



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## WARESIDE



**Location:** 2 miles northeast of Ware. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL3915.

**Postcode:** SG12 7QX. **Access:** B1004. **Buses:** M3 and M4 (Mon – Sat) to/from Ware railway station (1 mile from Wareside parish boundary).

**County:** Hertfordshire. **District:** East Herts. **Population:** 561 in 2001, 735 in 2011, 750 in 2021.



Wareside has existed as a separate ecclesiastical parish since soon after its church, Holy Trinity, pictured here, was built and consecrated in 1841. However, the administrative parish of Wareside, with its own parish council, was created only in 1991, its boundary somewhat changed from its immediate predecessor, the civil parish called Ware Rural that had been set up in 1894.

Wareside has quite different characteristics from what is now the urban town of Ware, whose population of almost 20,000 threatens to spill across Wareside's southwestern boundary.

Wareside is a large, mainly rural, parish with the majority of residents living in either the village of Wareside itself or nearby Babbs Green, where the church can be found. Wareside evolved close to Nimney Bourne, a short distance before its waters flow into the River Ash. There are several smaller hamlets, including Baker's End, Blakesware, Nobland Green and Reeves Green. Each of these, like Babbs Green, takes its name from a medieval landowner.

Wareside has a total of 66 listed properties, well-scattered throughout the parish. In Babbs Green, the delightfully-named Crooked Chimneys, shown here, is, according to its listing, "a little-altered example of a compact late medieval hall house".



A considerable number of the listings relate to Fanhams Hall, in the west of the parish. It dates from the 18th century and was substantially altered and extended at the beginning of the 1900s when a Japanese garden was added. It was then the home of the Page Croft family. Henry Page Croft (1881 – 1947) was born there and, as Baron Croft, served Winston Churchill as Under Secretary of War through most of the Second World War. The house and estate now function as a hotel and events venue – shown below.



A manor house called Watersplace, in the southwest of the parish, was owned in the 16th century by William Parr, the brother of Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth wife. The building remains, though somewhat altered and now divided into two cottages.

Another manor house, in the east of the parish, was Blakesware. This was built by Sir Thomas Leventhorpe in the 17th century with extensive formal gardens. It later became well-known through the writings of 19th-century essayist Charles Lamb [see short profile in the Hundred Parishes website's People section]. Lamb was a frequent visitor to

Blakesware, where his grandmother was housekeeper; he lamented the house's demolition in

1823. It was replaced in 1878 by a fine mansion that later was taken over by a Roman Catholic order whose monks ran it as a retreat house between 1960 and 1980. It has since been divided into several large houses.

Wareside's main road, the B1004, follows the Ash valley between Ware to the west and Widford to the East. The B1004 passes Wareside's public house, 16th-century Chequers and also 17th-century White Horse, recently closed. A hundred years ago, there were six public houses. The others are now private residences. A notable survivor from the 19th century is Wareside Primary School, part of which dates from 1843.

Between 1863 and 1964, steam trains ran regularly along the Ash valley on the Buntingford branch line, stopping just south of Wareside at Mardock Station. This primarily served Mardocks Mill, on the River Ash, until the mill's closure in the 1890s. Although the track and stations were dismantled half a century ago, the route through the countryside is still quite visible. The old signal box from Mardock station is preserved in a garden beside the B1004 and pictured here.



Across the road, the war memorial commemorates nineteen Wareside men who died in the First World War and two who perished in the Second. There is a fine view from here over the Ash Valley. The long-distance Hertfordshire Way passes below. It is one of many good paths that criss-cross the parish.

As in many rural areas, Wareside's population declined significantly in the second half of the 19th century. Although it has risen again in recent years, it has not reached the 798 recorded in the 1861 Census. However, within East Hertfordshire District Council's draft plan for the coming years, either this figure could be significantly exceeded or Wareside's southwest

boundary could be re-drawn to allow further expansion of Ware. It is to be hoped that coalescence between urban areas and distinct rural communities will be avoided.

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### Hospitality:

Fanhams Hall Hotel, SG12 7PZ – 01920 460511 - <https://www.exclusive.co.uk/fanhams-hall>  
Chequers, SG12 7QY – 01920 467010 - <http://chequerswareside.com/>

### Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 124, a countryside route of 6 miles, mostly in Wareside parish.

Two long Station walks pass through Wareside parish; they could be joined here, followed to the end and then, after catching the train to Ware, completed back to Wareside :

18: between Ware and Stansted Mountfitchet stations (17 miles) – join description at page 1.

20: between St Margarets and Sawbridgeworth stations (12 miles) – join at page 2.

### Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:

Thundridge, Much Hadham, Widford, Hunsdon, Stanstead Abbots, Great Amwell.

**Links:** Parish Council: <https://www.waresideparishcouncil.co.uk/> - includes history and a series of walk routes, etc.

### Further reading:

*Wareside: a Miscellany of Histories*, Jane Webb, The Rockingham Press, 2000.

*Pictures in my Memory: Wareside 1911 – 1919*, Harold Walker, Hertfordshire Publications, 1989.

*The Buntingford Branch*, P.Paye, Oxford Publishing Co, 1980.