



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

GREAT WALTHAM



Location: 5 miles north of Chelmsford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6913.

Postcode: CM3 1DP. **County:** Essex. **District:** Chelmsford.

Access: A130, B1008. Regional Cycle Route 50.

Buses: 42a (each day) between Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Airport, Great Dunmow and Chelmsford; X10 (each day) between Stansted Airport and Chelmsford; 10 (Mon to Fri) between Chelmsford & Pleshey; 16 (Mon – Sat) between Chelmsford & Wethersfield calling at Ford End and Hartford End; X30 (each day) between Stansted Airport and Southend calling at North End and Ford End. **Population:** 2,228 in 2001, 2,172 in 2011, 2,300 in 2021.

Great Waltham is one of the most extensive parishes of Essex. Covering 6,147 acres or 2,488 hectares according to the parish council website, it may be the largest of the Hundred Parishes. The parish lies mostly in the broad valley of the River Chelmer, which here runs from north to south. The name Waltham has a Saxon derivation meaning wood (*walt*) home (*ham*). The area was once part of the extensive Forest of Essex whose remnants include the ancient woodlands of Epping and Hatfield Forests; today, this is mostly gently-undulating open farmland.

The parish comprises numerous villages and small hamlets, most notably Great Waltham itself, Ford End, Howe Street, North End, Littlely Green and Broad's Green. Altogether, there are over a hundred listed buildings, some of which are pictured within this introduction.

Approaching Great Waltham village from the east will offer the most distinctive introduction to the visitor, passing the rolling parkland of the Langleys estate. Langleys takes its name from its fourteenth century owners, although its origins can be traced at least two centuries further back. The estate and its "new" Georgian mansion are privately owned, having been in the Tufnell family since the early 1700s. The house has a Grade I listing. It is not open to the public, but footpaths that cross the park offer some fine views of the house and grounds. Those walking the Essex Way, the long-distance path from Epping to Harwich, or following Hundred Parishes walk number 110 will be able to savour this view at close hand.



The parish church, dedicated to St Mary and St Lawrence, is in the centre of Great Waltham village. It dates from Norman times and is listed at Grade I. Closer inspection of the outside will reveal the items pictured below: the clock commemorating Queen Victoria who reigned from 1837 to 1901, a handsome gargoyle on a drainpipe and intricate carving on the lychgate.



On first entering the church, one is struck by the exceptionally wide nave which lends an air of space and light unusual in medieval churches. It has a ring of eight very ancient bells (the first cast in 1336) and many fine stained-glass windows.

Also of note is the ornate Jacobean monument to the Everard family, early owners of Langleys, shown below.



Behind the church is 16th-century Badynghams with its tall, eye-catching, red-brick chimneys. Known locally as the Guildhall, although it never was, this is a striking building, a private house of medieval origin. It has had many alterations over the centuries; early photos show it with an integral village shop and post office.

Just beyond the photo, the main entrance to Badynghams passes the war memorial and a "listening bench" where one can sit and listen to recorded reminiscences of life here in the 20th century.



The theme of tall chimneys is continued at Littley Park, just outside the hamlet of Littley Green in the northeast of the parish. There, you will find one of Great Waltham's several pubs. The Compasses, shown below, is a popular destination, a home of log fires, real ale and good food with their speciality, the Essex "Huffer". The word is apparently a corruption of 'half a loaf'; it is certainly a filling meal, a large triangular over-filled bap.



In the north of the parish there are two further churches, quite different in style to one another and to the church in Great Waltham village.

Pictured here is the red-brick Church of St John the Evangelist in the village of Ford End. It was built in 1870 by the Chelmsford architect Frederick Chancellor. The pulpit, lectern and stalls were carved in 1869 by Colonel Nevill Tufnell who lived at Langleys. The church has a memorial to the Rev Arthur Shearly Cripps, twice vicar, a missionary to Zimbabwe, and nephew of the mid-20th-century politician Sir Stafford Cripps.



Set originally upon an osier bed where willows were grown, the marshy ground has caused structural problems over the years. It is currently safe and the bells, which were quiet for two decades in the 1980s and 90s, are ringing again. Sunday services alternate between Ford End and Great Waltham.

Hundred Parishes walk number 102 starts and finishes at the small car park opposite the church. The early part of the route follows some of the Ford End / Hartford End World War II Trail which is explained on an interpretation panel in the car park. The routes pass several concrete pillboxes (two shown here) and also spigot mortar emplacements, all of which were part of a defensive line constructed in 1942 in preparation for a possible German invasion. In this area, the installations were close to the River Chelmer which formed a natural barrier against vehicle movements.



