



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 311

### Westmill parish – 4.2 miles (7 kms)

This circular walk is mostly in the Hertfordshire parish of Westmill, with just a short diversion beyond the Hundred Parishes boundary into the parish of Great Munden. Apart from the village of Westmill, the route is mainly through open countryside on high ground.

The start and finish are close to two possible places for refreshment: The Sword in Hand pub, open 7 days a week - SG9 9LQ – 01763 271356 – <https://www.theswordinnhand.co.uk> - and Westmill Tea Room (usually open only in the summer, from Thursday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm), SG9 9LG - 01763 274236 - [www.westmilltearoom.co.uk](http://www.westmilltearoom.co.uk)

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

**Start and finish:** The walk starts and finishes from Westmill Church where there is space for several cars to park in the road beside the wall of the churchyard. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL370272 - Postcode: SG9 9LJ – What3words: reputable.anode.ambition  
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of this 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 and cyclists may be as surprised to see you as you are to see them!

Before setting off, please take a look inside St Mary's, the parish church, if it is open. It dates from the 12th century with substantial additions in the 15th and much rebuilding work in 1876. One of the church's six bells is exceptionally ancient, dating from 1350 AD.

After exiting from the churchyard, we turn right, keeping to the right side of the road.

On the left we pass an attractive and varied series of cottages whose origins range from the 16th century to the 18th. Most are listed buildings – we will pass more than twenty before we leave Westmill village.

On the right, the unusually-named pub, The Sword in Hand, dates from the 16th century. It was once a house but has been an inn for over 200 years. Its name comes from the coat of arms of the Greg family who lived at Coles Park in the south of Westmill parish. They were generous benefactors in the mid-1900s, leaving several properties in trust for the benefit of the parish including almshouses, allotments, recreation ground and the village hall which we will see shortly.

Attractive properties continue on both sides of the road. The terrace of cottages on the right is called Pilgrims Row, named after Samuel Pilgrim who built them in the 18th century.

Just after Pilgrims Row, we turn sharp right, passing almshouses on the right and then the village hall, a 17th-century barn that was converted into the hall and its adjoining caretaker's house. Follow the lane round to the left, past Westmill's tea room.

On the green to our left, the water pump was installed around 1900 AD.

The final house on the right, Dial House, has an unusual sun dial on the gable, dated 1793. Its Latin inscription DUM SPECTAS FUCID has been translated as WHILE YOU WATCH, I FLEE.

So, we had better keep moving! We turn right, keeping to the right, and continue to pass interesting old buildings, including 17th-century Old Gaylors, set back on the right with red-tiled roof.

Soon after, we should cross the road with care and turn left, signposted towards Cherry Green. This narrow lane climbs steadily for some distance.

We leave most houses behind and then on the left we pass Cherry Green Lodge, Woodside and Gaylors Farm House. By now the gradient has almost levelled off. A look back will confirm that we have been climbing. In the distance, back over our right shoulder, we can probably see the red roofs of 21st-century houses that have been built at the southern end of Buntingford on what was previously a large Sainsbury's distribution centre.

We continue ahead, still climbing gently.

In a quarter of a mile, we pass a tree-lined driveway on the right. It goes to distant Whatbarns Farm.

A little further along, we pass an electricity substation on the right, just before our lane turns to the left. We are now on fairly level ground, on a plateau about 400 feet (125 metres) above sea level.

After a while, a sign tells us we have reached Cherry Green, a tiny hamlet within Westmill parish. We pass farm buildings and then follow the lane round to the right, passing Cherry Green Farmhouse on our left – it dates from the 17th century or earlier.

In another 100 yards or so, we reach a junction where we turn sharp left, signposted towards Nasty and Great Munden.

Quite soon, we pass the back of a sign that confirms we have left Cherry Green.

A little further on, we pass beside woodland on our right – this is Furtherfield Spring.

At the end of the woodland, a byway is signposted to the right. The round signs tell us that cars and motor bikes are not allowed. Nor are horse-drawn wagons permitted. This must be a change since the track was first opened nearly 2000 years ago when chariots may have made their way along here. Then it was a Roman road, coming in a dead straight line from Baldock, 8 miles northwest from here (back to our right), and heading towards the Roman town at Braughing, about 2½ miles to our left, southeast from Cherry Green.

As we continue along the lane, there is no evidence today of where the Roman road went off to the left, although we do soon pass a signposted footpath heading that way. From this spot, we may see the tower and Hertfordshire spike of a church ahead and slightly to the right, about a mile away in Great Munden.

The old Roman road marks the parish boundary between Westmill and Great Munden which lies outside The Hundred Parishes. It was necessary to draw a boundary somewhere and this is it! Fortunately, few border guards monitor this checkpoint, so we can press ahead.

It is nearly half a mile, mostly with woodland on our right, before we encounter the next road junction. Here, we turn left. The fingerpost sign points us towards Westmill.

After a gentle climb, a footpath sign on the right indicates the route of Footpath 61, heading to Nasty (a hamlet within Great Munden parish), half a mile to our right.

In another 300 yards, just before a small patch of woodland on the right, a footpath sign on the left points towards Furtherfield Spring. Just here, we imperceptibly cross the border and return to civilisation as we know it, more specifically the parish of Westmill within The Hundred Parishes. Passports and visas can now be put away.

We continue ahead on this quiet lane, initially past the woodland and then descending gently.

After a while, we ignore a lane to the right, signposted to Puckeridge and Ware. Behind the fence on the right is a former 19th-century lodge house, Coles Hill Lodge, with fancy chimneys. We keep straight ahead towards Westmill.

On the left, we pass a red-brick private house that has been enlarged since it started life in the 17th century as a rectory.

On the right, we pass another former lodge house, Garden Lodge, with another tall chimney stack. This was built in 1909 beside the entrance to Coles Park which was owned by the Greg family. The big house was demolished in the 1950s after the death of Thomas Greg and his wife Mary Hope Greg. They had been major benefactors to the parish of Westmill.

In a hundred yards, we pass a very large stone on the green on our right, probably a sarsen stone which was formed around 50 million years ago and deposited nearby during the retreat of a glacier in relatively recent times. The sarsen stone stands in front of a parking area for commercial units and a 17th-century farmhouse.

We continue along the lane, back into open countryside and soon getting another view of the former rectory if we look back to the left.

Our lane descends and then turns right, soon passing Thrift Cottages on the left, standing in front of Thrift Wood.

In another half a mile, the lane turns sharply to the left, beside a gravel driveway on the right to Westmill Lodge – another former entrance to Coles Park.

Soon, we come into the village of Westmill, passing The Terrace, 1920, and then relatively new houses on our left.

As we come into the village centre, the former school is on our left, opposite the children's playground.

On the left we pass a listed telephone kiosk which now houses a defibrillator, and then 18th-century Sissons.

At the junction, we turn right, signposted to Puckeridge and Ware. We have almost returned to where we started, but do pause to take a closer look at the water pump on the green. The inscription around the top of the wooden casing comes from a 19th-century London poet who is understood to have had no connection with Westmill.

Continue down the road, perhaps pausing at the tea room, the pub or the church, and soon return to where we started the walk.

[If you started the walk elsewhere along the route, re-join the route description from page 1]

This route description, last updated 16 December 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parish of Westmill 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.

