Our Local History

By Dick Mundy

Editor's note:

This is a collection of the local history articles that have previously been published in The Three Towers. These historical articles are reproduced in this compilation by the kind permission of their author, Dick Mundy of Manthorpe.

Tom McWilliams

Editor – The Three Towers

the3towers1@gmail.com

Contents

The Old Radio Station Swallow Hill

One place that has always intrigued me on my travels is the now derelict radio station on top of Swallow Hill on the left of the road leading from Manthorpe into Thurlby. The station is in fact just inside Manthorpe parish. The boundary between Manthorpe and Thurlby goes along the road past the radio station and then turns left to follow the hedge line northwards on the Thurlby side, with the radio station in the corner.

For those of us with a passion for maps, the parish boundary and the station are marked on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map sheet 248 (Bourne) at grid reference TF 0816.

The station consists of a small brick building with a notice on the door announcing that it is "British Gas East Midlands Thurlby Radio Station". A large concrete slab is to the right. The aerial mast must have been at least 100 feet tall and was built in the centre of the slab with guy ropes anchored at each corner. The whole site is surrounded by a wooden fence, with a gate in front of the building.

Some years ago, when I was younger and fitter, I was very keen on archery. When driving home from my place of employment in Peterborough, I used to gauge the strength of the wind by the amount of bending in the mast. This told me whether or not it was too windy to go shooting.

At least ten years ago the mast disappeared and the whole site was abandoned. It has now been taken over by trees, which have grown so

well that the building has almost been consumed by them. Some parts of the fence and the gate have collapsed. It is in a pretty poor state.

There appears to be a lack of information about the radio station and why it has been left in this way. Reference books and local histories offer no clues. Despite diligent searching, the only mention I can find on the internet is a photograph on the geograph.org.uk website dated 2006 which shows the radio station and aerial mast at the above grid reference.

As a keen photographer I have often taken pictures of the station showing its gradual decline. The earliest is from 2011, probably not long after the mast was dismantled, and before all the foliage took over.

Derelict buildings such as this are usually sold off, snapped up by developers and the site covered with expensive housing. But strangely this has not happened to the radio station.

The truth must be out there.

The Earl of Lindsey

Tucked away at the east end of the north aisle of Edenham Church is a very fine monument to the first Earl of Lindsey. Born Robert Bertie in 1582, he became the 14th Baron Willoughby d'Eresby in 1601 and was created Earl in 1626. His home was Grimsthorpe Castle, granted by the Crown to the d'Eresby family in 1516. The Earl was killed on 23rd October 1642 at the battle of Edgehill, the first major action of the English Civil War, the armed conflict between King Charles I and Parliament.

The Earl of Lindsey was an experienced soldier who had fought in Spain, the Low Countries and at sea. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he and his son Montague raised regiments in Lincolnshire for the King. In August 1642, at the age of sixty, Lindsey was appointed Lord General of the main Royalist army.

When the King's nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, was appointed commander of the Royalist cavalry, he would only take orders from the King himself. This placed Lindsey in a very difficult position and led to bitter acrimony. At the council of war before the battle of Edgehill, Lindsey quarrelled with Rupert over the deployment of troops. When the King followed Rupert's advice, Lindsey angrily resigned his post and was promptly replaced as Lord General.

Lindsey then fought on foot as a colonel at the head of the Lincolnshire infantry regiment that he had raised. His son, commanding a troop of

cavalry under Rupert, dismounted and stood by his father's side. Family loyalty came before military discipline. During the battle, Parliamentary horsemen violently attacked the Royalist infantry division. The Earl of Lindsey was shot in the thigh, then he and his son were captured. Lindsey was carried to a nearby barn, where he died from his wounds on the following day.

The King had been shaken by the suffering he had witnessed. Lindsey's fate was still unknown. The King sent a herald to the Parliamentarian lines offering free pardon to all the rebels. The herald brought back to the royal camp the news that Lindsey had died. It was the only positive result of his mission.

King Charles was eventually defeated in the Civil War and was tried and beheaded in 1649 on the orders of Oliver Cromwell leading a Puritan faction in Parliament. Lindsey's son Montague was one of only four peers brave enough to attend the King's funeral at Windsor.

After more fighting, a failed attempt by Parliament to establish a republic, and the death of Cromwell in 1658, the monarchy was restored with Charles II, son of Charles I, as King.

At Edenham there is an array of monuments in the church to the Willoughby d'Eresby family. The text of the monument to the first Earl of Lindsey and his son Montague is in Latin and for us non-scholars a helpful translation is affixed. A fitting memorial to a brave man who had the courage of his convictions but paid the ultimate price.

Saxon Architecture

One of the attractions of this part of England is the variety and number of parish churches. All history is there. Churches record the story of the parish, contain monuments to local worthies, and parts of the building often date back a thousand years to Saxon times.

The Anglo-Saxons arrived in England after the Romans left in about 400 AD and governed the country until conquered by the Normans in 1066. During that time, they fought ferociously among themselves and were frequently invaded by the Vikings from Denmark. Because secular Saxon buildings were constructed of wood with wattle and daub walls, such depredations left none of these inflammable structures standing.

Only their monasteries and churches were built in stone. There are good examples in the north of England at Escomb, County Durham and the monastic buildings at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. An early Saxon church of note is at Brixworth, Northamptonshire, partly built of old Roman bricks. At nearly 100 feet long, Brixworth is large compared to other early Saxon churches.

Churches tend to develop over time and often display many different periods of architecture in one building. In our area there are quite a

few displaying Anglo-Saxon origins. Arguably the finest is St. John the Baptist at Barnack near Peterborough (pictured). The oldest parts of the church are the two lower stages of the tower which date from 1000 to 1020 in the late Saxon period. There are particularly fine and unusual carvings on all its faces as well as typically Saxon windows and the south doorway.

St. Mary Magdalene at Essendine has a useful architectural description of the church on an information board inside the building, which dates the south doorway to the first half of the 11th century. The arch has a Norman zig-zag decoration and contains a particular device used frequently by Anglo-Saxon church builders.

St. Medard in Little Bytham is supposed to have Saxon quoins (corners) to the nave but on a recent visit I could not spot them.

St. Peter and St. Paul in Market Overton in Rutland was originally 10th century Saxon of which only the tower arch remains. It is said to be the only notable piece of Anglo-Saxon architecture left in that county.

At St. Michael and All Angels at Edenham there is a small but very fine array of Anglo-Saxon remains. High up on the wall of the south aisle are two 8th century carved roundels, indicating that this was probably the original external wall of an ancient Anglo-Saxon minster. The shaft of an Anglo-Saxon cross of the same period is displayed at the north west of the nave. A rare pre-Viking sculpture from the late 8th century decorated on all four sides sits at the west end. A useful typed notice tells the visitor that their presence indicates pre-Conquest Christian worship at Edenham.

This is history you can visit, look at and touch. Walk around the church, admire the architecture and monuments, make a small monetary contribution and say a prayer if you will. Or at least we could until this tiny virus fouled up our lives. Roll on the time when the bug is defeated and we can get back to near normal and appreciate these wonderful buildings.

The Mallard

Just beyond the boundary of our group of parishes, a record was set over eighty years ago which still stands today. The world speed record for steam locomotives at 125.88 mph was achieved on 3rd July 1938 on the East Coast Main Line. The exact spot is between Aunby and Carlby, at milepost 90¼ on the up line towards London.

The record was obtained by No. 4468 Mallard, a Class A4 locomotive, designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, chief engineer of the London and North Eastern Railway. Mallard and its tender, painted in garter blue, was pulling seven carriages weighing in all 240 tons. The attempt was rather hush-hush, it was made on a Sunday, under the pretext of a trial of a new quick-acting brake, and no fare-paying passengers were carried.

Crewed by driver Joe Duddington and fireman Tommy Bray, Mallard's streamlined design and some clever engineering powered it to the record. The train rocked so violently that dining car crockery smashed, and red-hot bullet-like cinders from the locomotive broke windows at Little Bytham. Mallard's big-end bearings were running so hot that it had to slow down considerably to avoid them melting. In fact, Mallard had to

be detached from the train at Peterborough for repairs and the journey back to King's Cross continued with a standby engine.

Mallard retired from regular service in 1963 after covering almost 1.5 million miles, was fully restored to working order in the 1980s, and is now preserved at the National Railway Museum in York.

Sir Nigel Gresley was born in 1876, knighted in 1936 and died in 1941. He was responsible for designing many famous steam locomotives including The Flying Scotsman. The Gresley Society was founded in 1963 to commemorate the work of the great man.

On 29th July 1998 the society installed a large sign beside the East Coast Main Line to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the event. It is sited at the precise point where the highest speed was reached. The cost was funded partly by the society, by individuals and railway companies.

The Mallard sign can be seen either by buying a railway ticket, and hoping that the train will not be going too fast, or from the B1176 going from Ryhall towards Little Bytham. Past the turn off to Carlby, the road ascends to Barbers Hill and at the top just past the farm house on the right is a gated field entrance from which the sign can be viewed. Parking is risky. Either on the narrow verge, or at the field entrance, or another on the left slightly further on. However, the sign is a long way from the road. You will need: clear weather, good eyesight, good binoculars, and a telephoto lens for photography. The railway authorities, or possibly the landowner, have very helpfully cut back the tree growth allowing a better view of the sign from the road.

All this is old news to railway enthusiasts, among whom I do not include myself. I just love history that I can go and see. And this is one instance where the lockdown does not stop us.

Recumbent Effigies

This splendid term refers to a type of English church monument in the form of a life size figure lying down, carved from stone or wood, sometimes covered in painted brass, and mounted on a stone plinth or chest tomb. There are a surprising number of these effigies in our local parish churches.

The figure can be a knight in armour from the late 13th or early 14th centuries. Good examples are at Burton-le-Coggles, Swinstead, Uffington and Wilsthorpe. Sometimes the effigies are in pairs with a lady lying next to her husband. These are found at Stoke Rochford, Careby and Edenham.

When recumbent effigies were raised onto chest tombs, they were far more elaborate than those lower down, and are from later centuries. There are some very fine recumbent effigies of this type in Rutland. At Brooke, the monument to Charles Noel who died in 1619 aged 28 is an alabaster figure in plate armour with panel and crest above. At Exton, one chest tomb bears recumbent effigies of John Harrington (died 1524) in full armour with his wife Alice beside him. Another is to Anne, Lady Bruce of Kinloss (died 1627). Her tomb is made from black and

white marble and is of great importance and exceptional beauty according to “Buildings of England” by Pevsner. They must have been very wealthy in Rutland!

All the foregoing refers to monuments of the nobility and landowning classes who had the wealth and social standing to have elaborate tombs inside the church. The closer the tomb is to the altar, the greater the prestige of the family. The poorer people and lower social classes had to make do with being buried outside the church in a simple grave.

Crossed legs on a knight effigy indicate that he served in the crusades, or had taken crusading vows. The vow was referred to as “taking the cross”, hence crossed legs. A good example is at Swinstead (pictured). When the feet rested on a lion, it indicated valour and nobility for men. When on a dog this shows loyalty, often used for ladies. Sometimes the feet rested on a heraldic beast from the family coat of arms. Military historians have found that some knight effigies are carved so well that they give valuable information on styles of armour in medieval times.

Some of these effigies are badly weathered, perhaps because they have spent centuries outside the church. Now and again one or both feet are missing. These signs indicate wanton damage by Protestants during the Reformation or by Parliamentarian troops in the Civil War. At Edenham, effigies were thrown out of the church at the Reformation and only brought back inside at the start of the 20th century. At Wilsthorpe and Burton-le-Coggles feet are missing.

As for identification of the deceased represented by the effigy, the best place to find out is on a plaque or helpful notice in the church itself, or the guidebook often written by a scholarly clergyman in years gone by. So next time we are allowed out to visit a church, look around for recumbent effigies, make a contribution, dig deep and buy the guidebook, and enjoy the history.

Woodcroft Castle

Woodcroft Castle is a mainly late 13th century structure with a few early Tudor period additions, tucked away in the back roads just north of Peterborough. It was the site of the only substantial military action of the English Civil War in Peterborough, when in 1648 it was besieged by Parliamentary forces determined to capture Michael Hudson, its commander. Dr. Hudson was a priest, chaplain to Charles I, and, despite his calling, a dyed-in-the-wool Royalist who launched armed raids into the surrounding area. The siege was a bloody affair which led to deaths on both sides, including Dr. Hudson, but victory for the Roundheads.

I only found out about the castle in the summer of 2019 in an estate agent's advert in an old newspaper. I did a bit of research and it seemed a fascinating place. So even though privately owned, I was keen to visit.

The castle is not easy to get to. I tried the narrow lane south of Etton from the Glinton to Helpston road but was thwarted when I reached the level crossing of the East Coast Main railway line. The lady crossing keeper warned me that as it was only an insignificant crossing, controlled from Helpston, it could be a half hour wait until the gate was opened.

I had better luck with my next attempt. I drove south along King Street and left to Marholm. In the village I turned left along the narrow lane back to Etton. After 2 miles I reached Woodcroft Castle and parked on a muddy farm track opposite.

The castle is circled by a moat and well set back from the road in extensive grounds with large trees. I walked up the entrance drive, hoping to meet someone who would give me permission to take photographs. A gang of builders was renovating the castle and they had their vans, cranes, sacks of cement and various bits of equipment strewn about in front of the building, somewhat spoiling the view.

I enquired of who appeared to be the head man, who said I should speak to the owner. One of the builders then disappeared into the castle. I followed him and the owner appeared, an American gentleman.

I asked for permission to photograph but he was reluctant at first, mentioning rightly that the castle was not looking its best and did not want any images posted on social media. I gave him my solemn word that any pictures would be solely for my private use and guaranteed that they would never appear in public. (That is why I cannot provide any photographs). He graciously accepted my assurance and gave me permission.

