



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

CASTLE CAMPS



Location: 4 miles southwest of Haverhill. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6242.

Postcode: CB21 4TB. **County:** Cambridgeshire. **District:** South Cambridgeshire.

Access: well away from main roads. **Rail:** Nearest station is Audley End on the London Liverpool Street-Cambridge line. **Buses:** 319 (Mon – Sat) between Audley End Station, Saffron Walden & Haverhill; 19 (Mon – Fri) to Haverhill; 13B (Mon - Fri) to Linton.

Population: 600 in 2001, 684 in 2011, 650 in 2021.



The parish of Castle Camps lies in the very south-eastern corner of Cambridgeshire. It takes its name from the castle which dated back to Saxon times. Virtually nothing still exists of this above ground though part of the moat can still be seen on the land which is now a private farm. The castle and its attached estate were given by William the Conqueror to the De Vere family, the Earls of Oxford, with whom they remained for 500 years. The De Vere family's principal property was Castle Hedingham in Essex.

In 1584 the castle was sold and in 1611 it came into the possession of Charterhouse School, with which it remained until quite recent times. Over the centuries the castle was variously destroyed, rebuilt or fell down and was replaced by

Charterhouse with 'a very noble house' – essentially a farmhouse.

The present village is about a mile north of the old castle site and one story suggests that the villagers decamped in the 17th century, to avoid the worst ravages of the plague, to an area then known as Camps Green, a name that still appears on some maps.



The church of All Saints has a magnificent nave roof of king posts upon tie beams. When the old tower, built about 1400, collapsed in 1850 Norman remains were found in the tower which seems to prove that this tower replaced a Norman one and that the present church was built some 50 years later than the fallen tower. The remains of two bodies found under the tower were believed to be of the Saxon period which would seem to prove that All Saints stands on the site of one of the earliest Christian Churches. Many associate the church

and the village with a former rector, John Bode, who wrote the hymn 'O Jesus I have promised' in the 1860s and is buried in the churchyard.



Following the Restoration of the monarchy in the 17th century, the village became home to a strong strain of non-conformism. The United Reformed Church, shown here, is still active today, having been built in 1856 as an Independent chapel.

During World War II, Castle Camps was the setting for a famously cold and windy airfield from which a wide variety of Battle of Britain and bomber units operated, most notably 85 Squadron.



Although only a few miles from the busy town of Haverhill, the village has an air of remoteness, reflected by the fact that it first received piped water in 1937 and electricity in 1949 when connected to the National Grid.



Despite its small size and secluded setting, the village boasts an excellent school and pre-school, a village pub, sports facilities, and a village hall, as well as various clubs.

The Oak (formerly known as The Cock or The Cockerel) is a traditional country pub, albeit not open at lunchtime or serving food. It is situated in the centre of the village, close to the village green.

The area is well served by footpaths and offers first-rate walking for those who are fit.

Hospitality:

The Oak (limited opening times, mostly evenings) - 07875650640 - <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076372970639>

Hundred Parishes Society walks include two circular walks around Castle Camps, number 153 of 2.8 miles and number 154 of 6.7 miles:

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:

Hempstead, Radwinter, Ashdon, Bartlow, Helions Bumpstead.

Links: Village web site: <http://www.castlecamps.org.uk/>

History: <http://www.rd29.net/cc/index.html>

History: <http://www.shanty.co.uk/castlecamps/history.htm>

Further reading: *From Castle Camps to Rawalpindi*. William A Harding. Published by Haverhill and District Local History Group.
