



# The Hundred Parishes

## An introductory article about WATER MILLS

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In recent years, climate change has brought examples of extreme weather all over the world. Part of the solution to global warming is to use natural energy. Our ancestors harnessed the power of water by means of water mills, thought to have been invented by the Greeks. The Domesday Book of 1086 AD recorded no less than 5,624 watermills in England alone. Most were used to grind wheat. They continued as a prime source of energy until the Industrial Revolution.

The Hundred Parishes has a wealth of these water mills and associated mill houses, many retained through their conversion into private homes. Many can be seen on Hundred Parishes walks whose descriptions can be freely downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk)

On the River Cam, Hinxton once had three water mills. One remains, pictured on the right. It dates from the 17th century and was built on the site of an older one mentioned in Domesday and valued at eight shillings. It ceased to operate commercially in 1955 but now works again on days when it is open to the public.



The mill can be seen at any time from the outside – and is on Hundred Parishes walk number 14.



Linton's watermill on the River Granta, is shown on the left. There has been a mill on the site since the 13th century; this building dates from the 18th. It stopped working in 1972 and is now apartments. Walk 109 passes it.



The building pictured on the right was part of a watermill on the River Cam at Great Chesterford, once known as Kings Flour Mill. Today it is divided into apartments and can be seen during walks 13, 14 and 21.

On the right is weatherboarded 18th-century Kings Mill in Littlebury. It was originally powered by the River Cam and later by steam until it stopped working in 1924.



Walk number 165, only 1.4 miles, passes Kings Mill during a short exploration of historic Littlebury.



Felsted's former water mill on the River Chelmer is pictured on the left, standing four storeys tall. It was built of red brick in 1856.

A footpath (part of Walk 102) goes over the millstream on a footbridge beside the mill.

Stepping has two surviving watermills, albeit both now non-operational. They were both driven by Stebbing Brook as it flows south to join the River Chelmer. Both can be seen on Walk 117 which covers less than 3 miles around Stebbing parish. The more northerly mill at Bran End is shown below on the left and Stebbing or Town Mill on the right.



What remains of Great Bardfield's watermill can be seen on walks 103 and 104. The rusty mill machinery, shown on the right, is all that survived a fire, possibly arson, in the 1980s. A three-storey, timber building had housed three grindstones, powered by the River Pant. A photo of the mill in its former glory can be viewed at <https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/great-bardfield-watermill-2>





Many watermills were substantially constructed of wood, making them a fire risk. Another that was destroyed by fire, this time in the 1970s, once stood in Sawbridgeworth beside the River Stort. The picture on the left is taken from a 1908 postcard.

Little Hallingbury Mill also stands on the River Stort. For a while it functioned as a restaurant. The photo on the right was taken from the stretch of towpath of the Stort which is used on walk numbers 8 and 181.



The remains of Tilty watermill, are shown on the right. The mill stands on a tributary of the River Chelmer and is on walk 120.

Several of our watermills, including Tilty, are located on what are now only modest streams; it is hard to imagine that the water flow would have been strong enough to operate heavy machinery.

Hartford End Mill, below, was built around 1800 AD. It is now a private house.



The former mill straddles the River Chelmer which here forms the parish boundary. The left of the mill is in the parish of Great Waltham and the right is in Felsted.

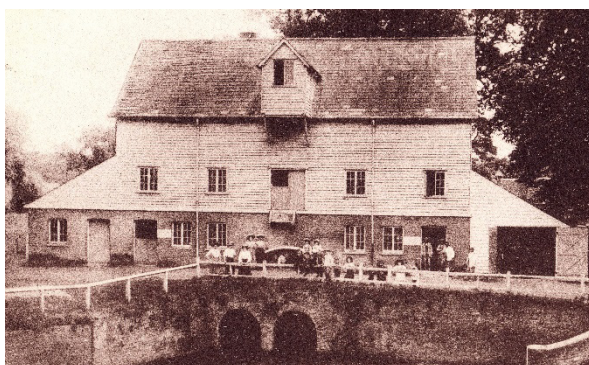
Yet another former mill on the Chelmer can be seen in Little Easton: the photo on the right is of Elmbridge Mill which is now a private house.

Codham Mill, pictured below, stands on the River Pant in the parish of Wethersfield.



The large, former mill pictured below is one of several in Stanstead Abbots on Stanstead Mill Stream, a diversion off the River Lea, constructed around 1300 AD to control the flow of water through the mills.

The two photos below were taken at Wadesmill in the parish of Thundridge. The newer residential property replaced the original Wades Mill which stood here, on the River Rib, until it was demolished in the 1970s.



Finally, in this round-up of some of our water mills, the picture on the right is of Suffolk Punch horses in front of Hildersham's former water mill on the River Granta.

References in this article are not in any geographical sequence, and this does not purport to be a complete list of watermills within the Hundred Parishes.

The locations of mills that are described include most rivers within the Hundred Parishes. The exceptions are the River Ash, River Quin and River Roding, none of which appear to have any remaining water mill structures within the area.

Please also see the articles on Rivers and Windmills.

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