



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 109

Hadstock and Linton – 6.3 miles (10 kms) or 5.2 miles (8 kms)

*This walk is quite hilly, a mixture of countryside with expansive views and some of the older parts of Hadstock and Linton. Hadstock is in the county of Essex and Linton in Cambridgeshire. Try to walk on a clear day so as to gain the best views from the highest point at the top of Rivey Hill. There is an option to avoid that part of the route, reducing the distance from 6 miles to 5.*

*There is a choice of eating places in Linton, but do check opening days and times before relying on one. A few parts of the route may be muddy at times, so if you hope to stop somewhere for refreshment or look inside the two Grade I-listed churches, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or don boot covers or plastic bags. There are occasional seats and no stiles.*

Start and finish: Hadstock Village Hall car park, close to the church. From the small green with the village sign, take the very narrow lane towards the church, keeping left past the church to the village hall and its car park just beyond. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL559447 - Postcode: CB21 4PH.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the parking area and go back down the lane, with Hadstock's Grade I-listed church on the left, dedicated to St Botolph.

You may like to visit this Anglo-Saxon church, if open, or at least view its ancient door which is almost a thousand years old and believed to be the oldest door in England still in regular use. The church may have been the minster church built by King Canute to commemorate those who died at the decisive victory by his Danish army over the English in 1016 at the Battle of Assandun, a battle which may have taken place here or at nearby Ashdon.

From the church porch, go straight ahead, down the gravel path, rejoining the lane and passing thatched, 16th-century Beam Ends on the left.

At the village green, keep straight ahead, uphill with the village sign on the left, and then bear right onto the road. Ignore Moules Lane on the left and continue climbing. Altogether, stay on this quiet lane for about half a mile, ignoring occasional footpaths to left and right.

When the lane turns sharp right, go straight ahead onto a track, known as Chalky Road. Initially this is quite wide but becomes narrower with a hedgerow on either side.

When the hedge on the right ends, the track bears left, beside a hedgerow on the left. Ahead and to the right we can now see the village of Linton. Beyond is Rivey Hill and, at the top, a large water tower which we will pass in another mile and a half – yes, this walk will demonstrate that not all of Essex or Cambridgeshire are flat. Further away in that direction

you may be able to see some of the rotating blades at Wadlow Wind Farm, some 4 miles distant.

Soon, the remains of a tower windmill come into sight. After a while, the windmill disappears from sight and the path passes between hedges on both sides. It then turns sharp right, almost imperceptibly crossing a bridge over a long-discontinued railway track whose alignment can be seen over the wall to the left. This was once the line from Shelford, south of Cambridge, to Sudbury. It operated from 1865 to 1967. Today, the rail alignment marks the boundary between Hadstock and Linton parishes and the boundary between Essex and Cambridgeshire.

After the bridge, the path bears left and meets the drive to Windmill House which stands to our right, beside the disused windmill. Keep left and follow the lane past Malting Cottages.

After about 200 yards, turn right to reach the busy A1307.

With great care, cross, turn right and almost immediately left into a lane, Mill Lane. Continue along this lane through woodland and then keep to the left and use the footbridge to cross the River Granta.

Soon afterwards, follow the road round to the right to pass beneath the former Linton Mill, now converted to housing. Note the bungalow straight ahead which displays "Office" above the front door. Follow the road to the left and then to the right. Soon after passing the pump on the right, Mill Lane reaches Linton High Street.

Turn right, against the flow of traffic along this narrow one-way street of colourful houses, former shops and a few current shops. When safe, cross the road and continue ahead.

Turn left onto Balsham Road, the B1052. Ahead in the distance is the water tower.

Soon turn left onto a road with no apparent name (actually, it's Back Road). Pass Rivey Way on the right and, when safe, cross Back Road to reach a tarmac public bridleway on the right, signposted towards Rivey Lane and Roman Road 1½.

*[Should you wish to avoid the climb and descent of Rivey Hill (reducing the walk distance by a little over a mile) you can continue along Back Road for about 600 yards. Pass a cemetery on the right and ignore several turnings to right and left until you reach Crabtree Croft. The route description continues 11 paragraphs below . . . ]*

Immediately before the cemetery, turn right onto the bridleway. We will not be walking as far as the signposted Roman road. That former highway now marks the northern boundary of Linton parish and seems to follow a straight line between two major Roman cities, Colchester and Chester.

Our path is one of the strands of the ancient Icknield Way.

