

Sible Hedingham - an introduction

Sible Hedingham lies on the west bank of the River Colne, opposite the historic smaller village of Castle Hedingham with its distinctive Norman Keep. The village covers some 2123 hectares (5248 acres), making it the second largest village in Essex by area.

The village centres around the A1017, consisting of Yeldham Road, Swan Street, Potter Street and Queen Street, but away from the village centre, you will find outlying hamlets and greens with intriguing names such as Cutmapple, Delvin End and Cobbs Fen.

Unusually, Sible Hedingham has two historic centres, both with small village greens. One is around St Peter's Church, and the second (shown on old maps as the hamlet of Swan Street) around Alderford Street. Today, these are both Conservation Areas that showcase the village's rich architectural and environmental heritage.



A settlement has existed in what is now Sible Hedingham since the Bronze Age but the name Hedingham dates back to Saxon times, meaning 'a village at the head of meadow or pasture'. The 'Sible' part of our village's name comes from Sible de Laverton who held land in the village in the early 13th century.

Throughout its history, agriculture has been central to Sible Hedingham's development and the village gained a great reputation for one quite important crop – hops. Indeed Sible Hedingham hops were considered to be the finest in the county, and, as you walk along the footpaths you may well see surviving hops growing wild in the hedgerows. But, in spite of Sible Hedingham's agricultural heritage, the shape of the village today reflects a more industrial past, built on bricks and woodworking.

The earliest recorded brickworks were in existence in the early 1700s, but the arrival of the railway in 1861 led to such rapid expansion that by 1900 Sible Hedingham's brickworks employed more than five hundred men making over seven million bricks per year. As you walk around the village you will see Sible Hedingham's distinctive red bricks all around you, but keep a particular eye open for the ornamental moulded bricks and terracotta panels for which local brick makers such as Mark Gentry were nationally and internationally acclaimed.

As Sible Hedingham's brick industry declined throughout the first half of the 20th century, so Rippers Limited grew to become the largest employer in the area. Rippers' joinery factory filled the area that now includes Earls Garden, Rockways Close, Bewick Court and Rippers Court. Very little remains of 'The Works', (although you will see Rippers woodwork in famous locations such as Liberty's, Harvey Nichols and the Royal Festival Hall), but Rippers left their mark on the local environment through the 94 houses they built in the 1920s on Yeldham Road, Station Road, Swan Street and Brook Terrace.

The success of both industries and the prosperity of the village owed much to the Colne Valley and Halstead Railway which ran from Haverhill to Wakes Colne. The railway closed in 1962, but the station was dismantled and can now be seen at the nearby Colne Valley Railway.

Today, the majority of the village's 4000 inhabitants work further afield, relying on buses and cars rather than the local railway. But Sible Hedingham remains a vibrant community in the beautiful Colne Valley.



Places of Interest

St.Peter's Church

Sible Hedingham Church, dedicated to St. Peter, was largely built during the reign of Edward III. It is a fine edifice of brick and stone, including some Roman tiles, indicating that there were Roman remains nearby. The West Tower, originally built in 1350, was almost entirely rebuilt in the early 16th Century when the South Porch was added. The priests and choir stalls are a relatively recent addition, having been carved and constructed from oak by the craftsmen of Rippers Ltd. The church also possesses a fine peal of eight bells.

Alderford Street and Alderford Mill



For the greater part of the 19th. Century Alderford St. was known as Water Lane. In addition to The Mill the street had a tannery, three maltings, a wool combing factory and a hop merchants. The first records of the a mill (Alderford Myll) appeared in 1587, but a mill may have been on this site prior to this date; the Domesday Book refers to the area around the millsite as 'Alreforda', so the name has been in use for at least 900 years. The mill was part of the huge De Vere estates and manorial records from 1585 tell us that Edward De Vere of Hedingham Castle leased it for a term of 1000 years to a Mathew Allyton of Sible Hedingham at 68s 8d a year.

In 1792 the mill was rebuilt. In 1868 an extension was built for a steam engine, followed by early diesel then electric power. Alderford Mill ceased operation as a working mill in the late 1950's, but in 1994 ownership was transferred to Essex County Council, who renovated it with the help of English Heritage. It is now open to the public 6 times a year on a Sunday. (<http://www.alderfordmill.org.uk/>)

Broaks Wood

Broaks Wood, which sits on the border between Sible Hedingham and Gosfield, is considered to be the most diverse area of woodland in Essex. It is home to a unique variety of tree species, including a spectacular example of a Giant Redwood grove - the tallest growing tree species in the world.

The majority of the wood is designated as an ancient woodland and is estimated to have existed for more than 12,000 years.

Maintained by Forestry England, Broaks Wood offers visitors more than five miles of open paths to explore and enjoy. (<https://www.forestryengland.uk/broaks-wood>)

The Recreation Ground

The Recreation Ground was given to the village in 1928 by Arthur Frank Gibson, a local builder. It is managed by Sible Hedingham Parish Council and over the years there have been many improvements, including tree planting, the provision of playing equipment, a multi-use games area and public toilets. A shelter constructed of wood and red bricks, made in the village was erected in 1935 to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. The Recreation Ground is an amenity for all ages to enjoy.

