



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 138

Radwinter and Wimbish - 5.5 miles (9 kms)

This countryside route includes some of Radwinter village and part of Wimbish parish around its church. Radwinter Church is most interesting but is usually open only on the first Saturday morning of the month. Most of the route is on footpaths and the remainder along quiet lanes. It is slightly hilly but there are no stiles. In autumn, there should be ample opportunities to pick sloes. There is nowhere to purchase refreshments along the route but there are seats at Wimbish Church, both outside and in the porch. There is a pub, The Plough, half a mile East of Radwinter church.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes from the car park behind Radwinter Village Hall. The entrance is on the left of Water lane which heads north from the crossroads by Radwinter Church. The car park can become full on Saturday mornings when football is played on the adjacent playing field; then an alternative is to park along the lane heading north from the crossroads.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL606374 - Postcode: CB10 2TG.

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 and turn right onto Water Lane, keeping to the pavement on the right. Immediately pass the unusual-looking village hall. This building was part of a radical rebuilding operation after a disastrous fire in 1874 when 24 buildings were destroyed. The operation was led by the Reverend Frederick Bullock in collaboration with the Arts and Crafts architect William Eden Nesfield. The building combines village hall, parish office, residential accommodation and a part-time post office.

Pause at the corner, close to the pillar box and doorway to the Post Office. Look up at the building's decoration. Radwinter's village sign, designed by pupils of Radwinter Primary School, stands on the small green to the left. Diagonally across the crossroads is the former Red Lion pub, now a much-altered private house. The former inn dates from the 17th century. The Red Lion and the church were the only buildings to survive the great fire.

Turn right in front of the building, passing an old village pump and then a row of almshouses, also designed by Nesfield. On the side wall of the first almshouse a stone panel proclaims VIVAT REGINA, AD 1887 – Long live the Queen. 1887 marked Victoria's 50th year on the throne. When the pavement ends, beside the last almshouse, cross the road when safe. Turn right along the pavement and after 20 yards, beyond the bus stop, go through the small gate into the churchyard.

Follow the path, passing several Bullock family graves on the right and then the war memorial, to the porch. This is an unusual porch in several respects. It is one of the oldest parts of the church, dating from the 14th century. Whilst the church dates from the 12th century, much was rebuilt or renovated in the 19th.

The porch is double-storeyed and above the entrance is a prayer room. If you have come at a time when the church is open (usually the first Saturday morning of the month) do go inside. There you will find many interesting, nay stunning, items that were given to the church by the Bullock family who were lords of the manor and rectors of the church through much of the 18th and 19th centuries.

From the church porch, turn left to continue along the path beside the church, neatly faced in knapped flintstones, and exit through the lychgate. Careful scrutiny of the inscriptions above will reveal that it was erected around 1901 in memory of Queen Victoria and to honour her successor.

Beyond the lychgate, we can now appreciate the Arts and Crafts style and decoration of the parish hall building opposite. Turn right and soon turn right again into Church Hill. When safe, cross to the pavement on the left.

We soon reach a range of buildings that were designed by Eden Nesfield. The first was a shop and the next few have always been dwellings. Next on the left is a terrace and, facing us is a former brewery, decorated with a bunch of grapes above the door. Follow the road past The Old Brewery to reach The Old Bakehouse and then another pair of Nesfield cottages, the first now called The Old Dairy.

We cross a stream (actually, it is the River Pant and we will see more of it later). In another 50 yards we reach 18th-century, part thatched Old Comptons on our left. We will turn here to retrace a short distance, now with a view of the church ahead. Soon, note the attractive modern pargetting on Bourne Side on the left.

Return to the former brewery and turn left at the mini-crossroads. Having turned left, keep to the right with the churchyard on the right. On our left we pass the entrance to Church View Cottages. This building dates back to the 16th or 17th century and is timber-framed and plastered. Continue along this path with a low flint wall on each side.

Just past the churchyard on the right is The Old Vicarage. It dates from the 16th or 17th century and retains many original features, both inside and out, including high quality craftsmanship in its timber framing.

Keep straight ahead and pass through a wooden gate into Church Meadow. Turn half left to cross the field diagonally. At the end of this field, there is a good view back to the church. Keep straight ahead between a pond on the left and a seat on the right, passing woodland on our left.

In about 100 yards, a path joins us from the left and we bear right on a well-defined grass path with hedgerow on the left. We follow the River Pant on the left with many young willow trees.

We go straight ahead at a crossroads of paths with concrete bridge to our left, keeping to the grass path with the river on the left.

When we reach the end of the field on our right, go straight ahead into the next field and almost immediately turn sharp left, crossing the river. Ahead of us is a metal kissing gate into a long narrow field stretching away to the right. Do not go through the gate but turn right, with a wire fence on the left and the hedgerow and Pant on the right. [*The public footpath goes through the gate, straight ahead for a few yards to the far side of this narrow field and turns right, following the fence for about 600 yards, but that route seems little used*].

After about 600 yards, at the end of the long field, follow the path to the left and soon turn left again to another kissing gate. At this point, turn right (with your back to the kissing gate) and cross a ditch on wooden boards.

On the far side, turn half right (not sharp right) along a clear grass path with the main field on the left and a small field on the right. The path soon climbs a little. We have just passed from Radwinter into the parish of Wimbish.

Ignore a path that goes to the right and keep straight ahead with a hedgerow and ditch (actually, it's the River Pant again) on the right. We follow this path for nearly half a mile as it meanders, following the route of the river.