The foreman builder was a knowledgeable man, who told me that the castle dates from the 1200s and pointed out that the battlements along the frontage were more recent. He showed me the line on the central tower of an old pitched roof, saying that a flat roof was now concealed behind the parapet. On leaving I politely declined his request for a portrait and thanked him for all his kind help.

A truly worthwhile expedition. Pity the castle was not open to the public. I mentally forgave the owner for entrusting a historic English structure to American hands. One could take the view that at least he was restoring the castle, which otherwise might have fallen into wrack and ruin.

A Great Treasure from a Small Village

It is a surprising fact that one of the greatest medieval treasures of England originated in Irnham, a small village tucked away in the back roads north-west of Bourne. I refer to The Luttrell Psalter, a beautifully illuminated 14th century manuscript, the finest work of art to come out of Lincolnshire and which is ranked nationally alongside the Domesday Book and Magna Carta.

A psalter is a book of psalms, about 150 ancient songs that appear in their own chapter in the Old Testament, but are often in a book of their own accompanied by prayers and a calendar of church feast days. Many people learnt to read using a psalter. From medieval times to the present day, the psalms form a fundamental part of Christian worship for laymen and ecclesiastics alike. But the Luttrell Psalter is not just a religious work. It is famed for its rich illustrations of everyday rural life in the 14th century, exceptional in their number and in fascinating detail. There are lively, sometimes risqué, and often humorous scenes of corn being cut, a woman feeding chickens, food being cooked and eaten, portrayals of wrestlers, hawkers, dancers,

musicians, an archery tournament, a mock bishop, scary monsters, and a wife beating her husband!

The Luttrell Psalter was commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (1276 – 1345), Lord of the Manor of Irnham. It was illuminated and written in Latin on vellum from about 1320 and took ten years to complete. Art historians have confirmed that the style of the illumination points to this date. Sir Geoffrey was a rich man. He owned the village and the manor house, Irnham Hall, near the parish church of St. Andrew's. As well as Irnham he held estates across England thanks to a distant ancestor who shrewdly married a wealthy heiress and whose loyal service to King John had been rewarded by numerous land grants. Sir Geoffrey was summoned for military service by Kings Edward I and II and fought in the Scottish wars between 1297 and 1319. Following on from a property dispute, he conducted a private war with a neighbour, one Roger de Birthorpe, against the monks of Sempringham Priory, although only de Birthorpe was censured. Sir Geoffrey was supposedly buried in St. Andrew's churchyard. The Psalter contains his portrait, fully armed and mounted on a warhorse.

Various historians and scholars state with confidence that because Irnham is a tiny village there is no way the Psalter was produced there, and the work was certainly created in Lincoln by scribes who remain unknown. On a recent visit to Irnham, I met a local man who disputed this claim and said that the scribes may have come from Lincoln, and some work may have been done there, but it was almost certain that the Psalter was produced in Irnham. He told me that the original is in the British Library in London and is one of their top ten treasures. A facsimile copy is kept in the local church in a locked glass case for all to see (pictured). My informer praised the illustrations of medieval village life in the 14th century in the margins of pages in the Psalter. Not in towns and cities like York or Lincoln but in small villages like Irnham. There is a cutting from a newspaper dated 2006 in the church porch which mentions the publication of the British Library facsimile edition at a price of £295. A well-known second-hand book website now lists used editions at prices above £1400.

Before the British Library was a separate institution, all its works were held in the British Museum. It was this body who tried to buy the Luttrell Psalter in 1929 from Mary Angela Noyes, wife of the poet Alfred Noyes. But at the time could not afford the then record asking price of 30,000 guineas (£31, 500). An anonymous benefactor stepped in and loaned the money to the museum, interest free. The benefactor was later revealed as the American banker and millionaire J. P. Morgan, who could have easily bought the Psalter himself, had he wished. To repay the loan, funds were raised by public subscription with thousands donating. There were collection boxes in museums, contributions from university colleges, even the Labour Government coughed up £7,500. It is fair to say that the Psalter belongs to the nation.

On another visit to Irnham, I found the church was closed. But I managed to collar a local man who was walking his dog. I asked him (the man not the dog) if he knew when the church might be open. He expressed surprise that it was closed and said that he would go and fetch Charlie to open it for me. It turned out that Charlie was in fact the churchwarden. A few minutes later this gentleman appeared wielding a large key. He apologised that the church was not looking its best at the moment because of all the cleaning and disinfecting the Church of England was imposing on local parishes due to coronavirus. He also politely asked me to complete the Test and Trace form. He unlocked the massive oak door, and allowed me in after I had added my signature to the register. I wandered around the church, snapping the Psalter and the exquisite Easter Sepulchre, thinking that they are very nice people in Irnham.

Although pages from the Psalter are reproduced on the British Library website, I always think it is far better to view the original manuscript, or failing that, the facsimile. To see an example of the latter, I recommend going to St. Andrew's. Parking is risky in Irnham, but if you can find a space by the roadside, and Charlie has unlocked the church, it will be a most rewarding visit.

Castle Bytham

There can be few of us who have not seen the great earth mound at Castle Bytham, the remains of the old castle, which has fascinating links to the Norman conquest and the Barons' wars against King John and Henry III. It was a motte and bailey castle, consisting of the earth mound, the motte on which the keep was built, surrounded by a fenced area for ancillary buildings, the bailey.

The castle was constructed sometime before 1086 by Drogo de la Beuvriere, Lord of Holderness in Yorkshire. Drogo fought alongside William the Conqueror when he invaded England in 1066. As his reward, Drogo was granted extensive lands in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including the manor of Bytham.

In the late 1100s, the manor was granted to William de Colvile, and then in 1215 to William de Forz, 3rd Earl of Albermarle, an Anglo-Norman nobleman. He was actively engaged in the struggles of the Norman barons against King John and King Henry III but changed sides as often as it suited his policy. These struggles were rebellions against

these Kings in protest against their tyrannical will, their foreign friends governing the country and oppressive taxation.

After King John's death in 1216, de Forz supported Henry III, fighting in the Battle of Lincoln Fair in 1217. His real object was to revive the independent power of the feudal barons, and he made alliances with other rebellious lords. In 1220 de Forz refused to surrender two royal castles of which he was constable. Henry III marched against them and they fell without a blow. In the following year, however, de Forz, in face of further efforts to reduce his power, rose in revolt.

In the winter of 1220-21 de Forz fortified the castle at Bytham, and King Henry III laid siege in February 1221 requiring the use of heavy siege weapons. It held out for nearly a fortnight against Henry. After the rebellion was quashed miners were brought in to slight the defences. The manor was returned to the Colviles, who rebuilt and re-occupied the castle until the late 14th century. The castle was clearly highly regarded for John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, chose to raise his children at Bytham including Henry of Bolingbroke, later King Henry IV. In the 15th century it fell into decline and by 1544 was in ruins. The castle was subsequently dismantled for building stone and by 1906 no stonework was visible above ground.

Excavations in 1870 revealed a large keep with a great cylindrical tower 60 feet in diameter with curtain walls and outworks including water defences drawn from the neighbouring beck and local springs.

The remaining earthworks are in excellent condition and are an impressive sight especially from the road north to Swayfield. The castle is on private land and access to the mound is not really allowed. But there is a bridge over the stream and footpaths surround most of the site giving excellent views. On my last visit there were useful information boards, giving a history of the castle, a map of the earthworks, and an impression of it in its heyday. Parking is on the road alongside, a bit risky perhaps. Altogether, well worth a trip.

Lost Villages

Known to historians as deserted medieval villages, these were communities that flourished centuries ago but have now disappeared off the face of the Earth. Many were mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, William the Conqueror's great survey of England, but are now just empty fields.

The extinction of these settlements seemed to have happened in the 14th century and is usually blamed on the Black Death, the plague epidemic that first struck England in 1348, but came back again and again for more than 300 years. Estimates vary, but from a third to a half of the population died. Once it took hold in a small village it went through the inhabitants like wildfire until they were all gone. Historians have advanced other reasons such as climate change, coastal erosion and replacement of arable farming with sheep and cattle raising.

More deserted villages have been found in the East Midlands and Eastern England than the rest of the country with over 130 listed on the Lincolnshire Historic Environment Record. Some are close to home: Bowthorpe settlement, south of Manthorpe, Stow near Barholm, Elsthorpe near Edenham and Banthorpe near Braceborough. There are at least 15 in our adjoining county of Rutland. But they are very difficult to find without aerial photography or archaeological investigations. Only rarely are humps and hollows or cropmarks seen on the surface.

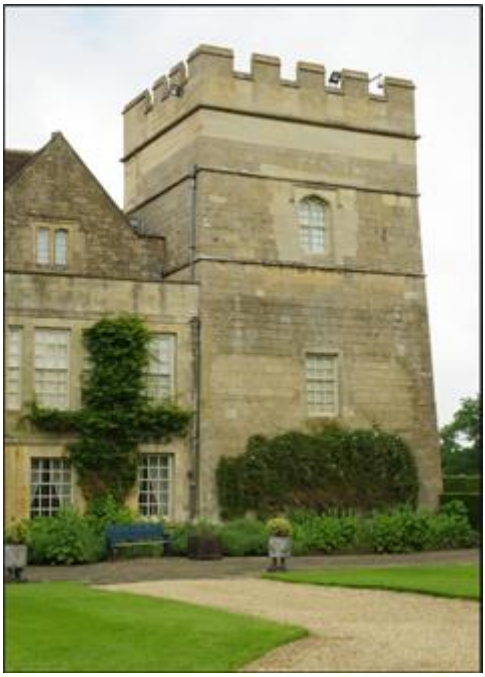
There are three lost villages in Rutland in a cluster around the A1, which was the Great North Road: Horn, Hardwick and Pickworth. All that remains of Pickworth are the arch from the south porch of the original church (pictured overleaf) in a private front garden of the newer village and a few vague humps and hollows in a field to the west where sheep now graze. On old maps, the lost village is called either Mockbeggar or Top Pickworth. A golf course and a farm occupy the location of Hardwick lost village.

Two interesting alternative reasons have been advanced for their loss. During the 15th century, England was gripped by the Wars of the Roses, the armed conflict between the rival houses of York and Lancaster for the crown of England. In 1460 King Henry VI's queen Margaret was marching south from Yorkshire with a vast army of northerners and mercenaries after her defeat of the Yorkists at the battle of Wakefield. On their way south to attack London, the Lancastrians wrought fear and great destruction on the towns of Grantham, Stamford and Peterborough, all Yorkist supporting and on the Great North Road. It is possible that the three villages were destroyed by the ravages of this army. In the same conflict, the battle of Losecoat Field in 1470 was fought in or near the area occupied by the villages. According to the information board outside Pickworth Church, the village was described as having no residents by 1491 and advances the idea that it was destroyed following the battle. The same explanation could apply to Hardwick and Horn.

Villages on the east coast like Dunwich in Suffolk and Skipsea in Yorkshire are still being lost to coastal erosion. War has claimed Tyneham in Dorset, taken over in the second world war as a tank firing range and training ground for the army. Fortunately, the coronavirus pandemic, which is now hopefully diminishing, has not led to the devastating consequences of the Black Death seven centuries ago.

Grimsthorpe Castle

We are fortunate to have Grimsthorpe Castle, one of the finest country houses in England, within the boundary of our group of parishes, indeed right on our doorstep. The architecture, the park and gardens, the walks and bike rides, are first-rate. As is the story of the castle, albeit long and convoluted.



The castle's early history is linked with the abbey of Vallis Dei, the Valley of God known as the Vaudey, which stood to the south of the present lake in the castle grounds. The site was granted in 1147 to the Cistercian order by William, Count of Aumale and Earl of York, a major landowner in the north of England. At first the abbey flourished with profits from wool. But by the end of the thirteenth century the abbey had suffered financial difficulties and the number of monks had fallen. The abbey was a victim of the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1536. An archaeological dig in 1851 revealed the four crossing piers of the chapel.

It is likely that the first castle was built by a certain Gilbert de Gant in the 13th century. Gilbert was made Earl of Lincoln in 1216 by Prince Louis of France who claimed the throne of England and considered himself entitled to create earldoms. Gilbert fought against King John in the Baron's Revolt; an armed insurrection led by Prince Louis. Gilbert

was captured and deprived of his estates and title. He died in 1242. Much of the estate eventually passed to Henry, 1st Lord Beaumont, who served in the armies of both Kings Edward I and Edward II. The south east tower of the castle is named King John's Tower (pictured) and is the earliest part of the castle still standing. In view of Gilbert's opposition, how it got its name is a bit of a mystery.

At some point in the late 15th century the castle was in the hands of Viscount Francis Lovell a close friend and supporter of King Richard III. After Richard was killed at the battle of Bosworth in 1485, Lovell raised rebellion against the new Tudor king, Henry VII. The rebellion ended at the battle of Stoke Field near Newark in 1487 when Henry defeated the rebels and Lovell disappeared, presumed dead. His lands were confiscated by Henry for his part in the rebellion. Grimsthorpe remained in Crown hands until 1516 when it was granted to William Willoughby, 11th Baron Willoughby d'Eresby, on his marriage to Maria de Salinas a lady-in-waiting and friend of Queen Katharine of Aragon, wife of Henry VIII. Dating back to 1313, the Barony of Willoughby d'Eresby is an English peerage which can descend in the female line as well as the male.

In March 1520 Maria gave birth to a daughter, Catherine, who was only about six when her father died and she succeeded as 12th Baroness and heiress to Grimsthorpe. She became a ward of the king until 1528 when Henry VIII sold the wardship to his brother-in-law, Charles Brandon 1st Duke of Suffolk.

Suffolk's devious plan was for his young son, Henry Brandon Earl of Lincoln, to improve his prospects by marriage to Catherine. But the scheme collapsed in 1533 when Suffolk's wife died and their son Henry became terminally ill. Ever the opportunist Suffolk, then aged about 50, took the fourteen-year-old Catherine for his fourth wife. In 1541 Henry VIII honoured Suffolk with a royal visit to Grimsthorpe Castle and the Duke spent the previous eighteen months frantically upgrading and extending the Castle.

