



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 119

### Great Dunmow and Stebbing - 9 miles (14 kms)

*This clockwise walk passes through attractive countryside with explorations of parts of the town of Great Dunmow and village of Stebbing. A shorter walk, number 117 covering 2.8 miles, focuses just on Stebbing and covers some of this route in the opposite direction; walk number 126 covers 3 miles and explores the older parts of Great Dunmow.*

**Caution:** *about one mile of the route, approaching Merks Hall and Dunmow towards the end, is across fields that can be muddy after rain. There is no realistic alternative route.*

*The walk is fairly flat. The first half is largely on well-surfaced tracks, and the second half mainly along paths. There is one stile.*

*The walk passes two interesting churches. If you hope to visit a church or a pub, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.*

*There is a choice of eating places in Great Dunmow, near the start and finish, and a pub in Stebbing. The White Hart in Stebbing (01371 856383) opened in 2023 only from Wednesday to Sunday. Please check beforehand if you plan to stop at any particular establishment.*

**Start & Finish:** Public Car Park, The Causeway, Great Dunmow, Essex  
Grid Reference: TL628225 – Postcode CM6 2AA. Public toilets in Car Park.

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

From the car park, retrace almost to the road and then turn sharp right through a gate. Follow the tarmac path past a play area on the left and pavilion on the right, continuing ahead on a straight tarmac path across the recreation ground, heading towards Dunmow's parish church.

The path becomes a roadway and soon meets Church Street (B1057). Here, the building immediately on the right dates from the 14th or 15th century. It now comprises several houses but started life as an open hall house.

Turn right, passing 17th-century Angel and Harp pub. Soon, where the view is clear in both directions, cross the road with care. Continue in the same direction, past the former 1836 National School on the right. Keep straight ahead into Church Street, passing a row of ancient houses on the right, some dating back to the 15th century.

St Mary's dates mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries and merits a visit – but please first remove or cover boots if they are muddy.

Continue ahead with St Mary's on the right and the 16th-century vicarage on the left.

The footpath goes straight ahead through a parking area and then runs alongside and to the left of the low cemetery wall. Pass through two gates and veer slightly right to cross a field. Take the footbridge over the River Chelmer. Cross a narrow field to emerge onto a lane, Bigods Lane. Turn left.

After about 400 yards, keep right on this lane, ignoring a concrete bridleway that goes off to the left.

The lane (frequently but incorrectly marked as “private road”) climbs gently for about half a mile, passing 17th-century Lower Hall with a 16th-century barn and large pond on the right.

Further on, we pass the entrance to Bigods Hall on the right. This large building dates from the 16th century but has been much altered. It functioned as a school for Roman Catholic boys from 1916 and during WWII it served as a home for orphaned boys who had lost their parents in the Blitz.



Between the Hall and the road, there stands a medieval red-brick “summer house”, also from the 16th century. This unusual building is pictured here; it is not so visible when trees are in leaf.

Keep ahead on the main lane, signed Bigods Hall Farm, passing Grange House on the left and several other houses and farm buildings to either side. The path continues to climb and can be muddy in places. Pass beside a metal gate and continue for some distance in the same direction along the edge of the field with hedgerow on the left.

Ignore a track to the left and continue ahead, gently climbing all the time, with hedgerow and ditch on the left. This track can get churned up by farm vehicles. About 600 yards beyond the farm buildings, bear left across the ditch and then right, now following the hedgerow/spinney on the right along a grassy path, still gently climbing.

Keep to the right edge of the field and stay on the path as it bears left, heading for Bigods Wood in the distance.

On reaching the far corner of the field, turn left for 10 yards and then right at the corner of the wood. Immediately after passing through the hedge, turn sharp right, keeping a hedge on the right.

At the end of this field continue straight ahead, still with the hedge on the right. Soon, ignore the footpath that comes in from the right over a wooden footbridge with metal handrails, but 40 yards later fork right to follow the path through a narrow strip of woodland.

