



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

BARLEY



Location: 3 miles southeast of Royston. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL4038.
Postcode: SG8 8JR. **Access:** B1368 and B1039. **Buses:** 18 (Mon-Sat) between Royston, Buntingford & Hertford; 444 schooldays to Newport & Saffron Walden.
County: Hertfordshire. **District:** North Herts.
Population: 659 in 2001, 662 in 2011, 700 in 2021.

Barley, like many settlements within the Hundred Parishes, is listed in the Domesday Book of 1086. The spelling there, *Berlei*, reveals that its modern form, which first appeared around 500 years ago, does not relate, as one might expect, to the crop. *Berlei* appears to be derived from Saxon *Beora's Ley*, with *Ley* meaning a woodland clearing and *Beora* being either bear or boar or perhaps a Saxon lord.

The village is close to the Icknield Way, the ancient trackway that followed the chalk escarpments between Norfolk and Wiltshire. Evidence has been found in the surrounding area of settlements from the Bronze Age and Iron Age. Today Barley benefits from its position at the intersection of two B-roads, giving access to the bustling market towns of Royston to the west and Saffron Walden to the east.



The Fox & Hounds public house, pictured above, has always provided a focal point in the centre of the village. The building dates back to the 17th century; it was brought up to date by the present owners who came in 2018.

Its unusual sign, spanning Church End as it meets the High Street, was installed in the 1950s. It features huntsmen (out of the photo on the right) and hounds chasing a fox into the gable of the pub.

The community is also served by a second pub, the Chequers, on the southwest outskirts of the village on London Road (B1368), pictured on the right.

The two pubs stand on the B1368 which is an alternative to the main A10. It offers a 20-mile 'scenic' route between Puckeridge to the south and the outskirts of Cambridge to the north.

The B1368 was given its number in the 1920s but long before then it had been part of a popular coaching route between Cambridge and London.

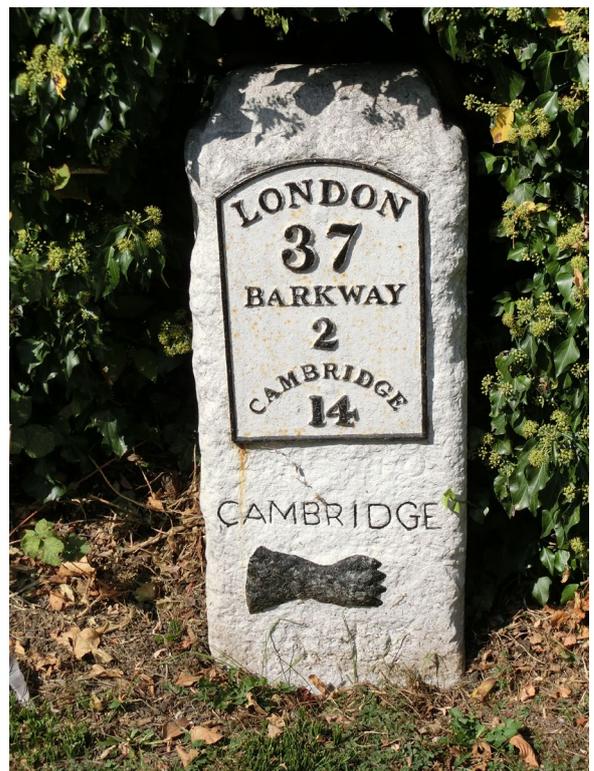


A series of milestones was installed along the route around 1730 and three survive within the parish of Barley. Each is listed for its historic significance. The one pictured here stands in Barley village, roughly midway between the two pubs. The hand points the way towards Cambridge. The 'modern' iron plate was added to the stone in 1804 by the Wadesmill Turnpike Trust.

Barley has a thriving village shop in Church End, providing a range of services for a community that stretches well beyond the parish boundary. Further important facilities within the village range from a well-regarded primary school through to the doctors' practice.

A major employer in the village is Richmonds Coaches, a business with 75 years of history and a major depot for its 30 coaches and school buses.

Several of Barley's 67 listed buildings are to be found in the High Street. Those pictured below show some of the High Street's architectural variety, starting with 16th-century White Posts on the left.



Below on the right is 18th-century Icknield Way Cottage whose extension to the left once served as a shop and post office.



Below on the left is pink-painted Number 5 (the numbering sequence seems quite random!).



17th-century Wheelwrights is shown below.



Below is Lower Farmhouse, dating from around 1500 AD.



Today's modern village shop is located close to the historic church which occupies a slightly elevated position along Church End. The church is dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch.



While the Norman tower dates from the 12th century, much of the church was rebuilt in the late 19th century, including the addition of the spirelet at the top of the tower in 1871 and a new font at about the same time – pictured on the left.

A few more of Barley's varied listed buildings are shown below, starting with two houses that date from the 17th-century: Tudor Cottage in High Street, on the left, and Greenbury in London Road on the right.



Next, four houses in the hamlet of Smith's End: Ravello Rose Cottage, on the left, dates from the 18th century while The Thatched Cottage on the right has 16th-century origins.



Smith End Farm, immediately below dates from the 17th century and Nobles Cottage, at the bottom has 15th-century origins.



Below is Barley's unusual Victorian pillar box – without the usual “VR” insignia.





Opposite the parish church, the 16th-century Town House, pictured on the left, now serves as the village hall. In the past, it has been guildhall, marriage feast room, school and almshouses. It has two unusual external staircases

To the rear of the Town House is the Plaistow, two acres of land that were given to the residents of Barley by King Edgar as far back as the 10th century. The popular village fete is held here annually and in more recent times two all-weather tennis courts have been installed.

Little use is found today for the 17th-century cage, or lock-up, that stands beside the war memorial.

As in many surrounding villages, cricket is a significant part of village life and a pleasant wander along secluded Smith End Lane provides access to Barley Cricket Club, founded in 1882.

Barley is home to several small businesses. It is only three miles from Royston Station, giving commutable travel for residents into London or Cambridge.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BARLEY

Hospitality:

Chequers: 07474 318055 - <https://www.chequersbarley.co.uk/>

Fox & Hounds: 01763 290716 - <https://www.foxandhoundsbarley.com/>

Hundred Parishes walks, free to download and print from this website, include the following circular routes which visit Barley parish and can be joined along the route. . .

Walk 131 (6.5 miles) starts in Barkway.

Quiet Lane walks avoid footpaths. Route 306 (10.5 miles) starts in Nuthampstead.

Quiet Lane walk 322 (6.5 miles) starts in Barkway.

Quiet Lane walk 327 (2.7 miles) starts in Barley

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:

Barkway, Great & Little Chishill, Langley, Nuthampstead.

Links:

Parish Council: www.barley-village.co.uk

Church history: <https://unitedbenefice.wordpress.com/churches/st-margaret-of-antioch-barley/>