



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about POSTCARDS

Nowadays, it is quite unusual to see picture postcards for sale – and even rarer to receive one in the post. How times have changed.

The parish introductions on our website always include a few photos, usually recent images, but Barkway's intro also has a copy of a wonderful photo that had been published as a postcard in 1904.



Today, the view looking south down the main street has hardly changed – except that the telegraph pole has become less intrusive, there are now pavements and the once-empty main road has lots of parked cars.



Nearly all buildings are still recognizable, although their uses may have changed. Today, Barkway has just one pub, where once there were many to service the horse-drawn coaches on this once-popular route between London and Cambridge.

Sadly, the local lasses no longer come out to marvel at anyone with a pocket camera, nor do they wear long posh frocks and bonnets. And if any young lads appear, they no longer wear flat caps.

Picture postcards became extremely popular in the UK after the introduction in 1902 of the style with a picture on the front and a divided back - half for the address and the other half for a message. Pictures were generally black and white but sometimes coloured. Popularity waned after the First World War but it remained customary to send postcards to family and friends from somewhere visited on holiday or a day out. That custom has now almost died out, no doubt due in part to the availability – albeit only in this century - of more immediate means of exchanging messages and photos electronically.

Once upon a time, before widespread use of the telephone, many people used picture postcards for sending short messages. Until 1918 it cost only an old halfpenny to send a card – that's 480 cards for a Pound (in 2023 a second-class stamp for one card costs 75 pence). In those early days, there could be as many as five postal deliveries in a day, at least in towns, so it was not unreasonable to expect a reply the same day.

It wasn't just seaside towns that sold postcards; almost every town and village had its own postcard or set of postcards. Within the Hundred Parishes, it seems that only one parish has never had a postcard – Flitch Green, which became a parish only in 2008. Many of those old cards have survived. They often provide a revealing insight into our past and into an earlier way of life, for example buildings, roads, transport and dress.

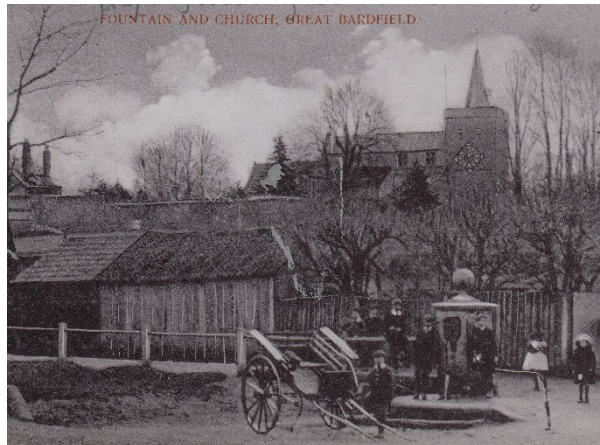
The three mile walk around Stansted Mountfitchet (Station Walk number 3) is illustrated with postcard images of a hundred years ago. Each location can be readily identified today.

Below is a selection of old postcards from around the Hundred Parishes. Most are recognizable a hundred years on – long may they remain so.

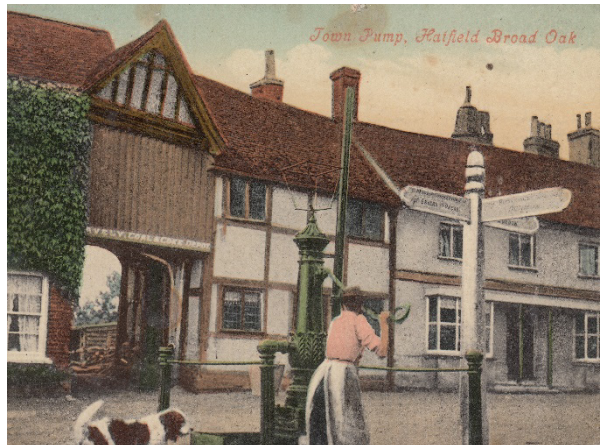
First, we feature Buntingford High Street on the left and Church Lane, Clavering on the right.



Next, we have a sheep sit-down in the centre of Felsted and the water pump in Great Bardfield.



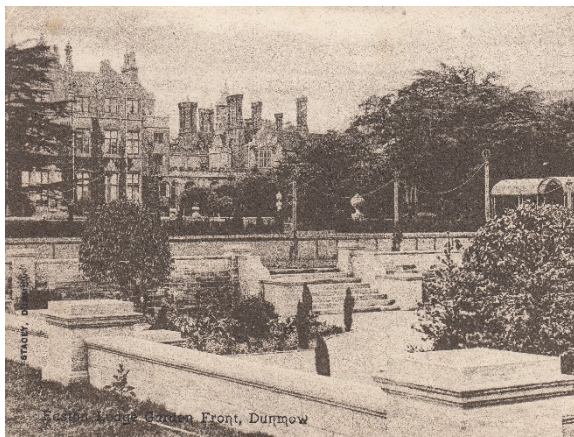
Below, Great Sampford High Street and the pump at the centre of Hatfield Broad Oak.



Next, Linton when the railway still crossed over Hadstock Road and the bend at Littlebury before the road was called the A11.



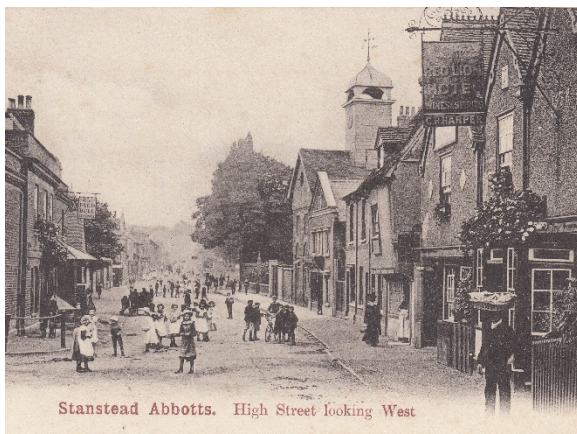
Immediately below are Easton Lodge at Little Easton in 1904, before it was destroyed by fire, and then Much Hadham High Street.



Two views of Saffron Walden: High Street and Market Square, the latter 1908 and tinted.



Finally, old postcards of Stanstead Abbots High Street and Church Path, Wendens Ambo.



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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.