



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about PARISH NAMES



The registered office for The Hundred Parishes Society is in Stansted Mountfitchet. The name is an interesting one: Stansted derives from Saxon language meaning stony place – residents are reminded of this whenever they dig in the garden where flintstones often lie just below the surface. Mountfitchet is a corruption of Montfiquet, a village in Normandy. A man from there fought with William the Conqueror and was rewarded with land in Stansted. One of his descendants, Richard de Montfichet, was one of the barons who forced King John to agree to the Magna Carta in 1215.

Several more of the Hundred Parishes have names ending in the Saxon word for place: STED, STEAD or TED. Thaxted, for example, refers to the thatch that could be obtained there; Broxted seems to come from brock, the old name for badger.

Many of our town and village names pre-date the Norman invasion of 1066 and were subsequently recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. Duxford appears as Duchesuorde, or Duc's Enclosure. Duxford has a number of locations where ancient travellers could ford the River Cam. There are several more parishes whose name ends in FORD.



Domesday includes the manor of Pelham, possibly the home or farm of a man called Peola.



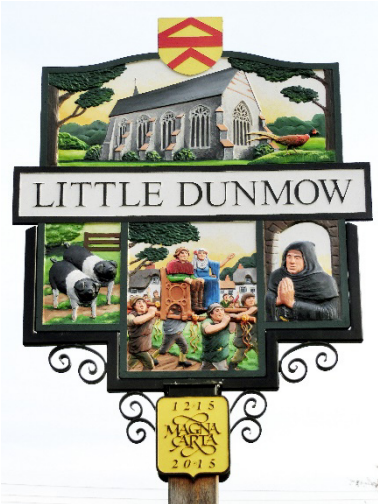
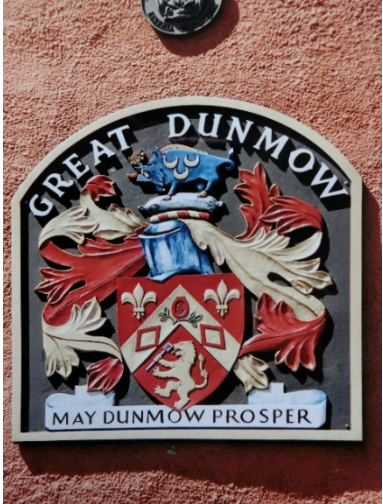
The Norman family De Furneux added its name to establish Furneux Pelham, while part of the manor was destroyed by fire in the twelfth century and became 'burnt' or Brent Pelham. Stocking Pelham, seems to have adopted an Old English word meaning 'made of logs', perhaps referring to the parish church.

The only Pelham with a village sign is Furneux Pelham. We understand that whoever paid for the sign insisted on their preferred spelling!

HAM appears at the end of more parish names, suggesting that they also arose from someone's home or farm.

The parish of Quendon and Rickling was created in the 1940s, bringing together two settlements whose names related to an ancient queen. Quendon is recorded as Kuenadana in Domesday and may come from Old English words meaning a valley owned by the queen. Rickling was recorded as Richelinga and may be derived from Ricula who was the wife of Sledd, a 6th-century ruler of Essex.

The Saxon words *aesun* and *dun* mean ash tree and hill respectively and in 1086 Ashdon was recorded as Ascenduna. DUN also finds its way into the name Dunmow, while DON links with Stane Street to form Standon.



On the other hand, DEN once meant either valley or pasture and became the ending of the name for several parishes including Berden and Manuden.



The name Sampford seems to be derived from two manors which appear in Domesday as Sanfort and Sanforda, each meaning a sandy ford. Today, a sandy ford still exists in Great Sampford, perhaps where one might spot the kingfisher that features on the village signs for both Great and Little Sampford. Great and Little have long been united into one administrative parish, The Sampfords.



