



# The Hundred Parishes

## Walks from railway stations – number 10

### Circular walk from Harlow Town station – 6 miles (10 kilometres)

*This walk route offers an opportunity to enjoy the rural parish of Eastwick and Gilston as it is today. Much of the area is due for massive change – to become part of what is formally referred to as “Harlow and Gilston Garden Town” but what is often called “Harlow North”.*

*Harlow is just outside the Hundred Parishes, but Harlow Town Station, on the edge of town, is a convenient starting point for exploration of the Stort Navigation canal and the parish of Eastwick and Gilston. Much of the route passes through countryside that is designated in East Herts District Council’s plan for the construction over the coming years of 10,000 houses and associated employment sites, etc.*

*The route covers 6 miles of varied terrain, including flat towpaths and gently undulating country footpaths and lanes. There are no stiles.*

*The route passes two churches which are generally shut, although a key can be obtained nearby for Gilston Church. The route also passes pubs in Eastwick (Lion, 01279 434388), Gilston (Plume of Feathers, 01279 424154) and in Harlow (The Moorhen, 01279 423066). It is always advisable to check opening times and book beforehand if you wish to eat. Please be prepared to remove or cover muddy boots before entering a church or place of refreshment.*

**Start and finish:** Harlow Town station (Grid Reference: TL447112) which is on the London Liverpool Street to Cambridge line. There is parking at the station, postcode CM20 2JD. The station has toilet facilities. The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the station by the only exit. Turn right, keeping on the pavement and climbing gently. If we had alighted at the station in the 1950s, it was called Burnt Mill Station and was a typical, modest rural station: a few single-storey buildings, level crossing and wooden signal box.

That all changed after the 1947 decision to build Harlow New Town. The present station opened in 1960 and was subsequently listed because it was a flagship of modern design.

As we climb gently, away from the station, the area to our left and behind us was once the village of Burnt Mill. The village was relatively new, consisting mainly of two streets of semi-detached houses – about 50 homes altogether - mostly built around 1890 to house workers from the new Kirkaldy’s engineering works, which we will pass soon. The houses were all demolished to make way for Harlow New Town.

The postcard image on the right shows one of the streets that once made up Burnt Mill – now all demolished.

We pass Goodman House on the right and, just before reaching a busy roundabout, turn right alongside the office block and then right again, continuing along the pavement.

Cross over the railway line and, about 50 yards later, turn right into Burnt Mill Lane, signposted to the River Stort.



Keep to the pavement on the right, passing the Harlow Centre for Outdoor Learning on the left. This has been built on the site of Kirkaldy's engineering works and makes use of one or two of its original buildings. The factory had relocated from London in 1885 and closed in 1932; some buildings were re-purposed for a while, but it was mostly demolished by 1960.

With care, cross the road and turn left onto a road signposted to The Moorhen, keeping to the pavement on the right. This road very soon passes over Burnt Mill Lock. Cross the road and take the path on the left, signposted as Harcamlow Way. The towpath beside Stort Navigation soon offers a better view of activities at the Outdoor Learning Centre.

Follow the towpath for about half a mile, passing Parndon Lock Meadows on the right for some distance and then a bird observation point on the right. From this hide, we may be able to see the tower of Eastwick parish church in the distance (immediately in front of a pylon).

The canal rounds a bend just before Parndon Mill, pictured here. The 19th-century mill had been powered by both water and steam. It ceased to operate in 1960 and has since been gradually converted to a centre for creative activity, including a small art gallery and artists' studios.



Opposite the Mill, the towpath crosses a weir on an ornate metal and glass bridge created by two of the Mill's artists in 2007. This is one of several works of art along the River Stort Sculpture Trail.

Another work of art follows almost immediately, beside Parndon Mill Lock. This was installed in 2000 to commemorate the opening of Stort Navigation in 1769.

Our route turns right here, away from the canal, along a tree-lined path.

In 300 yards, the path crosses the River Stort, as opposed to the canalised Stort Navigation. At this point, the route leaves Harlow and Essex and enters the Hertfordshire parish of Eastwick and Gilston, part of the Hundred Parishes.

