



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 184

Braughing - a short, hilly and varied route – 3 miles (5 kms)

This walk is entirely within the administrative parish of Braughing, using a mixture of footpaths, tracks and lanes. Whilst short, it is quite hilly and full of interest and surprises for anyone who does not know the parish of Braughing. You are encouraged to take your time and expect the walk to take at least two hours. The route will pass many ancient, listed buildings and we will refer to some of them. There are several seats along the route and no stiles. One section of footpath can be muddy.

The walk passes close to three pubs in the centre of Braughing. If you hope to take refreshment at one, you are advised to check opening days and times and book in advance:

Axe & Compasses – 01920 759101 - <https://www.axecompasses.co.uk/>

Brown Bear – 01920 822157 - <https://www.thebrownbearpub.co.uk/>

Golden Fleece – 01920 823555 - www.goldenfleecebraughing.co.uk

The route goes past Braughing parish church which you are encouraged to visit.

If you hope to visit a pub or the church, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or put on boot covers or plastic bags.

Start and finish: The route starts and finishes at a small green called The Square, located on The Street midway between the Axe & Compasses and The Brown Bear. (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL398252 - Postcode: SG11 2QS - what3words: gala.senior.realm)
There is a small parking area on The Street facing the green. If full, you may be able to park in Church End which runs from the left of the green, with the postbox and telephone kiosk on the right. The short lane widens out soon after leaving The Square
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of this description and it can also be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.

We should not rush away from the small village green, called The Square, as it is full of interest. Please take a few minutes to read the next few paragraphs.

The Square is surrounded by listed buildings, many around 500 years old, with a more modern 200-year-old water pump in the centre. The two pubs within sight - Axe & Compasses one way and Brown Bear slightly further away in the opposite direction – each date from the 16th century. Between them, next to the Axe & Compasses, is number 24, also known as The Habit, which started life as an open hall house in the 16th century. The substantial chimney stack was added later to take away the smoke from the fire which had previously burned in the centre of the hall and must have been very unhealthy.

Next to The Habit is number 22, The Gatehouse, another former hall house of similar vintage, albeit much altered in the 1950s. The two first-floor jetties over the pavement, with exposed beams, seem to be original features.

Looking towards the green from the parking area, the two adjacent houses on the right, numbers 4 and 5, were once a single dwelling. They are 16th-century, timber-framed

buildings, as is house number 3 just beyond them, albeit now faced in red brick and called Red Stack.

To the left of the green, the house on the corner, The Old Bakehouse, dates from the 17th century, possibly earlier. Behind the telephone kiosk, the long building was once an 18th-century block of three houses but is now one called Pump House.

All of these buildings are listed for their architectural or historic interest, as too is the telephone kiosk, a type K6, designed in 1936 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, the architect whose work also included Cambridge University Library, Liverpool Cathedral and Battersea Power Station – a busy man!

Maybe now is a good time to discuss the pronunciation of the name of this village - Braughing. It is perhaps easiest to describe the pronunciation as somewhere between BRAFFING and BRUFFING.

Beyond The Square we can see Braughing's parish church. We will talk about that in a little while.

Now, it is time to leave The Square. Please follow the usual safety precautions when walking on roads: if 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.

We leave The Square beside the post box and turn down narrow Church End, signposted towards St Mary's Church, and passing The Old Bakehouse on our left.

Church End descends, possibly past where we have parked, and soon passes beside the churchyard on the right.

When we reach the entrance to the churchyard, you are encouraged to enter the church if it is open - before getting your boots muddy.

The church is well worth a visit. The building dates mostly from the 15th century although some elements date back to the 13th. There are several fine stained-glass windows, entertaining corbels at the end of roof supports, and monuments to earlier occupants of the nearby Hamels estate including messrs Brograve, Steward and Freeman. Hamels, on the west side of the A10, has since been repurposed as offices, apartments and a golf course.

Do look up at the decorated ceiling where angels with golden wings are keeping watch.

From the church porch, there is a good view across the road and to the right of The Old Boys School, yet another former hall house. The building dates from 1574 AD and retains a typical feature of a larger hall house – gabled crosswings on each side of the central hall. The property now has the benefit of several chimneys. Red brick herringbone “nogging” fills the spaces between the exposed external timbers. The building was renovated in the 19th century when the house was converted to a school.

We should retrace the few paces down to the lane and turn right for a closer look at the Old Boys School. Immediately after, we reach a crossroads. We will turn left here, but first you may wish to venture for a few yards along Church End to the right. This lane has the churchyard on the right and a range of dwellings on the left that mostly date from the 17th century. The second building along, The Old Rose & Crown, is from the 16th century with

pargetting, a jettied front and a substantial external chimney. Retrace to the crossroads and continue straight ahead, now with the Old Boys School on the left.

