



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 186

Meesden and Anstey – 5.6 miles (9 kms)

This walk explores two Hertfordshire parishes: it is mostly within Anstey, while the start and finish sections are in Meesden which is part of the combined parish of Brent Pelham and Meesden. The route uses a mixture of quiet lanes and footpaths, passing through two villages and lots of open countryside with good views. The route is fairly flat and on higher ground, mostly more than 400 feet (120 metres) above sea level, with only occasional ups and downs.

The route description starts from the small car park outside Meesden Village Hall. An alternative start is from the small car park at Anstey Village Hall, just south of Anstey church and school, (Grid Reference: TL404327 - Postcode: SG9 0BY – what3words: microchip.built.pinks. From here, you can join the route description towards the bottom of page 3. You can, of course, join this circular walk anywhere along the route.

The route travels in a clockwise direction and passes just one possible place for refreshment, The Blind Fiddler in Anstey (01763 848000 - <https://theblindfiddler.co.uk>). In 2025, it did not open on Mondays or Tuesdays. If you hope to take refreshment, please check availability.

Some parts of the route are also used in other walks, including numbers 142, 306 and 335, sometimes in the same direction.

Start and finish: The walk starts from a small parking area in front of Meesden Village Hall. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL431325 - Postcode: SG9 0BA – what3words: shiver.passing.sapping

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.

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

Please follow the usual safety precautions when walking on lanes: 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!

We leave the car park and immediately beyond the gate, before reaching the road, we turn right onto a grass path that passes through a small nature reserve. We walk beside the road for about 200 yards, passing a telephone kiosk on the other side of the road.

On reaching a drive to a bungalow on the right, we bear left to meet the road. With care, we cross the road.

Immediately on the right there is a most unusual former well, surrounded by a low hedge. An inscription declares that it was restored in AD 2000.

Having crossed the road, there are two gravel drives, forking right and left. We take the drive to the left, heading towards a terrace of two houses.

Before reaching the houses, we bear right off the drive to pass immediately to the right of the houses, now on a signposted footpath.

We pass a pond on the right and a large wooden barn on the right. Over to our right, beyond the barn, is Manor Farm which dates from the 17th century.

We keep straight ahead into a large field, keeping to the right of the field and passing a corrugated iron barn and several silos on our right.

After the farm buildings, we keep straight ahead, now with hedgerow on the right.

At the end of the field, we follow the field edge round to the left.

We join a track which comes in from the right, keeping straight ahead with hedgerow and ditch on our right. We are now heading South, beneath a telephone cable above us.

After about 100 yards, we reach another set of cables that cross our path. Just here, we turn sharp right beside a telegraph pole and cross a wooden footbridge.

Having come into a new field, we turn left to walk along the field edge with ditch and hedgerow on our left, now heading West.

After about 300 yards, we reach the end of the field. Here we turn left, crossing a ditch and now heading South with a ditch on the right.

After about 50 yards, we ignore a wooden footbridge on the right, and continue straight ahead, heading South.

Now on the right we pass a small wood called Ladylike Grove.

Just as Ladylike Grove ends, we cross a wooden footbridge with no handrails and keep straight ahead, still with ditch and hedgerow on the right.

After another 60 yards, we bear right to cross the ditch and then immediately go left to continue heading South, now with the ditch and hedgerow on our left and heading gently uphill.

Towards the end of the large field, we should pause to appreciate the view of unspoilt Hertfordshire countryside all around: a magnificent (unidentified) tree stands in isolation in the field to our right; and further away to the right we may be able to see Anstey's parish church, just over a mile away – we will pass it in a little while.

We continue straight ahead, leaving the corner of the field, now with young woodland on our right and a ditch and more mature trees to our left.

We soon reach a lane where we turn right. We should keep to the right facing any oncoming traffic.

After a while, we pass between a few properties in the rather remote hamlet of Puttock's End.

We continue for another half mile on flat, higher ground before we reach Anstey Bury on the left. This timber-framed house dates from around 1600 AD and has 19th-century red-brick facing.

We follow the lane round to the left, ignoring the turning on the right to Coltsfoot (there was no signage in 2025). On the corner on the left we pass a large 16th-century barn, associated with Anstey Bury.

