



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about LISTINGS

Within its towns, villages and countryside, the Hundred Parishes has an exceptional depth of ancient buildings. More than 6,000 are “listed”, meaning that they have been formally identified as an important part of our national heritage so that they can be protected by law. They appear on the National Heritage List for England.

That figure of 6,000 listings represents around 10% of all buildings within the Hundred Parishes, whilst nationally only about 2% are listed. Furthermore, half of our listed buildings date from the year 1700 AD or earlier. This exceptional depth of heritage is a key feature of the Hundred Parishes area.

Over 100 buildings within the Hundred Parishes have the highest category of listing - Grade I - and of these more than half are parish churches, constructed and reconstructed over the last thousand years.

Pictured here is Grade I-listed Wyddial parish church which dates from the 14th century and includes a 16th-century brick-built aisle and ancient box pews, each of which make it quite special.



By way of explanation, of all listed buildings in England less than 3% have been classified as Grade I (“grade one”), while 92% fall into the Grade II (“grade two”) category and about 5% into the intermediate Grade II* (“grade two star”) category. Listings can relate to all manner of buildings, while there are separate listings of “registered parks and gardens” and “scheduled monuments”. Local listed buildings include garden walls, gravestones, war memorials, telephone boxes, milestones and other features of historic interest.

Details of all listed buildings can easily be found on www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk. All listings, including parks and gardens and scheduled monuments, can be found on the official website, <https://historicengland.org.uk/>, but you may find it is not as easy to navigate.

The fact that a building is listed gives it some degree of protection so that it should survive to delight future generations. Owners of listed buildings are generally conscious that they are just today’s custodian within a long line of custodians.

Shown below is just a small selection of Grade-I listings within the Hundred Parishes.



These are probably our best-known Grade I listings: Thaxted Guildhall on the left and Audley End House below.

The image below actually includes three Grade-I listed buildings, not only Audley End House but also the 1764 bridge over the River Cam, designed by Robert Adam, and, in the distance, the spire of Saffron Walden's parish church.



Thaxted also has a Grade I-listed garden wall – it dates from the early 1700s and marks the boundary of Grade I Clarence House.



The area has many ancient barns, many of which have been listed. Shown here is the Grade I Prior's Hall Barn in Widdington. Its construction in the 14th century is believed to have used timber from as many as 400 oak trees.

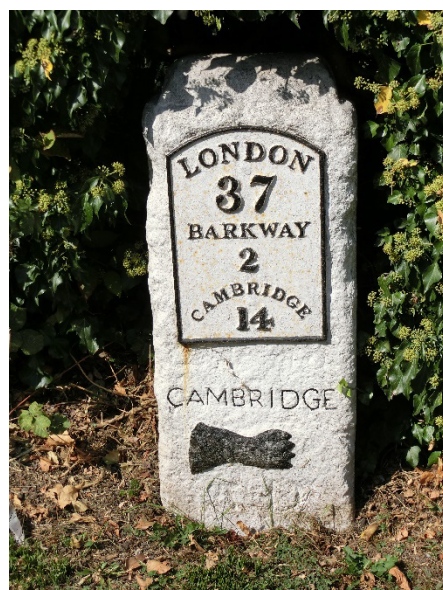


Nowadays, the barn is cared for by English Heritage and is open to view, free of charge, at weekends from April to September from 10am to 6pm.

The kind of heritage that merits protection through listing is quite varied. The photos below give an indication of the diversity. Immediately below are Hatfield Heath's war memorial, Hatfield Broad Oak's village pump and Linton's telephone kiosk, each listed at Grade II.



Also Grade II-listed are Audley End Station and a milestone in Barley.



Pictured below are two more Grade II buildings: Westmill's village hall (a converted 17th-century barn) and a former lock-up in Great Chishill.



In addition to listed buildings, we also have several Scheduled Monuments, most often relating to an area around an ancient building or enclosed within an ancient moat. These include the land around Rye House Gatehouse in Stanstead Abbots, pictured on the right, and the site of the castle near the church at Castle Camps, shown below.



The majority of listed buildings are private houses, covering a wide spectrum of design and vintage. Many are pictured within the individual parish introductions on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

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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.