



The Hundred Parishes

Walks from railway stations – number 6

Newport to Audley End - 3.5 miles (6 kms)

This walk passes two churches and many other attractive and interesting buildings, especially in Newport, so the walk can take much longer than its 3.5 miles suggests.

The route includes Newport's main street and a variety of quiet lanes and paths, undulating at times, with no stiles. There are several seats along the route.

The route passes two churches. There is a tea room near the start and The Bell pub near the finish. If you hope to visit a church or a place of refreshment, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

Start: Newport Station. Grid Reference TL522336 - Postcode CB11 3PL.

Finish: Audley End Station - TL516363 - CB11 4LD.

Parking at both stations, albeit rather expensive especially before 9:30am.

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

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 to catch a train.

Leave Newport Station through the main entrance, which is on the Cambridge-bound platform on the west side of the tracks. Proceed straight ahead along Station Road, immediately passing a former maltings on the right: the buildings were constructed in 1855 beside the railway and originally had their own rail siding. Malting ceased in 1982 and the premises now serve a variety of commercial purposes.

On the left shortly before the post box, note the substantial chunk of "Hertfordshire puddingstone", a natural rock composed of flint pebbles believed to have been formed around 50 million years ago.

Further along, we pass Newport's village hall on the left; behind it is a large common.

We soon reach a junction with the London to Cambridge Road, B1383. Here, we turn right into the High Street, keeping to this side of the road.

Newport High Street is on the old highway from London to Newmarket and Cambridge. The road retains several fine buildings from the days of horse-drawn carriages, when stabling and overnight accommodation were required to break the journey. In the 17th century, King James I and his grandson King Charles II were fond of horse racing and travelled with their royal entourage regularly between business in London and pleasure at Newmarket.

Many of the buildings along the High Street are listed for their architectural or historic interest – we will refer to just some of them.

Soon, on the right, Pond Cross House and then Pond Cross Farm bear witness to the fact that there was once a great fish pond here, albeit that it dried up in the 16th century. This was the site of medieval fairs and markets and a market cross stood here until the 18th century.

Soon afterwards, you may be tempted to use the pedestrian crossing to purchase sustenance at Dorrington's, a shop and tearoom that is part of a century-old local bakery chain. Return with care to the pavement opposite.

Continuing northwards, red-brick The Georgians on the right dates from the 18th century.

On the left, The Old Manse also dates from the 18th century and once functioned as a branch of National Westminster Bank.

On the right, we pass the 16th-century Old Vicarage which is possibly the oldest timber-framed building in Newport. It was badly damaged by fire in 2018 but has been professionally reinstated to its former appearance.



Just after Hercules House, formerly the Hercules public house, cross Debden Road with care.

Further along, Newport House on the left has steps leading up to the central door. This red-brick building dates from the 18th century and in springtime is almost hidden behind its magnificent wisteria.

Opposite, on the right, the ancient Monks Barn, with exposed timber beams and brick nogging, pictured here, is believed to date from the 15th century when it was built for a priest. Its upper storey is jettied out over the ground floor and the protruding (or 'oriel') window on the left is supported by a wooden bracket with carved figures thought to be a crowned Virgin and Child, flanked by angels. The building was extended in the 16th and 17th centuries.



We pass the junction with Wicken Road on the left. Soon afterwards, pause outside the Convenience Store to look at the 21st-century paving on The Old House opposite. The building is not as old as some we have seen, dating 'only' from the 17th century.

Keep straight ahead as the High Street becomes Belmont Hill, passing The White Horse pub and now descending gently past further ancient buildings. Number 7 dates from the 15th or 16th century and has most of its timber framing exposed.

At the foot of the hill, the large brick building on the right, The Links, was built in 1774 as a house of correction. It ceased to be used as a prison in 1841.

Before crossing the bridge over the almost-hidden Wicken Water, look to the left and you will see a copy of the toll board from when the road was a turnpike. Looking right, the level of the base of the buildings reveals that the bridge spans what was once a ford. The entrance to 17th-century Distaff Cottage is below the level of today's road.

Bear right into Bridge End and keep left, passing The Old Priory and Priory Cottage (pictured on the right) which date from the 15th century.



Go under the railway arch and follow the road round to the left. This was once the main road, before the railway viaduct was built as part of the London to Cambridge line in the 1840s.

Further along, on the right, we pass Crown House (with a plaster crown above the entrance), a timber framed 16th and 17th century building that served as an inn for many years.



Local legend has it that one of King Charles II's mistresses, Nell Gwynn, would stay here to entertain the king, but this has not been substantiated. Subsequently, in 1692, the inn was renamed the Crown and the elaborate baroque pargeting was added.



Pass 16th-century Forge Cottage and then 15th-century Tudor House whose fine chimney stack is pictured here. It is thought to have been installed in the 16th century.

Bridge End rejoins the main road. To the right, you can see the 16th-century Coach and Horses inn, but our route turns left. We should keep to the pavement on the left and pass beneath the railway bridge.

Joyce Frankland Academy, on the opposite side of the road, was formerly Newport Grammar School. It was founded in 1588 by Dame Joyce Frankland and rebuilt by the "arts and crafts" architect Eden Nesfield in the 19th Century. The internationally-known chef, Jamie Oliver, was a pupil here.

Cross Bridge End on the left (yes, you have been around the block) and soon cross the main road by the pedestrian crossing.

On the other side of the road, look back for a better view of the gaol – note the symbolic chains and manacles high above the doorway.

