



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 151

Sheering and Hatfield Heath – 4.9 miles (8 kms)

The parish of Sheering comprises two main settlements: Sheering and Lower Sheering. They are a mile apart and were separated by the construction of the M11 motorway in the 1970s. This walk mainly explores countryside to the southeast of Sheering village, with half of the distance being in the adjacent parish of Hatfield Heath. The route is a mixture of lanes and public footpaths, some of which may be muddy. There are two stiles. The Cock public house is close to the start and finish. Also, there may be an opportunity to visit Sheering parish church, so please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the car park for the village hall and playing fields in the centre of Sheering. The narrow entrance to the car park is on the north side of The Street, B183, near The Cock Inn and around 20 yards West of the war memorial.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL507140 - Postcode: CM22 7LT.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.

Leave the car park via the single vehicle entrance. Cross The Street when safe and turn left to the War Memorial.

Before we turn right, do take a look at the memorial. Its inscriptions honour 120 men of the parish who joined His Majesty's forces in the Great War, of whom 20 died, and also the women who nursed the sick and wounded.

From the war memorial, proceed down Church Lane, passing the Cock public house on the left. The pub was built as a private house in the 17th century.

We will walk along this lane for about a mile, heading south. The first few hundred yards have mostly larger and relatively modern houses, some with fancy gates, although we do pass one on the right, Redrick House dated 1992, which has interesting brickwork and pargetting.

On the left, we come to St Mary's Church Room and a signposted footpath for Sheering Country Walk. Turn left here and almost immediately right into the churchyard. We are immediately struck by the advice around the clock on the side of the church tower: "WORK AND PRAY". As we approach the tower, we see another clock face on the front of the tower, with more guidance: "TODAY IS YOURS". They were installed in the late 1940s as a memorial to those who served in the Second World War.

The church is Grade I listed and is mainly from the 14th century. It is usually closed, but you are encouraged to visit if it is open. In any case, turn left past the church to the porch which has entertaining gargoyles.

Return from the porch and bear left to rejoin the lane. Immediately on the left is the entrance to The Old Rectory which dates from the 18th century. Soon, we will get better views of this rather unusual building.

After the lane turns left, there is a view of the back of The Old Rectory with its extreme contrast of architectural styles. The lane now enters open countryside. Do look back from time to time to view the setting of The Old Rectory. After a while, the church tower appears behind and above it.

After a quarter mile, we cross Sheering Bridge over Pincey Brook, which flows from left to right. The brook rises near Stansted Airport and meanders for a total distance of 13 miles before discharging into the River Stort at Sawbridgeworth.

When the lane turns left, we fork right into High Lane.

We pass Wheelers Farm on the right. The large timber barn to the left dates from the early 17th century and has apparently changed little in its 400 years.

About 200 yards later, the lane turns left. After about 50 yards, look back for a final view of The Old Rectory, now about three-quarters of a mile behind us.

Pass a thatched cottage on the right, dating from around 1600 AD and now with thatched garage and thatched dog kennel. Soon afterwards, a terrace of dwellings called Slate Cottages bears a date AD1649, although they seem much newer and are not listed.

Soon afterwards, we pass imperceptibly from Sheering parish into Hatfield Heath parish.

We come into the small hamlet of Newman's End. Before a road junction, on our right are Red Tile Cottages, a terrace of houses standing sideways to the road. They started life around 1600 AD and were gradually expanded until the 19th century.

At the junction, turn right and soon reach Smallways Farm on the right. When safe, cross to the left and turn left down the lane beside a tiny green with a 19th-century water pump.

Immediately pass Chestnut Cottage on the right and soon come to a pond on the left in front of 17th-century Matching Parsonage Farm. Do not go up the private drive but turn right onto a bridleway, initially with a hedge on the left.

After about 150 yards, we turn left – but before turning, pause to look ahead to Matching Church [Walk number 116 passes this]. Now turn left (there is a signpost half-hidden in the hedge) onto the field-edge path with hedgerow on the left.

After a quarter mile, when the field ends, continue on the path round to the right, with woodland on our left.

After another 100 yards, the field edge turns right again but we follow the footpath, very sharp left, into the wood.

We soon pass through this narrow wood and cross a stile into a field that often has sheep. We bear right on a bridge over a ditch and continue along a narrow field.

Bear to the right to leave the field and turn immediately left, following a stream on the left. In about 15 yards, cross the stream. (There are new willow trees beside the stream to the right). On the other side of the stream, head half right and in 50 yards pass beside a fence around a pond on the left.

