



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 174

Linton – Great Chesterford – Linton 9.5 miles (15 kms)

This walk is mainly on good tracks through open countryside, crossing the high ground between the villages of Linton in Cambridgeshire and Great Chesterford in Essex. The route could be started from either end, although the route as described is likely to make better use of sunshine (not so much in the eyes). Each village has more than one pub, but if relying on one for refreshment their opening days and hours should be checked in advance. Closures on Monday and Tuesday might be expected. There are no stiles; and no seats except in Linton. If you hope to stop at a pub or tea room for refreshment, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. Some paths may be muddy.

Start and finish: The route starts and finishes at the car park in Linton (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL563469 - Postcode: CB21 4JS). The car park, which also serves the Health Centre, is on the right off Coles Lane, a one-way street that runs north from the High Street. Should the car park be full, on-street parking should be possible further up Coles Lane, if necessary turning either left or right at the end of Coles Lane.

If starting from Great Chesterford, parking is suggested on High Street, at the eastern end and just east of The Plough. (Grid Reference: TL512429 – Postcode CB10 1PL).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.

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

We leave the car park the way we came in and retrace to Coles Lane. When safe, we cross the one-way street towards the Village Hall and then turn left on the pavement.

Ahead, we can see the tower of Linton's parish church which dates mainly from the 14th and 15th centuries.

We cross a private road on the right and at the next corner we turn right beside Robert Cole's House into Linton High Street, with red-brick Linton House immediately on the left. On our side of the road, we soon go past a shop whose window displays photos of Linton

We soon pass a long white-painted building on our side: this was once the Swan Hotel and served in that capacity from the early 17th century. This was once a main through route until Linton was by-passed in 1968. When safe, we cross Symonds Lane and then cross the bridge over the River Granta. The river has badly flooded this area on a number of occasions.

Next on the right, we pass the thatched Dog and Duck Inn which dates from the 17th century. It comprised two cottages and a shop before they were merged to become the inn during the 19th century. We keep to the right and immediately after the pub turn right into Meadow Lane.

At the end of Meadow Lane, we continue straight ahead on a public footpath, a well-surfaced path that runs beside the Recreation Ground.

We pass a pavilion on the right with a clock and weather vane. This was once home of a bowls club but the adjacent bowling green looked sadly abandoned in 2021.

We soon pass a play area. Just before we reach a skateboard park on the right, we fork left onto a gravel path (the surfaced path turns right). We climb for just a few yards and then pass through a wooden kissing gate.

We go straight ahead on a grass path between horse paddocks.

At the end of the paddocks, we pass through another wooden kissing gate onto a public bridleway which is also the drive to Little Linton Farm to the right. The farmhouse and several barns are all listed and date from the 16th or 17th century. We turn left, away from Little Linton.

We pass a pair of houses on the right and, after a left bend, walk beside a long line of trees. We should keep to the right, facing any traffic.

At the end of this drive, we reach the busy A1307 and must take great care in crossing, pausing midway on the central reservation of this dual carriageway.

At the far side, we keep straight ahead on the wide approach to a major industrial site. We pass between embankments that once supported a railway line and enter the site. Our public bridleway passes straight through the site but we should take great care and follow directions. In 2021, the designated pedestrian path kept firstly on the right, then crossed to continue on the left. This 15-acre Camgrain site has been here since 1983 and stores 150,000 tonnes of seed each year, serving farmers for many miles around. The major crop stored here is usually malting barley.

The roadway is called Catley Road. After a mile or so, it reaches what was once Catley Park Farm. That farm is now part of Little Linton Farm.

At the end of the storage tanks, we go straight ahead to leave the Camgrain site. Our route now goes straight ahead, gently uphill for about a mile. We should look back from time to time; as the path climbs, we get a wider and more extended view behind.

We pass beneath a high voltage power transmission line which heads in our direction, southwards, eventually reaching the major National Grid substation at Stocking Pelham.

As we reach higher ground, a backward look will show us the hills to the north of Linton. Linton's distinctive tall red-brick water tower is over to the right. It was constructed in the 1930s and still provides water to Linton. To the left, the sun may be glinting on the 13 rotating wind turbines at Wadlow Wind Farm, about 5 miles distant and beyond the Hundred Parishes.

