



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 322

### Barkway, Barley and Nuthampstead – 6.5 miles (10 kms)

This walk is mainly on high ground, mostly in open countryside and sometimes hilly. The route travels clockwise and visits parts of three parishes: Barkway, Barley and Nuthampstead. They are the only parishes within the Hundred Parishes that come under North Hertfordshire district. About one mile is along the B1368, but on pavement. About half of this pavement section goes along Barkway's historic High Street. The walk passes just one place that offers refreshment, The Woodman Inn at Nuthampstead; in 2024, it opened every day. The route passes Nuthampstead Airfield Museum which has limited opening hours – see <http://www.nuthampsteadmuseum.com/> for more information.

The route description starts and finishes from the car park opposite Barkway village hall. The location is marked **1** on the route diagram on the last page of this description.

An alternative start is marked **2** on the diagram – from the Woodman pub in Nuthampstead (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL412345 - Postcode: SG8 8NB – what3words: whiplash.hits.teeth). From there, you should turn right out of the pub, passing the war memorials, and join the route description near the top of page 4. If you wish to park at The Woodman or take refreshment before or after the walk, you are advised to book in advance on 01763 848328 or <https://www.woodmannuthampstead.com/>

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

**Start and finish:** The route description starts and finishes at the car park opposite Barkway Village Hall. This is on the B1368 at the far north end of Barkway village. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL386360 - Postcode: SG8 8DF – what3words: snacks.inventors.responds.

This route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.

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: 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!

Leave the car park and, with care, cross the main road towards the Village Hall which was erected in 1926 for the Women's Institute. Turn right and head North along the pavement.

We soon pass a sign for those coming in the opposite direction, welcoming them to Barkway. About 100 yards later, please pause beside the footpath that goes off to the left, signposted to Newsells Village. From here, there is a clear view of a communications mast, about 600 yards away. This very tall radio mast was erected in 1941 and was designated *RAF Barkway*.

The mast served as part of the RAF communications network and continued to be used for aircraft navigation until 2011. Barkway has the highest ground in the Hundred Parishes and the mast was erected at a point that is 500 feet (150 metres) above sea level. The mast itself is 348 feet (106 metres) tall. Some views from the top are available at <https://www.28dayslater.co.uk/threads/raf-barkway-mast-barkway-herts-nov-2013.86478/>

Continue along the main road. Fairly soon the pavement ends so, with care, cross the road and continue on the other side, pausing at the entrance to Cokenach Cricket Club, a 100-year-old club.

The B1368 on which we are walking passes, here, between two large estates that have existed for centuries. On our left, to the west, is Newsells Park and to the right Cokenach.

Cokenach was purchased in 1896 by the wealthy Crossman brewing family. Douglas Crossman, a cricket enthusiast, established a high-class cricket ground on the estate in 1919. The estate side played against other estates and for many years estate staff were recruited only if they played cricket. There was a professional coach and full-time groundsman. The Hertfordshire county cricket side played here from time to time.

After the death of Douglas Crossman, the estate was owned by successive, wealthy Danish families who had no interest in cricket. In 2011, Cokenach Cricket Club was obliged to move from the centre of the estate to a new ground on the outskirts, where we are now standing. Today, Cokenach is owned by the Holch Povlsen family, owners of the international "Bestseller" clothing chain. On the other side of the main road, we may be able to see a tall obelisk through the trees – this is within the Newsells estate and is believed to have been erected by the estate owner in the 19th century in memory of his favourite horse.

We continue ahead, passing the ornate South Lodge entrance to the Newsells estate.

A little further along, we cross the entrance to the Cokenach estate. Grand and imposing it may look, but this is also a public right of way. Hundred Parishes walk number 131 heads down there, but today we keep straight ahead along the B1368, descending and still on pavement.

After about 300 yards, we fork right, leaving the main road and heading towards Great Chishill on a lane that is deemed unsuitable for Heavy Goods Vehicles. This is Bogmoor Road which, for the next half mile defines the parish boundary between Barkway to the right and Barley to the left.

Soon, on the left, we pass the rear of a group of Edwardian houses, The Penns – they face onto the main road.

The lane climbs and then undulates, giving broad views to the left.

From the top of the hill, we may see a distant windmill ahead – this is at Great Chishill.

After about half a mile, Bogmoor Road descends to a junction with a lane on the left, signposted to Barley. This is the most northerly point of Barkway parish. We go straight ahead, now entirely in the parish of Barley.

We descend for another 200 yards to a road junction where we turn sharp right, signposted towards Nuthampstead.

We will not encounter another road junction for 2 miles - until we reach Nuthampstead. For the next two miles, we will see few buildings, just attractive countryside.

Initially, our lane climbs in a straight line with rather limited views beyond the high hedges.

The 'hedge' on the left becomes even taller as we approach Abbotsbury Farm whose boundary is marked by a row of leylandii trees which appear to be out of control.

