



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 317

### Great Waltham and Felsted parishes, rural – 3.5 miles (6 kms)

This walk goes through some rural parts of the parishes of Great Waltham and Felsted, passing only occasional houses. A short part of the route is outside The Hundred Parishes, in the parish of Great and Little Leighs.

The route description starts and finishes from The Compasses pub at Littley Green, a hamlet within the parish of Great Waltham. The start is marked **1** on the diagram on the last page of this description. Please do not park in the car park behind the pub without prior permission. In 2024, the pub normally opened 7 days a week, taking bookings only for groups of six or more - 01245 362308 or [www.compasseslittleygreen.co.uk](http://www.compasseslittleygreen.co.uk)

An alternative start is marked **2** on the diagram, an informal parking area beside the road northeast of Prior's Green (Grid Reference TL688183). From there, you should head southwest to Priors Green and join the walk description at the bottom of page 2.

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

**Start and finish:** The route description starts and finishes outside The Compasses at Littley Green in the parish of Great Waltham - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL699172 - Postcode: CM3 1BU (a wide area) - what3words: dupe.rent.debit. It should be possible to park opposite The Compasses or along the lane heading northeast from the pub.

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 mostly 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 and cyclists may be as surprised to see you as you are to see them!

From the pub, turn left along the lane.

After about 300 yards we pass Graveleys on the right, a rather large house – with an impressive cedar tree - that is not listed for any architectural or historic reason. We will pass very few listed buildings along this rural route.

For a short distance, the red-brick walls on either side of the lane seem to be competing with one another for height.

Further on, we pass two or three houses on the left. Immediately afterwards, a footpath is signposted, going off to the right. At this point, we cross the boundary of The Hundred Parishes, leaving the parish of Great Waltham and entering the parish of Great and Little

Leighs. There is no noticeable change in the landscape. We will return to The Hundred Parishes in about half a mile.

Not long afterwards, now about half a mile from The Compasses, we reach a T-junction, where we turn left onto a new lane. There is no signpost.

After about 200 yards, a footpath sign points to our right. In that direction, we may be able to see the tall floodlight towers stretching along the horizon – they are at Chelmsford City Racecourse about 2 miles away.

Our lane is nicely lined with trees on the left, a good variety of native species. On the right, the view is somewhat hidden by a high hedge but from time to time we may be able to see a group of red-brick buildings about a quarter of a mile away in the valley to our right. This is Leez Priory which was once the home of Richard Rich.

An Augustinian priory once stood there. It was demolished in the 16th century to make way for the present buildings which became the palatial home of Richard Rich. He acquired the former priory during his time as Henry VIII's "Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations". He served the king in that role from 1547 to 1552, with responsibility for handling the financial consequences of the dissolution of the monasteries. Rich rebuilt and extended the former priory which today functions as a wedding venue, straddling the parish boundary between Felsted and Great & Little Leighs. Several of Leez Priory's buildings are listed at Grade I.

After a gradual rise and about 20 yards before our lane turns right, there is a clear view to the right of Leez Priory.

We follow the lane round to the right, just where a track comes in from the left. Here, we re-enter the Hundred Parishes – at least on the left of the road which is in the parish of Felsted, albeit that to the right of the road it is still Great and Little Leighs.

Just after the bend, a sign tells us that we are entering a Quiet Lane. This is a designation that can be given by local authorities under the Transport Act 2000.

Our lane descends to a junction with a good view of Leez Priory and various entrances. We follow the lane round to the left.

In about 100 yards, we come to a junction and a black-and-white finger post made at Maldon Iron Works in Essex, probably between the wars. We keep straight ahead, signposted towards Dunmow.

For the next half mile, the land to our right was once fish ponds for the priory. A considerable area here is designated as a Scheduled Monument with protection against development or excavation.

About half a mile after Leez Priory, our lane turns left, passing 17th-century Thatched Cottage before turning again to the right.

