



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 106

Rural walk mainly in the parishes of Henham and Chickney, also including a little of Widdington and Debden – 6.8 miles (11 kms)

*This is a rural, fairly flat walk, largely on gravel tracks, passing through the village of Henham and visiting the remote Saxon church at Chickney. There is one pub, The Cock, near the suggested start and finish. In 2022, The Cock did not open on Mondays and Tuesdays.*

*This circular walk can be joined anywhere along the route; an alternative start is suggested if you wish to stop at the pub about half way round, rather than at the end.*

*Paths are generally well maintained. There are no stiles. The hedgerows along this route are particularly rich in blackberries in late summer and autumn, so you may like to carry a suitable container.*

Start and finish: Henham, by the war memorial. Park somewhere nearby on the road.  
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL546285, Postcode CM22 6AJ.

Alternatively (so that the pub comes around midway), start from an informal parking area beside a bend in the road that heads north-east from Henham, about a mile beyond Henham, at Grid Reference TL562295. This spot is north of the rugby club and south of Lovecotes Farm (at the southern end of Postcode CM22 6BH which encompasses a long stretch of road).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

If you have parked at the alternative start, your route starts with the description towards the bottom of page 2.

From the war memorial, head west along Church Street, signposted towards Elsenham Station. Pass The Cock pub on the right and the parish church on the left – you may like to visit these now or at the end of the walk. The pub dates from the 18th century or earlier. The church was built in the 13th and 14th centuries and has been little altered for over 500 years.

After passing the church on the left and pub on the right, keep to the right of the road, facing any traffic and passing several pretty thatched cottages.

When the lane bears left keep straight ahead on a gravel footpath, part of the long-distance Saffron Trail which crosses Essex from Southend to Saffron Walden.

After a short descent, keep half right on the main track, ignoring paths to left and right. Continue on the gravel track uphill for ¼ mile to Henham Lodge Farm.

Pass the entrance to commercial properties on the left and go through a gate. Turn immediately left and pass between commercial buildings on the left and housing on the right. Keep following the hedge on the right, soon turning right and then right again.

Follow the main track, passing sixteenth-century Henham Lodge Farmhouse on the right and, on the left, a small copse that includes foxglove trees with their large leaves and foxglove-like flowers in springtime. Stay on the track, leaving the small residential area behind, and now with a hedgerow on the right.

The route follows this path in a northerly direction for about a mile, generally with hedgerow on the right, imperceptibly crossing from Henham parish into Widdington, and after a while passing beneath two power lines.

After an uphill stretch, pass barns and then older buildings to the left and join the drive from Amberden Hall which we have just passed on the right. The Hall is part of what was once a much larger building when it was originally constructed in the sixteenth century. Pass ponds to right and left before leaving through a gateway.

Turn right onto a lane (Green Croft Lane) which soon becomes a gravel track. In about 50 yards turn sharp right to continue along the byway, now heading south and passing Amberden Hall on the right.

After about half a mile, having crossed another parish boundary into Debden, the byway climbs gently and passes the very tall metal tower which has been visible for much of the walk. This communications tower was constructed as part of a national microwave radio network in the 1960s. Should you be tempted to climb this giant structure, please observe the notice which states that a permit must be obtained first!

Soon pass on the right the site which has for many years been used for banger or stock car racing.

The byway passes a reservoir and water tower on the left before reaching a crossroads. Once, just ahead across the road, there was a small railway station known as Sibleys.

Turn right onto the road signposted towards Henham. For around 40 years until 1952 the railway ran beside this road, with steam trains operating between Thaxted and Elsenham, where it joined the main Cambridge – London line.

After a little while, pass Lovecotes Lodge Campsite on the right.

Follow the road round to the left, ignoring the footpath that goes straight ahead along the route of the old railway. **[The informal parking area on the right is suggested as an alternative start and finish point for this circular walk. If you start from here, leave the parking area and turn right along the road, heading south-east.]**

We have just left Debden and entered the small, sparsely-populated parish of Chickney whose population in 2011 was around 30.

When safe, cross to the left side of the road. In about 100 yards the road turns right but our route goes straight ahead, passing Burnt House on the left. This public byway is called Chickney Green and later Chickney Lane.

Please stay alert for where we leave this byway – it should be obvious once you reach the point described in the next paragraph.

After a quarter mile pass a thatched cottage on the right. After another quarter mile or so of gently meandering byway, after a slight descent and just before a gradual bend to the right, a field-edge footpath comes in from the right. Almost immediately, another path goes off to the left. Turn left onto this unmarked path, passing between two single oak trees as you leave the byway.

We are now heading East along a wide grassy path with hedgerow on the left. Our route follows a clear permissive path and not a cross-field footpath as shown on maps.

After about 500 yards, at the bottom of the field, bear right and continue with a hedgerow and ditch on the left. You may see and hear clay pigeon shooting over to the right on the far side of the field.

After another 200 yards, turn left and pass between metal barns. Follow a gravel track uphill.

At the top of the climb turn left, pass a house on the left and soon reach Chickney Church on the left.

This Saxon church, dedicated to St Mary, is one of the oldest, possibly the oldest, place of worship in the Hundred Parishes, built sometime between 850 AD and 1000 AD. Its churchyard is oval, suggesting it may have been sacred in pre-Christian times. The building has been cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust since 1972 and is usually open to visitors.

Leave the church and turn right to retrace a short part of our route: soon, follow the track round to the left and with a hedgerow on the right. Over to the left, across the valley, you may see the village of Broxted and the tip of its church spire.

After another 300 yards, turn right onto another gravel byway, descending past farm buildings on the left.

At the bottom of the hill, the track divides. Our route turns left to pass through a parking area (for the clay-pigeon shooting club).

Keep to the left, with a hedgerow on the left, once again following part of the Saffron Trail. Leave the parking area and keep straight ahead with a line of trees on the left.

On reaching a wood, keep ahead with the wood, Hawland Wood, on the left. After about 50 yards the path turns left into the wood. Follow the main path (which may be muddy in winter) through the wood.

Leave the wood – and pass from Chickney parish into Henham parish. Keep straight ahead, initially with a hedgerow on the left and then with fields on either side, descending and then climbing gently with a hedgerow on the right.

After passing a house on the left, the wide path turns left and soon reaches the drive of the house we have just passed. Turn right and follow the drive.

Follow the drive as it bears left and right and then climb gently through Woodend Green on a road lined with horse chestnut trees. We are now in the village of Henham which is noted for its many greens.

On reaching a junction, turn left along Henham's High Street, keeping to the left which soon has a pavement.

After a while, on the right, a large bell reminds us that this was once a public house called The Bell, before its conversion to a private house in 1978. Almost immediately opposite, on the left, is Henham Village Hall, set back with a green in front.

Near the end of this green, turn left towards Starr House. Not long ago this served as a garage and, before that, the Starr and Garter pub.

Turn right, passing Starr Cottage, and keep straight ahead along a narrow path past some lovely thatched cottages.

Pass a school on the right and the village sign on the left. The sign features a dragon, last seen here in 1669. On reaching the road, Crow Street, turn right towards the war memorial, where this route started.

If you were to turn right past the memorial, you would soon reach Henham's village store. Alternatively, keep left at the war memorial to visit the church and The Cock public house.

If you started the route on page 2, you should now return to page 1 to continue the route back to where you parked.

This route description, last updated 04 September 2022, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) where you will find further information about each of the parishes visited today, as well as many more walking routes.

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

A diagram of this clockwise route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

