



The Hundred Parishes

Walks between railway stations – number 12

Stansted Mountfitchet to Elsenham - 4 miles (6.5 kms)

Note: Walk number 2 is a longer version of this route.

This walk mainly explores the countryside between Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham, with start and finish through residential areas. The route is mostly on paths and lanes with some residential streets. It is gently undulating with two stiles. Parts of the route may be muddy at times. There are pubs & cafes near the start and a pub near the finish. There are seats in Stansted and Elsenham villages.

The walk passes one church but it is rarely open. If you hope to visit a church, pub or tea room, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

Start: Stansted Mountfitchet Station (Grid Reference: TL514248, Postcode CM24 8BE). Parking in Station or Mountfitchet Castle pay-and-display car parks. Public may use toilets at Stansted's Kings Arms and Yeoman's.

Finish: Elsenham Station (GR: TL533270, Postcode CM22 6LX) - car park just north of station in Old Mead Road, no toilets.

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.

Leave Stansted Mountfitchet station by the main exit (near the booking office on Platform 2). Keep straight ahead along Station Road to the busy junction. You might like to pause here in front of the mini-roundabout for a brief orientation . . .

Straight ahead, Lower Street heads north. Not far along on the left are the exposed beams of Savages and, immediately beyond, Tudor House. They date from the 16th or 17th centuries. On the right, the tower is part of the Social Club, opened in 1888 by the Earl of Rosebery just a few years before he became Prime Minister. The turning beside the Social Club leads to Mountfitchet Castle, a 1990s recreation of Stansted's Norman castle and a popular destination for children. The turning to our right is Church Road and it leads out of the village to Stansted's Norman church, St Mary's.

Our route turns left, up Chapel Hill. It is recommended that you cross Chapel Hill almost immediately at the pedestrian crossing and use the wider pavement on the right.

On the right, just after the travel agency, number 12 was once Lloyd's Bank; further on, Barley Mow on the left was once a pub. We pass the Free Church on the right and then two houses that once functioned as a school.

A little further on, there is a good view through the Memorial Gardens to St John's parish church. We turn right, through the gates, and pass the war memorial. One of the seats beside the memorial was donated by the Hundred Parishes Society in 2017.

Turn left immediately before the church and soon reach the church porch. If open, you are encouraged to visit, but if boots are muddy please remove them or cover them.

The church was built in the late 1800s, the first complete church designed by William Douglas Caroe, who became a well-known church architect. It soon became the parish church, superseding St Mary's which lies beyond the main centre of population.



Continue past the church porch and soon reach St John's Road where we turn right. Despite signs to the contrary, this is not a private road, merely one that is unadopted. We soon pass Magna Carta Primary Academy on the right. The school's name was chosen because the Magna Carta was imposed on King John in 1215 AD by barons including Stansted's lord of the manor, Richard Montfichet.

We take the second road on the right, Brewery Lane, whose name reflects the fact that a brewery once stood to the right of the lane near the bottom of the hill. Beware of the 'sleeping policemen' which are designed to slow any traffic that dares to use this non-private road.

Brewery Lane ends at a junction with High Lane, the B1351. Cross with care to the pavement and turn left, heading uphill. Keep to the pavement on the right.

After a short climb, pass Croft House and The Barn, then turn right by crossing a stile onto a footpath. The path descends beside woodland on the left. In 2022, the local community was opposing a proposal to dig up the wood and build a residential estate.

After a short descent, the path emerges onto Gall End Lane, opposite the entrance to North End House which dates from the 17th century and was once Stansted's workhouse. We cross a small footbridge over a ditch and turn left onto a path, keeping the former workhouse on our right.

We follow this path for some distance, never far away from the ditch on our left. The ditch is properly known as Ugley Brook. Sometimes it is dry but it can become a raging torrent; in 2014 it flooded Lower Street in the centre of Stansted village. The footpath passes through trees, where it can be muddy, and then alongside a field on the right, always keeping the brook on the left.

