



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

HEMPSTEAD



Location: 6 miles east of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6338.
Postcode: CB10 2PD. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** B1054.
Buses: 320 and 321 (Mon – Sat) between Audley End Station, Saffron Walden and Haverhill.
Population: 422 in 2001, 451 in 2011, 430 in 2021.

Hempstead is a small parish with a population of 430 recorded in the 2021 Census. It is situated seven miles east of Saffron Walden in the far northeast corner of Uttlesford District. Hempstead is notable as the final resting place, in the parish church, of two renowned members of the Harvey family and also as the birthplace of notorious highwayman, Dick Turpin.

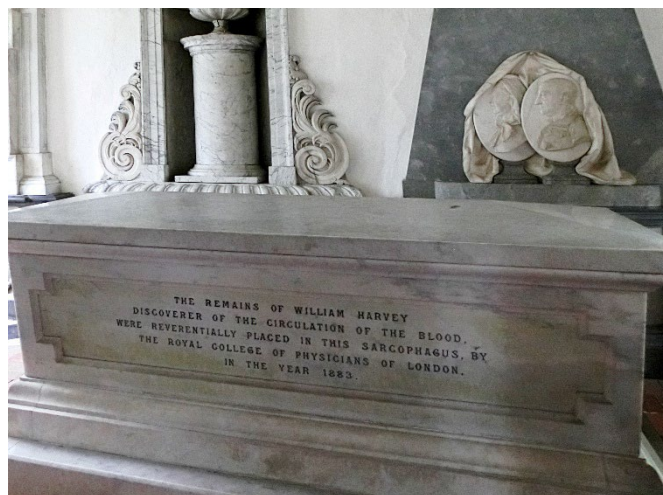


William Harvey (1578 – 1657) was a physician to two monarchs, James I and Charles I, and chief physician of St Bartholomew's Hospital in London. He changed the course of medical practice through his discovery and explanation of the circulation of blood.

Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey (1758 – 1830) commanded the *Temeraire* at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Both men were interred in the crypt of the Church of St Andrew in the family vault which holds around 50 family members

William Harvey's body was moved in 1883 by the Royal College of Physicians into a marble sarcophagus that can now be seen in the north chapel, above the Harvey family vault. It is pictured on the right.



Sir Eliab Harvey's ship, the *Temeraire*, is probably best known as the subject of a painting by J.M.W. Turner in 1839 of the sailing ship being towed along the Thames by steam tugs to the scrapyard. The painting is shown on the left.

Neither William Harvey nor Sir Eliab Harvey appears to have resided in Hempstead before they died. Their association with the parish is due to William's younger brother, another Eliab Harvey.

He lived in Hempstead for a while at Winslow or Wincelow Hall which he bought in 1647 and which was destroyed by fire in the 19th century. Eliab funded an extension to the church and created the Harvey family vault.



Most of the early Harveys in the family vault are in lead coffins, some decorated with a three-dimensional image of the deceased person's face. The coffin on the left contains (or contained) the remains of another Eliab, a London merchant who died in 1651. The small coffin shown above, lying on top of Eliab's, contained the remains of a young child. While the church opens regularly, the vault is usually kept closed.

Hempstead village is a linear settlement, with the majority of houses lining the B1054 road that runs east from Saffron Walden towards Haverhill and Suffolk. St Andrew's Church sits on higher ground, up Church Road which climbs eastwards from the village centre. It dates from the 14th century, although its tower was rebuilt in 1933 after its predecessor collapsed.

At the junction of the B1054 and Church Road, the Bluebell Inn is a noted landmark, opposite the recently refurbished war memorial. Sadly, the pub has been closed since 2020 although an ongoing residents' initiative hopes that its efforts will one day see the historic pub reopen.



The notorious 18th-century highwayman Dick Turpin (1705 – 1739) grew up here as his parents were licensees of what was then called the Bell Inn. In more recent times it was also known as the Rose and Crown. Turpin avoided capture for his highway robberies, murder and other brutal crimes in Essex by fleeing to York where he adopted a new name. He was held in York gaol for a suspected local crime, but made the fatal mistake of writing to his brother-in-law in Hempstead. His handwriting was recognised by his former teacher and his true identity was revealed. He was tried and executed in York.

Life seems to be less dramatic these days. As with many small villages, Hempstead can appear quite sleepy at first glance but activities take place all year round between the different clubs and societies which include a keep fit group and an amateur dramatic society.

Village activities usually take place in the village hall. The village hall is set back from the road, close to the pub on the opposite side of the road. The building was used as a village school until the mid-20th century with separate classrooms for boys and girls. The hall was fully refurbished and extended as a village Millennium project, with the doors opened by the oldest resident in January 2000. The Millennium Tapestry, recounting the history of Hempstead, hangs in the hall.

Occasional concerts are held in the church, organised by Friends of Hempstead Church who seek to protect the church's structure and preserve its history. A booklet by Hazel Weedon taking the reader on *A Walk Through the Centuries* of St Andrew's church can be purchased in the church and a management plan of the churchyard is also available. In 2007 the churchyard was recognised as the Best Kept in Essex.

The parish council has received grants from The Hundred Parishes Society which have enabled them to refurbish the village sign and war memorial, pictured below.



The rural setting around the village is of gentle slopes and arable farmland with several nearby woods including Hempstead Wood. It is a popular destination for walkers although its 190 acres of ancient woodland are only walkable along its southern boundary. In springtime, you may see the lovely oxlip, a rare plant outside this area and pictured here. Footpath maps and suggested walks are available to buy in the church and two Hundred Parishes routes start from there – see below.



Many of the parish's 39 listed buildings can be found in the centre of Hempstead village which is protected as a conservation area. Three are pictured here.

On the right is 17th-century Old Quail Farm.

Below is 18th-century Welltrees.



On the right, Dick Turpin's Cottage dates from either the 17th or 18th century. It acquired its name in the 20th century and probably has no direct link with Turpin.

Hempstead's nearest food store and post office are in Steeple Bumpstead, three or four miles to the east.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HEMPSTEAD

Hospitality: The Bluebell Inn closed in 2020 but a community group is seeking to reopen it.

Further reading:

"A Walk through the Centuries" by Hazel Weedon is a guide to Hempstead's church. Two books about Hempstead by Ross Midgeley were published in 2025: "Walking the Hamster to the Fountain" and "At the Going Down of the Sun".

Hundred Parishes Society walks include two circular routes around the parish, both starting near the church. They can be freely downloaded and printed . . .

Walk 135 (4.3 miles) includes footpaths; Quiet Lane Walk 302 (3.4 miles) avoids footpaths. Several walk routes can be downloaded from the parish council website.

Adjacent parishes:

The Sampfords, Radwinter, Helions Bumpstead, Steeple Bumpstead, Finchingfield.

Links:

Parish Council and all parish organisations and events: www.hempstead-essex.org.uk

Hempstead history: <https://hempsteadhistory.uk/>

1961 Television archive of Hempstead and Dick Turpin: <http://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=1066383>

This page, last updated 30 January 2026, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk.