



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 110

Pleshey and Great Waltham - 7.3 miles (12 kms)

This anti-clockwise walk is mostly through attractive countryside with short explorations of Pleshey and Great Waltham, two attractive villages with interesting ancient heritage. There may be a choice of eating places in Great Waltham but please check opening days and times before relying on one. The walk is fairly flat, a mixture of mainly well-surfaced tracks, field-edge paths, country lanes and village streets. There are no stiles. A few parts of the route may be muddy at times, so if you hope to stop somewhere for refreshment or look inside a church, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or don boot covers or plastic bags. In 2022, Great Waltham's parish church offered only limited opening for visitors (Mondays, except Bank Holidays, from 1pm to 2:30pm and the last Wednesday of the month from 10am to Noon)

Start and finish: Pleshey church. There is space for parking either outside the church or, on that side of The Street, slightly further into the village.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL653144 - Postcode: CM3 1HA.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.

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

Consider visiting the church, both inside and outside, either before or after the walk. Parts of the building date from the 14th century although the church was largely rebuilt in Victorian times.

With the church on your right, head for a short distance along The Street into the village, almost immediately passing the Retreat House on the right and the former White Horse pub on the left. Pass Parsonage Cottage on the right and immediately turn right into Pump Lane.

On the left you will soon pass Pleshey Castle moat. Then, through a gateway on the left you can see some of the remains of the castle, constructed soon after the Norman Conquest of 1066. The castle is privately owned but is occasionally opened for viewing.

Immediately opposite the gateway, take the public footpath with wooden railings on each side, heading away from the castle. The path emerges onto a concrete lane. Keep straight ahead and stay on the concrete lane as it bears left where it is joined from the right by the Essex Way, a long-distance footpath.

Stay on the lane as it crosses a public right of way and a ditch. After climbing gently for about 150 yards, turn left off the concrete lane onto a bridleway.

After a gentle climb, over to the left, the tower of Pleshey church can be seen.

At a T junction of paths, turn right along the bridleway with woodland on the left. We have just left the parish of Pleshey and entered the parish of Great Waltham.

When the bridleway reaches a road, cross with care and continue straight ahead.

Continue on this bridleway for about half a mile until a T junction of bridleways. Turn left, leaving what for some distance has been a well-surfaced gravel path, now onto an earthen path.

After a while, pass a thatched cottage and thatched summer house on the right and soon go straight ahead on a gravel drive.

When the path reaches a road, go straight across, with care, and turn left onto a well-defined, tree-lined path. Continue along this path, running parallel with the road on the left, for some distance, about 500 yards altogether.

Pass a derelict building and yard on the left and, about 100 yards later, when the path comes close to the road just before a terrace of white-painted cottages, turn right, away from the road, onto a field-edge path with a hedgerow on the left.

At the end of the field, go straight ahead and immediately left into a new field with a hedgerow on the left. Look back and to the right to a large reservoir in a former gravel pit.

At the next field corner, turn left to cross a ditch on a footbridge with a metal handrail and then turn immediately right. Follow the path with hedgerow and ditch on the right.

After 150 yards the path switches to the other side of the ditch and continues with the ditch on the left.

When the footpath reaches a road (Hoe Lane), go straight across with care and up a short rise to continue in the same direction along a path (now part of long-distance Saffron Trail).

The outskirts of Great Waltham appear over to the left.

After passing two large oak trees on the left, turn left over a footbridge with metal handrails. Bear right and almost immediately left, climbing uphill with a hedgerow on the left towards houses.

Emerge from the field onto a gravel parking area. Pass houses on the right and soon reach a road. We are now in Great Waltham. Bear right along the road for about 50 yards and then turn right onto a public footpath. Soon, keep straight ahead beside a playing field with a fence and then hedgerow on the left.

At the end of the field, turn left and immediately right onto a residential road, Hatchfields.

Keep to the right pavement and follow this road round to the left and then downhill to meet another road, Chelmsford Road. Turn right and, when safe, cross to the far side. In about 100 yards, turn sharp left on the public footpath through a white gateway.

A lodge house on the right has an ornate coat of arms and the Latin motto *ESSE QUAM VIDERI* which may be translated as "To be, rather than to seem". It is the motto, for example, of many schools and the American state of North Carolina.

