



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 139

The Salings – 3.5 miles (6 kms)

This country walk explores some of Great Saling and Bardfield Saling, two parishes that merged in 2019 to become The Salings. This is a rural area. The route is quite flat and follows a mixture of quiet lanes and footpaths. There are no stiles. There are no opportunities to buy refreshment along the route although there is a tea room in the extreme south of the parish: The Grain Shed at Blake End, just North of the B1256. If you plan to visit the tea room or one of the two churches along the route, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or put on boot covers or plastic bags.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the small car park beside Great Saling Village Hall. The vehicle entrance is from Piccotts Lane which runs East from the T junction beside the green, signposted towards Shalford.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL702256 - Postcode: CM7 5DP – what3words: jokes.landed.concluded.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.

From the car park, with the village hall and plough behind, we start along the exit road from the car park but immediately turn right beside a lamp post and waste bin to follow a very short brick path onto the pavement of Piccotts Lane.

Across the road is the listed perimeter wall of the Saling Grove estate. Immediately beyond the wall are residential properties: the single-storey building once served as stables and the larger building behind was constructed in similar style to the former carriage house that burnt down in 2008. Beyond these buildings, out of sight, is the 18th-century Saling Grove mansion, pictured here in the early 1900s. Its grounds include some 50 acres (23 hectares) of listed park and gardens that were partly designed by Humphrey Repton in the late 18th century.



We turn right along the pavement. The weather vane above the larger building features what appears to be a mermaid, coloured blue and gold and with trailing hair. Next on the left is red-brick North Lodge, built in 1838 as a house and school.

We soon reach a road junction with a fingerpost sign on the small triangular green. Before turning right, we should take a look around. Immediately to our left is a gravel drive, an entrance to Saling Grove. Just along the drive, on the left, is the front of North Lodge. On the

other side of the main road, opposite the large green, is a private house with a tall lime tree in front: this was built in the 17th century and functioned as the White Hart Inn for many years and then as a tea room in the early 21st century.

Having looked around at what has changed, let's see what more history we can find. We will turn right along The Street, signposted towards Great Bardfield. We soon reach the thatched 17th-century Cobbers Thatch on the right. When safe, we should cross the road towards the group of relatively modern bungalows, Vicarage Close. In front of the bungalows, the community has installed a garden with financial support from The Hundred Parishes Society.

Here, there is a memorial erected by returning Americans in 1975. Not far behind these bungalows the United States Army constructed an airfield in 1942 to 1943, one of many that appeared all over East Anglia when the USA entered World War II. A battalion of 800 American engineers worked day and night to ensure that this was the first of the new airfields to be completed in England. It covered a large expanse of Great Saling parish and adjoining Stebbing parish. It was named after an American general, Frank Andrews, and part of it is still known as Andrewsfield and used by private light aircraft. At the peak of its operation, around 3,000 servicemen were based here, around 10 times the population of Great Saling. The bungalows have been built on the site of the airfield's former sick quarters.

We continue along the pavement. On the right are two more 17th-century cottages, Holly Cottage and Thorpe House, the latter a former store and post office.

On the left, we pass The Old Vicarage and then The Glebe. At the end of the wall for The Glebe, we fork left and leave The Street. Immediately ahead of us is a small gate into the garden of Saling Hall. This may be used by parishioners going to church but it is not a public right of way, so we will keep round to the left. Like Saling Grove, Saling Hall also has extensive gardens that are listed. Compared with listed buildings, there are relatively few listed parks and gardens and this is the only parish in England with two. We may catch a glimpse of the house but here's a full view of the building which dates from around 1600 AD.



Earlier in the 21st century, Saling Hall was owned by Hugh Johnson, a well-known journalist and horticulturalist, who would open the gardens to the public. It is now kept private.

We keep left on the gravel drive, passing The Old School on the left, a small green on the right and then Hall Green House on the left.

We ignore a public footpath that goes off to the left over a stile and pass some houses on the right. We then turn right and immediately left beside a metal gate. We follow a concrete wall on our right and in only about 30 yards, after a long cart shed on the right, we turn right through a narrow gateway into the churchyard. Ahead is the flint-faced church and to its left we can see part of Saling Hall.

If open, the parish church, dedicated to St James the Great, merits a visit. It was built in the 14th century, probably on older foundations. Its appearance has been influenced by considerable repair and renovation in the 19th century with a fine array of stained-glass windows.

After leaving through the church porch, we turn right and retrace through the churchyard to exit through the small gateway by which we entered.

We turn right onto a concrete hardstanding and then go ahead on a gravel track.

After about 100 yards, we turn left through a narrow gap in the hedgerow, signposted as a public footpath. We bear a little to the right to go along a straight, clearly-defined grass path between fields, heading towards a distant white fingerpost sign.