After the farm, we again climb, this time quite steeply for about a quarter of a mile.

Having regained the higher ground, our lane turns sharp right.

After a gradual descent, the view opens up across the valley to the left. In the distance, the houses along the ridge at the top of the hill are in Great Chishill, about 2 miles northeast of our location.

We negotiate another steep climb.

Half a mile further on, our lane turns sharp left with woodland on the left and a signpost on the right for Public Bridleway 10. We have just left Barley and entered the parish of Nuthampstead.

Soon after the woodland on our left ends, we enter a 30mph zone and go past just a few new homes and then Morrice Green Farm.

A little further along, we pass a gateway on the left that once gave access to Nuthampstead's wartime airfield. Here, there are signs for Nuthampstead Shooting Ground and a model flying club – areas of the wartime airfield that have been re-purposed for activity other than agriculture. Most has reverted to farmland.

For a short distance, the lane is unusually wide.

We pass a sign welcoming us to Nuthampstead and the lane narrows again.

We pass Little Cokenach on the right – a house whose dominant feature is the brick chimney stack that was added in the 19th century to the building which originated in the 16th or 17th century. The pointed-arch windows were inserted into the chimney during the 20th century.

A little further along, we reach a T junction with no useful signage - although a Nuthampstead parish notice board stands on the left, immediately before the junction. Here, we pass the entrance to Bulls Farm on the right with a tiny postbox in the flintstone wall.

This is a blind corner so we should take extra care. It seems safest to cross the road and walk on the left, with Bulls Farm's wall to our right.

Almost immediately, we come to another junction, this time with a signpost. We turn left, heading towards Anstey, Meesden and Brent Pelham.

In just a hundred yards we reach The Woodman pub on our left, marked as **2** on the route diagram. Immediately before it, on the left, there are two war memorials to American servicemen.

The memorials are located close to the perimeter of Nuthampstead's former airfield. The three-runway airfield was constructed by American civil engineers in 1942 / 1943 on farmland that

was requisitioned for the war effort. The air base was known officially as Station 131 and up to 3,000 American servicemen were based here. Initially, it was a base for fighter planes and then it became used primarily by bombers. The last mission was flown in April 1945, just two weeks before the war ended. By then, more than 300 airmen had been killed and a similar number were taken prisoner. Behind The Woodman, Nuthampstead Airfield Museum merits a visit, but it has limited opening times - see <http://www.nuthampsteadmuseum.com/>

The pub and its linked café offer an opportunity for a pause and refreshment. Inside, there is a collection of memorabilia from when it was used by the Americans. The thatched element of the pub dates back to the 17th century.

From the pub and war memorials, we turn right to retrace 100 yards to the road junction. Here we turn left, signposted towards Nuthampstead and Barkway. As usual, we should keep to the right facing any oncoming traffic.

In about 200 yards, we pass the entrance to Caylers Farm on the right. They specialise in Charolais beef cattle – large, white beasts with French origins.

Soon after, we pass The Old Chapel on the left, displaying the date 1840. Nuthampstead parish is unusual in that it has no parish church. Perhaps the chapel once served that purpose; it is now a private house.

We are now in Bell Lane. Soon, we come to where many of Nuthampstead's 140 residents live. This road is relatively straight and wide because it was upgraded by the Americans in the 1940s to provide a more straightforward approach to the airfield than the existing winding lanes.

We pass Skylark Cottage on the left. It dates from the 17th century when it was built as three dwellings.

Soon after, The Old Bell on the left looks too modern to have given its name to Bell Lane.

We pass several more white-boarded and/or thatched cottages including 17th-century Whites Farm on the right.

We ignore a lane on our right.

After another quarter of a mile, we pass a sign for people coming in the opposite direction, welcoming them to Nuthampstead.

Soon afterwards we go straight ahead at a staggered cross roads, signposted towards Barkway and Royston.

Just afterwards, on the left, we may see activity – this is the car park and clubhouse for Barkway Golf Club which will be on our left for the next half mile.

The lane climbs gently, eventually passing a sewage works on the right and, later, the entrance to Howletts Farm on the right before coming into the southern end of Barkway.

We reach a junction with the B1368, here called London Road, and here we turn right, signposted towards Barley and Royston. As soon as it is safe, we should cross the road to use the pavement on the left.

This was once a busy route between London and Ware to the south and Cambridge to the north. We will continue along this straight road for more than half a mile, passing the majority of Barkway's 65 listed buildings. Helpfully, almost every house has both a number and a name. We will mention just a few of them. Hundred Parishes walk number 133, just 1.7 miles long, also passes up and down Barkway's main street and describes more of the buildings.

We pass the Tally Ho pub on the right. It has only limited opening hours and does not regularly serve food.

