



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 154

### Castle Camps – 6.7 miles (11 kms)

*This rural walk is almost entirely in the parish of Castle Camps, in the extreme south-east corner of Cambridgeshire. Much of the route is on high ground with extensive views on a fine day. The route is a mixture of quiet lanes and footpaths, some of which may be muddy. There are several stiles and many gates and footbridges. 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. There is a seat after 4.7 miles. Some of this route (the beginning and the end) is repeated in Walk number 153 which covers a distance of 2.8 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, heading 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 for just a short way. Ignore the wooden gate on the left – it goes back into the cemetery – but in another 10 yards go through a wooden kissing gate into a field. The cemetery is immediately on our left.

Continue ahead along the field-edge path for about 150 yards and then turn left through a metal kissing gate. Turn immediately right and continue with the fence on the right.

[Yes, we could have come through the churchyard to here, but it is not straightforward to describe or follow!]

At the end of this field, we pass through a gateway and then in 20 yards through another gateway (this time a wooden kissing gate). Now, we go straight ahead on a clear cross-field path. To our left is the tall communications tower.

After a while, this cross-field path becomes surfaced. The concrete path descends, crosses a concrete bridge, and soon reaches a lane. Immediately opposite are imposing wrought iron gates. They date from the 18th century but were installed here only after World War II. On the far side of the gates is a former rectory, Berghane Hall, built in the 1750s.

Turn left onto this quite wide lane, heading gently uphill. Pass a newer building and then, just before an entrance to Rectory Farm, turn right onto a public footpath that climbs gently between high wooden fences. On the right we soon get a better view of red-brick Berghane Hall.

A little later we pass between tennis courts. Soon afterwards, the path reaches a field and we turn right along the back of the Berghane Hall property. Ignore steps that go down to the right and just afterwards bear right and then left to now follow a field-edge path with hedgerow on the left.

To our right is a valley through which the River Granta flows. On a clear day, ahead and slightly to the right we may be able to see the rotating wind turbines on the horizon. These are at Wadlow Wind Farm, 5 miles distant and close to the A11, beyond the Hundred Parishes.

After about 200 yards, at the end of this field, continue along the field edge, bearing to the right, and very soon turn sharp left into shrubs. Follow the path through a short stretch of trees and soon climb over a stile - the first of several stiles in the next mile or so.

After the stile, continue ahead on the field-edge path with hedgerow on the left.

After about 100 yards, turn left through a metal kissing gate and climb gently on a field-edge path with a wire fence on the left. At the top left corner of the field, go straight ahead across an unusual bridge which incorporates a stile.

After the bridge, turn half right to cross a relatively narrow field. Turn left to leave the field and pass through a garden, keeping to the right, and leave through the wooden gate. The garden we just passed through belongs to Little Biggs Farmhouse on the left.

Cross a footbridge with wooden handrails and reach a lane. Turn right, heading towards a cottage that has for many years been painted blue. We are now in the hamlet of Camps End.

When the lane turns right beside the blue Walnut Tree Cottage, we go straight ahead on a footpath, signposted to Steventon End. Soon, pass Langley Cottage on the left and, when the path forks, we keep left with hedgerow on the left. Cross another stile into a field.

The footpath follows the field edge on the left, bearing right past one gate to another gate.

Pass through this gate or climb the adjacent stile and continue ahead, now with the large and mature Langley Wood on our left. We will walk beside the wood for about half a mile. In April and May the wood has extensive areas of bluebells.

To our right, we are following the valley of the River Granta. On the other side of the valley, the water tower on the horizon is about 2 miles away in the adjoining parish of Shudy Camps (just outside the Hundred Parishes).

Pass from one field to another, still with woodland on the left.

When the woodland ends, we follow the field-edge path round to the left. In about 50 yards, we go straight ahead on a footbridge with a wooden handrail, crossing a ditch into more woodland. This is called Whiten's Mere Grove and this short, narrow stretch of meandering path, with ditch on the left, can be muddy at times.

Cross a footbridge with single wooden handrail and continue ahead. Immediately, come to a track and go straight across into more woodland which can also be muddy.

