



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 143

Berden and Stocking Pelham – 4.9 miles (8 kms)

This countryside walk passes through the parishes and villages of Berden in Essex and Stocking Pelham in Hertfordshire. It also goes beside a few fields in the parish of Brent Pelham & Meesden. The route is on quiet lanes and footpaths that are generally well surfaced but with some stretches that may be muddy. There are no stiles. There is nowhere to purchase food or drink along the way.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes in the village of Berden, about 200 yards south of the village sign, on The Street, close to the start of the drive to Berden Church. There is usually space to park considerably along this road.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL469296 - Postcode: CM23 1AU.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.

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

Before setting off, and while boots are still clean, please take this opportunity to visit Berden's parish church, dedicated to St Nicholas. The building is listed at Grade I. It dates from the 12th century, has a Norman nave, 13th-century chancel and 15th-century tower. Inside hangs a fine embroidery completed in 2000 AD and depicting many of the parish's buildings and activities. In the churchyard, you may be able to find the gravestone of Henry Trigg. He was the parish constable in 1814 when he was shot dead by burglars from Bishop's Stortford.

Return to The Street. When the church drive reaches the road, note the building immediately opposite, Church View Cottage. It displays the coat of arms of Christ's Hospital, a charity school also known as the Bluecoat School. Christ's Hospital owned property in the village in the 19th and early 20th century. Now, turn right, heading south.

Soon, turn right up the drive towards Berden Hall and The Granary. The house on the left also has a Christ's Hospital coat of arms. The drive is also a footpath for a short distance. The path turns left just before the gate to Berden Hall, but we will turn around here. Berden Hall was another property that was once owned by Christ's Hospital. This substantial red-brick house was built around 1580 and is distinguished by the three gables on each side of the building. The house has changed hands quite often: in the later 19th century its head, one Edward Roberts, farmed half of the parish. The present owners kindly host Berden's annual fete.

Just before the gate to Berden Hall, turn and retrace to the road. Turn right to continue in a southerly direction.

Further along the lane, we pass another pair of houses with the Christ's Hospital coat of arms, dated 1864.

Soon afterwards, the lane turns left but we keep straight ahead, signposted to Brick House End. Soon pass beneath the electricity transmission line – we will meet it again later.

On the left, we pass a pond and then The Crump, a thatched, former farmhouse from the 16th or 17th century, now extended and modernised. Out of site, behind The Crump, is an ancient earthwork now protected as a Scheduled Monument. It is a 'ringwork': a small moated and fortified site dating from the 12th century or earlier.

Immediately after The Crump, turn right onto a lane. After a while the lane becomes the entrance to Park House Farm. Keep ahead, passing Berden water tower on the right. The bridleway passes through a farmyard area and then continues straight ahead on a wide grassy track. After about 50 yards, ignore the footpath to the right and keep straight ahead.

When the field edge bears left, bear right into bushes and then left, now following a straight path for some distance through fairly young woodland. Over to our left we can see Pelham Electricity Transformer Station. This large establishment, constructed in the 1960s, is part of the National Grid, redistributing electricity to balance supply and demand. Every giant pylon for miles around is connected to here, carrying a total of six high voltage power lines across the countryside.

Over to the right, the series of white units is a giant battery. This unit helps to balance energy supply and demand by storing surplus electricity and releasing it as and when required. The footpath passes what appears to be a former brick-built sentry box.

The path reaches a road, the approach road to the substation on our left. Our route goes straight across the road but, first, take a few paces towards the metal fencing. There, possibly partly hidden behind containers, you will find county signs, side by side, for both Essex and Hertfordshire. The county boundary passes between the signs and heads South through the substation.

Retrace back up the road a few yards and turn left onto the footpath (immediately opposite where we came onto the road). By crossing the road, our route has crossed from Essex to Hertfordshire, from Berden to Stocking Pelham. The footpath goes through Pelham Nature Reserve, supported by National Grid.

Pass picnic tables on the left and a pond on the right. Immediately after the pond, follow the path to the right, pass through a gateway and pass between ponds and through a short stretch of woodland. Emerge onto a green, Crabb's Green.

Cross the green and turn right onto a roadway, Crabb's Lane. Pass 17th-century Crabb's Green Farmhouse on the right and follow the lane round to the left. Stay on this lane for a quarter mile.

At the end of Crabb's Lane we come into Stocking Pelham village. On the left is thatched 17th-century Silver Birches and on the right 18th-century White House Farm, just before a small triangular green with oak tree.

Turn left onto the road, Ginns Road. We recommend that you cross when safe and continue, facing any oncoming traffic. On the right, we pass two or three older houses and then come to several large 21st-century houses that were built in the grounds of what was The Cock Inn, a 16th-century thatched pub that was destroyed by fire in 2008. One of these 'houses' is due to become the replacement pub but, at the time of writing, it waits to find an owner. On the left is 17th-century Cockswood.

