



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 321

### Great Easton & Tilty parish – 3 miles (5 kms)

This walk is entirely within the administrative parish of Great Easton & Tilty, an anti-clockwise route that passes through countryside and the two main settlements of the parish: Duton Hill and Great Easton itself. Most of the route is along quiet lanes or through villages but about a quarter of the distance is on pavement beside the B184. The route description starts and finishes at the Village Hall in Great Easton (marked **1** on the diagram on the last page of this description).

There are two pubs on the route: The Three Horseshoes in Duton Hill (marked **2** on the diagram), and The Swan in Great Easton (marked **3**). Opening days/times and contact details for each pub appear on the parish introduction for Great Easton & Tilty on [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk). You might be able to park at one, with permission, and you should check availability if you hope to pause for refreshment.

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

**Start and finish:** The route description starts and finishes at the Village Hall in Great Easton, in Rebecca Meade, opposite the church. There is usually space to park behind the hall. Its location is marked **1** on the diagram on the last page of this description - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL607255 - Postcode: CM6 2HE - what3words: hiking.walked.umbrellas.

If this is not convenient for parking, it should be possible to park about 200 yards after the start, in the road that heads East from the church (Grid Reference: TL608255 - Postcode: CM6 2HD - what3words: limit.assembles.scouted or thereabouts).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.

Most of this route is on quiet lanes and the remainder is on pavement, but please follow the usual safety precautions when walking in the road: 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 Great Easton Village Hall, we turn left, almost immediately leaving Rebecca Meade and turning left onto the through road, The Endway, with the parish church on our right. For the first mile of this walk we have the luxury of a pavement on the left - so we should use it.

After the churchyard, we pass a green on the right. Beyond it is Great Easton Hall, with the porch, a house which dates from the 15th or 16th century.

We soon pass a gateway on the left and just 20 yards later we should pause, opposite a telegraph pole on the right side of the road. Looking over the hedge beside the pole, we should

be able to see the top of a mound, surmounted by two large trees. This mound was once the base of a small motte castle, probably built during the period of civil war in the mid-12th century. The castle mound measures about 40 feet across the top and probably had a wooden palisade. The mound was surrounded by a moat. A number of similar castles were built around Essex at that unsettled time to afford some protection to the landowners.

We continue ahead on the pavement, later passing Gunsfield House on the left with attractive paving in the plasterwork.

As we approach the bottom of the hill, we pass the premises to right and left of P&A Wood who service and deal in Rolls Royce and Bentley cars, old and new. The company is the only authorised Rolls Royce repair agent in the UK. The business was founded in Essex in 1967 and has been on this site since 1988.

At the junction, we turn left onto Dunmow Road, the B184, still on the pavement, signposted towards Saffron Walden and Thaxted.

We soon pass the entrance on the right to the Moat House retirement complex. Almost opposite, on our left, is Workhouse Yard, a group of listed houses that are set back from the road. They date from the 15th to the 19th centuries and once served as the parish workhouse until responsibility for dealing with the poor was moved from individual parishes to the Dunmow Poor Law Union which built the large workhouse in Great Dunmow in the 1830s.

Soon afterwards, we pass a road junction on the right, signposted towards Lindsell, etc but we continue ahead on the pavement. Just here, the road speed limit drops from 40mph to 30mph. Sadly, many drivers fail to observe it.

The road climbs steadily for about 300 yards until we reach a school on our left. A notice on the older part of the building, opposite the metal barrier on the pavement, tells us "Great Easton Primary School – Rebecca Meade Trust". You may recall that Rebecca Meade was the name of the turning where we parked in Great Easton village. There is a connection . . .

Rebecca Meade was the daughter of a London merchant. She bequeathed a sum of money which funded the establishment of Great Easton primary school in 1759. In 1840, a new school was built by the trustees of her trust, close to where the village hall stands today, and where we started this walk. The present school building was erected in 1882 on land donated by the Countess of Warwick, whose Maynard family had owned the land for centuries. The stag, part of the Maynard family crest, is incorporated into the school logo.

