



# The Hundred Parishes

## Quiet Lane Walks – number 303

Nuthampstead and Anstey - mostly through open countryside - 4 miles (6 kms)

This walk starts and finishes beside The Woodman Inn in Nuthampstead. If you wish to park there and take refreshment before or after the walk, you are advised to book in advance on 01763 848328 or <https://www.woodmannuthampstead.com/>

Alternatively, you may find somewhere to park in the residential road, Park Farm Lane, SG8 8LT, about 150 yards North and East of The Woodman.

**Start and finish:** The route starts and finishes at the war memorials outside The Woodman, Nuthampstead (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL412345 - Postcode: SG8 8NB) – what3words: limit.crows.fiery

If you wish to visit Nuthampstead Airfield Museum, behind The Woodman, please first check opening times - <http://www.nuthampsteadmuseum.com/>

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

The two war memorials were erected to commemorate the Americans who were stationed at Nuthampstead between 1943 and 1945. We will learn more as we continue our walk.

As we set off, please follow the usual safety precautions: 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 may be as surprised to see you as you are to see them!

From the war memorials / Woodman car park, turn left onto the lane, heading southwest and immediately passing the pub on the left.

Almost immediately, we leave the village of Nuthampstead to pass through open countryside. We are still in the administrative parish of Nuthampstead.

Over to the right, the very tall communication tower is more than two miles away in the next parish, Barkway. We will see it along much of this walk – and give further information about its history.

Over to the left, about a quarter of a mile away, the straight line of trees was planted after World War II beside what was the main runway of Nuthampstead's airfield. The airfield was constructed by American civil engineers in 1942 / 1943 on farmland that was requisitioned for the war effort. The air base was known officially as Station 131 and up to 3,000 American servicemen were based here. The airfield, with three runways, was constructed in less than a year, just one of many airfields built rapidly across East Anglia by American civil engineers. The Hundred Parishes was home to thirteen wartime airfields.

Initially, Nuthampstead was a base for fighter planes and then it became used primarily by bombers. The last mission was flown in April 1945, just two weeks before the war ended.

By then, more than 300 airmen had been killed and a similar number were taken prisoner. Behind The Woodman, a museum tells the story of the Americans and the planes that flew from here.

Two airmen died just a mile from here when their plane crashed into the old castle mound behind Anstey parish church. The church has a memorial window in which the names have been etched of all 300 airmen who perished.

We continue parallel with the runway and trees for some distance. This uncomplicated walk requires few directions. The lane twists and turns for about a mile.

After a relatively sharp climb, we enter a 30mph zone. This is a good spot to pause and look back at the view which extends northwards for many miles into Cambridgeshire.

Around this high point, we cross the parish boundary, leaving Nuthampstead and entering Anstey.

About a mile after leaving The Woodman, we see our first houses as we enter the village of Anstey. We soon reach a road junction with a small triangular green. Our route bears right but you may like to bear left for a few yards to view the cottages that date from the 16th or 17th century. Retrace to the junction and then follow the lane signposted towards Hare Street, heading towards a red telephone kiosk.

We soon pass red-brick Anstey Chapel on the left, probably built in the 19th century.

Pass the telephone kiosk on the right. Almost immediately we reach a busy little green with a seat, a postbox and a shelter which protects a wellhead - the 19th-century mechanism for winching water up from the well below. The well has for many years been capped by a concrete slab. The thatched and weather-boarded cottage on the right is called Well Cottage and dates from the 17th century.

Our route turns sharp right at the little green, but you may wish to keep straight ahead for a hundred yards or so to the Blind Fiddler pub (01763 848000 to check opening times) or Anstey church which is a quarter of a mile beyond the pub in the direction of Hare Street and Buntingford. If you do choose to visit these, retrace to the wellhead.

From the wellhead, take the narrow lane signposted towards Nuthampstead and Barkway. The fingerpost sign declares that it is 2 miles to Nuthampstead but we have nearly 3 miles to cover before we return to The Woodman.