In fact, in 1539, Suffolk was granted the lands of the dissolved Vaudey Abbey the materials of which he clearly pillaged for his new work. He

built three small towers and four ranges to form a courtyard, all of which survives. The south west tower is named the Brandon Tower.

After Suffolk died in 1545, Catherine's second marriage was to Richard Bertie. Their grandson, Robert Bertie, became 14th Baron Willoughby d'Eresby and inherited the estate in 1601. He was created Earl of Lindsey by Charles I in 1626 and had the Four Mile Riding laid out in the park. The Riding was an avenue of oaks running from the Castle to the lake and is shown on old maps.

His grandson Robert Bertie, third Earl of Lindsey inherited the property in 1666 and undertook the complete rebuilding of Grimsthorpe in the classical style and laid out the gardens. Robert's son, another Robert, was created Duke of Ancaster and Kesteven by King George I in 1715. This Robert commissioned Sir John Vanbrugh to rebuild the north front of Grimsthorpe in the baroque style to celebrate his elevation. Vanbrugh was the architect of Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard, and Grimsthorpe was to be his final masterpiece. The front of the castle was subsequently redesigned and there were plans to complete the other three facings of the castle in the same style, however these were never carried out. The north front was completed in 1730, four years after Vanbrugh's death. It is probable that after 1726 Nicholas Hawksmoor, another celebrated architect in the baroque style, took over the completion of the work. The end result is a large quadrangular house with a central courtyard, with each side reflecting the different architectural styles employed since building began in the 13th century.

The park and gardens consist of 3,000 acres of rolling pastures, lakes and woodland created by the master landscape architect "Capability" Brown. I regard the view from the western range across the park down to the lake on a summer's day as the finest view in England. The present owner is Jane Heathcote-Drummond-Willoughby, 28th Baroness Willoughby d'Eresby, granddaughter of Nancy Astor the first woman MP who died at Grimsthorpe in 1964.

Whether you visit to enjoy the park and gardens, hire a bike and go for a ride, go on a tour of the house, enjoy tea and cake in the tea room or admire the architecture, you will not be disappointed.

The Flodden Plaque

The small village of Tickencote lies in the east of the county of Rutland, two miles north-west of Stamford. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 with the Countess Judith of Lens, a niece of William the Conqueror, listed as Tenant-in-Chief. From the 17th century the Lordship of the Manor was held by the Wingfield family. The first of that name was John Wingfield who moved into Tickencote Hall in 1602 with his wife Elizabeth. John originated from the Suffolk branch of the family who came from the village of Wingfield in Suffolk. They in turn descended from Sir Henry Wingfield of Letheringham, also in Suffolk. The Tickencote Wingfields were great benefactors of the local church, financing its restoration in 1792.

For such a small village to have a church at all is surprising. What is even more remarkable is that the church is exceptionally fine with superb architectural features. The massive Norman chancel arch is rightly regarded as the finest in England, the stunning rib vault in the chancel is certainly unique in the country and there is a 600 year old wooden recumbent effigy, sadly now showing its age. For these features alone the church is well worth a visit.

Easily overlooked amongst these attractions is a small oak plaque on the south wall of the nave. Inset into the plaque is a brass tablet commemorating the death of Sir Anthony, one of the Suffolk Wingfields, who was killed at the battle of Flodden in 1513.

The brass tablet reads, in translation from the old northern English:

"At Flodden field did bravely fight and die,

Of Wingfield sons, the brave Sir Anthony,

But death he counted much gain since he,

Over the Scot did gain the victory."

The inscription on the oak plaque reads:

> *"The above was given to this church in 1938 by John Parry Wingfield. It was probably first fixed in Letheringham church in Suffolk. The battle was fought on the 9th September 1513".*

According to the Church guidebook, the brass tablet was found in a shop in Lowestoft in 1862.

The battle of Flodden was fought in Northumberland. King Henry VIII was in France having joined the Holy League formed by Pope Julius II fighting against French territorial ambitions in Europe, leaving the defence of England in the hands of the 70-year-old Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey.

King James IV of Scotland was obliged by a mutual defence treaty with the French to invade northern England. He raised an army of 30,000 men including the flower of the Scottish nobility and marched south from Edinburgh crossing the English border at the River Tweed.

The Earl of Surrey mobilised 26,000 men at his base at Pontefract Castle and then marched north to Wooler in Northumberland. Surrey

was concerned that the Scots might retreat back across the border from their impregnable position on Flodden Edge, a hill 500 feet high.

Surrey and his entire army undertook a daring march in foul weather to outflank the Scots and deployed to the north of the Scottish position. The English had cut off King James's supply line and his retreat to Scotland, leaving him no option but to fight.

A bloody battle ensued, with cannon fire, volley after volley of deadly arrows and vicious hand to hand fighting. The Scottish army was eventually destroyed, King James was killed, the last king in Britain to fall in battle, along with twelve earls, fourteen lords, at least one member of every leading Scottish family and 10,000 of her soldiers. The English lost no more than 1500 men.

There is a handsome memorial cross, erected in 1910, at the site of the battle with an inscription:

"Flodden 1513. To the brave of both nations."

There is a memorial window in St. Leonard's Church in Middleton, Lancashire, commemorating the archers of Middleton who fought so valiantly under Sir Richard Assheton in Sir Edward Stanley's division of the English army. The window is claimed to be the oldest war memorial in England. Perhaps the Flodden Plaque in Tickencote Church, Rutland, can challenge this assertion?

A visit to the battlefield at Flodden is highly recommended. An equal recommendation can be made for Tickencote Church, which has the benefit of being much nearer. Prepare to be amazed by the chancel arch and the rib vaulting, but spare a glance for the Flodden Plaque and spare a thought for those brave men of long ago.

Hereward the Wake

Hereward is an almost legendary figure on whom there is little reliable and much suspect information. Born around 1035 and died 1072, his epithet “the Wake” means “the watchful” or is derived from Hereward's relationship with the manor of Bourne in Lincolnshire, which from the mid-twelfth century was held by the Wake family. He is the most famous of all the figures who resisted Norman rule and perhaps is best known for raising rebellion against William the Conqueror and fighting a last ditch stand against the Normans in the Isle of Ely.

Traditionally it is said that he was the son of Leofric of Bourne and Eadgyth, a descendant of Earl Oslac of Northumberland, and a nephew of Abbot Brand of Peterborough. Hereward was of high social status holding estates at Witham-on-the-Hill and Barholm-with-Stow as a tenant of Peterborough Abbey and lands as a tenant of Crowland Abbey, according to the Domesday Book.

Hereward must have committed some severe transgressions in his youth because he was exiled from England at the age of eighteen for disobeying his father and even worse for being declared an outlaw by the Saxon King Edward the Confessor. He went to the continent and found employment as a mercenary in the service of the Count of Flanders. After the Norman Conquest he returned to England in about 1069 and found his family’s lands confiscated by King William and given to the Norman Ivo de Taillebuis. Hereward’s father and brother had been killed and his brother's decapitated head placed on a spike at the entrance to his house. Hereward took a bloody revenge when with just one follower he slaughtered fourteen Normans at a drunken feast and replaced his brother’s head with theirs. After returning briefly to the continent while the heated situation cooled, he came back to England, only to find that his uncle Abbot Brand had been replaced at Peterborough Abbey by a Norman abbot, Turold of Fecamp.

The Danes themselves were still trying to conquer England and their King Sweyn with a small army had established a camp on the Isle of Ely,

where Hereward joined them. With the aid of the Danes, Hereward and his crew stormed and sacked Peterborough Abbey, claiming that he resented the appointment of the Norman Turold to the house and that he wished to save the Abbey's treasures from the rapacious Normans. Later he must have felt badly let down by his new friends. Sweyn realised that his force was too small and accepted terms from King William. The Danes left Ely, sailed into the River Thames where they stayed for two nights and then sailed back to Denmark. It is said that they even purloined the loot taken from Peterborough.

The Isle of Ely is so named because it occupies an area of raised ground which was the largest island in the Cambridgeshire Fens. The isle was only accessible by boat or causeway making the area relatively easy to defend until the waterlogged Fens were drained in the 17th century.

Morcar, the former Saxon Earl of Northumbria, had already raised rebellion against the Normans in the north of England and was well supported. But he was unwilling to take too much risk and advanced with his men to Warwick and there submitted to William leaving his companions high and dry. Morcar and a small remaining force made their way to Ely and joined Hereward.

Round about 1071, the King was in Normandy but returned to England to deal with the revolt personally. He called out naval and land forces to mount an attack from all directions. Ships blockaded the island on its eastern seaward side, while to the west his army constructed a pontoon bridge to launch an assault across the marshes.

William was foiled on three occasions by the superior military skill of Hereward in his attempts to build a causeway across the impassable marshes. However, during William's first attack the weight of the troops on the bridge was so great that the causeway sank and many soldiers drowned.

After many attempts the Normans bribed Abbot Thurstan of Ely to reveal a safe path across the marshes, which resulted in Ely at last being taken. Some of Hereward’s men were imprisoned, but some were set free only after hideous mutilation, a practise William often

performed on rebels. Morcar was captured and imprisoned for the rest of his life, but Hereward managed to escape into the wild fenland.

There are several conflicting accounts of Hereward's fate after his escape from the Isle of Ely. Some say he was reconciled with William the Conqueror, regained his lands and estates, died in his bed and was buried at Crowland. Others that he was killed by a band of Englishmen. Alternatively, he lived for some time as an outlaw in the Fens, but that as he was on the verge of making peace with William, he was set upon and killed by a group of Norman knights.

Hereward owes his popularity as an archetypal English hero in the mould of Robin Hood to the publication in English of the "Gesta Herewardi" (The Life of Hereward) in the nineteenth century. This is an ancient tome originally written in Latin in the 12th century and from which much of our knowledge is gained. And to Charles Kingsley's novel Hereward the Wake: Last of the English, published in 1866 which is largely based upon it, elevating Hereward into one of the most romantic figures of English medieval history.

But Hereward lives on. Even more than nine centuries after his demise his name is celebrated in the Hereward Cross Shopping Centre, Peterborough; Hereward Medical Centre, Bourne; Wake House, Bourne; and the Hereward Way, a long-distance footpath from Peterborough to Ely and probably several others.

The picture on the previous page is from a "See Britain by Train" poster in the National Railway Museum in York, captioned "Ely Cathedral where Hereward the Wake made his last stand".

As mentioned before, Hereward is a semi-legendary figure with narratives of his life and exploits recounted in many ancient works most with wildly conflicting accounts. As in most histories getting to the truth is not easy. But why let historical accuracy spoil a good story? Even if there is a grain of truth in the written accounts, he was a determined and brave warrior and epitomises the refusal of the English people to be governed by foreigners. That is why he is still popular today.

Baptist Noel

It is said that the only places to see English medieval sculpture is in our cathedrals and parish churches. This observation is nowhere more true than at the church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Exton, Rutland, which contains nine magnificent monuments, several of which are outstanding. Probably the finest is the huge marble monument to Baptist Noel, 3rd Viscount Campden, on the east wall of the north transept.

The grandly named Baptist was a nobleman in Rutland who gained notoriety in the English Civil War as a staunch Royalist who led his band of followers in brutal plundering raids across Rutland and Lincolnshire from bases in Belvoir and Newark castles.

In 1611 Baptist was born at Exton Park into the powerful Noel family, son of Edward Noel the 2nd Viscount Campden. In 1632 Baptist married Lady Anne Fielding and then Anne Bourchier in 1638. Sadly, these ladies had short lives and their children all died young. Baptist married his third wife, the Hon. Hester Wotton, in 1639 and they had four daughters and two sons who survived.

In 1639 Baptist and his father accompanied King Charles I in the ill-fated war against the Scottish National Covenant who vehemently opposed the King's attempt to reform the Scottish Church. The King summoned Parliament to provide money to support this war. The so-called Short Parliament only ran for three weeks in April 1640 and was replaced by the Long Parliament in November that year. Baptist, as a Knight of the Shire, was elected to both but, being a Royalist, his association with the latter parliament was brief.

Parliament refused to grant funds until its grievances were resolved but the autocratic Charles refused to compromise and the Civil War between them soon broke out. Baptist was commissioned into the Royalist army and was based at Newark castle when he succeeded as 3rd Viscount Campden on the death of his father in March 1643. At the head of his troop known as the "Campdeners", he plundered the

property of his local opponents and frequently imprisoned them. He rose rapidly through the ranks being appointed brigadier of foot and brigadier of horse in July 1643. Both sides fiercely contested Rutland; and Exton Park along with neighbouring Burley Park, the home of the Duke of Buckingham, were confiscated by the Parliamentarian forces.

The Campdeners seized Stamford, drove away cattle, and generally became a serious threat. It got so bad that on the 10th April 1643 Oliver Cromwell wrote to Sir John Burgoyne of Potton in Bedfordshire, the chief member of the Bedfordshire Committee, to request troops of horse to resist the raiders. On 19th July 1643 the Campdeners attacked Peterborough with a large force but were repulsed and fell back on Stamford. They were defeated at Burghley House by Cromwell on 24th July. Baptist continued to resist the Parliamentary forces, leading his cavalry troop in daring raids across Rutland and beyond.

In late 1645 the war was effectively over and Baptist resigned his field command. By October 1645 he was a prisoner in London. He was released in August 1646 and allowed to return to Rutland. He was fined over £19,000 by Parliament, this massive amount demonstrating the severity of his offences. In May 1648, after long negotiation and with Baptist severely in debt, his fine was discharged on payment of £100.

