



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 320

### Littlebury Green – Elmdon - Strethall – 6.9 miles (11 kms)

This walk is mainly on high ground, occasionally hilly, and mostly through open countryside. A stretch of about half a mile is on the B1039. The route visits parts of three parishes: Littlebury, Elmdon, Duddenhoe End & Wenden Lofts, and Strethall. The route does not pass anywhere to eat or drink.

The route description starts and finishes from the green church in Littlebury Green, St Peter's. It should be possible to park on the road near the church, close to the "30" painted in the road.

The location is marked **1** on the route diagram on the last page of this description.

An alternative start is marked **2** on the diagram, in Elmdon where it should be safe to park in the main Ickleton Road east of the church at approximately Grid Reference TL464397, postcode CB11 4LX. From there, you should head east, away from the church, and join the route description on page 4.

You may, of course, join this circular walk anywhere along the route.

**Start and finish:** The route description starts and finishes at Littlebury Green's green corrugated iron church – Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL490385 - Postcode: CB11 4XE (a wide area) - what3words: intro.follow.pegs

This route overlaps two Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps: 194 and 209.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

St Peter's Church is quite unusual. The corrugated iron structure was assembled from a kit in 1885. It was erected as a 'chapel of ease', allowing local parishioners to avoid the 2-mile walk to the parish church in Littlebury. Do visit if it is open, first removing or covering boots if they are dirty (in 2024 the church was open from 10am to 4pm each day except Saturday when it opened from 9am to 1pm). It is larger inside than it appears from the outside. Hundreds of 'tin tabernacles' like this were erected in the 19th century but few survive. Much of the interior is unchanged, including the "stained glass" windows which are actually transfers between two panes of glass.

From the church, we turn left, heading southwest and initially passing a variety of houses as we go through the hamlet of Littlebury Green, part of the administrative parish of Littlebury.

This route is mostly on quiet lanes, but please follow the usual safety precautions: keep to the right so as to face oncoming traffic, crossing occasionally to the left if this offers a clearer view around a right-hand bend. Drivers and cyclists may be as surprised to see you as you are to see them!

Soon, we pass Littlebury Green Recreation Ground on the right. Here, there are seats – which may be welcome after the walk or if you started somewhere other than Littlebury Green.

Further along, on the left, we pass a former telephone kiosk, now housing a defibrillator. Opposite the phone box, the house called The Hoops served as a beer house or pub during much of the 19th and 20th centuries.

We continue past a few more houses before leaving the hamlet of Littlebury Green.

A little further along, we pass woodland on the left and our lane bears right, with a footpath signposted to our left. At this point, we leave the parish of Littlebury and enter the administrative parish of Elmdon, Duddenhoe End and Wenden Lofts – the latter was once a separately-administered parish until a merger in 1958.

At this point we are 118 metres, almost 400 feet, above sea level. We will soon lose some of this altitude.

Soon, we come to a group of buildings on the right, the last of which is Elmdon Lee, a red-brick, ivy-covered house dating from the 18th or 19th century. There is an impressive cedar tree in the grounds, just after the house.

After a bend to the left, our lane descends, now more-or-less following the straight line of a former Roman road. Almost two thousand years ago, the road was constructed to connect two Roman settlements: at Braughing, almost 10 miles ahead, and Great Chesterford about 4 miles behind us.

We descend quite steeply, losing 40 metres or 130 feet in about 600 yards. We cross a stream before rising again to a small green triangle where we meet another road.

The Roman road went straight ahead towards the wood, its alignment still apparent, but we turn right, signposted towards Elmdon and Royston.

We are now on the B1039, where we may encounter more traffic for the next half mile, so please use extra caution, facing oncoming traffic and walking in single file if necessary.

We pass a lane on the left, signposted to Duddenhoe End.

A sign welcomes us to Wenden Lofts.

Just afterwards, the main road bears left but we fork right, signposted to Elmdon. The fingerpost sign is topped with “Parish of Wenden Lofts” so it presumably predates the 1958 parish merger with Elmdon.

After turning off the B road, the lane descends for a few yards to cross a stream before beginning a steady climb for the next half mile.

After a while, we pass an ornate gateway, set back on the left. This leads to Lofts Hall and also to a former church which is now on private property and out of sight. 12th-century St Dunstan’s was once the parish church for Wenden Lofts and is now just a shell.

