



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 316

Matching and White Roding, etc – 9.6 miles (13 kms)

This circular walk takes in parts of five Essex parishes including about a mile just southeast of The Hundred Parishes in the combined parish of Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding. Most of the route is quite flat and through unspoilt countryside; there are brief encounters with ‘civilisation’ at Matching Green and White Roding, each of which has somewhere to eat or drink on most days of the week.

The route starts at Matching Green, in Matching parish, but you can join this circular route anywhere along the way. A possible alternative start can be found at Needham Green – an informal parking area beside the lane about 50 yards southeast of the road junction (marked **2** on the route diagram on the last page of this description, Grid Reference TL558158).

The route description starts and finishes on the opposite side of the green to the Chequers at Matching Green (the restaurant is marked **1** on the route diagram). The route also passes close to Bretts Country Restaurant at White Roding after about 6 miles (marked as **3**). If you choose not to start at Matching Green, the ‘diversion’ from point **4** to The Chequers may be avoided with a reduction of about 1.2 miles.

If you plan to stop for refreshment (and perhaps parking) at either venue, prior booking is advisable, especially for The Chequers. In 2024, The Chequers was closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, while Bretts was open every day:

Bretts Country Restaurant, CM6 1RF - 01279 876571 - <https://brettscountryrestaurant.co.uk/>

The Chequers, CM17 0PZ - 01279 731276 - www.thechequersmatchinggreen.co.uk

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the lane that runs along the eastern side of Matching Green, near the pond and The Limes. It is usually safe to park along this road, keeping clear of junctions and entrances to residential properties. The description starts at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL537111 - Postcode: CM17 0QE (a wide area) – What3words: danger.cute.ample
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.
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!

We are going to start with a clockwise circumnavigation of the green, initially heading south, away from the pond and The Limes. When safe, we should cross to walk on the right side of the road.

Immediately on our right is Matching Green. At 13 acres, it is one of the largest village greens in Essex. Just behind us, beyond the pond and near the centre of the green, the cricket pavilion has an Old Father Time weather vane, similar to the one at Lord's Cricket Ground in London. Matching Green Cricket Club was founded in 1833.

In about 200 yards, near the end of the green, we turn right. There is no signpost.

We pass a lane on the left and, just afterwards, The Chequers pub and restaurant – marked **1** on the route diagram - and an opportunity for refreshment later, especially if a table has been booked.

If you do pause here, on leaving The Chequers please turn left to continue with Matching Green on the right.

Immediately after the pub, we pass Elm House with a blue plaque that celebrates the painter Augustus John (1878 – 1961) who lived here from 1907 to 1911 – reportedly with his wife, his mistress and nine of his one hundred children!

We soon come to another road junction where we keep right, following the perimeter of the green. Our direction is signposted to many places including London, precisely 26¼ miles distant. The fingerpost sign was manufactured at Maldon Iron Works in Essex, probably between the First and Second World Wars.

Soon afterwards, note pink-painted Lascelles, set back on the left. Part of the building started life as a hall house in the 14th century.

Just afterwards, Cherry Tree Cottage, also pink and with a red tiled roof, dates from the 17th century.

Afterwards, we reach another road junction where we turn right, signposted towards Hatfield Heath.

We soon come to yet another junction (with no signpost) where we turn right, opposite 17th-century Greenside, thatched and with black weather-boarding.

Now, we are quite close to the cricket pavilion, to our right.

We soon pass the pond and the Matching Green village sign on the right to complete our circumnavigation of Matching Green.

We reach a crossroads. Ahead of us on the right is The Limes, an 18th-century house which looks over the road towards the pond.

With care, go straight ahead, signposted towards Matching Airfield and White Roding.

We soon pass an entrance on the right with a long straight drive that leads to Stock Hall.

Within a quarter of a mile, approaching a junction, we should cross with care to the left side of the road.

This junction is marked **4** on the route diagram. We will return here in another 8 miles or so.

The main lane goes sharp right but we turn left into a narrower lane, heading North. It is not signposted other than as National Cycle Network route 50.

For a considerable distance, the farmland to our right was once part of RAF Matching airfield.

After about a mile, we pass an entrance on the left to Manwood Bury and then Little Manwood Farm. As we pass the farm on our left, we leave the parish of Matching and enter the parish of Hatfield Heath. We are now in the hamlet of Manwood Green.

Our narrow lane, here called Sparrow's Lane, meanders between just a few houses including Manwood House on the right. It stands beside a pond and dates from around 1620 AD.

We will not see any more houses for another mile or so.

After half a mile, we ignore a lane on the left – a no-through road that goes to Parvilles Farm, about half a mile to the west. We keep to the main lane, bearing slightly right.

In another three-quarters of a mile, after a gentle climb, we pass Hatfield Grange on the left, and then Hatfield Grange Cottage.

