



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 141

Little Bardfield – 4.5 miles (7 kms)

This route passes through Little Bardfield village and the hamlet of Hawkspur Green, and ventures briefly into the neighbouring parish of Great Bardfield. It explores high open countryside in the north of the parish of Little Bardfield with extensive countryside views. Much of the route is rural, along quiet lanes and footpaths that are generally good but with some stretches that may be muddy. There is a chance of some traffic through Little Bardfield village. It is a slightly hilly walk and the footpath section passes over two stiles (there is an opportunity to miss the stiles and shorten the walk by about a mile). There is a good chance of seeing red kites and other birds. The nearest opportunities for refreshment are in Great Bardfield, a mile or so to the East.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from a small parking area beside the main road, opposite Gridiron Villas and about a quarter mile East of the entrance to the church. The parking area is about 50 yards East of the village sign. The area also serves as a bus stop, so please park at the eastern end, away from the bus stop.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL661308 - Postcode: CM7 4TR.

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 parking area, head west, soon passing the bus stop and Little Bardfield's village sign on the left. The village sign includes: the parish church; two cricketers; the Essex county coat of arms with three seaxes or scimitars on a red background; and the oxlip, a rare yellow primula that is native to a limited local area.

Cross to the opposite side of the road and continue ahead, passing a good variety of interesting residential buildings. We will comment mainly on those that are listed.

Pass the entrance to Styles on the right. Immediately afterwards is a charming row of five almshouses, built in the 18th century from funds donated by Sarah Bernard, widow of a former rector of the parish. The building at the far end of the almshouses, called The Chapel, was built around 1871 as a school and later became a library. It is now a private house.

We soon pass Appletrees on the right, an 18th-century thatched cottage. Just afterwards, on the left, is the entrance to the Little Bardfield Village Cricket Club ground. The club has established in 1919. On the right, Eagle House was once the Spread Eagle pub.



On the left, the fascinating Three Chimneys dates from the 13th or 14th century and started life as a hall house. The character of the building is complemented by the interesting topiary in front. A medieval hall house typically had a high central hall with an open hearth in the centre. The smoke from the fire would rise up through a vent in the roof. There might be rooms on either side, probably an upper and lower floor. Three Chimneys seems to fit this classic layout.

A little further along on the left is a very old-looking house with a fine chimney stack, Guivers. It is not listed so there is no publicly-available information about its origins. After passing Hall Farm on the right, we turn right, signposted to St Katharine's Church. Immediately after turning right, note the interesting and detailed weather vane on the left – could this be our local highwayman, Dick Turpin?



As we head towards the parish church, to its left is Little Bardfield Hall, the former manor house which dates from the 16th century or earlier. On the right we pass several newer houses that have been built on the site of a former country club and night club which in the 1960s hosted performances by many popular recording artists including Dusty Springfield and Deep Purple.

At the end of the drive, pass through the metal gate into the churchyard. The church is listed at Grade I and is certainly worth a visit if open. It is believed to date from around 1040 AD. The tower and nave are Saxon and there are occasional Roman bricks and tiles in the walls. Remedial work and improvements have been carried out over many centuries and the organ is believed to be 300 years old.

Leave the churchyard through the gate by which we entered, retrace along the lane for only about 20 paces and then turn left onto a grass path, immediately before a driveway. There is a hedgerow on the left and fence on the right. After only about 20 yards, turn left, signposted as a public footpath. Continue with hedgerow on the left and fence on the right. After a while we walk alongside a wall on the left. Turn left to keep the wall on the left.

After a while the tall wall takes on a winding “crinkle crankle” design. It encloses the garden of Little Bardfield Hall and dates from the 18th or 19th centuries.

We start to pass a series of small information panels. These are the work of LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), an organisation that encourages sustainable farming practices.

We pass a pond on the right and about 100 yards later our path crosses a ditch on a wooden bridge with metal handrails. Immediately after the bridge, turn left to follow a ditch on the left.

After about 100 yards, follow the field edge round to the right, keeping the ditch on our left. The grass path climbs gently beside the ditch which is sometimes lined with horse tail or mare’s tail, a prehistoric and invasive plant.

After about 300 yards, the path reaches a wide track where we turn left. Do look back down the hill – you should just be able to see the spire of St Katharine’s above the trees.

Continue along this clear track, gently uphill, after a while joining a tarmac roadway that comes in from the left. Continue ahead towards a large farm building whose roof is covered in solar panels. At more than 300 feet or 100 metres above sea level, we can enjoy extensive views for the next mile or so.

Pass farm buildings on the right and a farmhouse on the left – The Hydes, dating from the 15th or 16th century. At the end of the farm buildings, turn right along a wide concrete roadway. Then, at the end of the farm buildings on the right, turn half left, still on the roadway.

