



# The Hundred Parishes

## Walks between railway stations – number 14

### Great Chesterford to Whittlesford – 5 miles (8 kilometres)

*This walk is quite flat, mostly along lanes or good paths, mostly in Cambridgeshire in the valley of the River Cam. It starts in Essex on the outskirts of Great Chesterford and finishes just outside the Hundred Parishes at Whittlesford Station. In between, the walk passes through three attractive Cambridgeshire villages: Ickleton, Hinxtton and Duxford. Each village has one or more opportunities for refreshment, but please check opening days and times before relying on one. The route passes no fewer than six churches or chapels.*

*A few short stretches of the route may be muddy at times, so if you hope to stop somewhere for refreshment or look inside a church, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or don boot covers or plastic bags. There are occasional seats and a single, low stile.*

*Ickleton and Duxford are explored more thoroughly in two short walks: number 173 of just over a mile around Ickleton and number 129 which covers nearly two miles around Duxford.*

**Start:** Great Chesterford Station (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference TL504424, postcode CB10 1PG).

**Finish:** Whittlesford Station (TL485472, Postcode CB22 4WL).

There is very limited parking at Great Chesterford, more at Whittlesford.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.

A map of the route appears at the end of the route 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 Great Chesterford Station from the London-bound platform (which also has a ticket machine and booking office). The station building was erected around 1845 when this railway line was opened. Pass through the car park and bear left along the station approach road. Keep left on the pavement at the junction with London Road, the B1383. Immediately opposite, on the right, is a former mill, now converted into apartments.

Very soon we turn left, signposted to Ickleton. After Icen House, we fork left, slightly uphill. With great caution, cross the rail track at a level crossing.

Our road soon rejoins the main carriageway, just as we leave Essex and enter Cambridgeshire. Here, we also leave Great Chesterford and enter the parish of Ickleton. As soon as it is safe, cross the road and continue on the pavement on the right.

We pass beneath the two sliproads that link the A11 (which lies ahead, to the North) and the M11 motorway, over to our left. Just afterwards, we cross the entrance on the right to Riverside Café, the first of several dining opportunities along this route.

About 100 yards after the entrance to the café, we have woodland on our right and an open field on our left, partly hidden by a thin hedgerow. The field is protected as a Scheduled Monument because it is believed to be the site of a Roman villa, no doubt associated with the significant Roman settlement that is now partly beneath Great Chesterford village, over to our right and just beyond the motorway.

As we approach the village of Ickleton, we should keep to the right, where there is generally a pavement. A speed limit of 20mph applies right through the village.

The road, which is called Frogge Street, squeezes between 16th-century Frogge Hall on the right and 18th-century Frogge Cottage on the left.



After Chapel House on the right, we get a view across the field of Ickleton's parish church.

A little further along, we pass 500-year-old Hovells, a timber-framed building that was once a farmhouse and believed to be named after a former owner. It is shown here.

On the right, the bungalows bearing the inscription "G & G Bowen 1927" were built as almshouses. Soon after the bungalows, we turn right into Church Street, passing the village shop on the left.

When the pavement runs out, when safe, we should cross to the left and continue ahead. We soon come to Gurner House which dates from around 1500 AD and has been updated. The two sets of steps perhaps date back to when the property was once divided into two.

Next on the left we come to Mowbrays, prominent in front of the church and dating from the 15th century. It probably took its name from the surname of early Dukes of Norfolk who once owned the property.

Behind Mowbrays, we can see the church spire with its external bell. This is a "sanctus bell" which traditionally was rung during a Catholic mass to tell those outside that an important element of the service had been reached. Today, this bell chimes the hours. It is unusual to find a sanctus bell on an Anglican church, yet we will pass another in about a mile.

Opposite Mowbrays, the small green is home to a number of interesting features including Ickleton's village sign, the war memorial and a horse chestnut tree that was planted in 1919 to mark the end of the First World War.

