



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

BRAUGHING



Location: 7 miles west of Bishop's Stortford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL3925.
Postcode: SG11 2QR. **Access:** Off B1368. **County:** Hertfordshire. **District:** East Herts.
Buses (Mon to Sat): 331 between Hertford & Buntingford; 386 between Bishop's Stortford & Stevenage.
Population: 1,150 in 2001, 1,203 in 2011, 1,400 in 2021.

Roads, Romans, railways, rivers, a "resurrection". . . oh, and sausages. For a small place Braughing certainly knows how to pack things in.

Archaeological evidence suggests the parish, which includes the hamlets of Bozen Green, Braughing Friars, Dassells, Hamels Park and Hay Street, has a history dating back far beyond the Domesday Book – in which it features as Brachinges. Permanent settlement in the area is thought to have begun in the Iron Age, though there are traces of human activity dating from significantly before then.

By the time the Romans arrived, Braughing was a significant settlement, possibly the capital of the Trinovantes – one of Britain's most powerful Celtic tribes. The new arrivals took full advantage of the location, developing a trading post at Ford Bridge, linked to the river Lea and using some of Roman Britain's most important highways, roads such as Ermine Street (now the A10), Stane Street – the present day A120 - and the Icknield Way.

The railways arrived rather later – in the 19th century – via the Buntingford branch line. In 1964, along with large swathes of Britain's network, the Braughing connection fell victim to Dr Beeching's axe, though the site of the station has been preserved.

As for the "resurrection", that took place back in the days of the first Queen Elizabeth, and is still celebrated every year on October 2. The story goes that as the pall bearers were carrying the coffin of a local farmer, Matthew Wall, to his final resting place they slipped on wet autumnal leaves and dropped their burden. To the amazement of all present the burial party heard the sounds of loud knocking from the coffin. "Matthew, not dead at all, had been awoken by the crash", according to one report.

When he finally did die, almost a quarter of a century later, Matthew left funds for his adventure to be marked, once a year by the ceremonial sweeping of Fleece Lane, where the coffin fell, and for the funeral bell to be tolled – immediately to be followed by a wedding peal. Fleece Lane is not open to motor traffic, crossing the River Quin by a 19th-century iron footbridge.

Shown here is Malting Lane ford – one of two in the parish that cross the Quin. It is picturesque and often populated by a noisy congregation of ducks and geese. The village's photogenic appeal was sufficient to see it featured in an episode of the television drama series, Foyle's War.



Despite its sometimes hectic history, Braughing is a tranquil spot. The village boasts a range of interesting buildings, including the Grade I church, St Mary the Virgin, dating back to the 13th century, the old school house and a number of homes sporting the decorative plaster designs known as pargetting - as well as the intriguingly named Robbers Cottage.



For those wanting to explore the parish and its surroundings on foot, the Braughing Parish Paths Group arranges regular walks in and around the parish (details appear on the parish website - see below).

Those requiring refreshment can choose from three pubs, the Axe and Compasses and the Brown Bear in the village centre and the Golden Fleece on the B1368 at Green End, while teas are available from the church hall on Sunday afternoons during the summer. The sausages are pretty good, too.

Hospitality:

Axe & Compasses – 01920 821610 - <https://www.theaxebraughing.uk/>

Brown Bear – 01920 822157 - <http://brownbearbraughing.co.uk/>

Golden Fleece – 01920 823555 - www.goldenfleecebraughing.co.uk

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 108 of 8 miles through Albury & Braughing (start from Braughing on page 2)

Circular walk 105 of 3.5 miles mostly in Standon & Puckeridge (start from Braughing on page 3)

Station walk 18: between Ware and Stansted Mountfitchet stations (17 miles).

Adjacent parishes: Standon, Westmill, Hornead, Furneux Pelham, Albury.

Links:

Parish website: <https://www.braughing.org.uk/>

Film 1946: <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/no-spreading-chestnut-tree/query/Braughing>

Further reading: The Braughing of Victor Tott – available from Bishop's Stortford TIC.