His wife, Hester, died the following year and was buried at Exton on 17th December 1649. Baptist married his fourth wife, Lady Elizabeth Bertie, eldest daughter of Montague Bertie, second earl of Lindsey, on 7th July 1655. They had nine children. After the civil war he was restored to his estates when he laid out geometric areas of woodland, divided by avenues with formal gardens, and a lake close to Exton Park. Baptist died at Exton on 29th October 1682 aged 71 years and was buried on the north side of the church there. His wife Elizabeth survived him by only a few months, dying in July 1683.

His monument, squeezed into a space too small to adequately display it, is of white and black marble made by Grinling Gibbons, perhaps better known for his carvings in wood, celebrated as the finest sculptor working in England at the time. It shows Baptist and his fourth wife Elizabeth, flanked by two obelisks, separated by a pedestal. They are standing on a base with reliefs of their children. The whole monument is on a lower base with a relief showing his third wife Hester and hers, and on the obelisks the first and second wives, two Annes, and their children. Twenty-five figures in all. On the base are two black marble inscriptions, on the left giving brief biographical information on Baptist, while that on the right gives the names of his children by his four wives. On the pedestal between Baptist and Elizabeth is a black marble inscription plate recording that the monument was erected by order of Elizabeth and carried out by her third son, John Noel, in 1686. The monument is topped by a large broken pediment displaying the Campden coat of arms. As was the fashion for the age, all of the figures are depicted in Roman dress. It cost £1,000, the equivalent of over £200,000 today. The monuments in Exton church were restored by the Exton Monuments Restoration Fund between 2000 and 2002. Baptist's monument cost £49,000 to restore.

Opposite Baptist's monument is another to his son James Noel, who died aged 18 years. It's smaller but no less well executed. In addition, there are superb replicas of the original funerary and armorial banners of the Noel family hanging above the nave.

The church is at the end of a lane just before the village. The lane is narrow so care must be taken in case another car decides to come the other way. Parking is on the verge at the end of the lane. A visit to see the church and the monuments will be a joy. It's like an art gallery, but free, and well worth a pound or two in the collection box.

Editor's note: According to one historic wealth calculator, the original fine of £19,000 given against Baptist in 1646 was equivalent to the wages for a skilled tradesman for 743 years' work!

Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue

In the village of Clipsham in Rutland there is a handsome Hall built in the local limestone and surrounded by parkland. The Hall was originally constructed in 1582 but was drastically rebuilt in 1700 in the classical Doric style of architecture, leaving just one wall from the original structure. There were many additions and further alterations made in the 19th century. The Hall is the hub of the Clipsham Estate which includes the productive limestone quarries and a half mile long carriage drive lined with Yew trees.

In the mid-Victorian period, the estate came into the hands of the Handley family. When the purchaser, John Handley MP for Newark, died, he left the property to his nephew William Davenport on the condition that he adopt the additional surname Handley.

In 1870 the Estate Head Forester, a Mr Amos Alexander, asked John Davenport-Handley, the Estate owner at the time, if he could enhance the carriage drive by clipping the Yews into different shapes, an art called topiary. Mr Davenport-Handley agreed, providing that each tree was different and paid tribute to events and people of local, national

and world interest. However, he would not allow depictions of women, Queen Victoria being the only exception.

Family members with their names and years of birth would be depicted in topiary, as would important events in the family such as when David Davenport-Handley went to Dartmouth Royal Naval College in 1930, depicted by an anchor, and when Leslie Davenport-Handley celebrated her ruby wedding anniversary. Queen Victoria was represented in each of her jubilees. The tops of each tree were made into the shapes of various birds and animals.

In 1955 the Avenue was let to the Forestry Commission on a 999-year lease. Experts were brought in to continue the tradition of topiary and they created clippings showing a Spitfire from World War 2, Neil Armstrong as the first man on the moon in 1969, the county of Rutland gaining independence in 1997, a windmill and the initials of Amos Alexander and Sir David Davenport-Handley. And thus, the carriage drive became the celebrated Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue.

The result is an avenue unique in this country with free entrance to the public, open every day of the year, complete with car parks, seats, picnic tables and information panels. Topiary is only found in private gardens and never in such numbers as in the Avenue. The trees in the Avenue are over 200 years old, planted in Napoleonic War times. It is deservedly one of the top attractions in Rutland.

At the road entrance there are two Copper Beech trees, one on each side of the double gates. Each bears a metal plaque stating that it was planted by Sir David Davenport-Handley on 21st March 1986. Strangely, the one on the left has grown better than the one on the right. The stone-built lodge, built in 1860, also on the left of the gates is grade II listed. It appeared to be empty until a few years ago, I know this because I often took a peek through the windows, but now it seems to have been converted to a private house. At the end of the avenue are a further set of gates from which there is an excellent panorama of the estate parkland with a distant view of the Hall. There is also a not terribly comfortable seat and a useful information board describing the fauna and flora of the Avenue.

In 2010 the Forestry Commission announced that it no longer had the funding to continue with the clipping and the trees soon became diseased and overgrown. The patterns on the trees were lost, bank voles chewed up the ground and the Yews deteriorated further. The grass was not cut and large potholes appeared in the car park and approach roads.

Despite its increasingly poor condition, visitor numbers to the Avenue remained high. Fortunately, in 2012 a number of local people started to raise serious concerns about the lack of maintenance and the very survival of the Avenue.

In 2018, a new charitable trust was formed – the Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue Trust, a group of local people determined to get something done. They estimated that £15,000 to £20,000 would have to be raised each year to maintain and improve the Avenue. With help from local MPs and council leaders, they set about fund-raising and have received several grants. The Trust has contracted with the Forestry Commission to take over the management of the Avenue and a regular program is now in place.

The Trust have certainly done a superb job with the Avenue now looking better than ever. Supported by the Friends of Clipsham Yew Tree Avenue, an extra car park has been built, growth behind the Yews has been cut back, the grass has been regularly cut, seats, picnic tables and information boards have been installed, drainage channels cleared and many, but not all, of the potholes on the entrance roads have been filled in. And of course, the topiary is in the process of being restored.

That no entrance fee is charged is amazing. A visit is a great experience and is extremely popular. Visitors, with or without granny or dogs, can go for a pleasant walk, take the kids for a noisy run about, have a picnic in good weather, photograph the flora and fauna or just sit and admire the trees and breathe God's fresh air. But when arriving take care to avoid the occasional pothole, there are still a few remaining to be filled up.

The Essendine Earthworks

Anyone motoring through Essendine in Rutland cannot fail to have noticed the small and delightful church of St. Mary's on the corner when leaving the village on the A6121 going towards Bourne. A mixture of Saxon, early Norman and mid-Victorian, the church occupies a substantial plot with a graveyard on the right, a field with many sheep to the front, and an extensive area of earthworks behind.

The earthworks, surprisingly, are nearly a thousand years old, starting life as a ringwork and bailey raised in the last half of the 11th century by the Norman invaders. A ringwork was a basic structure consisting of a raised earth rampart surmounted by a palisade fence protected by a surrounding ditch. The bailey was a separate enclosure also with rampart and ditch, either encircling or separated from the ringwork.

Soon after the conquest, the Normans were faced with rebellions all over England. In response they built castles to suppress the native Saxon population. In the early years of the occupation, such castles were not massive stone towers but simple defensive earthworks and Essendine could have been one of these.

A hundred years later the entire site was redeveloped into a defended manorial estate either by William de Bussey, Lord of Essendine from 1159, or his successor Robert de Vipont. The completed estate consisted of a central square platform upon which was built a manor house, surrounded by a moat. To the south was a bailey which is still partly occupied by St Mary's Church, taken over as the estate's chapel. A further enclosure to the north served as a fishpond, an important source of food in the medieval household, and there were additional ponds to the south of the church, although these were filled in during the 19th century. The estate occupied a low-lying site with the moats and ponds fed from the River West Glen that runs north to south on the east of the site. An earth bank separated the estate and the river.

The estate passed through the hands of numerous families during the medieval period. In 1296 it was owned by Robert de Clifford, in 1318 it was held by John de Cromwell and from 1336 by the Despenser family. In 1447 it passed to Cecily Duchess of Warwick and thereafter it remained in the hands of the Earls of Warwick until taken into Crown ownership by King Henry VII in 1499. Queen Elizabeth I later granted the estate to Sir William Cecil, the Lord Treasurer. It fell into disrepair sometime during the seventeenth century, eventually being dismantled. No remains of any buildings are visible today.

The whole site is over 5 acres in extent. In 1951 the site was designated a scheduled ancient monument by Historic England. St. Mary's Church is of late Saxon or Norman origin, itself listed grade II*

in 1961, and the structure is excluded from the scheduling of the manorial estate, although the ground beneath the church is included. The modern burial area alongside the church is totally excluded.

Access to the earthworks themselves is not possible as the entire area is fenced off and occupies private land used for grazing sheep. At least the landowner, or his flock, do a good job of keeping the earthworks reasonably clear of dense undergrowth allowing their full grandeur to be seen. The only views of the earthworks are obtained from the graveyard at the east end of the church and from the small area alongside the west end. Views of the remains of the fishponds to the north or any views across the river from the east are completely blocked off by a thick line of trees immediately west of the river going north from the parapet of the bridge carrying the A6121.

Parking is available on the grassy area alongside the track to the church and is used by members of the congregation attending services. The entrance to the track is from the main A6121 road through the village going towards Bourne, immediately after the bungalows on the left. The entrance is rather abrupt, so care must be taken. But a visit to the church and a close sight of the ancient earthworks is most rewarding and makes taking this very minor risk well worthwhile.

The Siege of Burghley House

Few will disagree that Burghley House in Stamford is the finest Elizabethan country house in England and richly deserves its fame and its grade 1 listing. Most of the rooms and interiors received make-overs in the 18th century but the exterior largely retains its original period appearance. The magnificent 1,300-acre park surrounding the house was laid out between 1755 and 1780 by the celebrated landscape architect Capability Brown who also built the lake and the Lion Bridge. The house was built between 1555 and 1587 for Sir William Cecil, later 1st Baron Burghley, Lord High Treasurer and Secretary of State to Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth was succeeded by King James I (also King James VI of Scotland – son of Mary Queen of Scots) in 1603, followed in turn by his son Charles I in 1625.

Charles was a very different monarch to Elizabeth. In religion he was uncompromising, enforcing the High Church form of ritual worship. He believed in the "the Divine Right of Kings", meaning he was above the law and answerable only to God. Rather than cooperate with his Parliaments Charles treated them with contempt and levied taxes without their consent. In early 1642, he tried, unsuccessfully, to arrest five members for treason. This action, and his unyielding attitude to religion and politics enraged Parliament and his subjects who saw his actions as those of an absolute and tyrannical monarch, which soon led to riots breaking out and eventually to civil war.

In its early years the war was a series of skirmishes and battles fought locally between local forces. In 1643 the Royalists, who supported the King, were in a strong position in the East Midlands having occupied

Newark Castle in December 1642 and Belvoir Castle in January 1643 and large-scale raids were launched into the area from these strongholds.

On the 11th April 1643 a raid on Grantham led to a Royalist victory at Ancaster Heath, prompting a southern offensive led by Viscount Baptist Camden. On 19th July, Camden took command of a 1,000 strong force from Belvoir and Newark Castles and assaulted Peterborough, held by the Parliamentarians. The attack was repulsed by Colonel Palgrave commanding a regiment of foot (infantry) from the Wisbech garrison. The Royalists retreated in disarray to Stamford. Palgrave was reinforced by Colonel Oliver Cromwell who arrived from Northamptonshire with seven troops of horse (cavalry) and three companies of foot.

After a vicious skirmish around Wothorpe House, the Royalists retired to the grounds of Burghley House, held by the Countess of Exeter for the King, and sheltered behind its stone walls. Cromwell suffered no losses in the skirmish but several Royalists were killed or captured.

On the 23rd July the Parliamentarians were further reinforced by 4,000 men and 14 cannon from East Anglia. In the pitch dark early the following morning they opened a two-hour bombardment but made no impression on the defenders. The Royalists were offered quarter but they refused. The fighting then resumed until the afternoon when the heavily outnumbered Royalists finally surrendered. Cromwell took them all prisoner: two Colonels, six Captains, four hundred foot, two hundred horse and all their weapons. Cromwell later sent the Countess of Exeter a portrait of himself by Robert Walker, which still hangs in Burghley House, out of the high regard he felt for the lady.

Marching towards Grantham, the Parliamentarians were attacked by four hundred “clubmen” two miles outside Stamford at Great

Casterton. Clubmen were local civilians who supported neither side but who just wanted to defend their property and their families from attacks by rapacious armies. The clubmen killed some of the Parliamentarian scouts but then Cromwell sent four troops of horse to drive them off. Fifty clubmen were killed and the rest fled into nearby woods.

No siege damage to Burghley House can be seen. The south front may have been destroyed in the bombardment and, as has been suggested by some architectural historians, was rebuilt in its entirety in the late seventeenth century.

Further rebuilding took place during the period of the 9th Earl of Exeter's ownership in the eighteenth century when, guided by Capability Brown, the south front was raised to alter the roof line and to allow better views of the new parkland he had designed.

The south front is a bit difficult to get at (see opposite). The west side of the house is protected by what is known as a ha-ha (pictured below), comprising a 6-foot-

deep trench, revetted on the house side with a stone wall. The ha-ha keeps the wandering deer away from the house and garden but unlike a hedge or fence does not interrupt the

view. The south end of the ha-ha is hard against a fence and the lake. The south face of the house is also protected by the same fence and lake. Sadly, all this protection prevents close examination and photography of the south side of the house.

The siege is a fascinating part of the history of Burghley House but strangely the attack is not mentioned anywhere, neither at Burghley itself nor in its website nor in any of its publicity. Nevertheless, a visit is always rewarding. Although a charge is made for a tour of the house, entrance to the grounds is free. A new car park opened in May 2023 and is also free, at least for the moment. The grounds are wonderful to walk around with many ancient trees particularly oaks, sweet chestnuts and sequoias dotted about, and some stately tall conifers at the west end of the lake. The herds of deer appear to wander at will and are very photogenic, providing they are not approached too closely. It's all very calm and very peaceful, a far cry from the sounds of cannon fire and conflict from times long ago.