At the end of this tree-lined path, turn right along the field edge track with a line of oak trees on the left.

After 200 yards, follow the track round to the left, at the same time passing imperceptibly from Great Dunmow parish into the parish of Lindsell.

Keep the hedgerow on the left and continue in this direction for more than half a mile, heading towards a large barn. The settlement over to the left, about half a mile away, is the small village of Lindsell.

Pass two large farm buildings on the left. Join the roadway and for a very short distance follow it round to the right. Almost immediately leave this roadway to bear right across a grassy area and continue along a wide field-edge path with hedgerow on the right. We have just passed Lashley Hall on the left, a building that dates back to the 15th century.

The path bears to the left and then to the right, heading gently downhill towards woodland. Before reaching the wood, turn left along the field edge, keeping the woodland on the right for about 300 yards.

At the end of the woodland, turn right, keeping the woodland on the right and heading downhill for 200 yards.

At the end of this stretch of woodland, turn left with a ditch on the right.

After 80 yards the path reaches a small wood. Turn right into the wood and follow the winding path through the trees. Just before a footbridge over a stream, turn right over another footbridge with a single handrail. We have now left Lindsell parish and passed into the parish of Stebbing.

Follow this path with a stream on the left. After a while, the path passes a house on the right (Tanners Farm) and becomes a drive, passing Mill Race Barn immediately before reaching the B1057 road.

Cross the road with care and descend the steps beside the former Bran End Mill. At the bottom of the steps, bear slightly left and cross a stile.

The path goes ahead, along a long, narrow field that is sometimes wet underfoot as this is the flood plain for Stebbing Brook.

After 500 yards, the brook is channelled through a large metal pipe beneath the path. After crossing a second pipe, the path emerges into a field that can be boggy.

Keep straight ahead with a fence and willow plantation on the right. Cross a wooden footbridge with single metal handrail and then go ahead, uphill, towards a pink house. Pass to the right of the house and leave the field through a kissing gate.

Immediately cross a drive and continue on a narrow footpath with a fence on the right and a line of trees on the left. Take care to avoid the many rabbit holes along this path.

Before the line of trees on the left ends, a wooded mound comes into view beyond the fence on the right. This is known as Stebbing Mount and is the site of a former moated Norman castle.

Keep straight ahead until the path emerges onto a cricket field. Head uphill towards the large tree diagonally across the field (avoiding the wicket area). Keep to the right of the tree and pass a small cemetery on the left, soon emerging onto a lane, Mill Lane.

Turn left onto the lane, passing a former church on the left, now converted into a terrace of houses. On the right is red-brick Stebbing Village Hall, also once a chapel, built in 1877. We are now in the heart of the village of Stebbing.

Continue up Mill Lane to the High Street. The White Hart public house on the left has an 18th-century façade, but mainly dates from the 16th or 17th century. It is the only survivor of 5 inns and 2 beer houses that served Stebbing in the 19th century, and is a suitable place for refreshment (albeit only from Wednesday to Sunday in 2023). The village shop is about 100 yards further along the High Street on the left.

The parish of Stebbing is home to 150 listed buildings, many of which are along the High Street. This route description briefly mentions just a few. For a more in-depth exploration and appreciation of Stebbing, please try walk number 117.

From the front door of the pub, turn right and soon cross Mill Lane before passing the bowling green on the right. Continue along the High Street past many interesting buildings.

On the left we soon pass 16th-century Town Farm and then Kings Head House, also 16th-century in origin and once a pub. The present owners have reinstated its appearance as a public house. On the right, The Vicarage dates from the 19th century.

Further along on the right, Stebbing Memorial Hall was built in 1674 as a Quaker meeting house. It ceased to function as a church in 1884 and now hosts meetings of the garden club, etc.

The road descends past Tudor House on the right, constructed on the steepest part of the hill in the 15th century or earlier.

