



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 301

### Hatfield Broad Oak village and lanes – 3 miles (5 kms)

This walk is entirely within the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak. The section through the village is similar to Walk 125.

The route description starts and finishes at the small car park just west of the parish church. Alternatively, you may join this circular walk anywhere along the route.

There are two pubs in the village; if you wish to take refreshment before or after the walk, you are advised to book in advance - Cock Inn, CM22 7HF – 01279 718306 - [www.thecockinn-hatfieldbroadoak.co.uk](http://www.thecockinn-hatfieldbroadoak.co.uk) and Duke's Head, CM22 7HH – 01279 718598 - <https://www.thedukesheadhbo.co.uk/>

**Start and finish:** The route description starts and finishes at the car park in Priory Lane, to the west of the church. The car park approach road runs north from the sharp bend in B183 as it enters the village centre. (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL545166 - Postcode: CM22 7HD).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

This route is entirely on pavement or quiet lanes, but please follow the usual safety precautions: keep to the right so as to face oncoming traffic, crossing occasionally to the left if this offers a clearer view around a right-hand bend. Drivers may be as surprised to see you as you are to see them!

Before leaving the parking area, enjoy the view from this high point, looking north up the Pincey Brook valley with Hatfield Forest on the horizon, a little over a mile away. Hatfield Broad Oak administrative parish is one of the largest, by area, in Essex and includes most of Hatfield Forest.

The parish of Hatfield Broad Oak has 95 listed buildings, some of which survive from when HBO, as it is now often abbreviated, flourished as a market town in the Middle Ages. We will pass many of these listed buildings but refer to only a selection.

Leave the parking area by the way you came in. 17th-century Eden End on the left served for many years as a cottage hospital. When you reach the junction with the main road, keep straight ahead for a short distance, passing the tall, red-brick Court House on the left. This is a former court house and dates from the 14th century. The brick front was added in the 18th century. Over to the right, on the opposite corner, is 16th-century The Priory.

At the corner, turn left into High Street, B183, passing a range of buildings including the Post Office and general store and one of HBO's two pubs, the Cock Inn. This group of listed buildings has a range of origins from the 15th to the 19th centuries.

The buildings on the right side of the road are nearly all listed and mostly date from the 17th century.

Further along, the 3-storey red-brick building on the right was known until recently as Great Chalks and is a former rectory, built in 1838 and now subdivided into at least two dwellings.

Just after 19th-century Bury House, also red brick on the right, we turn sharp left towards the church, passing Oak House and Church Cottage, 1708, on the left.

The Church of St Mary the Virgin is Grade I listed and is predominantly from the 15th century. The tower has a clock with the date 1797. Its smart appearance probably owes much to recent refurbishment. The church was built on part of the site of a 12th-century Benedictine Priory. The priory was demolished following the Reformation and there is now no evidence above ground of its existence. However, there may be historic remains below ground so a large area behind the church is now protected by its designation as a Scheduled Monument.

You are encouraged to visit the church which, amongst other items of interest, has box pews, some exceptional "poppy heads" at the ends of pews - lovely carved wooden creatures - and an ancient stone effigy of Sir Robert de Vere, 3rd Earl of Oxford. His family founded the priory and he was buried in the church in 1221 AD.

From the church porch go straight ahead to retrace our steps to the High Street.

Turn left onto the High Street, soon reaching the village sign which displays the coats of arms of the Barrington and De Vere families.

With care, use the pedestrian crossing to cross the road and continue past the school.

A little further along, on the left, we pass a gateway to the village green.

On the right, the Roman Catholic church started life in 1868 as a Congregational Chapel.

Cross the entrance to Duke's Orchard and pass the Victorian postbox in the wall of the Duke's Head - first recorded as a pub in 1755.

At the corner, turn right around the pub onto Broad Street, signposted towards Needham Green and White Roding.

On the right, Little Bradwell, Bird Cottage and Easton Cottage date from the 17th century and were once a public house. The group of three thatched dwellings on our right also date from the 17th century - Lockwood, Chiswell and Rose Cottages,.

Soon afterwards, the main road turns to the left and becomes Hammonds Road. We also turn left, taking care at the junction and using the pavement on the right. After about a hundred yards, we pass 16th-century Morningside on the left and then the photogenic, thatched Parson's Cottage from the 17th century. Do look back at the view towards the church.

Continue gently uphill, crossing the entrance to Barnfield on the right. This is where the pavement ends so continue ahead on the right side of the lane, facing any oncoming traffic. We soon leave the village, although still in the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak.

This walk description will now become less intense as we cover a rural loop back to HBO village.

We pass Waters Farm on the left and keep straight ahead along Needham Green Road, signposted towards White Roothing.

We pass occasional farm buildings and residential properties, then Anthony's Lane on our left. Soon afterwards, we keep right, ignoring the lane signposted to White Roding – but do note the fingerpost sign, manufactured by Maldon Iron Works in Essex, probably before World War II. (The finger pointing in our direction to M and H was broken in 2024 – perhaps these were Matching Green and Hatfield Heath?).

We continue past Sparrow Hall Farm on our right. This little hamlet is called Needham Green.

We soon come to Sparrow Hall on the right, a farmhouse that dates from the 16th or 17th century. It is timber-framed with pink pebble-dashed walls and red pegtile roof.

After Spurlings Barn, it is some distance to the next buildings.

After about a quarter of a mile, we pass commercial premises on the right.

Soon afterwards, we turn right, signposted to Cage End, immediately passing the entrance to Pierce Williams House on the right.

Further along the lane, HBO's parish church comes into view and there is a long line of tall poplar trees over to the left.

As we come back into Hatfield Broad Oak village, we cross the entrance to Cannons Lane on our right. We are now in a road called Cage End.

Soon on the left, New Bury Meadow is the access road to Broad Oak Farm, home of the famous Broad Oak Sausages for almost a century. On the corner is Hatfield Broad Oak Village Hall. For many years this was the focal point of an annual 10 kilometre run, "The Big O Road Race", which regularly attracts a thousand participants. It now finishes on the new village green.

We almost imperceptibly cross Mus Brook, beside a footpath on the right, and then the entrance to Cage End Close. We now enter an area of older, interesting buildings, most of which are listed for their architectural or historical value, so do take your time as we ascend this short hill.

The varied buildings on the right mostly date from the 17th century, including the first, a former almshouse.

After a hundred yards or so, Musbrook Cottage takes its name from the tiny brook we crossed at the foot of the hill. This street was called *Musbrook Street* from the 14th century, only changing to *Cage End* in relatively recent times to reflect the siting somewhere hereabouts of the village cage or lock-up which was in service until 1873.

Just after Musbrook Cottage, on the left, is Town Farm House. This dates from the late 14th century. It was once known as Hatfield Bury and is HBO's only survivor from ten medieval manor houses.

On the right, North Cottage and Hope Villa once formed a single 15th-century dwelling,

Opposite, on the left, numbers 26 and 26A date from the 16th century or earlier.

At the top of the hill, Cage End meets the High Street. With care, cross Cage End, via the early 19th century village pump, to Rundle House which was first built around 1400 AD.

Turn right, with Rundle House on the left, passing Sun Cottage (not long ago a branch of the County Library) and Saddlers (once a shop), both from the 16th century. Next on the left is a red brick wall outside The Priory.

The main road turns left and becomes Feathers Hill. We will not follow it round the corner, but will cross with care and go straight ahead up Priory Lane to the parking area where we started.

This route description, last updated 25 April 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak and also find many additional walk routes.

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto:hundredparishes@btinternet.com).

A diagram of this route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