Soon after crossing the river, the path becomes a lane. Keep to the right as it reaches the busy A414 dual carriageway, **which must be crossed with great care.**

On the far side, continue ahead on a lane which soon comes into the village of Eastwick.

Eastwick and Gilston are separate villages whose destiny has been shared for centuries. Back in 1637, Sir John Gore bought Eastwick and added it to his Gilston estate. In 1917 the two churches were entrusted to one rector. And in 1955 the two villages were formally joined as a single administrative parish.

Eastwick parish church stands over to the left.

The first roadside building on the left was constructed as a school and schoolmaster's house. It later served as part of a small industrial complex, most famed for making the bars of the cells in Harlow police station. The industrial premises have now gone and the school buildings have been converted into houses. Change is a recurring theme of this walk.

The building is marked "WH 1884". Now, most buildings in Eastwick and Gilston show the date of construction and initials, either WH or IH. These initials refer to brothers William Hodgson and John Hodgson (always noted as IH rather than JH). John, a wealthy shipbroker, bought the two villages around 1850 and soon set about demolishing most of the old farmhouses and cottages and building solid new Victorian homes of red or yellow brick. When John died in 1882, his older brother William carried on the process of redevelopment for another few years until his death in 1886.

A little further along on the left, we pass one of the few buildings that survived the Hodgson demolitions, Culverts, a large brick house dating from around 1700.

Next on the left is the Lion public house, built by John Hodgson in 1852 as a farmhouse, but converted to a pub before World War I. Opposite stand the former almshouses, pictured here. They were built around 1890.



This quiet lane was once the main road, with heavy traffic negotiating the tight corner beside the Lion. Relief came in 1962 with the bypass which was subsequently widened to the A414 dual carriageway that we crossed a few minutes ago.

Eastwick church is usually locked, but for a view of the outside we should go straight ahead at the crossroads. St Botolph's Church was substantially rebuilt in the 1870s, but retains the tower and chancel arch from the 13th century. In the churchyard at the rear of the church is the large tomb of the Hodgson brothers, sadly now looking rather dilapidated. From the



churchyard, there is a clear view of Eastwick Manor which is little changed from when it was built as the rectory in 1826.

From the church, we should retrace to the crossroads and turn left, immediately passing the war memorial on the left and the almshouses on the right.

This is Eastwick Hall Lane, although there has been no Eastwick Hall for hundreds of years. The lane climbs gently. We have just entered the area that is due to become part of the extended Harlow.

After about 500 yards, as the lane bears left, our route turns right onto a public bridleway, signposted "Public Bridleway 6 – Home Wood 520 yards". The bridleway climbs steadily. Whilst the route is obvious, it can become somewhat overgrown in summer. Towards the top, the land to the left is thought to be the site of early settlements in Eastwick: Eastwick Manor from the 13th century and possibly much earlier habitation.

Continue ahead with woodland, Home Wood, on the right, and passing a half-hidden estate building: this was constructed in 1851 by John Hodgson for his estate's gamekeeper.

We reach a junction with another track and here turn right into the wood for about 100 yards to meet a lane (with the gated entrance to Homewood House on the right).

Keep left, now with woodland on the left. To the right, the tower and spire of Gilston church come into view. We are now in Gilston, a very scattered community.

Shortly before reaching the church, we pass Dairy Cottages on the right. Numbers 3 and 4 started life in 1888 as a dairy where cows would come to be milked.



Continue ahead to Grade I-listed St Mary's Church. It is largely from the 13th-century, with a Tudor tower topped by a Victorian Hertfordshire spire. The church is usually locked but a key is available from a nearby house. If you do visit, please remove or cover boots if they are muddy. Inside, you will find a 12th century font and a rare 13th-century wooden screen.

An early 20th century monument to the Johnston family in the southwest corner of the churchyard (on the left as you enter the churchyard and close to the road) is also listed as Grade I, although to an amateur the justification is not obvious! The memorial includes the name of Reginald Eden Johnston who served as Governor of the Bank of England from 1909 to 1911.

Continue downhill from the church, passing more Hodgson houses on the left.