The Car Dyke

Before rushing off home to defend their capital from invaders in the fifth century AD, the Romans had been very active during their 400-year occupation of this country, particularly in our area. Apart from crushing the native British tribes, they built roads such as Ermine Street and King Street, large townships like Durobrivae west of Peterborough, the Fossedyke canal connecting Lincoln with the River Trent, and Car Dyke, an 85-mile long canal in eastern England.

The Car Dyke was built in around AD 125. It runs along the western edge of the Fens from Washingborough, east of Lincoln, to Eye, east of Peterborough. However, archaeologists claim they have found sections of it at Waterbeach, north of Cambridge, suggesting it ran much further east. It is thought that the Car Dyke once linked up with the Fossedyke built around AD 120. If this theory is correct then the Romans possessed a strategic waterway all the way from East Anglia to the north of England.

The Car Dyke is one of the largest of the known Roman canals and is an important feature of the Roman landscape in the Fens. Along with their road system and Hadrian's Wall, it is one of the greatest engineering feats carried out in Britain by the Roman Empire.

Excavations on parts of Car Dyke have shown that the water channel, before it became silted, was approximately 40 ft wide at the top and between 7 to 13 ft deep, with sloping sides and a flat bottom.

The purpose for which Car Dyke was built is hotly debated among historians. Archaeologists have found boats with cargoes of pottery, coal and grain of the Roman era and dressed stone of

the medieval period, leading them to think that Car Dyke was used for transport. The canal may have been also used for military purposes, to carry food and supplies from East Anglia to their advancing armies in the north, the main cargoes being corn and salted meat for food, wool for uniforms and leather for tents and shields. Another suggestion is that its primary purpose was to serve as a drain to control and divert flood waters, acting as a catchwater drain intercepting runoff from the higher ground to the west.

Car Dyke may well have been built for agricultural drainage purposes so as to produce more fertile land for crops. The emperor Hadrian visited Britain in about AD 120 and the sections dating from this period may be associated with his plan to settle the Fens. Major works to drain the Fens to improve the land for agriculture took place in the seventeenth century and evidence has been found of improvements to Car Dyke dating to that era overlying construction from the Roman period, thus incorporating the canal into local drainage schemes.

Whether constructed for transport, military defences, drainage or agriculture, Car Dyke still remains an impressive work of civil engineering and is designated a scheduled ancient monument. Fortunately, it is marked on larger scale OS maps and there are many places where it may still be seen.

In my younger and fitter days, I traced Car Dyke east of the B1177 and B1394 between the north of Bourne and the east of Sleaford at Heckington, Horbling, Sempringham, Dowsby and Dunsby. In some of these places the canal is just a shallow weed choked ditch, most unimpressive. In other locations it has been maintained much better, the banks have been cleared and the weeds removed from the water. A few places have very fine brick arched bridges carrying the narrow fen roads. In our locality a good place to see the canal is in Bourne. The A151 past Tesco goes over a bridge across Car Dyke. A better place is the far end of the car park at Lidl supermarket from where there is an excellent view of the canal going south (pictured above). At Thurlby church the canal passes between the churchyard and the A15. There is in fact a footpath from Thurlby east of the A15 all the way to Bourne on the east side of Car Dyke, which I have yet to try.

On its way south and east, Car Dyke runs along the north side of the Paston Parkway to the north of Peterborough. In 2011 a new road designated the A16 was built which branches off from the Parkway and goes north towards Crowland and Spalding. As the new road had to cross Car Dyke, the initial plan was to run the canal through a concrete culvert. But as Car Dyke and its verges is a scheduled ancient monument, English Heritage would have none of it and insisted on a bridge. The plans were changed to cross the waterway with a 240 ft span “bow stringed” arch bridge, increasing the £80 million cost of the road by another £3 million. I do not recommend going to the bridge site to see

the canal. The A16 here is a busy road carrying fast moving traffic and one must park on the verge of the road beyond the crash barriers which can be extremely hazardous. There is no lay-by. A great shame, as the views of the canal here are excellent.

Whatever your opinion of the Romans, either as a civilising influence or as cruel military occupiers, you cannot deny that they were brilliant engineers and builders. That Car Dyke is still recognisable, and in fact still in use at least in part, after nearly 2,000 years is testimony to this fact. Along with the Roman roads mentioned above, it is still worth going to see, as it is a valuable addition to the local history of our area.

The Manners Monument or a Mystery at Uffington

It is said, often by me, that the finest examples of English medieval sculpture are the monuments in our cathedrals and parish churches. Not only in their beauty but as priceless historical resources, telling us about local worthies who are often of national standing. We are fortunate indeed in our area having such a wide variety to see. A fine example is the Manners Monument at St Michael and All Angels church at Uffington near Stamford.

On the south wall of the chancel is the monument to Roger Manners and his brother Oliver. Roger and Oliver were the third and fifth sons of Thomas Manners KG (1492 – 1543), of Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire, who was created first Earl of Rutland by King Henry VIII in 1525. Earl Thomas's maternal grandmother was Anne of York, a daughter of Richard Plantagenet, 3rd Duke of York. Anne was thus an elder sister of two kings: Edward IV and of his brother and successor, Richard III.

The monument consists of two kneeling figures in Tudor style armour facing each other and is made of alabaster, probably mined in Nottinghamshire. It contains panels at the top and one beneath each of the figures with text describing their lives.

The panel beneath the kneeling figure on the left of the monument tells us that Thomas's third son Roger was an esquire of the body, or personal attendant, of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth I. A date of 1587 is mentioned, whereas a date of death is mentioned in Latin on the panel at the top: "Obit XIDE 1607".

However, this information introduces a mystery. There is the date 1587. Pevsner in his "Buildings of England – Lincolnshire" assumes that this is Roger's date of death and states that perhaps 1607 is of another Roger. Thomas Manners had eleven children but no other Rogers. The date of 1607 agrees with genealogical sources which state that our Roger was born in 1535 and died in 1607. He was unmarried and resided at Uffington until his death. The panel beneath the figure on the

right says Thomas's fifth son, Oliver, served Queen Elizabeth in her wars at Newhaven and there fell sick and died of the same sickness.

Here is another mystery. No dates of birth and death for Oliver are given, just that he died of "the same" sickness. Same as whom or what? Similarly, genealogy sources give Oliver's date of birth as 1541 and death as 1563 and that he served under Elizabeth I in the wars at Newhaven against the French troops, where he fell sick and died.

The problem here is that there were no wars in Newhaven, Sussex, in this period. However, I strongly suspect that the city of Le Havre in France, founded in 1517, was named Newhaven by the English. France was a Catholic monarchy. As part of the European wars of religion following the Reformation, Protestants, called the Huguenots, captured Le Havre in 1562, looted churches and expelled Catholics. Fearing a Royalist counter attack, the Huguenots appealed to Queen Elizabeth I who sent 3,000 troops to occupy the city. Elizabeth's intention had been to exchange Le Havre for Calais, lost to France in 1558 after two centuries of English occupation. But the Huguenots then made an alliance with the Royalists who together attacked Le Havre and expelled the English troops. Queen Elizabeth was forced to relinquish any claim to Calais. I am fairly certain that these were the wars in Newhaven mentioned on the Manners monument.

All this is very interesting to anyone with a fascination with history. Or a visitor may have an appreciation of fine art and

sculpture and may not be terribly bothered with the historical details. Either way the monument is well worth a look. There are other monuments in the church, particularly the Great War memorial, which are just as good. As there is a primary school opposite the church, I would recommend visiting on a Saturday or during school holidays when there is a lot more parking space.

Bourne Abbey

A jewel in the crown

In feudal England, long ago, the manor was an estate of land with one of the nobility appointed as Lord of the Manor by the King. In Bourne, following the Norman conquest, there were three such manors but these were later consolidated into a single manor granted to Baldwin Fitz Gilbert of the De-Clare family as its Lord.

In the mid to late 11th century William the Conqueror ordered his lords to construct castles all over the country to control the native population. Following this edict, Baldwin set his hand to building an earthwork motte and bailey castle in the southwest of Bourne. Situated in what is now Wellhead Gardens, the earthworks were very extensive and formed a castle of an

unusual layout. The motte stood inside the bailey surrounded by a bank and ditch and further encircled by another ditch, in concentric plan.

Having built the castle, the energetic Baldwin turned towards founding a religious house with an abbey replacing an earlier demolished Saxon church located in the south east of Bourne. He invited the Arrouasian branch of the Augustinian Order to provide the religious establishment of the Abbey with a house for up to 14 canons. For financial support, Baldwin granted the house farmland, fishponds and the profits of many other churches. Bourne Abbey was the fourth Arrouasian house to be established in England.

Unlike monks who spent their time in prayer and study in closed communities, canons led a more interesting life with duties beyond their own enclosures involving preaching and public worship. In those days, monks tended to live in Benedictine foundations, while canons were members of the Augustinian orders. But Benedictine houses were expensive to establish, for their rules required a large number of monks with a subsidiary body of lay brothers to perform the prescribed liturgy. There were no such constraints in the Augustinian orders, and thus much better suited to Baldwin's means.

The Augustinians usually constructed their cloisters and associated buildings to the north of their abbey but in Bourne, sadly, all were knocked down after the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in 1534. Only the Abbey church remained. Excavations by archaeologists have discovered that

the cloisters were indeed on the north side of the church adjoining the nave, and there was an east, north, and west range of buildings surrounding the cloisters which included the chapter house, dormitory, refectory and kitchens. Further digging in 1985 revealed that the north range was a substantial set of stone buildings with walls 5 to 6 feet thick but very limited remains were discovered on the west and east sides.

At the dissolution, the canons appointed one of their number as the parish priest to minister to the spiritual needs of the people and, as a result, the Abbey church itself was not demolished and became the parish church of Bourne. The area to the north of the church is now taken up with private apartment blocks, the church hall, a care home and a substantial vicarage. In fact, visitors hoping to see the north side of the church must trespass a few yards down the vicarage driveway to get a view (pictured below).

After the Civil War, it seems that the fabric of the Abbey church was allowed to deteriorate. The earliest drawings of the west front indicate that by the early nineteenth century, the incomplete north tower of the west front had lost its roof and the northern door was bricked up. But apparently it was a lot worse than these drawings suggested and it took two major restoration schemes in 1869 and the 1880s to restore the church to something of its pre-Reformation glory. It is now the only Grade 1 listed building in Bourne.

With the demise of the Abbey, the provision for educating the children of the town came to a halt. A new Grammar School was

founded in 1636 under the will of one William Trollope whose family had acquired the Abbey buildings in the early 17th century. The school he erected was rebuilt in the early 18th century and is situated in the graveyard to the south of the church, a smallish brick building with surprisingly large windows. It closed in 1904 and now bears a warning notice saying it is in a dangerous state, so viewing must be from afar.

In the same way, the provision of local health care suffered when the Abbey closed. The canons had a hospital in the original part of the building just to the west of the Abbey over the stream which flowed through the Abbey grounds. This house is now known as Bourne Eau House and is probably the oldest in the town.

After the dissolution, the farmlands and fishponds east of the Abbey, which grew vegetables and herbs and provided fresh fish for the canons, became the town's unofficial recreation ground. This arrangement persisted for several centuries. The land was eventually acquired by a syndicate of local businessmen who rented out the rights for cricket and football, but when it came under threat from housing development in the 1930s, Bourne United Charities stepped in to buy it for the benefit of the town at a cost of £700. Now known as the Abbey Lawns, the large grassy expanse is an area for sport and recreation and the home of the town football club, cricket club, and tennis courts. Its broad acres also cater for a casual kick-about, jogging, strolling, athletics, bowls and petanque. The open-air swimming pool used to be the carp pond for the canons of Bourne Abbey but it was

taken over by Bourne United Charities in 1922 and is now greatly enhanced to become one of the few remaining lidos in England. The purchase and laying out of the grounds are commemorated by a plaque on the gate post at the main entrance in Abbey Road. A plaque on the opposite gate post records tree and shrub planting celebrating the silver jubilee of King George V in 1935.

All places mentioned can be visited, with the possible exception of the north side of the church. The church is usually open for a walk around, providing no service is taking place. There is parking in the church hall car park if visiting the church or in Church Lane opposite the west front of the church. It is a short walk to Wellhead Gardens to view the bumps and hollows remaining from the castle. Abbey Lawns has parking next to the wall in Abbey Road but it does fill up early.

Bourne Abbey is one of the most delightful places in Bourne and ease of access makes it more appealing. It truly merits the title “jewel in the crown”, a hackneyed phrase perhaps, but well deserved in this case. It is one of those few places with a combination of attractiveness and a long and fascinating history. Such a rarity must be maintained and cherished.

Kate's Bridge

An old bridge in a small hamlet

Mention the name Kate's Bridge to anyone in our locality and they will assume you are talking about the petrol station or the garden centre in this small hamlet about a mile and a half south of Thurlby. But there are also a few houses, an outfit that fixes lawn mowers, a farm, some sort of caravan establishment and a chicken farm. On the current Ordnance Survey map the name is attached to the farm, the houses, the chicken farm and a weir on the River Glen, just west of the A15 main road.

All these places are spread over about a mile on the map. So, effectively, the small hamlet has become quite large. Strictly speaking the term hamlet is correct, defined in England as a settlement smaller than a village and without a church.

But the highways authority has decided in its wisdom that Kate's Bridge is so small that the road signs announcing the name of the hamlet only merit being mounted on one pole. In fact, they have gone further, both name plates are on the same pole, one facing north, the other south, located on the west side of the A15 roughly opposite the houses and the petrol station.

The hamlet is shared with Thurlby and Baston County Parishes. The border runs from the north-east along the River Glen, which flows north-easterly through the hamlet, then south of Kate's Bridge farm, then zig-zags west across the A15 then south taking in the north west corner of Waterside garden centre.

