



The Hundred Parishes

Walks between railway stations – number 5

Elsenham to Newport – 7 miles (11 kilometres)

This south-to-north walk is mostly on paths with some quiet lanes and passes through gently undulating countryside. It only briefly touches Elsenham and Newport, passing mainly through the parishes of Henham and Widdington, each with an attractive village. Each village has a pub, but you are advised to check opening days and times before relying on them. There are a few seats along the way and just one stile.

If you hope to visit either Henham church, Widdington church or a place of refreshment, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

Start: Elsenham Station (Grid Reference TL533270, postcode CM22 6LX).

Finish: Newport Station (TL522336, postcode CB11 3PL)

There is parking at both stations, albeit rather expensive, especially before 9:30am.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.

Pubs at Henham (2 miles) and Widdington (4.7 miles).

A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Tip: If travelling by train to and from the two stations it is usually cheaper to buy a return ticket for the most distant station, rather than two single tickets.

Tip: If travelling by car, it is suggested that you park at the finish and catch the train to the start, thereby avoiding the possible pressure to finish the walk at a certain time.

If you arrived at Elsenham Station on a train bound for Cambridge, you must first cross the rail track by the level crossing or the footbridge. If you arrived on a train bound for London, or parked in the station car park, you will be on the correct side of the level crossing. Take great care on the short stretch of road that zigzags through the level crossing.

The route starts by heading north along Old Mead Road, running parallel with the rail track just to the left. About 150 yards beyond the level crossing, just after the entrance to a large warehouse on the right and opposite the start of Cambridge Walk on the left, we turn right onto a footpath, passing over a footbridge and following the footpath steadily uphill for some distance. Almost immediately, we leave Elsenham and enter the parish of Henham.

For the next half mile or so, the path runs alongside the line of a railway track which once ran from Elsenham via Henham to Thaxted. The path alternates from time to time between running to the left or right of the hedgerow. The Elsenham and Thaxted Light Railway opened in 1913 and closed in 1952, when a single ticket for the 6-mile journey cost 1 shilling and twopence halfpenny (1/2½d), equivalent to 6 pence in decimal coinage).

After about half a mile, when the field to the right of the railway route ends, we should be sure to be on the left of trackway. Towards the top of the climb, Henham Church comes into view over to the left. The route will pass by the church later.

When the path emerges onto a road, cross it with care and turn left along the road. We soon cross the entrance to a nursery on the right and continue ahead, using the grass verge.

Within 200 yards, we turn right onto a footpath.

Our route continues in this direction for some 500 yards, initially with a hedge on both sides and later with a hedge just on the left.

When the hedge ends, cross a wooden footbridge with metal handrails and turn left, keeping a hedgerow on the left.

The path becomes a tarmac lane as we enter the village of Henham. Henham is noted for the village greens that line most of its roads. Keep straight ahead along Carters Lane. Towards the end of the lane, we pass between 17th-century thatched houses: on the left, White Cottage and on the right Glebeside Cottage, followed by Henham Church Hall.

At the end of Carter's Lane, across the green to our right is Mondis, also 17th century and with exposed timber framing.

Just afterwards, we meet another road and turn right, keeping to the pavement on the right.

Henham's sign on the right recalls the village's dragon which was last sighted in the mid-17th century.



Almost immediately after the sign, we turn right, passing 17th-century Wyndies Cottage on the right and then walking along a path beside this row of charming cottages. All are thatched, timber-framed and plastered. They date from the 15th to the 18th centuries.

At the end of this short path, turn left at Ship Cottage, and soon turn left again onto the High Street. The thatched village shop on the left is staffed by volunteers.

Cross the High Street and follow it past the duck ponds and the war memorial, bearing right beside the ancient Maldon Ironworks signpost into Church Street.

Pass The Cock public house on the right and Henham's Grade I-listed church on the left, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. You are encouraged to visit the church. Much of the building dates from the 13th or 14th centuries. Since then, it has been little altered, although the present font, pulpit and chancel screen were added in the 15th-century. Turn left from the church and continue along Church Street for another hundred yards.

Where the lane turns to the left, keep straight ahead onto a gravel path.