After about 200 yards, a gap in the hedgerow on the right offers a fine view. We get another distant view of Anstey church and also, about half a mile away, a row of white-painted houses with woodland behind. We will walk beside these houses later when we come to Cheapside – and then we will walk through the woodland, East Wood.

Further along, a sign advises that we have arrived in Anstey. Initially, we are in the hamlet called Daw's End, passing between two thatched buildings.

The house on the right, with dark weather-boarding, functioned as the Bell Inn until the 1950s. It dates from the 17th century. On the left, Bell Cottage is somewhat newer.

We pass a few more scattered buildings before we leave Daw's End including Dawes Cottages on the right, a pair of dwellings under one roof which was newly thatched in 2025. Later, there are a few cottages off to the left, out of sight down a track and public footpath called Silver Street.

We then come into the hamlet of Snow End where we descend between a close-knit collection of ancient buildings. The first three were all built in the 16th century or earlier as open hall houses – basically a hall where day-to-day life was played out around an open fire whose smoke drifted out through vents in the thatched roof. Each subsequently had a chimney and floor installed to create two storeys.

This group of houses starts with Essex Cottage on the right, closely followed by Little Orchard. Then, an entrance on the left leads to weatherboarded Windmill Cottage. That entrance also leads to the relatively-new Hill Farm which dates from the 17th century – by that time the fashion for open hall houses had ended. Hill Farm has also been altered and has a red tile roof.

The lane continues to descend to a road junction. Just before the corner, on the left, is yet another former hall house, Roding House, although its pedigree is not obvious. It dates from the 16th century or earlier but has been much altered over the last 400 years or so.

At the corner, the building facing us is Snow End House, dating from the 15th century.

We turn right, signposted towards Anstey and Meesden. We have been in the parish of Anstey for the last mile and a half, but we will soon reach the village itself.

In about 300 yards, we pass a small parking area on the left. This is a possible alternative starting point for this walk route. Anstey Village Hall is behind the car park.

The lane climbs past Anstey First School on the left as Anstey's parish church comes into view, complete with its "Hertfordshire spike" on top of the tower. Before the lane turns right, we should cross to the left.

At the corner, we go straight ahead (passing Anstey's war memorial on the right) to enter the churchyard through the lychgate.

Just after the lychgate, we should turn and look back at it. The overall structure is believed to date from the 15th century. To the left of the gateway is a tiny lock-up or cage for the temporary

confinement of minor criminals and drunkards. This element was created with brick and flintstone in 1831 but it may have succeeded an earlier lock-up structure. It continued to serve that purpose until the early 20th century.

We continue up the path towards the church – to our right is the rather grand Anstey Hall, a manor house dating from the 17th century.

The church is listed at Grade I and merits a visit if open. It dates from the 12th century. Of particular note inside is the 12th-century font which is decorated with mermen, the male equivalent of mermaids, one of only two known examples of such font decoration (the other being in St Peter's, Cambridge). The walls and pillars have been decorated over centuries by graffiti 'artists'. Note the detail within the memorial window which names almost 300 American airmen who died in World War II having flown from nearby Nuthampstead airfield.

On leaving the church, we turn sharp right from the porch and right again to pass the church on our right before leaving the churchyard through a gate.

We keep straight ahead, passing a pond on the right – actually a moat around the former Anstey Castle, now just a thickly-wooded mound.

When our gravel path divides, heading left or right, we go straight ahead across the grass to a gateway.

We pass through the metal kissing gate and keep straight ahead with fencing on each side of the path which runs between two fields. The path has been widened in recent years but beware of the old fence post holes which are now trip hazards.

At the end of the fields, we go through another metal kissing gate and continue straight ahead along a field edge with hedgerow and ditch on our left. Beyond the ditch, Northey Wood is usually rich with bluebells in springtime.

At the end of the field, we go straight ahead, passing Woodside Cottage on the right. On reaching a lane, we turn right into Paynes End (or Pains End), with a clearer view of Woodside Cottage which was built around 1500 AD as an open hall house.

We follow the lane as it meanders past somewhat newer properties until we reach a junction with a well head. Here, we turn right, signposted towards Hare Street and Buntingford.