After the turning on the left towards Buckland, our road changes name from London Road to High Street. We pass thatched Barkway Cottage on the right, dating from around 1600 AD

After Gas Lane and Osbourne House (number 45) on the right, when safe, we should cross to the right. A little further along on the left is *Clock House Cottage*, with its clock. The right-hand corner of this house has an Ordnance Survey benchmark carved into the plaster, beside an older inscription which seems to read *EW 1762*. The house was built towards the end of the 18th century as a toll house, collecting fees from carriages, wagons and animals passing along this busy road which was managed for many years by the Wadesmill Turnpike Trust.

Continue on the right, crossing the entrance to Townsend Close.

On the right, the long, thatched *Berg Cottage*, number 85, took its name from its owner in the 1930s. It dates from the 17th century and displays the date 1687 above the central window. Below the same window is a Sun Fire Insurance marker, indicating that the property was insured.

On the left, the red-brick Almshouses dated 1909 were erected in memory of John Stallibrass, a local benefactor who died about 100 years earlier. They were erected by his great granddaughters.

Cross Burrs Lane.

Immediately opposite, on the left, number 100 is appropriately called *Century House* and has an interestingly-tiled roof.

Number 96, next on the left, dates from the 17th century and was formerly the *Cross Keys* public house. Many properties along this once-busy coaching route functioned at some time as hostelrys.

On the left is a pond with the village sign and an informative interpretation panel about Barkway. Please feel free to cross when safe to check this out. We continue on the right.

Immediately after the pond, number 82 dates from the early 16th century and may have started life as a hall house. In more recent times it functioned as the *White Horse* public house.

On the right, just after the defibrillator housed in a telephone kiosk, *Old Forge* dates from the 16th century and was once two dwellings and a forge.

Soon on the left, a long building has a single, tiled roof with decorative fishscale bands. It dates from around 1700 AD. Its four chimney stacks reveal that this was once four dwellings, numbers 74 to 68; now it is just *Bumblebee Cottage* and then *Horseshoe Cottage*.

Our route continues straight ahead, but you may wish to divert to the left, up Church Lane, for about 200 yards to view two more survivors from Barkway's past - the parish church and the wagon wash. The next six, indented, paragraphs describe the diversion which would add about a quarter of a mile to the route.

Soon, on the left, we reach the wagon wash, dating from 1600 AD. A notice explains that it was in use until the 20th century for the cleaning of farm wagons [and probably also the horse-drawn carriages that stopped in Barkway overnight].

Next on the left is Manor Farm, an impressive three-storey house with mullioned windows on its eastern side. The building dates from the 16th or 17th century.

Continue along the lane and, just after it turns right, turn right again through a gate into the churchyard. The small door on the left would seem to allow only thin bell-ringers into the tower. A visit to this, the only Grade I-listed building in Barkway, is recommended, but please first remove boots if they are muddy. The church, dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, dates from the 13th century and was extensively rebuilt in the 19th, like many of our ancient churches.

Turn left from the church porch to continue down the path through the churchyard, passing beneath a giant cedar tree and the lychgate. On the left, we pass the grounds of Barkway House before returning to the High Street

From Church Lane, turn left and, when safe, cross to continue northwards on the right side.

After Church Lane, on the left, number 64, *Coachlamps*, and 62, *The Old Coach House*, are halves of what was once a coaching inn called *The Angel*, built in the late 17th century. By 1800 AD it had been renamed as *The Wheatsheaf*. The inn was re-fronted and re-roofed around 1820 AD and later converted into two houses.

*Milestone House*, on the left, stands beside an ancient milestone, installed around 1730 and one of a series that mark the miles on this route between London and Cambridge. They were funded by a trust established in 1586 by a former master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge for the upkeep of roads in and around Cambridge.

After 100 yards, on the right, steps lead up to the rather imposing *Red House*, number 11, which has 16th-century origins.

On the left, number 14, *Duck Cottage 1692*, with ducks on the roof, is joined to a red-brick building which is used by Barkway Parish Council.

Soon afterwards is number 2, High Street, built originally around 1500 AD as a hall house – a property with a high central hall that was used as a communal room, being heated by an open fire in the centre of the room. Smoke would escape through vents in the roof. Fireplaces with chimneys came into fashion later.

Just after Royston Road on the left, we come to Barkway's war memorial on the right, just as the pavement ends. With care, we should cross High Street and pause on the far side, by the flint wall on the corner with Royston Road.

From this spot, we can look back along Barkway High Street to see how little has changed in the last century. The photo below appeared on a postcard that was sent in 1904. The red-brick building on the left was yet another pub, *The Chaise and Pair*.



Now, we continue along the pavement on the left of the High Street, immediately passing the war memorial on our right which takes the form of a large Celtic cross.

We continue heading north along the main road for about 200 yards, crossing the entrance to Birch Meadows. We pass Barkway Pavilion and Community Room on the right, erected in 2015. Just afterwards, with care, we cross the road to the car park where this route description started.

If you started somewhere else along the route, please stay on the pavement and continue past the car park, joining the route description from page 1.

This route description, last updated 11 August 2024, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parishes of Barkway, Barley and Nuthampstead 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.

