



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 330

North-west from High Cross (in Thundridge parish) – 4.5 miles (7 kms)

This Hertfordshire walk is mostly in the parish of Thundridge but it touches four more parishes, three of which are just outside the Hundred Parishes. It is mainly on high ground, mostly along rural lanes with a short stretch of pavement through High Cross.

The route does not pass anywhere to eat or drink, although there are options about a mile to the south of the start in Wadesmill and Thundridge, each within Thundridge parish.

The route description starts and finishes outside the church in High Cross where there is usually space to park on the main road beside the pavement outside the churchyard. You can, of course, join this circular walk anywhere along the route.

Start and finish: There is usually space to park in High Road, High Cross, outside the church - Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL363187 - Postcode: SG11 1AZ – What3words: speeds.worth.daily. The route description starts from here.

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, you may like to visit High Cross church if it is open.

This 19th-century church is dedicated to St John the Evangelist. It was built in 1846 at the expense of Dame Louise Giles Puller of Youngsbury. She was the widow of Sir Christopher Puller and niece of Daniel Giles, the owner of Youngsbury. Inside, there are stained glass windows commemorating members of the Puller and Martin-Leake families. On the wall of the nave, an 8-foot war memorial cross has the names of 25 men from High Cross who died in World War I, while a brass plaque commemorates the single High Cross soldier who died in WWII.

The churchyard is the final resting place of a local man, Lieutenant-colonel Arthur Martyn-Leake, who was one of only three men ever to be awarded two Victoria Crosses, the highest military honour. On each occasion, it was awarded for his bravery in tending wounded men in the face of the enemy, firstly in the Boer War and then in World War One. His grave, alongside that of his brother, a vice-admiral, is clearly identified at the far left, back of the churchyard.

From the church, we turn left along the pavement, immediately passing a plaque in the wall beside the lychgate – it commemorates Arthur Martyn-Leake.

We are heading south along a historic roadway. This was once part of Ermine Street, a major Roman highway that ran from London to Lincoln. It was later designated as the A10 before being by-passed in 2004.

We soon pass a garage/shop and reach the junction with North Drive. Opposite the junction, on the right, is 17th-century Farm House.

We stay on the main road, crossing North Drive and soon reaching the former 17th-century White Horse Inn on the left, immediately opposite Marshalls Lane on the right. The pub closed in 2017 and by 2024 the site was being developed for housing. Just after the former pub, when safe, we cross the road using the pedestrian-controlled traffic lights. On the far side, we should turn left for just 20 yards and pause. Opposite, The Old Wagon started life as a medieval hall house (with an open hearth in the middle of the floor and no chimney to extract the smoke). The buildings to its right are also ancient.

We turn around and retrace. Just past the pedestrian crossing, we turn left into Marshalls Lane, signposted towards Sacombe Green and Sacombe. Immediately on our right is a small sitting area with a map and photos of Thundridge parish.

We continue along Marshall's Lane, heading west, and soon emerge into the countryside.

We pass Marshalls on the left and Marshalls Farm on the right. Marshalls was the family home of the Martin-Leake family for 200 years and it was to here that Arthur Martin-Leake, VC, retired after working overseas for many years.

The lane then descends quite steeply, a sunken lane far lower than the ground on each side. At the bottom of the hill, we cross a very deep ditch, The Bourne, and pass a footpath sign on the left, pointing towards Wadesmill $\frac{3}{4}$. We continue ahead on the lane.

Having descended steeply, we must pay the price for the next two to three hundred yards as we climb steeply, back out of the valley.

Marshall's Lane bears to the left, passing the start of a bridleway on the right, known locally as *Jacob's Ladder*.

Soon, our lane turns sharp right at what may be the sharpest hairpin bend within the Hundred Parishes.

We continue to climb, soon passing the top of *Jacob's Ladder* on the right.

The gradient eases off as we continue along this quiet lane for another mile or so. After a while, we pass a seat on the right beneath a group of oak trees.

For some distance, we head towards woodland to the right of the road. After a while, we walk alongside a narrow strip of trees on the left and then beside woodland on our right – this is Dilly Wood. Here, our lane defines the parish boundary and the boundary of The Hundred Parishes, with Thundridge on the right and Bengo to the left.

