



# The Hundred Parishes

## An introduction to **STANSTED** **MOUNTFITCHET**



**Location:** 2 miles north of Bishop's Stortford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5124.

**Postcode** CM24 8AE. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford.

**Access:** Stansted Mountfitchet station on London Liverpool Street to Cambridge line. B1383, B1051, B1351. National Cycle Route 11.

**Buses:** 7 and 7A (Mon-Sat) between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport; 301 (Mon-Sat) between Saffron Walden and Bishop's Stortford.

**Population:** 5,533 in 2001, 6,011 in 2011; 8,600 in 2021.



Stansted is a Saxon word meaning stony place, whilst Mountfitchet is a corruption of Montfiquet, a tiny village in Normandy, northern France, whose name came across the Channel with William the Conqueror. After the Norman Conquest, the linked Gernon and Montfichet families governed extensive territory in England, including Stansted where they built a castle.

Several generations later, Baron Richard de Montfichet, was one of the barons who forced King John to agree to the Magna Carta in 1215. This was a landmark declaration on the long road that led to the constitutional law that governs most of the English-speaking world. The Magna Carta limited the king's authority and recognized the rights delegated to his barons. It was signed at Runnymede, not far from Windsor and close to another of Montfichet's manors. However, King John soon renounced the Magna Carta and destroyed Montfichet's castle in Stansted.

The Magna Carta and its association with Stansted Mountfitchet are illustrated on the approaches to the village by the figure of a medieval knight.

Today, Mountfitchet Castle, together with the adjoining toy museum, is one of the foremost visitor attractions within the Hundred Parishes, especially for children. The castle was constructed in the 1990s to depict what its Norman predecessor may have been like – a bustling community with lots of domestic animals, protected by a wooden palisade.



Man has been here for thousands of years. Evidence of Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman settlements were uncovered during the archaeological excavations that preceded the major expansion of Stansted Airport in the late 20th century. The airport was one of many that were hurriedly constructed by American forces in the 1940s and were instrumental in bringing World War II to an end. The long runway, built for the heaviest bombers, encouraged retention of the base after the war for civil use. Despite considerable local opposition, Stansted became London's third airport in the 1980s. Today, the airport is a major employer, but the recurring threat of further expansion makes it a worrying neighbour.

The village grew out of a number of hamlets – Burton End in the east, now close to the airport, Bentfield End in the west and two central elements: the Chapel (along what was once the



London-Newmarket coaching route, later classified as the A11 and now the B1383) and the Street, focused on Lower Street near the castle. In the 21st century they have been joined by new residential estates, principally Foresthall Park on the former Rochford Nurseries site. These developments have increased the parish's population by a third to around 8,000.

The village's several churches include 12th-century St Mary's, pictured on the left, and Victorian St John's in the village

centre (on the right). St Mary's is now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. A local team of volunteers ensures it is used for various activities and that it is open for visitors.

Two particularly grand memorials in St Mary's commemorate Sir Thomas Middleton, a Lord Mayor of London who lived at an earlier Stansted Hall, and his daughter Hester Salusbury. They died in the early 17th century.

The present Stansted Hall, pictured below in winter, was built in the 1870s by the then lord of the manor, William Fuller Maitland. In the 20th century it was purchased by a wealthy industrialist, Arthur Findlay. In accordance with his wishes, it is today used as a college of the Spiritualists' National Movement.



Those arriving in the village from the south are welcomed by the outstretched arms of an 18th-century tower windmill. It is cared for by a volunteer group, the Stansted Millers, who open it to visitors (see links below) and hold a traditional village fete each August Bank Holiday Monday.

Between Norman times and the 21st century, Stansted Mountfitchet has been home to more than its fair share of distinguished residents, many of whom have left their mark. Notable former residents have included Lord James Blyth (1841-1925), whose various premises were used in the early 20th century for research into tuberculosis (TB); several members of the Gilbey family of Gilbey's Gin fame; and jazz trumpeter/singer Kenny Ball (1930–2013).

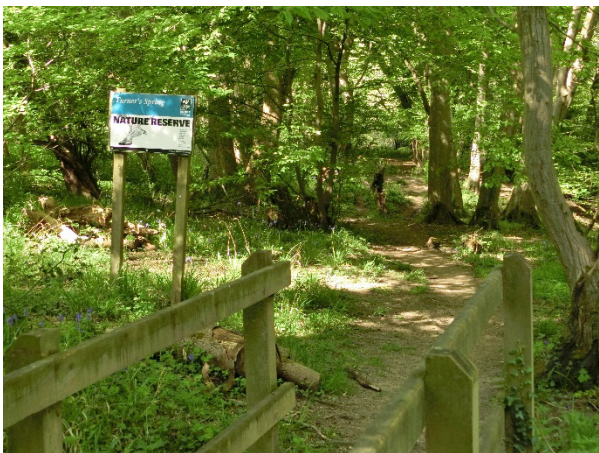




Scattered throughout the parish are more than one hundred listed buildings, including 16th/17th-century Savages (pictured here) in Lower Street. It once served as a shop.