Continue up Belmont Hill, crossing the entrance to Gaces Acre and then keeping ahead on the raised pavement. Until the main road was upgraded as a turnpike (a toll road) in the 1740s, the main route had followed what is now the pavement.

Upon reaching the White Horse pub on the opposite side of the main road, we fork right beside 17th-century Belmont Farmhouse and follow the line of the old road, soon reaching the tiny Elephant Green. This was probably named after the Elephant & Castle inn that served this locality in Victorian times before being converted to a private house, although a rather more imaginative but unconfirmed explanation tells of an elephant with a travelling circus that collapsed and died on the green.

Keep to the right and then turn right into the churchyard of Newport's parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin.

You are encouraged to visit, but first please remove or cover boots if they are muddy. The church is largely 13th to 15th century with an unusually fine Victorian tower, a medieval carved screen and an ancient "portable" altar, shown here.



On leaving the church porch, soon turn sharp right and keep to the footpath through the churchyard, passing the church on the right.

We leave the churchyard through a gateway and continue ahead on a good path, soon passing tennis courts and a recreation ground on the left and a retirement complex on the right.

After a short, steep descent, cross a footbridge over a stream (Wicken Water) and climb up to meet a road. Turn left, past the long low building on the left. Bury Water Cottage was built as Newport's workhouse in 1799 and the lower cottages beyond were built as poor houses. When safe, cross the road and continue downhill.

Ignoring new housing, bear right, passing School Lane on the left. Pass more new houses on the right and in 100 yards turn right onto Whiteditch Lane.

After a while, use the pavement on the right. This was once a quiet lane to Tudhope Farm, but it now provides access to a few older houses in larger grounds, interspersed with groups of 21st-century residential properties. Our route continues uphill and then descends, ending beside the entrance to Tudhope Farm on the right.

Keep straight ahead, now on a path and soon passing between two large concrete blocks. Bear slightly right, keeping the hedge on the left. The path climbs steadily with the valley of the River Cam below to the right.

The large house on the opposite side of the valley is Shortgrove, a 20th century replacement for an even grander Shortgrove that was destroyed by fire in 1966.

The path veers to the left to meet a roadway where we turn right and continue uphill on this concrete bridleway.

On a clear day, in the distance far away to the right, some of the higher buildings of Saffron Walden may be visible, including the church spire.

As the roadway flattens, Wendens Ambo church comes into view straight ahead (albeit not so obvious when trees have their full summer foliage).

The roadway descends steeply and we pass through a gate, turning turn left onto Rookery Lane.

We are now in the village of Wendens Ambo, whose name derives from the amalgamation of two small parishes in 1662, 'ambo' meaning both in Latin.

Follow Rookery Lane round to the right, passing Wenden Grange on the left.

When the lane reaches a junction, turn right into Duck Street. We pass beside a good mix of houses, mostly from the 20th century but interspersed with some older gems. After a while, a shingle track and footpath leads off to the left. This is not our route, but we have a view of a 17th-century house about 50 yards down the track: Old Rectory Cottages, whose facing (eastern) wall is dominated by a huge tapering chimney stack.

After a few modern houses, on the right there is a pink two-storey house with a gabled dormer window, somewhat hidden behind a wall and vegetation. This timber-framed and plastered house dates from the 16th century and was moved to this site in 1939 from Suffolk. It stands opposite thatched and pargetted 17th-century The Cottage on the left.

Keep ahead on Duck Street until it reaches a junction beside a telephone box. This is the B1039 road. The Bell Inn lies about 50 yards to the left. This small pub was a farmhouse in the 16th century, before becoming an inn some 200 years ago.

Our route turns right. Note the listed wall opposite – a mixture of puddingstone and flint.

Very soon, turn right again into Church Path, a no-through road. The view to Wendens Ambo church ahead is much photographed, although rarely without a car or two.

Please visit the church if it is open, first removing or covering boots if muddy. The church tower is Norman and the west doorway, facing Church Path and pictured below, has Roman bricks. The interior includes wall paintings, pulpit, screen and benches which date from the Middle Ages.



From the church porch, turn right to leave by the gate through which we entered. You might like to pause before the gate for an alternative, less known, view of the cottages along Church Path.

Leave the churchyard and turn immediately right through a gate onto a tarmac path with the church and churchyard wall on the right. After a short climb, cross a small car park beside the village hall and turn right, back onto the B1039. Cross the road carefully to use the pavement on the opposite side.

After 200 yards, the road passes between brick walls as it crosses over the railway. Immediately beyond, to the left, are Railway Cottages, a Victorian terrace of nine dwellings faced with flint.

Cross the road with care and turn right by the mini roundabout into the approach to Audley End Station.



Whilst the station is situated in the village of Wendens Ambo, it is named after the better-known Audley End House, which is situated about 1.5 miles north of the station. The station was built in 1845 and its grand carriage porch was erected to give protection from the elements for guests of Baron Braybrooke at Audley End as they arrived or departed by horse-drawn carriage. Today Audley End House is under the guardianship of English Heritage and well worth visiting.

Between 1865 and 1964 a branch line operated from Audley End Station to the nearby town of Saffron Walden. The remains of the platform and waiting room for this line can be seen in what is now the station car park.

The ticket office and London-bound platform are on this side of the track. Cross the bridge for trains bound for Cambridge. A ticket machine is on the London platform.

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 30 April 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you will find many more walks and can read more about the parishes of Newport and Wendens Ambo.

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

A diagram covering this route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

