



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 326

Great Easton – Lindsell – Monk Street – 9.8 miles (16 kms)

This walk passes through three administrative parishes: Great Easton & Tilty, Lindsell and Thaxted. The counter-clockwise route goes through attractive countryside and also passes through the villages of Great Easton and Lindsell. About 300 yards of the route is along the potentially-busy B184 at Monk Street where there is no pavement.

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).

The first section and final section of this route are repeated in Walk 321 which covers just 3 miles.

There are three pubs on the route: The Green Man at Millend Green (marked **2** on the diagram), Farmers Inn at Monk Street (marked **3**), and The Swan in Great Easton (marked **4**). Contact details for each pub appear on the parish introductions for Thaxted or Great Easton & Tilty on www.hundredparishes.org.uk. You might be able to park at one, with permission, and you should check availability if you plan to dine – in 2024, Farmers Inn was open at lunchtimes but only serving meals in the evenings.

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.
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: where there is no pavement, 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. A visit to the church is recommended – but we will leave that option until the end of the walk.

For the first quarter of a mile, 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 parquetry 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 come to a road junction where we want to turn right. When safe, we should cross the main road and turn into the quieter lane, signposted towards Lindsell, Mill End Green and The Green Man.

The lane climbs gently. We no longer have pavement, so we should get in the habit of walking on the right, facing any oncoming traffic.

After a while we pass 18th-century Fern Cottage on the right.

Later, on the left, we pass thatched 17th-century Ayletts.

In another hundred yards, Blacksmiths on the left displays the date 1862 and a large "M" insignia. The M indicates that the building was once part of the extensive estate of the Maynard family of nearby Little Easton, where Easton Lodge was the family seat from 1582 AD until the twentieth century. Succeeding generations expanded the family's holdings of land and buildings, usually denoting their properties with either a large M or the silhouette of a stag. We will see more of these on this walk.

Next on the left is another thatched building, Tudor Cottage, which dates from the 17th century.

Soon afterwards, we reach the Green Man bar and restaurant on the right, marked **2** on the route diagram.

About 100 yards later, we pass Breach Lane on the left. We continue ahead, signposted towards Lindsell and Great Bardfield.

In another 50 yards, we pass Cranes Farmhouse on the right and Andrews Farm Lane, a no through road. We keep straight on.

When hedgerows allow, we have a good view to the left, looking North.

We pass Nevilles Farm on our left. The farmhouse displays a stag.

Later, we go past Little Rakefairs on the right. This timber-framed and plastered house behind the pond dates from the 17th century or earlier.

We pass a gravel footpath on the left and just afterwards our lane enters Dow Wood.

The wood ends on our right but continues on the left. About here, we imperceptibly leave the parish of Great Easton & Tilty and enter the parish of Lindsell.

For a while, we again have woodland on both sides of the road.

After the woodland ends, we descend gently.

The lane turns left and right before we reach Simkins Farm on the left. This was built in the 15th century with an open hall where the household would gather. This was before chimneys came into fashion, so in winter the hall would be heated by an open fire in the centre of the floor, with smoke rising through vents in the roof.

Over to the left, the green-painted barns belong to Prior's Hall Farm.

Nearly half a mile after Simkins Farm, we pass signs welcoming us to Lindsell and asking us to reduce our speed.

We soon pass the thatched 17th-century Church Cottage on the right.

On the left, just before we reach a road junction, we pass the ground of Lindsell Cricket Club, founded in 1905.

At the junction, we should cross the new road with care and turn left, signposted towards Duton Hill, Great Easton and Thaxted.

After just a few yards, an information board on the right shows that we are in Church End, Lindsell. Here, our route diverts briefly from the road to visit the ancient centre of Lindsell. We turn right beside the information board onto a public footpath which is the short driveway to Lindsell's parish church.

We pass the church car park on the left before reaching Lindsell Hall on the left. This was built as a hall house in the 15th century. In the 16th century a chimney stack was installed and the dividing floor inserted to create two storeys.

Immediately after Lindsell Hall, a courtyard on the left has a 17th-century barn and 19th-century granary resting on cast iron staddles. It is more usual to see staddle stones used for the purpose of deterring vermin from accessing the raised granary, but here they are metal.

We continue ahead into the churchyard. The small parish church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, dates from the 12th century and there is much that remains from its early existence. If it is open, you are encouraged to visit, first removing or covering boots if they are muddy.

In the north wall of the chancel, to the far right, there is a tiny window which provided the only view from a small "anchorite cell", built against the outside wall of the church to enclose a recluse or anchorite who wanted solitude, possibly for the rest of their life. The anchorite, often a woman, would have been granted permission by the bishop, probably in the 12th or 13th century, on the understanding that she could pay for food to be delivered. Pretty scary!

On leaving the church, we retrace 100 yards past Lindsell Hall to the lane and turn right, keeping to the right to face any traffic.

We walk beside several cottages on the right and then pass farm buildings at Prior's Hall Farm, well known in these parts for its farm shop and especially its locally-sourced pork.

We come to a road junction with a grass triangle. Opposite, on the left, is Lindsell's village sign, erected in 2017.

