



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 329

Ickleton – Strethall – Elmdon – 6.2 miles (10 kms)

This walk is mainly on high ground with a few lengthy climbs and descents. It is mostly away from habitation, passing only one listed building but with an abundance of blackberries in August / September along one stretch. Roughly half of the route is in the administrative parish of Ickleton in Cambridgeshire and the other half in Essex through the more rural parts of the parish of Strethall and the parish of Elmdon, Duddenhoe End & Wenden Lofts. It is mainly on rural lanes but also passes through a little of Ickleton village. The route is never more than 3 miles from the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, so small planes can often be seen flying around. About a mile of the route is also covered in Walk number 320, but in the opposite direction.

The route does not pass anywhere to eat or drink, although there are hopes that the Ickleton Lion pub may reopen one day. There are two seats along the road coming out of Ickleton.

The route description starts and finishes at the southwest end of Ickleton, marked **1** on the route diagram at the end of this description. You may, of course, join this circular walk anywhere along the route – one alternative start, marked **2** on the diagram and on page 3 of the route description, is north of Elmdon, at an unofficial lay-by just west of the crossroads near Lodge Farm (TL473409 - CB11 4NB – tokens.seagull.openly).

Start and finish: There is usually space to park at the southwest end of Ickleton in Grange Road, either outside or opposite the row of houses about 100 yards southwest of the crossroads - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL488434 - Postcode: CB10 1SZ – What3words: hypnotist.inert.chugging. The route description starts from here.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.
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 the parking area, we head downhill along Grange Road. We soon enter Ickleton's 20 miles per hour zone and very soon come to the crossroads. The centre of Ickleton lies just ahead but we will bypass it today.

At the crossroads, we turn right into Coploe Road, signposted towards Strethall. This road is part of National Cycle Network 11 (NCN 11) which covers 60 miles along relatively quiet lanes between King's Lynn and Wendens Ambo. We are heading in the direction of Wendens Ambo.

Soon, when safe, we should cross to the left to use the pavement as we pass housing.

After about 300 yards, we cross the entrance to The Stackyard on the left, the pavement ends, and we leave the residential area behind.

Signs tell us that we are entering a single-track road where the national speed limit applies.

We pass a seat on the left and allotments on the right. We have just started a long, steady climb up Coploe Hill, but it is probably too early to take advantage of the seat!

We continue to climb as we pass over the M11 motorway. Traffic heading to our left is bound for Cambridge and vehicles heading right are en route towards London. The 55-mile motorway was completed in 1980.

About 300 yards beyond the motorway, there is another seat, perhaps more tempting with a view to the left of distant hills as well as a reminder of all the drivers who chose to use the M11 rather than our quiet lanes.

Just after the seat, we come to Coploe Hill Pit, a nature reserve on the right. We might like to go through the gate to look at this small, former quarry where chalk was first extracted in 1542 and which is now home to a variety of flora and fauna.

For a considerable distance after the nature reserve, the road is abundantly lined with blackberry bushes. About a quarter of a mile beyond the nature reserve, we reach the top of the hill, having gained about 150 feet or 50 metres in altitude since the crossroads back in Ickleton. The map shows a spot height of 89 metres, 292 feet, above sea level and we now have views in all directions.

The top of the hill defines the unmarked boundary where we leave Cambridgeshire and the parish of Ickleton, entering Essex and the very rural parish of Strethall – which had a population of only 26 at the time of the 2011 census.

We continue on high ground, heading South. Ahead and somewhat left of our trajectory, Howe Wood is a dominant feature on the horizon.

Our lane descends for about 200 yards to a bridleway sign on the left and then levels off before descending again.

We pass a public footpath sign on the right and after another 300 yards we reach another bridleway sign on the left. The finger points back to our left and indicates that this is part of the Icknield Way. Should we turn sharp left, the path would take us to Great Chesterford Station in about 1.5 miles. This path is used in Hundred Parishes Station Walk number 13 – an opportunity for another day.

In another 200 yards we reach a crossroads. Here, we turn right, signposted towards Elmdon. We leave the cycle route, NCN 11, which continues straight ahead.

Having turned right, we are advised that our new lane is also a single-track road.

After a short climb, we are again on a plateau. Until now, the landscape has been very open but at the top of the climb our lane becomes tree-lined. You might like to look back before we lose the view behind.

Just here we leave Strethall and enter the parish of Elmdon, Duddenhoe End and Wenden Lofts.

Before long, we pass Poplars Farmhouse on the left – the first sign of habitation for about 2 miles. Soon afterwards, the view ahead opens up – we are now looking West.

About three-quarters of a mile after Poplars Farmhouse, we reach a crossroads. With care, we cross and go straight ahead. Not long ago, a signpost at the crossroads indicated our direction as Royston Lane, but no signage was visible in 2024.

Just after the crossroads, there is a possible alternative parking area and starting point for this walk, marked **2** on the route diagram. We continue heading westwards, away from the crossroads.

In about a hundred yards, we pass a thatched house on the right – Rickards.

In another 200 yards, we pass a very wide entrance on the left to The Grange – a property close to Elmdon village, south of here, and about half a mile down the drive.

Soon afterwards, we cross a stream and climb steeply for about 300 yards.

At the top of the hill we leave Essex and the parish of Elmdon, Duddenhoe End and Wenden Lofts, returning to the parish of Ickleton in Cambridgeshire. One last chance for a look back towards the East.

Over the brow of the hill, we have extensive views in all directions. Ahead and to the right, there is a long white-painted building in the valley with red-brick New Grange just beyond, amongst the trees.

Royston Lane, very straight (and badly surfaced in 2024), descends steeply for about 200 yards, levelling off before we reach a road junction.

Here we turn right, signposted towards Ickleton.

We are now on another very straight lane, Grange Road, heading East, initially with hedgerow on each side. Over to the left is 18th-century The Old Grange, the only listed building we pass on this walk. To its left and up the hill amongst the trees is New Grange which we spotted from above.

On the right, we pass the terrace of houses we saw from above – Ickleton Grange Cottages and then Stulps Cottage. They stand opposite the driveway to The Old Grange.

A little further along, there is a lodge house on the left at the start of a drive which is lined with beech trees and leads to New Grange, Ickleton. Its gardens feature in Historic England's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest. Sadly, they are out of sight!

We continue along this remarkably-straight lane for another mile.

We pass a long line of buildings to our left, largely hidden. When we reach the entrance we find this is RAGT Seeds, an international supplier of seeds to farmers.

Further along, over the brow of the hill, we pass Hill Cottage on the left.

In another quarter of a mile, we come to a small group of houses and then a road junction. We turn left, signposted (on a signpost behind the hedge) to Ickleton, Duxford and Great Chesterford.

When safe, we should cross to the right to face any oncoming traffic. We immediately pass Crossways on the left – with a sundial on the apex.

We are still in Grange Road.

We pass a large parking area on the left beside the entrance to Abbey Farm which is far in the distance.

The road rises to pass over the M11 motorway. Traffic heading left is bound for Cambridge; right is towards London.

We soon come to 30 MPH signs as we enter Ickleton – although there is no sign to indicate where we are.

Very soon, we will return to where this route description started.

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

This route description, last updated 04 September 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the three parishes: Ickleton, Strethall and the combined administrative parish of Elmdon, Duddenhoe End & Wenden Lofts. There, you will 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.