Just as a lane joins on the left, bear right onto Public Footpath 28, signposted *Eastwick 1¼*. This becomes the entrance drive to Gilston Park, an area not scheduled for 'development' but one which will be surrounded by Harlow North.

After about 200 yards, shortly before reaching the first house along this drive, a footpath heads left through a gateway. We ignore this but just 10 yards later another footpath (number 20) turns right off the drive. We bear right onto this clear path between trees. Soon, we walk beside a high chain link fence on the left, with woodland on the right.

When the fencing ends, we keep straight ahead on a grass path through open parkland. Ahead and slightly to the left, we should be able to see the taller buildings in the centre of Harlow. Over to the right is Home Wood; we walked along the far side of it about a mile back.

At the end of this field, we go straight ahead on a wooden footbridge over a ditch.

On the far side of the bridge we go straight ahead, but now to the left we get our first view of Gilston Park House.

Our route continues straight ahead for another 100 yards. Just **before** we reach another wooden bridge with handrails, we turn left along the field edge, beside a deep ditch on our right. This ditch marks the boundary of civilisation as we know it, with Harlow North destined for the far side.

Gradually, Gilston Park House comes more into view over to the left. In a further 100 yards, we meet another path and here we turn left, heading gently uphill towards the big house.

As we cross this area of parkland, there are several large, dead trees that may once have been specimen trees in this parkland surrounding John Hodgson's mansion.

At the end of the field, we continue ahead, now on a gravel path and soon entering the grounds of today's Gilston Park House.

This impressive grey stone mansion, reminiscent of a Scottish castle, was built in the 1850s as the home of John Hodgson and his brother William, both of whom did not marry. When they died in the 1880's, Gilston Park passed to their nephew, Edward Salvin Bowlby and his heirs. In its heyday, around 30 domestic staff were employed in the house. During World War II, it was used by RAF officers based at nearby Hunsdon airfield and then as a hospital. The Bowlby family moved away soon after the war. The house passed to the Guinness family and then to a pharmaceutical company, Smith & Nephew, who used the house as a corporate office with research facilities in buildings erected nearby. The company preserved the splendid interiors. After Smith & Nephew relocated, the house was sympathetically divided into fourteen houses and apartments.

Having observed the big house, we continue ahead, passing the house on our right. For the next half mile or so, we will walk through an area that is due to remain untouched by developers, albeit surrounded by Harlow North.

The final section of Gilston Park House is now called Gamekeeper Cottage. Behind it, at the top of the drainpipe, the initials IH and date 1851 remind us that this was built as John Hodgson's home some 170 years ago. Continue down the drive.

We pass through gates and then continue along the tarmac drive for only about 50 yards before turning right onto a roadway, ignoring the "No Exit" sign.

On the left we soon pass red-brick Goldenbrook, with a high red-brick wall that surrounds the former extensive kitchen garden for Gilston Park.

Soon afterwards, we cross a stream, Golden Brook, and then continue ahead, climbing steadily.

After another 200 yards we reach a lane where we turn right, immediately passing Cumberland Lodge, a gatehouse for Gilston Park built in 1855 in ornamental Tudor style.

After 200 yards, the wrought-iron gate on the right dates from the 19th century. It was once an entry point for Gilston Park but now serves that purpose for Little Park, the next residence we will come to on the right.

Before we reach Little Park, we go past The Old Gilston Rectory on the left. This was built in 1889 by Edward Salvin Bowlby who inherited the Gilston estate from the Hodgsons. It is now a private house.

Further along, we pass steps that lead up to Little Park on the right. This is a relatively modern house, built in 1948 as the residence of the estate manager when the Guinness family briefly owned the estate.

Soon afterwards, we come to more estate buildings on the left. High Gilston was built in 1856 as the village primary school and served that purpose until 1959 before becoming a private house.

Running beside the lane for a while on the right is Fiddlers' Brook, a stream that is fed by water overflowing a dam at the southern end of a lake on the Gilston estate. After a while, a footpath leaves the lane to turn right and cross the brook. If you pause here and look back, over the brook and up the hill, you will get a last glimpse of the big house.