Immediately after the school, there is a footpath which leads directly back to where we parked – a favoured walking route to school for pupils and staff who live in Great Easton village.

We continue ahead on the pavement.

Not far beyond the school, the speed limit goes back up to 40mph.

We pass Rosewood and Greenfields on the left as the road starts to descend.

On the right, we pass two thatched houses that each date from the 18th century or earlier. The first, somewhat hidden behind a hedge, is Timber Thatch.

The second thatch, either Snow Hill Cottage or Snowhill Cottage, is altogether more visible, displaying four “eyebrow dormers” protruding from the thatch.

We pass Barnard’s Farm on the left and continue to descend.

On the right, largely hidden, we pass a house called Barnard’s Bridge. It used to be known as Hillside and in the 1920s and 1930s it was owned by Sir George Clausen (1852 – 1944). He was a prolific artist whose work captured the spirit of rural life and rural characters – you can read more about him in one of the People profiles on [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk).

Soon afterwards, we reach the bottom of the hill as we cross over a tributary of the River Chelmer.

Just afterwards, the main road curves to the right but we turn left, signposted towards Duton Hill.

Very soon, the pavement runs out. With care, we should cross to the right to face oncoming traffic.

We now head uphill to walk through the hamlet of Duton Hill. You may recognise the next half mile from Walk number 170.

On the right we pass The Old Forge which dates from the early 19th century.

On the left is Patmers, a house with a stag emblem which indicates that this was once part of the extensive estate of the Maynard family of Little Easton.

On the right we pass The Barn House, a 17th-18th century barn converted for modern living.

Next on the right is Duton Hill Farm.

The view on the left opens up as we climb. Near the summit we are officially welcomed to the hamlet of Duton Hill.

We pass The Three Horseshoes, Duton Hill’s rather quirky pub, marked **2** on the route diagram. This is a popular meeting place for locals and for local organisations.

Opposite the pub, the house called The Warrens was built in 1632. Note the rabbit!

Our lane starts to descend.

On the left, the timber-framed and plastered Abbey Cottage dates from around 1600 AD.

On the right, Elizabeth Cottage has been dated to around 1500 AD when it was built as an open hall house – where the household would spend most time in the hall where a fire burned in an open hearth in the middle of the floor, sending smoke through vents in the roof.

Opposite Elizabeth Cottage, we pass an entrance to Abbey View, a residential road whose name refers to the view from some of the houses, looking south-west across the Chelmer valley to the ruins of Tilty Abbey, about 300 yards to the south-west. [Tilty can be visited as part of Walk number 120]

On the right, thatched Deers Leap Cottage, probably dates from the 16th century.

The next house on the right is Tudor Cottage. It dates from the 17th century and operated as a pub called The Rising Sun until the 1980s. Note the patterned roof tiles.

On the left, we pass a second entrance to Abbey View.

We leave Duton Hill hamlet at the foot of the hill where we cross a “weak bridge” over the River Chelmer.

Just afterwards, we turn left onto a new lane, signposted towards Tilty, Little Easton and Great Dunmow.

We will stay on this lane for the next mile, heading south with the River Chelmer close by to our left. From time to time, we may see the occasional “pill box” between the lane and the river. These robust concrete structures were installed in the 1940s during World War II when German invasion along the East coast was feared. The pillboxes would provide shelter for members of the Home Guard as they lay in wait for any advance by the German army, an additional defence to the natural barrier provided by the river. The line of pillboxes ran all the way along the Chelmer and, to the north, along the River Cam, providing an outer ring of defence for London.

After a quarter of a mile, we pass a lane on the right, signposted to Tilty Church. Up the hill to the right, we should be able to see the church with its impressive east window. The church was once on the outskirts of a great abbey whose ruins lie in the field to the right of the church.

We continue straight ahead along the Chelmer valley. Keep watch for highland cattle with their very wide horns – they can sometimes be seen in this area.

Further along, we pass Goodfellows Farm up the hill to our right.

