



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 109

Hadstock and Linton – 6.3 miles (10 kms) or 5.2 miles (8 kms)

This walk is quite hilly, a mixture of countryside with expansive views and some of the older parts of Hadstock and Linton. Hadstock is in the county of Essex and Linton in Cambridgeshire. Try to walk on a clear day so as to gain the best views from the highest point at the top of Rivey Hill. There is an option to avoid that part of the route, reducing the distance from 6 miles to 5.

There are no stiles.

Start and finish: Hadstock Village Hall car park, close to the church. From the small green with the village sign, take the narrow lane towards the church, forking left to the village hall and its car park. Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL559447 - Postcode: CB21 4PH.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the parking area and go back down the lane, passing the church on the left. You may like to visit this Anglo-Saxon church, if open, or at least view its ancient door. It is almost a thousand years old and believed to be the oldest door in England still in regular use.

Continue down the lane past gravestones on the right and then the thatched 16th-century Beam Ends on the left.

At the village green, keep straight ahead with the village sign on the left and then bear right onto the road. Ignore Moules Lane on the left and continue uphill. Altogether, stay on this quiet lane for about half a mile, ignoring occasional footpaths to left and right.

When the lane turns right, go straight ahead onto a track, known as Chalky Road. Initially this is quite wide but becomes narrower with a hedgerow on either side. When the hedge on the right ends, the track bears left with a hedgerow on the left. Ahead and to the right we can now see the village of Linton. Beyond is Rivey Hill and at the top a large water tower which we will pass in another mile and a half – yes, this walk will demonstrate that not all of Essex or Cambridgeshire are flat. Further away in that direction you may be able to see some of the rotating blades at Wadlow Wind Farm, some 4 miles distant.

Soon, the remains of a tower windmill come into sight. After a while, the windmill disappears from sight and the path passes between hedges on both sides. It then turns sharp right, almost imperceptibly crossing a bridge over a long-discontinued railway track whose alignment can be seen over the wall to the left. This was once the line from Shelford, south of Cambridge, to Sudbury. It operated from 1865 to 1967. Today, the rail alignment marks the boundary between Hadstock and Linton parishes and the boundary between Essex and Cambridgeshire.

After the bridge, the path bears left and meets the drive to Windmill House which stands beside the disused windmill. Keep ahead and pass Malting Cottages.

After about 200 yards, turn right to reach the busy A1307. With great care, cross, turn right and almost immediately left into a lane, Mill Lane. Continue along this lane through woodland and then keep to the left and use the footbridge to cross the River Granta.

Soon afterwards, follow the road round to the right to pass beneath the former Linton Mill, now converted to housing. Note the bungalow straight ahead which displays "Office" above the front door. Follow the road to the left and then to the right. Soon after passing the pump on the right, Mill Lane reaches Linton High Street.

Turn right, against the flow of traffic along this narrow one-way street. Pass a few shops and, when safe, cross the road. Turn left onto Balsham Road, the B1052. Ahead in the distance is the water tower.

Soon turn left onto a road with no apparent name (actually, it's Back Road). Pass Rivey Way on the right and, when safe, cross Back Road to reach a tarmac public bridleway on the right, signposted towards Rivey Lane and Roman Road 1½.

[Should you wish to avoid the climb and descent of Rivey Hill (reducing the walk distance by a little over a mile) you can continue along Back Road for about 600 yards. Pass a cemetery on the right and ignore several turnings to right and left until you reach Crabtree Croft. The route description continues 7 paragraphs below . . .]

Turn right onto the bridleway. We will not be walking as far as the Roman road which now marks the northern boundary of Linton parish and seems to be on a straight line between two major Roman cities, Colchester and Chester.

Our path is one of the strands of the ancient Icknield Way. After a while the tarmac ends and the track becomes stony. The track climbs Rivey Hill for half a mile, eventually reaching the water tower which stands 110 metres or 360 feet above sea level. Sometimes, stretches of the track can be quite wet. These might be avoided by diverting onto a well-used unofficial path that runs on the other side of the hedge on the right. The track gets steeper as it approaches the summit. At the top, just before the water tower, the unofficial path rejoins the main track.

The tower was built in 1936. It is topped with a steel water tank which receives pumped water and supplies much of the Linton area. It stands 100 feet (30 metres) tall. It is a listed building because of its landmark value and its attractive art deco design, constructed of brick rather than concrete.

Turn left, passing the water tower on the right and houses on the left. Walk beneath an avenue of silver birch trees and soon get the benefit of the climb: a splendid wide view over the Cambridgeshire countryside. Continue ahead with Rivey Wood on the left.

