



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 145

The Sampfords – 4.5 miles

This walk, entirely in the parish of The Sampfords, explores the village of Great Sampford and some of the countryside between Great Sampford and the tiny hamlet of Little Sampford. The route passes two Grade I parish churches at Little Sampford and Great Sampford. There may be an opportunity to visit them, so please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. You may like to purchase refreshment at The Red Lion in Great Sampford which in 2025 was open for lunch each day except Sunday. If you bring your own refreshment, the route passes several seats.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes on Hall Road, just north of Little Sampford's church. The lane is quite wide and quiet with ample space for parking on one side. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL653337 - Postcode: CB10 2FN – What3words: spicy.premature.upper
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Before setting off, and before boots risk getting muddy, you might like to visit Little Sampford's Grade I-listed parish church. It was built in the 14th century, around the time of the Black Death. The tower has a short central spire and mini-spires on each of the four corners. Inside, there are some interesting ancient memorials including one in marble to Bridget Peck.



Beside the church entrance, the village sign for Little Sampford features a kingfisher and Little Sampford Church.

Immediately opposite the church drive is an entrance to Little Sampford Hall, built as recently as 1936 after the demolition of its 16th-century predecessor.

With Little Sampford Church on the right, descend along the road, Hall Road, keeping to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

Towards the bottom of the hill, pass 17th-century Green Farm on the right and soon cross the River Pant.

Before we reach a road junction, we should cross to the left and then fork left. We soon reach the B1053 which we should cross with care and then turn left, passing Green Farm Dairy on the right.

We soon reach a road junction where we will turn right. There was no signpost in 2025. On the opposite corner, the thatched cottage dates from the 17th century, with five gabled dormers protruding from the thatch along the front. We turn right onto a narrow lane which climbs steadily for some distance. For part of the way, the lane is sunken well below the fields on each side.

Towards the top of the climb, a look back straight down the road may reveal the top of Little Sampford Church, amongst trees a little below the horizon.

At the top of the climb, we pass red-brick Sampford Lodge on the right, on a bend.

Pass Walnut Tree Barn on the left, dating from the 17th century. Just afterwards we pass another 17th-century house called Maynards, seated on a moated site. Just after Maynards we turn left onto a grassy footpath, continuing beside the moat on the left. The whole moated site is protected against development and unauthorised excavation through its designation as a Scheduled Monument. The site was associated with the family of one Symon Maynard in 1327 AD.

Soon after the moat ends, our path goes straight ahead between hedgerows. (In the past, this stretch of footpath has sometimes been overgrown with brambles – if that is the case, turn right into a field and then, in just a few yards, turn left to follow the field edge path).

The hedge-lined path emerges onto the field where we turn left along the field edge. We soon pass beneath a power line.

At the end of the field we cross a footbridge with metal handrails to reach a lane. We turn left onto the lane, passing a bungalow called Hawksmead on the left and then two 17th-18th-century thatched cottages on the right: Hawkes Cottage and then Sudbury Cottage.

Sudbury Cottage has a blue plaque to the English composer Alan Rawsthorne. Rawsthorne is buried in Thaxted cemetery. He was a successful composer for many years and wrote several scores for films in the 1940s and 1950s including *The Cruel Sea*. We are perhaps familiar with “Cats”, Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical based on the T.S. Eliot collection of Old Possum poems. It premiered in 1981. Yet twenty-seven years before that event, another musical version of Cats was presented to the public. Alan Rawsthorne was invited to set six of the poems to music for a concert for children to be presented at the Edinburgh Festival in 1954. A recording is available on Amazon!

Soon after Sudbury Cottage, a footpath is signposted to the left. Immediately opposite, a less visible sign indicates the footpath to the right. We turn right onto this field-edge path, but beware!. In 2025 the farmer had, unhelpfully, harrowed right up to the edge of the field. THIS NOTE WILL HOPEFULLY BE REMOVED SOON: IN SEPTEMBER 2025 THE FOOTPATH APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN DIVERTED AND NEITHER THE OFFICIAL ROUTE NOR THE DIVERTED ROUTE WERE PROPERLY MAINTAINED FOR SOME DISTANCE. IF THE FIELD-EDGE ROUTE IS TOO CHALLENGING, PLEASE RETURN TO THE LANE AND TURN RIGHT TO CONTINUE ALONG THE LANE IN THE ORIGINAL DIRECTION OF TRAVEL. AFTER ABOUT 600 YARDS, TURN RIGHT ONTO A SOMEWHAT BUSIER

ROAD (B1053) AND IN ANOTHER 300 YARDS REJOIN THE ROUTE DESCRIPTION AT THE END OF THE NEXT PARAGRAPH.