We continue to climb – with an expanding view to the right through the hedgerow.

Further on, as the climb levels off, we pass an entrance on the left to Lofts Hall Farm.

Later, we pass between two signs which advise that we have reached the village of Elmdon and should slow to 30mph.

Soon after, a bridleway is signposted off to the right. This is part of the Icknield Way, an ancient trackway that probably pre-dates the Roman occupation and which generally follows high ground all the way from Wiltshire to Norfolk. We keep straight ahead.

On the left we pass another gated entrance to the Lofts Hall estate.

Opposite, through the woodland on our right, we may get glimpses through the trees of Pigots, a 16th-century moated manor house with exposed timber framing. The site around the house is protected as a Scheduled Monument.

Soon, there is an entrance on the left to Elmdon Cricket and Football Ground. Opposite, on our right, Wilkes Barn was once a public house, serving the community as the Wilkes Arms. It was named after the Wilkes family who were lords of the manor for around 200 years until the middle of the 20th century.

Next on our left is thatched Carpenters Cottage, dating from the 17th or 18th century.

We ignore a narrow lane that forks to the left, but here we should cross our road with care to use the pavement on the left. We descend past the clock on the wall of Vine House and on towards the centre of Elmdon village. There are many buildings here that have been listed for their architectural or historic value – we will mention a few. Most of Elmdon village is also protected as a conservation area.

On the left, a flight of steps leads up to the front door of The Old Forge which dates from the early 19th century.

We cross Kings Lane as it comes in from our left. We are now in Elmdon's High Street.

On the right, a telephone kiosk was still in service in 2024.

On the left, The Old Stores dates from the 19th century and retains its shop front.

We soon pass 18th-century Old Bakery on the left.

As the road bears round to the left, we pass another former pub, The Carrier. It closed in 1972 but the present owner has retained the pub sign and a Greene King Brewery plaque on the wall.

Just afterwards, we pass the village hall on the left, with a seat that may be tempting.

Across the road, beyond the bus shelter and war memorial, is Crawley House. This was built around 1600 AD. The main chimney stack dates from that time, but the rest of the building, like most we will see today, has benefited from updating and modernisation. The building was acquired by a Thomas Crawley who endowed it as a grammar school. It served that purpose for about 300 years.

We continue to bear left for just a few more yards to find another former pub sign. It stands outside a building that served as the village's most recent pub - The King's Head closed in 1998, reopened a few years later as the Elmdon Dial, and closed again in 2013.

Now, when safe, we should cross the road and turn sharp right, passing the green, war memorial and bus shelter on our right. The cast iron fingerpost sign was made at Maldon Iron Works in Essex, probably in the 1930s.

Our route goes straight ahead, signposted towards Ickleton, Chesterford and Cambridge but, before continuing, you might like to visit the church if it is open.

Elmdon's parish church is dedicated to St Nicholas; it was mostly rebuilt in the 19th century, probably on its original foundations and preserving some 16th-century features inside. The tower has survived since the 15th century. Just inside the door is a lovely illustrated map of the village.

From the church porch, we turn right to retrace to the road, and then turn sharp left onto Ickleton Road, heading towards Ickleton.

On the right, The Old Vicarage is followed by Old Vicarage Cottage, both dating from the 18th or 19th century.

We keep to the pavement on the left, following the wall of the churchyard.

Through gates on the right, the house called Farthing Green has a very tall chimney stack and stands sideways to the road. It was built around 1600 AD.

After the church wall ends, there is a small green on the left, with a seat. Set back, beyond a thatched lychgate, is 17th or 18th-century Church Cottage with a fox finial on its thatched roof.

The pavement on the left will soon come to an end, so we should cross when safe and continue on the right.

On the left, we pass Badgers and then thatched The Cottage, from the 17th-18th century.

Just afterwards, slightly set back on the left, The Old School was built in 1844 and is now a private house.

The Old Post House, thatched, on the right, dates from the 17th century. It is followed by School Row, a terrace of four brick-built cottages.

We continue ahead along the main road, mainly past houses from the 20th century.

[Here, there is a possible alternative place to park and start this walk, marked **2** on the route diagram on the last page of this description.]

After a while we pass thatched 18th-century The Hoops on the right – yet another former pub.

The pavement comes to an end just as we reach a turning on the right called Hollow Road. We go straight ahead, leaving Elmdon village.