After a while, the tarmac ends and the track becomes stony. The track climbs Rivey Hill for half a mile, eventually reaching the water tower which stands 110 metres or 360 feet above sea level. Sometimes, stretches of the track can be quite wet. These might be avoided by diverting onto a well-used unofficial path that runs on the other side of the hedge on the right.

The track gets steeper as it approaches the summit. At the top, just before the water tower, the unofficial field-edge path rejoins the main track. Do look back at the view, with Linton now way below.

The tower was built in 1936. It is topped with a steel water tank which is supported on steel girders inside the brick wall. The tower has a conical slate roof. The tank holds up to 87,000 gallons (around 400 tons) of water which is pumped up to the tank. It supplies much of the Linton area. The tower stands 100 feet (30 metres) tall. It is a listed building because of its landmark value and its attractive art deco design, constructed of brick rather than concrete.

Turn left, passing the water tower on the right and houses on the left. By turning left, we join the Icknield Way Walkers Route. We pass beneath an avenue of silver birch trees and soon get the benefit of the climb: a splendid wide view over the Cambridgeshire countryside. Continue ahead with Rivey Wood on the left.

After the wood, continue ahead, gently descending. Just after a bench, the path turns left, descending more steeply back towards Linton.

While passing a wood on the right, it is just possible to identify Hadstock Church (where we started this walk) on the hill about two miles ahead. It appears just below the horizon at about half past eleven on the clockface.

When the wood on the right ends, continue ahead. Over to the right, we may be able to see the white-capped former windmill in the adjacent parish of Hildersham.

Continue descending until the path reaches a road (Back Road). We are once again in the village of Linton. Cross with care and turn right on the pavement.

Turn left into Crabtree Croft, a residential area of bungalows. *[This is where the main route is rejoined by anyone who chose to miss the Rivey Hill climb].*

At the bottom of this short close, go straight ahead on a footpath with a fence and then a wall on the left, and with a large flint-walled building beyond.

When this path reaches a road (Symonds Lane), turn left and in 50 yards you will see the front of the flint-walled building. This is Symonds House Nursing Home, built originally in 1836 as a workhouse for 200 inmates. The house and grounds were used as a Prisoner of War camp during WWI, with huts housing a hundred German prisoners who were employed on local farms. Symonds house now provides care for around 60 residents.

Cross the road with care and retrace 50 yards to turn left onto a tarmac path (if you reach Granta Leys you have gone past the tarmac path).

Cross a rather attractive bridge over the River Granta to emerge onto a recreation ground, the Queen Elizabeth II Field.

Continue straight ahead on the tarmac path and, just after passing a pavilion with clock tower on the right, follow the path round to the left. After 50 yards, leave the field by turning right onto a tarmac path beside a stony track. This soon comes into Essex Gardens. With care, cross a minor road and go straight ahead on another footpath.

The path becomes a lane, Market Lane, where Linton's markets used to be held. There are several interesting buildings here including Shepherd's Hall on the right. The building was opened in 1921 by the Ancient Order of Shepherds, a friendly society that offered benefits, including insurance, to its members.

At the end of Market Lane, turn left into High Street. We will now take our time to cover a short loop back to this spot, en route passing around a quarter of Linton's 120 listed buildings. We will refer to just some of them.

Linton flourished as a market town from the 13th to the 19th centuries and High Street was a busy through route until the bypass, then A604 and now renumbered A1307, was opened in 1968. This wide stretch of High Street would also have formed part of the market area.

The phone kiosk is listed and stands outside what was a general store for about a century until the mid-1900s. The name of the proprietors, HOLLTUM & SONS, is just visible in a panel at first-floor level.

On the right, Bull House dates from around 1700 AD and was once the Bull Inn.

Further along, we pass number 51, a former chapel, and then Chapel Terrace, built around 1800 AD and now a mix of small shops and dwellings.

The thatched pub, The Dog and Duck, was established as an inn in the 19th century when three 17th-century properties were merged - two cottages and a shop.

Just afterwards, we cross the River Granta again. The river used to seriously flood this part of Linton from time to time – right back down the road as far as Holttum's store. After the bridge, cross Symond's Lane (yes, we crossed it earlier near the former workhouse) and immediately reach the former Swan Hotel on the left; this served as a hotel from the 17th century until the 20th century.

Continue along the pavement on the left. On the other side of the road is Linton's village sign.