Keep to the left, then cross a stile and climb up to a field where we turn left. Keep the ditch and hedgerow to the left and in about 200 yards we reach a lane. This is Matching Road, which some drivers rush along. Matching is to our right and Hatfield Heath to our left. When safe, cross the road and turn left. As usual, we recommend walking on the right to face oncoming traffic.

We pass Bridge Cottages on our right and, further up the hill, Downswood Studio.

At the top of a rise, we pass the entrance to Down Hall on our left. Through the imposing gateway, a straight drive leads to the hotel, spa and restaurant (afternoon teas a speciality). Immediately opposite is a matching, and even longer, straight drive towards Parvilles Farm. We continue ahead on the road.

We pass several larger properties and descend quite steeply. As we approach a bend to the right, when safe, cross to the left in readiness for turning left. Ahead, up the hill, is a newish, imposing house called St Clouds. Our road crosses Pincey Brook again, and just afterwards we turn left onto a public footpath.

We follow the field edge with Down Hall Wood on the left. Beyond it is the hotel. Our path is part of the Stort Valley Way. We follow this wide grass path for nearly half a mile as it meanders in tune with Pincey Brook.

When the wide grass path ends, at the end of the wood, our route turns right on a wide path between fields, climbing steadily. After a while, we pass a small reservoir on the right.

At the top of the climb, a permissive path comes in from the right. We follow the track round to the left. To our right is Shrubbs Farm.

Soon pass a bungalow and lots of farm buildings on the right and continue straight ahead on a path with a ditch on the right.

About 50 yards before the track turns left at the end of the field, turn right to cross over the ditch and then turn left to continue with the ditch on the left.

In another 50 yards, bear slightly right and then left to cross the ditch and then continue ahead, now with hedgerow on the right. We have just crossed back into Sheering parish.

Pass a recreation ground on the right, then pass an entrance into the ground. About 50 yards later, we turn right through the hedge to continue along a footpath with hedgerow on either side. Pass an entrance on the right to Willow House and soon reach the main road.

We are now back in Sheering village, on The Street, B183. When safe, cross the road to Pump Cottage. Outside is a listed 19th-century cast iron water pump.

Turn left on the pavement, facing the traffic. Soon pass a small cafe on the left [if you are tempted to cross, please beware of the traffic]. Pass 17th-century Crown House on the left. We need to turn right after house number 1, but first continue along the main road for a short distance to the Sheering village sign.

The sign was erected in 2002 AD. It focuses on Sheering's mention in the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, displaying its recorded name *Sceringa* and depicting various assets recorded at that time: a mule, an ass and three beehives.

We now turn to retrace our steps, but first note the taller thatched house opposite the village sign. Start to retrace and note the next thatched dwelling, much shorter and now two properties: Thatched Cottage and Meadowcroft. This property was built in the 16th century as a hall house. Originally, it would have had a hearth in the middle of the building and smoke would have risen to exit from openings at each end of the roof. It was probably not long after construction that a chimney was installed and a floor inserted to make it two shallow storeys, as now. The building was converted into two dwellings in the 19th century.

Continue to retrace for a short distance and then turn left (just before number 1) onto a gravel drive. We are back on the Stort Valley Way for a while. We soon reach another ancient building on the left: Daubneys Farmhouse. Like the thatched former hall house, Daubneys was also constructed in the mid 16th century, but as a two-storey dwelling from the outset. The building's official listing tells us that, after nearly 500 years, it retains a good number of original features.

Continue straight ahead on a field-edge track. After about 50 yards, it appears that our path turns to the left but this is not a public right of way. We keep straight ahead on a waymarked cross-field path for about 150 yards. [Should this path be too muddy, we could retrace to the main road, turn right and after about 200 yards turn right into the car park where we started].

At the far side of the field, go straight ahead across a ditch and then turn immediately left, leaving the Stort Valley Way. We now walk beside a ditch and line of mature trees on our left. Ahead, we can see traffic on the M11 motorway.

At the end of the trees, we turn left, keeping the ditch on the left. Immediately, bear half right to leave the field, cross the ditch and then turn left. In about 30 yards, turn left onto a footbridge with metal handrail to cross the ditch. Turn immediately right, keeping the trees and ditch on our right. Keep straight ahead, with the woodland's edge just to our right.

When the wood on our left comes to an end, we enter a playing field. Ahead, across the recreation ground, is the village hall and car park where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parishes of Sheering and Hatfield Heath on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last checked and updated 29 January 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.