After the wood, continue ahead, gently descending. Just after a seat, the path turns left, descending more steeply back towards Linton. While passing a wood on the right, it is just possible to identify Hadstock Church on the hill about two miles ahead. It appears just below the horizon at about half past eleven on the clock.

Continue descending until the path reaches a road (Back Road). We are once again in the village of Linton. Cross with care and turn right on the pavement.

Turn left into Crabtree Croft, a residential area of bungalows.

At the bottom of this short close, go straight ahead on a footpath with a wall and large flint-walled building on the left. When this reaches a road (Symonds Lane), turn left and in 50 yards you will see the front of the flint-walled building. This is Symonds House Nursing Home, built originally in 1836 as a workhouse for 200 inmates. It now provides residential care for a third of that number.

Retrace to where we left the footpath, cross the road with care and continue on another tarmac path. Cross a rather nice bridge over the River Granta to emerge onto a recreation ground, the Queen Elizabeth II Field.

Continue straight ahead on the tarmac path and, just after passing a pavilion with clock tower on the right, follow the path round to the left. After 50 yards, leave the field by turning right onto a stony track which soon comes into Essex Gardens. With care, cross a minor road and go straight ahead on another footpath.

The path becomes a lane, Market Lane, where Linton's markets used to be held. There are several interesting buildings here including Shepherd's Hall on the right. This was opened in 1922 by the Ancient Order of Shepherds, a friendly society that offered benefits, including insurance, to its members.

At the end of Market Lane, turn left into High Street. We will now cover a short loop back to this spot, en route passing around a quarter of Linton's 120 listed buildings. Linton flourished as a market town from the 13th to the 19th centuries and High Street was a busy through route until the bypass, A1307, was opened in 1968.

Pass a listed phone kiosk and many former shops and pubs. Just after The Dog and Duck, cross the River Granta again. The river used to seriously flood this road from time to time. After the bridge, cross Symond's Lane (yes, we crossed it earlier near the former workhouse) and immediately reach the former Swan Hotel on the left. When safe, cross the High Street to the Linton village sign. Beside it is an interpretation panel with details of Linton's Heritage Trail and information about the town's history.

Remain on this side of the High Street and continue away from the river. Soon pass Coles Lane on the left. Look back at Robert Cole's House on the corner – it dates from the 16th century and was bought by the Cole family, grain merchants, in 1675.

Continue ahead for a short way and cross the entrance to Church Lane. On the opposite side of the High Street are several colourful buildings that date from the 15th and 16th centuries, one with a particularly interesting mix of ancient and more modern paving.

Retrace a few steps and turn left into Church Lane. This soon reaches a group of interesting ancient buildings including the 14th/15th-century church and 16th-century former Guildhall. Our route turns right along the side of the Guildhall, soon crossing the Granta yet again.

Follow the road, Horn Lane, round to the right and soon reach the High Street, almost opposite Market Lane.

Turn left along High Street and, when safe, cross to the right. Pass Crown Inn to reach the main Cambridge Road, A1307. Cross this busy road using the pedestrian-controlled lights and turn left. Immediately fork right into The Grip, passing attractive ancient thatched houses.

Turn right onto B1052.

Soon after The Grip Barns on the left and Ditches Close on the right, high banks on either side of the road are all that remain of the embankment that once supported the railway line on either side of a high brick arch that took the line over the road.

Continue ahead, passing a commercial estate on the right and then the entrance to Linton Zoological Gardens (worth a visit if you have time).

The pavement ends just as we leave Cambridgeshire and enter Essex but at this point, where the road bends left, we leave the road to continue straight ahead on a public bridleway, the Icknield Way, signposted towards Great Chesterford. Ignore Len's Path that forks left.

This clear track climbs steadily. Do pause from time to time to look back at how far you have walked since the Rivey Hill water tower. Pass a concreted area on the right.

Just before reaching the end of a field and shortly before the first large tree, turn left over a footbridge and keep in this new direction, climbing gently for about 200 yards. Keep to the right of a hedge and then descend.

Pass Len's Path on the left and then commercial premises on the right before following the track round to the left. Soon, just before reaching a road, turn right onto a footpath. We are now back in the village of Hadstock. The path runs beside the road, at first elevated and then at road level.

Approaching the Kings Head pub on the right, cross the road with care and continue on the opposite pavement. Do not follow the main road round to the right but keep straight ahead, signposted towards Bartlow. Almost immediately cross this road and pass the green and village sign on the left. Pass an old pump on the right and soon turn right up a narrow lane, retracing the start of the walk, uphill to the car park at the village hall.

There is now a second opportunity to visit Hadstock Church with its ancient door before departing.

You can read more about Hadstock and Linton on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

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 covering this route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