We turn right, signposted towards Lindsell and Thaxted. We pass more of Prior's Hall Farm on our right and, just afterwards, Prior's Hall itself.

We continue along the lane, after a while passing a sign that asks us to "Please drive slowly through our village".

We ignore the turning on the right to Bustard Green.

We pass red-brick The Glebe House, on our right behind the trees. This was built in 1867 as the vicarage but was sold by the church in 1972 after Lindsell started to share a vicar with Stebbing.

Soon, we pass Lindsell village hall on the right.

Just afterwards, a windmill on a weather vane precedes Mill House on the left, a house that dates from the 16th century. The last windmill on this site, a smock mill, was demolished around 1906.

After a hundred yards, 19th-century Old Crown House, on the right, was once a pub, The Old Crown House. Its hanging sign has gone but the frame still stands, just peeking above the hedge. In more recent years its weather-boarded outbuilding operated as Lindsell Art Gallery.

We now come to a row of houses on the left, starting with School House. This was built as a school in 1877 but closed and became a private residence in the 1950s. It retains the school bell above a clock which was installed to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. He had a connection with the Hundred Parishes through his regular visits when he was Prince of Wales, especially to Easton Lodge to visit his mistress, the Countess of Warwick.

After a few more houses, the lane becomes narrower and more winding, with a scattering of relatively modern houses, mostly 20th century. Some have intriguing names, but their origins have not been researched for this walk description.

On the left we pass thatched, 17th-century Pettitts and then a few new, larger houses.

We eventually leave Lindsell's strung-out village and pass from the 30mph zone into a stretch of lane with national speed limit.

We continue along the lane for another quarter of a mile until we reach a road junction with a grass triangle. Here, we continue ahead, passing the green on our right and ignoring Duck End Farm Lane on the right.

We are now in the hamlet of Holder's Green. We pass several individual houses on the left including 18th-century Thatched Cottage and, later, Wayhours from the 16th or 17th century – its plaster is painted pink and it has a red-tiled roof.

As we approach a junction at a right-hand bend, this is an appropriate place to switch to the left side of the road for a while to improve visibility.

On the right, immediately opposite the junction, there is a small 18th-century thatched and weather-boarded cottage – it is called Wrens.

At the junction, we keep round to the right, ignoring Cowells Farm Lane on the left.

Our lane soon bears right again and we can safely cross back to the right.

We pass another cluster of houses before leaving Lindsell. Immediately afterwards, there is an entrance on our left to Sweetings Meadow Nature Reserve which is managed by Essex Wildlife Trust.

We continue ahead through open countryside along a relatively wide lane. Having left the parish of Lindsell, we are now in the parish of Thaxted.

After about half a mile, a track joins our lane from the left and, just afterwards, we pass a house called Whittakers. To our right there is often a giant haystack after harvesting.

We come into the Thaxted hamlet of Richmond's Green. On the left, we pass some new barn-style houses and then 16th-century Gladwyn's Farm with its 16th-century chimney stack.

On the right, we pass the entrance to Richmond's Farm (signposted to Richmonds Gn). The farmhouse, behind farm buildings and not visible from here, dates from the 14th century.

Continuing along the lane, for some distance we walk beside a neatly trimmed hedge on the right. After it comes to an end, to our right we should be able to see Thaxted's church and also Thaxted's windmill, about 1.5 miles away.

Now, the view ahead opens up and we have a panoramic view of the Chelmer valley and the hills beyond. Our lane descends down into the valley.

Straight ahead, there is a white water tower on the horizon – this is about 2 miles distant, near Cutlers Green, another hamlet of Thaxted parish. A few degrees to the right of the water tower, a rather strange 'tree' protrudes above the tree line – this is actually a mobile phone mast in disguise.

Looking to the left of our lane, about 10 o'clock on the clockface, on a clear day we may be able to see the tall control tower at Stansted Airport on the horizon. This is about 6 miles away.

At the foot of the descent, we reach Dunmow Road, the B184, where we need to turn left, signposted towards Dunmow. We must cover about 300 yards along this sometimes-busy road so extra caution is needed. Rather than crossing the road here and facing oncoming traffic, we may prefer to use the wide grass verge on the left. There is also a grass verge on the right.

This road basically follows the alignment of a Roman road that once ran from Radwinter, 4 miles north of here, through Dunmow and High Roding to London. Today, we are unlikely to see a chariot, but the road is often busy and not quiet!

Within 300 yards, we draw level with a lane on the right where we turn right, signposted to Monk Street. If we are on the left, we should use extreme caution when crossing the main road.

Another signpost, brown-painted, indicates Farmhouse Inn and Glendale Forge.

Having turned right, we are now in the Thaxted hamlet of Monk Street and we reach Farmhouse Inn after about 100 yards. It is marked **3** on the route diagram. The inn dates from the 15th century when it was built as an open hall house – we are seeing many of these today. In the roadside hedge, there is a Victorian post box.

We may wish to seek refreshment here. We have covered about 6 miles since Great Easton and have about 4 miles to go.

