



# **The Hundred Parishes**

## **An introductory article about THE HUNDRED PARISHES – ORIGINS & AIMS**

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### **ORIGINS**

It was in 2009 that local historian David Heathcote first floated the idea of trying to gain some sort of formal acknowledgement of this special area, in particular to recognize its rich and diverse heritage.

A small group of historians and environmentalists came together as a steering group and developed the idea into what became The Hundred Parishes and The Hundred Parishes Society.

The steering group called a 'constitutional conference' on 25th June 2012 to discuss how to carry forward the concept. Forty people came together, representing county, district and parish councils and a wide range of other local organisations. Those who gathered in Saffron Walden that day helped to shape the definition of the Hundred Parishes area and what should be the aims of The Hundred Parishes Society going forward.

For two years following the constitutional conference, the steering group carried out a great deal of work. This included final definition of the boundary, forming a limited company, obtaining charitable status, opening a bank account with direct debit facility, designing 20 station walks, researching and writing introductions for each parish and for 20 local people, creating a membership database, establishing the logo, registering The Hundred Parishes trade mark, designing and printing promotional leaflets and pulling this work together in the design and build of the website, [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk)

When all these foundations were finally in place, the website went live in July 2014 and The Hundred Parishes Society was launched with an invitation for membership applications from households and organizations. The Society, run entirely by unpaid volunteers, seeks to increase awareness, enjoyment and care of The Hundred Parishes.

The area covered is approximately 450 square miles and incorporates 103 parishes in northeast Hertfordshire, northwest Essex and southern Cambridgeshire. It includes 6,700 listed buildings which is more than any single UK National Park, and this despite having a smaller geographic area than most of them.

It is also worth pointing out that the three districts in the UK with the greatest concentration of pre-1700 listed buildings are Uttlesford, Braintree and East Hertfordshire. 87 of our 103 parishes are within these three districts.

The Hundred Parishes is not a formally recognized area or designation, not a national park or area of outstanding natural beauty, but the Society's activities have enabled the Hundred Parishes name to become recognized and its special characteristics to be better understood, at least locally.

## **THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The formal text of the Society's objectives, approved by the Charity Commission, reads as follows:

*(a) To advance the education of the public in the character and history of the geographic area comprising The Hundred Parishes.*

*(b) To promote for the benefit of the inhabitants of the geographic area comprising The Hundred Parishes and the surrounding areas the provision of information and facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the quality of life of the said inhabitants.*

*(c) To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical and natural environment of The Hundred Parishes, especially its features of historic, architectural and wildlife interest.*

It is useful to remind ourselves from time to time what the Society is about. We focus quite consistently on (a) and (b) through the information on the website and monthly articles for members and parish magazines. The series of walk routes creates opportunities for people to explore the Hundred Parishes on foot and is a major contribution towards achieving our first two charitable objectives.

It is not so easy to achieve (c) directly, but it is hoped that a consequence of actions under (a) and (b) is to raise awareness and appreciation in a way that will encourage more people to get involved in conservation, protection and improvement. Specific opportunities to get involved in such activities are included within the What's On page of the website.

The primary aim of the Hundred Parishes Society is to 'educate' – to increase knowledge and appreciation of our area. We do not pretend to know it all or to be the only organisation spreading the word. We are very happy to publicise what others are doing, usually through the What's On page of our website, [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk). If you know of a suitable event that doesn't already appear, please advise the Society, ideally by using the Feedback form on the website.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Please see separate articles on The Hundred Parishes Society's activities and trustees..

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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.