Follow the field edge round to the right but, after only 50 yards and before climbing, we turn left onto a footpath through woodland. The land to the right is the Aubrey Buxton Nature Reserve, managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust. The path keeps left and climbs beside pine trees and then three mature beech trees. Keep straight ahead, with the valley now below on the left. Ahead and over to the left, there is a roundabout and 21st-century residential development, Walpole Meadows. A windmill once stood there at the top of the hill.

After a while, the footpath passes a small commercial development, Alsa Business Park, on the right just before reaching a lane. Here, we turn right onto Alsa Street.

The lane climbs gently for a quarter of a mile, passing 17th-century timber-framed and weather-boarded barns on the left and then red-brick Alsa Lodge.

Soon, we pass Norman House on the right, once the home of Aubrey Buxton (1918 – 2009). He was a director of Anglia Television for 30 years and was probably best known for creating the nature series *Survival* which was broadcast for nearly 40 years. He was a co-founder of World Wildlife Fund in 1961 and in 1978 was granted a life peerage as Baron Buxton of Alsa. Beyond the house is the Aubrey Buxton Nature Reserve which he donated to the Essex Wildlife Trust. [Aubrey Buxton was not directly related to Edward North Buxton who bought Hatfield Forest in order to give it to the National Trust.] Norman House is now divided into several apartments. Note the howitzer, probably from the Second World War and primed to discourage intruders.

On the left, Norman Hall Cottage dates from the 17th century, with exposed timbers and a jettied upper storey.

Soon, the lane turns left and becomes Snakes Lane, but we go straight ahead along the public bridleway, passing a puddingstone at the corner. A puddingstone is a conglomerate of many small, rounded and colourful pebbles that appear to have been cemented together. They were formed around 50 million years ago and were deposited in this area by a retreating glacier, possibly only 10,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age.

After a while, on the right, there is a small car park at the main entrance to the Aubrey Buxton Nature Reserve.

We pass Keepers Cottage on the left, just at the start of Alsa Wood which we will pass beside or through for the next half mile.

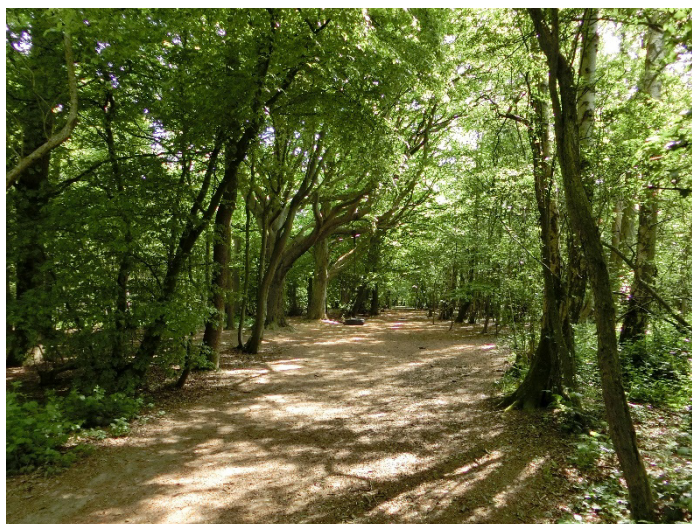
Soon afterwards, the path forks. We keep to the left, beside Alsa Wood on the left.

The path passes Alsa Wood Cottage and then rises to cross a footbridge over the M11 motorway. The motorway bisects Alsa Wood. On the far side of the bridge, in 2022, developers were starting to work on another housing development on the right, beside the motorway. Its provisional name is Millers View – perhaps a corruption of M11's View.

We keep straight ahead through the wood along the wide main path, pictured here.

Approaching the far edge of the wood, we bear right, opposite a pond on the left, to leave the wood.

We turn right along a pavement for 50 yards and, just after house number 15 on the right, we cross the road with care and turn left onto a footpath through woodland.



Keep straight ahead, with housing on the left, and in about 100 yards reach a residential road where we turn right. We are now in the village of Elsenham (at the end of Leigh Drive).

Soon, take the first turning on the left along another residential road. Ignore a turning on the right.

When the road comes to an end, we turn right along a short alleyway to meet a main road. This is the B1051, Stansted Road. Opposite, Gilbey Cottages are named after Sir Walter Gilbey (1831-1914) who was a founder of a major wine and spirits company and the Elsenham Jam company and lived at nearby Elsenham Hall. We should cross the B1051 with care and turn left on the pavement.

