



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

NEWPORT



Location: 3 miles southwest of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5233.

Postcode: CB11 3RN (parking). **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** Newport station on London Liverpool Street to Cambridge line. B1383. **Buses** (Mon – Sat): 301 between Saffron Walden & Bishop's Stortford; 319 and 321 between Newport, Saffron Walden & Haverhill.

Population: 2,208 in 2001, 2,352 in 2011, 2,900 in 2021.

The earliest reference to Newport is in the Domesday Book of 1086 when it had 48 households and seven slaves. The name means a new town. In Saxon times “port” was often the name for a market and Newport did have a flourishing market until 1141 when Geoffrey de Mandeville was granted the right to move the market to nearby Saffron Walden.

The River Cam flows through the parish and the Cam valley was a natural setting for the transport routes that developed along it and played a significant role in Newport's evolution. The village grew particularly after improvement of the road in 1744 and the arrival of the railway in 1845. The opening of the M11 motorway in 1979 had a dramatic effect as the noise and pollution from heavy motor traffic were removed from the village street.

Until the 20th century, Newport was mostly dependent on agriculture, although many other occupations were followed in days gone by, notably in the leather trade, in wool combing and later in malting.

Newport has many fine ancient buildings. The Crown House, shown here, dates mostly from the late 16th century with 17th-century pargetting.



The timber-framed building served as an inn for many years. Local legend has it that one of King Charles II's mistresses, Nell Gwynn, would stay here and receive the king, but this has not been substantiated.

Subsequently, in 1692, the inn was given its present name and the elaborate baroque pargetting was added.

The Crown House stands on what was once the main road between London and Newmarket, but this short stretch of the route was bypassed in 1830, some years before the viaduct carrying the London – Cambridge railway was constructed above the two roads in the 1840s. Just north of the Crown House stands 15th or 16th-century Tudor House with a fine 16th-century chimney stack at the northern end.



Tudor House was built before the Newmarket Road saw the entourages of King James I and later his grandson King Charles II passing by on their journeys between London and horse racing at Newmarket. Their carriages would pause in Newport to change horses and take advantage of hospitality, accommodation and stabling. These trades brought wealth to those who provided such services.



Monks Barn, on the left, can be seen on today's main road through the village. It was once a country retreat for monks. It is a Wealden-type house dating from the 15th century. It features an oriel window to the left that is supported by an ancient, carved wooden bracket depicting angels playing a harp and a portable organ.

Just to the north of the village, the fine entrance pictured on the right leads into the private Shortgrove estate. A 1760 bridge takes the drive over the River Cam. The grandeur of the entrance was once matched by 18th-century Shortgrove Hall itself. Sadly, the Hall was destroyed in 1966 by a fire that was widely believed to have been instigated by the then owner, who was later jailed for defrauding insurance companies.

A new Shortgrove Hall was built at the beginning of the 21st century. The surrounding landscaped park, laid out by Lancelot "Capability" Brown in the 18th century, is listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.





Nearby, the main road passes what is known locally as the Leper stone. It is actually a glacial erratic of Jurassic limestone that is believed to have originated in what is now Lincolnshire. In the medieval period, the stone was adjacent to a hospice that looked after the destitute (not lepers).

A little further north along the main road, on the right shortly before the roundabout, there are the remains of a spigot mortar emplacement. This was installed during the Second World War. A lightweight gun would be mounted here to fire explosive shells at any invaders.



Newport is a good base for walks, either short or long. Several of the Hundred Parishes walk routes, downloadable from www.hundredparishes.org.uk, start or finish at the railway station. The first half of walk number 6 includes an introduction to many interesting features of the village. Its route passes the Grade I-listed parish church which dates mainly from the 13th century.

Its distinctive tower was extensively rebuilt in 1858 and is a clear landmark from roads and paths that rise up from the Cam valley. This is one of only three church towers within The Hundred Parishes that have a clock on each side.

One unusual building is the former House of Correction or Bridewell, shown below. It was built in 1774, ceased to be a prison in 1841, and was later converted into apartments. The symbol of manacles above the doorway is a subtle reminder of its origins.



