



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 180

Berden and Clavering – 6.5 miles (10 kms)

This countryside walk passes through the parishes and villages of Berden and Clavering. The route is on quiet lanes and footpaths that are generally well surfaced but with some stretches that may be muddy. The route passes two churches and The Fox & Hounds pub in Clavering (limited lunchtime opening – check before relying on it). If you hope to visit a church or a pub, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. There are several seats along the route. There is one ‘easy’ stile. Around ¼ mile of the route is similar to part of Walk number 118 and 1 mile is similar to part of Walk 143, but each of these sections is covered in the opposite direction.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes in the parish of Berden from a small informal parking area (suitable for up to 3 cars) beside the lane to Little London from the Manuden - Clavering road. About 200 yards west of the Manuden – Clavering road, the ‘parking area’ is on the left of the lane, near the top of the rise, just where the lane bears to the right. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL481295 - Postcode: CM23 1BD (this covers a large area). The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of this description.

We head west along the lane and soon descend into the hamlet of Little London, part of the parish of Berden. We pass Barleycroft House on the right as the lane starts to climb. Next on the right is thatched, 17th-century Gate Cottage.

The origin of the name “Little London” is not known. Berden’s local history recorder has suggested that it refers to the little lane that leads to a road that goes to London. Around England, there are several places with the same name and diverse theories as to its origin.

A little further along, a postbox stands outside Petley House Farm which has a well just inside the gate.

On the left we pass an ornamental pond beside the entrance to 17th-century Rooks Farmhouse, the building which we can see straight ahead down the drive.

As we continue along the lane, Berden’s parish church comes into view, away to the right. From a distance, we can see the pyramid roof above the parapet of the tower. We will be there later.

We pass beneath a high voltage power line. To the left, it passes a white water tower before reaching a major National Grid electricity substation on the parish border between Berden and Stocking Pelham.

Soon after the power line, we turn right at a road junction, passing a seat on the right.

On the right, a row of cottages displays the date 1864 and the coat of arms of Christ's Hospital, a charity school whose property investments included Berden Hall and associated land until sold in 1919. The cottages were probably built for employees at Berden Hall.

Soon, we pass a gateway on the left to a drive that leads to Berden Hall, a large red-brick mansion that was built around 1580 AD. Its design includes a distinctive set of three gables on each side. After another 50 yards, there is the main gateway to the hall. The first part of the drive is a public footpath which soon leads to a gate where there is a good view of the hall.

Continuing along the lane, we come into the village of Berden.

Soon, we reach the entrance to Berden parish church on the left. If open, it merits a visit but if boots are dirty please remove them or cover them with boot covers or plastic bags.

The church is dedicated to St Nicholas and listed at Grade I. It dates from the 12th century, has a Norman nave, 13th-century chancel and 15th-century tower. Inside, there hangs a fine embroidery completed in 2000 AD and depicting many of the parish's buildings and activities.

Beyond the porch, towards the back of the churchyard, the ancient gravestone of Henry Trigg, pictured here, is no longer legible. He was the parish constable in 1814 when he was shot dead by burglars from Bishop's Stortford. They were subsequently caught and hanged at Chelmsford gaol.



From the church, we return to the lane. Note the Christ's Hospital coat of arms on the cottages opposite. Here we turn left to continue along the lane which is now called The Street.

Soon on the right we pass numbers 4 to 1, The Raven. These houses were built on the site of The Raven pub which closed in the 1960s and was later demolished.

Before reaching a road junction, we should cross when safe to the pavement on the left.

At the junction, Berden's village sign stands on a small green. The three-dimensional sign features a wheatsheaf and a piglet, representative of two possible origins of the word *Berden* from Old English: either *corn valley* or *swine pasture valley*. The building beyond the sign, fronted by white picket fencing, dates from the 16th century and is now two dwellings

We turn left here, taking the road signposted towards The Pelhams.

The next building on the left is The Old Bakery – appropriately with half an old millstone in front of the door. For many years this was the village general store.

When the pavement on the left runs out, we should cross when safe to the pavement on the right, passing several interesting properties including 16th-century Martins Green. The whole upper storey of this former farmhouse is jettied out over the ground floor.

We cross Bonnetting Lane and, when safe, cross back to the pavement on the left.

We pass the entrance to Vicarage Lane on the left and about 200 yards later cross back to the right and turn right into Dewes Green Road, signposted to Dewes Green.

We climb past a series of relatively modern houses on the left before reaching another former pub, set back on the right, thatched 17th-century King's Head, now nicely renovated and called The Old King's Head. Immediately after the entrance, we bear right onto a byway. *[The next section of the walk is likely to be muddy after rain, so an alternative is to remain on the lane for a quarter mile until reaching a small green at the top of a short rise - and then continue with the route description from the point ^{**} four paragraphs below]*

On the byway, we soon pass two properties on the left and the path becomes narrow (and potentially muddy) as we come into a short stretch of woodland. We follow the path to the left and soon emerge onto a field. Here, we keep straight ahead on a field-edge path with hedgerow on the left.