Soon, shortly before the shops, we turn right into Robin Hood Road, noting the gold-painted pillar box opposite, outside the Post Office. It was painted gold in 2012 to celebrate the gold medal won at the London Olympics by Elsenham equestrian Ben Maher (he also won gold at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics). We follow Robin Hood Road downhill.



Just after crossing the entrance to Mill Close on the right, the building on the left with tall chimneys – Fuller's Court - was once the Robin Hood pub, after which the road is named. It served as a pub for about 150 years before closing in 1988. The location of a pub just here is explained by the fact that this was once the main road between Elsenham and Stansted, a road which followed Stansted Brook. When the London – Cambridge railway was constructed in the 1840s, roughly following the original road route, the road was superseded by the present B1051 which we crossed just before the gold pillar box.

We continue down Robin Hood Road, passing a group of thatched dwellings called Wells Cottages. The central property, two-storey and thatched, dates from the 17th century and those on each side from the 18th or 19th. We continue ahead, past Rush Lane on the right.

At the bottom of the hill, we reach Fullers End Footpath Crossing over the main London to Cambridge railway line.

Elsenham's station was originally located here, but trains pulling away and heading left, uphill towards the north, would struggle to get going, so the station was relocated to its present site, half a mile north from here.

Use the crossing with great care and continue straight ahead, but only for a very short distance before turning left.

[Before leaving the lane, you may like to walk a little further up the hill to see some pretty cottages on the right, before returning to turn right onto the footpath].

Just 20 yards beyond the crossing, we turn left onto a footpath between houses. Initially, this appears to be the entrance to Woodview, but we soon go straight ahead through a gate on the left and pass beside a wall on the left.

We soon pass through a second gate and then cross a small field.

Now, we pass through a wooden gate, turn right and almost immediately left.

We should keep to the left of the field, beside wooden fencing and walking parallel with a ditch down to the right – it is actually Stansted Brook.

We pass through a kissing gate (it was rather stiff in 2022) and keep straight ahead across the next field.

We keep to the right of high, temporary fencing.

Cross a stile and follow the footpath for a short distance with a tall overgrown hedge on the right. This path soon reaches a road. Here, we turn left, heading uphill towards a road junction – with the B1051.

Shortly before the junction, we pass Tinkers Cottage on the left, thatched and dating from the 17th or 18th century.



All the buildings beside the road junction date from the 18th century, including Camellia Cottage on the left and the Crown public house, the last opportunity for refreshment before we reach Elsenham Station.

We turn left into the High Street.

After 100 yards, we should use the pedestrian crossing to cross the High Street, continuing on the far side. We soon pass the Gilbey Memorial, pictured here. This grand canopy was erected over a water pump in 1896 by Sir Walter Gilbey in memory of his wife. Gilbey (1831-1914) was a successful businessman and also a breeder of shire horses. He lived at nearby Elsenham Hall.



Sir Walter had his own carriage on the train to London. He would be driven to Elsenham Station by horse and buggy from Elsenham Hall, using the private back road, now called Park Road, which turns off High Street beside the memorial. Gilbey was a principal promoter of the railway branch line which was opened in 1913 between Elsenham and Thaxted. The line closed after 40 years.

We continue along High Street, crossing over the main railway line and passing the entrance to the cemetery on the right. You might take a second look at the notice above the cemetery entrance.

A little further along, we turn right beside the green and Elsenham's war memorial, into Station Road.

Continue along Station Road for 600 yards to Elsenham Station.

The two platforms are separated by both a road and a level crossing. The northbound line, towards Cambridge, is on this side of the railway line, but you must go straight ahead, crossing the road with care, to reach the platform.

For the London – bound platform, do not cross the road, but turn right, with care, over the level crossing (or cross the railway using the very high footbridge) and turn right onto the platform. The waiting room on the London-bound platform dates from soon after this line was opened in the 1840s, meriting its status as a listed building.

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 10 May 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk where you will find further walks, further information about Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham and an introduction to Sir Walter Gilbey.

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.

