



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

STEBBING



Location: 6 miles west of Braintree and 4 miles northeast of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6720. **Postcode:** CM6 3SW. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** Off B1057 and B1256. **Buses** (Mon – Sat): 16 between Chelmsford & Wethersfield), 324 to Great Dunmow and Bishop's Stortford.
Population: 1,290 in 2001 1,300 in 2011, 1,500 in 2021.

Stebbing lies just north of Stane Street, the major Roman road between St Albans and England's oldest town, Colchester, a route that is now classified as B1256 in this area. Stebbing parish comprises a main village of the same name and a number of small hamlets which have settled roughly along the east bank of the River Chelmer's tributary, Stebbing Brook. Apart from Stebbing Green, all other hamlets are Ends: Brook End, Duck End, Bran End and Church End. The term End, found frequently in the Hundred Parishes, probably arose centuries ago when the settlement was not on a through route. Stebbing was named around the 6th or 7th century, possibly after a Saxon chief Stybba or the Old English *stybb*, a tree stump; opinions differ. An *ing(e)* was a meadow or enclosure, therefore Stybba's land, or perhaps a woodland clearing. Bronze Age burial mounds have been discovered in Stebbing, along with a first century cemetery, and there is evidence of Roman occupation in the Porters Hall Farm area, near Boxted Wood and close to Stane Street.

The Domesday Book tells us that at the time of the Norman Conquest Stebbing was held by the Saxon thane Siward and that in 1086 this was a large community of more than 100 households. Domesday names Henry de Ferrers and Ranulf Peverel as the local lords and tenants-in-chief. Peverel held extensive lands in Essex and is thought to have been one of William the Conqueror's most trusted knights.

The Peverel and de Ferrers families appear to have held much of Stebbing's land through the next 300 to 400 years. They gave some to the Knights Hospitallers, who held it until their dissolution in 1540. By that time there were three manors, Stebbing Hall in the hands of the Earls of Essex, Porters Hall and Priors Hall. Porters Hall and Priors Hall still remain. Priors Hall, dating from around 1400 AD, is pictured here.



For walkers, there are many footpaths and small scattered areas of woodland to enjoy. A simple circular walk of less than three miles is suggested below, Hundred Parishes walk number 117. It offers a delightful insight into the parish, passing many of the buildings pictured in this introduction.

Walk 117 does not pass this unusual 18th-century open cart lodge which can be seen at Duck End, in the north of the parish, beside the B1057.



The two photos on the right were taken from Mill Lane.

First, white-boarded Stebbing Mill and the adjoining Stebbing Mill House, with its painted brick exterior, date from the 18th century.

Then, below on the right, Tan Farmhouse dates from the 15th century. The mill and Tan Farmhouse are each listed as Grade II*.



Also dating from the 15th century is Tudor Cottage in the High Street, pictured below.



The parish church, Grade I-listed St Mary's, was built in the 14th century in the Decorated style on foundations which are probably some 200 years older. Many medieval artefacts remain, including remnants of medieval wall paintings. Today St Mary's is the only consecrated place of worship, but Stebbing still has the buildings that once served as a Quaker Meeting House and a Congregational Chapel. The relatively central location of both, and their proximity to the Anglican Church of St Mary the Virgin, suggest the popularity here of Nonconformist persuasion in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In front of the church is 17th-century Rose Cottage, for some years the home of Victorian ship's doctor and prolific author Henry de Vere Stacpoole. His best-known novel, *The Blue Lagoon*, was written in 1908 and has been made into a feature film several times. His former presence is acknowledged with an Essex County Council blue plaque.





The parish church's most notable feature is the beautiful carved stone rood screen across the chancel arch, pictured on the left. It is one of only three stone rood screens remaining in Europe, another being in nearby Great Bardfield and the other at Trondheim Cathedral in Norway.

Times have changed from when there was demand for three places of worship. The Quaker Meeting House, built in 1674 and pictured below, is now called the Memorial Club and used for meetings of the Garden Club, while the Congregational Chapel was converted into housing in the 21st century.

Beside the parish church, The Chantry, shown below, dates from the 15th, possibly even the 14th, century.



Opposite the church is the war memorial and Church Farmhouse, dating from the 15th or 16th century and shown below. This truly is a parish rich in ancient and lovingly-maintained buildings.



Not surprisingly, much of the heart of Stebbing is protected as a conservation area. Uttlesford District Council's detailed Conservation Area Appraisal in 2010 helpfully identified and described many of the buildings.

The High Street is rich in variety and colour, some pictured here. On the right, the exterior of the long-closed 16th-century Kings Head has been rejuvenated.



The building above on the left is now two homes, but was once one, built in the 15th or 16th century. 17th-century Honeysuckle Cottage is one of the relatively few thatched houses.



Beyond the village centre, towards the southeast of the parish, there is more variety and thatch, including Warehouse Farmhouse, dating from the 15th century and shown on the left. This is on the road to Stebbing Green, a linear hamlet of many listed houses including the two adjacent 17th-century cottages shown below, Sunnyside and Byways.



Despite being rather widespread, Stebbing is a cohesive community with a strong sense of history and a vibrant social life.

The local history society has been in existence for over 20 years. A quarterly magazine, Stebbing Scene (obtainable online through the Parish Council website), keeps everybody in touch and up-to-date. There is an interest group for everyone, from bowls to bell-ringing and gardening to horse-riding, and a laudable endeavour to hold onto those aspects of community identity which are the heart of village life.

The village has a community shop and the White Hart, on the corner of Mill Lane and the High Street, opposite the bowls green, could be a suitable stopping off point for refreshment.

In the east of the parish lies Andrews Field, an American Airforce base built in WWII partly in Stebbing and partly in Great Saling parish. Please see the Great Saling chapter for a fuller description. For the last 40 years, part has been used as a private airfield.

There are proposals to develop a new “garden city” centred on Andrews Field, a settlement that would be much larger than Saffron Walden, the most populous of the Hundred Parishes. Should the proposal come to pass, it would dramatically change the parish and the area.



Hospitality

The White Hart, High St, CM6 3SQ - 01371 856383 - <https://thewhitehartstebbing.co.uk/>

Andrewsfield Milli-Bar (bar and café), Saling Airfield, CM6 3TH – 01371 856744 or 07923 981900 - <https://andrewsfield.com/andrewsfield-millibar/>

Motts Cottage B&B, CM6 3SE - 01371 856633 - <https://www.mottsbedandbreakfast.co.uk/>

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 117 covering 2.8 miles around Stebbing village and Bran End.

Circular walk 119 which starts in Dunmow and covers 9 miles including Stebbing. This route could be joined in Stebbing where it passes the White Hart at the top of page 3 of the description.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Felsted, Little Dunmow, Great Dunmow, Lindsell, Little Bardfield, Great Bardfield, Bardfield Saling, Great Saling.

Links

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

Stebbing Scene, parish magazine: <https://stebbingscene.uk/>

Stebbing Local History Society: <https://stebbinglhs.wordpress.com>

1961 film: <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/thatched-train-aka-thatched-railway-cottage/query/stebbing>

Further reading:

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stebbing. C E Livesey. Robus 1924.

Stebbing Conservation Area Appraisal - link from: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/caa>

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