

Red Lion

At the heart of Preston is The Red Lion, a 200 year-old Georgian building and free house. As a real-ale pub, The Red Lion offers an ever-changing assortment of real ales mostly sourced from micro-breweries from around the country.

The Pub has an attractive well-kept beer-garden to the rear which is very busy during the Summer months. In the Winter, an open log fire provides a cosy and traditional pub atmosphere.

Home made food is served every day with proper roasts for Sunday lunch using local produce.

The Red Lion is also well known because, in 1982, it became the first community-owned Public House in Great Britain. The spirit of the village initiative attracted national and even international attention.

Having won the Bronze Award the previous year, The Red Lion was presented in 2003 with the national Silver Award by the Morning Cask Conditioned Ale Advertiser for the best.



CAMRA's Pub of the Year in Hertfordshire in 2001 and 2005.

The Red Lion is the spiritual home of the village's highly successful Cricket Club. As well as serving the local community, it also acts as a meeting place for Morris Men, book clubs, ramblers, cyclists, fishermen, shooters as well as three hunts.

The Red Lion,
The Green, Preston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire,
SG4 7UD
Tel: 01462 459585

History

In the time of Edward the Confessor, the manor of Deneatlat (later Temple Dinsley - see map ref C4) was held by Earl Harold but by 1086 it was in the hands of William the Conqueror and was assessed at the time of the Domesday Book as having a value of seven hides.

Preston formed part of the manor, 'the hundred of Hitchin' and, in the 12th century, was granted to the Knights Templars, who built a Preceptory of the order at Temple Dinsley. Among the best known of these Knights was Bernard de Balliol, a crusader whose effigy can still be seen in Hitchin St Mary Church.



The earliest reference to a church in the area was in 1252 when six acres of land was given to the nuns at Elistow, Bedfordshire. The nuns provided a chaplain to the church and gave one mark of silver and 4lb of wax for candles to celebrate the feast of St Michael. The current church, St Martin's, is relatively modern having been built in 1900, a good example of an arts and crafts building.

According to folklore and historic records, a lost Knights Templar treasure chest is buried somewhere in Preston. In 1309, by order of Edward II, the six Knights Templar at Temple Dinsley were arrested: two were sent to the Tower of London and the remaining four to Hertford Castle. Neither the King, nor Geoffrey de la Lee, to whom the Templar's lands were assigned, could find the treasure casket said to be buried at Temple Dinsley. A Royal Commission set up 'to inquire touching concealed goods of the Templars in the County of Hertfordshire', found nothing, nor did two men granted a patent to dig for treasure by Edward III on condition that the Crown took half the spoil.

Some believe that an ancient oak to the east side of a pool, long ago filled in, is a clue to the resting place of the fabulous treasure.

On the dissolution of the Knights Templars in 1312, Temple Dinsley passed to the Knights Hospitallers who resided there until their dissolution by King Henry VIII in 1542. The estate was then given to Sir Ralph Sadleir of Standon for his services to the crown.

Welcome to Preston

Preston is a small village in Hertfordshire nestling in beautiful countryside 30 miles north of London and three miles south of the historic market town of Hitchin. Preston is fortunate to be located in beautiful countryside which attracts many ramblers, cyclists, and artists, especially in the summer months.

With its close proximity to the eastern edge of the Chilterns, Preston is one of the highest points of Hertfordshire at a height of 507ft. Allegedly, if you travel in a north easterly direction, you will not come to a higher point until you reach the Russian Urals.

Preston stands in an area of great natural beauty, with winding country lanes, shallow valleys and beautiful woodland. In 2005, Preston was a proud recipient of the first prize in Hertfordshire's Small Village of the Year competition organised by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, The Hertfordshire Society and Calor.

To the north of Preston is Wain Wood (map ref A3), made famous in the 17th Century for the meetings of the non-conformist preacher, John Bunyan (see 'History'). To the southeast, is Hitch Wood which is also a popular destination for a relaxing weekend stroll. During late Spring, both Wain Wood and Hitch Wood are covered in a dramatic carpet of bluebells.



Along the footpaths and bridleways of Preston, there is much to discover throughout the year. Deer freely roam the woods and farmland and other wildlife includes bats, hare, mink, stoat, foxes and plenty of rabbits!

Preston welcomes all visitors who respect the peace and tranquillity of our beautiful village.

Countryside Code

While visiting the village of Preston we kindly request that you abide by the Countryside Code:

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Fasten all gates
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Take special care on country roads
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Make no unnecessary noise



Paths and Trails

The Preston Trust is a supporter of the Parish Paths Partnership (P3), a scheme which enables local people to improve and promote the use of rights of way.

Preston benefits from an extensive network of off-road routes classed as Public Rights of Way, many of which are signed or "waymarked" with coloured arrows along the route.

- **Footpaths** are open only to walkers.
- **Bridleways** are also open to horse riders and cyclists (although cyclists should give way to other users).
- **Byways** are legally open to all traffic, although most of them are unsuitable for ordinary motor vehicles, you may encounter off-road vehicles and motorbikes.

Restricted byways are open to all non-motorised users including vehicles such as horse-drawn carts.

Permissive paths are where the owner has given permission to the public to use the path. Although permission is usually granted on a long-term basis, it can be withdrawn at any time.

For further information, see www.ramblers.org.

Colour maps and information on the rural village of Preston and surrounding area



www.prestonvillageherts.com

This leaflet has been designed by John Nurthen on behalf of **THE PRESTON TRUST**

Further information on the history of Preston, including family history, can be found at www.prestonherts.co.uk

Bunyan used to stay at Hunsdon House or Preston Castle (now the site of privately-owned Castle Farm - map ref B2). Nearly a century later it became the home of Captain Robert Hinde (1770-86), historian of the Light Dragoons and the inspiration for Laurence Sterne's Uncle Toby in the novel Tristram Shandy. He embarked the farm, provided a drawbridge and placed guns on the front lawn. On the anniversary of a battle or other notable event, he would march his 'army' composed of his steward, farm hands, and a group of village children dressed in a uniform of his own design into Hitchin market place and on return to Preston fire a salute of guns.



Preston also has its place in history due to its importance in the development of non-conformist religion during the 17th Century.

To the north of the village is Wain Wood where the preacher and author of Pilgrim's Progress, John Bunyan, held regular meetings.

Buried deep in the wood, you can find Bunyan's Dell (map ref A4), a natural amphitheatre which was the site of Bunyan's services.

"I have understood that a thousand people have met in that vale at midnight to hear Mr Bunyan preach", wrote an 18th century Hitchin parson.

In 1690, his son Edwin sold the estate to cover his debts, to Benedict Ithell who later became a Trustee of Hitchin Grammar School. Mr Ithell pulled down the old house and erected the present one (now Princess Helena College). The wings and outbuildings were added by the famous architect Sir Edwin Lutyens for the Fenwick family in 1909-22 along with fine gardens designed by Gertrude Jekyll.

When the widow of Benedict Ithell died, the estate was inherited by Thomas Harwood, "her faithful friend and steward" and, following his death by his and Mrs Ithell's secret son, Joseph Darton. In 1873, the Dartons sold Temple Dinsley to Henry Fryor who sold off parts of the estate so establishing the village we know today.