



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 336

Arkesden – 2.7 miles (4 kms)

This walk is entirely within the administrative parish of Arkesden, mostly on quiet lanes and with a short amble through the centre of Arkesden village. The route travels in a counter-clockwise direction and climbs quite steeply after leaving the village. The walk through the village could be omitted, reducing the walk distance to 2.1 miles.

The Axe and Compasses restaurant is the only option for refreshment along the route – in 2024 it did not open on Mondays. If you hope to take refreshment there, please check availability - 01799 550272 - www.axeandcompasses.co.uk .

A diagram of the route is provided at the end of this description.

Some parts of the route are also used in other walks, numbers 149 and 305, which are somewhat longer.

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

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from Hampit Road, about 200 yards west of the junction south of Arkesden Church. It should be safe to park considerably along this road where it is wide enough for traffic to pass. As an alternative, it may be possible to park opposite the Axe & Compasses and start from paragraph 8 on page 2.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL480345 - Postcode: CB11 4HJ – what3words: nail.unpainted.fortress (approx.)

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!

The walk starts by heading downhill along Hampit Road – in an easterly direction - towards the centre of Arkesden village, passing houses on the right. To our left is a deep gully through which Wicken Water flows eastwards on its way to join the River Cam. The gully is often dry.

On the right we pass residential properties including Tallis Cottage and Victoria Cottage, a pair of semi-detached houses dated 1858, and then two individual thatched houses: 17th-century Applebees Cottage (originally three dwellings) and 18th-century Empire Cottage.

We come to a small triangular green on the left – Pump Green. Our route takes us straight ahead for a short out-and-back look at Arkesden village. If you wish to omit this section (it is

also included in Walk 149) you could turn left towards the church, crossing over Wicken Water, passing thatched Watts Folly on the right and rejoining the full route description from the sixth paragraph on page 3.

Before moving on, you may like to look around Pump Green with its 19th-century cast iron water pump, a seat and a helpful interpretation panel with a plan of Arkesden. Our route will take us past most of the places mentioned.

Then we should continue along the main road (keeping to the right), signposted towards Wicken Bonhunt, Clavering and Newport. On the right, we immediately pass Parsonage Farm Cottage 1633. From here, there is an attractive view to the left with the parish church up the hill beyond the thatched roof of 17th-century Watts Folly.

Wicken Water flows just in front of the cottage. We will follow it through the village.

Next on the right is the tall Hill House, three storeys plus attics, set back from the road and dating from the 18th century.

We pass 18th-century Tatlock's Cottage on the right and just afterwards, immediately before the Axe and Compasses pub, we should note the puddingstone outside the entrance to Cruachan – we will see more further on.

The thatched pub was originally constructed around 1700 AD as a timber-framed building, with a brick front added a hundred years later. The pub was featured in the popular 20th-century television series *Lovejoy*. The pub was badly damaged by fire in March 2022 but was rebuilt in similar style, reopening 18 months later.

We continue with the Axe and Compasses on our right. Wicken Water flows beside the road on the left and each house on that side of the road has its own little bridge across the gully.

After a hundred yards or so, immediately after Box Tree Cottage on the right, there is a stone beside the telegraph pole; it declares "Audley End Station 3 miles". That is indeed the distance using the most direct road route - past Arkesden Church.

From the milestone, when safe, we should cross the road, also crossing over Wicken Water on the footbridge, towards Down House. We turn right along the footpath.

On the left, we pass two 17th-century thatched houses: Long Thatches (which was originally three dwellings) and then Ivy Cottage.

Immediately after Ivy Cottage, we return to roadway and turn left into Wicken Road, also known as Poore Street.

We will venture just a short way along Poore Street before turning.

Bailey's Cottage on the right dates from the 17th or 18th century.

Also on the right, Finchleigh and Reubens share a colourful Norwich Union fire insurance plaque which appears to have been repainted in more recent times.

On the left, we pass thatched 18th-century Glebe Cottage and then 17th-century Byrne's Cottage, much renovated in the 20th century, with exposed timber framing and modern brick nogging. We will turn here and retrace our steps back through the village.

After about 200 yards, we should halt just before the road junction. Here, Wicken Water passes beneath the junction. Note the cast iron signpost opposite, manufactured in Essex at Maldon Iron Works in 1934.

Just before the junction, we turn right to retrace along the footpath beside the thatched cottages and then crossing over Wicken Water on the footbridge.

With care, we should cross the road and turn right along the pavement until we get back to the Axe and Compasses. When safe, we cross the road to the former telephone kiosk (type K6), now re-purposed as a lending library. It stands outside The Old Post Office which was, indeed, once the post office and, before that, the village reading rooms.