The next half mile is through open countryside, albeit often hidden behind high roadside hedges.

We pass a sewage works on the right and the lane later descends gently to reach a crossroads.

Here we turn right onto a narrow lane. Not long ago it was signposted towards Strethall and Littlebury, but no signage was visible in 2024.

Our lane passes through more open countryside with occasional expansive views, especially to the North, our left.

After about three-quarters of a mile, a steady climb takes us past Poplars Farmhouse on the right. Before reaching the farmhouse, take a look back to see how far we have climbed.

Later, we pass a sign that tells us “Single track traffic” – and the lane soon gets very narrow.

Soon afterwards, we reach the top of the climb and emerge from the trees, to be greeted by a wide open landscape ahead. Just here, we leave Elmdon parish and enter Strethall parish. Strethall has one of the smallest populations of any English parish – just 26 people were recorded in the 2011 census.

Our lane heads towards a large wood on the horizon; this is Howe Wood which is mostly in the parish of Littlebury. It has a great show of bluebells in springtime.

Our lane descends to a crossroads where we turn right, signposted towards Strethall. For a while we join National Cycle Network Route 11, a 60 mile route between King’s Lynn and Wendens Ambo. We are heading in the direction of Wendens Ambo.

Now we climb gently, with Howe Wood over to the left.

After about 300 yards we ignore a lane that goes off to the right to Strethall Church. It is an interesting Saxon church, believed to be over a thousand years old, but it is about 600 yards up this no-through road – perhaps another day. Hundred Parishes walks 13 and 165 go beside it using footpaths.

We continue ahead, climbing for the next quarter of a mile or so. For a short distance, the road flattens out and from here we can see Strethall Church about 300 yards to our right.

As we approach the summit, we leave Strethall parish and return to the parish of Littlebury. Just before the top, if we pause at the entrance to the house on the left (Cuckoo Hill), we should again be able to see the tower of Strethall Church back over our right shoulder.

At the summit, we will pause at the road junction before moving on.

We are now in the Littlebury hamlet of Catmere End. Ahead and just to the right, Piper’s Cottage dates from the 17th or 18th century. Ahead and to the left, The Thatch dates from the 18th century.

We turn left, signposted towards – oh dear! – in 2024 most of the finger was missing, with just part of the distance remaining –  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Some years ago, the full story was “Saffron Walden  $3\frac{3}{4}$ ”. This is another ancient signpost from Maldon Ironworks.

The houses through Catmere End are representative of many eras and designs.

On the right, we go past 18th-century Nunn’s Farm.

Then, set back on the right is Graves Farm, dating from the 16th or 17th century.

Almost opposite the far end of Graves Farm, on the left, is a property called The Old Well. Outside, next to the road, is a pump with a ‘steering wheel’ that still turns.

Behind the houses on the left is Howe Wood, part of which is a Scheduled Monument, a protected site: an ancient moated area and fish pond.

Before long, we reach the eastern end of Catmere End and are back in the countryside.

The lane turns right and we descend past Clayhall Cottages. Soon afterwards, we are advised that we have left Catmere End.

We ignore a turning on our left (no signpost) and 200 yards later reach a crossroads. Here, we turn right, signposted towards Littlebury Green and Royston, still following National Cycle Network route 11.

In a quarter of a mile, a sign welcomes us to Littlebury Green.

Soon afterwards, we ignore a lane on the left. There is no signage other than for NCN 11, which turns left, heading towards Wendens Ambo.

We walk beside a flintstone wall on the right, the boundary wall of Howe Hall which dates from the early 1800s.

The lane climbs steadily, passing two separate seats on the right and then a variety of houses.

Set back down a driveway on the right is Catlin's Farm which dates from about 1600 AD, albeit much altered in the 19th century.

Just afterwards, on the left, we pass The Bumpy, a former gravel pit that has been turned into a nature reserve.

Immediately after The Bumpy, we reach St Peter's Church where this route description started. If you didn't visit it before the walk, you might like to try now. Visitors are welcome, but please first remove boots if they are muddy.

If you started somewhere else along the route, please continue along the lane and join the route description from page 1.

This route description, last updated 02 September 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the three parishes: Littlebury, Strethall and the combined Elmdon, Duddenhoe End and Wenden Lofts, and also find many additional walk routes.

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto: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.

