



# **The Hundred Parishes**

## **An introductory article about THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES**

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In the Society's early days, a number of walks and talks were organized for members, but attendance was limited. Since then, information on the website has been expanded, especially the downloadable walk routes, and the focus for group participation by members is now the annual general meeting. The AGM, usually held in September, takes place in different locations.

### ***Annual General Meetings of The Hundred Parishes Society***

The Society's constitution requires that a formal meeting of members is convened once a year. There, annual accounts are adopted and trustees are elected or re-elected. The formal business usually takes only about ten minutes, so this opportunity for members to come together is usually expanded by holding the meeting in an interesting venue or with an interesting speaker, or both.

For two years, 2020 and 2021, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented the Society from holding a physical meeting. Instead, the formalities of approving accounts, appointing trustees, etc were carried out through voting by email or letter.

Over the years, the AGM has been held as follows:

- 2015 - Finchingfield Guildhall
- 2016 - Much Hadham's Forge Museum
- 2017 - Duxford village hall
- 2018 - Ashdon Village Museum
- 2019 - Pleshey village hall
- 2022 - Great Dunmow Maltings
- 2023 - Ickleton village hall

In **2015**, after the formal part of the meeting and refreshments, members enjoyed a guided tour of Finchingfield Guildhall whose recent repair and conservation had been funded by significant grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage as well as generous support from a number of other organisations.

Our excellent guide, Des Fahy, explained that the recent work had revealed fascinating details of this lovely timber-framed building's construction, as well as the range of skills of the original carpenters, tilers, plasterers and others who had toiled to create such a long-standing building from what is believed to have been a limited budget. Their modern counterparts have sympathetically rejuvenated it so that today it is fully accessible and all can use and appreciate the Grade I-listed building.

Finchingfield's library is on the ground floor, as is a small museum where modern technology enhances the presentation of Finchingfield's history. The lofty and

spacious upper floor provides a venue for a popular programme of varied events. For details of future events, please see [www.finchingfieldguildhall.org.uk](http://www.finchingfieldguildhall.org.uk).

In **2016**, the AGM's formal business was preceded by a most interesting guided stroll around Much Hadham, led by museum curator Cristina Harrison. Our stroll included a visit to the Grade I-listed parish church which dates from the 12th century.

After a break for refreshment and the short formal meeting, Society members explored the excellent small museum, built around the forge which is still used. There was an added bonus as Cristina explained the museum's fascinating Elizabethan wall paintings. They have been there for some 400 years and were hidden beneath several layers of colour wash until they were painstakingly uncovered and conserved about twenty years ago.

In **2017**, we were made most welcome in Duxford where our visit was kindly hosted by the parish council. Before the AGM, we were guided by local historian Jim Longstaff on a short walk around the centre of Duxford, with visits to its two interesting Grade-I churches.

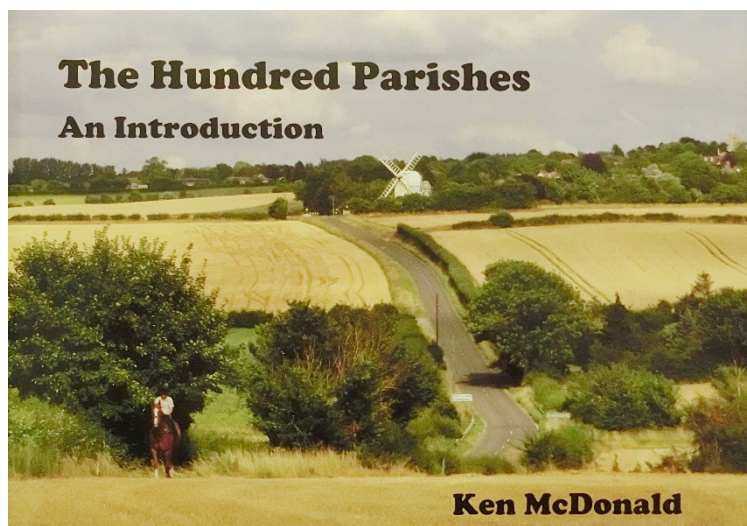
In **2018**, the 22 members who attended the AGM just about squeezed into the delightful tearoom at the back of Ashdon Village Museum. Before and after the brief formal meeting, members were able to socialize and get an introductory look at this terrific museum. For the majority, it was their first visit and most vowed to return and explore more thoroughly without the distraction of old and new friends.

In **2019**, the AGM was held at Pleshey village hall. Beforehand, Nick Wickenden from Chelmsford Museum took members around privately-owned Pleshey Castle, giving an interesting insight into its history, and then Mary Horsnell guided members around Pleshey's parish church.

In **2022**, the AGM was held in Great Dunmow Maltings which also houses the Town Museum. Elphin Watkin, who had been heavily involved in the building's restoration, gave a presentation on the building's history and revival before guiding members around the fascinating museum.

