



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 305

Northwest from Clavering – 10.3 miles (16 kms)

This rural walk traverses parts of five parishes, four in Essex (Clavering, Langley, Elmdon & Wenden Lofts and Arkesden) and one in Hertfordshire (Brent Pelham & Meesden).

The route travels clockwise and the description starts and finishes in Clavering but it could be joined anywhere along the way. Possible places to park, eat or divert are marked within the text and on the route diagram on the final page with numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. Please do not park in any pub car park without prior permission.

There is opportunity for refreshment at The Cricketers, Clavering (01799 550442) [marked as 8], The Axe and Compasses, Arkesden (01799 550272) [7] or The Bull, Langley (01279 777307) [2] although the latter is open during the day only at weekends. Please check beforehand for opening times and table availability.

The route passes close to parish churches in Langley [3] and Arkesden [6]. Arkesden is usually accessible most days, but Langley opens only on Wednesdays and Sundays, from 10 to 5.

Start and finish: The route description starts and finishes at the roadside in Clavering [1], just west of Eldridge Close and about 200 yards west of The Cricketers pub. (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL479328 - closest postcode: CB11 4FZ) Alternatively, you may join this circular walk anywhere along the route. For example, there is an informal parking area at the southeast corner of High Wood [4] (TL451359 – postcode CB11 4US) and a small car park at Duddenhoe End Village Hall [5] (TL459367 – postcode CB11 4US) – these locations are highlighted on page 4 of this description.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

This route is entirely on 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!

Starting from near Eldridge Close, the route heads west, away from Eldridge Close, along the lane which is called Stickling Green.

We will stay on this lane for a mile before we reach another road junction. We will remain in the parish of Clavering for some distance, passing through several of the Greens which make up this rural administrative parish.

Throughout the walk, we will pass many ancient and/or attractive buildings; we will mention just a few of those that are listed for their architectural or historic value.

We soon pass a farm complex on our right and shortly afterwards we come to the entrance on the right to three buildings. Court Lodge, straight ahead with a tall central chimney stack, dates from the 17th century. On the right is The Maltings. Set back to the left is Clavering Court, previously called The Maltings. This was built in the second half of the 19th century and was then the 'big house' of Clavering whose owner was probably regarded as the squire. It was bought with 157 acres in the early 1900s by HW Baker, a stockbroker who went by pony and trap to Newport Station to commute to London. During the First World War, Mrs Baker led community efforts to make garments for troops and hospitals.

Just afterwards, we pass the pretty, 18th-century Court Cottage on the right – a timber-framed and plastered house with a thatched roof – the first of many we will see on this walk.

It is not far until we find more pretty thatched cottages as we pass through the hamlet of Stickling Green. Here, the lane passes through the green and the houses are nearly all set well back from the road.

Beyond Stickling Green, a former windmill comes into sight – we will pass close by later.

We pass Clavering Place Farm on the right. After the various barns and other farm buildings we get a view of the farmhouse which dates from the 15th century. It was altered and extended in the 18th and 19th centuries and re-faced in white brick about 200 years ago. To the left of the farmhouse, the red-brick outbuilding dates from the 17th or 18th centuries.

Soon, we follow the lane round to the left, passing the entrance on the right to Clavering Lakes, a popular fishing venue.

After the corner, our route climbs to pass the former windmill with its distinctive white cap. The red-brick tower mill was built in 1811; its sails were removed many years ago.

We continue ahead, keeping right at a fork in the road. Ahead is a second former windmill – with a cap that is not so white. This tower mill was built in 1757 and, like its companion, has not worked for many years. The pair of similar-looking mills can be seen from a distance and are affectionately known locally as the salt and pepper pots.

At the road junction, we turn right, heading towards Langley, passing the house called Clavering Mill on our left.

We soon pass Mill End House on the right, proclaiming its origin as circa 1550. This is contrary to the building's listing which puts it as 17th century.

After a quarter of a mile, ignore the lane which forks to the right, signposted to Langley Upper Green, and continue ahead towards Langley Lower Green.

In another 200 yards, we come to a turning on the left, signposted to Sheepcote Green (yes, another Clavering green). Just before the junction, note the well mechanism in the patch of woodland – presumably no longer in use. Keep straight ahead on the main lane to pass through the hamlet of Roast Green.

The white-painted Waggon and Horses has a giveaway name for a former pub. On the wall of the garage there is probably the smallest postbox within the Hundred Parishes; it is also one of the oldest - its VR cipher indicates that it has been in service since the reign of Queen Victoria.

After a while, we pass a thatched cottage on our left – Brocking Cottage – and soon afterwards we turn left onto a lane. The fingerpost at the junction has lost the finger that once pointed south, the direction we will take.

After a quarter of a mile or so, we pass 17th - 18th-century Further Ford End House on our left. We are now in the tiny hamlet of Further Ford End, still within the parish of Clavering.