As we continue ahead, along the road, we come back into the area scheduled for development, to left and right of this lane.

Our route continues along the lane for another 200 yards, past more Hodgson houses on the left, until we reach the Plume of Feathers at the junction with a main road.

To visit the pub, fork left onto the pavement before the junction. The pub is believed to date from the 17th century, albeit that "1350" is inscribed high on its northeast gable.

With or without a visit to the pub, we turn right onto the main road, immediately passing the war memorial which records the 16 young men of the parish who died in WWI. This area of the parish is known as Pye Corner.



The pavement soon ends, so cross the road with care to the Eastwick and Gilston village hall, which bears an ornate panel declaring that it was erected in 1908 in memory of Edward Salvin Bowlby.

Continue on the left side for a short distance, and follow the pavement round to the left, leaving the main road.



Pass several cottages on the left (pictured here). At the end of this cul-de-sac, ignore a public footpath on the left signposted to the River Stort and keep straight ahead to cross over Fiddlers Brook on a brick-built footbridge with sturdy wooden handrails. Unusually, the footbridge is named – Fiddlers Bridge – and is Grade II listed. We are now leaving the area designated for development as part of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.

After about 30 yards, before the footpath meets the main road, turn left onto a gravel footpath. Follow the path round to the left, passing a relatively-new residential area on the right. We stay on this path and ignore opportunities to bear right into the residential area.

We are now in Terlings Park, in the landscaped grounds of the former manor house of that name. There was a big house here in the 16th century and a replacement from the 19th century. In the late 19th and early 20th century, this had been the home of the Johnstone family whose 20th-century memorial we saw in Gilston churchyard.

The Terlings Park mansion was damaged by fire and then demolished in the mid-20th century; the site was re-purposed as a medical research and development site (owned by Merck, Sharp and Dohne). That operation ceased in 2006 and the housing estate was built a few years later. We will pass through some of the parkland which was retained as part of the housing development approval.

We stay on the path, always keeping left. The parkland includes a number of mature specimen trees and in springtime has extensive areas of white-flowered ground cover: this is wild garlic, distinguishable by its strong aroma.

On reaching an area with a swing park, keep to the left. On the right, a new area of woodland was planted in 2023, each sapling having a plaque with the name of the sponsoring family. The final plaque bears the name *Hodgson*, perhaps a link to the Hodgson brothers. After this new planting, turn left on the path.

Now, ahead we have a fine view of the specimen trees. Continue ahead and keep turning left along the pathway.

The path descends and a weir comes into sight on the left behind the trees. This is the River Stort, flowing from the canalised Stort Navigation, flowing west to join up with the River Lea.

Continue down the path to reach a road – Burntmill Lane. On the corner, immediately on the right, is a 19th-century Terling Lodge, a single-storey house that once served as the South Lodge to Terlings Park.

We turn left on the road, keeping to the left and soon crossing over the River Stort. Here, the river marks the boundary and our route leaves Eastwick and Gilston in Hertfordshire to return to the Essex parish of Harlow.

Stay on the pavement, on the left. Now, over to our left is Moorhen Marina. Just afterwards, we come to The Moorhen pub and restaurant.

Perhaps after a break, continue along the raised pavement, passing the pub car park on the left. Soon afterwards, we cross over Stort Navigation, with Burnt Mill Lock on the left. From now on, we will retrace the first part of the walk back to Harlow Town Station.

Soon turn right and, when safe, cross to the pavement on the left. Stay on the pavement and, just before it reaches a busy road, turn left onto the pavement / cycle path. Soon, cross over the railway line.

Keep to the left and bear left and left again round Goodman House into the station approach road. Keep on the left until you reach the station.

This is the only entrance to the station. Not all trains stop at all stations so, before boarding one, please check that it is scheduled to stop at your intended destination.

Much of the information included in this walk description was gleaned from 'Public Service Information' on the parish website, <http://www.eastwickandgilston.org.uk/>

This route description, last updated 09 May 2023, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) where you can find many more walks and read more about the parish of Eastwick and Gilston

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto: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.

