



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 327

Barley parish – 2.7 miles (4 kms)

This walk is entirely within the administrative parish of Barley. The clockwise and gently undulating route explores Barley village and surrounding countryside. The parish of Barley has over 60 listed buildings. The route passes most of them and we draw attention to a good number. The route includes almost a mile of B roads through the village, but these roads have pavements.

The route description starts and finishes outside the Town House, Barley's village hall, opposite the parish church in the road called Church End. It should be possible to park somewhere along this road.

There are two places to eat in the village: The Fox & Hounds which is on the route and The Chequers, about 200 yards west of the route. These are marked, respectively, **2** and **1** on the route diagram on the last page of this route description. Contact details for each pub appear towards the end of the parish introduction for Barley on www.hundredparishes.org.uk. You might be able to park at one, with permission, and you should check opening times if you plan to dine. There are many wooden seats around the route.

Some sections of the route are covered in other, longer Hundred Parishes walks – numbers 131, 306 and 322 - but in the opposite direction.

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

Start and finish: The route description starts and finishes at the Town House, opposite the parish church in the road called Church End - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL401384 - Postcode: SG8 8JW - what3words: coast.rant.float.

It should be possible to park in Church End.

The 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: 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!

Before we set off, just a few words about the Town House and the church. . .

The Town House, with two covered stairways rising to the first floor, dates from the early 16th century. Over its 500 years, the building has served as a guildhall, marriage feast room, school, workhouse and almshouses; nowadays it functions as Barley's village hall.

Barley's parish church is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. Various elements of the building date from the 12th century to the 19th. A visit is recommended, either before or after the walk. Inside the church, do look out for the carved 'poppy heads' at the ends of some benches in the chancel, the medieval stained glass preserved in one window on the south wall, and the steep 'stairway to heaven' in the bell tower.

Now, with the Town House on our left and the church on the right, we set off along the pavement, heading East.

We soon pass the substantial red-brick *Margaret House* on the right. It was built around 1830 as the rectory. It has since been extended and is now a retirement home.

Just afterwards, we pass the busy village store on the left.

We soon reach a turning on the right. We should cross the road with care and turn right into Shaftenhoe End Road, signposted towards Little Chishill. Time to practise walking on the right to face any oncoming traffic.

After a while, we pass the appropriately-named *Lovely View Stables* on the right. It really is a lovely view to our left, with Great Chishill windmill at the top of the hill about half a mile away.

Our lane continues for half a mile until we reach the Barley hamlet of Shaftenhoe End.

After a sharp rise, we come to a small triangular grass traffic island with a postbox. The green also has a rowan tree (also called mountain ash) with red berries in late summer and autumn. Here we turn right, signposted towards Barkway and Reed and immediately passing *Hillside Farm* on our right.

On the left we pass *Crown House*, probably built in the 20th century and unremarkable except for a rather grand wooden roundel on the wall, decorated with crowns and wildlife.

We are now in Bogmoor Road which we will use for the next half mile. It is often a sunken lane, below the fields on each side, and we are likely to see plentiful signs of animal runs and holes in the often-chalky banks.

After a quarter of a mile, we ignore a lane on the left, signposted to Nuthampstead. Opposite the junction, a short terrace is known as *Putty Hall Cottages*.

We climb again and for a while we pass a 'gabion' retaining wall on the right - made of stacked stone-filled gabions tied together with wire.

We reach a junction (called Pinner's Cross) where we turn right, signposted to Barley. If anyone knows why it is called Pinner's Cross, please leave feedback on www.hundredparishes.org.uk

Just after turning the corner, there are more views of Great Chishill Windmill through two gateways on our right.

We are now in Smith's End Lane, descending into Smith's End. This Barley hamlet has a rich assortment of dwellings, many dating from the 17th or 18th century. Most have been updated and several are now single homes that were once multiple dwellings.

The final house on the right, *The Thatched Cottage*, is the oldest within the hamlet. It dates from the 16th century and was probably built originally as a small hall house. The single-storey hall

would have been the focal point for the household, with a fire in the centre of the hall and smoke rising to exit through vents in the roof. The concept of having a chimney to take away smoke came somewhat later.

As we leave the hamlet, the lane turns sharp left. At the corner there is an entrance on the right to Barley Cricket Club's ground.

We should keep to the left as we take the sharp bend to the right.

We soon come into another small hamlet, still part of Smith's End, with buildings that mostly date from the 17th or 18th centuries. *The Hoops*, with red-tiled roof, was once a pub of that name.