We pass a newsagent on the left and then reach the corner with Coles Lane. With care, cross Coles Lane and then pause to look back at Robert Cole's House, the large timber-framed building on the corner. Its wavy roof line suggests it is old; indeed, it dates from the 16th century and was bought by the Cole family, grain merchants, in 1675.

Still looking back, the building on the left, opposite Robert Cole's House and behind a high wall, is 17th-century Linton House. Its grounds extend beside the High Street back to the River Granta.

Now, continue along the High Street, passing beside a high flint wall with the date 1812. Pass the entrance to Church Lane on the right, but continue for just a few yards to see several colourful buildings on the left that date from the 15th and 16th centuries, one with a particularly interesting mix of ancient and more-modern pargetting.

Now, retrace a few steps and cross the High Street with care to turn left into Church Lane.

Church Lane soon reaches a group of interesting ancient buildings including the 16th-century former Guildhall on the right and the 14th/15th-century parish church on the left, constructed of flint and stone.

As usual, you are encouraged to visit the church if it is open – but first, please remove or cover dirty boots. Inside, there are several ancient monuments, the grandest of which has been almost hidden since the Victorian organ was installed. A series of intricate carvings adorn the ends of some benches – they are known as “poppy heads”, a corruption of a Latin word *puppis*, meaning the poop or figurehead of a ship.

From the church, retrace through the gate and cross Church Lane to go down the lane with the Guildhall on the right. We soon cross the Granta yet again.

Follow this road, Horn Lane, round to the right, passing Linton Free Church on the left. The church was built in 1818 as a Congregational Chapel. The array of rather grand tombs reflects the relative wealth of the tradespeople who made up a good proportion of the congregation in the 19th century.

We soon return to the High Street, almost opposite Market Lane which we came down not long ago to commence this short circular tour of the older part of Linton. The building on our left, on the corner of Horn Lane and the High Street, was once the Red Lion Inn, a posting inn where coaches could change horses.

Turn left along High Street and, when safe, cross to the right.

Pass Crown Inn on the right and soon reach the main Cambridge Road, A1307. Cross this busy road using the pedestrian-controlled lights and turn left. Immediately fork right into The Grip. Before construction in 1968 of the bypass heading East from where we have just crossed, traffic between Linton and Saffron Walden came along The Grip.

We pass attractive, ancient thatched houses, some dating back to the 16th century. The pavement is raised above the level of the road because the road used to flood. *Grip* is an old term for a ditch or watercourse that sometimes dried up.

When The Grip comes to a crossroads, we turn right onto B1052. (If we were to go straight ahead along Long Lane, in about half a mile we would reach Malting Cottages which we passed earlier, before we reached Linton).

Having turned right, keep to the pavement on the right, soon passing tall, 16th-century Grip Farmhouse on the left.

A little further along, soon after The Grip Barns on the left and Ditches Close on the right, there are high banks on either side of the road. They are all that remain of the embankments that once supported a high brick arch which carried the railway line over the road.

Continue ahead, passing a commercial estate on the right and then the entrance to Linton Zoological Gardens (worth a visit if you have time).

The pavement ends just as we leave Cambridgeshire and enter Essex but at this point, where the road bends left, we leave the road to continue straight ahead on a public bridleway, the Icknield Way, signposted towards Great Chesterford. Ignore Len's Path that forks left.

This clear track climbs steadily. Do pause from time to time to look back at how far we have walked since the Rivey Hill water tower. Pass a concreted area on the right.

Just before reaching the end of the field on our right, and shortly before the first large tree, we turn left over a footbridge with metal handrails and keep heading in this new direction, climbing gently for about 200 yards. Keep to the right of a hedge and then descend.

Pass Len's Path and a seat on the left and then commercial premises on the right before following the track round to the left.

Soon, just before reaching a road, turn right onto a footpath with a wooden handrail on the left. We are now back in the village of Hadstock. The path runs beside the road, at first elevated and then at road level.

At Hillingdon House on the right, cross the road with care and continue on the opposite pavement. Do not follow the main road round to the right but keep straight ahead, signposted towards Bartlow. Almost immediately cross this road with care and pass the green and village sign on the left. Pass an old pump on the right and soon turn right up a narrow lane, retracing an early part of the walk. Keep left and head uphill towards the car park behind the village hall.

There is now a second opportunity to visit Hadstock Church with its ancient door before departing.

This route description, last updated 06 April 2023, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) where you can read more about Hadstock and Linton and find many more walks including numbers 174 and 182 which also visit Linton.

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.

