



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

LINDSELL



Location: 3 miles north of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6427.
Postcode: CM6 3QR. **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Access:** west off B1057.
Buses: 16 (Mon – Sat) between Chelmsford & Wethersfield; 322 (Tues) to Gt Dunmow & Bishop's Stortford. **Population:** 220 in 2001, 260 in 2011, 260 in 2021.

Lindsell is a small mid-Essex parish of open farmland. It has been variously known over the years as Lyndesele, Lindseles and Lindezel, thought to indicate 'huts among the trees'. It appears to have Roman origins and has probably changed little over the centuries.

There is no real focal point to the parish, with its small hamlets of Bustard Green to the northeast and Holder's Green to the northwest connected by quiet lanes to Lindsell village near the centre. Bustard Green is a tiny cluster of dwellings off the beaten track near the delightfully named 15th-century Porridge Hall (apparently a corruption of "poor ridge", a description of the landscape). Bustard Green, accessible by a number of footpaths from all directions, is common land and a notable wildlife site. It has never been sprayed or fertilised and is known for its bee orchids and sulphur clover, and also for turtle doves which have taken up residence in recent years. The tiny hay meadow and orchard of Sweetings Meadow Nature Reserve, just a mile to the west near Holder's Green and owned by the Essex Wildlife Trust, is another little pocket of unusual flora, boasting five species of orchid.

The village of Lindsell is rather larger than it first appears, there being a cluster of dwellings around Lindsell Hall and the parish church at Church End, which one meets first if arriving from either east or west. One is inclined to think that is it, until a turn northwards opens up a long linear settlement in the direction of Thaxted.

Many of Lindsell's dwellings are listed, for example Simpkins and Lashley Hall, seen here to right and left respectively.



Also listed is the lovely parish church of St Mary the Virgin, easy to miss if you are just driving through, as it is set back off the road behind Lindsell Hall. But don't miss it; it's worth a visit.

St Mary's has about it an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness. It is very small and very light. The configuration of pews is such that one bank is set at right-angles to the other, so that worshippers can actually look at one another if they so wish.





A 'squint' built into the chancel wall allows all to view the celebrant administering the bread and wine. This church, unlike so many, seems to be designed to draw people together, rather than to keep them apart. But having said that, there is a part of the church which was expressly, and rather disturbingly, designed to do just the opposite. In 1926, some renovations to the church opened up the remains of an anchorite cell attached to the north wall, having as its only access a small door into the chancel, 13 inches x 9 inches, shown here.

Through this hatch, the cell's incumbent received the necessities of daily life. By choice an anchorite nun (many were women) would have been bricked up in this cell, possibly for life, for the purposes of prayer and solitude. A rather chilling contrast to the overall sense of togetherness.

St Mary's is a church of many centuries, there being evidence of Norman origins and features and artefacts from almost every century since, to the present day.

Visitors wanting to stop awhile for refreshment during their exploration of Lindsell will need to cross the border into neighbouring parishes, but don't leave without a visit to the farm shop at Priors Hall Farm – probably the most-visited place in Lindsell, and well known for its high-quality pork products. It's just opposite the village sign.



Hospitality: See adjacent parishes and Great Bardfield.

Adjacent parishes: Great Dunmow, Great Easton & Tilty, Thaxted, Little Bardfield, Stebbing.

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 177 covering 4 miles entirely within Lindsell parish, and

Circular walk 119 which covers 9 miles from Great Dunmow including 1 mile through the southern part of Lindsell parish.

Links:

Parish: No website. Lindsell has no parish council, but a parish meeting which meets twice a year - <https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/mgParishCouncilDetails.aspx?ID=484>.

Lindsell history: www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/lindsell/Lindsell.html

Lindsell church: www.achurchnearyou.com/lindsell-st-mary-the-virgin/

Wild Essex – Bustard Green: www.wildessex.net/sites/Bustard%20Green.htm

Essex Wildlife Trust - Sweetings Meadow: <https://uttlesford-wildlife.org.uk/places-to-visit/sweetings-meadow/>

Priors Hall Farm, Lindsell, CM6 3QR: www.priorshallfarm.co.uk - 01371 870256.

Further reading:

Lindsell: a Record of its People, Parish and Church, by Arthur Osborne, published 1944.

Lindsell Church and Village Life, booklet available from church.