The name also refers to the old stone bridge, east of the main road, crossing the River Glen. The old bridge is less than 18 feet wide and was adequate in its time for horses, with or without carts or coaches. The bridge no longer carries a road, just a muddy track which is part of the Macmillan Way long-distance footpath. The track abuts the A15 and forms an even muddier unofficial lay-by, exit from which by car into the fast-moving traffic on the main road takes extreme care.

The bridge is late 18th century but appears to be in superb condition. It is a single elliptical arch. The stone blocks have smooth faces and sharp square edges. Either side of the arch are pilasters which are flat representations of classical columns. All masonry blocks on the pilasters and the arch on the east and

west sides are rusticated, meaning they have deep V-shaped joints between the blocks. On the west face the keystone has a female carved head, who could well represent Kate in the hamlet's name. The keystone is the highest stone in the arch and stands proud of its neighbours. Sadly, ivy and much other foliage is growing over both the faces obscuring the quality of the structure and possibly damaging it. Despite the deterioration, the old bridge is grade II listed. (The picture above is about 15 years old, copied from the geograph website).

In the 1960s the increasing weight of traffic caused the old bridge to be replaced with a modern concrete bridge just to the west which now carries the A15. When the new bridge was built the A15 was also re-routed to by-pass the old bridge and to smooth out the route.

In times gone by the Roman road King Street consisted of its present route and part of the modern A15 north through Thurlby and Bourne. Where this route crossed the River Glen was the only section of river bed with a solid rock bottom thus a safe point to ford before the bridge was built, fords being more commonplace than bridges. During the thirteenth century the area north of the river was known as "Caterbrig" which must be of Latin derivation. Its ownership was apparently disputed between two bishops. However, the south side of the river was known by the Anglo-Saxon name, Thetford, a public ford, a name retained in Thetford Farm Estate.

The origin of the name "Kate's Bridge" is a bit of a mystery. It could be the woman personified in sculpture on the west face of

the old bridge. Or possibly a corruption of the name “Caterbrig”. Alternatively, a local newspaper recently published a feature about ghosts and spirits in the area. It related a story about a woman called Kate who hanged herself from the bridge and that her ghost still inhabits the hamlet which adopted her name. Or it may be something else entirely.

Admittedly there is not a lot to be seen in Kate’s Bridge unless you are into old bridges. But access means either parking in the muddy lay-by, or using the garden centre car park and walking along the very busy A15.

Mention must be made of Storm Henk in early January 2024 causing the River Glen to burst its banks resulting in devastating floods. On Wednesday 3rd January Waterside Garden Centre which is alongside the Glen had to close. On a local news website, the owner Andy Parrot said that parts of the premises were under five feet of water, he has lost virtually all his stock, and the damage could run into over a million pounds. At the time of writing (late January 2024) it was said that the popular garden centre could remain closed until March.

The Toft Trig Point

Regular travellers around our area will be familiar with the narrow and pot-holed lane from Toft village to the junction with the Manthorpe to Thurlby road. On the right is the golf course, then farmland. On the left is a farmhouse, then more farmland. The verges either side of the lane are quite wide in places, bounded by tall hedges.

About halfway between the farmhouse and the junction with the Thurlby road another hedge goes off at right angles to the lane. On the Thurlby side of this hedge, about 200 yards from the lane is a concrete Ordnance Survey Trigonometrical Pillar, often called a trig point. Such an edifice is four-sided, four feet high, two feet square at the base tapering towards the flat top which holds a brass plate. Unless the hedge has been cut, only taller people can spot it by standing on tip-toe and peering over the top. Binoculars will be useful and a long telephoto lens will be needed for photography, which alas I do not have, hence the rather fuzzy photograph.

The building of trig points on high ground began in 1935 to assist the mapping of Great Britain by the Ordnance Survey. When all the trig points were in place, it was possible in clear weather to get a line-of-sight to at least two other trig points from any one trig point. Careful measurements of the angles between these lines-of-sight using an instrument called a theodolite then allowed the construction of a system of triangles which covered the entire country. This network of triangles originated from a precisely measured baseline five miles long on Hounslow Heath near London. Using trigonometry, the dimensions of the sides and angles of all the other triangles were calculated. The process was called triangulation and was used as the basis of the very accurate Ordnance Survey maps we have today.

The man responsible for the design of the concrete trig point, as well as the planning and implementation of the triangulation, was Brigadier Martin Hotine, head of the Trigonometrical and Levelling Division of the Ordnance Survey.

Most people's experience of trig points is on top of a high hill or mountain, in the upland areas of Great Britain. The pillar is often surrounded by exhausted walkers taking selfies and eating sandwiches, usually in thick fog or pouring rain. In the flatter areas of the country, they are rarer and must be sought out but are certainly easier to reach.

Originally about 6,500 trig points were built in the period between 1935 and 1962 but many have now been lost due to road building, housing development and farming. As far as I know, the Toft trig point is the only one in our area, although

there is another one by the hedge on the narrow road from Pickworth in Rutland to the A1 southbound slip road. Trig points, sadly, are no longer used to construct OS maps, having been replaced by radar, laser measurement, aerial and satellite photography and the global positioning system (GPS). However, trig points are still marked on OS maps by a small triangle and are very useful navigation beacons for climbers, hillwalkers, mountain bikers and other such energetic people. The height of the trig point above sea level in metres is marked alongside its symbol. The Toft trig point is marked as 58 metres which is 190 feet in English.

I cannot even suggest that a visit will be particularly enlightening. There is nothing much to see; it is after all just a 4-foot concrete pillar. Just a small reminder of the history of map-making and an interesting part of our local history.

The Fen Causeway

One thing the Roman invaders in England were famous for was building durable roads whose abiding feature was that they ran straight as an arrow across the countryside ignoring hills, fields, woodlands and ancient tribal boundaries.

The best local example of a Roman road, although doubtless rebuilt many times over the last 2,000 years, is King Street which turns off the A15 just north of Baston and runs past the Waterside Garden Centre. This road is indeed arrow straight and level for miles. The road user can almost see the end of it.

Not so the road known as the Fen Causeway. The Fens at the time were mostly undrained land which flooded in winter with a few small “islands” of slightly higher ground. Thus, the road had to weave from island to island, round deep marshes and water courses, creating a very un-straight route.

Fen Causeway starts in the east at Denver in Norfolk, just south of Downham Market where there was a Roman salt works. It continues through Whittlesey and the bronze age museum at Flag Fen, across Peterborough, and finishing in the west at the Roman fort of Durobrivae near Water Newton where it joined the major north-south route Ermine Street. Fen Causeway is just 24 miles long. It was raised above the marshy fens using gravel with a width of up to 60 feet.

Durobrivae was a significant walled Roman town and fort established to protect the crossing point of Ermine Street over

the River Nene. The name translates as “Fort by the Bridge”. It sits south of the River Nene on a stretch of land about 2 miles long and 1 mile wide. Its position along the main north-south route of Ermine Street, with access to the Fens and their waterways, meant it was the perfect place for a busy commercial centre. “Nene Valley ware” was produced here, a finely decorated pottery that was traded around Britain. The natural resources of the area provided clay for pottery, iron ore for metalworking, trees for fuel and fertile fields for farming. The walls and central street of Durobrivae are still visible as bumps in a field (pictured) which borders the south-bound carriageway of the A1 at a lay-by just south of Water-Newton. Coincidentally, this is where King Street finishes. Aerial photography has provided strong indications of the layout of streets and buildings within the town. Durobrivae appears on both the Landranger, and in more detail, on the Explorer versions of Ordnance Survey maps. It is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act to be of national importance.

Flag Fen is a museum east of Peterborough built around a Bronze Age site discovered in 1982 by Francis Pryor consisting of a large

wooden causeway from one fen island to another, built 3,500 years ago. The Roman road which crosses the site came much later. In fact, a section of the road has been excavated and can be seen by visitors. In recent years reconstructions of Bronze Age roundhouses have been built. Flag Fen was probably abandoned long before the Roman occupation.

The Fen Causeway was built after the rebellion of Queen Boadicea (sometimes called Boudicca) leading the Iceni tribes in AD 60. The new road meant that troops could be sent quickly to put down further rebellion from the Norfolk tribes. In addition, the road linked the north and west of England to East Anglia, improving communication routes for trade.

Anyone who is really enthusiastic about Roman roads, and apparently such people exist, will be unable to walk along the Fen Causeway. Most of it is buried under Peterborough or through fields and there appears to be nowhere it appears above ground, unlike King Street and many others. The section at Flag Fen is the best bet. Think of it as a useful addition to the history of Boadicea's revolt and the rich local history of our area.

Bowland's Gibbet

The traditional image of the highwayman is a masked and cloaked figure on horseback on a lonely road at night, pointing a large pistol at the occupants of a stagecoach and saying "stand and deliver". Often his victim was the mail coach which carried large amounts of cash. But mail coaches were not introduced until 1784. Before that men on horseback carried the mail. They were known as post-boys and wore scarlet livery. Because of the poor condition of the roads the journey was slow and hard on the men and horses. The riders travelled at barely more than three miles per hour, and as they were alone and undefended they were very vulnerable.

According to the Empingham local history website, early on Saturday 17th March 1769 a post-boy set out from the General Post Office on Lombard Street in London carrying mail bags. He was the first in a relay of carriers positioned along the Great North Road. By Sunday evening the mail had reached Stamford Post Office where the local mail was removed and the bags were handed back to the local post-boy who packed them onto his horse and left for Colsterworth at 10.00pm.

The post-boy rode through Great Casterton, passed Tickencote and was about a quarter of a mile from Bloody Oaks wood when he was accosted by a highwayman at pistol point. The robber selected one of the bags with the mail for Boroughbridge in Yorkshire and rode back towards Stamford. The post-boy also

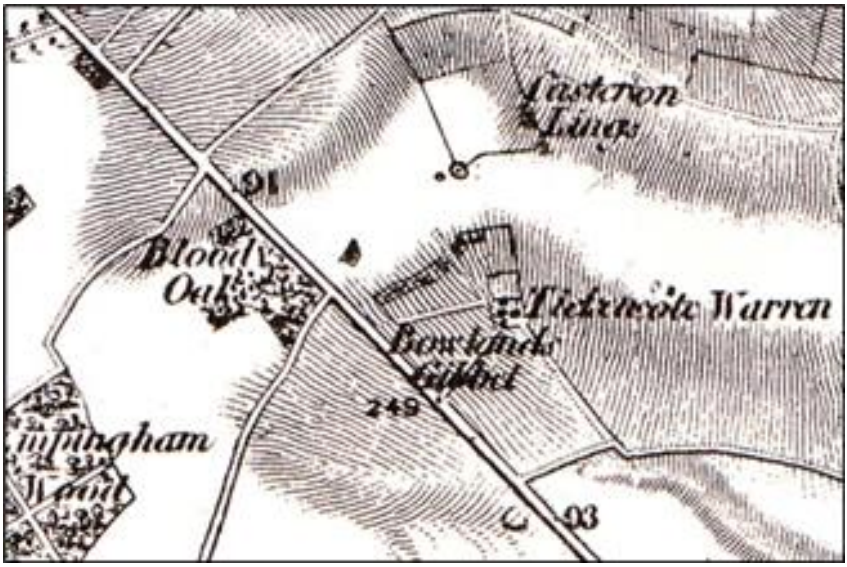
returned to Stamford and gave a good description of his assailant to the authorities. The stolen bag, without its contents, was later recovered from Empingham Common close to the scene of the robbery and was returned to Stamford Post Office.

Newspapers reported the robbery and speculated that the highwayman targeted the Boroughbridge bag because he knew it contained a large amount of banknotes, possibly the huge figure for the time of £10,000. In Stamford the description of the highwayman and his horse were widely circulated and soon brought in information that enabled the authorities to identify him as John Bowland. Apparently, he was recognized in the town by his distinctive blue greatcoat. From this description Bowland was arrested by constables on the quayside at Greenwich in Kent in the evening of 29th March half an hour before he was due to take ship for Holland.

Bowland was taken before a magistrate and questioned. He was found in possession of eight promissory notes from a bank in Lombard Street, along with money drafts and legal documents, but no banknotes. He confessed to the robbery but denied taking cash. He was later transported from Maidstone jail to Oakham prison and on 6th July he was tried in Oakham Castle by Justice Sir Edward Clive. Justice Clive found Bowland guilty of highway robbery and sentenced him to be executed on the 20th, his body to be hung in chains on a gibbet.

Bowland was duly hanged at a gallows in Oakham. His body was then taken to a newly built gibbet on Empingham Common and there hung in chains. The gibbet was placed at the scene of the

crime to deter the increasing frequency of highway robberies. The gibbet post was covered in tar, and spikes were driven into it preventing relatives from climbing up and recovering the body or from ghoulish souvenir collectors.



The location of Empingham Common is uncertain. However, the site of “Bowland’s Gibbet” appears on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map (inset above) published in 1824 located between Tickencote Warren farm and the Great North Road, about six miles north-west of Stamford. It is indeed just south-east of Bloody Oaks wood which most historians claim was named after the place where many rebels were slain after the battle of Losecote Field in 1470.

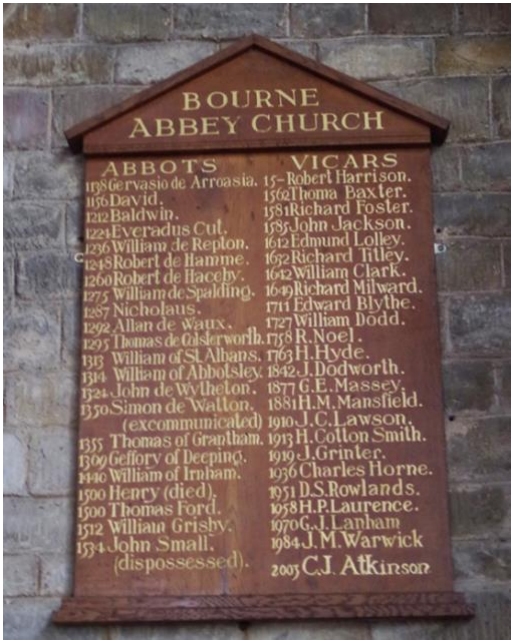
However, Rutland County Council produced a leaflet at the millennium for the Rutland Heritage trail which says that on a map of 1645 the wood is shown as "Royal Wood" but was changed following the execution of John Bowland. Local legend says a gibbet was still there in 1900 and that the last man hanged there stole sheep.