Pass the turning on the right and follow the road round to the left, signposted towards Furneux Pelham – pronounced "Furnix". We pass the former telephone kiosk on the right – now housing an informal book exchange.

We soon pass Stocking Pelham Village Hall on the left. This was built as the village school in 1874 and continued as such until 1918. It then served a variety of community purposes before becoming the village hall in 1955.

Continue gently downhill, passing Croft on the left with a neat lychgate entrance. Soon afterwards, we leave the 30mph section of road and, in another 100 yards the road bends to the left. At this point, turn right across a ditch and through the hedgerow onto Stocking Pelham Footpath 001.

Turn right along a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right.

At the end of the field, keep to the right and cross a wooden footbridge with wooden handrails onto a lane, where we turn left.

Continue along the lane until we reach the church. Shortly before it, we pass Stocking Pelham Hall, built 1877, and then a 17th-century barn, much larger than the church and now residential. The parish church is dedicated to St Mary. The present building dates from the 14th century, but the circular churchyard suggests that this has been sacred ground since Saxon times, many years before. The size of the church reflects the fact that it serves a small community, Stocking Pelham's population never having risen above 200. If the church is open, please do visit. The belltower has just one bell, cast in London around 1390 AD and one of the oldest in Hertfordshire.

From the church, turn left and retrace along the lane.

Pass the footbridge on the right where we joined the lane and in another 100 yards turn left onto a footpath, crossing a wooden footbridge with wooden handrails and passing through a kissing gate. Keep straight ahead with a hedgerow on the right.

At the end of the field, pass beneath an oak tree and through another kissing gate. Here, there is a notice declaring that the field we have just walked through is "a medieval ridge and furrow pasture which is being managed to maintain its historical interest and improve its value for wildlife". Keep straight ahead on a wide field-edge path with hedgerow and a series of oak trees on the right.

As we walk along this field, to our right is Stocking Farm, a large 17th-century farmhouse.

Soon after Stocking Farm, we reach woodland at the end of the field. At the corner of the field, we turn right over a wooden footbridge with no handrails and, on the other side, immediately turn left.

We soon come to the end of the field and, from the top left corner, we must turn left along a short stretch of permissive path past a pond on the left. This short path is sometimes churned up by horse riders.

At the end of this short section of path we come into a field where we turn right, at the same time passing from Stocking Pelham into the parish of Brent Pelham & Meesden.

Follow the field-edge path with hedgerow on the right, again passing many oak trees.

Over to the left, about 600 yards away, the tall 17th-century chimney stacks of Beeches gradually come more and more into view.

After following this field edge for about 600 yards (since passing from Stocking Pelham into Brent Pelham), we reach a corner of our long field, where the hedgerow turns sharp left. From this corner of the field, turn right down a short steep bank and across a ditch, onto a new field. Keep straight ahead, now heading East, with a hedgerow on the right.

After about 300 yards, at the end of this field, go straight ahead through the hedgerow and cross a ditch. By crossing the ditch, we have returned to Essex and to Berden. Immediately turn right. In about 30 yards, turn left, keeping a hedge on the right.

After about 100 yards, follow the field edge round to the left. In another 50 yards, we reach a waymark and turn sharp right through the hedgerow onto a clear path through woodland. Soon, the path emerges from the woodland onto Dewes Green.

Keep straight ahead across the green, passing 16th-century Dewes Green Farm on the left. Continue ahead, now on Dewes Green Road, passing Lint House on the right and then Berden Priory Farm over to the left.

This lane brings us back into Berden, with newer houses on the right and, to the left the thatched Old King's Head, a former pub and now beautifully maintained. The timber-framed and plastered building dates from the 17th century.

At the end of the lane, turn left and cross with care to the pavement. Pass Vicarage Lane on the right. When the pavement ends, cross with care back to the left and pass Bonnetting Lane.

On the left we pass several houses dating from the 16th or 17th century, the first of which is Martin's Green, a former farmhouse whose upper storey is jettied out beyond the lower storey.

On the right is the former post office and store, dating from the 17th or 18th century and retaining its shop front.

As we approach a junction, cross to the right – with care. Turn right, signposted to Lt London, and look back to the adjoining Ivy Cottage and Holly Cottage which date from the 16th century. On the green is Berden's 3-dimensional village sign, featuring a piglet and wheatsheaf.

Continue past more attractive and varied houses. We come to a row of houses called The Raven, taking their name from the pub which once stood here. Cross the entrance to St Nicholas Field and soon return to where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parishes of Berden, Stocking Pelham and Brent Pelham & Meesden on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 20 February 2022, 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.