After about 300 yards, at the tiny hamlet of Pain's End, we pass Woodside Cottage on the left. This thatched property is more than 500 years old and started life as an open hall house around 1500AD. An open fire would have burned on the floor in the centre of the hall where most family life was lived, its smoke drifting up through vents in the roof.

Just after Woodside Cottage, the lane turns sharply to the right – you are advised to keep to the left in case anyone is coming in the opposite direction.

Soon, Barkway communications mast reappears ahead, more than two miles distant. This very tall radio mast was erected in 1941 and was designated RAF Barkway. It served as part of the Royal Air Force's communications network and continued to be used for aircraft navigation until 2011. Barkway has the highest ground in the Hundred Parishes and the mast was erected at a point that is 500 feet (150 metres) above sea level. The mast itself is 348 feet (106 metres) tall. Some views from the top are available at <https://www.28dayslater.co.uk/threads/raf-barkway-mast-barkway-herts-nov2013.86478/>

We continue along this lane for about half a mile. On the way, pass the entrance on the left to Bandons Farm, out of sight, built in the 15th century as a manor house.

We pass a single dwelling on the right. Soon afterwards, we cross a stream, the River Quin, and then a sign tells us we have left the village of Anstey, although we are still in the parish. This River Quin has nothing to do with the 1967 Bob Dylan song, The Mighty Quinn.

After a short rise, we ignore a turning to the left signposted to Wyddial and Buntingford.

Further along, we pass North End Farm on the left, with a good view over the Quin valley. Our lane meanders and about 200 yards after North End Farm, we ignore a signposted footpath (walk number 132 goes that way, passing through Barkway Golf Course). Around here, we imperceptibly return to the parish of Nuthampstead.

For a quarter of a mile, our lane runs beside the golf course on the left, then a driving range on the right, and then a car park and clubhouse on our left. Immediately afterwards we reach a crossroads with a "main road". We go straight across into the unsignposted lane, ignoring a Nuthampstead village sign to the right.

[This lane has been known to flood just before Bury Farm; if you should encounter this problem, simply retrace to the crossroads and turn sharp left, passing the Nuthampstead village sign.]

After about 300 yards, the lane turns sharp right opposite Bury Farm, passing Bury Cottage on the right and then Bury Farm Cottage on the left; each is thatched and each dates from the 17th or early 18th century. (Walk 131 passes through this corner on footpaths).

The lane soon returns to the "main road" and we turn left. This is Bell Lane, where many of Nuthampstead's 140 residents live. This road is relatively straight and wide because it was upgraded by the Americans to provide a more reliable approach to the airfield.

Until now, most of the route has been along lanes that are too narrow to follow the usual advice, but now we should keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic.

We pass several white-boarded cottages, some thatched. They include 17th-century Whites Farm on the left.

The Old Bell on the right looks too modern to have given its name to Bell Lane.

Skylark Cottage, also on the right, dates from the 17th century when it was built as three dwellings.

Further along, we pass The Old Chapel on the right. Nuthampstead parish is unusual in that it has no parish church. Perhaps the chapel, which dates from 1840, once served that purpose; it is now a private house.

Soon afterwards, we pass the entrance to Caylers Farm on the left. Its sign advertises the fact that Charolais beef cattle are kept here – they are distinctive for their white or cream colouring.

In another 200 yards we turn right onto a lane signposted to Anstey. In about 100 yards, we reach the war memorials and The Woodman pub where we started.

The thatched element of the pub dates back to the 17th century. Inside, the pub exhibits wartime photos and other memorabilia, some donated by the Americans who served here and visited in later life. There is an extensive exhibition in the museum that stands at the back of the pub car park – their website is given in the box on page 1 of this route description.

This route description, last updated 17 February 2025, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) There, you can read more about the parishes of Nuthampstead and Anstey and also find many additional walk routes.

Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto: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.

