



The Hundred Parishes

Quiet Lane Walks – number 339

Sheering and Matching - 4.8 miles (8 kms), mostly through open countryside

This walk includes some sections of lane that are used in both directions. The route might be called “out-and-back” rather than “circular”. The route passes through two parishes, Sheering and Matching, travelling between the centre of Sheering and the lovely hamlet of Matching. The route is mostly through open countryside. Its first mile is the same as for Walk number 151, but thereafter it is quite different.

You may, of course, join this route anywhere along the way – one variation might be to park in Matching Tye (near the Fox inn), heading north to join the southern end of the route description on page 3, turning right beside The Old School House.

The Cock Inn is close to the start and finish in Sheering and in 2025 was open 7 days a week: <https://www.thecockinnsheering.co.uk/> – 01279 734229. There may be an opportunity to visit Sheering and Matching parish churches. Although this route is all on paved surfaces, there might be mud on some lanes, so please be prepared to either remove your boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags before entering these places.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the car park for the village hall and playing fields in the centre of Sheering. The narrow entrance to the car park is on the north side of The Street, B183, near The Cock Inn and around 20 yards west of the war memorial.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL507140 - Postcode: CM22 7LT – what3words: offers.soccer.finds The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Please follow the usual safety precautions: when 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!

Leave the car park via the single vehicle entrance. Cross The Street, B183, when safe and turn left to the War Memorial.

Before we turn right, do take a look at the memorial. Its inscriptions honour 120 men of the parish who joined His Majesty’s forces in the Great War, of whom 20 died, and also the women who nursed the sick and wounded.

From the war memorial, proceed down Church Lane, passing the Cock Inn on the left. The pub was built as a private house in the 17th century.

Church Lane heads south. The first few hundred yards have mostly larger and relatively modern houses, some with fancy gates, although we do pass one on the right, Redrick House dated 1992, which has interesting brickwork and pargetting.

On the left, we come to St Mary's Church Room and a signposted footpath for Sheering Country Walk. Turn left here and almost immediately turn right into the churchyard. We are immediately struck by the advice around the clock on the side of the church tower: "WORK AND PRAY". As we approach the tower, we see another clock face on the front of the tower, with more guidance: "TODAY IS YOURS". They were installed in the late 1940s as a memorial to those who served in the Second World War.

The church is Grade I listed and is mainly from the 14th century. It is usually closed, but you are encouraged to visit if it is open. In any case, turn left past the church to the porch which has entertaining gargoyles.

From the porch, turn right and then bear left to rejoin the lane, heading downhill. Immediately on the left is the entrance to The Old Rectory which dates from the 18th century. Soon, we will get better views of this rather unusual building.

After the lane turns left, there is a view of the back of The Old Rectory with its extreme contrast of architectural styles. The lane now enters open countryside.

Do look back from time to time to view the setting of The Old Rectory. After a while, the church tower appears behind and above it.

After a quarter mile, we cross Sheering Bridge over Pincey Brook, which flows from left to right. The brook rises near Stansted Airport and meanders for a total distance of 13 miles before discharging into the River Stort at Sawbridgeworth.

When the lane turns left, we fork right into High Lane.

We pass Wheelers Farm on the right. The large timber barn to the left of the farmhouse dates from the early 17th century and has apparently changed little in its 400 years.

About 200 yards later, the lane turns left. After about 50 yards, look back for a final view of The Old Rectory, now about three-quarters of a mile behind us.

Pass a thatched cottage on the right, dating from around 1600 AD and now with thatched garage and thatched dog kennel.

Soon afterwards, a terrace of dwellings called Slate Cottages displays a date, AD1649, although the building seems much newer and is not listed.

Over to the left, at the top of the rise about half a mile distant, we may see the upper floors of Down Hall, a Victorian mansion which now functions as a hotel with nearly a hundred bedrooms. The present Down Hall was built in the 1870s by Sir Henry Selwin-Ibbetsen whose family owned the extensive Down Hall estate from 1741 to 1902.

The hotel is in the adjacent parish of Hatfield Heath. It is more visible in winter months when there are no leaves on the trees, but it is largely hidden in the summer. It is never far away from our route so we should get further glimpses.

Soon after Slate Cottages, we pass imperceptibly from Sheering parish into Matching parish.

We come into the small hamlet of Newman's End. Before a road junction, on our right are Red Tile Cottages, a terrace of houses standing sideways to the road. They started life around 1600 AD and were gradually expanded until the 19th century.

At the junction, we turn right and soon pass Smallways Farm on the right, with steps up to the front door. The plaster on the upper storey was pink in 2025, making this building easy to spot from a distance. We continue ahead, passing a small triangular green on the left. Its 19th-century water pump is no longer in use; nor is the red 20th-century telephone kiosk on the right.