We pass along the side of the former school with more herringbone brickwork. The building now serves as a community hall where parish council meetings have been held since 1894 and where Sunday afternoon teas are served in the summer.

Next on the left we pass 17th-century Causeway House. The plaster facing is completely decorated with pargetting.

In about 100 yards we reach the end of the lane and here we turn right, using the pavement to descend towards the ford. Immediately on the left is another village green with Braughing's rather unusual village sign which was sculpted in bronze in the year 2000.

On the right we pass a notice board and then an interpretation panel which displays a map of Braughing parish and gives lots of information, some of which is shared in this walk description.

Soon, the pavement crosses on a bridge over the River Quin which flows from right to left to join the River Rib just beyond the village. Ducks are usually in evidence.

We continue ahead, now on Malting Lane with no pavement, climbing quite steeply.

At the top of the climb we should not follow the main route round to the right, but keep straight ahead. With care, we cross the main road (Green Lane, B1368) and continue straight ahead into Hull Lane. On our left, the white plastered house is called Chestnuts and once functioned as The Bull and Magpie public house.

We continue to climb up Hull Lane, passing relatively-modern houses.

After about 200 yards, nearing the end of the lane, we pass number 14 on the right and turn right onto Public Footpath number 1, signposted to Hay Lane $\frac{3}{4}$. We will continue along this footpath, heading north and still climbing gently for a while, until we reach Hay Lane. The path is well defined with fencing or hedgerow on each side.

When the hedgerow on the right ends, we follow the path as it turns right. In about 40 yards the path continues ahead but we turn left through a kissing gate to continue northwards, now with wire fencing on each side of the path.

At last, we stop climbing, passing through another kissing gate before continuing north. Sometimes this footpath can be muddy, depending on how much it has been used.

We are now quite high, more than 300 feet or 100 metres above sea level, with views to left and right. To our right, the field is cultivated; to the left the land appears to have not been farmed for many years. To the right, the land slopes down into the valley of the River Quin and the B1368. To our left, the uncultivated land slopes down towards the River Rib. Beyond the Rib lies the dual-carriageway A10. Although it is out of sight, half a mile away, we may hear the traffic if the wind is blowing from the west.

Along this straight path, someone has kindly installed two seats.

After a while, the cultivated field on the right comes to an end and the uncultivated area is now on both sides of the path. The many clear animal tracks suggest that this is a well-used haven for wildlife.

After a while, we pass a large metal work of art on the right, behind the hedge in a private property.

The footpath ends when we reach Hay Lane. We pass through another metal kissing gate and turn right, keeping to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

After about a hundred yards, we pass the gateway on the left for Hay House, a rather nice mansion built, according to the gate pillar, in 1886. We should turn our back to the gateway and look to the opposite side of the road where an avenue of trees across the field leads to the art installation we spotted earlier. Interesting!

We continue down the lane, descending until we reach the B1368 and a tiny hamlet called Hay Street, still within the parish of Braughing. When safe, we should cross to the pavement on the far side, the east side of the road.

The building immediately opposite Hay Lane is The Old Adam & Eve, a 17th-century house that operated as a pub for a while.

Now, let's turn right, heading south along the pavement with the former pub on our left.

After only 50 yards we pass a short terrace of houses on the left and immediately afterwards we turn left, signposted as Public Byway 29 towards Braughing.

We descend again and before long we have a splendid view down to the left, into the valley of the River Quin. Just afterwards, the road surface deteriorates somewhat from tarmac to gravel.

About 300 yards after leaving the main road, we pass the various buildings of Quinbury Farm on the left. We ignore a footpath that goes off to the right and soon afterwards we cross a bridge over the River Quin.

Our byway now climbs quite steeply with uneven surface, passing young woodland on the left. We ignore a footpath that goes off to the left.

Please feel free to pause from time to time, if only to look back and appreciate the altitude gained.

The steep climb comes to an end after 200 yards when we reach a junction with a bridleway. We are again about 300 feet above sea level. We turn right, immediately passing a seat on the left.

We now head south on a well-defined track with hedgerow on each side, soon passing through a gateway. After a while our bridleway starts to descend. Ahead in the distance we can see the tall spire of Braughing parish church.

At the bottom of the descent, we pass beside a gate and reach a lane. Here we turn right along the lane.

In 200 yards, the lane goes through a ford across the River Quin – but we fork right to use a footbridge over the river. We find that our lane is called The Street and pass a bench that was installed in 1953, the year of Queen Elizabeth’s coronation.

Having crossed the river, we are now in Gravelly Lane.

Just before the lane turns left, we pass a curious stone up the bank on the left. Any ideas?

The lane meanders between buildings and then climbs to reach the main road again, the B1368. We turn left and keep to the pavement on the left.

We soon pass a terrace of houses on the left, numbers 44 to 36, and then come to a pair of former hall houses, one on each side of the road . . .