In **2023**, the AGM was held in Ickleton's village hall. Before the formal business, our members were guided round part of Ickleton by Rachel Radford who is chair of The Ickleton Society. During the stroll, we passed through the new gates to Ickleton Church; the installation was made possible by a grant from The Hundred Parishes Society.

## **The Society's first book: "The Hundred Parishes: An Introduction"**



In 2018, The Hundred Parishes Society published its first book, entitled "The Hundred Parishes: An Introduction". It was a quality, hardback publication, printed by Lavenham Press in Suffolk.

The book comprises over 400 pages, with an extensive index, and includes almost a thousand photos.

The principal author was Ken McDonald, Secretary to The Hundred Parishes Society. The book was based on the parish introductions that had been prepared for [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk). Many of these had been drafted by other people, most notably Tessa Perrin and Alan Landsbury who, between them, had drafted more than a third of the original parish introductions. 98 of the then 104 parishes responded to requests for a review of their chapter. Their helpful input generated additional content and avoided a number of inaccuracies.

The original parish introductions and the book benefited from review by Ken's wife Janice, by the Society's trustees and by three independent proof readers.

The book was stocked by four local shops and it sold steadily. By the beginning of 2022 all 800 copies had been sold. Demand had gradually tailed off, so it was decided that a reprint would not be economically viable. Copies are held by most local libraries.

One of the differences between the Society's book and its website is that the book is intended to be a valid source of information for many years, whilst the website also gives details that change from time to time; this potentially-changing info is at the top and the bottom of each parish web page.

The book has separate chapters for Bardfield Saling and Great Saling, two parishes that merged in April 2019 to become The Salings, thereby reducing the total number of parishes from 104 to 103.

Since publication of the book, a small number of errors and omissions have been identified and they are noted below:

On page 14, the first paragraph incorrectly includes Thorley as a parish with a population over 5,000 in 2011. In fact, the population was just 626. Until the beginning of the 21st century, Thorley had included rural areas that became developed into large residential estates whose administration was then transferred from Thorley parish to the town of Bishop's Stortford.

On page 50, writing about St Andrew's in the parish of Barnston, in the third paragraph the church is incorrectly referred to as St Dunstan's.

On page 72, the final paragraph relates to Buntingford's former workhouse. It would be more correct to say "It closed in 1933 and has since been converted into private houses and apartments".

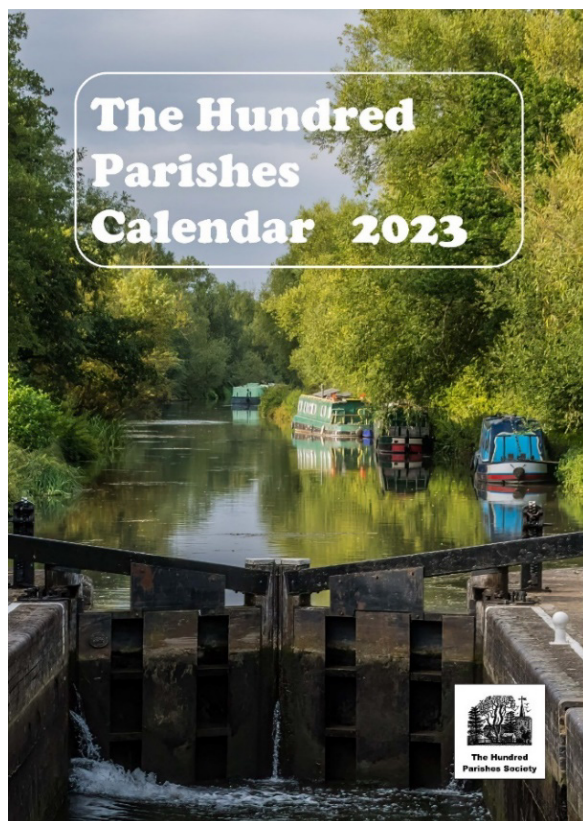
On page 114, line 2, *Dalmations* is incorrectly spelt and should read *Dalmatians*.

On page 153, paragraph 3 refers to two pubs in Great Waltham that vie for the distinction of being the most southwesterly pub in the Hundred Parishes. It should read southeasterly.

On page 301, the photo of a memorial in Standon church is wrongly attributed to Sir Thomas Sadleir but it actually commemorates his father, Sir Ralph Sadleir.

On page 393, the Index should also include references to Debden airfield on page 83 and Wimbish airfield (known as RAF Debden) on page 387.

### ***The Hundred Parishes Calendar for 2023***



The Society produced a printed calendar for 2023 featuring thirteen local views. It was stocked by eighteen local shops, tourist offices and cafes, each of which was listed on the home page of the website.

Altogether, around 400 copies were sold. However, the proceeds did not cover the cost of printing and the exercise required considerable manpower.

