



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 309

Helions Bumpstead and Castle Camps - mostly through open countryside – 5.8 miles (9 kms)

This circular walk passes through two parishes in two counties - Helions Bumpstead in Essex and Castle Camps in Cambridgeshire.

The route description starts and finishes at the Three Horseshoes in Helions Bumpstead, marked **1** on the diagram on the last page of this description. If you wish to park there and take refreshment before or after the walk, you are advised to book in advance on 01440 730088 or <https://threehorseshoeshelions.co.uk/> In 2024, the pub was usually closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Two alternative starting points are shown on the diagram:

Firstly, along a wider stretch of road, southeast of the tall communications mast, marked **2** on the diagram - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL625415 - Postcode: CB21 4TN – what3words: promise.louder.latter. From this point, the route description can be joined halfway down page 2.

Another alternative spot to park and start the walk is in Castle Camps, at the small car park for the village hall and recreation ground at the southern end of Castle Camps village. The narrow entrance to the car park is on the north side of Park Lane, around 30 yards east of the village sign and war memorial which stand at the corner of Park Lane and High Street. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL633432 - Postcode: CB21 4SS – what3words: brother.hotspots.limo. This location is marked **3** on the diagram; the route description can be joined towards the bottom of page 3.

You may, of course, join this circular route anywhere along the way.

Start and finish: The route description starts and finishes at the Three Horseshoes in Helions Bumpstead. (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL650415 - Postcode: CB9 7AL – what3words: afraid.reserves.mergers).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 210.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

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!

From the pub, turn left onto the lane, keeping to the right. Soon, we reach a crossroads, opposite the village sign and with the parish church up to the right. We will return to this spot at the end of the route. With care, turn left into Sages End Road, signposted towards Olmstead Green.

The lane leads through a residential area of Helions Bumpstead, but we soon leave the village. The population of Helions Bumpstead was just 400 in 2021.

Towards the end of houses, on the left, a long drive leads to Helions Farm and Great Hall. These buildings, out of sight, are not listed. They date from the 19th century and replaced a former manor house that was destroyed by fire 200 years ago. The site was once moated and is now protected as a Scheduled Monument, an archaeological site where excavation is permitted only under certain circumstances. We continue straight ahead, along Sages End Road.

Further along, the lane turns left and then climbs gently for some distance. This quiet, narrow lane seems to get even quieter and narrower, passing only an occasional farm building.

At the top of the climb, a look back should reveal Helions Bumpstead church, amongst the trees over to the right.

Just after a righthand bend, the red-brick house called Perry Appleton, on our right with a lily pond in front, stands on the parish boundary. Here, we leave Helions Bumpstead and Essex. Without any fanfare or notice, we come into the parish of Castle Camps in the county of Cambridgeshire. A change of road surface seems to mark the change of county.

A little further along, again without notice, we come into the hamlet of Olmstead Green - and within a few strides we are back into the countryside.

After a short descent, the lane turns right, passing the entrance on the left to Olmstead Hall – actually a 16th-century cottage on a moated site, set well back out of sight from the road. The entrance also gives access to a byway signposted to Radwinter End 2, but we will leave that for another day.

In about half a mile the lane widens [with an alternative place to park, marked **2** on the route diagram] and we pass a tall communications mast on the left – it is 300 feet tall.

Almost opposite the mast, on the right, there is an old Ordnance Survey triangulation pillar. These concrete triangulation pillars were used for many years by surveyors to aid their mapping; they usually stand on high ground where they can be seen from at least two more triangulation pillars, each of which is located at a precisely-measured position and height above sea level. Here, we are 413 feet or 126 metres above sea level. Around 6,500 triangulation pillars were installed, starting in 1936. Today, their use has been superseded by more accurate technology including aerial photography and satellite global positioning systems. Triangulation pillars (or ‘trig points’ as they are sometimes called) are depicted on Ordnance Survey maps by a blue triangle around a blue dot.

The tower of Castle Camps parish church appears over to the right. To the left of the church, the white water tower on the horizon is about 2 miles away, in Shudy Camps, just outside the Hundred Parishes.

We continue ahead. On a clear day, on the horizon almost straight ahead, we may be able to see the red-brick water tower on Rivey Hill, to the north of Linton. This is about 4 miles away. Way beyond the water tower, we may even see the group of 13 rotating wind turbines at Wadlow Farm, about 6 or 7 miles away, hopefully glinting in the sunshine.

For a while, our route descends gently.

On the left, we pass Cooper's Farm with an extensive array of ploughs and other farm machinery, some new and some ancient.

A little further along, we come to imposing wrought iron gates on the left. The gates date from the 18th century but were installed here only after World War II. On the far side of the gates is a former rectory, Berghane Hall, built in the 1750s.

Immediately opposite the gates is a public footpath which, unusually, has been surfaced with concrete for some distance. We keep straight ahead on the lane, gradually descending.

We reach a road junction where we turn right, signposted Castle Camps ½.

The road climbs before it reaches a few houses and then levels out.

Gradually, we draw nearer to Castle Camps church; the communications mast we passed earlier can now be seen in the distance to our right.