About a mile after the grain store, the path levels out and we ignore a track / footpath that goes off to the right. We keep straight ahead and the path begins to rise more steeply.

About 250 yards later, we must keep watch for an opening in the hedgerow on the right. Here, a footpath leaves our track and goes immediately over a footbridge.

We leave the main track, turning half right and immediately crossing the footbridge. On the far side of the bridge, the public footpath goes straight ahead to cross the field diagonally.

However, if the path is uninviting, we could follow the field edge along two sides - turning right from the footbridge, keeping the hedgerow on the right, then left at the corner of the field, still with hedgerow on the right, and then left again for about 30 yards to reach a footbridge on the right. Before crossing the bridge, a look back will reveal Linton down in the valley to the right and the wind turbines to the left.

We leave the field and cross the wooden footbridge with metal handrails. We then pass along a narrow strip of trees to emerge onto a new field, turning left to head west-southwest along the field edge path with hedgerow on the left. We have just left Linton and Cambridgeshire and are now in Great Chesterford, Essex.

We continue along the field edge path for about 200 yards until we reach a small copse on our left. We continue past the copse and, just before the end of the field, we follow the path to the left.

We follow this new field-edge path for about 300 yards, with hedgerow and trees on our left and views ahead and to the right. After a sharp descent, we reach the end of the field on the right. Here, we go straight ahead to meet another path, turning right onto the bridleway.

We continue with hedgerow on each side. We ignore a path that goes left, keeping on the main track, heading slightly downhill. There are plenty of sloes here in the autumn.

After a while, we walk beside wire fencing on the left and then reach Crave Hall Farm. We go straight ahead through a gateway, pass a large house or two on the left, and then continue along their drive. We will stay on this tarmac lane, Cow Lane, for about a mile and a half.

Soon, to our right we see Grumble Hall, nestling in a secluded dip in the countryside.

After a while, we pass through a gateway which denotes the end of the private drive, and the end of the long white fence, from Crave Hall. Waymark signs indicate that we are on the Icknield Way 'Rider's route'. We pass the drive to Grumble Hall on our right and keep straight ahead.

When the lane bends left, the view opens up and we can see Great Chesterford ahead.

We continue along this lane, ignoring a lane that turns off to the left. Shortly after that turning, we pass Little Paddocks on the left. This was a boarding kennel for 20 years until 2021.

Over to the right, about 2 miles away, we may be able to see the spire of Ickleton's parish church and, beyond, traffic on the M11 motorway.

The lane eventually reaches the B184, a sometimes-busy road. It runs from Saffron Walden to the left to Stump Cross and the M11 and A11 to the right. With care, we cross the B184 and keep straight ahead onto High Street.

Suddenly, we are in Great Chesterford. We are at the edge of a village of some 1,500 residents at the time of the 2011 Census. There are many listed buildings and some of the village is on the site of a Roman fort and town. Our route assumes we will venture in just a few paces to The Plough, saving a more thorough inspection for another day. We should stay on the pavement on the right.

Immediately on our left is The Old Tower. This is essentially a water tower, built in the 19th century to provide water for the big house, Chesterford House, on our right. Chesterford House dates mainly from the 19th century.

We continue along the pavement for about 100 yards or so and then cross with care to The Plough, a good opportunity for refreshment. The Plough dates from the 18th century and has been an inn since the latter part of the 19th.

Should The Plough be closed, there is another pub, 16th-century Crown & Thistle, about 300 yards further along High Street.

From the pub, we will turn right, using the pavement on the left, and retrace up the High Street. We should cross back to the right before reaching the B184, where we turn right, heading towards Saffron Walden which is signposted as 4 miles away. We stay on the pavement on the right.

After only about 50 yards, we pass an ancient milestone which declares that we are now only 3 miles from Walden!