If you stick with our official route - follow the field edge round to the left and then keep straight ahead for some distance - through two or three fields with hedgerow on the right and then alongside wire fencing and garden on the left. Eventually, we pass a house on the left and go through a metal gate to reach a road, the B1053 (which we crossed about a mile ago). THIS IS WHERE THE SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVE ROUTE REJOINS THE OFFICIAL ROUTE.

We turn right onto the B1053 and continue for about 100 yards until the main road turns left at a mini crossroads. Here, we leave the B1053 by going straight ahead into Sparepenny Lane. We soon ignore a footpath on the right, a section of the Turpin Trail, keeping straight ahead on the lane.

Pass the entrance on the left to The Sampfords Cricket Club and, later, a row of bungalows on the right. We continue climbing, passing several thatched cottages on the left including Gill Mill from the 17th or 18th century.

Sparepenny Lane, a public byway, becomes poorly surfaced for a while and then descends to meet the B1051 where we turn sharp left on the pavement.

We now enter the main settlement of Great Sampford, most of which is designated as a conservation area to protect its character and heritage.

We soon pass three 18th-century cottages: Mill Thatch on the left, Rose Cottage on the right and then Windmill Cottage on the left.

Keep straight ahead on the pavement which separates from the roadway and gradually rises above it. On the right, we pass the fully-thatched Briars and half-thatched Carpenters, both dating from the 18th century, possibly the 17th.

We pass a seat beside the pavement. Soon, at the top of the climb, the first building in this part of the village is The Nurses House on the left. It was once the home of the district nurse.

On the right, Hardy's was formerly the Cock Inn, built around 1686.

On the right, we pass 16th-century Stow Farmhouse with tall chimneys and unusual pargetting.

On the left, we pass the entrance to The Corn Mill and Mill Hatch. To the rear of the garden, the base survives of the windmill which once stood here. The mill building is now thatched.

When safe, we should cross the road and continue along the pavement on the right

We pass the Baptist Church, set back on the left and built in 1875 of light-coloured stone. To the left of the church is the Old Baptist Hall, which for a while served as the manse, the home of the Baptist minister.

We reach Great Sampford's village sign – very similar in appearance to that of Little Sampford except for the depiction now of Great Sampford church. Behind the sign, the thatched bungalow is called Churchside. Just afterwards, we bear right and then left to enter the churchyard.

Great Sampford's Grade I parish church dates from the first half of the 14th century and is said to have been built by the Knights Hospitaller, a Christian military order founded at the time of the Crusades. The ancient main door is reputed to date from the time the church was constructed.

You are encouraged to visit the church if it is open – but first please remove or cover boots if they are muddy. Inside, if you turn immediately right you will come to a particularly fine arch between the south aisle and the chapel: the capitals of the arch piers are decorated with fascinating creatures: a human face looks rather shocked, perhaps having been bitten by a dragon. The church's east window is large and impressive.

After visiting, turn left from the church porch and left again to leave the churchyard and then go right past the village sign to reach the road. Before crossing, note the big house straight ahead, The Manor House, displaying the date 1595. The building immediately to the left of The Manor House has a cameo high up on the wall. It appears to depict Queen Victoria on an occasion when she was not amused.

Cross with care to The Manor House and turn right to the road junction. Turn left onto the B1053, signposted towards Finchingfield and Great Bardfield. On the right, Bull House used to be the Black Bull pub until the 20th century.

On the left is 17th-18th century Horrells, with steps up to the front door. A little further along we pass thatched Burleys, 1824. Next on the left is the Red Lion Inn, built of white brick in the early 19th century and a possible stop for refreshment.

