



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## MANUDEN



**Location:** 1 mile northwest of Stansted Mountfitchet. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL4926. **Postcode** CM23 1DD. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** west off B1383. National Cycle Route 11. **Bus:** no general bus service visits Manuden, only school buses. **Population:** 636 in 2001, 677 in 2011, 720 in 2021.

Magghedana appears in the Domesday Book of 1086, its name probably Saxon and meaning “Valley of the people of Mana”. Manuden village lies on the flood plain of the River Stort, which flows from north to south through the parish and defines the parish boundary for a while in the southeast corner. The parish extends westwards to higher ground and the border with Hertfordshire. The tiny, isolated hamlets of Uppend and Mallows Green, in the southwest of the parish, are accessible only by a single country lane.

Approaching from the south, along Carters Hill, the visitor is greeted by a village sign that features a worker in the leather industry which flourished here for centuries until the 1900s.

Just beyond the sign, springtime sees the small green enriched with flowering crocuses and other bulbs.



The first building on the left is thatched, 17th or 18th-century Walnut Tree Cottage which was once the home of the Savill family. One night in 1789, Richard Savill and Thomas Bray had been drinking at an inn in the next village, Stansted Mountfitchet. Next morning, Bray's body was found in a field in Manuden and Savill eventually confessed to the murder. Aged just 20, Richard Savill was hanged on The Downs, on the other side of the valley, in sight of his poor mother's cottage.

Manuden seems to have a long history of involvement with activities now regarded as barbaric. An early Manuden vicar, Thomas Bagley, was found guilty of heresy and burnt at the stake in London in 1431.

As we come into the village, we pass The Old Inn on the right, dating from the 18th century. Now a private house, it once flourished as The Cock Inn. It was here, in 1845, that a crowded coroner's court considered the untimely death of a Manuden child. It was feared that the boy had been poisoned by Sarah Chesham from Clavering, but no conclusion appears to have been reached. A few years later, Sarah, by then known locally as Sally Arsenic, was acquitted of charges of poisoning her own children but hanged at Chelmsford Gaol after being convicted of the attempted murder of her husband.



Manuden's most famous resident was Sir William Waad (pronounced Wade) (1546 – 1623). When not in London, Waad lived at Battles Hall, a mile northwest of Manuden village. Waad was a high-ranking official during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. From 1605 to 1613 he was Lieutenant of the Tower of London, where he was the custodian of prisoners who included Sir Walter Raleigh and Guy Fawkes. Waad supervised the interrogation and torture of Fawkes and his fellow conspirators who were then hung, drawn and quartered for their part in the “Gunpowder Plot”, a failed attempt to blow up Parliament. Sir William Waad's grandson, Captain William Waad, was murdered close to Battles Hall in 1677.



Life is now more peaceful and it is safe to visit and view the parish's many fine buildings.

This photo was taken over 100 years ago, coming into Manuden from the south. The basic view has changed little, although the road and pavement have been surfaced, there is now more 'street furniture' and the buildings have been updated.



The two thatched 18th-century properties on the right are Grove Cottage and then The Long House. Beyond them are the railings of Manuden Primary School, which is still going strong. On the left, a row of 12 dwellings was built in 1857 by John Thomas. He was the owner of Manuden House whose view was blocked by some older cottages. Thomas had them demolished and instead provided this row of six pairs of almshouse cottages, out of his sight.

Peeking above the trees in the old photo, the spire of Manuden parish church is just visible. The road, now called The Street, bears right, passing a low stone wall that surrounds what was once the village pound for stray animals.

Here is a more recent photo, just showing the top of the wall, with The Bury behind. The Bury dates from the 16th century. Manuden History Society has met here for many years.



The parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, dates from the 12th century.

Like many churches, it was substantially rebuilt during the 19th century but retains significant elements from the 15th including the fine carving and tracery work of the chancel screen.

A wall monument commemorates Sir William Waad (of Guy Fawkes fame) who is probably buried inside the church.





Benrose, a 16th-century house with exposed timber-framing shown on the left, stands beside the churchyard. It was once a series of four small cottages.

Just at the church, The Street turns left past The Yew Tree pub, but if we turn right here, a narrow lane soon crosses over the River Stort and passes Manuden Hall, pictured below.



