



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 140

Shalford and Wethersfield - 5.4 miles (9 kms)

*This route explores the more inhabited areas of the rural parish of Shalford, straying occasionally into the parish of Wethersfield. About half of the route is along quiet lanes, about a quarter on the fairly quiet B1053 road and another quarter on footpaths. It is slightly hilly and the footpath section passes over several stiles. Shalford village has a pub and there is a general store opposite the start. **In July 2025, part of the route was blocked so the description offers a choice of footpaths at the foot of page 3. We will remove this warning when we learn that the problem has been resolved. If you wish to comment, please email hundredparishes@btinternet.com.***

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the small car park beside Shalford Village Hall and playing fields at Church End, close to the road junction and opposite the village shop.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL725282 - Postcode: CM7 5FB (which covers a large area) –
What3words: complies.hedgehog.palace
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Shalford's village hall was built in 1925 on land given by Major Guy Gilbey Gold (1877-1968) of Abbot's Hall, the estate that lies beyond the playing field. The clock tower was added as a memorial to Major Gold's son who was killed in the Second World War.

Leave the car park through the car exit and, when safe, cross the road towards Shalford Village Store. Turn right on the pavement. Stay on the pavement and follow the road round to the left, signposted towards Shalford. On the right is Shalford's village sign, featuring the coat of arms of Humphrey de Northwood, the parish's first lord of the manor in the early 14th century.

We have just joined the B1053 which has come from Braintree and is heading towards Finchingfield.

When the pavement ends, and when safe, cross the road to continue along the pavement on the right, passing a variety of houses.

When the houses end, the road starts to descend and Shalford parish church briefly comes into view. We cross Water Hall Lane on the right and pass Billericay & District Angling Club's private fishery.

The pavement on our side ends just as we reach a 30mph speed limit sign. Cross the road with care and continue along the pavement on the left on what is now called The Street.

Soon, we pass the entrance on the right to the church. We will return shortly, after a brief exploration of Shalford village.

On the left we pass Pages, dating from around 1590 AD but updated in the 20th century. Soon we pass Stores Cottages which retain their shopfronts. They were built in the 18th century as two attached houses, later functioned as a store and were later divided into four cottages.

Cross the entrance to Barryfields and soon reach thatched Keepers Cottage, dating from the 17th century or earlier. We are going to turn here so, when safe, cross the road and retrace past The George public house, built as a private house in the 16th century or even earlier.

Continue past Penthouse on the left and after a short climb turn left onto the driveway to the church.

Immediately on the right is a memorial to the crew of an American 'Flying Fortress' bomber that crashed in Shalford in fields behind the church in 1944. The plane was fully laden with bombs and had taken off from Ridgewell airfield about 10 miles to the north. Nine members of the crew made safe parachute landings but the tenth was killed. The explosion when the plane crashed weakened the walls of Shalford Hall, leading to its collapse and demolition in 1958. It stood to the right of the church.

Continue down the driveway and pass through the lychgate to the parish church, dedicated to St Andrew. This Grade I-listed building is mostly from the 14th century. If the church is open, you are encouraged to visit, but please remove your boots if they are muddy. Inside you will find examples of straw plaiting, a forgotten craft that flourished in this area in the 19th-century.

A brass war memorial inside the church includes the name of Eric Ravilious. Born in Sussex, he moved to nearby Great Bardfield and became one of the "Bardfield Artists" who were so influential in art and design before and after World War II. One of his woodcuts has been adopted as the logo of The Hundred Parishes Society. During the war he was an official war artist, sketching and painting war scenes. He died on active service when the plane in which he was travelling was lost at sea. We will see his final home later on this walk.

Leaving the church porch, turn right and right again beside the church and descend through the churchyard to just before a brook (opposite a large oak tree on the other side of the brook). Ignore a gate and footpath over to the left and turn right onto a grassy footpath, keeping the brook on the left. Leave the churchyard, passing the entrance on the right to more lakes used by Billericay and District Angling Club

Follow this narrow footpath, with hedgerow and ditch on the left and fence and lakes on the right. At the end of the lakes, turn right, keeping the fence, hedgerow and lake on the right. We now have the River Pant on our left.

