



The Hundred Parishes

Walks from railway stations – number 3

3 miles (5kms) circular walk from Stansted Mountfitchet Station

This gently-undulating stroll is entirely within the parish of Stansted Mountfitchet, passing many of its historic buildings. Where appropriate, we give information about the buildings or events, so please take your time. The route is along a mixture of residential roads and footpaths with several stretches of main road. A relatively short section may be muddy. The route passes St John's Church and several pubs and cafes. If you hope to visit a church, pub or café, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. There are several seats along the way. The route crosses one stile. All photos were taken around 100 years ago.

See also Walk 137 which covers 3 miles, largely in parkland to the East of the station.

Start & finish: Stansted Mountfitchet station. Grid Reference TL514248 – Postcode CM24 8BE. Parking in pay-and-display car parks at Station (CM24 8BE) or Mountfitchet Castle (CM24 8LY). Public may use toilets nearby at Kings Arms and Yeoman's tea room. The route can be traced on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the station by the main exit (near the booking office on Platform 2) and go straight ahead along Station Road. Just after leaving the station, note where Stansted Brook emerges from under the road on the left. This road was once known as Bradford Street, possibly a corruption of Bad Ford Street as this part of the village was susceptible to flooding, with Stansted Brook being crossed by a ford. It is not known when the brook was diverted beneath the road, but it may have been around the time the railway came in the 1840s.

At the end of Station Road, we reach a busy road junction with mini roundabout. Turn left beside the Kings Arms onto Chapel Hill for a few paces to the pedestrian crossing. This photo, with the Kings Arms on the left, was taken long before the need for a pedestrian crossing. Otherwise, the view has changed very little in a hundred years.



Cross over the crossing with care and turn right to come back down the hill, immediately turning left into Lower Street. On the opposite side of the road, the Social Club was opened in 1888 by the Earl of Rosebery. Just a few years later he succeeded William Gladstone as Prime Minister and leader of the Liberal Party.

Soon, on the left after the Queen's Head pub, we pass Savages, a 16th-17th century house with lots of exposed timber framing. It appears on the extreme left in this photo. It is now a private residence, but was a general store when the photo was taken.



Immediately after Savages, Tudor House is probably a little older.

Keep on the left side of the road, but pause by Brewery Yard. On the opposite side of the road, between the buildings, can be seen the wooden stockade of the re-created Norman Mountfitchet Castle - an interesting destination, especially for children. In 1215, Richard de Montfichet, Stansted's lord of the manor, was one of the 25 barons who compelled King John to agree to Magna Carta. Most of his castle was later destroyed by the king.

Pass the junction with Grove Hill on the right and continue straight ahead along Lower Street. Carefully cross to the opposite pavement and keep to the right. Over to the left, red-brick Brewery House is a reminder that Stansted once had a brewery on the site behind Brewery House.

We keep right and soon pass the Dog and Duck pub on the right.

The residential area comes to an end and the road narrows as it becomes Gall End Lane. It leads to an area that, in the 19th century, was called Gallows End. We continue with Ugley Brook on the left (it flows from Ugley, the next parish to the north of Stansted Mountfitchet). It is usually dry but sometimes can overflow onto the lane. As recently as 2014, Ugley Brook was largely responsible for serious flooding in Lower Street.

We continue until the lane turns right just before North End House on the right. The house dates from the 17th century and served as Stansted's workhouse for many years until the Poor Law Union was established in the 1830s. Then, a purpose-built workhouse in Bishop's Stortford took the poor from 20 parishes. That building became the Herts & Essex Hospital.

Just before North End House, we turn sharp left, over the ditch, onto a narrow uphill footpath. Parts of this path can be muddy at times – and beware tree roots.

At the end of the path, we cross a stile and turn right onto the road, High Lane, which is also the B1351.

When the pavement ends, carefully cross to the opposite side of the road and continue for a short while before turning left into Coltsfield. This residential road was built on a field that used to belong to the Three Colts public house.

Ignore the turnings to right and left, going straight ahead along a short alley beside Norman Court. Alleys in Stansted, as in a number of Essex and Hertfordshire villages (and also Nottingham) are commonly referred to as "twitchells". At the end of the twitchell, we turn right into Norman's Way, which leads to the main road, Cambridge Road.

Today, Cambridge Road is classified as the B1383, but it was known as the A11 before the opening in 1979 of the M11 motorway between junctions 8 and 9. Long before that, it became a busy highway, used in particular by 17th century monarchs who travelled regularly with their court between business in London and pleasure at Newmarket's race course.

