



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 324

High Wych – 4.3 miles (7 kms)

This walk is entirely on quiet lanes within the administrative parish of High Wych. The route is mostly rural and travels in an anti-clockwise direction through rural Hertfordshire.

The start and finish is close to the High Wych village sign, just off the main road between Sawbridgeworth and Gilston. Near the start and finish, the route passes The Coffee Lounge and the long driveway to The Manor of Groves hotel. If you plan to take refreshment at either, it is probably wise to check opening times and perhaps make a table reservation.

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

Start and finish: The route description starts and finishes close to the High Wych village sign in Broadfields, just off the main High Wych Road - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL466143 - Postcode: CM21 0HT – what3words: slowly.hips.dated. It should be possible to park in Broadfields.

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 entirely 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!

Before we set off, let's get to grips with the pronunciation of the second word in the parish name - the 'y' is sounded like the 'i' in 'high' and the 'ch' like the 'tch' in 'witch'. Thus, High Wych.

We start by retracing a few yards from the village sign to the main road, High Wych Road, and here we turn right, using the pavement on the right.

After about 200 yards we reach a small triangular green where we fork right, passing a bus shelter on our left. Note the 17th-century thatched property on our left, on the main road – this was once a single house; it then became Wychcroft Cottages; but now the right half is called Whyte Croft Cottage.

Near the end of the green we pass what looks like another village sign, but it is actually an advertising board for Chandini Restaurant which we pass on the right as we turn right, leaving the main road. Until recent years, this 17th-century building operated as the Half Moon public house.

In another hundred yards, we pass The Coffee Lounge on our right. This operated as the village store and post office for many years until the postmaster was caught up in the Horizon software scandal. He was found guilty of theft but exonerated many years later when failings in the Post

Office computer software were exposed. In the meantime his post office closed but reopened in 2024 as The Coffee Lounge. We will return past the café near the end of the walk.

Continuing along the pavement, we pass the recreation ground on the left and cross the entrance to Mansfield on the right. We should warn that the quiet lane we will use for the next half mile sometimes becomes a “rat run” when the main road through Sawbridgeworth is closed for any reason. Let us hope it is not like that today!

We pass a narrow lane on the left and, immediately afterwards, the entrance to the Manor of Groves hotel and golf course. The tall iron gates are listed as dating from the 19th century.

Our narrow pavement bears right and we pass two thatched houses on the right: firstly, Beth Gilboa and then The Thatched Cottage, each dating from the 17th century or earlier.

Further along, we pass several 17th or 18th-century houses on the right, a mixture of thatch and slate roofs and some with weatherboarding. The last of these older properties is The Four Lanterns which dates from the 17th century or earlier.

We pass a narrow lane on our left, keeping straight ahead.

We leave the 30 mph zone, passing a sign for anyone approaching from the opposite direction, asking them to drive carefully through High Wych.

Just after a pond on the left, a driveway (to Noons Cottages) is signposted as a Public Footpath. We continue straight ahead.

With care, we cross the junction with West Road on our right, keeping straight ahead, signposted towards Allens Green and Spellbrook.

In another hundred yards, we come to another junction. With care, we should cross the road and turn left into Gangies Hill.

Immediately on our right, the building with black weatherboarding and red-tiled roof is a pair of cottages, Beanfield Cottages, dating from the 18th century. We have just left Beanfield Road.

It is another quarter of a mile before we pass the next group of buildings – Gangies Farm and its outbuildings. The farmhouse itself dates from the 18th century while the black weather-boarded barns are a century older.

In another quarter of a mile, we reach a triangular green. There is a postbox on the green, but no road signage. We keep round to the left, into Fryars Lane and passing beside Hoskins Farm on our left. According to Historic England’s listing details the farmhouse dates from the 16th century, although 1421 appears in the plasterwork. The associated farm buildings are from the 17th to the 19th century.

In 200 yards we come to another small triangular green – again with no road signs. Here, we keep straight ahead, ignoring the lane on our left.

In another 200 yards we pass the black weatherboarded barn at Stonards and then the tall red-brick Stonards farmhouse which dates from around 1700 AD.

A little further along, we pass converted barns, now used as homes, and then the square, white-painted Carters Farm, dating from around 1800 AD.

Later, we pass a group of buildings at Fryars Farm on the left – the cream-painted farmhouse was built in the mid-1800s.

We approach a line of pylons that come towards us from our right but, shortly before meeting them, our lane turns left, just as a byway joins us from the right.

After 200 yards, we ignore a byway on the right (signposted to Gilston Church, 1¼ miles away) and then pass Actons Cottage on the right and a farmyard on the left.

A little further along, we pass the farmhouse on our left – Acton Farm. This is what remains of a somewhat larger 16th-century moated manor house, believed to have been built for the local Leventhorpe family - they have an impressive memorial in Sawbridgeworth parish church and a local school takes their name.

We continue ahead, now in Actons Lane.

After nearly half a mile, we reach Great Penny's Barn on the right, now a modern barn-style dwelling, and then a farmhouse with tall chimney stack.

Very soon afterwards, we leave Actons Lane, turning left into an unsignposted lane. The lack of signposting in these parts makes one wonder if all the signs have been removed to thwart an anticipated enemy invasion! Or is it just to deter adventurers like ourselves?

Having turned left, we are apparently now in Bakers Lane. We descend for a short distance, crossing a stream called Golden Brook before climbing gently.

In a quarter of a mile, at the top of the gentle climb, a footpath sign on our right points across the field towards Eastwick Road. In that direction, we may be able to see a water tower on the horizon – this is about 4 miles away, close to the M11 motorway near the Church Langley area of Harlow.

We continue along the lane, heading eastwards.

After a gentle descent, we reach a T junction – again with no signage. We turn right, still in Baker's Lane.

Just around the corner, we pass Jeffs on the left – a house that dates from the 17th century or earlier.

Just afterwards, we pass the more modern Mabletts on our right, cross another stream and begin a long, gentle climb.

After a while we pass an official Passing Place on the right – an unusual sight in this part of England.

Not long afterwards, we pass a lane on our left. There is no signpost, but this leads to the service area for the Manor of Groves golf club and hotel. We ignore it and keep straight ahead.

In a quarter of a mile, we pass an entrance on the right to Bakers Farm – after whom this lane was presumably named. We walk beside a long building on the right. This is the back of the former stable block which was built in 1891 for a racehorse owner, Mr E.B. Barnard, who was then the owner of Grove Lodge – now the main building within the Manor of Groves complex.

Just beyond the stable block, we pass Bakers Farm farmhouse,

Soon, we reach a sports field on the right. Here, we should leave the road and fork right, passing the pavilion and continuing along the tarmac path that runs beside the sports field.

We soon pass the road junction on our left - beside the entrance to The Manor of Groves. The tarmac path follows the field edge, bearing right and soon joining the pavement.

We continue along the pavement to the pedestrian crossing. With care, we cross the road to continue on the left side, almost immediately reaching The Coffee Lounge on our left.

Immediately before the Coffee Lounge, we turn left into a narrow alley. We follow this alley until it reaches a junction of paths: we ignore the path that goes off to the left and immediately afterwards fork right. We walk beside a chainlink fence on the left and then a group of garages.

When the path reaches a road, we continue straight ahead on the pavement. We are now in Broadfields.

Soon, we reach a junction where we turn right. In just a few yards we reach the village sign where this route started.

If you started somewhere else along the route, please rejoin the route description from page 1.

This route description, last updated 19 August 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parish of High Wych 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.

