



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## HEMPSTEAD



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**Location:** 6 miles east of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6338.

**Postcode:** CB10 2PD. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** B1054.

**Buses:** 320 and 321 (Mon – Sat) between Audley End Station, Saffron Walden and Haverhill.

**Population:** 422 in 2001, 451 in 2011, 430 in 2021.

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Hempstead is a small parish situated seven miles east of Saffron Walden in the north-west corner of Essex. Its population was just 451 at the time of the 2011 census.

Hempstead is probably best known for its association with three extraordinary men.

William Harvey (1578-1657), who first explained the circulation of blood in the human body, and Admiral Sir Eliab Harvey (1758-1830), commander of the Temeraire at the battle of Trafalgar, were both interred in the Church crypt with many more members of the Harvey family. William's body was moved in 1883 by the Royal College of Physicians to a sarcophagus that now dominates the north chapel, above the Harvey family vault. Neither of these gentlemen is believed to have lived in Hempstead but they rest here because William's brother, another Eliab, lived just outside the village at Winslow Hall which was destroyed by fire in the 19th century. He funded an extension to the church and created the Harvey family vault.

By complete contrast to those honourable gentlemen, the third man associated with Hempstead is notorious highwayman Dick Turpin (1705-1739). He was born in the village pub but died in York where he was executed for his various brutal crimes, having evaded capture in Essex where most of his crimes had been committed.



Dick Turpin grew up in Hempstead as his parents were licensees of what was then called the Bell Inn. After a period when it was known as the Rose and Crown, the pub has for some years been called The Bluebell Inn. It is a noted landmark, standing at the T Junction in the village, opposite the recently refurbished War Memorial. Sadly, the pub closed in 2020; it is hoped that closure will not be permanent.

The main road through the village, classified as the B1054, passes the pub and connects the towns of Haverhill and Saffron Walden. The majority of properties in Hempstead are to be found along this road which runs along a narrow valley with fields rising on either side.

The village hall is set back off the road a short distance north of the pub on the opposite side of the road. The building served as the village school until the mid 20th century with separate classrooms for boys and girls. The hall was fully refurbished and extended as a village Millennium project, with the doors opened by the oldest resident on 3rd January 2000. The modern facilities make it suitable for the Radwinter Pre-School to operate here 5 mornings per week in term time, providing care and learning for youngsters from the age of 2. The local primary school is based in Radwinter, 1.5 miles away, and children then attend secondary schools in Saffron Walden and beyond.



The parish church, dedicated to St Andrew, sits on higher ground, on the secondary road leading uphill from the pub, giving it a commanding presence over the heart of the village. The church dates from the 14th century although the tower is as recent as 1933 after the collapse of its predecessor. A booklet taking you on *A Walk Through the Centuries* of St. Andrew's church by Hazel Weedon can be purchased and a management plan of the churchyard is available in the porch. The churchyard won Best Kept Essex churchyard in 2007.

While the village hall is the location for most village events, occasional concerts are held in the church, organised by Friends of Hempstead Church whose interest is in protecting its structure and history.

As with many small villages, Hempstead can appear quite sleepy at first glance but a host of activities, entertainments and fund-raising events take place all year round between the different clubs and societies. The Gardeners' Club holds plant sales and two traditional village shows per year plus walks, garden visits and guest speakers. The Amateur Dramatic Society is renowned for its high-quality productions and pantomimes and there is a bellringing group (for the 6 bells in the church tower), an informal art group, keep fit group and much more.



The centre of the village is a conservation area and here there is an interesting selection of ancient, listed buildings. One of these, the idyllic cottage on the left, dates from the 17th or 18th century. Its name, Dick Turpin's Cottage, was bestowed only in the 20th century and it probably had no direct connection with the legendary highwayman.

The rural setting around the village is of gentle slopes and arable farmland with several nearby woods including Hempstead Wood. It is a popular destination for walkers although its 190

acres of ancient woodland are only walkable on the southern boundary, but even here in springtime you can see the lovely Oxlip which is rarely seen outside this area. Footpath maps and suggested walks are available to buy in the church.

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**Hospitality:** The Bluebell Inn closed in 2020, hopefully only temporarily.

**Hundred Parishes Society walks** include . . .

Circular walk 135 which starts near the church and covers 4.3 miles around the parish. Several walk routes can be downloaded from the parish council website.

**Adjacent parishes:**

The Sampfords, Radwinter, Helions Bumpstead, Steeple Bumpstead, Finchingfield.

**Links:**

Parish Council and all parish organisations and events: [www.hempstead-essex.org.uk](http://www.hempstead-essex.org.uk)

1961 Television archive of Hempstead and Dick Turpin: <http://eafa.org.uk/work/?id=1066383>

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