In another quarter of a mile, we pass a sign that tells us "Quiet Lane ends". That's a shame!

Soon, there is an informal parking area on the left, a possible alternative start for this walk. The location is marked **2** on the route diagram on the last page.

Just afterwards we come into a tiny hamlet called Prior's Green. We keep round to the left, passing just a few houses on the right.

We soon come to a busier road. The signpost tells us only where we have come from – Leez Priory. Our route turns left. Please cross the road with care and walk facing any oncoming traffic. We use this road for about half a mile, generally heading downhill. It is likely to have more traffic than we have been used to, so please be ready to walk in single file or even on the grass verge.

After about 200 yards, a sign tells us that we have reached Hartford End in the parish of Felsted.

Soon afterwards, we cross the entrance to a private road to Camsix Farm.

We pass several houses on the right including 17th-century Keepers Cottage (named as Gamekeepers Cottage on the gate): this distinctive symmetrical cottage has a brick path leading up to the door and four dormer windows beneath a red-tiled roof.

We pass The Brewer's House on the right.

In another hundred yards, we come to a former brewery on the right. It has now been converted and expanded into residential accommodation, appropriately named Ridley Green.

With great care, we should cross the road to take the first turning on the left, opposite the former brewery and signposted to Littley Green.

You might like to pause and look back at what was once Ridley's brewery. The residential development is partly a conversion of the former Ridley's Hartford End Brewery which operated here for around 150 years. TD Ridley & Sons Ltd was purchased by Greene King in 2005 and the brewery was closed in 2009.

We are now back on quiet lanes. Just to our right, and usually hidden by vegetation in summer, the River Chelmer runs parallel with the lane, flowing in the opposite direction to us, towards Chelmsford.

After about 100 yards, by a telegraph pole, pause to look back to the right. On the opposite river bank of the river, we may see the remains of a survivor from World War II - a concrete spigot mortar emplacement, usually visible in winter months because of the small shiny steel post on top of the round concrete base. This small post was the mounting for a lightweight anti-tank weapon known as a spigot mortar. The gun crew would crouch in the surrounding pit, turning the gun to fire on an enemy tank. Thousands were installed for use by the Home Guard if Germany invaded. The weapon had a range of only about 100 yards; fortunately, they were never required.

We have now left Felsted and returned to the parish of Great Waltham.

A little further on, a World War II concrete pillbox is visible on the other side of the river. Several remain along the line of the River Chelmer, making this one of the key lines of defence against possible invasion.

We continue up the lane. After about 300 yards, the lane bears left and climbs away from the river, passing several old stumps of trees that once lined the way.

You are encouraged to pause and look back from time to time to enjoy the view back to the Chelmer valley.

At the top of the climb, the road skirts round Littley Park on the left. The house and original chimney stack date from the 16th century. Note the giant magnolia tree in front of the house.

We follow the lane round to the right, ignoring the bridleway straight ahead which leads to Leez Priory. Just after turning right, we pass a pair of cottages on our left.

The lane is quite straight with the Chelmer valley below on our right.

After a quarter of a mile, we enter the hamlet of Littley Green. Just before we reach a road junction, the square house set back on the left is Oak House. It dates from the 17th century and once functioned as The Royal Oak Inn.

Just afterwards, we pass a Victorian postbox on the left, easily distinguishable by its VR insignia.

At the junction, we turn left, signposted towards Willows Green and Braintree.

Soon afterwards, we reach The Compasses where this route description started. The pub was once one of the chain of more than 50 pubs that traded under the Riddleys name, associated with the brewery at Hartford End. It still sells Ridley's Old Bob beer which is now brewed by Greene King at Bury St Edmunds.

If you started somewhere else along the route, please continue ahead, perhaps after a pause for refreshment. You can rejoin the route description from page 1.

This route description, last updated 17 July 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parishes of Felsted and Great Waltham 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.