We turn left immediately after the phone box to walk along the path with Wicken Water now on our left. On the right, we pass 17th-18th-century Sextons.

Next on the right is The Green Man, a former pub dating from the 16th or 17th century.

We soon reach 17th-century Watts Folly where the path bears to the right to meet up with the road from Pump Green on the left [and meet with anyone who chose the shortened route from the top of page 2].

Here, the roadway crosses over Wicken Water. Down on the stream bed, there are a number of large puddingstones and sarsen stones. These different types of stone were each formed around 55 million years ago. Sarsen stones are extremely hard sandstone rock; puddingstones are a conglomerate of colourful pebbles bound together with a quartz 'cement'. They probably originated in different parts of the World and were brought together here by glacial or river movements long, long ago. Arkesden is particularly rich in puddingstones.

We pass Arkesden's village hall on the right (built on the site of a former Congregational Chapel) and then fork right to take the footpath towards the church.

We now have Church Green on our left. A few yards further on, we pass 18th-century Church Green Cottage on the right and then 17th-18th century Dove House. The seat on the green was installed in 1977 at the time of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee.

You are encouraged to visit Arkesden's parish church. St Mary's dates from the 13th century and benefited from a major restoration in 1855. Inside are several sculptured monuments including the grand memorial to Richard and Marye Cutte. He died in 1592. The memorial's colourful appearance is due to relatively recent decoration.

From the church porch, we retrace down to the green and turn right, passing Arkesden's war memorial which has been built into a puddingstone.

Just after the war memorial, we turn right onto the lane.

As the lane bears right with poor visibility, it is probably safest to walk for a while on the left.

Initially, the lane rises quite steeply.

As the lane bends to the right, we pass the red-brick Old Vicarage on the left and then the exposed timbers and thatched roof of 17th-century The Old Maltings

When safe, we should cross to the right to face oncoming traffic. We soon get a different view of The Old Maltings.

On the right, there is a new development of large houses.

A little further along, a roadside sign advises that we have reached the hamlet of Quicksie Hill. Most of these houses were built soon after World War II, including one group that is set back behind its own village green.

In a hundred yards, after leaving Quicksie Hill, we reach a road junction where we turn left, signposted towards Newland End.

We immediately pass Mulberry House (with beech hedge) on the right.

Further up the lane, we walk beside a long hawthorn hedge on the right.

After a while, we pass an entrance to the relatively-modern house behind the hawthorn hedge – and then the hedge continues . . .

We do not lose the hedge until it turns right at a road junction. There is no signage here but we keep straight ahead.

Almost immediately, there is a seat on the left – a good spot because this is the highest point on our walk at 384 feet or 117 metres above sea level. The seat faces away from the road, looking southwest over the valley through which Wicken Water flows. The view in the opposite direction is even more outstanding, looking northwards towards Elmdon, Littlebury and Saffron Walden although none of the settlements are visible.

We continue past the seat on our left. Ahead and to the left is a distinctive landmark – a row of five tall, thin poplar trees.

The lane soon bears left and descends gently.

On the right, we pass a mixture of buildings which are used as sculpture workshops.

Immediately afterwards, we pass the entrance on the right to a house, Newland End. Opposite, a footpath sets off to the left to pass the five poplars.

We pass another entrance to Newland End and over the next 200 to 300 yards we may catch glimpses of sculptures in the gardens behind the hedgerow on the right.

About a quarter of a mile later, we come to a road junction. Ahead, a splendid chimney stack protrudes above the barn. The four octagonal brick chimneys belong to Great Becketts, a house that dates from 1580 AD.

At the junction, we turn left, signposted towards Arkesden and Wicken. We get only a limited view of Great Becketts, behind its outbuildings to the right.

We are now in Hampit Road, about three-quarters of a mile from where we parked.

Very soon, we cross a stream, flowing beneath the road from right to left. This stream is Wicken Water. It flows down into Arkesden and will never be far away to our left as we descend into the village of Arkesden.

After nearly half a mile, we pass an entrance on the right to Chardwell Farm.

Further on, we are greeted by a sign that tells us we are entering Arkesden.

We pass a pair of 17th-century thatched cottages on our left and immediately afterwards a former chapel.

Just beyond a small group of houses, Wicken Water appears just to our left, flowing in a deep gully.

Over to the left, the tower of Arkesden's parish church comes into view

We soon reach where this route description started.

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

This route description, last updated 29 September 2024, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parish of Arkesden 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.