Unfortunately, there is nothing to be seen. If the 1824 map is correct the location of the gibbet is now on private farmland behind a thick hedge overlooking the dual-carriageway. The only access is along a private lane to Tickencote Warren farm. The photograph above was taken from this lane. The story of Bowland's Gibbet is just another small and fascinating part of our rich local history.

Registers of Vicars

Among the spiritual and architectural splendours of a parish church is a small and often ignored attraction. Intentionally placed quite close to the entrance door, inviting examination from the more curious visitor, is the register of the rectors or vicars of the parish. It can be a fascinating document as the entries may go back centuries and contain useful clues as to when the church was founded and hint at some of its history.

Sadly, not all churches display such registers. Even when present, the detail is often disappointedly sketchy and only the name of the incumbent and the year of his appointment are given. But at Bourne Abbey church, the register of Abbots and Vicars is beautifully written in gold on an oak plaque, as is the register of Rectors at All Saints, Pickworth in Rutland, an otherwise small and rather plain church.



In other churches the register is on a framed piece of paper under glass containing considerable detail. Such is the case at Barholm,

Tickencote, and Uffington where much information is given on the rector and the patron in some entries.

Usually, a register is in tabular form, and the meaning of the columns for date of appointment and name of the incumbent are obvious. Most contain a column for the “patron” who holds a legal right to nominate an incumbent for the church to the bishop of the diocese. This right is called an *advowson*. The patron can be of a high status, the King, a college, or another Christian body. The person who originally founded, built or endowed the church is often the first patron. The *advowson* can descend to the patron's heirs and might be bought and sold like any other property. A college might thus buy the *advowsons* of lucrative benefices in order to provide positions for its future Fellows.

Many churches, according to their registers, had a monastery or priory as their first patron. Many pious medieval patrons chose to grant their church to a monastic house, particularly in the 12th century, when there was a surge of disapproval of churches in private hands. Not necessarily a local abbey, for Edenham it was the Augustinian Priory of Bridlington, for Stamford St Johns the Priory of St. Fromund, a monastery near Virc in Normandy, for Uffington the Prior and Convent of Belvoir.

The monastery thereby became the rector, appointing a vicar, or clerical deputy, to carry out parochial duties. A monastery as rector would generally collect the “*greater tithes*”, those of grain, hay or timber for its own use, while the vicar had the “*lesser tithes*” of wool and milk from animals and produce from fishing

and milling. A *tithe* was usually one tenth of the annual production of cultivation and farming of the parish.

After the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in about 1538, the *advowsons* formerly held by monastic houses were sold, creating many lay rectors. When Bourne Abbey was dissolved in 1536, the church was retained as the parish church. Thus the register (pictured) reveals this history showing Abbots from 1138 in the left column and Vicars from 1534 in the right column.

I remember talking to the Rev Andy Hawes some years ago when he told me the appointment of the Vicar of Edenham is in the gift of the Lords of Grimsthorpe Castle. Entries in the register confirm this information:

> "*In 1130 William de Gaunt gave Edenham Church to the Augustinian Priory of Bridlington. The parish was served continuously by Augustinian Canons until 1539". And later: "In 1539 the Priory was dissolved and the Parish granted to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk and Katherine, Baroness Willoughby*".

From such a small item there is a surprising volume of information that can be gleaned from these registers. The founding of the church, the influence of the religious disputes in the civil war, incumbents deprived of their living and often the reason, the links of a small parish church to the King or the great families of the realm. So, when next visiting a church, have a look for the register, it may turn out to be very rewarding.

The Life and Times of Richard Bertie

Amongst the many superb memorials in Edenham Church is a particularly fine white marble tablet dedicated to Richard Bertie who was born in 1635 and passed on in 1686. Tucked away in a dark corner at the east end of the north aisle of the church, the visitor must really hunt around to find it. But the search is rewarding. Coincidentally placed next to the black marble memorial to his grandfather, Richard's memorial is superbly carved, and contains extensive details of his life in the flowery language of the 17th century.

We learn that he was indeed of illustrious parentage, being the grandson of the first Earl of Lindsey, of Grimsthorpe Castle, who was killed at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642, and the son of Montagu, 2nd Earl of Lindsey. Both father and grandfather were Knights of the Garter, the highest order of knighthood in the kingdom, founded in 1348, the oldest in the world. And both were hereditary Lords Great Chamberlain of England, the Officer of State to whom the Sovereign entrusts the custody and control of the Palace of

Westminster, the responsibility for the organisation of the State opening of Parliament, and who plays a major role in a Coronation.

To escape the vindictiveness of Oliver Cromwell's republic, Richard and his elder brother Peregrine were sent out of the country by their father in 1649. Richard travelled throughout Europe before joining the Duke of York (later King James II), serving in the French army under Marshall Turenne during the Thirty Years War.

The Thirty Years war of 1618 to 1648 was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history, caused mainly by the Protestant Reformation in the Germanic states and those who opposed it. The Franco-Spanish war was part of this wider conflict and Richard distinguished himself in the Siege of Mouzon in eastern France in 1653. In the midst of the Franco-Spanish War, the nobility, the law courts ("Parlements"), as well as much of the French population, rose in revolt against the government of the young King Louis XIV in what was known as "the Fronde". Again, Richard won acclaim in the capture of the fortress of Landrecies in 1655 during this uprising.

Our man returned to England at the Restoration of King Charles II in 1660 and briefly pursued a political career. He was a commissioner for assessment of taxation in Lincolnshire, was appointed a justice of the peace in Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire and was returned as Member of Parliament for Woodstock in Oxfordshire in March 1685.

When King Charles II died on 6th February 1685, he left no legitimate issue. But despite being a Catholic, his younger brother James acceded peacefully to the throne as King James II. However, James Scott, 1st Duke of Monmouth, eldest illegitimate son of Charles II, had other ideas. He was vehemently opposed to a Catholic King and in 1685 led a group of like-minded Protestants in an armed invasion known as the Monmouth Rebellion in the west of England with the object of toppling the King.

But Monmouth was opposed by James who had a standing army of nearly 20,000 men. Richard Bertie was part of this force as a Captain commanding a troop of horse. The Royal army easily defeated Monmouth on 6th July 1685, at the Battle of Sedgemoor, the last pitched battle fought on English soil. Monmouth himself was captured hiding in a ditch disguised as a shepherd.

Tried and found guilty of High Treason, Monmouth was sentenced to death by beheading. However, Monmouth's execution was hideously bungled. The executioner took five strokes with the axe and even then the head was not completely severed and had to be finished off with a knife. Monmouth was interred, along with many other victims of execution, in the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula in the Tower of London.

King James's reaction to the Monmouth rebellion was to plan the increase of the standing army and the appointment of loyal and experienced Roman Catholic officers. But Richard and his younger half-brother Captain Henry Bertie did not support his

measures and as a result were deprived of their commissions in December 1685. Richard died on 19th January 1686 and was buried at Edenham. He never married.

Edenham Church houses the monuments to the Berties, Lords Willoughby de Eresby and later Dukes of Ancaster, all of Grimsthorpe Castle, some of them huge and very ornate, but a series larger than that in any other Lincolnshire church. Richard was a politician, a magistrate and a soldier, and thoroughly deserves his place amongst these worthies.

The Wilsthorpe Effigy

In April of 2021 the editor of the Three Towers in his wisdom published an article of mine entitled “Recumbent Effigies” describing the several stone figures of knights in armour, and sometimes their ladies, to be found in churches in our area.

Since then, more information has come to light regarding the effigy at St. Faith’s church at Wilsthorpe (pictured). St. Faith’s is one of the smallest churches in South Lincolnshire. It was built in 1715 as a replacement for an earlier church, underwent extensive changes in the 1860s, and is a mixture of classical and gothic styles. The church is in a delightful rural spot, backing onto fields in this very quiet village.

The effigy is to the left of the altar, beyond the rail, in a dark corner of the church up against the north and east walls. In fact, it just fits between the altar rail and the east wall. In such a small church there is probably nowhere else to put it. Its position restricts close viewing and photography but that is a minor consideration. The legs are crossed, the right foot is missing, the other rests on what appears to be a faithful dog. The shield on his left arm is hard up against the wall. His head rests on a pillow and the right arm is across the chest grasping the top of his shield. He has two swords, one beneath the shield the other on his right hip although this may be a dagger. Sadly, much of the detail on the shield and on his belt is worn, presumably lost to the centuries.

It is interesting that Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in his "Buildings of England – Lincolnshire" (2nd edition) claims that the effigy with the arms of the Wake family must be a 17th century fake. He says "the crossing of the legs is improbably done, and the surcoat and its carved pattern is also improbable. The way the hand lies instead of holding the shield has no parallel. Finally, although all this tends to convey a date about 1300, the lavish belt and the moustache would spell 1375 or so". Pevsner does not think much of the church either, using terms such as "cruel alterations" in the 1862 rebuilding, and "the ridiculous shingled broach-spire". The Shell Guide to Lincolnshire by Thorold and Yates (published 1965) is not a fan of the church either, describing the pinnacled exterior as "comic". The church is listed Grade II*, the

description of the building describes the effigy as “late 13th century, recut”, as does Historic England.

It is fortunate that the church authorities are unmoved by any criticism of their church or effigy. They have written and displayed useful information, propped up on the organ, describing the effigy as “a stone figure of a knight believed to be circa 1340 bearing a shield with the arms of the Wake family to which the famous Hereward is supposed to have belonged. An inscription in English around the hem of his tunic reads: “Peace is better than war”. Sadly, none of this detail could be seen as the effigy is badly worn. There is even graffiti scratched on his person. On a visit to Barholm Church in July 2011 I met the then vicar, Carolyn Kennedy, who was also vicar of St. Faith’s. She told me that the Heraldry Society have investigated the effigy and have pronounced that it dates from 1340 to 1350 and is in the style of tournament armour.

The Wake family of Lincolnshire claim descent from Hereward the Wake (died 1072) who gained fame by raising rebellion against William the Conqueror. Hereward had a daughter named Turfrida by his second wife, Alftruda. Descending from Alftruda and at the end of a long and tortuous genealogical path comes John (1268 – 1300), created the first Lord Wake in 1295. He served King Edward I, campaigning in Gascony between 1288 and 1297 and against the Scots from 1297 to 1300. He fought in the battle of Falkirk in 1298. John’s son Thomas, 2nd Lord Wake (1297 – 1349), also fought against the Scots for King Edward II.

Another branch of the Wake family includes Sir Hugh Wake (1202-1241) who fought in Brittany with King Henry III and died on Crusade in the Holy Land fighting the Saracens with Simon de Montfort. His grandson, another Thomas (1280-1347), was present in France with King Edward III, where he fought at Crecy in 1346, and at the siege of Calais in 1347, where he died. There must be other family members of a martial disposition. Members of the Wake family of Lincolnshire were also Lords of the Manor of Bourne, and of Deeping.

It is far too much to expect that the effigy is one of these warriors. And if so, how come he is commemorated in a tiny church in deepest Lincolnshire? Due to his age, he must have been moved from another church, perhaps the forerunner of St. Faith's at Wilsthorpe. The identity remains an enduring mystery. Or possibly a fake, or even re-cut. Surely this is part of the attraction. A trip to Wilsthorpe is highly recommended, and then the visitor can form his or her own opinion.

The Protector's Widow

King Charles I remains the only English King in history to be tried and executed for treason, a judicial murder which caused outrage and horror throughout the British Isles and Europe. Charles was beheaded in 1649 after the defeat of his armies by Parliamentarian forces in the English Civil War. Parliament's army was commanded by Oliver Cromwell, arguably the most capable soldier in England at the time. He was also a Member of Parliament and a radical politician, bitterly opposed to the King, and it was largely at his instigation that Charles was put on trial. Realising that the country needed a head of state, Parliament declared that Oliver Cromwell be the Lord Protector of England, Scotland and Ireland, a King in all but name.

But away from politics and the battlefield he was a dedicated family man. In 1620 he married Elizabeth Bourchier, daughter of a London merchant. Theirs was long and stable marriage which produced nine children of whom eight survived until adulthood. Cromwell died at Whitehall on 3rd September 1658. A violent storm wracked England on the night of his death, said by his enemies to be the Devil carrying away his soul. He was buried in Westminster Abbey following an elaborate funeral service.

His son Richard, known as "Tumbledown Dick", took on the duties of Lord Protector, but he was not the man his father was. In 1659 the Protectorate was dissolved, the army took over the government and the country became a military dictatorship.

Parliament was rudely known as The Rump, and was a shadow of its former self.

Elizabeth Cromwell, known as the Lady Protectress, was well-provided for at her husband's death and given an annuity and lodgings in St James's in London. When the Protectorate fell, the ruling Council of Officers urged the Rump Parliament to treat her generously. In spring 1660, on the eve of the Restoration of the Monarchy, she left London, but was accused of purloining jewels and other goods belonging to the royal family. She strongly denied the charge. Elizabeth went to live in the Manor House in Northborough, Cambridgeshire, with her son-in-law John Claypole, where she spent her last years in quiet retirement. After a period of declining health, she died in November 1665 and was buried in Northborough church.

The Manor House had provided a comfortable residence for the Protector's widow. It is at the south end of the village, a small stone-built fortified hall of two storeys under a gabled roof. A gatehouse stands by the road with a magnificent arched entrance and added on to the west is a large, early seventeenth century barn into which a row of circular gun ports was cut during the Civil War. (Pictured).