The railway station, which opened in 1845, provides an essential commuter link to London and Cambridge. The station is the convenient start or finish point for several Hundred Parishes walks, including number 3, which highlights many of the village's landmarks along its 3 miles. National Cycle Route 11 runs roughly north from the station along quiet lanes through some lovely countryside to Whittlesford Station.

Much of the parish consists of attractive countryside – a mixture of gently undulating farmland and woodland. There are two nature reserves, pictured below – on the left, Turner's Spring at Burton End and, on the right, Aubrey Buxton Reserve to the north of the parish.



Stansted put out the flags in 2012 to welcome the Olympic Torch as it passed through the village. Here, they can be seen decorating the

19th-century drinking fountain at the top of Chapel Hill. Opposite the fountain, on the right just out of the picture above, is a large iron milepost. This was installed in the early 1900s to replace a traditional stone milestone that once stood beside the fountain and a cattle trough.



Despite recent expansion, Stansted Mountfitchet retains its village atmosphere and its residents insist that it is still a village, not a town.

There are good shopping facilities and a great abundance and variety of places to eat, mostly in two areas: along the B1383 and in the Lower Street area, close to the station.

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### **Accommodation:**

Kings Arms, CM24 8BE - 01279 248170 – <https://ourlocal.pub/pubs/kings-arms-hotel-stansted/>

The Linden, B1383, CM24 8JL – 01279 813654 - <https://thelinden.co.uk/>

Old Bell Hotel, CM24 8EY – 01279 816555 – <https://old-bell-hotel-stansted-mountfitchet.hotelmix.co.uk/>

### **Additional Hospitality:**

Ash, Burton End, CM24 8UQ – 01279 814841– <https://theashpub.com/>

Bombay Butler, Station Road, CM24 8BE - 01279 816492– <http://www.bombaybutler.co.uk/>

Brohmon, Chapel Hill, CM24 8AG – 01279 815688 – [www.brohmon.com](http://www.brohmon.com)

Cock, B1383, CM24 8HD – 01279 812964 - <https://thecockstansted.co.uk/>

Cork House, Lower Street, CM24 8LR – 01279 817474– <https://www.thecorkhouse.co.uk/>

Crimson 8, Castle Walk, CM24 8LY – 01279 812818- <https://crimson8.business.site/>

Domino's Pizza, Cambridge Road, CM24 8BZ – 01279 812777 –

<https://www.dominos.co.uk/store/fulfilment/stansted/moreinfo>

Dog & Duck, Lower St, CM24 8LR – 01279 812047 - <https://www.dogandduckstansted.co.uk/>

Lower Street Brasserie, CM24 8LP – 01279 817177– <https://www.lowerstreetbrasserie.co.uk/>

Queens Head, Lower Street, CM24 8LN – 01279 815746 –

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063519674859>

Rose & Crown, Bentfield Gn, CM24 8HX – 01279 812107- <https://www.roseandcrownstansted.co.uk/>

Wood Grill, Cambridge Road, CM24 8BX – 01279 813699 – [www.woodgrillrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.woodgrillrestaurant.co.uk)

Yeomans Cafe, Lower Street, CM24 8LP – 01279 817755– <https://cafeyeomans.wordpress.com/>

**Hundred Parishes Society walks** include several routes starting from or finishing at Stansted Mountfitchet railway station . . .

1: Circular route of 11 miles to Farnham, Manuden, Ugley and back to Stansted.

2: Circular route of 6.7 miles via Elsenham.

3: Circular route of 3 miles around Stansted Mountfitchet village.

4: One way 7.5 miles to Newport station mainly west of B1383 (catch the train back).

12: One way 4 miles to Elsenham station.

18: One way 17 miles from Ware station to Stansted Mountfitchet station.

Other walk routes include . . .

137: Circular route of 3 miles from Lower Street, Stansted, largely in parkland.

161: Circular walk of 5 miles starting from Farnham. It includes the west side of Stansted Mountfitchet, so could be joined near Hole Farm at the bottom of page 3 of the route description.

### **Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:**

Birchanger, Farnham, Manuden, Ugley, Elsenham, Takeley, Great Hallingbury.

### **Links:**

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

Stansted Mountfitchet Local History Society – [www.stanstedhistorysociety.org.uk](http://www.stanstedhistorysociety.org.uk)

Mountfitchet Castle: <https://mountfitchetcastle.com/>

Stansted Windmill: <https://www.stanstedwindmill.co.uk/>

House on the Hill toy museum: [www.stanstedtoymuseum.com](http://www.stanstedtoymuseum.com)

Short silent 1964 film:

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/VLVAEG8QWNVZ9TBPUDX2VYW84J7WQ-UK-NEW-STANSTEAD-AIRPORT-PROJECTED/query/stanstead>

### **Further reading:**

*On the Beaten Track: the history of Stansted Mountfitchet*, Peter Sanders

*Around Stansted Mountfitchet (in old postcards)*, Paul Embleton

*Stansted Station, a history*, Ralph Phillips

*They Sleep in Heroes' Graves, Stansted Mountfitchet during both World Wars*, Glyn Warwick.

Village map showing footpaths - available from parish council – 01279 813214