



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 319

Wethersfield – 3.0 miles (5 kms)

This walk is entirely within the parish of Wethersfield, in a rural area about 2 miles southeast of Wethersfield village. The route does not pass anywhere to eat or drink. Part of the route is along a sunken lane which may flood or become muddy after heavy rain.

The route description starts and finishes at the village hall in the hamlet of Blackmore End, where it should be possible to park in the car park behind the hall. The location is marked **1** on the route diagram on the last page of this description. If there is not space in the car park, then it should be possible to park along the road nearby.

An alternative start is marked **2** on the diagram, an informal parking area on the east side of the road at Grid Reference TL743296 (what3words, approximately `encoding.alleyway.swanky`). If you park there, please do not block access to the field gateway. From there, you should head south, with the parking area on your left, and join the walk description near the top of page 2.

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

Start and finish: The route description starts and finishes at the village hall in Blackmore End – Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL741307 - Postcode: CM7 4DN (a wide area) - what3words: `rumbles.sheets.norms`

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Outside the hall, note the village sign. How many of the features might we see today?

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 village hall car park, we turn left, heading south.

For the first half mile, our lane is quite wide but it usually has little traffic. However, please be extra cautious when approaching bends, crossing with care to the side of the road which gives the clearest view and then crossing back to the right when safe.

On our right we pass 2 Old School Garage, a former school. To its left, set back, are two Church Cottages, one of which is thatched. Soon afterwards, the lane bears right.

About a hundred yards later, we pass a turning on the right, signposted towards Shalford. We keep straight ahead in the direction of Gosfield and Braintree. We will return to this junction near the end of our route, having walked clockwise around the block.

In another 50 yards, we ignore a turning to the left – not signposted but leading towards warehouses. We go straight ahead.

Soon, we pass a long barn on the left and we are now in the countryside.

A sign on our right welcomes anyone coming the other way into Blackmore End.

After a quarter of a mile, we pass beneath a modest set of power lines and soon afterwards our lane bears right. Here, we pass a bridleway sign on the left and a possible alternative start point - an informal parking area marked **2** on the route diagram. We follow the lane round to the right.

In another 200 yards. Our lane bends sharply to the left but we turn right at a small grass traffic island, possibly signposted towards Rotten End (the fingers were missing from the post in 2024). This is a much narrower lane, called Mumfords Hill, and a traffic warning advises that it is unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles.

We soon pass a house called Little Woolmers on the right.

Further along, we pass an unusual house called Hopkiln on the left. It is not listed but a sale brochure in 2019 stated that it dates from the 18th century and was once an oast house (rare in this part of the country), used for drying hops.

Our lane descends, now well sunken below the fields on either side. Consequently, the road surface is quite stony and can sometimes be wet or even flooded.

About 600 yards after Hopkiln, our sunken lane reaches a crossroads with no signpost. The private drive to the right leads up to Rotten End Hall – a rather grand-looking house of some antiquity which, surprisingly, is not listed. Those responsible for listing properties with architectural or historic interest seem to have missed several in this area! For those without binoculars, we show a photo below.



The lane to the left goes to Rotten End. We continue straight ahead, immediately passing Crossgates Cottage on the left.

After about 200 yards, our lane turns right, just as a drive forks off to the left to climb up to Valley Farm and Great Meadow Barn. Each of these is listed. There are actually two listed barns, each dating from the 18th century; behind them, the farmhouse is 200 years older.

We continue along the lane, climbing steadily. The lane is now called Oak Hill and we soon pass Oak Hill Cottages on our right.

Further on, we pass Highwood House and then The Shieling, both on the right, before we reach the top of the climb. Here we are told to "Give way", but there is no directional signpost.

We turn sharp right, now heading eastwards along Gosfield Road.

After about 300 yards, we pass a drive and byway on the left.

We pass beneath the line of power cables that we saw earlier.

We pass an entrance on the right to The Old Granary and then a bungalow called Betelgeuse (the name of a massive, bright star in the constellation of Orion).

We come into a small group of houses including thatched High Thatch on our left and a barn on the right. High Thatch dates from the 16th century; the barn is from the 18th albeit now converted for modern living. Mostly hidden behind the barn is Hyde Farm which dates from the 16th century or earlier and has a substantial chimney stack which appears to be from that era.

Our lane turns left and then right.

Soon, we pass Oast House on the right. It is not listed but presumably started life as an oast house like Hopkiln which we passed earlier.

A little further along, on the right, we pass a group of farm buildings just before reaching Summers Hall. This was originally built in the 15th century, probably as a manor house. It once comprised an open hall with crosswings at each end. Its listing says that roof timbers above the original open hall are still blackened from where smoke rose from the open hearth that would have been in the middle of the hall before a fireplace and chimney stack were installed in the 16th century. The building has clearly been modernised but the classic hall house layout with two crosswings is still apparent.

We continue ahead, passing more outbuildings.

Soon, just as we approach a road junction, we pass a house called St Marys on the left. Just afterwards, the red-brick building set back on the left was once a chapel, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. Although there is still a cemetery, the chapel seems to have been converted into a house.

At the junction, we turn left, signposted towards Wethersfield. When safe, we should cross to the right to face oncoming traffic. We are now back in Blackmore End.

In two or three hundred yards, we return to the village hall where this route description started.

Please take a look at the village sign, outside the hall. How many of the features did we see today? It is unlikely that we will have seen any apart from the two oast houses – most unusual in the Hundred Parishes or surrounding area. Blackmore End Windmill, depicted on the sign, was demolished in 1918. The village hall was built in the 1920s by Samuel Courtauld who was

then chairman of the giant Courtauld textile business. The Courtauld family has long been associated with this part of Essex.

If you started somewhere else along the route, please turn around and join the route description from page 1.

This route description, last updated 28 July 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parish of Wethersfield 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.