From The Red Lion, with care we cross the B1053 and go straight ahead into a short residential road called Homebridge.

In about 50 yards, rather than follow the road round to the left, we keep straight ahead on a footpath between wooden fences, signposted as the Turpin Trail (a local route named after a locally-born highwayman Dick Turpin).

Soon, we cross over a wooden footbridge with no handrails into a field where we continue straight ahead on a well-defined path across the field.

We keep straight ahead with a ditch on the left. After a hundred yards, we turn left to leave this field, crossing a wooden footbridge with no handrails over the ditch and then turning right into a new field. We follow the edge of the field with hedgerow on the right and almost immediately passing beneath a major power line.

At the end of the field, we stay on the path as it turns left, but do pause to look to the right where you may see this waterfall. The water, if flowing, comes from a reservoir into the River Pant, having been pumped from near the Wash in Norfolk, thereby balancing a surplus of water there with a shortage in Essex. The pumping scheme started in the 1960s and mainly transfers water to two much larger Essex reservoirs at Abberton and Hanningfield.



We continue with the ditch on our right – which we now know is the River Pant. (Further downstream, the Pant becomes the River Blackwater.)

On the left, we pass beside a wood and then keep straight ahead with the Pant on the right.

When we reach the corner of the field, we turn right over a wooden footbridge with a single metal handrail.

About 50 yards after the footbridge, we reach a distinctive concrete footbridge with steps and metal handrails on our right – but we ignore it and keep straight ahead.

After a short distance, we pass through a gateway on the right and go across a modest wooden footbridge over a shallow ditch. Now we keep to the right of the field, with the Pant not far away on our right and a view of tennis courts and a tall house over to the left – it appears to be The Old Rectory.

At the end of this field we go across another wooden footbridge with no handrails and immediately turn sharp right to go through a metal kissing gate.

Please pay close attention to the next few paragraphs as the route is not always obvious as it passes through a number of grassy fields. Sometimes the ground is somewhat indented, indicating where it has been walked.

Having turned right through the kissing gate, we walk through a long grassy field, usually with no clearly-marked path. We start by bearing half left, heading towards woodland in the distance.

We then head towards a gap between two sections of woodland.

When the woodland on the left ends, we turn left, still in the same field, heading uphill with the woodland on our left. Within 100 yards, and before reaching a gateway, we turn right, away from the wood and heading across the narrow field towards a gate on the far side. We keep to the right of a pond and go through the metal kissing gate.

After the gate, we turn half left.

In about 50 yards we pass a couple of ancient trees on our left. Here, we bear half left, heading towards a gateway.

Within 100 yards, we cross a solid concrete bridge with metal handrails (over the Pant) and pass through the gate.

Now we turn half right and head uphill across a field towards a fence with another metal kissing gate.

Having reached the gate, please pause and look back – Great Sampford church is visible just beyond a pylon.

After passing through the kissing gate we continue ahead, now on a cross-field path that may be muddy, heading uphill towards a house.

From here, the route is more obvious!

Shortly before reaching the first building we go through a metal gate. We continue ahead past a bungalow on the left and join a concrete driveway.

We pass through a metal gateway and follow the driveway between farm buildings, some quite ancient, keeping watch for moving farm vehicles.

To the left, over the wall, we can see an older house with fancy brickwork.

Having passed through the farmyard, a sign on the left tells us we have now left Little Sampford Hall. We reach a lane where we turn left.

We should cross to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

We now get occasional glimpses of the front of Little Sampford Hall.

After about 100 yards we reach a road junction where we turn left into Hall Road, signposted towards Great Sampford and Finchingfield.

Very soon we reach the entrance on the right to Little Sampford's parish church. If you did not visit it at the start of the walk, you might like to do so now – but please remove or cover boots if they are muddy.

From Little Sampford church, turn right along the road and in just a few yards return to where this walk description started.

If you started elsewhere along the route, please skip to page 1 to resume the route description.

This route description (last updated 06 October 2025) was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk where you can read short introductions to the parish of The Sampfords and Dick Turpin and an article on local rivers - and find many more walk routes that can be downloaded.

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.