It has been decided not to repeat the exercise.

**The website:** [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk)

The Society maintains an active online presence through its website. It is hoped that the following few sentences may help visitors to make the most of it.

New website visitors are encouraged to step through the menu to get a feel for what is available. Below are some tips on how to make best use of some sections . . .

It is usually easiest to start with either Parishes, What's On or Walks.

**Parishes** holds the key to lots of things. If you are familiar with the area, you could start from the alphabetical listing. Otherwise start with one of the two 'maps', north or south.

From one of these, click on an individual parish. This will bring up a short introduction to that parish. Every parish has a story to tell and they are quite varied.

Towards the end of the introduction, you will be able to find details, for example, of the nearest Hundred Parishes walk routes or the website, postcode or phone number for a pub or tea room. Each parish introduction holds further information that may be useful on occasion: its location, further reading, parish council website, etc.

**What's On** is self-explanatory, with future events in chronological order. Here we list activities that relate to local heritage, countryside, wildlife, exercise, culture or conservation. Please also see the Attractions pages for places that are open on a regular basis.

Many entries have a link to a website which will provide further information. If you are attracted to an event, it is recommended that you follow the link to check that it is still due to take place, make a booking, find the venue, etc. If you are going somewhere new, check out the Parish introduction for somewhere to eat or perhaps print off a nearby walk.

If you know of any additional forthcoming event within the Hundred Parishes that offers an opportunity to learn, enjoy or participate, please contact us using the Feedback option at the foot of the website menu.

**Walks** has some general guidance and then two options, Station walks and Other Walks. Each option has a list of walks in numerical sequence – the sequence in which they were added to the website. Simply scroll down to find one that suits your need in terms of location and distance. Then click on the walk number to call it up. The first few paragraphs will usually tell you what you need to know about the distance, terrain and opportunities for refreshment. When you find a walk you like, print it to take with you. [Control, P] is a useful shortcut to start printing.

An alternative way to find a suitable Hundred Parishes walk route is to start with the Parish introduction. Towards the end, walks that pass through the parish are listed.

**Articles** includes an expanding series of articles, most of which appeared originally in parish magazines and/or in regular communications with Society members.



**Feedback** is another section that we encourage people to use. As the Hundred Parishes covers a large geographic area, we rely on feedback to keep us updated, for example, with pub closures or re-openings, walk problems, bus route changes, potential activities for What's On, and any website links or phone numbers that no longer work. Just jot them down on the Feedback form while they are fresh in your mind; we will follow them up.

It is hoped that these notes may make your visits to the website more rewarding. We have referred here to just some sections. Please explore the others too.

## **Facebook group**

In 2022, the Society established a presence on Facebook. If you are a Facebook user and have not yet found us there, simply search for The Hundred Parishes group. Alternatively, you can sign up to join the group by clicking on this link: - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/562396892237665>

There, you will find a healthy exchange of ideas and, in particular, a growing number of photos that have been submitted by group members.

The immediacy and interaction of Facebook complements the structured website approach.

## **Leaflets**

The Society distributes leaflets to promote its activities and publicize The Hundred Parishes. The leaflets are displayed in churches, libraries, railway stations, pubs and tea rooms. Should you notice that one of our leaflet holders is running low, or even empty, please contact the Society using the website Feedback form. If you would like to display leaflets on your premises, please get in touch.



In 2019, the Society purchased new leaflets which included promotion of the Society's book. Gradually, leaflet holders were re-stocked. After the book sold out in 2022, a new exercise was undertaken to replace these leaflets with versions that displayed "SOLD OUT" across the book section. A third leaflet was printed in 2023.

## ***Talks by the Hundred Parishes Society's trustees***

Two of the Society's trustees, Mike Young and Ken McDonald, are pleased to talk with interested groups. Mike generally talks informally to parish councils about the benefits of joining the Society, while Ken is happy to give a photo-rich presentation to any group of people.

Before Covid, Ken spoke at meetings of a number of local organisations, giving a talk and PowerPoint slideshow structured around the Society's first book, "*The Hundred Parishes: An Introduction*".

Since Covid, and following the sale of all copies of the book, Ken has been talking about the development of the Society's walk routes, a subject that provides an excuse for showing lots of photos of interesting and beautiful places, many of which are just a little off the beaten track.

In 2023, Ken added a new talk, "A peek inside some Hundred Parishes churches". This has provided a framework for displaying a diverse range of images taken inside some of the area's most historic buildings.

If you belong to a history or walking group, WI, U3A or anything else, please advise your speaker secretary. Ken does not charge and is fairly self-sufficient with projector and screen, etc.

And if your parish council would like to learn a little about the Society, Mike would be pleased to oblige.

Please contact us through the Feedback section of the website, or email [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto:hundredparishes@btinternet.com) or phone Ken on 01279 813226.

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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.