Further along, on our right, we cross the entrance to Thorpe Lea Close, a 21st-century housing development, and then a footpath signposted as the Icknield Way. In another 50 yards, when safe, we cross the main road to turn up a track which is signposted as Icknield Way Trail, Walkers' Route. We will basically follow this trail all the way back to Linton.

Initially, this is a wide track, climbing steadily. Before we reach the first tree, we should take a look back to see how far we have climbed. Now we can see Great Chesterford's parish church and the M11. There are just two larger trees beside the path, both of which are walnuts.

Further along, we have hedgerow on our left with plenty of sloes in late autumn.

When the hedgerow ends, our path goes straight ahead across a field for about 500 yards but there is an alternative if the path is too muddy – described in the indented paragraph below.

The official route goes straight across the field, then through the hedge to cross a wooden footbridge with a metal handrail onto a lane where we turn right.

The alternative (adding about a quarter mile to the distance) is to turn left on a track, initially with hedgerow on the left, descending to a lane. We then turn right on the lane. We follow it round to the right and then uphill to meet the official-route footbridge with metal handrail that comes in from the right.

We continue along the lane, soon passing a well-hidden house, Burtonwood Farm, on the left. Just afterwards, we ignore a public bridleway that leaves to the right, continuing along the lane, signposted as the Icknield Way.

Soon, we ignore a turning to the right, signposted to Burtonwood Farm (yes, another one!). We continue ahead, coming to an area of concrete hardstanding, passing Burtonwood Farm on the right and farm buildings on the left. As we reach the last farm building on the left, we turn right, signposted as the Walkers' Route of the Icknield Way.

We follow the grassy, sometimes muddy, path round to the left and continue ahead on a wide path. Soon, this becomes a field-edge path with a ditch on the left.

When the field on the right ends, keep ahead on the wide path with the ditch still on the left.

At one point, we ignore a path that goes left into shrubs, also signposted as Icknield Way. Just afterwards, our path bears left and then right, following the field edge.

When we reach the end of this long field, we keep round to the right and in only about 20 yards we turn left, leaving the corner of the field to quickly enter a new field with hedgerow and ditch on the right.

At the end of this field, at the corner of the field, we turn right into a new field.

As we enter the new field, the large buildings straight ahead in the distance are at Hadstock Common on what was once an airfield in the Second World War – known as either Hadstock or Little Walden airfield.

We turn left, to continue along the Icknield Way, now with hedgerow on our left.

We gradually pass beneath high voltage power lines. The path then bears right, still with hedgerow on the left. For the next mile or so, we will be walking along the boundary between Cambridgeshire and Linton to our left and Hadstock and Essex to our right. Looking ahead and to the right (about 2 o'clock on the clock face) we can see Hadstock village.

The path is by now descending gently, with hedgerow on the left. When we reach the bottom left corner of the field, we keep straight ahead, descending now beneath a thin strip of woodland for about a third of a mile. We need to be careful of exposed tree roots that may constitute trip hazards. Should any of this path become impassable, there is sometimes a field-edge path just to the left.

Eventually, our path emerges from the strip of trees and continues ahead on a field-edge path with a ditch on the right. We soon ignore a footbridge that goes right. We keep straight ahead on a wide, grassy field-edge track, descending steadily with good views in front. Not far ahead is Linton; behind the village, its brick water tower commands the top of the hill.

We pass an area of concrete hardstanding on the left and the track then becomes stony.

The track reaches a road where we turn left. Immediately, we are welcomed back into Cambridgeshire (remember, we have been following the county boundary for some time).

We are now on the B1052 which comes from Hadstock to our right. We will keep to the pavement on the left.

We are soon welcomed back into Linton and then pass the entrance to Linton Zoological Gardens. The zoo and gardens have been here 50 years and cover 18 acres – they merit a visit on another day – see <http://www.lintonzoo.com> for details.

Then we cross the entrance to an industrial estate. As we draw level with the far end of the estate, we reach where a railway bridge used to cross the road, carrying the Stour Valley Railway which operated between Shelford and Sudbury for a hundred years before closing in 1967.