Just past Mowbrays, we will turn left into the churchyard, perhaps pausing on the seat outside to read the next few paragraphs of introduction.

The church has a Grade I listing and most certainly merits a visit. If boots are muddy, please remove them or cover them with boot covers or plastic bags. Inside, it should be possible to purchase a copy of the booklet "Welcome to Ickleton" which goes into some detail about the church, as well as the rest of Ickleton.

The Church of St Mary Magdalene dates from around 1100 AD and its early Norman interior was commended by the renowned architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner as having few equals in England. Pevsner was writing in 1954, before an arsonist set fire to the church in 1979. During subsequent restoration work, builders discovered extensive wall paintings that had been hidden beneath whitewash. The whitewash had probably been applied to hide them from either Henry VIII's vandals or Oliver Cromwell's. The extensive range of wall paintings is believed to date from the 12th century, while the "Doom" painting (depicting the day of judgement) above the chancel arch is considered to be from the 14th century.

There are many other fascinating elements inside the church, not least the 14th-century rood screen, restored wood carvings on medieval pews, including St Michael weighing souls, and the extensive array of kneelers that were embroidered in the 1960s to record notable people, places and events in the history of Ickleton.

From the church porch, we retrace our steps, through the gate to Church Street. Looking ahead, the house on the far side of the green and to the left of the war memorial is 17th-century Wellington House. It was once The Duke of Wellington, one of at least six public houses that served the village in the 20th century.

To the left of the green is 18th-century Mill House Cottage. Beyond it, out of sight, there was once a water mill beside the River Cam. The last miller was killed in 1927 when his clothing became caught in the mill machinery. In the Domesday Book of 1086, it was recorded that Ickleton had two water mills.

Now, we turn left on the pavement alongside the churchyard wall and with a good view of the church.

After turning the corner, we come to 15th-century Norman Hall on the right. The wisteria that covers the front wall is a picture when in bloom. The building was used as a hospital during World War I.

We continue ahead past Norman Hall. Flint walls are very much in evidence in this area. The one on our right becomes the wall of Ickleton Social Club. The club stands on the corner of Mill Lane. Our route does not go down Mill Lane which ends at a pedestrian crossing over the railway line.

We continue along Church Street, passing a row of listed buildings on the right. Red-brick Druid Cottage dates from around 1800 AD. This is followed immediately by Nook and Cranny Cottage which started life in the 15th century as an open hall house. Appearances can be deceptive! A chimney stack was installed in the 16th century and in the 19th century the building was divided into two dwellings. It now seems to be one again.

Next on the right, number 3 is the first of a pair of early 19th-century cottages that stand on the corner, faced in flint and gault brick. This yellowish brick became popular in the 18th and 19th centuries and many examples are to be found around Ickleton.



We should keep to the pavement on the left, crossing the entrance to Butcher's Hill and continuing along Brookhampton Street. When the footpath ends and the road becomes a lane, we should cross to the right, facing any oncoming traffic.



Over to the left, about half a mile away, there is a former windmill, a tower mill that was converted to a house around 1925 and its red bricks covered in plaster.

We pass Ickleton Cemetery on the left with its flint chapel, built in 1883.

Follow the lane round to the right and, with care, cross the railway line level crossing. The road crosses the River Cam and here we pass from Ickleton into the parish of Hinxton.

The river flows from right to left, heading north towards Cambridge where it joins the River Great Ouse and flows into the North Sea at The Wash.

About 50 yards later, we turn right through a gate (immediately opposite a footbridge over the river on the left side of the lane). Our route bears left, but you may like to divert from the 'official route' to take the path that goes right - this path heads in a southerly direction for a few hundred yards, passing through a wetland nature reserve within the grounds of the Genome Centre. If you do choose to divert, simply retrace along the path to rejoin the 'official route' at the next paragraph.

