



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

MATCHING



Location: 4 miles east of Harlow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5211.

Postcode: CM17 0RR. **County:** Essex. **District:** Epping Forest. **Access:** south of A1060.

Buses: HSB1 (Mon, Weds and Friday) to Harlow.

Population: 636 in 2001, 661 in 2011, 980 in 2021.

Matching is a parish on the western edge of the county of Essex, home to a number of small villages and hamlets, the most notable of which are the tiny, hidden-away Matching itself, Matching Tye to the southwest (pictured below) and Matching Green to the southeast. The area



is thought to be a settlement of Saxon origin, the name being derived from the people of Maecca (Match) who populated an open area of pasture (Ing). There are still areas of open pasture in the parish, but what mostly strikes the visitor, approaching from any direction, are the areas of woodland, shrub and hedgerow, much of which lines the network of lanes and footpaths and makes this a green and beautiful place.

Approached by a twisting lane and no-through road, Matching itself has a rather remote and enclosed feel about it. It is not hard to imagine it as the site of the

principal manor it once was, the centre of the original village, and it retains the manor house Matching Hall, the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, and the curiously named Marriage Feast House (or Hall or Room depending upon which sources you use). It rather feels as though you have stepped back in time here and you would not be at all surprised to see a yokel in a smock driving a horse and hay cart through it. In fact, the smart car leaving the manor house and the anoraked walkers with a dog on an extendable lead seem out of place; something of an anachronism in this sheltered and historic place. It feels as though they shouldn't be here.

All three main buildings which now constitute Matching village are Grade II* listed. The Hall, which stands on a moated site, is a private residence. It was mostly rebuilt in the 17th century, with some later reconstruction. St Mary's Church is of Norman origin, probably built on an old Saxon site. It was extensively renovated in the late 19th century, but retains structures and artefacts of every century from the 13th to the present day. The oldest of its six bells was cast in 1500, the newest in 1887 to celebrate Queen Victoria's jubilee; all were overhauled in 1990. The rare Bevington



organ was installed in 1907. The delightful Marriage Feast Room (seen here) is a Tudor building adjacent to the church and described by Philip Morant in his *History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1768) as 'designed for the entertainment of poor people on their wedding day'.

He also added 'it seems to be very ancient, but ruinous'. Fortunately, it is not ruinous now, having received 19th and 20th-century extensions and been well-maintained to the present day. It appears to have been used as a community building throughout its history. Similar buildings elsewhere that were designed for use in connection with an adjacent church have the overhanging upper storey facing the church, but Matching's faces away, suggesting that from its inception it was intended for a secular purpose.

Matching Tye is less than a mile from Matching. While there has been some 20th-century residential development in the locality, this does not impinge on the central conservation area, which has numerous listed buildings of note clustered around the small village green, the oldest dating from the 16th century.

Matching Green, also rich in listed buildings (including the one shown here), completes the triangle, but is entirely different from either of the aforementioned villages. It is a light, open space built around one of the largest greens in Essex, some 13 acres in size. The artist Augustus John lived here for a time in the early part of his life, next door to The Chequers pub which is still going strong.



Plenty of footpaths link the hamlets that make up Matching parish. Hundred Parishes walk 116 is a good introduction.

Those seeking a walking challenge whilst doing their sightseeing might want to pick up the Forest Way, a long distance path linking Epping and Hatfield forests. The Stort Valley Way is another possibility, a 28-mile route around Harlow and Sawbridgeworth, which runs through the northwestern part of the parish.

Refreshments en route can be obtained at The Chequers in Matching Green or The Fox Inn in Matching Tye. The Fox also offers bed and breakfast accommodation. Rather more upmarket is Down Hall Country House Hotel. Down Hall has a long and fascinating history and has a mention in the Domesday record as being 'let for £6 a year'. It might cost rather more than that today. During the late 1800s it was the residence of the politician and JP Sir Henry Selwin-Ibbetson - Lord Rookwood – who was a benefactor of some influence in the Matching area. During the 20th century it was first a home for convalescent soldiers from the First World War, and later a school. Today it is a luxury hotel and conference centre.

Hospitality:

Down Hall Country House Hotel, Hatfield Heath, CM22 7AS; 01279 731441; www.downhall.co.uk

Fox Inn, The Green, Matching Tye, CM17 0QS - 01279 731335 - www.thefoxinn.com

Chequers, Matching Green, CM17 0PZ - 01279 731276 - www.thechequersmatchinggreen.co.uk

Hundred Parishes Society walks include . . .

Circular walk 116 which starts at Matching Green, covers 5.7 miles and includes each of the parish's three main settlements.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Sheering, Hatfield Heath, White Roding.

Links:

Parish Council: <https://www.matchingcouncil.org.uk/>

The Forest Way: https://ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=Forest+Way+%28Essex%29

Stort Valley Way: www.ldwa.org.uk/ldp/members/show_path.php?path_name=Stort+Valley+Way

Further reading:

The Forest Way, David Knockton, 1996

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