Descend for 200 yards to a cross-roads of paths and here turn left, keeping a ditch on the left. Ignore signs which may suggest this is not a public footpath. The path bears right and passes a lake on the left. Soon afterwards, keep straight ahead on the public path, ignoring the private paths to left and right.

Our route keeps a hedge on the right, climbing at first. Near the top of the rise, we ignore a footpath signposted through the hedge on the right and keep straight ahead with hedgerow on our right, heading towards the overhead power line.

Our path descends for a while and then bears right for a few yards to pass immediately beneath a power transmission pylon. Shortly afterwards, we pass through a metal gate, cross a small field, climb over a stile and cross a footbridge before turning left onto a byway with a ditch on our left.

The byway soon becomes a surfaced lane.

After about 300 yards, we turn right at the first junction onto another lane which winds uphill to Little Henham Hall. The lane turns left, but we keep straight ahead into Little Henham Hall Farm. We pass between farm buildings and bear slightly right to continue on the path as it enters a wood. Just here, we imperceptibly leave Henham and enter the parish of Widdington.

Keep straight ahead through the wood. After 300 yards, the path almost reaches the edge of the wood. We keep straight ahead, still within the wood, but with a field on the right.

When the path emerges from the wood, keep straight ahead across the field for about 100 yards and then keep to the right to leave the field and continue beside it, still heading in the same direction and now along a narrow footpath.

At the end of the footpath, turn right onto a bridleway. Soon pass Widdington House on the right and then bend left onto a lane. The avenue of horse chestnut trees marks the entrance to Widdington village which has many interesting buildings.

We should keep to the right, facing any oncoming traffic. When a lane joins from the left, our road becomes High Street. We soon pass Bishop's Cottage on the left, dating from the 16th century. Just here, we can cross to use the pavement on the left.

We ignore turnings to left and right, continuing down the High Street.

On the left, we pass several yellow-brick semi-detached houses, set back from the road. These were built in the 19th century for agricultural workers, an early example of such buildings and unusual in a rural village setting.

On the right, we pass the Fleur de Lys public house and restaurant.

Just after the pub, the village hall displays a map of the village with names of many of its houses.



Soon, we come to the small village green with a village sign. Keep to the right of the green and turn right down Church Lane for about 100 yards to the parish church. St Mary's dates from the 12th century but was much restored in the 1870s. If you would like to visit, please remove or cover dirty boots.

From the church, turn right and retrace to turn right at the village green and follow the road, Springhill, signposted towards Newport. On the right, just after the green, thatched Rectory Cottage dates from the 19th century.

After about 100 yards, an English Heritage property, Priors Hall Barn, is signposted to the left. It lies about 100 yards up the drive. This exceptional, large barn, dating from the 15th century, is usually open at weekends from 10am to 6pm, April to September, and entry is free. It is listed at Grade I, as is Priors Hall itself which can be seen beyond the barn but not visited. The Hall is an exceptionally old residential property whose stone walls were built in the 13th century.



From the barn, retrace to the road and turn left, keeping to the right to face oncoming traffic.

We ignore turnings on the right (signposted to Debden) and follow the lane round to the left. About 300 yards later, immediately after Shipton Bridge Farm, turn right onto the public bridleway. Beyond the farm, this sunken lane climbs steadily.

After about half a mile, at the top of the hill, the track meets a byway where we turn left

We follow the byway for more than half a mile. As it starts to descend, we leave Widdington and enter the parish of Newport. Ahead, we can see Newport Quarry and, beyond it, the M11 motorway. This is the only working chalk quarry in Essex and produces around 15,000 tons of chalk a year.

The uneven track descends quite steeply and becomes a tarmac lane before arriving at Newport Station.

Most of Newport lies beyond the station. Other Hundred Parishes walks explore much of it, especially Station Walk number 6.

Our route arrives at the platform for London. Cross the footbridge for the Cambridge-bound platform, ticket office and ticket machine. Not all trains stop at all stations so, before boarding one, please check that it is scheduled to stop at your intended destination.

This route description, last updated 09 May 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk. There, you will find many more walks and further reading about each of the parishes. Please email any suggestions for improving this route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

A diagram of the route is shown on the next page. It is based on the Ordnance Survey map and published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