Ahead and to the right is a tall red-brick garden wall of the former Shalford Hall. After about 50 yards, turn left to cross the River Pant on a concrete bridge with metal handrails. We have now left Shalford and will be in the parish of Wethersfield for the next half mile.

Go straight across a narrow field and then up a short, steep climb of wooden steps into a larger field. Go straight ahead on a well-walked cross-field grass path and then keep ahead with a fence on the right.

After another 40 yards, near the end of this field, turn right and cross a stile into another field which often has horses. Turn left and keep to the left side of the field. After about 130 yards, leave the field by going left, either through the gate or over the stile. Continue ahead, with a fence on the right, along a track that is well used by horses.

We are coming into the Wethersfield hamlet of Rotten End. Pass a barn on the left, go through a small gate, cross a courtyard and then through another gate. Go along a concrete drive with the pink 16th-century Rotten End Farmhouse over to the left. Soon emerge onto Water Hall Lane.

Turn right onto the lane, immediately passing 16th-century Priest House on the right. Despite its name, its original purpose is not known.

After about 200 yards, the lane turns right, at the same time crossing the River Pant. Should the road be flooded, there is a much higher footbridge immediately to the right.

Almost immediately after the bend, turn left onto Footpath number 22, a wide field-edge path with the Pant on the left. We have now crossed back into Shalford, with Wethersfield on the left side of the river. Continue beside the river and its accompanying willow trees for a quarter of a mile.

Ahead in the distance is the former home of Eric Ravilious. The 16th-century timber-framed house has its timbers on show. The building has long been known as Iron Bridge Farm but today is apparently called Ewen Bridge Farmhouse

At the end of the field, climb a stile on the left and turn right. Immediately, we need to turn left onto a wooden footbridge with handrails to cross high over the River Pant – but if you would like a closer look at Iron Bridge Farm, stay on this side of the river and keep straight ahead on the footpath for a hundred yards or so and then return to cross over the footbridge. [There is another crossing just a few yards ahead and down to the left, a concrete bridge just above the water.]

The high, metal footbridge is shown on maps as Iron Bridge. The name appears to be a corruption of *Ewen Bridge* or bridge for ewes.

At the far side of the footbridge, keep straight ahead on rough ground between trees and soon emerge into a field.

Now, we are going to describe two alternative routes. In 2025, each had issues which have been reported to Essex County Council Highways. We will continue to describe the more interesting option (albeit blocked by brambles, but hopefully only temporarily) (this is as plotted on the route diagram), starting from “**Option A**” below. We will then describe the alternative from the marker “**Option B**” in the indented paragraphs, before continuing from either option at the point marked “**Continuation**” on page 4.

“Option A” Soon, ignore a stile and gateway on the right and continue ahead on a grassy, rather uneven, field-edge path. Keep to the right of the field, following the wire fence as it meanders, passing beside a line of fairly young oak trees.

When the field ends, look back the way we have come to see Iron Bridge Farm.. We follow the fence sharp right, leaving the field and the oak trees.

Having turned right, the path gets narrower and uneven (and in July 2025 impassable because of unrestrained brambles). Take care as the grassy path has been subjected to burrowing, perhaps by rabbits.

Cross a stile and soon pass beside a gate to come into a tiny hamlet known as Lone’s Hole. There are just three cottages here, the first two being thatched and dating from the 18th century. Continue along their drive, passing through a wooden gate onto a lane. If you have got this far, please skip past the indented paragraphs and continue at the point marked **“Continuation”**.

“Option B” Soon, turn right through the stile or gateway on the right to join another public footpath through a field. Go straight ahead with wire fence and woodland on the right.

After a while, there is a view of Iron Bridge Farm over to the right. Soon afterwards, go through a gateway into a new field. Keep to the right of the field, still with woodland on the right.

Pass a pond on the left (probably dry in summer) and soon go straight ahead through trees and over a stile.