After about 50 yards, bear half right along a clear gravel track, passing a notice that proclaims this to be a LEAF demonstration farm, launched in 2017. We continue along this wide track for about a mile, initially with fencing on each side.

After a while we walk alongside a field with an extensive solar farm on our left, installed in 2016. Towards the end of the solar farm, just after an oak tree on our right, there may be a view to the left, through the hedgerow, between the solar panels towards the tall white tower of Little Sampford church, about a mile to our north. On a fine winter’s day, with no leaves on the trees, you may be able to see the windmill and church at Great Bardfield, about 2 miles away to our right.

Near the end of the solar park, keep on the field edge path with hedgerow and trees on the left. Do not fork left onto a parallel, tree-lined path as this can become very muddy.

After descending gently, and shortly before reaching a building, turn left off the field and then right, down a short drive to reach a lane. We are now in the hamlet of Hawkspur Green.

Turn right to pass through this hamlet, part of Little Bardfield parish.

After the hamlet, pass an entrance to a farm on the right and, in another 100 yards, turn left onto a narrow lane that is not signposted except to advise that there is a ford ahead. Before proceeding, please consider the next paragraph . . .

[Should you wish to shorten the route by a mile and miss two stiles, do not turn left but continue ahead on the lane for about 600 yards. Pass Moor Hall on the right and take the first turning on the right, re-joining the route where indicated below, on page 5]

About 200 yards after turning left, the lane turns right, crossing Langford Bridge over the River Pant. This appears to be where there may be a ford if the river is running high. There is a footbridge to the right of the road, crossing the river somewhat more elevated than the road, but when last viewed in 2023 the footbridge seemed to be closed.

On crossing the river, we leave Little Bardfield and continue along the lane, Cook's Lane, in the parish of Great Bardfield for about half a mile.

Along the lane, we pass Stone Cottage and some lovely old oak trees. Later, after farm buildings on the right, we pass 18th-century Beslyn's Barn on the left. Behind it, mostly hidden, is thatched Beslyn's Cottage, a former granary built in the 17th century.

At a T junction, turn right, signposted towards Great Bardfield.

After about 100 yards the lane bends left, but at this point we turn right, over a stile, onto a signposted footpath, immediately passing beneath another magnificent oak tree.

Follow the field-edge path gently downhill with hedgerow on the left. At the bottom of the field, turn left over a stile and continue with the River Pant on the right. This river rises near Saffron Walden and flows generally south-east to Bocking where it becomes the River Blackwater and continues eastwards to flow into the North Sea near Maldon.

After only about 20 yards, turn right, down a short and sometimes slippery slope, to cross the river on a concrete footbridge with metal handrails – back into Little Bardfield parish.

At the far side of the bridge, bear right and continue along the footpath. This short stretch of path through trees can be muddy at times. In 2023, the path passed beside poisonous giant hogweed plants – pictured here. They should not be touched as they can cause serious damage to the skin.

Emerge from the trees and continue straight ahead along the field edge. The path soon joins a clear track; continue ahead with hedgerow on the right.

After about 300 yards, pass beside a metal gate to join a road. Turn right with care. This short, winding stretch of road does carry traffic.



Straight ahead is the impressive Chequers: early 17th-century with interesting topiary and a chimney stack that supports four separate tall chimneys.

Do not follow the main road round to the left but bear right, signposted towards Hawkspur Green which we visited earlier on this walk. As we pass Chequers, note the chequered shield up on the gable on this side of the house.

On the opposite side of the road is the entrance to The Old Rectory, a substantial red-brick house from around 1800 AD. Between 1910 and 1940 this building was used as a theological training college for young priests; some 300 trained here.

Next on the right is Glebe Barn, also dating from around 1800.

Continue along this lane, soon passing a more modern crinkle crankle wall on the left, behind the flintstone wall. The crinkle crankle wall can most easily be seen from the entrance to Glebe House, looking back to the left.

[This is the point where the route is rejoined by anyone who cut out the section with two stiles]

Soon, we turn left onto a lane and climb for a hundred yards or so until we reach a small grass triangle at a road junction. Now to our left is 16th-century Wainsfords Farm (with a Victorian postbox outside, just around the corner).

Keep straight ahead, bearing right to join a busier road. Stay on this road for a few hundred yards. The road meanders so you may like to switch sides from time to time so you can see and be seen.

Soon, we return to the village of Little Bardfield, passing thatched Gridiron Cottage (previously called Gridiron Hall) on the right. According to its listing details, Gridiron Cottage was built around 1800 AD with medieval timbers.

Soon afterwards, we return to where we parked.

You can read more about Little Bardfield on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 28 May 2023, 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 on the next page. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