We reach a road junction, where Castle Camps' parish church is signposted to the right. The 13th-century church stands about 200 yards down this lane but is not often open. Should you choose to venture down here, you will find an informative interpretation panel about the earthworks which survive from the Norman motte and bailey castle within whose grounds the church was built.

Our route goes round to the left [so, if you retrace back from the church please bear right when you get back to this road junction].

After the junction, the land on our right is the site of a medieval village and is part of a substantial area (including the church and castle) that is protected as a Scheduled Monument.

Later, we pass a small Woodland Trust site on our left. If you do explore the path around the site, on return to the road please turn left.

We are welcomed by a Castle Camps sign as we enter the main residential area of this rural parish – the whole parish had a population of just 650 on the 2021 Census.

The first two dwellings are thatched, dating from the 18th or 19th centuries.

As the lane turns left, this is a good point to look back at how far we have come since the church and the communications mast.

Castle Camps Primary School stands on our right, just before we reach a road junction where we turn right, signposted towards The Bumpsteads 1½ .

Stay on the pavement on the right and soon pass a junction with The High Street on the left. The pavement runs out at this point so, with care, cross to the left. We keep straight ahead past the small green on our left with village sign and war memorial. The house on the right was once an inn.

Just afterwards, we pass a finger post pointing left to the Village Hall and Recreation Ground. This is marked **3** on the route diagram as an alternative start point for this walk. [If

you chose to park and start from here, leave the car park and turn left, along the pavement, heading East].

When the pavement ends, outside Haylocks Almshouses, we should, when safe, cross the road and walk on the right, facing any oncoming traffic.

We pass Moat Farm on the right and Moat Farm House on the left. Soon afterwards, we come to a war memorial on the right, commemorating Royal Air Force Castle Camps which operated here from 1940 to 1946 during the Second World War. The diagram on the memorial shows that the three-runway airfield occupied much of the countryside around which we are walking today. The main NorthEast – SouthWest runway ran from close to where we are standing, stretching nearly all the way to the tall communication mast.

We pass the back of a sign that indicates we are leaving Castle Camps.

Later, a sign welcomes us to Essex. At this point we leave Cambridgeshire and return to the parish of Helions Bumpstead.

On our right, a straight concrete road disappears into the distance – probably a former service road for the wartime airfield.

Soon afterwards, a large sign advises that we have arrived at Helions Bumpstead and are now subject to a 40mph speed limit.

On the left we pass an unusual display of “bespoke hand-crafted firepits”.

We come into a small hamlet called Drapers Green. Ivytodd House on the right dates from the 16th century – its very large postbox appears to be Victorian – with its VR cipher - but may no longer be in public use.

We keep straight ahead, ignoring a concrete bridleway on the right and a lane on the left.

Our lane descends gently as we come into Helions Bumpstead village, going past a string of individual houses on our left.

On the right, a gravel drive leads to 16th-century Moss’s Farmhouse. We might pause here.

Opposite Moss’s Farmhouse, on our left, is The Old Marquis, a much-extended house dating from the 16th century. This house, now largely hidden behind its hedge, once functioned as an inn, the Marquis of Granby, reverting to a private dwelling in 1960. It was one of many pubs, up and down the country, that were given that name. The Marquis of Granby (1721 – 1770) was the eldest son of the Duke of Rutland, but died before his father so did not become Duke. He was a well-respected army officer, rising to become Colonel and commander-in-chief of the Royal Horse Guards. He provided financial assistance to his former men, enabling them to become pub landlords when they retired from the army. His financial support came with the condition that the pub be named The Marquis of Granby. It was to this Marquis of Granby that Sylvia Pankhurst retired for the night in 1914 after making a speech in Helions Bumpstead to around 2,000 striking agricultural workers.

A little further along, we should cross the road with care and use the pavement on the left, passing beside a small village green with seats.

The Old Vicarage, on our right, stands sideways to the road. It has been extended over the centuries since its 16th-century origins.

The Helions Bumpstead village sign stands near the end of the green, just before we reach a crossroads. Immediately before the crossroads, the building on the right dates from around 1700 AD and is now divided into two homes, first Lower House and then Inglenook Cottage.

Our route goes straight ahead to return to The Three Horseshoes where we started, but you might like to make a short diversion to the left, up Church Hill, to visit Helions Bumpstead's parish church which dates from the 13th century. If you do visit the church, retrace down the hill and turn left at the crossroads.

Having negotiated the crossroads with care, we are now in Water Lane. In about 100 yards, we return to the Three Horseshoes on the right, where we started this walk.

The pub, named by the blacksmith who ran it in the 1860s, was central to village life until its closure in 2014. The landlords sought permission to change its use, but this was opposed by the community who came together to purchase it in 2019. It is now owned by The Helions Bumpstead Community Benefit Society Limited, funded mainly by local people. It reopened in 2021.

[If you started the walk elsewhere along the route, turn left out of the pub to retrace a hundred yards before turning left at the crossroads into Sages End Road. Now follow the route description from near the bottom of page 1]

This route description, last updated 12 May 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Helions Bumpstead and Castle Camps 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.

