



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## WIMBISH



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**Location:** 5 miles southeast of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5834.

**Postcode:** CB10 2XG. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** B184.

**Buses:** (Mon – Sat): 313 and 314 between Saffron Walden & Great Dunmow.

**Population:** 1,550 in 2001, 1,629 in 2011, 1,500 in 2021.

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This extensive parish stretches some 4 miles from end to end and covers almost 5,000 acres.

Long views over pleasant open farmland are a feature of the parish, which has many miles of public footpaths, making it popular with walkers and naturalists. It is claimed that the parish has more miles of 'headland' paths (along field edges) than any other in Essex.

The origin of the name Wimbish is not clear but the most frequently quoted explanation is that it is a combination of meadow (*wim*) and reedy or bushy (*beis*). Its first mention in historical documents was in 1042 when it was spelt *Winebisc*. Later, in the Domesday Book in 1086 the spelling changed to *Wimbeis*. The parish was once two separate villages, Wimbish and Thunderley, which were united in 1425.

Wimbish does not have a traditional village centre but has several quite distinct hamlets, each with its own individual character and identity. The larger settlements are at Tye Green, Howlett End, Upper Green and Lower Green (or Wimbish Green) and Elder Street/Carver Barracks.

The traditional village amenities are spread around these settlements. Tye Green has Wimbish Primary School, the village hall, meeting room and recreation ground. These are almost a mile from Rowney Corner in Howlett End where the parish's former pub, the White Hart is situated (it closed in 2021 and still awaits its fate). Rowney Corner is, in turn, almost a mile from the shop at Elder Street. The pub, dating from the 19th century, is pictured here in better days.



Attractive, often listed, buildings can be found throughout the parish. One example is Conyers, dating from the 17th or 18th century. And shown on the right.



The Grade I-listed parish church stands a mile north of Tye Green. All Saints' Church (Wimbish with Thunderley) dates from the first half of the 12th century with additions over subsequent centuries and major improvements in the 19th. The north chapel, known as Thunderley chapel, was built in 1340 and is thought to incorporate materials from the demolished church of Thunderley, a parish that was absorbed into Wimbish long ago.

The church, shown on the right, is listed at Grade I. It is unusual in that it has no tower or spire. The tower was struck by lightning in 1740; its replacement was deemed unsafe and pulled down in 1883. The church contains 14th-century oak screens and heraldic glass depicting shields of ancient local families. An elegant brass depicts Sir John de Wantone and his wife Ellen. He fought at the Battle of Crecy in 1346 and died in 1347.



Wimbish has a second Grade I-listed building - Tiptofts in the north of the parish near Swards End. It can trace its origins back to 1330. It is exceptional for its surviving aisled hall. It is rumoured to have been a meeting place for the 1605 Gunpowder Plot conspirators, but there is no evidence to confirm it. Tiptofts is largely out of sight but here, on the right, is a glimpse through the hedgerow from a public footpath.



Also of note is Broadoaks, shown on the right. It was built in 1560 and contains fine oak doors and panelling. It is famous for its priest hole which in 1594 hid a Catholic priest, Father John Gerard, for four days while his pursuers searched the house.



Between 1682 and 1776 about 25 adults and children were buried privately in gardens and fields in Wimbish. This is alleged to have begun after an illegitimate child was not baptised and was refused burial in the churchyard.

The majority are buried in a small field in Howlett End, known as the Dissenters' Burial Ground and shown on the right. It is now maintained by private donation and pictured here in springtime.



In complete contrast, Howlett End is also home to a Steam Engine Yard where a number of enthusiasts maintain and operate their vehicles.

Its long history as a scattered farming community has left Wimbish with a heritage of fine listed buildings that were once farmhouses. Four are pictured on this page.

First, on the right, is Rowney Corner Farmhouse. Its listing describes it as a “C16-C17 timber-framed and plastered house with gabled cross wings at the north and south ends jettied on the upper storey on the front.” The chimney stack is believed to be original, albeit probably rebuilt or restored.



The second photo is of Hodge's Farm, dating from the 17th century.



The third image is of Thunderley Parsonage Farmhouse at Cole End, also from the 17th century.



Finally, across the bottom of this page, Lower Green Farmhouse dates from the 16th or 17th century.



Wimbish also has a variety of attractive thatched properties, including the two shown below. On the left is 17th-century Roney Cottage and on the right Tipswains which has 15th-century origins.



Carver Barracks, in the southwest of the parish, has been a significant presence for many years. The entrance is shown below.



The site opened in 1937 as RAF Debden. It was operated by the American Air Force from 1942 to 1945, and reverted to an RAF base after the war.

In 1975 it was renamed Carver Barracks, after Field Marshall Michael Carver (1915 – 2001) a senior British army officer, and has since functioned as an army base.

During World War II it was visited by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and just a week later by a German pilot. He landed, realised his error and quickly took off again!

Carver Barracks has a population of around 500 bomb disposal personnel and their families. The presence of a number of Ghurkhas at the barracks led to the formation of the Tang Ting Twinning Association which raises funds for additional facilities to be provided in the Nepalese village where many of the local Ghurkhas were raised. Wimbish and its neighbouring parish of Debden are formally twinned with Tang Ting.

Wimbish's most recent claim to fame is the construction of 14 properties by a local Housing Association in 2011. They were built to "Passivhaus" standards, meaning that their energy consumption is only about 10% of that in a conventional property.

Some are shown on the right. It was the first rural housing development of its kind in the UK and won several awards. The properties are reserved for applicants with a strong local connection. In 2016, a further development of 11 properties to Passivhaus standards saw Wimbish become the first rural community in the country to have two such developments.



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## MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WIMBISH

### Hospitality:

Blossom Bites Café and Tea Room, Taylor Barns, Elder Street, CB10 2XA – 07510 829963 - <https://www.facebook.com/p/Blossom-Bites-Caf%C3%A9-Tearooms-61551345821370/>

Hidden Gem Shepherds Huts, Howlett End, CB10 2XW – 07738 050725

Wimbish Hall Cabins, CB10 2XG - <https://wimbishhallcabins.com/> - 07932 438028

### Adjacent parishes:

Debden, Saffron Walden, Swards End, Radwinter, The Sampfords, Thaxted.

### Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 138 which starts in Radwinter and covers 5.5 miles including some of Wimbish. The route could be joined near Wimbish Church on page 4 of the description.

Circular walk 162 starts in Swards End; its 4.7 miles includes the northwest corner of Wimbish around Coles End.

### Links:

Parish Council: <https://www.wimbish.org.uk/>

History: [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Wimbish/wimbish.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Wimbish/wimbish.html)

Wimbish Passivhaus project: <https://passivhaustrust.org.uk/projects/detail/?cld=16>

Mobile Post Office (2026: Broad Oaks Close, Carver Barracks, Tuesdays 11am to 11:30):

<https://www.royalmail.com/services-near-you/post-office/carver-barracks-mobile-service-cb10-2yj>

### Further Reading:

*Wimbish Through the Centuries*, Isabel Wiseman – available from [www.Amazon.co.uk](http://www.Amazon.co.uk)

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