Having left the road through the gate, we follow the path round to the left, initially with a small copse on the left, over a wooden footbridge with handrails, and then along a gravel path that runs parallel with the road. To the right, we can see modern buildings of the Wellcome Trust Genome Campus. This is where a third of the human genome was sequenced over a period of years up to 2000 AD. The identification of all human genes was a major breakthrough in medical science. The site now employs around 2,000 people, mostly engaged in medical research.

We follow this permissive path alongside the lane for about 300 yards. When it rejoins the lane, we continue ahead, keeping to the right. Now, to the right, we may be able to see the 18th-century red-brick Hinxton Hall, the nucleus of what is now the Genome Campus.

After a bend to the right, when safe, cross the road to the pavement on the left.

We soon turn left, passing the village sign on the corner on our left, into Hinxton High Street.

We pass the 17th-century Red Lion Inn on the right and then The Manor House on the left, standing sideways on to the street. It is understood to have started life as a guildhall in the 15th century and then been converted to a manor house around 1580 AD. The next house on the left also dates from the 15th or 16th century. Now, it is called The Old School House, presumably with reference to the building behind which does look like an old school.

Soon, we cross to the right and turn right into Church Green, passing between the old village pump on the right and Hinxton's war memorial on the left.



Church Green soon leads to the parish church of St Mary and St John the Evangelist which dates from around 1200 AD. Like Ickleton, this parish church also has a sanctus bell on the outside of the spire – pictured here. The church clock dates from around 1700AD but was extensively renovated in 1809 when a new face was fitted; its colouring, with black numerals and hands against a white face, is quite unusual. The pendulum that drives the clock has weights that are simple blocks of chalk, a readily-available local commodity.



This is another church that merits a visit, but please remove or cover boots if they are muddy. Entry is through a 14th-century porch and a wooden door that may date from that time.

From the church, retrace to the war memorial and turn right beside thatched, 17th-century Church Green Cottage, back into the High Street. When safe, cross the High Street and continue northwards, passing a variety of houses that have survived since the 17th century.

Pass Hunts Lane on the right before turning left into Mill Lane. The house opposite the junction with Mill Lane, William House, was once the King William IV pub. We have been walking along Hinxton High Street which was presumably a busy thoroughfare once upon a time. What appears to be a bypass, now called the A1301, runs parallel with the High Street, about 200 yards to the East, but this is not a new bypass: it was in use as early as the 17th century.

Having turned left into Mill Lane, continue ahead until the lane turns sharp right. Just before the corner, we pass 16th-century Lordship Farm on our left. Then, at the corner, we should keep straight ahead, following the footpath through the gate of Miller's Cottage and keeping to the right. The path soon reaches Hinxton watermill (shown here). The mill straddles the River Cam and dates from the 17th century.



[see [www.cambridgeppf.org/hinxton-watermill.shtml](http://www.cambridgeppf.org/hinxton-watermill.shtml) for more information and opening times]

Retrace along the footpath to rejoin Mill Lane at the sharp bend. Turn left.

Soon, at the junction, cross the road to the pavement and turn left, heading towards the ford. This is Duxford Road and the route follows it for some distance. Avoid the ford by using the footbridge to cross the river which is called both the Cam and the Granta. Keep to the road and, with care, use the level crossing to cross the main London to Cambridge railway line.

In another 200 yards, we cross another railway track. This track has not been used for many years but at one time would have brought rail tankers into sidings at what was then a CIBA-Geigy chemical works, perhaps most famously known for manufacturing Araldite adhesive.

Follow the lane past industrial premises on the left, turning left and then right to bring us into the village of Duxford.

Continue along the main road, using pavement where possible and passing residential turnings on the right and left. Keep straight on to the small green with Duxford's war memorial.



Here, there are two possible distractions, to left and right. Just round the corner to the left, Graystones café offers refreshment on certain days (and a further 200 yards up this road is the Plough inn). Opposite the green on the right is St Peter's Church, the first of two Grade-I listed Norman churches in Duxford.

Retrace to the green with its war memorial, seat and 19th-century water pump and then continue northwards along Chapel Street with St Peter's on the right.