Just after the railway embankment we pass Ditches Close, number 42, on the left, a former hall house that dates from around 1500 AD. This is followed by more cottages from long ago including number 36, 15th-century Priors End, and number 34 from the 17th century;

On the right, we pass tall Grip Farmhouse which dates from the 16th century. This section of road is called The Grip.

Soon we turn left, continuing along The Grip, keeping to the pavement which is elevated above the roadway. Here there are more ancient dwellings, starting with thatched cottages from the 16th century.

Soon, The Grip meets the 'new' A1307 which we cross with care, using the pedestrian traffic lights. On the far side, we turn right and then left into Linton's High Street. Before the 'new' road was opened in 1968, traffic heading East from Cambridge on the A604 would make this left turn before continuing, as we will, along Linton High Street. No wonder it was bypassed!

We will continue along the pavement on the left. Many of the varied buildings along the High Street are ancient and/or listed; we will mention just a few. Many extend back a long way from the main road. Much of the centre of Linton is designated as an Outstanding Conservation Area.

In about 50 yards, we pass Crown Inn on the left. *[If you started this walk in Great Chesterford, this is one option for a refreshment break].* The building has been here since at least 1600 AD and used to operate as a coaching inn where travellers could rest and tired horses be exchanged for fresh ones. Opposite, on the right behind the wall, is Queens House which dates from around 1730 AD.

Immediately after Crown Inn, The Merchants House dates from the 16th century.

On the right, thatched number 18, called "1716 House" is considered to be 17th century with 1716 referring to the year that alterations were made to merge two or three cottages into one house.

On the right, numbers 26 and 28 once constituted The Red Lion Inn, a posting inn where coaches could change horses. Immediately after number 28, Horn Lane meanders down to Linton's Guildhall and parish church (not included in today's route but covered within walk numbers 109 and 182). It is suggested that we cross the road to continue along the right pavement.

The next building on the right may tempt us: The Linton Kitchen tea room.

Continuing along the right pavement, Market Lane on the left reminds us that Linton flourished as a market town from the 13th century until the 19th century. Market Lane and this wider stretch of the High Street were once the site of regular markets.

Beside the telephone kiosk, the large building has served many purposes since its 15th-century origins including weavers, drapers and collar-makers. The name HOLTUM & SONS dates from when it was a general store, from the 1850s until the mid-20th century. In 1912, Holtum & Sons offered a halfpenny for every queen wasp brought to them during April and May. More than 800 were received, helping to alleviate a local problem.

The far end of the building was once The Griffin Inn but it closed after markets ceased in 1860.

Further along, on the left we pass number 51, a former chapel, and then Chapel Terrace which was built around 1800 AD. Some of numbers 53 to 61 are now shops.

Immediately afterwards we come to Meadow Lane. *[If you started from Great Chesterford, this is where you can take a short cut by turning left to join the route description from the penultimate paragraph on page 1].*

For those seeking to return to the car park in Linton, we continue ahead on the right side. Note the gardens on the right, before and after the river – these belong to Linton House. From here, we get a different perspective of buildings on the left that we saw close up at the beginning of this walk - The Dog and Duck pub and, after crossing the River Granta, the former Swan Hotel.

On our side of the road, we pass a bus stop. Soon afterwards, the pavement ends and we should, when safe, cross back to the left side of the road. We pass the newsagent and soon reach a corner with Coles Lane. With care, cross Coles Lane and, on the far side, pause to look back.

The large timber-framed and plastered Robert Cole House on the corner was built in the 16th century and was owned by a corn merchant, Robert Cole and his family in the 17th and 18th centuries. Note the wavy roof. Opposite Robert Cole House, to the left, is 17th-century Linton House behind the high brick wall which itself is listed and dates from about 1700 AD. We have been walking past Linton House's grounds since before we crossed the river.

We continue along High Street, passing beside a high flint wall (with the date 1812) and soon, just before Church Lane on the right, we turn left up an alley into the car park where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parishes of Linton and Great Chesterford on www.hundredparishes.org.uk. Other Hundred Parishes walks explore more of these two parishes: walks 109 and 182 for Ickleton and numbers 13 and 21 for Great Chesterford.

This route description, last updated 06 April 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 of this route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