Exit this woodland by crossing another wooden footbridge with single handrail and emerge onto a gravel track. Go straight across the track onto a wide grass field-edge path with ditch on the left.

After a gentle descent, we turn left (beneath telegraph wires) through an opening on the left, cross the ditch and turn immediately right, now following the ditch on our right. We are now briefly in the parish of Ashdon.

We leave this field after about 100 yards - turn right over a footbridge with two metal handrails. In the new field, go straight ahead with hedgerow on our right. Soon, follow the field edge round to the left. When the hedge on the right ends, we continue straight ahead across a field.

At the far side of this small field, bear right with hedgerow on the left and very soon drop down onto a road. Join the road with care, turn right and keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic. Now just behind us is the hamlet of Steventon End, part of Ashdon parish.

Stay on this road for nearly half a mile, gently climbing.

Pass the thatched Cobwebs on the left.

Later, we pass red-brick Whitensmere Cottages on the left, The Old Farmhouse on the right and then Whitensmere Farm on the right.

At the top of the climb, straight ahead, we have another view of the water tower at Shudy Camps, still about 2 miles away.

When we reach a road junction, turn right onto the lane which is signposted only as a byway. This straight, narrow lane is a public road but has a fairly uneven surface and little traffic. We will stay on it for half a mile and, hopefully, enjoy the view as we descend gently into the Granta valley.

At the end of the lane, just before the junction, pass the entrance to Sangsters Farm on the right and cross the narrow River Granta. The river flows from right to left, heading northwards. It will join the River Cam near Cambridge and eventually the Great Ouse before flowing into the North Sea.

Turn right onto the road, signposted towards Camps End. The Granta is in a gully to our right.

After about 200 yards, shortly before the road bends right, cross with care to the left and turn left onto the footpath signposted to Shudy Camps Church. Pass through a gate and go straight ahead with woodland on the right.

After a while, we cross a non-public path. To the left is a lovely avenue of trees (probably lime), leading towards Camps Hall. We continue straight ahead on a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right, gently climbing.

Towards the end of the second field we pass a seat on the left, a possible spot for a break with two miles to go. Just afterwards, pass through a metal kissing gate and continue ahead, gently uphill with ditch and hedgerow on our right.

Nearing the top of the climb, we pass a pond on the right. Just afterwards, we cross a track by turning right and almost immediately left. Now, on the horizon to the left we can see the red-brick water tower on Rivey Hill, just beyond Linton and about 4 miles away. Further round to the left, the distant hills are probably around Royston, about 15 miles West of here.

When we reach the end of the field on our left, pass through a gate into a narrow field. Turn half right and cross the field, exiting through a metal gate. Cross a footbridge with wooden handrails and on the far side of the ditch we turn right. With the ditch on our right, we continue to climb gently.

After about 100 yards, the path turns left and heads towards trees. When we reach the trees, we find they are oaks and then poplars and in a straight line. Our path passes beneath them until we reach a road, Bartlow Road. We are going to turn right here, but first you might like to turn left for just a few yards to view the arrangement of shrubs and two tree stumps. They appear to have been sheltering something, perhaps a bench or a memorial. Does anyone know?

Having contemplated the mystery shrubs, turn around and proceed up the road (yes still climbing) for about 200 yards to the road junction. When safe, cross Bartlow Road and turn left, signposted towards Shudy Camps.

When safe, cross this road and after 30 yards turn right onto a public byway, Homers Lane, signposted to Castle Camps village. We follow this byway for three-quarters of a mile. It is a very obvious route. The early part can be muddy at times but for most of the distance it is reasonably surfaced.

Towards the end of the byway, we pass a 17th-century thatched cottage called Owl's Hoot. Some of its timber framing is exposed.

Soon, we reach Haverhill Road where we turn right. This becomes Castle Camps' main street with 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 renamed in 2019 as "The Oak". In 2022, it had limited opening hours, evenings 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](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk).

This route description, the text of which was last updated 12 December 2022, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk). 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.