When the road bears right, turn left beside a tiny traffic island into Green Street.

After about 50 yards, we pass large wooden gates on the left. Just behind them is the Manor House, dating from the late 15th century. Unless the gates happen to be open, there is a limited view from the road of its exposed beams, so here is a photo.

Just as we reach a bend to the right, we are amongst properties from the 17th century: The Corner House on our right, and The Old House and Old House Cottage on our left. After turning right, we should take the diagonal path across the green, passing beside a 19th-century cast-iron water pump and beneath spreading lime trees, heading towards the church.



The path soon rejoins Green Street. Continue along it for a few yards. Just before reaching the church, the building on the left is College Farmhouse, number 11. It is believed to have been built around 1500 AD as a guildhall. Around 1560 AD it was converted into a farmhouse and probably at that time connected to the 16th-century barn at the rear. The property was owned by Caius College, Cambridge for around 200 years until 1825.

Now, go through the gateway or over the low stile into the churchyard of Duxford's second Norman church, 12th-century St John's.

St John's is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust and is usually open, meriting a visit, particularly to view the wall paintings that are thought to be almost as old as the church.

The existence of two ancient parish churches (each with a Grade I listing) within one small present-day parish is explained by the ancient history of Duxford. The village lies immediately west of the River Cam. An ancient route between Norfolk and Wiltshire, the Icknield Way, came through here. The Icknield Way was not always a single path and often had several alternative routes. That was the situation here: there were at least two points where travellers could ford the river. Settlements grew up beside these two routes and each built a church, albeit only 300 yards apart.

On leaving St John's, retrace through the gateway and turn sharp left to continue along Green Street beside the churchyard wall. Robynet House, on the right, dates from the 16th century.

At the road junction, cross when safe and turn right along the pavement of St John's Street. Pass a cemetery on the left and then cross the entrance to Greenacres. On the left, we pass 16th-century Laceys Farm with a jettied upper storey.

We soon reach the junction with Moorfield Road, the northern continuation of Chapel Street that we were on earlier. Should you require refreshment, turn right and you will soon reach the John Barleycorn pub. Otherwise, turn left.

Moorfield Road soon leaves the village of Duxford. With care, cross to the pathway on the right side of the road.

On leaving the village, the giant hangars of the Imperial War Museum at Duxford Airfield come into view on the left, albeit about a mile away. [for further information, see [www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford](http://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford) ]

After passing commercial premises on both sides of the road, the pathway reaches the very busy A505 dual carriageway, which must be crossed with great care. The safest option is probably to cross to the triangular refuge and then cross each carriageway in turn, following the signposted cycle route towards Whittlesford and Cambridge. By crossing the A505, we have left Duxford and the Hundred Parishes and are now in the parish of Whittlesford.

On the far side of the dual carriageway, continue ahead, cross Old Boundary Close and soon meet the main road (still called Moorfield Road). Cross this with care and continue uphill on the pathway on the right side.

At a cross roads, turn right into Station Road West. When safe, cross this road and continue along the pavement on the left to Whittlesford Station.

This approach comes into the station on the northbound platform, for trains heading towards Cambridge. The booking office is on this side. For southbound trains, towards Great Chesterford and London, cross the footbridge. Not all trains stop at all stations so, before boarding one, please check that it is scheduled to stop at your intended destination.

If you have to wait for a train, the following paragraphs may be of interest.



Just beyond the London-bound side of the station is the 16th-century Red Lion Hotel and then the medieval Duxford Chapel, pictured here. The chapel was built as part of a hospital in the 13th century and is now in the care of English Heritage.



The chapel and the Red Lion were within the parish of Duxford until 2010 when the parish boundary was redrawn, reassigning them to Whittlesford.

This route description, last updated 05 December 2022, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) where you can find other walks and read more about Ickleton, Hinxton and Duxford.

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

The route diagram on the next page was prepared by Glyn Kuhn for the Hundred Parishes Society.



