



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## RADWINTER



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**Location:** 4 miles east of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6037.  
**Postcode** CB10 2SW. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** B1054.  
**Buses:** 320 and 321 (Mon – Sat) between Audley End Station, Saffron Walden and Haverhill.  
**Population:** 595 in 2001, 612 in 2011, 660 in 2021.

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Researching information for The Hundred Parishes is always an intriguing occupation, no matter which parish is under scrutiny at any given time, but it would be true to say that the digging required to unearth information varies enormously from parish to parish. There is always a rich seam of history to be mined, for this is an area with deep and widespread roots of ancient community, but uncovering them is much harder in some parishes than in others. Radwinter is not a difficult one.

At one time a bustling agricultural town which boasted four windmills, two forges, numerous hostelries and places of worship and all the commonly associated shops and trades, it has today gone the way of most small rural communities. The commerce has all but disappeared and the casual visitor observes a small, quiet, attractive village. However, one only has to carry out the most cursory of online searches to discover that Radwinter is very much alive and well with a vibrant and cohesive community, proud of its heritage. This is perhaps largely due to the work of the Radwinter Society, a group formed in 2004 for the promotion and welfare of local history. Its 2016 publication, *RAF Great Sampford*, recounts the story of the WWII airfield which, despite its name, was almost entirely in the southern part of Radwinter parish. More information is available through the links and further reading suggestions at the end of this article.

The parish community is concerned not just with how it was; residents are equally interested in how Radwinter functions today. As well as the historical material, the parish maintains a frequently-updated website, full of local information for residents and visitors. The 2013 Conservation Area Appraisal demonstrates a real concern to maintain and protect the unique sense of place which is valued so greatly.

This love of the parish is centuries old. In the mid-16th century the rector, William Harrison, wrote *The Description of England*, based predominantly on his life-long experience of the local area. A short account of Harrison appears within the People pages of [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk).

The Bullock family, who were lords of the manor and rectors across the 18th and 19th centuries, made a major contribution to community buildings, particularly following the great Radwinter fire in 1874. Twenty-four dwellings (in fact the greater part of the village centre) were lost that day, only the Red Lion Inn and the parish church being spared. A major rebuilding project was rapidly established by the Rev Frederick Bullock in collaboration with the Arts and Crafts architect William Eden Nesfield.

The unusual appearance of the parish hall, shown on the right, is one product of that creative partnership, as is the remodelling of the church. An intriguing illustrated correspondence between Bullock and Nesfield has been compiled in the publication *A Deuce of an Uproar*, still in print today. Creativity continues today, for diagonally opposite the village hall, the former Red Lion Inn is now a private house.



Radwinter's almshouses, pictured on the right, were designed by Nesfield and the village school was extended by him.



The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin has been described as a great porch with a church attached. One can see why in the photo below.

The tower has a clock on each face. Only two other Hundred Parishes church towers have clocks on all sides: Newport and Steeple Bumpstead.



The origins of the church are 12th century but what exists today is largely the late 19th-century Nesfield rebuild including the stained glass; he retained the unusual 14th-century porch but added the prayer room above it.



Decoration on the 19th-century organ is shown on the right.



One of the church's most significant artefacts is the 16th-century Flemish reredos, a set of six carved wooden panels illustrating the life of St Mary. It was gifted to the church by Frederick Bullock in 1888. One panel is pictured here.



It may be difficult for the casual visitor to gain access to view these treasures, for St Mary's is kept locked apart from Sunday services and a regular monthly open day.



South of the churchyard is Church View, shown on the left, a 16th or 17th-century timber-framed and plastered building whose decorative plasterwork had been temporarily highlighted shortly before this photo was taken.



There are over 50 listed buildings, many of them originally farmhouses, situated around the parish. All of them are Grade II with the exception of the church and the large hidden Old Vicarage, each classified as Grade II\*. A little under half are 19th century and part of the post-fire rebuild, though a goodly number are Tudor.

A few are blessed with delightful names that boggle the imagination: Cricksies, Hylas, Dogknolls and Godknolls. One can only wonder! Following that theme, Jenkinhogs Farm, to the south of the parish, is shown on the left. It dates from the 17th century and now serves as a private residence rather than as a farmhouse.



The parish is good walking country and there is much to explore. Saxons, shown on the left, stands a little north of the village centre and is passed on Hundred Parishes walk number 138.

Besides Radwinter village itself, the parish includes the hamlets of Stocking Green and Maple End in the west and Radwinter End in the north.

There are many scattered farmsteads, usually dating back several hundred years.

The photos on this page were taken in Water Lane, also along the route of walk number 138. First is a terrace of 18th-century thatched cottages.



Below, Lower House Farm started life in the 15th-century as a hall house – a hall with two crosswings. The central hall was converted to two storeys in the 16th or 17th century when fireplaces and chimneys were installed. The building's listing tells us that some panelling and fireplaces remain from that period of modernisation.

Footpaths are everywhere. It is possible, for example, to follow the banks of the River Pant as it flows from Wimbish in the west, through Radwinter village and east towards Great Sampford. In the south of the parish a footpath crosses the site of the WWII airfield.



Radwinter parish is large, mainly agricultural, with two large woods in the north – Great Bendysh Wood and Little Bendysh Wood.

A springtime visit to the ancient Bendysh woods may be rewarded by the sighting of wood anemones or the rare oxlip - or the deer that like to eat them! After a period of conifer planting here, the Forestry Commission is reinstating native broadleaf trees.

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## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT RADWINTER

### Hospitality:

The Plough: Sampford Rd, CB10 2TL - 01799 599224 - [www.theploughradwinter.co.uk/](http://www.theploughradwinter.co.uk/)

### Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 138 which covers 5.5 miles, mainly in Radwinter with part in Wimbish.

### Adjacent parishes:

Wimbish, Swards End, Ashdon, Hempstead, The Sampfords, Castle Camps.

### Links:

Parish Council: [www.radwinter.org](http://www.radwinter.org)

Radwinter Society: <http://www.radwinter.org/RadHisthome.php>

History: [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Radwinter/Radwinter\\_home.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Radwinter/Radwinter_home.html)

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

### Further reading:

*Radwinter's First World War* by Michael Southgate, 2014, Radwinter Society.

*A Deuce of an Uproar: William Eden Nesfield's Letters to the Rector of Radwinter in Essex,*

C Aslet and JFW Bullock, published 1988 by Friends of Radwinter Church.

*Description of Elizabethan England 1577:* William Harrison, Kessinger Publishing

*RAF Great Sampford* by Michael Southgate, published by The Radwinter Society, 2016.