



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

MUCH HADHAM



Location: 3 miles southwest of Bishop's Stortford. **Ordnance Survey grid square** TL4218.
Postcode SG10 6DF. **Access:** B1004. **County:** Hertfordshire. **District:** East Hertfordshire.
Buses: routes 35, 35B, 35C or 351 (Mon to Sat) between Bishop's Stortford and Hertford.
Population: 2,000 in 2001, 2,087 in 2011, 2,200 in 2021.

Much Hadham is one of Hertfordshire's oldest and most picturesque villages, lying at the heart of a much wider parish of the same name. The earliest record of Hadham is dated 946 in the will of the Saxon Queen Aelfleda, wife of King Edmund. She and her sister inherited land at Hadham from their father. They in turn bequeathed the land to the Bishops of London who held it at the time of the Domesday Book and for a total of more than 800 years.



Much Hadham can rightly claim to have nurtured the founder of the Tudor dynasty as it was the birthplace of Edmund Tudor. After the death of Henry V, his widow Katherine married Owen Tudor. Their son, Edmund Tudor, was born in 1430 in the Bishop of London's palace, here in Much Hadham. In 1485 Edmund Tudor's son became Henry VII. The palace, shown on the left, is now a private residence. It can be seen from the churchyard.

The imposing Grade I-listed Parish Church of St Andrew was begun around 1220. The tower, with its tall stiletto-like spire known as a Hertfordshire spike, had been added by 1404. The roof timbers date from the 15th century.



The tower has six bells dating from 1595 to 1750. The oldest feature of the church is a weathered door which has now been moved inside and is thought to date from about 1225. A number of pews are decorated with carved poppyheads.

The church is notable for being shared between the St Andrew's Church of England congregation and the Holy Cross Roman Catholic congregation.

At the entrance to the church are two small sculptured *Heads of a King and Queen* by Henry Moore, the renowned sculptor who lived in the parish for many years.



Much Hadham's village High Street is one of the longest in the country. It extends for over a mile along the valley of the River Ash with many well-preserved houses of great variety, the earliest dating from the 15th century.

A good many of Much Hadham's 140 listed properties can readily be seen along the High Street. The photo on the right shows Batemans on the left and The Old House on the right. They are both timber-framed buildings dating back to the 16th century. The windows on the ground floor show that both buildings once functioned as shops.



Nearby, on the opposite side of the road, is the 16th-century Red Lion coaching inn, now converted into private residences. This was once a coaching stop on this old road from London to Cambridge.

Vine Cottage, shown below, dates from the 15th or 16th century.



The High Street truly is a delight, with so many well-maintained and attractive houses. Although most of the traditional village tradespeople have disappeared, their former locations are indicated by the names of some of the houses, for example Old Bakery and Collarmaker's House.

The photo below shows 16th-century Manor Cottage and, beyond it, 19th-century Manor House.

Below is Morris Cottage, dating from the 15th or 16th century. It was bought in the 19th century by textile designer William Morris for his sister.



Further south, at Hadham Cross, is one of Much Hadham's four Grade I listings – and rather a surprise. The 19th-century wall, shown on the right, rounds the corner into Kettle Green Road and is an interesting mixture of red and yellow bricks, flint and even a puddingstone. The date "1697" above the gateway appears to relate to Yewtree Farm, behind the wall.



The wall is in stark contrast to the splendour of Much Hadham's other three Grade I listings: St Andrew's Church, Moor Place and Much Hadham Hall.

Much Hadham Hall is shown on the right and Moor Place immediately below. Both are private residences and were built of red brick in the 18th century.

The Hall faces onto the High Street while Moor Place is set well back.