After a descent and as the road starts to rise again, turn left up steps and a path. Soon pass through a gate into the churchyard and continue uphill to the church. You are encouraged to visit, but first please remove muddy boots or cover them. The outstanding feature of the Church of St Mary the Virgin is its stone rood screen which fills the whole of the arch between the nave and the chancel. It is believed that only two similar screens exist – one at Trondheim Cathedral in Norway and the other at nearby Great Bardfield. The screen dates from around 1350 AD, as does the rest of the church.

From the church porch, turn right onto the road. Pass 16th-century Church Farm on the left and the war memorial on the right. Keep straight ahead, signposted towards Felsted, Dunmow and Brookend. After some farm buildings, pass the splendid Prior's Hall (also known as Parsonage Farmhouse). This building dates mainly from the 16th century although part that is not visible from the road is 14th century. The building benefited from major restoration in the 20th century.

Follow the road round to the left, downhill and over Stebbing Brook. 100 yards later, where the road bends to the left, our route turns right onto a footpath. After 100 yards, turn left and proceed uphill with a hedge and ditch on the left. From time to time, do check the view back towards the church and Prior's Hall.

The route follows this path for about half a mile, fairly straight in a West-South-Westerly direction. After 500 yards, the path bears right and in another 80 yards turns sharp left to cross a wooden bridge before continuing uphill on the far side of the ditch, now with the

hedge on the right and passing a large solar farm in the field behind the hedge to the right. We have now left Stebbing and are back in the parish of Great Dunmow.

At the corner of this field, go straight ahead and cross the next field, heading just to the right of some farm buildings. Keep to the right of the farm buildings, crossing a track, and continue in this direction for another half mile. This section can be muddy, especially if it has rained or the farmer has not reinstated the path. We cross several flat fields and two plank bridges with metal handrails over ditches. If muddy, take special care on the bridges. For a while, we continue to run parallel with the field with solar panels about 100 yards or so over to our right.

Soon after passing under a minor power transmission line, the path follows a field edge, with the hedge on the right.

Upon reaching a wire fence at the corner of the field (with a pond ahead behind the hedge), we turn right and proceed downhill with the fence and then buildings on the left.

Pass between Merks Hall on the left and new dwellings on the right, then Farmhouse Cottage and later Orchard House and Merk's Hill House, all on the right. Stay on this drive for a further half a mile.

When the woodland on the left ends, a former windmill comes into view. Continue on the drive until it meets a road, St Edmunds Lane. We are now back in Great Dunmow.

Carefully cross this road to the pavement and turn left. Cross Brick Kiln Drive on the right and pass the former windmill on the left. The red-brick tower, built in 1822, and adjacent mill house are now combined into a residential property called Tower House.

Pass two more turnings on the right before turning right into Windmill Close.

At the end of this close, turn sharp left into a narrow alley, and soon turn right, keeping the fence on the right. Bear right to follow the tarmac path across a green and cross the footbridge over the River Chelmer.

On the far side of the river, bear slightly right to take the middle path and soon pass houses on the left. Keep straight ahead and then cross a road into Knight's Way. Continue along Knight's Way through the residential estate, ignoring turnings off, eventually passing through a wall onto North Street (B184).

Cross the road with care and turn right.

Pass the former town lock-up and then Doctor's Pond. Lionel Lukin invented the self-righting lifeboat in 1784 and tested it on this pond. Immediately after the pond, turn left and soon bear right across the green to meet a road.

Cross the road with care to the pavement and turn right, downhill to the mini roundabout. Straight ahead, on the far side of the roundabout, is Brook House which dates from the 16th century.

Turn left and immediately cross the road via the traffic island. On the far side turn left and soon turn right into the car park where the walk started.



This route description, last updated 14 February 2023, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parishes of Great Dunmow, Lindsell and Stebbing and also find many more walks to download.

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

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

