



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 153

Castle Camps – 2.8 miles (4 kms)

This walk is entirely in the parish of Castle Camps, in the extreme south-east corner of Cambridgeshire. The route is a mixture of lanes and footpaths. Some paths may be muddy. There are no stiles. There is nowhere en route to purchase refreshment. The route passes the parish church; if you would like to visit, please be prepared to remove muddy boots or to put on boot covers or plastic bags. The route passes several seats. Some of this route is repeated in Walk number 154 which covers a distance of 6.7 miles.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes at a small car park for the village hall and recreation ground at the southern end of Castle Camps village. The narrow entrance to the car park is on the north side of Park Lane, around 30 yards east of the village sign and war memorial which stand at the corner of Park Lane and High Street.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL633432 - Postcode: CB21 4SS.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 210.

A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

From the parking area, leave by the only car entrance onto Park Lane and turn right. Very soon, when safe, cross the road and turn left onto the public footpath signposted to Castle Camps Church. Immediately on our right, this 17th-century house was once an inn.

In the distance we can see a tall communications mast. This stands a mile away and is about 300 feet tall on a plateau some 400 feet (126 metres) above sea level.

After passing between houses, go through a gateway into a field and continue ahead on a well-defined cross-field path towards the mast. Over to the right, we can see Castle Camps parish church.

At the far side of the field, cross a ditch and turn right on a footpath with hedgerow and ditch on our right. After a while, we come into another field and continue ahead.

At the end of this field, we bear slightly left across a narrow strip of land [apparently being turned into a roadway or track in May 2021] to soon continue with hedgerow on our left and heading towards the church tower in the distance.

For a while, the path is lined with hedges and then crosses a ditch on a footbridge with wooden handrails. When the path comes out into the open, continue ahead on a raised cross-field path.

At the end of the field, pass through a kissing gate into a field which is part of a fairly large site of a former medieval village. An extensive area is protected as a Scheduled Monument to prevent disturbance of possible remains from that ancient period of habitation. The land is uneven, suggesting that there may be ruins or earthworks beneath the surface.

Keep straight ahead, passing a boggy area on the left, and at the end of the field turn left through a kissing gate. The path soon reaches the approach road to the church and on our left is an interpretation panel.

Turn left onto the lane. We will venture just a little way beyond the church before returning to the churchyard. The lane climbs and turns right and then left.

Now on our left, partly out of sight, is Castle Farm, built in 1730 AD. This stands on the motte (or mound) on which Camps Castle once stood. The castle which gave the parish its name was built here by Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford, in the 11th century. At one time, the castle grounds extended to about 8 acres. The whole site, around Castle Farm and the church, is protected as a Scheduled Monument, adjacent to the protected site of the medieval village.

Turn and retrace a short distance but, just before the road turns right, bear left across the grass verge and pass through a gate to enter the churchyard of All Saints Church.

The church's origins go back to the 13th century, with most of the building dating from the 15th century and benefitting from much restoration in the 19th. If the church is open, do please visit, but first cover or remove dirty boots. The church is quite substantial and seems disproportionately large relative to Castle Camps' present population (684 in 2011).

Leave the church and turn right out of the porch. Just beyond the end of the church is the grave (with metal railings) of a former rector, John Bode, who wrote the hymn 'O Jesus I have promised' in the 1860s.

Continue clockwise around the church and exit to the roadway. Turn left along the lane.

In about 100 yards, the lane reaches a road, Church Lane, where we turn right. Stay on the right, facing any oncoming traffic.

After a quarter mile, we reach Millennium Wood on our left. Continue along the lane for another hundred yards to reach the entrance to this 12 acre Woodland Trust site. The interpretation panel beside the entrance explains that this young wood of native trees and shrubs was planted in 1999 with the help of local people. You may like to explore the footpaths around the wood which has two seats.

Leave the wood where we entered, turning left to continue along Church Lane – soon passing another seat. Cross to the right when safe.

As we come back into Castle Camps village, we pass two listed thatched houses on the left, Goodwoods Cottage and Old Thatch, both built around 1800 AD.

We pass the primary School on the right and then reach a junction with Bartlow Road.

When safe, cross the road and turn left. In about 30 yards turn right onto a public footpath between houses and with a hedge on each side. We soon come into an area of paddocks.

When the hedge on the right ends, continue ahead, now with a field on the right and ditch and hedgerow on the left.

When the field on the right ends, bear left and immediately right and continue ahead, with houses over to our right.

When we reach the end of the trees on our right, bear right, following the ditch and the line of trees.

When the field on the left ends, we go down steps and then turn right onto a gravel drive. On the right we soon pass a 17th-century thatched cottage called Owl's Hoot. Some of its timber framing is exposed.

Soon, our drive reaches Haverhill Road where we turn right. We are now on Castle Camps' main street which has an interesting variety of dwellings. As usual, keep to the right; before long we will reach pavement.

Cross the entrance to Claydon Close. Here, Haverhill Road becomes High Street and after a while the houses tend to be older. We will mention just a few, generally those that are listed for their architectural or historic value. Most have been renovated and extended from what may have been humble beginnings.

We pass The Cottage on the right, thatched with exposed beams. According to its official listing, it dates from the 17th or 18th century.

We come to a village green on our right. On the far side of the green is thatched Potash Cottage, dating from the 18th or 19th century. The thatched cottage to its left is 18th-century The Forge. The wooden building in front was where the actual forge was located. It functioned for a hundred years until 1989.

In front of the former forge is an informative interpretation panel. This tells us that Castle Camps village was, until not long ago, known as Camps Green, one of the several hamlets that make up the parish of Castle Camps.

Immediately after the green is the village pub, for many years called "The Cock" and since 2019 "The Oak". In 2022 it had limited opening hours, evening only.

Next on the right, Elizabeth Cottage dates from the 18th or 19th century.

On the right, we pass the Bowls Club. Opposite, on the left, is thatched Appletree Cottage.

Soon there is a former shop on the left. Opposite, set back on the right, are 18th-century Meadow Cottages.

United Reform Church on the left was built in 1856 as an independent chapel.

Old Stores Cottage on the left is faced with pargetting designs in its plasterwork. Next on the left, the more modern Poppy Cottage has a pargetted panel of poppies.

As we approach a junction, cross the road when safe and fork to the left of the small triangular green. Here stand the Castle Camps war memorial and the village sign. The sign was erected in 1993 and designed by the children of Castle Camps.

After the green, we reach Park Lane. Immediately opposite is The Old Inn, a 17th-century private house that functioned as The George until the early 20th century. We turn left into Park Lane and in 30 yards turn left again onto the drive to the village hall and recreation ground where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parish of Castle Camps on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, the text of which was last updated 12 December 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk 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.