We are now on the Langleys estate, owned by the Tufnell family for more than 300 years. The fenced footpath winds through parkland and we soon pass the impressive red-brick Langleys on the right. The house was built in 1719 by Samuel Tufnell, MP who was aged

just 29 at the time. His new residence incorporated an earlier building that is a hundred years older. According to Nikolaus Pevsner's description, the older rooms are even more grand than the 'new' ones, with highly-decorated ceilings and fireplaces. Sadly, there is not much likelihood that we will be invited in with our muddy boots! High above the central doorway is a coat of arms and motto similar to that which we saw on the lodge house, so presumably both relate to the Tufnell family.

Bear left along the fenced footpath, continuing gently uphill.

The path flattens out. About 100 yards before a second lodge house, watch out for the footpath which crosses the tarmac path via kissing gates on either side. Turn sharp left through the gate on the left. Follow the footpath downhill, across parkland and passing a group of trees on the right. Emerge onto a road and turn left. We are now in an older part of Great Waltham.

Keep to the left pavement, pass the Beehive pub on the right and then turn left through the lychgate into the churchyard. Note the interesting wood carving on the lychgate, erected in 1920 and giving thanks "FOR MANY MERCIES RECEIVED DURING THE GREAT WAR".

If open, the Norman church merits a visit – see the 2022 opening times in the introduction to this walk. Inside it is unusually spacious and has several interesting memorials. Out of sight are eight very ancient bells, one of which is dated 1336.

Pass to the right of the church and round to the back where you will find Badynghams, a striking 16th-century private house with impressive tall, thin and ornate chimneys.

Pass between the church and Badynghams and turn right beside the house, following the gravel path between the house and a red brick wall. The path soon comes to a small green with war memorial. Do look back at the front of Badynghams.

Opposite the war memorial is a "talking bench". Press the buttons to listen to tales of old Great Waltham.

From Badynghams, turn right onto the main road. When safe, cross the road and continue on the left pavement, passing The Stores restaurant on the left. Continue bearing right along this road, crossing South Street on the left to complete a circumnavigation of the church. Pass the lychgate on the right and immediately turn left into Barrack Lane, passing The Beehive on the right. Take care as there are some blind spots without pavements along this road.

Pass the Walthambury convenience store on the right and continue along Barrack Lane. We soon leave the village of Great Waltham but will stay in the parish for another mile.

At the end of Barrack Lane, follow the road round to the left, now called Mashbury Road. Ignore Bury Lane to the right, albeit signposted towards Pleshey.

Ignore the footpath just after Elm Tree Cottage on the right. About 200 yards further on, turn right onto a gravel track, passing between two large concrete blocks. This quite wide track soon bears left and then continues to meander for more than half a mile. It can sometimes be muddy. After some distance, ignore a path that goes through the field to the right.

At the crossroads of tracks near several houses at Fitzjohn's Farm, we turn sharp right, continuing on a track and descending gently with a hedgerow on the left.

At the end of the field, follow the track round to the left, keeping a fenced woodland area on the right. Soon, turn right into a field, still keeping the woodland on the right.

Follow the field edge round to the left and, within a hundred yards, turn right onto a footbridge over Walthambury Brook. You are encouraged to use the new bridge, not the old one! Pass through a little woodland, up some steps and turn left onto a field-edge path with hedgerow and ditch on the left. We have now crossed the parish boundary from Great Waltham back into Pleshey.

Follow this field-edge path in a fairly direct line for half a mile, back towards Pleshey. The top of the church tower occasionally appears ahead and to the left.

After a while, the path crosses the ditch which then runs to the right of the path.

Pass a chain link fence and sewage works on the left just before reaching Pleshey's main road, The Street. Turn left, keeping to the left grass verge and then pavement.

Enjoy the attractive houses to left and right, some with well-stocked and colourful window boxes or hanging baskets. Most date from the 18th century or early 19th century. Pass Back Lane and the Leather Bottle pub on the right.

On the left is Pleshey Mount View Point where you can watch the ducks swimming in the castle moat. Here stands a well-deserved Best Kept Village sign.

Pass the other end of Back Lane and soon afterwards a gap between houses on the left allows a view of the 15th-century red-brick bridge that gave access to the castle. Pleshey village lies almost entirely within the outer bailey earthwork that once protected the castle.

Pass Pump Lane on the left and soon reach Pleshey church, with a second opportunity for a visit.

You can read more about Pleshey and Great Waltham on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 09 November 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