In the 19th century, when there was widespread protest by farm labourers who were unhappy with their pay and fearful of the increase in mechanisation, Manuden had one of the worst records for rural arson. Targets were usually haystacks and barns, but in 1888 Manuden Hall was almost completely destroyed by a fire in another suspected case of “incendiarism”. The rebuilt Hall retains just the original chimney stack and some of the Tudor brick gables.

Returning to The Street, a quotation from Nikolaus Pevsner, the 20th-century architectural historian, provides a suitable introduction: “Manuden has a specially pretty, short village street with timber-framed cottages with oversailing upper floors near the church and a small assortment of Georgian houses a little further west”. Here is the view so enjoyed by Pevsner, looking west along The Street past the aforesaid oversailing upper floor of a former 17th-century maltings. Along here, also, are former shops and almshouses.



Most of the centre of Manuden is protected as a conservation area and almost every individual building along The Street is listed. The parish has a total of 72 listings, all Grade II except the church at Grade II\* (“2 star”). While the overall number is exceptionally high, the lack of higher ratings may be due to the fact that almost every building has been somewhat modernised to give the cared-for look that prevails today.

Pictured on the right is the red-brick former vicarage, Cleeve Hall, dating from around 1720 AD.





Each building pictured so far can be found in the centre of Manuden. Two of the Hundred Parishes Society's walk routes start in Manuden, exploring some of the village centre and also roaming more widely through the parish. Walk 146 covers just under 4 miles, all within the parish, and visits the area to the west of the main street. Walk 157 (5 miles) explores the area to the east, including some of the adjacent parish of Ugley.

Both walks start and finish at Manuden's Community Centre, opened in 2014 and pictured below, on the left. The Community Centre was developed alongside a small residential estate, Langlands, shown on the right, which incorporated building designs that echoed more traditional local architecture.



The Community Centre is the starting point for what has become a popular annual community tradition – a scarecrow trail. On one of these themed extravaganzas, Paddington Bear could be spotted beside 18th-century Long House which was shown earlier in the old photo.

Most of the parish is still agricultural, with several working farms, but today's Manudenites are far more likely to be commuters than agricultural workers.

To the north of the village, Pinchpools (on the right) is a former 16th-century manor house that is now the hub of one of those farms.

To the west, the pair of cottages shown below stand beside Mallows Green and date from the 16th or 17th century.

Pictured bottom right is Keeper's Cottage, dating from the 18th or 19th century and much improved in recent years.





Once on the paths and lanes that rise up from Manuden village, there are frequent views over the Stort valley. This view, from the west, looks over the houses on Carters Hill towards Bentfield Bury Farm in the parish of Stansted Mountfitchet.



The parish website (see link below) has a description of a walk through the village, with further history. A good selection of postcard images shows subtle changes over the last hundred years. There is also excellent coverage in the Conservation Area appraisal – see link below.

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#### **Hospitality:**

Yew Tree pub-restaurant-hotel, CM23 1DJ – 01279 814279 - [www.yewtreeinnmanuden.co.uk](http://www.yewtreeinnmanuden.co.uk)

#### **Hundred Parishes Society walks** include . . .

Circular walk 146 – 4 miles around the west of Manuden parish.

Circular walk 157 – 5 miles around the east of Manuden and also some of Ugley parish.

Station walk number 1 covers an 11-mile circuit and could be joined near the Yew Tree at page 3 of the description.

Station walk 18 is not for the faint-hearted, covering 17 miles from Ware to Stansted Mountfitchet. It could be joined in Manuden at page 4, then catching the train from Stansted Mountfitchet to Ware before completing the first part of the route back to Manuden.

**Adjacent parishes:** Farnham, Aldbury, Furneux Pelham, Berden, Ugley, Stansted Mountfitchet.

#### **Links:**

Parish Council: [www.manuden.org.uk](http://www.manuden.org.uk) including Local Organisations – Local History – Historical Walk through village and Old Manuden in postcards:

Conservation Area appraisal: link from [www.Uttlesford.gov.uk/caa](http://www Uttlesford.gov.uk/caa)

Manuden and Berden History Society (including publications): [www.manuden.org.uk/mhs.asp](http://www.manuden.org.uk/mhs.asp)

History: [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/manuden/manuden.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/manuden/manuden.html)

#### **Further reading:**

*Sir William Waad, Lieutenant of the Tower and the Gunpowder Plot*, Fiona Bengsten, 2005, Trafford Publishing.