After a descent, we reach the corner of the field where we keep straight ahead, kinking left and right over a ditch on a concrete bridge. We pass yet another seat on the right and continue along a narrow path that may be muddy at times. Ignore a small gate and footpath on the right.

The path becomes a surfaced drive and almost immediately reaches a minor crossroads. At this point, we can look back to the right to see Berden Priory down in the valley. This timber-framed and plastered building with exposed beams dates from the 16th century when it was built on the site of a small 13th-century priory. It was renovated in the 20th century.

We continue straight ahead on the tarmac drive, soon passing numbers 1 and 2 Waxstead Knoll on the right before turning right onto a lane ^{**} – we are now back on Dewes Green Road which we left at the Old King's Head. We soon pass an entrance to Berden Priory Farm on the right.

A little further along, when the lane bears left (towards Harrolds Farm), we leave the lane, keeping straight ahead onto a green, with 16th-century Dewes Green Farm on the right.

We cross the green, gently uphill, and then follow the path for a short distance through woodland.

When the path emerges onto a field, we turn left, keeping the hedgerow on our left. After 60 yards, we bear right to continue along the field edge with the hedgerow on our left.

We reach the end of the hedgerow in another 150 yards. Here, we turn right between fields for about 40 yards and then turn left through the hedgerow. We immediately turn right, now on a wide field-edge path / track with hedgerow and ditch on our right.

We stay on this path / track for a quarter of a mile until it reaches a road.

The track emerges onto a sometimes-busy road, the B1038. Immediately on the left is a notice proclaiming that Hertfordshire is the county of opportunity, but we will forego the opportunity and turn right, remaining in Essex. Whilst we narrowly avoided a change of county, we have just left the parish of Berden and are now in the parish of Clavering.

Having turned right onto the B1038, we should keep to the right so as to face any oncoming traffic. We stay on this road for 250 yards before turning left. We are welcomed to Starlings Green, one of many small hamlets within the parish of Clavering. Before the main road bends right, when safe, we should cross to the left.

We fork left off the main road onto a lane, Cock Lane, marked unsuitable for HGVs. We will walk along this quiet and narrow country lane, mostly descending gently, for more than a mile.

After about 200 yards, we ignore a lane that turns off to the right to the hamlet of Starling's Green. For the next quarter mile we pass beside woodland on our right.

After a while, our lane meets another that comes from the left, from the hamlet of Ford End. We keep straight ahead. Soon afterwards, the wood on the right ends.

Our lane passes over the young River Stort; it rises about 3 miles north-west of here in the adjacent parish of Langley and flows generally south (to our right) for another 20 miles to join the River Lea near Hoddesdon.

Soon, we enter the hamlet of Deer's Green, passing elevated Hemmingford House on the left.

A little further along, there is a group of three thatched cottages: Deards from the 17th or 18th century, followed by Deer's Cottage and Pleasant View, each from the 18th or 19th century. Then we are out in the country again for another quarter mile before we pass another small group of houses.

We keep straight ahead at a mini crossroads: an entrance on the left to Grange Farm and a lane to the right that heads towards a ford across the Stort.

In another few yards, we get just a peep through the gateway on the left of 16th-century Pond's Manor (there is no visible name). The house was restored and renovated in the 20th century. Note the "brick nogging", the infill between timber uprights, and in particular the bricks that have been laid in a herringbone pattern.

Continuing along the lane, over to the left we may be able to see the white caps of Clavering's former windmills at the top of the hill in the distance: two brick-built tower mills that stand only about 200 yards apart. Since the pair lost their sails many years ago, they have been affectionately known as the salt and pepper pots.

On the right, through the trees, we may be able to see the castellated tower of Clavering's parish church. After passing a short stretch of robust railing, we turn right onto a public footpath. We cross a footbridge over the River Stort, with a low semi-stile at the far end of the bridge.

This brings us into Clavering Castle, with the Grade I-listed Church of St Mary and St Clement straight ahead. The uneven landscape and moat to our left are what remains of a "ringwork", a medieval fortification that may pre-date the Norman Conquest of 1066. The area is protected as a Scheduled Monument.

We keep straight ahead, across the grass area, heading towards the church tower. We pass through a gate into the churchyard and continue ahead, keeping to the right of the tower and then turning left to the church porch.

The 15th-century parish church merits a visit – but first please remove dirty boots or don boot covers or plastic bags. Beware the steep steps down, just as you pass through the door. The church has medieval stained-glass windows, several interesting monuments, and angels who look down from above.