On the right, we pass thatched 17th-century Well Cottage and later 17th-century Red Stack.

Just afterwards, we come to Anstey's pub. It was once called The Chequers, but now it takes its name, The Blind Fiddler, from a legendary Anstey resident.

George was a blind fiddler or violinist who, for a wager and accompanied by his dog, entered a nearby tunnel that was said to lead to a distant castle mound. The sound of his fiddle gradually became fainter until, suddenly, there was a terrible scream. After a while, the dog emerged, badly singed, but George was never seen again. Please don't let this tale put you off visiting the pub if refreshment is required – their food was good in 2025.

From here, our route retraces a hundred yards.

From the pub, we turn right, heading gently uphill to retrace about 100 yards, past Red Stack and Well Cottage to the cast iron well head.

The tiny green is also home to a post box, notice board, seat and fingerpost sign. We should go straight ahead, signposted towards Meesden and Brent Pelham. Just afterwards, the telephone kiosk was still in service in 2025.

We soon pass a small chapel on the right; its foundation stone was laid in 1902.

We should cross to the left to negotiate the blind bend as we turn to the right. On the left we pass another small green cum traffic island. The fingerpost confirms that we should bear right to head towards Meesden. We are now in an area called Cheapside.

On the left, we pass two attractive thatched cottages that date from the 17th century: Little Thatch and then Chappells Cottage, standing sideways to the road.

We pass two terraces of houses on the left – we saw them earlier from a distance. Each terrace is topped with a “B” monogram on the central gable and each individual house has a front porch.

Immediately after the second terrace, number 5, we turn left onto public footpath 13, heading towards Eastwood and Lower Green. This path is part of the long-distance Hertfordshire Way.

We pass a gateway and then bear left and right to continue ahead on a wide grass path, heading towards woodland.

When we reach the woodland, East Wood, we continue on the wide path beside the wood on our right.

After about 300 yards, the path turns right to continue beside the perimeter of the wood, but we turn sharp right into the wood, leaving the Hertfordshire Way and continuing along a footpath through Scales Park Estate. If you have a dog, please put it on a lead. We soon join a very clear, straight path which we will follow for the next half mile, with East Wood on the right and Scales Park on the left, each with quite mature trees and bluebells in springtime. Some stretches of the path can be boggy at times.

At the top of a rise, we cross another path and continue straight ahead over a wooden footbridge with wooden handrails.

We go across a narrow field, cross a drive that heads into the wood on our left, and then continue with woodland now just on our left and field on the right.

After another 200 yards, the woodland on the left ends and we follow the field-edge path round to the right. We now have a ditch on our left. Having turned right, for just a short distance we follow the parish boundary with Anstey on the right and Langley on the left.

After only 50 yards, we turn left onto another wide, grassy field-edge path, now with a ditch on our right. We are now heading East.

The field on our right ends but the field on our left continues and we continue straight ahead, now with hedgerow on the right.

We reach a track where we turn right, off the public footpath and onto a public bridleway.

We pass a red-brick house on the right just before we meet a road. The house, called The Beehive, once functioned as a pub with that name.

We are now in Lower Green, part of the parish of Brent Pelham and Meesden. When safe, we turn left onto the lane. We should stay on the left for a short distance so we can see any traffic coming round the bend.

After the bend, we should cross to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

We will stay on this lane for the final half mile of this route.

We reach houses as we come into Meesden village, firstly passing 20th-century Elm Cottages on the left. Just afterwards, we come to Walkers on the right, somewhat hidden by tree foliage in summer. It has a steep thatched roof. This is one of the parish's oldest buildings, dating from the 15th century, albeit rebuilt in the 18th.

The village street passes beside a series of greens, with houses often set well back from the road. There is an interesting variety of trees.

After a while we pass a listed mid-20th-century K6 telephone kiosk on the right, now repurposed to house a defibrillator. It stands beside the entrances to Puddles Barn and Home Farm, each dating from the 17th century.

We soon reach Meesden Village Hall on our left where this route description started. The hall was erected in 1900.

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

This route description, last updated 27 April 2025, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk There, you can read more about the parishes of Anstey and Brent Pelham & Meesden 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.