After a hundred yards or so, we also have woodland on the left – Low Wood. We have now imperceptibly left Thundridge and Bengo and will be in the parish of Sacombe for the next mile. It will be nearly two miles before we return to The Hundred Parishes but we should have nothing to fear from the natives.

To our left, many trees beside the lane have been coppiced, cut down long ago to just above ground level.

After a while, we come into the hamlet of Sacombe Green. Some of the houses are hidden behind hedges, but not The Old Rectory, a building with exposed timber framing on our right. It dates from the 16th century when it was constructed as an open hall house – our second today – with a central fire in the middle of the hall and smoke rising up through vents in the roof. A fireplace with chimney was installed later, probably at the time a floor was inserted into the hall to make it two storeys like the crosswings on either side.

Immediately after The Old Rectory, our lane bears left and reaches a junction. Here, we turn sharp right into Rowney Lane, signposted towards Potters Green.

We continue through the scattered hamlet of Sacombe Green until the lane turns sharp left beside an entrance on the right to Sacombe Farm. At this point, we ignore the byway that continues straight ahead – except to note that it is a continuation of the straight lane we have been on for the last 300 yards, a former Roman road which is now called Lowgate Lane. We will meet it again later.

Having turned left, we are still in Rowney Lane, now with Rowney Wood on the right. Also, by turning left we have imperceptibly left the parish of Sacombe and entered another administrative parish - Little Munden.

On the right, we pass a group of buildings, mainly of red brick, the outbuildings to what is called Rowney Priory, a 19th-century mansion which we may just glimpse. It is believed to have been built on the site of a 12th-century nunnery.

At the end of Rowney Lane, we turn right at a T junction, signposted towards Barwick and Standon. This junction is the highest point on our walk, just 400 feet or 122 metres above sea level. We soon pass through the hamlet of Potter's Green, part of Little Munden parish.

After a quarter of a mile, our lane turns left. Here, a long, straight drive joins the lane from the right – this is the entrance to Lowgate Farm and also the other end of Lowgate Lane, the former Roman road we saw at Sacombe Green.

Just before the bend we left Little Munden and returned to The Hundred Parishes. For the next quarter of a mile, our lane defines the boundary between two parishes, Standon to the left and Thundridge to the right, both in The Hundred Parishes.

We pass Oak Lodge on the right and soon come to a road junction. Just ahead on the left is 17th-century Standon Green End Farmhouse.

We turn right into Pest House Lane. Soon, we pass a sign on the right that tells us we have just left Standon Green End, a hamlet of Standon parish.

We are now entirely in the administrative parish of Thundridge. One wonders where the “pest house” was. This was an old name for an isolation ‘hospital’ to which anyone may have been assigned who had a communicable disease like plague or tuberculosis – or Covid!

As the lane starts to descend, on a very clear day, way ahead in the distance we may be able to make out the distant silhouettes of tall buildings at Canary Wharf in London – 30 miles to the south.

Pest House Lane descends gently through open countryside for about a mile, heading towards the tower of High Cross Church.

In due course, we reach the former Roman road at High Cross.

At the road junction we will turn right but if we pause to look straight ahead, a private lane heads towards a white building with red-tiled roof and tall chimney. This is Sutes Farmhouse, a property that dates back to the 14th century and once the home of a family called Swote. This is the third hall house we have identified along today's route. Its chimney and dividing floor were inserted in the 17th century.

At the junction, we turn right onto the former Ermine Street, here called High Road, signposted towards Ware and Wadesmill.

Soon, when safe, we should cross the main road and turn left and immediately right into the residential road called Cambridge Cottages, continuing southwards in parallel with the main road.

At the end of the side road, we follow the pavement ahead and down to the right to rejoin the main road.

We immediately go past a school, full name: Puller Memorial Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School. This was erected in 1866 for the Puller family of the nearby Youngsbury estate in memory of C W Giles-Puller, MP. It still serves the village.

Soon after the school, we will return to where this route description started. If you didn't visit the church before setting out, you may like to try it now. There is a brief description on the first page of this route description.

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

This route description, last updated 12 September 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk where you can read more about the parishes of Thundridge and Standon 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.