After a while we see a farmhouse ahead and to the left. When the path reaches a road, with care go straight across and continue ahead on the bridleway. This is a clear path with hedgerow on both sides.

After about 300 yards, our path is joined by another coming in from the left and we keep straight ahead across a bridge over the ditch (yes, the Pant, but this is the last time we will encounter it today). A few yards later we turn left onto a drive, heading away from large farm buildings to the right. In about 30 yards we cross a concrete bridge over a ditch with no name. Almost immediately turn right on a grassy path, gently uphill, and soon reach woodland on the right.

Keep the woodland on the right for about 300 yards. Then turn very sharp right, over a concrete bridge, and follow the path round to the left, gently uphill with a hedgerow on the right.

After about 100 yards, turn right through the hedge. In about 50 yards pass through a gateway and turn half left, towards a tall pine tree, across a small field (possibly with horses, and possibly with a temporary electric wire with a plastic handle that allows it to be held back whilst passing through). On the other side of the field, pass through an old metal gate into the churchyard. This is Wimbish parish church, dedicated to All Saints.

Keep straight ahead towards the church. The near side of the church contrasts with the rest of the exterior, being of brick rather than flint and stone. It is assumed that the brickwork was installed after the west tower that stood here was demolished in 1883, having been deemed unsafe. The absence of tower or spire makes this parish church rather unusual. The church has a Grade I listing, primarily for its 12th and 13th century features. The church is rarely open except for services.

Keep to the left of the church, with the church immediately on the right. At the end of the church wall we face the Old Vicarage. It dates from the 17th or 18th century but it was altered and re-faced in red brick in the 19th century.

Just here, on the right, we will find a tiny belfry that houses one of three bells that once hung in the tower. Its Latin inscription means *John Clarke made this bell 1599*. Two larger bells are kept inside the church.

Turn right and right again to reach the church porch. The church is usually closed but there are seats outside or inside the porch.

From the porch go ahead on the path and leave the churchyard. On the right we pass Wimbish Hall and a large 17th-century barn with two gabled entrance bays. Stay on the lane, past Farm Cottage on the right, and climbing gently until we reach a T junction.

Immediately opposite is thatched Aldridges Farm which dates from the 17th century. When safe, cross the road and turn left on the road, facing any oncoming traffic. Soon walk beneath ancient oak trees.

As we pass a footpath sign on the right we leave Wimbish and return to the administrative parish of Radwinter.

A little further along, we come into the Radwinter hamlet of Maple End (possibly a corruption of *Maypole End?*), with a multi-coloured string of houses on the right. The thatched and curiously-named Old Rake Shed dates from around 1800 AD. On the left, Maple Farm dates from the 17th century. The thatch on the single-storey extension, October Cottage, is in keeping with the main building.

When safe, cross to the left of the road before the junction with the B1053.

At the junction we turn left towards Saffron Walden, but only for a short distance. When safe, cross to the far side and, in about 50 yards, turn right onto a concrete entrance. Now keep straight ahead onto a narrow field-edge path with a hedgerow on the left.

After a quarter mile or so, at the end of the field, go straight ahead across a wooden footbridge with a single metal handrail. On the far side turn left, keeping the ditch we just crossed on our left. In about 50 yards leave this field by going straight ahead beside a hollow ash tree and then, in the next field, turn sharp right.

Follow the field-edge path with hedgerow on the right. After about 300 yards the field edge turns left. Soon, before it turns left again, our route turns right through some trees and up a slope. At the top of the slope, keep straight ahead with hedgerow on the left.

At the end of this field, go straight ahead towards a large, majestic horse chestnut tree. Before the tree, turn sharp right onto a bridleway with hedgerow on both sides. We will stay on this fairly straight bridleway for about half a mile, passing many oak trees.

After about a quarter mile, ignore a footpath going right. Keep ahead on a bridge over a ditch and continue, now with just hedgerow on the left. Blackthorn is predominant along some of this hedgerow so there should be opportunities to pick sloes in the autumn.

At a crossroads of paths keep ahead.

At the end of a field, keep to the left of yet another ancient oak tree, along a path with wooden fencing on the right. When this path reaches a lane, turn right. This is Water Lane which sometimes floods. Almost immediately pass a row of 18th-century thatched cottages, embellished with relatively modern pargetting.

Further along, up a drive to the right, is Lower House Farm, a 15th-century hall house that retains some panelling and fireplaces from modernisation in the 16th century. Just afterwards, we may need to use the footbridge on the right to avoid the ford.

On the left we pass Saxons with an interesting roofline that may be a challenge for a thatcher. Ravensford on the left dates from the 18th century or earlier and now has a flock of thatcher's ducks on the roof. After Saffron Cottage we may need to negotiate another ford. These streams flow into the River Pant, to the southwest.

After a gentle climb, we come into Radwinter village, with 17th or 18th-century Rose Cottage and 17th-century Linden Cottage on the right. Ignore the turning to the left and continue ahead, soon reaching School House and Radwinter Primary School, a building that was enlarged by Eden Nesfield as part of Radwinter's rebuilding project after the 1874 fire.

Opposite stand two curiously-named 17th-century cottages, Cricksies and Hylas. Immediately after Hylas Cottage, turn right into the car park where we started this walk.

You can read more about Radwinter and Wimbish on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 28 October 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.