Keep straight ahead, through a garden, past a seat on the right and then beside the River Pant on the right.

Leave the garden on a wooden footbridge with wooden handrails, crossing a stream, and then go left, away from the river and with wire fence on the right.

In only 20 yards, cross a stile into a field and turn half left, keeping houses to the left, to go diagonally across the field to exit by a gate or stile beneath a walnut tree. Immediately turn right onto a lane.

“Continuation”.

Follow the lane for a short distance until it reaches a road. Here, we turn right. The parish boundary between Shalford and Wethersfield follows a tortuous route in this area and for the next 300 yards we will be in Wethersfield.

Descend for a short distance and soon approach the tall Codham Mill. It is suggested that before the building we cross to walk on the left around the sharp bend. We pass Codham Mill and, just around the corner, we should pause to view the front of the building.

The water mill and its adjoining mill house, on the right, date from the 18th century. The mill operated until the 20th century. It retains an exceptional amount of its original workings. It was sadly neglected for many years but has now been renovated and converted into a residential property.

Immediately after Cobham Mill, we cross the mill race that once powered the mill and in another 100 yards we cross the main stream of the River Pant. This stretch of road sometimes floods, so there is a higher footbridge on the left in case of need. At this point we leave Wethersfield and return to the parish of Shalford for the remainder of our walk.

The lane climbs gently and soon reaches a junction with the B1053. To the right stands a house called Ancells. Not long ago it was called *Ancells in the Hole*. It is recorded on Ordnance Survey maps as Tan Office Farm. This large house dates from the 16th century and retains several ancient features including an internal wall painting of a lady in Elizabethan costume.

We turn left here, signposted towards Braintree, and almost immediately fork left onto a grass field-edge path. Pause and look back at ancient Ancells.

The field-edge path runs beside the road, generally separated from it by a hedge. We stay on this path for a quarter of a mile, initially gently uphill. After a while, across the valley to our left, in Wethersfield parish, we can see Great Codham Hall, a fine mansion dating from the 14th century. Standing in front of it is an 18th-century red-brick dovecot.

On our right, in Shalford, we occasionally get a glimpse of Abbot's Hall, built in the 19th century of cream-coloured gault brick. This is another grand residence, complete with ballroom!

At the bottom end of the field, bear right to the road and, when safe, cross to the other side and continue down the hill. Very soon turn right, opposite Cut Hedge Cottage on our left, a thatched 17th-century house. We are now in Water Lane and will continue along it for three-quarters of a mile, climbing gently.

We occasionally pass attractive cottages, including Sleepy Hollow which was built originally around 1570 AD.

Ignore an entrance on the right to Killhogs Farm.

In due course, take the turning on the right into Jasper's Green, a small hamlet of Shalford parish.

In about 300 yards we reach a road junction. Immediately opposite is Forge Cottage. To our right, just before the junction, is appropriately-named The Old Place, dating from about 1600 AD.

Turn right and pass more houses with character. Further along on the right, we pass thatched April Cottage which dates from the 16th century or earlier.

Turn right at the next junction, just before reaching another hamlet, Shalford Green. We are now in Garretts Lane and we later pass Garretts on the right - with tall chimneys and dating from around 1600. Continue past Parsonage Farm on the right and then ignore the lane on the left.

At the T junction, turn right onto a slightly busier road, passing Hubbard's Farm on the left.

Fox House, on the right, stands on the site of The Fox, a Ridley's pub that was demolished in the 1990s. Just beyond it are Fox Cottages.

We come into the hamlet of Church End. When safe, cross to the pavement on the left.

We pass several attractive thatched cottages on the right, generally from the 18th century, and then Shalford Primary School on the left, built in 1874.

Soon afterwards, there is a stretch of narrow road with no pavement. On the right, Coachman's Cottage has a London Assurance fire mark, provided by its one-time insurer.

We soon reach the green and playing field on the right. Turn right through the gateway and left along the pathway to the car park where we started this walk.

This route description, last updated 24 August 2025, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk where you can read more about Shalford and Wethersfield and download many more walk routes.

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.

