



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 127

High Roding and Great Canfield: a countryside walk: 4.7 miles (8 kms)

This anticlockwise, rural walk is fairly flat, mostly through open countryside. It passes through two parishes but only one settlement of any size, High Roding. The first 2 miles are on pavements or quiet lanes and the remainder mostly follows obvious paths, some of which may be muddy at times. In High Roding the route passes a tea room early on and a pub, the Black Lion, near the finish. There are no stiles.

Start and finish: The walk starts from a small car park just off the main road, The Street, B184, in the centre of High Roding. The car park entrance, on the west side of the road, is around 100 yards south of a telephone kiosk and 100 yards north of the village sign. Access is immediately south of the former school with a bell tower.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL602172 - Postcode: CM6 1NR.

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

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

Leave the car park and return to the main road, The Street. This is a Roman road and we are around midway along a surviving straight that stretches for 4 miles between Aythorpe Roding to the south and Great Dunmow to the north. The original route ran from London to Dunmow where it met Stane Street, much of which still runs east-west.

Almost every house along The Street is of interest. We will mention just a few, mostly listed buildings, but please take time to enjoy so much diverse heritage in one street.

Turn left and stay on the pavement on this side. Immediately on the left, The Old School is Victorian and still has a large bell in the cupola above the clock.

The Old Post House on the left has pronounced pargetting.

On the right, the row of 3 white-boarded cottages is relatively new – 19th century.

Also on the right, Waysend Cottage has a thatched fox on the roof

A new estate on the right, Owers Place, was named after Arthur Owers, MBE, 1916 – 2017, a High Roding stalwart. By the age of 100 he had been president of the cricket club for 30 years and still lived in the High Roding house where he was born.

On the left, High Roding and Great Canfield Women's Institute has an interesting meeting place.

Opposite, on the right, thatched Swifts Cottage dates from the 17th century.

On the left, thatched Catkins dates from about 1600 AD,

On the right, The Old Lamb was clearly once a pub, built in the 19th century.

On the left Ash Tree House is from around 1600 AD, possibly earlier. It has an interesting range of roofs.

On the right, thatched Old Neals is not as old as some but has probably seen 200 summers.

On the right, three connected thatched cottages, Rosemary Cottages is a somewhat extended 16th-century building.

On the left, a café may tempt you to an early break.

Immediately after the café, Roding Hall is probably from the 19th century and has been under restoration for many years.

When safe, cross the road and pass thatched 16th-century Appletree Cottage on the right. Immediately afterwards turn right onto Rands Road. There is no pavement, so keep to the right. After about 200 yards we reach an attractive hamlet with no separate name.

On the right a barn with an overhang above the road is from the 16th century. It belongs to Rands Farmhouse which comes next and is of the same era.

On the left, rather set back, Tarvatts House originated as part of a hall house in the 15th century. Note the thatched cat climbing up the chimney.

The next building, Tarvatts Chase has lots of interesting 20th-century pargetting, a mixture of flora and fauna. This large building started life in the 16th century as a barn for Tarvatts House. In the 20th century it was converted into a youth hostel and then became a private house. This is



how it looked in its days as a youth hostel - a photo taken from just beyond the building.

Our route turns here and retraces to the main road. Keep to the right, facing the traffic.

At the road junction there is an interesting collection of roadside furniture including a 19th-century water pump and a fingerpost sign manufactured in Essex by Maldon Ironworks, probably before World War II. One finger still points to Takeley Station - which closed in 1972 with the demise of the Bishop's Stortford to Braintree railway line.

When safe, cross the main road and proceed down Canfield Road, keeping to the right. We will stay on this lane for nearly a mile, descending gently.

After passing several houses, the view opens up across the lower ground through which the River Roding flows. Down to the right is a 21st-century mansion called Badgers. Beyond it, on the horizon, we can see the control tower for Stansted Airport, nearly 5 miles away and standing 206 feet or 63 metres tall.

After the righthand bend, head and to the left, we catch an occasional glimpse of the spire of Great Canfield Church, peeking above the trees. As we get closer, we can see that these trees cover a mound. The 50 foot-high mound, known as The Mount, is all that remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle, built around 1200 AD.

At a road junction, turn left, signposted to Great Canfield and Takeley. As we turn left, we leave High Roding and enter the parish of Great Canfield. Please walk on the right, especially as this gives a better view of Water Hall on the left, a cottage that dates from the 16th century.

At the next junction, follow the lane round to the right, but only for a few yards to the Great Canfield village sign, erected in 2002. With care, cross the road and retrace to the junction. Keep straight ahead into Church End. This small hamlet is the historic heart of Great Canfield. This rural parish has a well-scattered total population of around 400; only a fraction live here, around the church.

On the left we pass The Maltings, built as a hall house in the 15th century, and then Rodingbourne, probably 19th century.

Turn left through the lychgate into the churchyard - note the single arm of the clock. The church, Grade-I listed, is well worth a visit, but this probably needs to be pre-arranged with a keyholder. Much of its original 12th-century structure and decoration survives. Within the porch, we can see Norman decoration above the church doorway and carvings from Norse mythology on the columns. Inside the church, there is a 13th-century wall painting of the Virgin and Child.