We turn left onto the main road, heading south, and almost immediately cross, with care, using the pedestrian crossing.

Continue heading south, passing the entrance on the right to Hargrave House. Today, this is a retirement home. Earlier, it had been the grand residence of some of Stansted's wealthiest families. It was built around 1777 by the Croasdaile family, later owned by the Pulteneys, and rented for 10 years towards the end of the 19th century by Walter Gilbey. It was later converted into the Mary MacArthur holiday home for working women, opened in 1939 by Queen Mary. By 2000 it had become a care home.

Further along, we pass the entrance to the sports ground - note the high entrance archway, erected in 1935 in celebration of the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. Pass the tennis courts, and then thatched cottages on each side of the road that date from the 17th or 18th centuries.

Just after another pedestrian crossing, we should pause beside the twitchell on the right. Note the stone decorations on the building on the opposite side of the road (now Domino's): it was constructed in 1901 for the Thurston family of fairground fame. During winter months their fairground attractions were taken through the archway into premises at the rear for winter storage and maintenance. The building used to be known as "Gallopington Villa", no doubt in reference to fairground amusements.

Do not cross the main road, but turn right into the twitchell known as Cooper's Alley. Pass through a small green and then cross a residential road into another twitchell with high fences on each side. At the end, turn right onto Bentfield Road.

We come to Bentfield Green and then turn left at the road junction to keep the green on our left. Set back on the right, Wealden Cottage (numbers 16 and 18), with jettied upper storeys at each end, dates from the 15th or 16th century and is probably the oldest residential building in Stansted Mountfitchet. The view ahead still looks like this . . .



We pass a 19th-century water pump on the left, and then the Rose and Crown pub.

The thatched cottage called Havering on the right dates from the 16th century.

We should keep to the right as we approach the bend so as to maximise the use of pavement and face traffic coming round the bend.

Pass a play area and then Bentfield Pond on the right before turning left opposite 17th-century Pond Cottage.

The finger-post sign points us towards Stansted. We have never left the parish of Stansted Mountfitchet, but the sign is a reminder that this area of Bentfield End was once a separate community. The other settlements that now make up the parish are The Street (Lower Street area where this walk started), Chapel (which we will see later) and Burton End (near the former parish church of St Mary's and today on the other side of the M11 motorway).

Cross the entrance to Wetherfield on the left and continue ahead on Bentfield Causeway.

Before reaching the next junction, a row of houses on the right displays extensive use of local flint stone. The name Stansted is derived from Saxon language and means stony place; flint stones are never far below the surface in fields and gardens.

At the junction, cross the road to the pavement opposite and turn right along Bentfield Road.

The road bears left and then descends to bend right at a small crossroads that did not exist when this photo was taken.



At the crossroads, we turn right into Cannons Mead.

Climb gently along this residential road and at the end go straight ahead, between numbers 15 and 16, into a twitchell. A sharp left, then right, leads into another residential road, Blythwood Gardens.

The road descends. When it curves to the left, we turn sharp right, immediately after house number 15, onto a narrow drive. Follow the drive round to the left and slightly uphill.



Just before the drive bears left, note house number 6 on the right. It was originally built for James Blyth as a model dairy. It was designed by William Caroe and opened in 1892 by the Prince of Wales. This photo dates from that era, before it was converted into a private house.

We follow the drive round to the left, where it narrows before returning to Blythwood Gardens. Cross the road and turn right, to soon reach the main road again, the B1383, here called Silver Street.

Turn left for just a few yards to see the knight sign. The sign welcomes arrivals to the village and reflects Stansted's link with the Magna Carta.

Just here, we cross the main road carefully via the traffic island. On the other side of the road, turn left and almost immediately right to climb Mill Hill to Stansted Windmill.

The windmill was built in 1787. It ceased to function as a mill 100 years ago, but from Easter to September it is opened to visitors on the first Sunday afternoon of the month and on bank holidays.



About 50 yards past the windmill, we turn left before number 41 into a twitchell which leads to Stansted's Recreation Ground, shown here.

Cross the road onto the playing field and bear left past the obelisk on the left. It records that this land was given for a playground by William Fuller-Maitland in 1867. He was yet another extremely wealthy Stansted resident and an active lord of the manor. He had an exceptional art collection and commissioned the building of Stansted Hall, specifically for the display of his collection of paintings. Sadly, he died aged 63 shortly before the new mansion was completed. Stansted Hall stands next to St Mary's, the former parish church, on the south-eastern side of the parish and beyond the range of this walk. [Walk 137 goes past it]

Keep heading in this direction, with the obelisk on the left, to leave the field by a footpath between the houses.

