



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about GARDENS

Public and private gardens provide opportunities for pleasurable exercise and social interaction. Our local sunny climate and fertile soils have encouraged those with green fingers to hone their design and horticultural skills to create some outstanding flower-rich gardens for their own delight. Some, like Bridge End Garden in Saffron Walden, pictured below during a winter walk, are free but entry charges may apply at others.



Many delightful gardens are listed in the current National Garden Scheme handbook and website, www.ngs.org.uk. This is a major showcase for owners who are willing to share their gardens with others; in 2021, £3 million was donated by visitors to help nursing and health charities. Some gardens have limited opening days, others more frequent opportunities to appreciate seasonal changes; some offer opportunities for booking group visits.

Some gardens open early to showcase spring flowers but as spring gives way to summer, more are opened to show off the variety of brightly-coloured blooms and intense floral fragrances, especially of roses. Enthusiastic and knowledgeable owners may specialize in growing cottage garden flowers, others in designing hidden features or ponds and all are willing to share their passions with visitors.

With so many varied gardens to visit it is a challenge to decide which one should top your list! We would recommend including Easton Lodge, where Harold Peto's Italian garden, shown below, is always colourful and restoration works to the balustrade have enhanced this area. The gardens have monthly official open days but are also open less formally on each Thursday during the summer.



Throughout the summer at Henry Moore Studios & Gardens at Perry Green, many of Moore's sculptures are displayed in a garden setting and exhibitions focus on his work.

Some of Moore's sculptures can be seen on Hundred Parishes walk number 172 which is free to download from www.hundredparishes.org.uk .



Walk 172 also passes through bluebell woods in Much Hadham, so April or early May are a particularly good time to try out this route.

Walk 173 passes Caldrees Manor, a rather large house behind a high wall in Ickleton. Behind the house is an exceptionally large and interesting private garden which, most fortunately, is usually opened once a year to the public.



The extensive garden at Caldrees is astonishing and a visit offers a rare glimpse of the former home of Sir Robert George Wyndham Herbert.

He grew up in Ickleton and had the unusual distinction of being elected as the first premier of Queensland, Australia. He served in that role from 1860 to 1866

before returning to Ickleton. Today, there is a Queensland parish called Herbert, after our man, and a town called Bowen after the first governor of Queensland who also features in the walk description. It's a small world. You can read more of this story on the walk 173 description.

Pictured below are the gardens behind Audley End House which stands beside the B1383 in Saffron Walden parish. The house and gardens are owned by English Heritage and are open to the public throughout the year, although weekends only during the winter months.



We are fortunate that the local area includes many wonderful private gardens, some large and some small, whose owners host open days in the summer months. Details of these opportunities can usually be found on the What's On page of the Society's website: www.hundredparishes.org.uk. There are dates for individual open gardens and also for occasions when villages have organized a group of open gardens, sometimes with added attractions like cream teas.

The ponds below were photographed in private gardens on open days in Clavering (on the left) and Steeple Bumpstead (on the right).



The photo above was taken in Ashdon and the one on the right in Braughing. There is no such thing as a typical garden!

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Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.