From this path we may well see small planes to our left as they come in to land at Andrewsfield.

When the path reaches a road, we might look back for a possible view of Saling Hall and Saling Church – although they may not to be visible when trees are in full leaf.

With care, we cross the road into Woolpits Road immediately opposite. The lane is designated as a Quiet Lane and we will stay on it for about half a mile. There are lots of attractive cottages but only one that is listed - April Cottage, on the right after 100 yards, dating from the 17th century. Opposite April Cottage a sign advises that we are entering Bardfield Saling. Over the centuries the parish has been referred to both as Bardfield Saling and Little Saling.

Towards the end of the lane we pass Woolpits Farm on the right and enter the hamlet of Crow's Green, still within Bardfield Saling. The designated Quiet Lane ends when we reach a T junction. Here, we turn right, keeping to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

In about a quarter of a mile we reach Bardfield Saling's distinctive Grade I-listed parish church, dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. It dates from the 14th century and its round tower is one of only 7 in the county of Essex (and two in The Hundred Parishes – the other is at Bartlow). If the church is open, we should venture inside – but remove or cover our boots first if they are at all muddy. A visit inside will be rewarded with an opportunity to see some

fine examples of straw plaiting, a local 19th-century craft that enabled women and children to earn good money. The east wall of the chancel was rebuilt without a window following damage caused by a rocket in WWII, presumably a consequence of being so close to an enemy target, the Andrewsfield airfield.

We leave the churchyard and return to the road. Immediately opposite is Arundels, a fine timber-framed building from the 16th century. We turn right and retrace for a few yards before turning right onto a footpath.

This field-edge path passes beside the churchyard, immediately on the right, and then continues with fencing and woodland on the right for about a quarter of a mile. We ignore a footpath off to the left and later pass beside the grounds of Parsonage Farmhouse on the right - it dates from the 16th century or earlier.

At the end of the field, we cross a wooden footbridge with metal handrail and turn right onto a lane.

On the right we pass the entrance to Parsonage Farm. On the left are two thatched cottages from the 17th century or earlier, Thatches and then March Cottage. The latter has some very artistic enhancements. In particular note the beautifully-carved gate posts.

We turn left at the road junction, past more entertainment around March Cottage. Just afterwards there is a small green with water pump and parish noticeboard. We are going to turn here.

We retrace past March Cottage and continue past the lane on the right. After about 300 yards we pass Lane Cottage on the left, dating from the 17th century. We ignore the byway immediately afterwards, opposite Bardfield Saling Church on the right. We continue just past the church and Arundels on the left. Immediately after Arundels, we turn left and soon turn right across a concreted area and past an old oil tanker immediately on the right.

We keep to the right of the field, parallel with the lane, and soon, just after a pair of telegraph poles, we follow the path round to the left. We are now on a field-edge path with hedgerow and ditch on the right. We will follow this footpath for about a mile back to Great Saling.

After a while, as the field edge bears slightly left, we pass Woolpits Farm over to the right.

Shortly before the field edge bears again to the left, we turn right to cross the ditch on an earth bridge, following a waymark and briefly heading towards a distant single-storey house. On the other side of the ditch, we turn left and continue with the ditch on the left. This section of the footpath gently bears round to the right. Beware of rabbit holes in the path.

For a good distance we have woodland or willow plantations on our left.

Fairly soon after the woodland ends we ignore a slope to the left that descends into the next field. Continue ahead for another 50 yards and now (100 yards before our field-edge bears right) we take a gentler slope to the left into the next field and immediately bear right. [If you

miss the gentler slope, there is soon a steeper descent to the next field, this one with a part-hidden waymark].

In about 100 yards, the path bears gently left, soon passes through a line of willow trees where it crosses an earth bridge over a ditch, and then bears slightly right. We continue ahead with hedgerow and ditch on the right.

After another 200 yards, we pass through a metal gate and turn left onto a lane.

Immediately on our right are the grounds of Saling Hall. In about 100 yards, we keep right, signposted towards Braintree. We are now back on Great Saling's main road, The Street. When safe, we should cross the road and continue along the pavement on the left.

In a little while we pass entrances to Saling Hall on the right. Through the final entrance, the main gate, we can see Great Saling Church.

After a bus shelter, we follow the pavement to the left, now with houses on the left and a narrow green on our right.

The pavement returns to run beside the road and 20 yards later we turn left onto a gravel path. We soon pass a children's play area on the left and stay on the path until we reach the village hall; here, we turn right with the hall on our left, and arrive back in the car park where we started this walk.

This route description, last updated 26 May 2025, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk where you can read more about The Salings parish and also download many more walk routes.

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 on the next page. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