Over to the left, the two tall communication towers are on the highest ground locally, over 500 feet above sea level. The one on the left is at Barkway and the more distant tower stands at Reed, about 3 miles away and beyond The Hundred Parishes.

The final buildings on the right are barns converted into dwellings. Set back behind them is red-brick *Smith End Farm*. The house and barns all date from the 17th century. Opposite the farm, on our left, is one of Barley's many seats, this one looking over an attractive pond.

The lane bears right and we soon come to two thatched houses where the lane turns sharp left. The first is called *Nobles Cottage*. Its English Heritage listing tells us that it dates back to the 15th century when it started life as a hall house with a traditional medieval structure – a central hall and crosswings at each end, one being for family use and the other a service wing. A chimney was inserted in the 16th century and it has been altered a few times since then.

The second thatched house, *Aldwyke Cottage*, is somewhat larger but not listed.

We negotiate another sharp turn to the right and soon reach the end of Smiths End Lane.

There is no signpost, but our route goes right. We should cross the road when safe to use the pavement on the other side. [If we were to turn left, we would come to *The Chequers* in about 200 yards – marked **1** on the diagram on the last page.]

Continuing along the pavement, we descend towards Barley village. This is London Road, the B1368, so we can expect a little more traffic.

Soon, on the left, 17th-century, thatched *Greenbury* has a Sun fire sign above the door, indicating that it was once insured by that company.

Just after *Greenbury*, there is a distinctive milestone in the hedge. It was installed around 1730 and is one of a series that 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.

Just afterwards, there is a house called *Milestones*.

We cross the entrance to Greenbury Close and soon afterwards we pass the entrance to Richmond's, a popular coach company.

Just ahead of us is the *Fox & Hounds* pub (marked **2** on the route diagram). This is a former coaching inn dating from the 17th century and more recently it has had the distinction of appearing regularly in the Michelin Guide. Its distinctive 1950s sign spans the road.

To our right, on the opposite side of the main road, the 17th-century lock-up or cage was once used to temporarily house drunkards and petty criminals. Just beyond it is Barley's war memorial. Between the cage and the memorial there is what remains of the base of a village cross, probably dating from the 14th century.

We continue along the pavement, following the main road round to the left – it is now called High Street. For the next 300 yards, almost every building on our side of the road is listed for its historic or architectural value, most dating from the 17th century.

On the left, we pass an "anonymous" Victorian post box, so-called because it was one of a batch manufactured in the 1880s when a design error omitted the usual royal insignia, VR, short for Victoria Regina, Queen Victoria. For some years, this and other post boxes in Barley have been decorated around Christmas time with imaginative knitted festive displays. They were amongst the early trend-setters for what has now become a tradition in several local villages.

Immediately after the post box, *The Ramblers* was once the *King William Inn*.

The next house was once a shop and post office.

Further along, we pass number 11, *Tudor Cottage* and then *Wheelwrights*.

The pink house on the left with thatched roof is number 5, High Street – quite out of sequence as we have already passed numbers 3 and 9. From here, if we look back and to the opposite side of the road we see *Lower Farm* – this is another former hall house and dates from around 1500 AD.

We continue along the pavement and within 100 yards we pass *White Posts* on the left – it dates from around 1600 AD and has a jettied upper storey.

We pass Barley Surgery on our left and, with care, cross the entrance to its car park.

Soon afterwards, the pavement ends so we should cross the High Street with care to join the pavement on the right.

We pass Bakers Lane which goes uphill to our left.

In another 200 yards we reach a crossroads where we will turn right onto Picknage Road, the B1039, signposted towards Saffron Walden. As Picknage Road has no pavement on the right, we should cross the junction with care before turning right. We can now use the pavement on the left. If anyone knows why this is called Picknage Road, please leave feedback on www.hundredparishes.org.uk

For about a quarter of a mile, we pass relatively modern houses. For a short stretch we should leave the main carriageway to follow the pavement beside a side road.

Once we return to the main road, we leave the houses behind and continue on the pavement, gently uphill for another 200 yards.

We reach a road junction where the B1039 turns left. We want to turn right, signposted to Little Chishill and Town House so, with care, we cross our road to join the pavement on the right.

We are now back in Church End with about 200 yards to go to return to where we started.

Soon, we pass 17th-century Cannons Cottage, set back on the right.

We soon retrace past the village store and return to Town House where this walk description started.

If you didn't check out the church before the walk, you might like to do so now. There is a brief introduction at the top of page 2 of this walk description.

[If you started somewhere else along the route, please rejoin the route description near the top of page 2.]

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