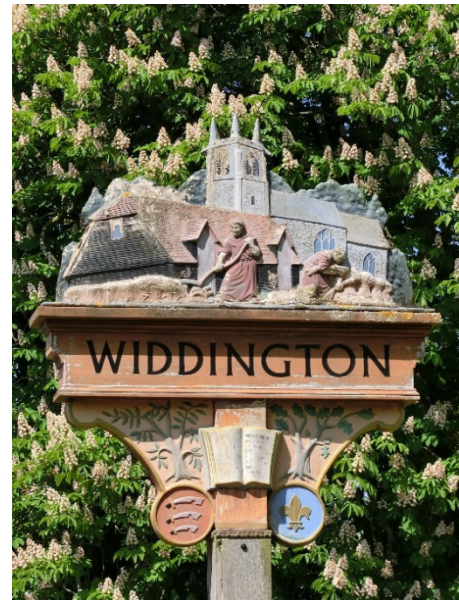
Ten parish names end in ING, a Norse word for meadow or enclosure. Of the ten, four are Rodings, linking the ING with Hroda, a local Saxon chieftain.



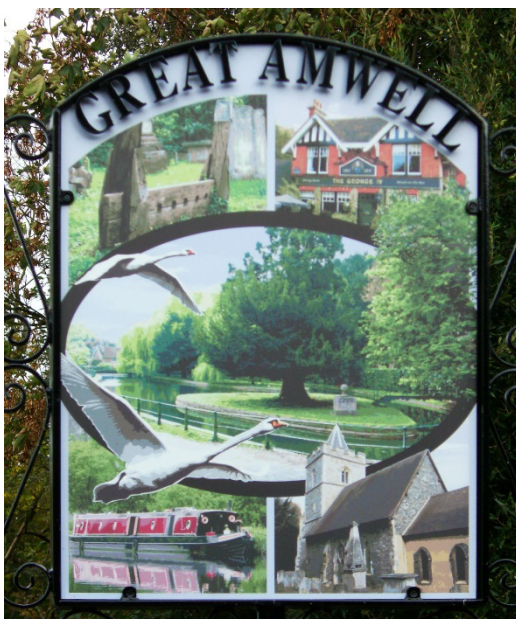
FIELD appears at the end of several parish names including the adjacent parishes of Finchingfield, Wethersfield and Great Bardfield which are often referred to locally as "the Three Fields"



The appearance of TON at the end of a placename is likely to be a corruption of TUN, which meant farm or hamlet.



Two adjacent parishes include the word BUMPSTEAD: Helions Bumpstead and Steeple Bumpstead. Bumpstead meant a place where rushes grew. Helions is after the name of a Norman Helion family, while the source of Steeple is less certain.



Great Amwell is believed to have taken its name from an ancient spring called Emma's Well, apparently named after the wife of King Canute who ruled England from 1016 to 1035.

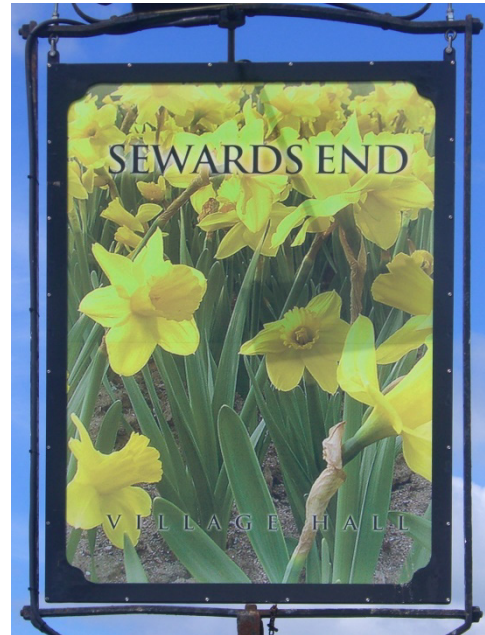
Specific name origins are often discussed in the parish introductions on the Society's website, www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

When, in 2011, a name was eventually decided upon for our own special area, it was a conscious decision to round the title to the **Hundred** Parishes as it was recognised that changes were possible. At that time the area comprised 104 administrative parishes of whom two were quite new - Swards End, established in 2004, and Flitch Green, 2008.

Swards End has existed as a community for hundreds of years, most recently as part of Saffron Walden parish. Its name appears to have derived from *Sigisward* who was granted land here in Norman times.



Flitch Green, an entirely new 21st-century community, took its name from the Flitch Trials which had been held nearby for centuries, a light-hearted tradition to find couples who had been happily married for a year and a day.



In 2019, two of our Essex parishes, Great Saling and Bardfield Saling, merged to become The Salings, thereby reducing the overall number to 103.

A number of photos of village signs have been used to illustrate this article. More are featured in the separate article relating specifically to Village Signs.

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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.