



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## BARLEY



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

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Barley, like many settlements within the Hundred Parishes, is listed in the Domesday Book of 1085. 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 and Hounds public house, pictured above, has always provided a focal point in the centre of the village, with its unusual sign spanning the road at Church End. After a period of closure, it reopened in 2019.

The community is also served by a second pub, the Chequers, on the southwest outskirts of the village on London Road (B1368). Barley has a thriving village shop which incorporates the post office and provides a range of services. Further important facilities within the village range from a garage and a well-regarded primary school through to the doctors' practice.







The 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. Whilst the Norman Tower dates from the 12th century, much of the church was rebuilt in the late 19th century. Opposite the church, the 16th-century Town House, pictured above, now serves as the village hall.



With a little exploring you can be pleasantly surprised as you venture to the rear of the Town House to find the Plaistow. This was two acres of land 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. It stands beside the war memorial.

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

The village is home to several small businesses and the charity Khandel Light was set up in 2000 by Dr Peter Gough who is based at the Barley Surgery.



Barley is three miles from Royston Station, giving commutable travel for residents into the main business centres of London and Cambridge.

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### Hospitality:

Chequers: 01763 849144 - <https://www.chequersbarley.co.uk/>  
 Fox & Hounds: 01763 802505 - <https://www.foxandhoundsbarley.com/>

### Hundred Parishes circular walks include . . .

Walk 131 which covers 6.5 miles through Barley and Barkway.

### Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:

Barkway, Great & Little Chishill, Langley, Nuthampstead.

### Links:

Parish Council: [www.barley-village.co.uk](http://www.barley-village.co.uk)

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

Khandel Light charity: [www.khandel-light.co.uk](http://www.khandel-light.co.uk)