The House of Correction stands opposite Newport's senior school, the Joyce Frankland Academy. It was founded in 1588 by a wealthy lady of that name who lived at Rye House, Stanstead Abbots. Its best-known former pupil is the celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver.



The Old Vicarage, pictured on the right, dates from the 16th century. It was beautifully restored after being damaged by fire in 1918.

Also dating from the 16th-century is The Coach & Horses, shown immediately below. It is one of Newport's current two pubs.

As was usual in earlier times, Newport once had several pubs. Another can be seen in the distance in the old photo below. The second building from the right, with the double bay window, is the Three Tuns Inn. It dates from the 15th century but was substantially rebuilt after being gutted by fire in 1914. The photo seems to have been taken after the fire but before rebuilding was completed.

The photo appeared on a postcard published around the time of the First World War. It shows Bridge End, with a rather dilapidated Crown House in the foreground and the railway viaduct on the far right.

Most of the houses between the Three Tuns and Crown House date from the 16th or 17th century and have changed little in the last hundred years. However, fashions have changed and it would be highly unusual today to spot two prams - or even a soldier like the one who is just visible, standing in the distance on the right.



Many postcards have been published for Newport. Here are just a few that illustrate how much has changed in the last century. The first two photos were taken from around the same spot on the main road, firstly looking south and then looking north down Belmont Hill. The third was taken in Church Street, somewhat later – around 1950.



Newport village is surrounded by attractive countryside that makes up the majority of the parish's area. Below is just a sample, to the east of the village, looking along the valley of Debden Water.



Newport's lively community has activities for all. The rail service from Newport Station takes commuters to London in an hour or to Cambridge in half an hour. An hourly bus service between Saffron Walden and Bishop's Stortford runs through the village. There is a doctors' surgery, two busy pubs, a social club, youth club and many other clubs and societies. These are all identified in *Newport News*, a glossy twice-yearly magazine that aims to cater for all tastes.

The award-winning book, *A Village in Time: the history of Newport, Essex*, published in 1995, was based on a series of articles which had appeared in the magazine.

Hospitality:

Coach & Horses, CB11 3TR – 01799 540292 - <https://tableagent.com/essex/coach-horses/>

White Horse Inn, CB11 3RF - 01799 540002 -

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063538394539&sk=about&locale=en_GB

Dorrington's Bakery and Tea Room, 24 High Street, CB11 3PQ – 01799 541533

Kappa House Café & Bistro, High Street, CB11 3PE – 01799 934521 or 0774 8844328 -

<https://www.facebook.com/KappaHouseCafe>

Radhuni Indian restaurant, CB11 3QX – 01799 542999 - <http://www.radhunirestaurant.co.uk/>

Buriton House B&B, Station Road, CB11 3PL - 01799 542237 - <http://buritonhouse.co.uk/>

The Toll House B&B, Belmont Hill, CB11 3RD – 07946 484498 - <https://www.the-toll-house.co.uk/>

Hundred Parishes Society walks include the following Station Walks which all start or finish at Newport Station . . .

4: Between Stansted Mountfitchet and Newport stations (7 miles).

5: Between Elsenham and Newport stations (7 miles).

6: Between Newport and Audley stations (4 miles).

11: Between Newport and Audley End stations (10 miles).

15: Between Newport and Audley End stations (5 miles).

16: Between Newport and Audley End stations (7 miles).

17: Circular route from Newport station (2 miles).

Adjacent parishes:

Quendon & Rickling, Wicken Bonhunt, Wendens Ambo, Saffron Walden, Debden, Widdington.

Links:

Parish Council: <https://newportessex-pc.gov.uk/>

History: www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/newport/newportindex.html

Conservation Area appraisal: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/conservation-area-appraisals>

Friends of St Mary's Church: <http://friendsofstmarysnewport.org.uk>

Further reading:

The Victoria History of Essex: Newport, Anthony Tuck and others, 2015.

A Village in Time: the history of Newport, Essex, Nurse, Pugh & Mollet, 1995.

A brief history of The Village of Newport and its Church – available in the church.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Newport Essex – available in the church.