This path is called Platts Alley. It crosses the new Sanders Close, named after Irving Sanders, a local historian and former Chairman of the Parish Council, and descends back to the busy main road, Silver Street. We are now in the area once referred to as The Chapel.

Turn right, keeping to this side of the road, climbing and passing a terrace of houses that were all shops until the mid 1900s. This photo looks back down the hill. We are walking on the shaded side, towards the photographer.



We pass Linden on the right, at one time Paringa Nursing Home and then Linden House Antiques shop before conversion in 2011 into a hotel and restaurant.

At the next junction, cross Chapel Hill with great care onto the triangular island. A plaque records that the fountain (just visible on the left of the photo) was given to the village by the Gilbey family in 1871.

It stands on the site of a medieval wayside chapel that gave its name to Chapel Hill. The chapel became derelict and was used as a blacksmith's shop for a while before its demolition around 1870.



On the opposite side of the main road is one of Essex's largest mile irons, indicating that we are 31 miles from London. This replaced the original turnpike milestone that appears in the photo above beside the cattle water trough.

With care, keep straight ahead to cross the other fork of Chapel Hill before pausing. Immediately ahead is a clock high up on what was formerly Green's Stores. The clock commemorates Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1887 and was originally illuminated by gaslight.

This building dates from 1878, but Green's Stores occupied the site for over 300 years.



Now, we should turn around and turn left into Chapel Hill.

We soon cross over Crafton Green, named after Crafton Green, one of the family who owned Green's Stores. Just to the left are the library, parish council office and a public car park.

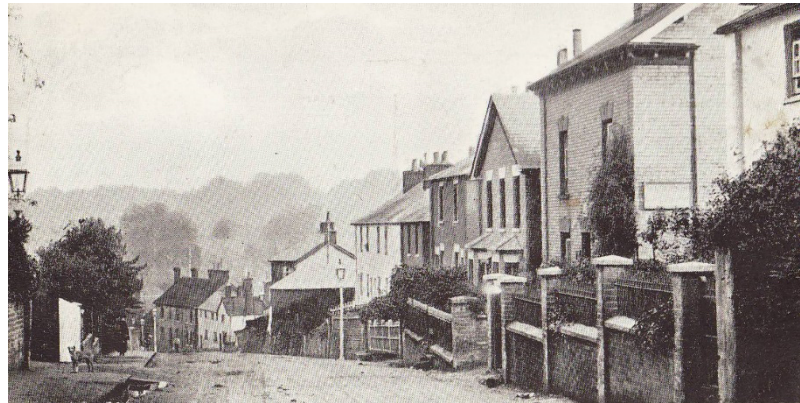
The next building on the left was purpose-built as a fire station. It served the village from 1928 to 1960.

Cross over Greenfields on the left. This private road was built in the 1950s on a field previously owned by the Green family. The field was once used as a football pitch.

Opposite Greenfields is the current fire station and then The Old Post Office that served the village for over 100 years.

Next on the right is what is now called The Old Courthouse. This was previously known as Central Hall. It opened in 1854 as a reading room, an early kind of library. It served many purposes over the years including village hall, courthouse with cell, and nightclub, before being converted in 1987 into flats.

Ahead, in the distance, can be seen the park that surrounds Stansted Hall, the mansion built for William Fuller-Maitland, and now a spiritualist centre. On a clear day you may be able to make out the chimneys of the Hall, over to the right.



We take the next turning on the left, into St John's Road. In 50 yards, we turn right at the first entrance into the grounds of St John's Church. Its construction was mainly funded by the Pulteney family who also gave the land on which it was built. If it is open, please take a look inside, but first remove or cover boots if they are muddy.

The church was consecrated in 1889 and was the first complete church designed by William Caroe who became a prolific and well-known architect.



