



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

CLAVERING



Location: 5 miles northwest of Stansted Mountfitchet. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL4731. **Postcode:** CB11 4QL. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** B1038, National Cycle Route 11. **Buses:** There is no general bus service, only school buses. **Population:** 1,156, 1,238 in 2011, 1,300 in 2021.

The Domesday Book of 1086 includes Clauelinga, which probably meant the place where clover grows. Then it was a relatively large manor. Today, Clavering is still a large parish, covering more than 15 square kilometres (6 square miles), most of which is over 100 metres above sea level. Clavering's northwest parish boundary follows the line of the Roman road between Chesterford and Braughing, yet little evidence has been found of occupation in that era. The population today is similar to that in 1841 when the majority of people worked on the land.



The early stages of the River Stort flow from the far west of the parish to the far south. En route, this generally benign river sometimes makes its presence felt, especially where it passes over the ford close to the centre of Clavering village. This photo was taken after heavy rain from Middle Street as it enters the ford, with the river flowing from left to right. Opposite the ford stands one of the smallest houses in Essex, dating from the 17th century and appropriately-named The Little House.

Clavering village is the parish's main settlement, but there are further hamlets at the seven Greens (namely: Butts, Roast, Sheepcote, Deer's, Starling's, Stickling and Hill) and at three Ends (Ford, Further Ford and Mill). Mill End is the location of two distinctive former windmills, now without sails and known affectionately as the salt and pepper pots.

The B1038 road, between Newport to the east and Buntingford to the west, crosses the parish and passes through Clavering village. Soon after entering Clavering, at Hill Green, it passes the Cricketers, renowned as the place where Jamie Oliver, local resident and international celebrity chef, learned to cook. The main road passes the village hall on the right before descending past the cricket field on the left – with its tiny thatched pavilion and 19th-century former Methodist chapel – and then the 18th-century Fox & Hounds pub on the left.

The B1038 avoids Clavering's historic core which is off to the right. This area is best explored on foot. There are links below to two longer walks, but here we give a short 'taster' suggestion:

It is probably easiest to park along Stortford Road, south and well clear of where it meets the B1038. From here, head north, past the war memorial outside the Christian Centre to the staggered cross roads and turn left on Pelham Road, B1038, signposted to Brent Pelham. After about 300 metres, turn right down the lane towards the church, passing the former guildhall on the left just before going through the gate into the churchyard. Follow the path round the church to an information board that explains that the moat and earthworks before you are the remains of Clavering Castle.

Turn right to leave the churchyard by the gate, immediately passing one of Essex's oldest houses on the left. This lane leads to Middle Street in the historic and picturesque centre of Clavering. Divert left, downhill to the ford, or keep straight ahead to return to the staggered cross roads. Cross, with care, into Stortford Road, where you parked.

To enjoy a visit to the full, please don't hurry – and be sure to bring the camera.



This view down Church Lane shows firstly the Old Hall, whose red brick exterior dates from around 1690. Further down is a 15th-century timber-framed and plastered building that served as a guildhall, then a workhouse from 1760 to 1835 and probably then almshouses before becoming private dwellings. Beyond is the 15th century Grade I-listed church of St Mary and St Clement. Inside are 15th-century stained glass, a beautifully-carved Elizabethan pulpit and several interesting monuments. One of a knight probably pre-dates the present church. The ceiling is original - perhaps its longevity is due to the supporting angels.

Beyond the church are the extensive earthworks of what was once a substantial castle, possibly pre-dating the Norman Conquest. Close by is The Bury, shown on the right. This is one of the oldest houses in Essex, a rare medieval aisled hall built around 1300 AD as a royal manor house.



The path continues past attractive thatched cottages, shown on the left, before reaching Middle Street, where the first houses on the left are shown below, left – Tudor Cottage and Bakers, both dating from the 16th century.



On the right is the scene a hundred years ago, viewed from the opposite direction – looking up Middle Street from the ford towards Tudor Cottage and Bakers at the far end on the right. At the top of Middle Street, facing the photographer, is the Old Post Office, named after an activity which took place long after it was built in the 16th century.

The historic significance of much of Clavering has long been recognised by the designation of an extensive Conservation Area, half of which can be seen between Church Lane and the ford. The Conservation Area continues northwards, almost to the Cricketers, and includes The Druce, a lane that heads East alongside the Stort. This becomes a byway, muddy at times, before turning up an ancient sunken lane. This is just one of many paths that criss-cross the parish.

National Cycle Network route number 11 passes through Clavering, coming from Stansted Mountfitchet Station and heading north, eventually reaching Ely by way of quiet country lanes.



Clavering's heritage is not confined to the Conservation Area, for there are ancient buildings and signs of early farming all around. In total, there are 87 listed buildings, well scattered throughout the parish.

Pictured on the left is Pond's Manor, a well-restored Elizabethan house of the 16th century that is notable for its herringbone brickwork.

Not nearly so old, but listed, is the telephone kiosk near the Middle Street crossroads. When it became redundant, Clavering's active community converted it into an information point and children's lending library.

This brief introduction to Clavering is merely a glimpse into the rich history that has been thoroughly researched and documented in recent times by two enthusiastic resident historians: the late Eileen Ludgate and, more recently, Jacqueline Cooper. Details of their publications are given

below. Many aspects of the parish have been beautifully sketched by another resident, Wendy Upson, and some of her illustrations appear in *History Walks in Clavering*. There is much to enjoy in this parish, either in print or by personal visit.

Hospitality:

Cricketers hotel & restaurant – 01799 550442 – www.thecricketers.co.uk

Fox & Hounds pub – 01799 550321 – <https://foxandhoundsclavering.com/>

Poppy's Barn Tea Room, Butts Green, CB11 4RT - 01799 812000 - <https://poppysbarn.co.uk/>

Clavering Lakes cafe (2021 closed re Covid-19) <https://clavering-lakes.co.uk/the-lodge/>

Hundred Parishes Society walk routes can be downloaded from this website. They include . . .

Station walk number 11 which covers 10.8 miles between Newport and Audley End stations and passes through Clavering.

Circular walk 118 covers 2.4 miles within Clavering.

Circular walk 180 covers 6.5 miles of Clavering and Berden parishes on quiet lanes and paths.

Adjacent parishes: Berden, Quendon & Rickling, Wicken Bonhunt, Arkesden, Elmdon & Wenden Lofts, Langley, Brent Pelham, Meesden.

Links:

Parish Council: <https://www.claveringparishcouncil.gov.uk/>

Conservation Area appraisal: link from: www.uttlesford.gov.uk/caa

History: www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/clavering/claveringhomepage.html

Further reading: available from Jacqueline Cooper: mrsjacquelinecooper@gmail.com

Clavering and Langley – The First Thousand Years, EM Ludgate, 1996.

Clavering and Langley 1783 – 1983, EM Ludgate, 1984.

History walks in Clavering, Jacqueline Cooper, 2003.

Clavering at War, Jacqueline Cooper, 2012.

Clavering WWI War Memorial, Jacqueline Cooper, 2014.