After a few more, relatively-modern houses, Sparrow's Lane reaches the A1060 road. Here, our route turns left for a short distance, heading towards Bishop's Stortford and Hatfield Heath. But first, when safe, we should cross the main road to face oncoming traffic, if necessary using the grass verge.

In about 100 yards, just before a road junction, the house on our right, largely thatched, is Blocks Cottage. It dates from around 1480 AD but was extended and modernised in the 20th century.

At the junction, we turn right, signposted towards Hatfield Broad Oak. We are now in Sparrow Lane, a subtle change from Sparrow's Lane or Sparrows Lane which we walked along before the main road.

The next mile of our route is along a lane which is sometimes used by traffic heading to or from Stansted Airport so may not be as quiet as it should be. Please take extra care.

We head north along Sparrow Lane, going past a group of houses on the left before passing imperceptibly from the parish of Hatfield Heath into the parish of Hatfield Broad Oak, sometimes referred to as HBO.

We pass a thatched house on the left, standing sideways to the road. Rose Cottage dates from about 1600 AD and is timber-framed and plastered with weather boarding up to the ground floor windows.

A little further along we pass a lane on the left, signposted to Cage End. We keep straight ahead, signposted towards Hatfield Broad Oak and Takeley.

We soon pass commercial premises on the left.

Over to the left, we sometimes see the tower of Hatfield Broad Oak's parish church In the distance, almost a mile away.

Spurlings Barn, on our left, is soon followed by Sparrow Hall, a farmhouse that dates from the 16th or 17th century - timber-framed with pink pebble-dashed walls and red pegtile roof. This little hamlet is called Needham Green.

The farm buildings of Sparrow Hall Farm are next on our left and, just opposite them, we turn sharp right into a lane signposted to White Roding,

Note the ancient fingerpost sign on the opposite corner – another from Maldon Iron Works. One of the fingers, pointing back the way we have come, was broken in 2024 – the surviving letters M and H once referred to Matching Green and Hatfield Heath.

Soon after turning right, we pass an unofficial parking area on the left – an alternative place to park and start this walk – it is marked **2** on the route diagram.

We will stay on this new lane for about two miles before reaching another road junction.

We soon pass Needham Cottage on the right. Just afterwards, without fanfare, we leave Hatfield Broad Oak and enter the parish of White Roding.

For some distance, we walk beside the fields and farm buildings of Cammas Hall Fruit Farm on our right. In summer and autumn, this is a popular destination for people who like to pick their own fruit. There is usually a café on site.

About half a mile after Sparrow Hall Farm, and just before a sharp bend to the right, we get a limited view of Cammas Hall on the right. The farmhouse stands on a moated site and dates from the 16th century, as does its fine red-brick chimney stack.

Whilst we should not encounter much traffic along this lane, it is recommended that we cross to the left before the bend to improve our line of vision. We follow the lane round to the right, soon passing another entrance to Cammas Hall on the right.

The lane continues through open countryside for another mile until we reach the rather grand-looking Marks Hall on the left, complete with a host of fine chimney stacks. This building is not listed.

Now, our lane is attractively lined with trees for some distance, also with daffodils in springtime.

Shortly before the line of trees ends, a sign welcomes us to White Roding, although we have been in the parish for some distance.

On the left, two-storey The Old Forge has been modernised since it started life in the 17th century. Soon afterwards, White Roding Recreation Centre is signposted to the left.

We continue ahead, making use of the pavement on the left as we pass 20th-century houses.

We soon reach a junction with the A1060. We turn left, towards Chelmsford, along the pavement for just a few yards.

Our route turns right, off the A1060, but we should pause before crossing the main road. Just ahead on the main road there were once two pubs. On the left, the Black Horse closed in 2019; almost opposite, the building with the tall chimney was the Whalebone which closed

around 1990. Hospitality is still available in White Roding, at Bretts Restaurant about a hundred yards ahead on the left, marked **3** on the route diagram. If you choose to stop here, on leaving Brett's, turn right and retrace past the former Black Horse to a point opposite the junction.

When safe, cross the main A1060 and head south, along Church Lane, generally keeping to the pavement on the right. We are now in the centre of White Roding.

Soon, we cross the entrance to St Martin's Close on the right and just afterwards a narrow lane on the right leads to St Martin's Church, about 100 yards down the lane. The church predates all the houses we will see today by several centuries and merits further inspection, although it is often closed. There are seats outside if a break is needed. Some of the church's structure dates from the 11th century and building materials include recycled Roman bricks. The Roman bricks were used when constructing the nave and the arch leading to the chancel, whilst the two central windows in the north wall have been identified as 11th century. The church tower is a relatively recent structure from the 16th century.

If you visit the church, retrace along the lane to the road and turn right. Old Rectory Cottage, immediately opposite, is one of many 17th-century listed buildings in White Roding.

We continue through the centre of White Roding, keeping to the pavement on the right. We pass several varied and attractive houses.