On leaving the church, immediately to our right is a former guildhall, built in the 15th century. We turn left from the porch, gently downhill along the stony path. This soon bears left and then right, but before leaving the churchyard we should pause to look at the interpretation panel on the left. It offers an explanation of the earthworks which we crossed a little while ago and which are now just beyond the panel.

Our route continues through the gateway to leave the churchyard. After only a few yards, we should look to the left at The Bury, a rare medieval aisled hall built around 1300 AD and one of the oldest houses in Essex.

We continue along the stony track beside a holly hedge on the left and then Bury Cottages before emerging onto Middle Street, once the main street and now the core of Clavering's conservation area. We should take our time to walk down Middle Street.

As we come into Middle Street, on our immediate right is The Old Post House, dating from the 16th century. At various times it served as a school and as a post office.

Ahead of us is Danceys, a former farmhouse, also dating from the 16th century.

Immediately on our left, Tudor Cottage also dates from the 16th century, as does the next house on the left, Bakers. Next on the left is Blakes Cottage.

On the right, The Wheelhouse dates from the 17th or 18th century and, just afterwards, 18th-century Willow Thatch is set at an angle to Middle Street.

Now is the time to turn and look back up the hill, comparing today's scene with the old postcard view from the early 1900s, replicated on the next page . . .



Having turned around, now on our right we have a terrace of three houses. The last of these is Stort Cottage, dating from the 17th or 18th century. The pump outside Stort Cottage can be seen in the old photo on the right. In the photo, the first house on the right is weather-boarded Blakes Cottage.

Oh for a time machine – to be able to stop and talk to the people in the photo!

But not today. We should turn again and continue the last few paces down Middle Street, keeping to the right and crossing the River Stort on the concrete footbridge. Horses and motor traffic can usually use the ford on our left but sometimes it is impassable. Just opposite the ford is a small, thatched, 17th-century cottage, one of the tiniest houses in Essex, appropriately called *The Little House*.

Having crossed the footbridge, we turn right. We are now back on Cock Lane for a short while. We should keep to the right, facing any traffic and with the Stort immediately on our right.

After passing Colehills Close on the left, we soon reach a junction with the B1038 (yes, we walked on this road about 2 miles back). When safe, cross to the far side of the main road and turn left, signposted towards Newport.

We pass a small green on the right and then reach a lane on the right which is called The Druce. Our route turns right into this lane, but you may wish to pause first for refreshment at The Fox and Hounds, just ahead (if you have chosen a day and time when it is open).

The Fox and Hounds dates from the 18th century. If you do visit, on leaving the pub, please turn left, pass the entrance to the car park and then turn left into the lane called The Druce (its name is not visible).

The Druce runs with the River Stort on the right. It should be flowing in the same direction as us, heading south. We pass several thatched cottages on the left, each dating from the 17th or 18th century.

We soon come to a longer thatched house, set back from the lane. This is called The Druce and gives its name to the lane. It was built as a hall house in the 15th or 16th century, had a second storey added in the 16th or 17th, and was further updated in the 20th.

After the dwellings, the lane becomes a byway.

When the byway turns left to go uphill, we continue straight ahead, through a gateway into a field. The public footpath keeps to the right of the field, with the Stort continuing to flow beside us. In February and March, the banks of the river are usually rich in snowdrops.

We continue in a fairly straight line for some distance, after a while passing farm buildings on the left. Here, a roadway goes off to the right, uphill to red-brick, 19th-century Clavering Hall which stands beside the Manuden–Clavering road. The Hall is on the left of the roadway.

Our path keeps straight ahead, while the river bears away to the right for a while. We continue ahead, now passing beside and beneath a line of mature beech trees.

We walk under a high-voltage power line and soon pass beside a gate to emerge onto a lane. Here, we turn right, keeping on the right and immediately crossing the River Stort on what is called Poor Bridge.

The lane climbs for a short way to reach the Manuden-Clavering road. With care, we should cross and continue ahead, still climbing, on the lane signposted to Berden and The Pelhams.

After about 200 yards, we pass Mill House Farm on the left. After the property's large garden, we turn left through a kissing gate onto a public footpath, a field-edge path with hedgerow on the left and field on our right.

After descending for about 200 yards, we pass through another kissing gate. When safe, cross the lane and go through the gateway to continue ahead on the footpath. Here, we should keep to the left of the ditch, following the field-edge path with the hedgerow on our right.

The path rises gently to the end of the field and we then keep straight ahead up a short steep rise to a lane where we turn left. You may recognise this lane. In about 200 yards, uphill, we reach the parking area where we started this walk. Before driving away, please pause to enjoy the view of the Stort valley ahead of us.

You can read more about the parishes of Berden and Clavering on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 21 May 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.