Molly's Wood

Molly's Wood is a ten-acre nature reserve first planted in 2007. In addition to providing members with a tranquil place to walk and relax, Molly's Wood is a beautiful outdoor setting used by schools, choirs and other community groups. (<https://www.mollyswood.org>)

Roads		Places of Interest	
Abbey Meadow	K4	Alderford Mill	L6
Alderford Street	L6	Allotment Gardens	K4
Alexandra Road	K5, L5	Baptist Chapel	K4
Aley's Barn	L6	Fire Station	K5
Ashley Street	L5	Football Pitch	K4
Beech Grove	K5	Gray's Hall Meadow	K4
Bewick Court	K4	Hedingham School	K3
Brook Meadow	K5	Library	L5
Brook Terrace	L5	Parish Council Office	L6
Cambridge Avenue	L6	Pharmacy	L5
Capes Chase	L6	Playgrounds	K4, K5, L4, L6
Castle Meadow	K4	Pocket Park	L5
Charlton Close	K4	Post Office	L5
Christmas Field	K4	Recreation Ground	K6
Church Street	K5	Rehobath Baptist Chapel	L5
Colne Road	L6	Riverside Walk	L4, L5, L6
Cousins Yard	L5	Saint Peter's CE Primary School	K5
Cygnat Court	L5	Saint Peter's Church	L6
Edward Crescent	L5	Surgery	L6
Elm Close	K4	Toilets	L6
Everitt Way	L4	Village Green (Church Street)	K5
Finch Walk	L5	Village Green (Alderford Street)	L6
Frirs Close	K4	Village Hall	K5
Gibson Road	K6	White Lion	
Grays Mead	K4		
Hawkwood Road	K6, L6		
Hawthorns	K4		
Hedingham Place	L5		
Hills Road	K6		
Hilton Walk	L6		
Hilton Way	L6		
Hogarth Close	L5		
Jubilee Court	L6		
Lamb Lane	L7		
Newman's Meadow	L5		
Norman Close	L4		
Oak Walk	K4		
Osier Way	L4		
Oxford Lane	J4, K4		
Oxford Meadow	K4		
Park Court	K5		
Parkfields	K5		
Pen Meadow	L5		
Plaza Court	L5		
Prayer's Hill	J5		
Queen Street	L3		
Recreation Ground	K5		
Recreation Road	K6		
Rectory Meadow	K5		
Rectory Road	K5		
Rippers Court	L4		
Riverside Way	L5		
Rockways Close	L4		
Saint Peters View	K5		
School Road	J6, K6		
Sparrow Close	K6		
Spring Way	L5, L6		
Spurgeon Close	L5		
Station Road	K4, L4		
Summerfields	L5		
Swan Chase	L6		
Swan Court	L6		
Swan Street	L5, L6		
Tundra Close	L5		
Warburton Avenue	K6		
Webster Close	K6		
Westrop Drive	L4		
Wethersfield Road	J5		
Willow Dene	K4		
Willow Meadows	L6		
Woodpecker Lane	L4		
Yeldham Road	K4		



About the walks

A few suggested walks, often linking with Sible Hedingham's history and heritage, are highlighted on the main map.

Two of the walks, the **Pauline Stevens Walk** and the **Phyllis Cox Walk**, are named in memory of former members of Sible Hedingham Parish Council. They both devoted an immense amount of time and effort into preserving the parish's network of footpaths, encouraging people to walk them, and organising group walks.

The **Hedingham Mills Walk** starts and finishes in Castle Hedingham, passing the newly renovated Alderford Mill before heading out into open countryside. The return journey passes by Hulls Mill (once owned by Hovis and still known by many as Hovis Mill) in one of the most picturesque parts of the Colne Valley.

The **Potteries Walk** reflects the village's history, passing through areas where ancient pottery has been discovered, including the remains of a medieval kiln near to the appropriately named Potter Street.

The **Hawkwood Walk** carries the name of Sible Hedingham's most famous son – the 14th century soldier and mercenary, Sir John Hawkwood. Hawkwood fought under Edward III in the Hundred Years War in France but found fame and fortune as a mercenary in Italy, earning himself the nickname Giovanni Acuto, or John Sharp, for his cunning on the battlefield.

Hawkwood died in Florence in 1394 and was buried in the Duomo, where the famous fresco of him by Paolo Uccello can be seen today.

Blue Plaques (See Main Map)

- 1 **John Hilton (1805-1878):** Celebrated surgeon and Surgeon Extraordinary to Queen Victoria
- 2 **Sir William Davenant (1606-1668):** Poet Laureate and dramatist
- 3 **John Redwood Anderson (1883-1964):** Poet and Playwright
- 4 **Rachel Barrett (1875-1953):** Campaigner for women's rights and editor of The Suffragette
- 5 **Emily 'Kitty' Marshall (1870-1947):** Suffragette and noted activist in the Women's Social and Political Union
- 6 **Arthur Marshall (1870-1947):** Lawyer who supported the suffragette movement and appeared on behalf of many suffragettes



MAP FOOTPATHS PARISH HEDINGHAM SIBLE

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