



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

FARNHAM



Location: 2 miles west of Stansted Mountfitchet and 2 miles north of Bishop's Stortford.
Ordnance Survey grid square: TL4724. **Postcode:** CM23 1HT. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** northwest off B1004.
Bus: No bus services serve Farnham.
Population: 392 in 2001, 410 in 2011, 420 in 2021.

The parish of Farnham consists of farms and several hamlets: Farnham village, Farnham Green, Hazel End, Levels Green and Chatter End.

Farnham is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 as having two manors: Pherneham, held by Geoffrey de Mandeville, and Hertisobury or Hassobury held by Robert Gernon. The village name probably originally meant the place where fern and bracken grew. Agriculture has always been the mainstay of the parish. The population has fallen from 578 in 1871 to 410 in 2011.



The manor of Hassobury was owned by the Glascock family from the late 16th century until it was sold in 1773 to William Gosling, whose descendants, in the 19th century, purchased the other manors and lands of Farnham. In 1871, father and son, both Robert Gosling, replaced the manor house of Hassobury with a stone mansion house in High Gothic style, pictured here. The house was used between 1940 and 1945 as a convalescent hospital for injured



servicemen, then let for a residential school, first to the Czech Government, then to Essex County Council. In 1976, it became home to Waterside, a day prep school, until 1994, after which it was sold and divided into a number of individual houses.

Other buildings particularly worthy of note are: Walkers manor house, originating in the 15th century; the farmhouses and cottages at Hazel End, dating from the 16th century; and the Grade 2* 14th-century barn at Hassobury.

The early medieval parish church was demolished and the present church, dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, was built jointly by Robert Gosling and the rector, Rev. WJ Copeland. The foundation stone was laid by Robert Gosling's wife, Georgina, in 1858, and the church opened in 1859. The church is of brick, faced with local flint, and embellished inside with English marble and granite and Minton tiles. The same rector and Robert Gosling were principal contributors to the present Church of England Primary School, built in 1855.



In the churchyard, the war memorial, made of "Forest Dean" stone, was unveiled in 1920 by Colonel SF Gosling DSO. Twenty four names of those that died in the two World Wars are remembered here.

The telephone box at Farnham Green has been converted into an exchange book library. This not only contains books but often has maps and copies of the *Farnham Circular Walks* booklet. Surprisingly, the books in the kiosk usually change completely within a six month period. The rules are simple: take a book and leave another in its place.

The Three Horseshoes public house, overlooking Farnham Cricket Club's ground at Hazel End, is the one remaining hostelry in the parish. Some parts of the building date back to the 16th century. It offers a wide-ranging menu and is open seven days a week.

Just behind the Three Horseshoes, Hazel End Farm has a vineyard from which still and sparkling wines have been made for nearly 20 years. They can be purchased from the farm door.

On the last Wednesday of the month one can enjoy coffee and cake at the friendly village hall.

The Recreation Area, situated off Rectory Lane, Farnham village, has apparatus for all ages, including a cross trainer for adults and a zip wire for the more adventurous.

Farnham is a little off the beaten track, on the border of Essex with Hertfordshire. It can be reached only by undulating, winding lanes and public rights of way. Just a few older inhabitants remember when cattle were driven twice a day along Rectory Lane, but Farnham has retained much of its rural heritage. Here are photos of two more of the parish's 51 listed buildings which are scattered around its five hamlets.



Hospitality:

The Three Horseshoes, Hazel End Road. Bar and restaurant - 01279 813429 - www.threehorseshoeshazelend.co.uk

Hundred Parishes Society walks include:

- Walk 161: a circular walk of 5 miles from Farnham Church and two longer Station walks that pass through Farnham:
 - 01: Circular route from Stansted Mountfitchet station (11 miles).
 - 18: Ware station to Stansted Mountfitchet station (17 miles).

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Albury, Manuden, Stansted Mountfitchet, Birchanger.

Links:

Parish Council: <https://farnhampc.com/>

Farnham Church history: <https://www.thefivechurches.co.uk/st-mary-farnham-church-history/>

Farnham Primary School: www.farnham.essex.sch.uk

Further reading:

Farnham, Essex: Past and Present, Rev JG Geare, the then rector, published in 1909.

Farnham, Essex: 1909 to 1990, William Gosling & Margaret Lehner

Farnham Circular Walks - Ten walks in the parish with maps (from parish clerk or website).