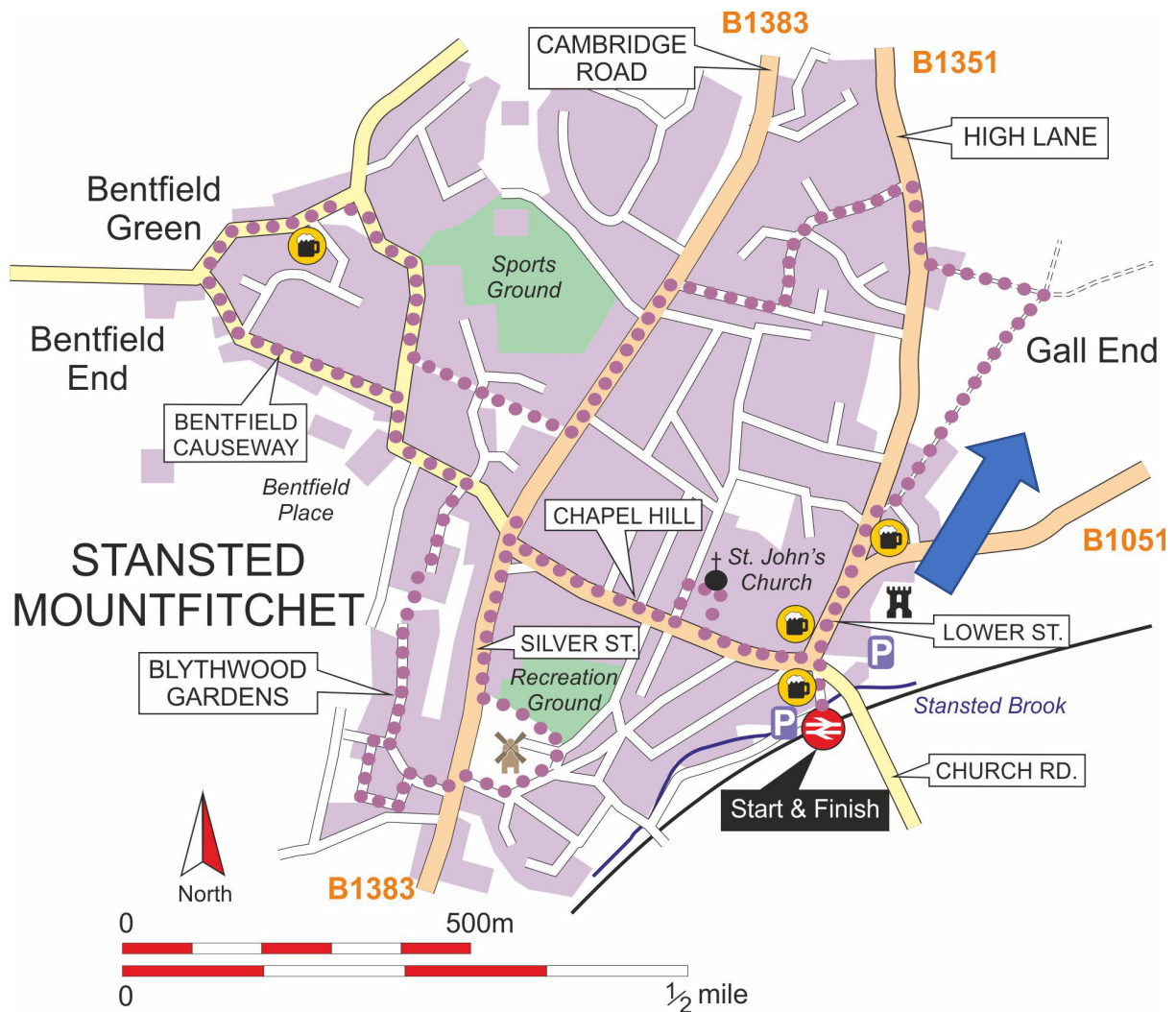
Keep to the right, passing the war memorial and a seat donated by The Hundred Parishes Society. The memorial was erected after WWI and after this photo was taken.

We re-emerge onto Chapel Hill and turn left to continue down the hill. The Barley Mow, a private house on the right, used to be a pub with the same name. Just afterwards, on the left, we pass a former village school (now converted into houses) and then Stansted Free Church. On the right, the current Post Office served as Brett's Forge until 1939.

At the bottom of Chapel Hill, we are close to a variety of refreshment opportunities. Use the pedestrian crossing and turn right beside Kings Arms into Station Road. This soon comes to the station with direct access to the north-bound platform, for Cambridge, etc. Pass along the platform and cross the footbridge for the south-bound platform and trains towards Broxbourne and London. Trains do not stop at all stations so, before boarding one, please check that it is scheduled to stop at your intended destination.

You can read more about the parish of Stansted Mountfitchet on www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you will also find short articles on Walter Gilbey and James Blyth.

This map was produced by Glyn Kuhn for the Hundred Parishes Society.



This route description, last updated 28 December 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk. Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com