The narrow lane meanders and at a sharp bend to the right it crosses a stream in a rather deep ditch - the upper reaches of the River Stort. As we cross the 'river' we leave the parish of Clavering and enter the parish of Brent Pelham and Meesden (a union of two administrative parishes that united many years ago). At the same time, by crossing the Stort we have left the county of Essex and will be walking in Hertfordshire, albeit for only about one mile.

Opposite a footpath sign on the right, we pass the wide entrance on the left to Meesdenbury Farm - a farmhouse and barns that all date from the 17th century. Soon afterwards, we may catch a glimpse of Meesden church amongst the trees at the top of the hill on the left.

In another hundred yards we reach a road junction. Here, we turn right onto a slightly wider lane. Once again, we appear to be heading into the unknown as our finger is missing from the signpost (at least in 2024). We are actually heading north towards Langley.

Within half a mile, we pass a sign which welcomes us back into Essex. Not publicised here is the fact that we have left Brent Pelham and Meesden and entered the parish of Langley.

The lane climbs steadily as we head towards a white house. When we reach it, we find it is called New Farm.

Further along, we come into the hamlet of Langley Lower Green, passing an 18th-century thatched cottage which comprises two residences – Brambles Cottage and Crockers Cottage - with a hare (a straw finial) running along the ridge of the thatched roof.

A few yards further on we pass another 18th-century thatched cottage, Fleet Cottage, with a cat pursuing two chickens along the ridge.

The lane, here called Waterwick Hill, descends past a former Primitive Methodist chapel on the right and then crosses a ford – there is a footbridge just to the right if necessary.

At the road junction, our route turns left – but do pause to look at the fingerpost sign which was manufactured at Maldon Iron Works in Essex, probably before the second World War. We turn left, heading towards Langley Upper Green.

We soon reach another road junction – with another Maldon Iron Works fingerpost – and here we turn right towards Langley Upper Green. We pass The Bull, a pub which has limited opening hours [marked 2 on the route diagram].

This lane climbs steadily, passing a herd of rusty deer on the left.

At the top of the hill, we may see Langley parish church over to the left as we come into Langley Upper Green. Church Cottage stands at the corner of The Causeway. The church [3 on the diagram] stands about 200 yards up The Causeway, a pretty diversion if you wish to indulge. The church is usually open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 10am till 5pm.

After The causeway, our route continues ahead, soon bearing right beside a former school on the left and then the village green where cricket is still played.

On the right, we pass Langley Baptist Church and cemetery just before a road junction. Here, we turn left, signposted towards Duddenhoe End and Arkesden.

At the end of the green, we pass Langley Community Centre on our left.

This lane continues for nearly two miles until the next road junction. It is sometimes wider than other quiet lanes, a reminder that we should follow the usual practice of keeping on the right to face oncoming traffic. For a considerable distance, the road is lined with mature trees.

We reach the southeast corner of High Wood [a possible place to park and start this walk – marked 4 on the route diagram]. Just here, the road turns right, now heading East, and we leave the parish of Langley behind. We are now in the parish of Elmdon and Wenden Lofts, the result of a merger of two administrative parishes in 1958.

The lane continues to be lined with trees, now somewhat younger specimens.

After some twists and turns, the lane passes Duddenhoe End Farm on the left; the solid-looking farmhouse dates from the 18th century.

Soon afterwards, we pass Duddenhoe End village hall with a car park which may be used by walkers visiting the village [another possible place to park and start this walk, marked 5 on the route diagram].

Immediately after the village hall, we turn right, signposted towards Arkesden – to be greeted immediately by a sign that confirms we are in Duddenhoe End, a village within the parish of Elmdon and Wenden Lofts.

Soon, on the left we pass 18th-century The Woodman which was once a pub. The next house has an impressive-looking dovecote – but are those doves real?

The village street has a mixture of old and new properties, ten of which are listed for their historic or architectural significance.

At the end of the street we reach a crossroads (albeit that the road straight ahead is only a bridleway). Here, we turn right, signposted towards Arkesden and Clavering and heading south.

After about half a mile, we pass The Old Farmhouse on the right, a 17th-century timber-framed and plastered house with exposed timber framing. This tiny hamlet is called Cooper's End.

Here, our lane swings left, signposted towards Arkesden. The drive to the right is signposted to Cosh Farm only. Nearly two thousand years ago, the road to the right would have taken us all the way to the Roman settlement just north of today's Braughing.

Today, we turn left. For a while we may be joined by the spirit of Roman soldiers from Braughing who used this route to get to another significant settlement - Great Chesterford, a Roman fort and town of perhaps a thousand inhabitants.

Between Braughing and Great Chesterford, there are still several stretches of road or byway that utilise this typically-straight Roman highway.