Later, there is a single house on the right, Chase House.

In due course, we reach a staggered cross roads. Immediately before the junction, through the gateway on our left, we should be able to see a WWII pillbox.

We turn left, signposted to Great Easton.

In about a hundred yards, we pass the very smart Croys Grange on the right. Behind the red brick and imitation timber framing is a pair of timber-framed houses from the 16th century. The house displays a Maynard family stag on the left gable.

Our lane crosses the River Chelmer. Quite often, the river level comes above the roadway, creating a ford. To avoid getting boots wet, we could take the footpath on the right. The path goes over a footbridge, high above the road and potential floodwater. On the next page, there is an old postcard view of this bridge in the early 1900s.



Immediately ahead and somewhat set back to our right is Bridgefoot, a timber-framed and plastered hall house which dates from the 14th century.

The roadway and the footpath meet outside Bridgefoot and a sign tells us we are now in Great Easton.

When safe, we should cross to use the pavement on the left.

Adjacent to the road on the right, Lings has timber-framing which dates from the 14th century. Part of the house was rebuilt in the 17th century.

We start a long, steady climb up through the village which has a mixture of modern houses, very ancient properties, and some in-between.

We pass Brocks Mead on the right.

A little further along, on the left, we pass The Old House, yet another former hall house, this one dating from the 15th century or even earlier.

Further up the hill, we pass The Swan, a pub marked **3** on the route diagram. Remarkably, the building started life as an open hall house around 1400 AD.

The next building on the left is of red brick, with a Maynard stag emblem high up on the gable overlooking The Swan. The house, White Gates, also displays the Maynard "M" on the front, together with the date 1860.

As we approach the top of the climb, Great Easton's parish church and village green come into view. Shortly before we reach them, we should cross the road with care to pass beside the exposed timbers of 16th-century Essex House on our right.

Looking back across the road, the former Bell Inn, on the left, dates from around 1500 AD. It has a variety of designs in the pargeting on its front plastered wall.

We continue ahead, passing the green and the war memorial on our left.

The pink house next to The Bell is called The Garth: in the early 20th century it served as an orphanage and care home, run by a single nun.

At the top of the green, the village sign stands between two seats. Almost the whole of Great Easton, since we left the staggered cross roads, is protected as a conservation area and many of the individual buildings we have passed are listed for their historical or architectural significance.

At the end of the green, we go straight ahead, through the gateway into the churchyard of the parish church, dedicated rather unusually to St John and St Giles. If the church is open, you are encouraged to visit, but if your boots are muddy please remove or cover them. The church dates back to the 12th century and retains much from that time, and even some Roman tiles. The church was renovated in the 19th century and is lovingly cared for today.

From the church porch, we turn left to continue along the path, with the church on our left.

We leave the churchyard through a gate. Immediately on the right is a barn that was constructed originally in the 14th century, although its red peg-tiled roof is a 'modern' enhancement, added in the 17th century.

After the gate, we turn left beside the church wall and soon return to the public highway.

With care, we cross to the pavement and turn left, still with the church on our left, to retrace a hundred yards that we covered at the beginning of this walk.

We soon return to Rebecca Meade where we turn right to the village hall where this walk started.

Should you wish to check out the few houses we missed by going into the churchyard, continue past Rebecca Meade. We immediately pass red-brick, 19th-century Easton Hall Cottage, set back on the right and sporting a large "M" for Maynard.

Next on the right is 17th-century The Clerk's Cottage.

This is followed by Stone Cottage, 1822, with a flintstone in the shape of a doughnut or torus above the door.

The next building, a pair of houses, has been greatly modernised and disguises its origins. It dates from the 17th century when it was a single-storey thatched cottage.

We are now back to The Garth, where we can turn around and retrace the 50 yards back to the village hall.

[ If you started somewhere else along the route, please continue past the village hall, rejoining the route description from page 1.]

This route description, last updated 10 August 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the administrative parish of Great Easton and Tilty or artist George Clausen, 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.