The first building on the right, The Old Rectory, dates from the 16th century or earlier and, like most of these ancient buildings, has been brought up to date for modern living.

The next house on the right, Church Cottage, thatched and extending out over the pavement, is not as old as it may seem, dating from the 19th century.

The Old Post Office, on the left, has some quirky adornments, especially its giant spider's web.

Dovecote Cottage, Old Bakery Cottage and Little Timbers, all on the right, are each listed buildings that date from the 17th century.

On the left, the former windmill is thought to have been the last built in Essex. It is a tower mill, constructed of bricks in 1877 to replace a post mill that had blown down. It is just the top, the cap, of a tower mill that rotates to ensure the sails face into the wind. On the other hand, the whole structure of a post mill rotates on a central pivot. This tower mill ceased to operate in 1931. It has lost its sails and is now part of a private residence.

The pavement ends as we leave White Roding village.

After a while, we pass Mill View on the right. Immediately afterwards, we turn right into Matching Lane, signposted towards Matching Green.

After about a quarter of a mile, Kingston's Barn, set back on the right, dates from the 18th century and has been converted for modern living.

At a mini crossroads, we follow the main lane round to the left, signposted to Matching Green. Over to the left, pink-painted Snows Farmhouse dates from the 17th century.

As we approach a road junction, we should cross to the left when safe to improve visibility. We keep right at the junction, heading towards Matching Green, before crossing back to the right.

Shortly before we reached the junction, we left the parish of White Roding. For the next mile, we will be just outside The Hundred Parishes, in the combined parish of Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding.

By way of explanation, there is a cluster of eight settlements which bear the name Roding (after an Anglo-Saxon chieftain called Hroda). When defining the boundary of The Hundred Parishes in 2012, it was decided to include Aythorpe, High, Leaden and White Roding but to omit Abbess, Beauchamp, Berners and Margaret.

We will press on and hope there are no border guards on duty. For the next mile, the Hundred Parishes boundary will run about 200 yards to our right.

After another quarter of a mile, our lane turns right so we should again cross to the left, not just for safety but also to pause to inspect the small war memorials on the left. They commemorate Matching Airfield and the American airmen who flew from here and died in combat in World War II. Our route is about to cross some of the former airfield.

With care, we leave the war memorials and follow the lane round to the right.

We immediately pass a house called Fairlands on the right. The timber-framed and plastered house, now painted white, dates from the 15th century.

The lane continues, very flat.

After a while, we pass through woodland and, just as we leave it, we cross a former airfield perimeter road. Over to the right is a former airfield control tower.

RAF Matching was, like so many, built in a hurry. It opened in 1944 and ceased operations in 1946 having been used mainly by bombing units of the Royal Air Force and US Army Air Forces. Although known as Matching, the majority of the airfield was actually in the parish of White Roding. We are still in Abbess Roding.

We continue ahead, across the former airfield.

After another few hundred yards, a straight track goes off to the left, signposted as a bridleway – once part of the runway but now heading away to infinity.

Soon afterwards, we imperceptibly re-enter The Hundred Parishes and specifically the parish of White Roding for just a few yards before we pass, unannounced, into Matching parish.

After another quarter of a mile, another straight track - perhaps a former runway - comes in from the left, just as our lane turns right. Having turned right, over to the left amongst the trees we might catch a glimpse of 16th-century Stock Hall, a former manor house with red-tile roof; it is surrounded by a 12th-century moat and now sits amongst more modern farm buildings.

Within a hundred yards, our lane turns left, leaving the old airfield track or runway to continue straight ahead without us.

In about 200 yards, we pass the entrance on the left to the farm associated with Stock Hall.

Soon, our lane turns right beside Elmbridge House on the left.

Soon afterwards, we reach a junction which is marked **4** on the route diagram. Here, if you started other than at Matching Green, you have a choice – turn left to complete the full 9.6 mile route with a circuit of Matching Green and passing The Chequers pub, or turn right to reduce the distance to about 8.4 miles. If you choose the shorter option, please skip the next few paragraphs and resume where the number **4** appears towards the bottom of page 2.

Keeping to the full route, we turn sharp left – taking care on this blind corner.

We are now in Potash Road. We soon pass the entrance on the right to New Upper Hall.

Further along, we meet the entrance on the left to Stock Hall; from here, a long, straight private gravel drive disappears over our left shoulder.

We continue ahead along the lane and soon come to a small triangular green with a fingerpost sign. Matching Green is directly ahead, with a seat beside the pond. Our route turns left, so we should negotiate the junction with care.

We turn left, signposted towards Little Laver, The Rodings and Moreton.

Immediately on our left, The Limes dates from the 18th century. Soon afterwards, we return to where we started the walk.

[If you started the walk elsewhere along the route, please continue by joining the route description near the bottom of page 1]

This route description, last updated 14 July 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Matching, Hatfield Heath, Hatfield Broad Oak and White Roding 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.