In the far north of Great Waltham parish, the appropriately-named North End is a small village overlooking the Chelmer Valley. All the photos on this page were taken there.

North End is home to the extraordinary Grade I-listed Blackchapel, a timber-framed chapel with adjoining priest's house, built in the 14th century and still in regular use for services. It is shown here. The chapel has rare box pews, a three-deck pulpit, an ancient barrel organ and what is reputed to be the smallest font in England.



Close to Blackchapel, there is another pub, the Butchers Arms, pictured immediately below on the left. The building dates from the 17th or 18th century.

Thatched, 17th-century Bumbles is shown on the right. The information panel to its right stands on a small green. It helpfully identifies many of the attractive houses in North End.



Below, on the left, is 15th-century Brook House, while the yellow plaster on the right belongs to 17th-century Green Oaks.



The hamlet of Howe Street is situated about a mile north of Great Waltham village. The next three photos were all taken in Howe Street. Each building dates back to the 15th century and each is now a residential property. Tudor House is shown on the right.



Below, Thatches is on the left. On the right is pargetted Lamb Cottage, with Maltings attached to its right.

Howe Street also has a pub, The Green Man. It has 14th-century origins and has been updated and extended to provide an upmarket dining experience.



Rather hidden in the depth of the countryside, close to the parish boundary with Pleshey, Fitzjohn's Farmhouse, below on the left, is a timber-framed and plastered hall house from the 15th century. It has changed very little since the 16th century. Nearby Garnetts Farm, shown on the right, has similar origins.



Great Waltham village is situated towards the southeast corner of the large parish that takes its name. Even further southeast, just beyond the village, two pubs could each claim to be the most south-easterly pub in the Hundred Parishes.

These are The Rose and Crown in the hamlet of Minnow End and The Walnut Tree in the hamlet of Broad's Green. The latter is pictured here.



Great Waltham parish has a myriad of public rights of way, including the Essex Way. The parish council has produced a small range of leaflets identifying circular walks in the area. *Beating the Bounds* will take you around the 16 miles of the parish boundary, with suggestions for the less energetic of some shorter cross-cutting routes.

Despite their dispersal over such a wide area, the two thousand or so residents of the parish remain a cohesive community. At no time is this more evident than during the annual Midsummer Festival when, over the months of May, June and July, all can participate in an extensive programme of music, dance, sports, walks and activities of many kinds, arranged by resident organisations and brought together by the Great Waltham Community Network.

USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT GREAT WALTHAM

Hospitality

The Compasses (Littley Green), CM3 1BU – www.compasseslittleygreen.co.uk - 01245 362308

Butchers Arms (North End), CM3 3PJ - www.butchersarms-essex.co.uk - 01245 237449;

Walnut Tree (Broads Green), CM3 1DT - 01245 360222;

Green Man (Howe Street), CM3 1BG - 01245 408820 -

<https://galvinrestaurants.com/restaurant/galvin-green-man-chelmsford/>

Beehive (Great Waltham), CM3 1ES - 01245 901672

The Stores tea room (Gt Waltham), CM3 1DE - <http://www.thestores.co.uk/> - 01245 362649

Rose and Crown (Great Waltham) www.roseandcrowngreatwaltham.co.uk - 01245 360359.

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 102 – a 7.5 mile rural route starting at Ford End

Circular walk 110 – a 7.3 mile route from Pleshey – join the route from Gt Waltham on page 2.

Quiet lane walks 310 (5.5 miles) from Great Waltham and 317 (3.5 miles) from Littley Green.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Pleshey, High Easter, Barnston, Flich Green, Felsted.

Links

Great Waltham Parish Council: <https://e-voice.org.uk/greatwalthamparish/>

The Essex Way: www.essexway.org.uk

Oral history that can also be heard on Great Waltham's Listening Bench – taken from interviews recorded by Anne Cowlin in 2001 – 2005 for her book [see below]

<https://www.essexsounds.org.uk/content/benches/great-waltham>

Further reading:

Gt Waltham Parish Plan and *Gt Waltham Design Statement*. Available from the Parish Council.

North End Village Design Statement. Available from the Parish Council.

Ford End: The Story of an Essex Village by Winifred Eastment, 1968.

Ages in the Making: a history of two Essex villages by Phillips & Bazett, 1974.

Victorian Hamlet: Howe Street 1837-1901 by Alan Maddock, 118 pages, published 2004.

Halcyon Days of Cod Liver Oil – Oral history of Great Waltham in the 20th century by Anne Cowlin, 2005.

Little Guide to St Mary and St Lawrence Church. Available from the church.