



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 103

Walk in the parishes of Finchingfield and Great Bardfield through attractive countryside – 4.5 miles (7 kms)

This is a mainly rural walk of varying terrain, fairly flat and generally away from busy roads. The route is anticlockwise, touching the northern edge of Great Bardfield and finishing in Finchingfield. These are both pretty villages and each has many places of interest and a choice of establishments offering refreshment. You could easily spend more time exploring either village. Walk number 104 also visits these two parishes, exploring different paths on a slightly longer walk.

Paths are generally well maintained. The route includes several stiles.

Start and finish: Finchingfield at the small public car park in Stephen Marshall Avenue at the southern end of the village. (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL683326 – Postcode: CM7 4LZ). There are public toilets in the car park.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the car park through the entrance by the toilets and turn left to the end of the cul de sac. Keep to the right side and follow the pavement, then path, between fences. Soon, just before reaching a bungalow named Asheton on the left, follow the footpath round to the right and then left, joining another path coming from the right. The path continues, heading West, firstly between trees, then with a field on the right and later with fields on both sides.

The path, known as Winsey Chase, continues in a westerly direction for about half a mile before turning left and then right. Ignore a footpath that heads off to the right (it may not appear on older maps). Soon, again turn left and almost immediately right following the main track, now with trees on both sides. Ignore a waymark pointing to the left of some trees, and ignore the subsequent footpath that crosses our route. The track winds and then straightens to head SSW with a hedgerow on the right and expansive views to the left.

After about ¼ mile the path bends to the right and heads downhill towards some buildings. At the end of the field, turn left along the lane, passing Beslyn's Cottage on the right. At a junction keep straight ahead, signposted to Great Bardfield.

After about 200 yards, we turn right over a stile onto a footpath, but at this point the spire of Great Bardfield church can be seen straight ahead to the right of the road. The path descends with a hedgerow on the left. At the bottom corner of the field, turn left over a stile. Follow this path with the River Pant on the right. Ignore the footbridge that crosses the river.

Beside a weir, just after Copford hall Gauging Station, cross another stile to enter a field. Keep ahead, bearing left away from the river.

Ignore the footbridge to the right and continue ahead and then uphill to reach a gateway. Cross another stile and turn right along the lane, passing Brooklands on the right and continuing downhill.

Upon reaching a junction, turn right. We are now in Bridge End on the northern outskirts of Great Bardfield. When safe, cross the road and continue in the same direction. Pass Fullbridge Cottage on the right, just before a bridge over the River Pant. Keep to the wooden footbridge on the left. The narrow road bridge is some 200 years old. Immediately after the bridge, you may see yellow oxlips flowering in April or May in Piper's Meadow on the left. Oxlips are relatively rare but found in this area.

The main part of Great Bardfield, a lovely and interesting village with several eating places, lies not far ahead, but our route soon leaves this road, Bridge Street. Turn left between two red brick houses, numbers 1 and 10 (?), cross a footbridge and immediately turn left along a fieldside path with a stream on the left. Soon, the path kinks to left and right, continuing with a hedgerow on either side, heading gently uphill.

Great Bardfield's windmill, now a private house, can occasionally be seen to the right.

When the path reaches some buildings, turn left to pass a former watermill and the remains of its rusted machinery on the left. Pass through a gate, bear right and immediately left to cross a long footbridge. Turn right, following the stream on the right.

Near the end of the field turn right over a footbridge. Keep straight ahead and soon enter a small patch of woodland on a narrow path. Very soon, cross another footbridge and follow the path which bears slightly to the right.

Pass an old farm building on the right. The path bears left, crossing the drive to a farm on the right. The path then climbs uphill with fences on either side. Pass through a gateway and immediately turn right. The view back includes Great Bardfield windmill. Continue with the fence (and a view of the Pant valley) on the right.

At the end of the second field, the path wiggles right and then left through the hedge. Continue ahead towards a communication tower. The path joins a surfaced roadway before passing the tower. Keep ahead on this concrete path, ignoring footpaths to left and right, until it reaches a lane (Mill Road). Turn left onto this lane.

Pass Dynes Cottage on the right, Mill Cottage on the left and then gradually descend into Finchingfield. Pass a primary school on the right and when the road bears to the right, keep ahead to join a footpath that turns to the left through the churchyard.

Pass the Church of St John the Baptist to reach the former medieval Guildhall which now houses Finchingfield's small museum (which is worth a visit). Pass through the archway beneath the building – beware of the steps at the far side as they descend to the road, the B1057. Immediately opposite is the Finchingfield Lion, one of Finchingfield's several pubs.

Turn left and stay on the left to descend the steep hill down to the village pond. This is a popular spot with various photo opportunities and dining options. There is much to see and enjoy here, including the lane to the right heading towards the windmill.

Keep to the left of the pond, crossing a footbridge over a stream. Keep to the left of the green and bear left onto the road.

Soon, near the post office, cross the road with care and turn right into Stephen Marshall Avenue. The memorial bench on the green commemorates Colonel Sir E.A. Ruggles-Brise. Many generations of his family have occupied nearby Spains Hall and are noted for their service to the community.

Follow Stephen Marshall Avenue uphill and to the right, soon reaching the car park and toilets where this walk began.

This route description, last updated 10 July 2020, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

A diagram of the anti-clockwise route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

