

THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY

www.hundredparishes.org.uk

The Hundred Parishes has an exceptional depth of ancient buildings. More than 6,000 are “listed”, meaning that they appear on the National Heritage List for England. Each property listing includes a description and many of these descriptions take their text from the guide books produced by one exceptional man, Nikolaus Pevsner.

Pevsner, an architectural historian, was born in 1902 in Leipzig, Germany, the son of a Russian-Jewish fur merchant. In 1933 he moved to England and settled in Hampshire. Following the outbreak of World War II, he was taken to an internment camp but was released three months later.

Work on his series of architectural guide books, *The Buildings of England*, began in 1945. The edition covering the whole of Hertfordshire was published in 1953; Essex and Cambridgeshire followed in 1954.

Most of the ancient architecture in The Hundred Parishes is mentioned by Pevsner in these three editions, either in general terms or in great detail. One example in Essex is Manuden, which he describes as follows: “Manuden has a specially pretty, short village street with timber framed cottages with oversailing upper floors near the church and a small assortment of Georgian houses a little further west”.

In Cambridgeshire, he described the Norman interior of Ickleton’s parish church as having few equals in the country.

In Hertfordshire, the 17th-century almshouses in Buntingford were described by Pevsner as “the stateliest almshouses in the county”.

Nikolaus Pevsner was granted British citizenship in 1946, appointed CBE in 1953 and knighted in 1969 “for services to art and architecture”. In total, he was responsible for 46 county-wide guides. He died in Hampstead, London in 1983.

The website www.hundredparishes.org.uk has more than a hundred walk routes that can be freely downloaded. The route descriptions draw attention to some of the listed buildings that are passed.