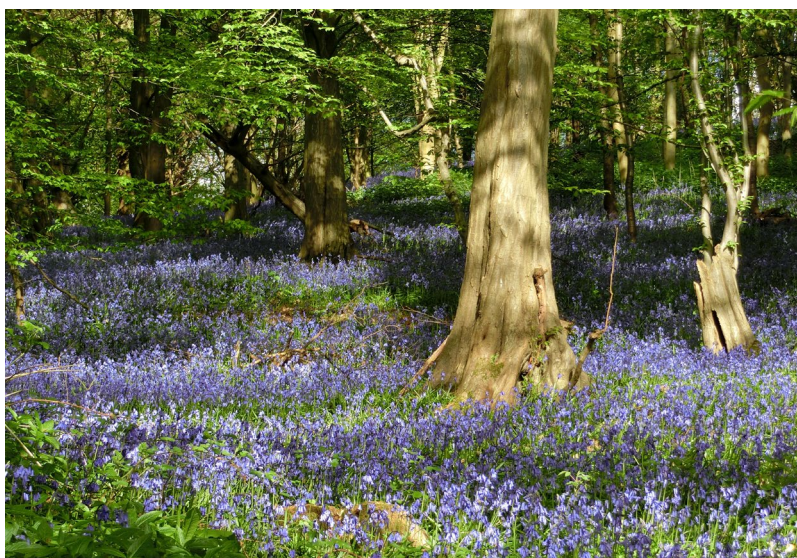
Forge Museum, shown below, combines several listed buildings that date from the 15th and 16th centuries. The interesting museum is well presented and merits a visit. It has a forge that operated commercially until 1983 and is still used occasionally by a resident blacksmith.

Furthermore, it has some fascinating Tudor wall paintings, in their original location. They were restored in the 21st century and part is shown on the right.



Much Hadham is a good base for walking, with public footpaths climbing out of the Ash valley to east and west.

South of the village, the Hertfordshire Way follows the Ash valley and passes through Sidehill Wood and Mill Wood. They are particularly attractive in springtime with bluebells rising up through the wooded hillsides. See below for suggested Hundred Parishes walk routes: one passes Henry Moore's giant *Reclining Figure* and another goes through the bluebell woods.



In modern times, Much Hadham parish is probably best known for being the home of the world-famous sculptor Sir Henry Moore. He lived a mile southeast of Much Hadham village in the hamlet of Perry Green from 1940 until his death in 1986.

The Henry Moore Foundation cares for his studio complex and many of his famous works. The Foundation was established by Moore himself in 1977 to promote appreciation of the visual arts. As well as caring for the studio, it funds exhibitions and research and also awards grants to arts organisations in the UK and worldwide.



The centre in Perry Green is open regularly during summer months and features many of Moore's works in a rural setting. Shown here are some of the sculptures that can be seen near Moore's former studio; some are huge.



Henry Moore was a highly productive sculptor. His distinctive bronze figures were in great demand during his own lifetime. They can be seen in prominent positions in many of the world's cities.

Moore is buried beside his wife Irina at the tiny Church of St Thomas in Perry Green. Their gravestones are notable for their simplicity.



Perry Green is one of Much Hadham's outlying hamlets, like Green Tye. Each has a collection of ancient listed buildings and each merits its own village sign . . .



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MUCH HADHAM

Hospitality:

The Bull Inn, High Street, SG10 6BU - 01279 841100 - <https://www.bullmuchhadham.co.uk/index>
or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/p/The-Bull-Much-Hadham-61560140846105/>

The Hoops Inn, Perry Green – 01279 745600 - <https://www.thehoopsinn.com/> - due to reopen in spring 2026 after upgrade.

Cafe at Henry Moore Studios & Gardens, Perry Green (seasonal opening) – see Links below.
High Hedges B&B, Green Tye, SG10 6JP – 01279 842505

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 122 of 2.2 miles around Much Hadham village.

Circular walk 168 of 7.8 miles across country to Standon and back.

Circular walk 172 of 5.5 miles of great variety on the east side of the parish.

Station walk 20 covers 12 miles from St Margaret's Station to Sawbridgeworth station – it could be joined at Perry Green on page 3 or 4 of the description, catching trains from Sawbridgeworth to St Margarets, and then completing the route back to Perry Green.

Adjacent parishes:

Widford, Wareside, Thundridge, Standon, Little Hadham, Thorley, High Wych.

Links:

Much Hadham Parish Council: <https://www.muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk/>

Henry Moore Studios and Gardens, Perry Green, SG10 6EE – 01279 843333 - <https://www.henry-moore.org/visit>

The Forge Museum, High Street, SG10 6BS – 07483 113345 - www.hadhammuseum.org.uk

History, old photos, etc:

www.hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk/data/places/places-m/much-hadham/much-hadham.htm

Further reading:

Much Hadham, a Millennium Scrapbook by Jean Page.