On the left, behind the wooden fence, is Ship’s Timbers, an open hall house from the 16th century or earlier. Its central chimney was installed in the 17th century.

Opposite, on the right and certainly not hidden, is The Gables which claims to be circa 1400. Its official listing is less precise, suggesting “late medieval” which is generally taken as the period between 1300 and 1500. The Gables proudly displays its two crosswings and has a chimney stack where the open hall was modernised.

The next house on the left, number 26 with a porch, dates from the 17th century and was once The Bird in Hand public house.

Soon we reach Braughing’s third live pub, The Golden Fleece on the left. It dates from around 1700 AD.

Opposite, the house with railings and raised pavement is aptly named The Old Butchers Shop. Between the 1950s and 2015, this was where the famous Braughing Sausages were made by butcher Douglas White and his family.

Should you pause at The Golden Fleece, on departure please turn left.

Immediately after The Golden Fleece, our route turns left into an alleyway which is signposted as Public Footpath 36 to parish church and village hall. This is called Fleece Lane. We descend along a sunken lane with exposed roots of trees on the left which mark the boundary of the pub garden.

On the left, we reach an entrance to the Queen Elizabeth Memorial Garden which is particularly attractive in springtime. This is a small cemetery associated with the building to the left at the end of the garden. This was Braughing Chapel, reputed to have been a preaching house used by John Bunyan, a 17th-century Puritan preacher and author whose works included “A Pilgrim’s Progress”. The chapel is thought to have been relocated from its original location in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, to its present site in 1762 by a local preacher.

After the Memorial Garden, we continue to descend and Braughing’s parish church comes into view a little way ahead, across the valley.

We cross an attractive footbridge over the River Quin. The bridge was made of cast iron in 1861. The date and the name of its manufacturer can just about be seen on the outside of the bridge at deck level – Barwell & Co, Eagle Foundry, Northampton. Like most of the buildings we have described, the bridge is listed for its architectural or historic interest.

We continue straight ahead, once again climbing, and soon we reach the staggered crossroads with The Old Boys School ahead on the right.

With care, we continue straight ahead, passing beside the parish church on the left. Soon we reach the entrance to the churchyard and here we turn left into it. If you did not visit the church at the beginning of the walk you now have a second opportunity – but please remove or cover boots if they are muddy.

We go into the churchyard and turn right in front of the porch, immediately forking left to follow the path beside the church. We will pause beside two gravestones for the next few paragraphs . . .

Just at the end of the church building, we should bear left for just a few feet to inspect the tall memorial on the right. It commemorates Maria, widow of Reverend William Tower. She was the daughter of Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey. The admiral achieved recognition at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 when he commanded the second ship in line to Admiral Nelson, The Temeraire. His ship won lasting fame as The Fighting Temeraire after it was painted by JMW Turner in 1838 being pulled by tugboat to the scrapyard – the photo appears on the £20 note. The admiral's final resting place is in the Hundred Parishes, in the Harvey family crypt beneath Hempstead parish church. It was presumably because of her marriage to Braughing's vicar, Reverend Tower, that Maria lived near here at Upp Hall and lies at rest here in Braughing rather than at the opposite end of the Hundred Parishes with other members of the extended Harvey family in the crypt at Hempstead. That was a long paragraph, but we hope you enjoyed the tenuous links!

Now, we should turn right, away from the church and past the railings around the ivy-covered gravestones on the right, to soon turn left onto the main path through the churchyard.

We should continue up the grass path for only 20 yards until we reach a fairly new gravestone about 4 yards to the left of the path. The inscription is on the uphill side of the memorial and says simply "Mathew Wall died 1595". Behind that simple statement lies a fascinating tale.

The story goes that Mathew, a local farmer, died many years before, in 1571. On October 2nd that year, as the pall bearers were carrying his coffin to his final resting place they slipped on wet autumnal leaves and dropped the coffin. To the amazement of all present the burial party heard the sounds of loud knocking from the coffin. "Mathew, not dead at all, had been awoken by the crash", according to one report.

When he actually did die, almost a quarter of a century later, Mathew left funds for his adventure to be marked once a year by the ceremonial sweeping of Fleece Lane, where the coffin fell, and for the funeral bell to be tolled – immediately to be followed by a wedding peal. We walked up Fleece Lane from the footbridge over the River Quin.

Mathew also requested that his grave be covered with brambles to deter cattle from trampling on it. Some four centuries later, Mathew Wall's wishes are still complied with each year on October 2nd, now known as "Old Man's Day".

Now we can continue along the path, perhaps with a look back to the church before passing through a gate to leave the churchyard and return to the green, The Square, where this walk started.

If you parked in the lane, Church End, turn right with the post box on your right.

This route description, last updated 20 May 2025, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parish of Braughing 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.