Not long ago, the pub was called The Greyhound. For some years it was run by a former professional footballer, John Radford, a prolific goal scorer for Arsenal in the 1960s and 1970s.

We continue past the pub on our left – along what was once the main road. After 100 yards, we turn right onto a narrow lane, signposted to Folly Mill. The lane is deemed unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles, HGVs.

Just after the bungalow called Willow Close on the left, we may be able to see a substantial, raised narrow-gauge railway track in the field on our left. This seems to be a leftover from about the 1990s when the landowner collected, built and restored engines.

After about a quarter of a mile, our narrow lane crosses over the River Chelmer. It flows from our right to the left, heading south towards Chelmsford and then Maldon where it joins the River Blackwater to flow into the North Sea.

Immediately after the river, we pass Folly Mill on our left. The building dates from the 16th century and was extended in the 17th.

Soon after Folly Mill, we pass thatched, 17th-century Folly Cottage on the right.

We can expect to see no more houses for nearly a mile. Our rural lane, known as Folly Mill Lane, climbs steadily with an expanding view down the Chelmer valley to our left. Much of the lane is lined with relatively-young trees.

As we mount the 'summit', a road sign advises that there is a crossroads ahead.

We descend to this minor crossroads where we turn left, signposted towards Gt & Lt Easton and Dunmow.

Our new lane is called Cherry Street. We will follow its gentle undulations along the Chelmer valley for the next 2.5 miles with the river flowing in our direction, a little way to our left.

About half a mile along Cherry Street, we pass the entrance to Broadfan Farm House on the left.

In another 200 yards, we pass an entrance to Broadfans Barn – with a pair of stone eagles on the gate pillars.

Soon afterwards, we imperceptibly leave Thaxted and return to Great Easton & Tilty parish.

After another quarter of a mile, we pass a lane on our right, signposted to Tilty Hill. We keep straight on, towards Dunmow, passing a small, diverse group of houses on our left.

In another half mile, we reach a turning on the left, signposted to Lindsell. This lane almost immediately crosses the River Chelmer over a weak bridge and climbs up to the village of Duton Hill - but we go straight ahead, signposted towards Tilty, Little Easton and Great Dunmow.

We will stay on this lane for another mile, heading south with the River Chelmer now close by to our left. From time to time, we may see the occasional “pill box” between our lane and the river. These robust concrete structures were installed in the 1940s during World War II when German invasion along the East coast of England 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 against enemy troop movement that was 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 just outside the gates 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 shaggy red-brown coat and very wide horns – they can sometimes be seen grazing in this area.

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

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

In another quarter of a mile, we reach a staggered cross roads. Immediately before the junction, through the gateway on our left, we can see a WWII pillbox.

We turn left, signposted to Great Easton.

In about 50 yards, we pass the very smart Croys Grange on the right. Behind the red brick and imitation timber framing, there is a pair of timber-framed houses from the 16th century. The house also displays a stag on the left gable, an emblem of the Maynard family of nearby Easton Lodge.

Our lane crosses the River Chelmer. Quite often, the river level comes above the roadway, creating a ford. To avoid getting boots wet, we can take the footpath on the right. The path uses a footbridge high above the road and potential floodwater.

A view of this bridge in the early 1900s is shown on the next page – it was taken from an old postcard.



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 perhaps even earlier.

Further up the hill, we pass The Swan, a pub marked **4** on the route diagram. Remarkably, the building started life as yet another 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 pass the exposed timbers of 16th-century Essex House on our right.

On our side of the road, the former Bell Inn 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 right.

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.

To our right, 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 at the foot of the hill, is protected as a conservation area and many of the individual buildings we have passed are listed for their historical or architectural significance.

From here, there is a choice. It is less than 100 yards, straight ahead, to where this route description started - or we could divert to visit the church (bringing the total distance up to 10 miles). The diversion is described in the next two (indented) paragraphs.

To visit the church, cross the road with care and go past the village sign. Turn left into the churchyard and soon reach the entrance porch. The parish church is dedicated, rather unusually, to St John and St Giles. 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 thin Roman tiles. The church was renovated in the 19th century and is lovingly cared for today.

After the visit, from the church porch, turn right to retrace through the gateway. Turn right past the village sign and with care cross the road and turn right on the pavement.

With or without the diversion, we continue along the pavement with the churchyard on the right.

The next building on the left is a pair of houses: Sage Cottage and Busters Cottage. The building has been greatly modernised, disguising its origins. It dates from the 17th century when it was a single-storey thatched cottage.

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

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

Finally, set back on the left, the red-brick, 19th-century Easton Hall Cottage sports a large "M" for Maynard.

Immediately afterwards, we return to Rebecca Meade. We cross and go straight ahead to the village hall where this walk description started.

By way of explanation, this road is named after Rebecca Meade who 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 this village hall stands today. The footpath from the back of the hall leads to the present school building which 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. The footpath is a favoured walking route to and from school for pupils and staff who live in Great Easton village.

[If you started somewhere else along the route, please rejoin the route description at the final paragraph on page 1.]

This route description, last updated 24 August 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Great Easton & Tilty, Lindsell and Thaxted 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.