After a few more houses, we leave Newman's End and return to the countryside.

After a while, our lane bears left and then right.

We continue straight ahead, ignoring a lane that comes in from the left. There is no signpost.

In another 200 yards, we pass School Cottage on the left and then The Old School House. The school was built in 1875 for a hundred pupils, funded by Sir Henry Selwin-Ibbetsen of Down Hall. Immediately afterwards we turn left beside a tiny green triangle into a lane with no signpost.

We pass beside the former school and then a gateway to a drive on the left. In summer, the drive passes through a field which is usually rich with daisies.

In another 300 yards, we pass an entrance on the left to The Barn and then Collins Cross Farm, largely hidden behind a beech hedge – the farmhouse dates from around 1500 AD.

At the end of the hedge, we bear right at a grass triangle, onto a lane that is unmarked except for a road sign which tells us this is a no-through road.

We go through a gateway and pass a single house on the left. Here, the public road ends but we continue ahead on a tarmac private road which is also a bridleway. The road is lined for a considerable distance with relatively young trees, possibly sycamore or another member of the maple family. Make a note to come back in 10 or 20 years to see how they mature..

After a while, the lane bears right as it is joined by a bridleway coming from the left. The lane now descends gently, heading towards Matching parish church.

At the bottom of the hill, a footpath comes in from the right and our lane bends past a house on the right as we approach the church.

In front of the church is a Marriage Feast Room. It dates from the 15th or 16th century and seems to have always been used as a community building, especially for the celebration of weddings.

A splendid oak tree dominates the green. A small plaque beside it states that it was planted by Lady Selwin-Ibbetson (of Down Hall) in honour of Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887.

We follow the lane round to the right, with the green and oak tree on our left. To the right is Matching Hall, a private residence which stands on a moated site. It started life in the 15th century as the manor house. The marriage feast room, the church and Matching Hall each have a Grade 2* ("two star") listing, a rather special group of ancient buildings.

To our left, beyond the Marriage Feast Room and the church, stands the Old Vicarage with red-tiled roof. It dates from around 1600 AD and was extended in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Towards the end of the green, we should turn left along the edge of the green, passing beside the churchyard and war memorial and then turning right through the gate into the churchyard.

You are encouraged to visit Matching parish church if it is open. St Mary's is of Norman origin, retaining elements from every century since the 13th. The church has several fine stained-glass windows: one records that the church was restored in 1874 by Sir Henry and Lady Selwin-Ibbetson; another is a memorial to Baron Rookwood. By way of explanation, Sir Henry served as a Member of Parliament and government minister under Benjamin Disraeli; when Sir Henry retired he was elevated to the peerage and became Baron Rookwood.

From the church porch, we should retrace our steps for the last quarter mile or so. Most simply, turn right from the porch and pass the war memorial on the left before leaving through the gate and crossing the green beneath the oak tree.

Now continue ahead on the main lane, soon climbing with young trees on each side of the lane.

At the top of the climb, we follow the lane round to the left. Over to the right, we can see various houses at Newman's End, including the distinctive pink-painted Smallways Farm.

We pass the single house on the right and go through the gateway.

Soon, we return to the small grass triangle with the beech hedge opposite. Now we turn right, leaving our outward route.

In about 200 yards, we reach a road junction (with no signpost) where we turn right, once again retracing a section of our outbound route.

The lane soon bears left and then bears right, just as a footpath comes in from the left.

We soon return to the hamlet of Newman's End. We pass the telephone kiosk and Smallways Farm on the left and the water pump on the right before bearing left.

We go straight ahead, ignoring High Lane on the left – we used that on the way out.

Over to the right, we may see Down Hall again, at the top of the hill beyond the trees about half a mile away.

As the lane starts to descend, we imperceptibly leave the parish of Matching and return to the parish of Sheering.

On the right, we pass the entrance to Sheering Lodge which was originally a lodge house on one of the drives entering the once-extensive Down Hall estate.

Our lane bears right, just as we are joined by High Lane from the left – we went that way early on this walk and from now on we will be retracing our original route.

We go over Sheering Bridge, crossing Pincey Brook, and then climb gently.

After a while, the twin colours of Sheering's Old Rectory come into view, with Sheering Church behind it.

We climb past the Old Rectory and Sheering Church, continuing past residential properties until we reach the junction with the main road, B183, with The Cock Inn to our right and war memorial just ahead.

To return to the car park, we turn left past the war memorial and almost immediately, when safe, cross the main road and go up the narrow drive into the car park (signposted for the village hall and playing fields) where this walk description started.

[If you started the walk elsewhere, please go to page 1 to rejoin the route description.]

This route description, last updated 19 February 2025, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Sheering and Matching 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.