Leave the churchyard through the lychgate. The building opposite dates from the 17th century; it has patterns of red tiles on the roof and walls and is now divided into three homes.

Turn left and continue up the lane. Pass beside a gate to Hall Farm and continue up the concrete track, keeping to the right concrete track and passing a large house on the left. Just before the pond, look back to the left for a better view of The Hall, a 16th-century former manor house. An extensive area including the pond and the castle beyond is protected as a Scheduled Monument, meaning that it may not be disturbed or excavated without formal approval.

Before the end of the pond, turn right on a grass path which soon passes close to a large farm building on the left.

About 30 yards beyond the building, we turn left, soon crossing a track and then passing beside the end of a larger green building on the left. This was erected in 2020/2021 and further activity meant that in early 2024 the footpath was unclear and poorly maintained and signposted. It seems simplest to keep close to the building, turning left at the corner and in about 50 yards turn right and soon left onto a grassy field-edge path with hedgerow on the left.

We go straight ahead on a grass field-edge path with hedgerow and ditch on the left.

At the end of this field go straight ahead across a footbridge with handrails. The next section of the public right of way is a well-defined path, sometimes used by farm vehicles, but its

alignment is not quite as shown on the Ordnance Survey map. Immediately after the footbridge, turn right, with ditch and hedgerow on the right.

After about 100 yards, turn left, following the field-edge path, now with a ditch on the right. In another 100 yards, at the corner of the field, turn right, following the ditch on the right.

The path now continues in a fairly straight line, beside the ditch on the right and a narrow field on the left, for about a quarter of a mile.

At the end of the field, turn left – **with a ditch on the left** – towards a solitary tree. Just before the tree, follow the field edge round to the right. In another 100 yards, turn left onto a footbridge with a single handrail to cross the River Roding. By crossing the Roding, we leave Great Canfield and return to the parish of High Roding.

From the bridge, continue ahead, slightly right, with a hedgerow on the left and climbing gently for a quarter mile. Near the top end of the field, fork left onto a narrow path with hedgerow on either side. Emerge after 100 yards and keep left on a wide track.

After about 20 yards, turn left through the hedge into the churchyard. Bear right towards the church. This is High Roding's Parish Church of All Saints. Much dates from the 13th and 14th centuries although the bellcote with two bells is a 19th-century addition, understood to have replaced a bell tower that collapsed following a lightning strike. If the church is open you are encouraged to visit.

Leave the churchyard through the gate opposite the porch and turn left along the lane. Pass a very small solar park on the right. Pass a few farm buildings on the left, a house, Bury Cottage, on the right and then a farmyard entrance on the left. Immediately afterwards turn left onto a footpath. Pass between old farm buildings on the left and a range of hay barns on the right. Just after the last building on the right, turn left and in 10 yards turn right onto a wide track with hedgerow on both sides.

This wide track, which can be churned up by farm vehicles when wet, continues fairly straight for about half a mile.

Later, the track becomes a grass field-edge path with hedgerow on the right. It then bears half right and passes a small wood on the left. Just after the wood, over to the left we can see a wooded area – this is the Mount in Great Canfield – where we were a couple of miles back. Continue with the hedgerow on the right.

At the end of this field, bear right across a footbridge with handrails and then turn right along the field edge with deep ditch and hedgerow on the right. After about 100 yards, turn right to cross a wooden footbridge with handrail, climb a couple of steps, and turn left, now with the hedgerow and deep ditch on the left.

After about 150 yards, at the end of this field, go straight ahead across a footbridge with handrails and then turn right to follow a deep ditch and hedgerow on the right. Over to the left are the houses of High Roding.

In about 150 yards, go straight ahead across a footbridge with handrail and then turn left, with hedgerow and ditch on the left. In 150 yards, at the end of this field, we reach an entrance to the car park where we started BUT we are not quite finished. Do not leave the field but turn right and follow the hedgerow on the left.

Pass the back gardens of several houses on the left. After about 150 yards, before reaching the end of the hedgerow on the left, turn left through a gap in the hedge. Pass through a tiny field and then through a gate into the grounds of the Black Lion pub. The pub dates from the 15th century, constructed originally as a hall house. Hall houses, built in the Middle Ages and until the late 16th century, consisted in their most basic form as one large room heated by a fire in a central hearth. The smoke would escape through a vent in the roof. The Black Lion has been brought up to date and in 2024 served food each day. The pub is dog-friendly.

From the pub, turn left onto the main road and cross the road with care before continuing northwards, leaving the pub behind on the left.

The range of interesting buildings on the left includes 16th-century Dragon Beam House and 18th-century Crabtree Cottage with a dog and cat sculpted above the thatched roof. Next, Salem Cottage was built as a hall house around 1400 AD and subsequently extended from time to time. Its thatched roof was destroyed by fire in 1973 and replaced with the current tiled roof.

Cross the junction with Broadfield to reach a small green with High Roding's village sign. Soon afterwards, cross the main road with care and enter the car park where we parked at the start of the walk.

You can read more about each of today's parishes on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last checked and updated 03 February 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk. Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to 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.