Having turned left at Cooper's End, we head northeast for a while. Our lane stays straight for only about 200 yards before we bear right and bid farewell to the Romans.

It is not long before our lane turns sharp right, passing an entrance on the left to Rockells Farm only.

After about 300 yards, we imperceptibly leave the parish of Elmdon and Wenden Lofts and enter the parish of Arkesden.

Further on, we pass a group of buildings on the right called Little Becketts. Immediately afterwards we keep straight ahead past a lane on the right signposted to Clodmore Hill.

About 200 yards further on, we pass the entrance to Great Becketts. This house dates from around 1580 AD; its substantial chimney stack dates from that era.

We follow the lane round to the right, signposted to Arkesden and with Great Becketts immediately on our right.

Very soon, we cross a stream, flowing beneath the road from right to left. This stream is Wicken Water - it will not be far from our lane, just over to the left, as we descend into the village of Arkesden. We are greeted by a sign that tells us we are entering Arkesden.

We pass a pair of 17th-century thatched cottages on our left and immediately afterwards a former chapel. Wicken Water is now just to our left, flowing in a deep gully.

Over to the left, the tower of Arkesden's parish church comes into view [marked 6 on the route diagram] and we soon come to a junction and small green on the left. An interpretation panel gives information about Arkesden.

The lane to the left goes up to Arkesden's parish church which is worth exploring if you have time. St Mary's dates from the 13th century, albeit much renovated in Victorian times. If you go up to the church, please retrace using the indented paragraph below.

If you visit the church, retrace through the churchyard. Keep to the left of Church Green, passing Arkesden Village Hall on the left. Here, keep left on the path, away from the road. On the right, we pass the road bridge over Wicken Water. There are several large puddingstones and sarsen stones on the stream bed. These different types of stone were each formed around 55 million years ago and brought together here by glacial or river movements long, long ago. Arkesden is particularly rich in puddingstones. On the left, pass close beside 17th-century Watts Folly. Continue on the footpath with the Wicken Water watercourse and roadway on the right. On reaching a phone box, we will leave the segregated path and return to the roadway. When safe, cross the road to continue on the right. Immediately on our right is the thatched Axe and Compasses pub.

If you choose to miss the church, the route goes straight ahead through the centre of the village, signposted to Wicken Bonhunt, Clavering and Newport.

We immediately pass beside Watts Folly on the left and soon reach The Axe and Compasses pub and restaurant on the right [marked 7 on the route diagram]. It was originally constructed around 1700 AD as a timber-framed building and a brick front was added a hundred years later. The pub once featured in the popular 20th-century television series *Lovejoy*. The pub was badly damaged by fire in March 2022 but was rebuilt, reopening 18 months later.

If you pause at the pub, on leaving, turn right to continue along the pavement. After 100 yards, when the pavement ends beside Box Tree Cottage, cross the road with care to take the concrete footbridge over Wicken Water, turning right on the footpath past the 17th-century thatched cottages. The path soon meets a road where we turn right to the main road junction.

With care, go straight ahead on Clavering Road (Clatterbury Lane), signposted towards Clavering – yes, the fingerpost sign was made by Maldon Iron Works.

We leave the village of Arkesden almost immediately but will be in the parish until we reach the top of this hill.

On the right, we pass a driveway to Woodhall Farm and further on, as the lane bears left, we reach a rather grand entrance on the right. Immediately opposite, on the left, is 18th-century Keeper's Cottage.

As the gradient levels off, we pass from Arkesden into Clavering parish, soon coming into the part of Clavering village known as Hill Green. Here, there is a mixture of housing, from 17th to 21st century.

We pass a small commercial estate on the right before reaching a junction with signpost pointing to Stickling Green. Our route turns right here but straight ahead, in less than 100 yards, is The Cricketers pub and restaurant where you may wish to pause [it is marked 8 on the route diagram].

The Cricketers has 16th-century origins but has been much extended in more recent times. This is where local celebrity chef Jamie Oliver first learned to cook when it was owned by his parents.

If you pause at The Cricketers, afterwards turn right out of the pub, and perhaps right again, to retrace along Clatterbury Lane, heading towards Arkesden. In only a few yards, soon after the pub car park, the pavement on the right ends. With care, cross the road to the traffic island, keep straight ahead across the island and across the side road, signposted towards Stickling Green, to rejoin the route.

We are now in a lane called Stickling Green, heading west and passing a small commercial estate on the right.

We soon pass 21st-century Eldridge Court on the right and shortly afterwards return to where we started this walk [marked 1 on the route diagram].

This route description, last updated 23 April 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Clavering, Brent Pelham & Meesden, Langley, Elmdon & Wenden Lofts and Arkesden, and also find many additional walk routes.

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to 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. The numbers refer to possible parking spots, pubs and churches mentioned in the route description. The arrow indicates the direction of the walk from the start as described in this route description.