There appears to be dispute over who originally built the Manor House. Either by Geoffrey De La Mare in the early 14th century and renovated and extended in the 17th, or built between 1333 and 1336 by William de Eyton - the Master Mason and Architect of Litchfield Cathedral.

The Manor House was owned in the 17th century by the Claypole family. John Claypole, was born on 21st August 1625, the eldest son of John Claypole and his wife Mary. John Claypole the younger was a Parliamentary soldier, politician, and great friend of Oliver Cromwell. He married Elizabeth, Oliver's second and favourite daughter, at Holy Trinity Church, Ely, on 13th January 1646. John first appeared in arms for Parliament at the siege of Newark in the winter of 1645–6, and rose to become a colonel of a regiment in July 1651. On 11th August 1651 he received a commission from the Council of State to raise a troop of horse in Northamptonshire to oppose the march of Charles II into England. At the Restoration of the Monarchy John returned to Northborough. But John had financial difficulties and had to sell the Manor in 1681 to a Lord Fitzwilliam. John died on 26th June

1688. John and his wife Elizabeth seem to have spent most of their married life in London rather than Cambridgeshire. Elizabeth sadly died in August 1658. Their children, three sons and a daughter, all died young.

St. Andrew's in Northborough is along Church Lane which turns off the main road between the Manor House and the Packhorse pub. The church has a late 12th to early 13th century nave and a very large south chantry chapel known as the Claypole Chapel. The chapel contains the graves of some of the Claypole family. John and Elizabeth were both buried in London, but at least two of their children were laid to rest in the chapel. Elizabeth, widow of Oliver Cromwell, is buried in a vaulted charnel house beneath the chapel. Although no contemporary monument survives, a large broken, and repaired, floor slab is traditionally said to mark her grave. The Cromwell Association have set up an inscribed tablet in her memory on the east wall.

Unfortunately, I have always found St. Andrew's church locked thus preventing a visit to the Claypole chapel, and the old Manor House is a private dwelling so it must be admired from the outside. Northborough was on the main road into Peterborough until February 1989 when the A15 Glinton bypass opened, but the road through the village is still a bit busy, so street parking is risky. However, the landlord at the Packhorse pub, close to the Manor House, will allow use of his car park if politely asked. Visiting these places in Northborough is not always easy, but like most things in life, putting in a bit of effort makes the experience most rewarding.

In Praise of Tracery

Among the many architectural splendours to be enjoyed in our Gothic cathedrals and parish churches, the decorative stonework called tracery in the windows is one that is frequently overlooked but still worthy of admiration.

The Gothic style of church architecture was imported from France in the late 12th century and soon became the true English style. English Gothic came after the fortress-like Norman style. Norman architecture has thick walls, massive columns and tiny round-headed windows. Gothic was a revolution, with pointed arches, rib vaulting to the ceiling, thinner walls with flying buttresses to support them, and large windows containing beautiful patterns of tracery, all leading to much more graceful buildings.

The first design used in the Gothic style is known as Early English. Windows in Early English were Lancets, tall, narrow windows each with a sharp pointed arch at its top containing plain or stained glass. It acquired the "lancet" name from its resemblance to a lance. There is no tracery. Lancets are often seen together in groups of three or more, sometimes the central lancet is taller than the rest.

These grouped lancet windows gave way in the mid-13th century to larger and wider windows. Larger windows obviously meant a larger area of glass, which needed supporting against the pressure of wind. Which then led to window tracery. The pointed

arch feature of the Gothic style created a space below the peak of the arch which is filled with decorative stonework. Below the arch are mullions, vertical ribs of stone dividing the window into two or more vertical window “lights” or panels of glass. If the window was particularly tall then horizontal ribs called transoms were added, giving more support to the glass and creating more lights. The outside of the ribs themselves are moulded or shaped and the ribs create an intricate pattern over the whole window.

The term tracery probably derives from the tracing floors on which the complex patterns of windows were laid out. These patterns were full size. Tracings were taken, then wooden templates were cut from the tracings and passed direct to the mason who carved the stone ribs.

Plate Tracery is the earliest form, where the area of stone was greater than the glass. The “plate” of stone was simply pierced to create small areas where glass was inserted. In the 13th century plate tracery began to give way to Bar Tracery, where the area of glass was greater than the area of stone. The simplest form of bar tracery was “Y tracery”, where the thin stone mullion separating two window lights branched into two sections in the shape of a letter Y. Another simple form is Intersecting Tracery where the mullions curved to the arch head, crossing over each other in the process.

As Gothic architecture developed, windows became much wider, and there might be three or more lights, separated by stone mullions, with increasingly complex tracery patterns above the lights. The fascinating subject of Tracery uses a wealth of

technical terms, beloved of architectural historians in an attempt to describe the patterns and place each one into a named category.

For instance, Geometric tracery has circles, trefoils and quatrefoils below the peak of the arch above the stone mullions. Curvilinear or flowing tracery involves more complex shapes based on ogee curves. The final phase of Gothic was the Perpendicular style of architecture of the late 14th century which has mullions crossed at intervals by horizontal transoms. This pattern is often called Panel Tracery or Rectilinear Tracery.

Patterns of tracery are complicated and it is frequently impossible to tell to which category a window belongs. Besides, quite a lot of windows do not seem to fit these neat categories. There also seems a dispute about which pattern of tracery is in which category. A visitor to a church is not necessarily an architectural historian and the layman need not be concerned with all the complicated categories of tracery that I have been at pains to describe.

A visitor travelling around our area will see many examples of beautiful window tracery. A good example of grouped lancets is on the chancel wall at St. Mary, Essendine. There is plate tracery at St. Mary, Clipsham, in the east wall of the north aisle and also in the spire bell-openings. The east window of St. Martin, Barholm uses intersecting tracery.

At another St. Mary, in Swinstead, the west tower is Early English with Y tracery in the bell openings and the east window has four lights with curvilinear or flowing tracery. I think the east window is the one of the most stunning I have seen.

Swinstead east window
Cusped curvilinear tracery. C14. Restored

But the finest example of Geometric tracery must be the great east window in the Angel Choir at Lincoln Cathedral. At 59 feet high it has eight lights and seven circles above, all filled with gorgeous stained glass. If an opportunity occurs, it has to be seen. Not quite so grand but still worth seeing is the late 13th century east window at St. Andrew, Folkingham, with four lights and three circles.

There are several windows at St. Michael, Edenham, of the Perpendicular style, particularly the east and west windows of five lights.

And a very fine west window at Folkingham which has a castellated transom, resembling small battlements.

As has been seen, tracery thrives in our local churches. And knowledge of terminology and category names, although there are a scattering in this article, is not needed to appreciate its magnificence. Best thing to do is just enjoy the architecture and revel in its beauty. No need to get technical.

Folkingham west window
Perpendicular. Castellated transom

Gargoyles, Grotesques and Miscellaneous Carvings

Gargoyles are elaborate carvings in the shape of fearsome and frightening beasts frequently found on medieval churches and designed to carry rainwater away from the walls from its mouth or from a short pipe projecting from its mouth. Grotesques are carvings in a similar vein that serve no architectural or structural purpose whatsoever and are purely decorative. These figures are often thought of as protection from evil spirits and as reminders of the separation of the earth from the divine.

Architectural historians and scholars have documented the history and origin of the names. For instance, the term "gargoyle" comes from the French word "gargouille," that means throat but sounds like "gargle", hinting at the function of these figures. "Grotesque" originates from the fascination with the Roman empire which led in the late 1400s to the excavation of ancient caves adorned with murals depicting human and animal forms. The Italian word "grottesca" means cave which in turn evolved into the term "grotesque." A "chimera" is a type of grotesque depicting a mythical combination of multiple animals, sometimes including humans. The most common reason why grotesques and gargoyles are often used in medieval architecture is that the grotesques were "apotropaic", meaning to ward off evil. It's often said that grotesques are concentrated

on the north sides of buildings, the sunless side from which demons would be expected to attack. Not true, grotesques are evenly distributed all round many Gothic churches. Some kinds of grotesque carving are, shall we say, rather risqué. These are surprisingly common in medieval churches. The two commonest theories are that they are apotropaic, or that they are warnings against the sin of lust.

But could it be that the masons were entertaining themselves, having a laugh? Was it a fashion amongst them? Or perhaps they had carved grotesques on other buildings and decided to include them where they were currently working. In the 13th century there was a monk called Bernard who was famous for building big abbeys and churches mainly in the west country. Even he admitted that even he didn't know why they were made.

St. John the Baptist Baston

St. Mary, Swinstead

There are gargoyles and grotesques on several of our local churches. St. John the Baptist at Baston has a fine west tower in

the Perpendicular style with a moulded string course just below the battlements. Gargoyles are mounted just below this course. The odd thing here is that rainwater chutes project immediately above the gargoyle, almost resting on their heads. St. Andrew at Irnham has a similar arrangement with rainwater channels above the carving. St. Michael and all Angels at Edenham also has a handsome Perpendicular west tower with a frieze just below the battlements with excellent grotesques.

But in my view the finest grotesques are found at the top of the tower at St. Mary, Swinstead. There are four of them, positioned at each corner of the tower. A bit of lichen grows on them and there is some erosion. But despite the wear and tear, they are in remarkably good condition. Not only that but as the tower is a bit short, they can be more easily viewed. And St. Mary has a decent size car park! Strangely, “Buildings of England” by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner describes these grotesques as gargoyles, when there is no provision for rainwater drainage.

There are many other types of carving, not necessarily grotesque, on our parish churches that should not be ignored. For example, a short frieze of small human heads above the south buttress on the west wall at the base of the tower at St. Mary, Clipsham. All around the very top of the tower at St Stephen, Careby, just below the start of the roof, are several human heads in a variety of expressions that are almost grotesque. St. Michael Langtoft has a similar row of heads at the top of the tower. Nor should carvings in the inside of churches be

ignored. Not gargoyles or grotesques but still worth mentioning. For instance, at St. Andrew Witham on the Hill there are very fine carvings on the ends of the pews in the chancel and small but excellent stone heads in the spandrels of the arches in the nave. Several churches have carved angels, with wings spread wide, projecting from the wall-plates at the bottom of a wooden ceiling, often called an angel roof. St. Martin, Barholm is a particularly superb example. Far more attractive than gargoyles.

The trouble with gargoyles, grotesques and most interior carvings is that they are usually high up, and as we rarely tend to look upwards, they are often not noticed. Which is a shame because they are well worth looking at. The good thing is that very few churches are entirely bereft of such works of art, except perhaps the smaller churches. So, the best advice when visiting any church is simple: look up.

The Three Fonts

At a risk of stating the obvious, all Christians know that a font is a piece of sculpted stone found in a church for holding Holy water for use in the baptism ritual, which represents admission to the Church of England. The service of baptism involves water being poured into the bowl in the font, blessed by the vicar, then poured or sprinkled onto the recipient's head, or used to make the sign of the cross on the forehead. Baptism for babies and young children takes place in a service called a Christening. There is no reason that an adult cannot be baptised. Some churches will perform total immersion as the act of baptism for adults.

Fonts have existed for many centuries. In fact, the oldest ones are over 2,000 years old, shallow pools cut into the soft tufa rock in the floor of baptismal chapels in the Roman catacombs. In England, fonts come in many shapes and sizes and are often made by local craftsmen, with decoration ranging from non-existent to elaborate. Late Saxon and early Norman fonts are often built in a simple tub shape, while other variations have the bowl supported on four corner pillars or a single central column. Eight-sided fonts were common from the 13th century and the norm for the 14th century. This is of religious significance for in Genesis, the world was created in seven days. The "eighth day" is the day after the completion of creation and is also the day of Christ's resurrection. Each of the sides of the font could be

elaborately carved with religious symbols, figures of saints, green man variants and heraldic shields. Fonts would have been paid for by the parishioners, and so the richness of their decoration was determined by the funds available and the prevailing architectural fashions of the time. Some of the more extravagant have elaborate multi-tiered covers, raised for use via ropes or chains and pulleys.

Fonts are often placed at or near the entrance to a church's nave to remind the congregation, or visitors to the church, of their own baptism as they enter the church to pray, or just look around, since the rite of baptism served as their initiation into the Church. But they do tend to get moved around with church alterations, often finishing up near the west end.

Witham on the Hill

I have never seen fonts in different churches that are the same. There must be no hard and fast rules for fonts. The fonts in each

of the three churches in our benefice are all different, as the photographs show.

At St. Michaels and all Angels in Edenham is a large drum-shaped font without a stem. Around the drum are shafts carrying unusually two-lobed arches. The font is carved out of one piece of stone and is possibly late 12th century. It has been moved around several times and its present position is a result of filling the nave with pews in the middle of the 19th century.

Edenham

According to Rex Needle, a local historian, it is currently tucked away in a corner and crammed in by pews and other seating.

St. Andrew Witham on the Hill has an octagonal font of about 1660 sitting on a two-tiered octagonal 19th century base. It has carvings to all eight sides consisting of chevrons, foliage and a cross. Pevsner in his “Buildings of England – Lincolnshire” casts doubt on its age but offers no alternative. But he does describe St. Andrew’s as “a strange, alas, over restored, church.”

There appears to be a dispute concerning the font at St. Mary, Swinstead. Whereas a notice in the church says it is the same age as the church building, which is early 13th century, the Historic England official listing says all fittings are 19th century including the early 14th century style font.

Swinstead

Fonts may be a smaller architectural feature of a church compared to, say, a great west window or a spire, but a font is a living part of a church which plays a role of greater religious significance than the others. That is their attraction. That and their variety, sculpture, carvings, and antiquity. It is always worth taking a good look at the font when visiting a church. You will find it very rewarding.

The Old Stocks

Witham on the Hill is blessed with many fine attractions among which are the old school, the church, the green, the pub and the old stocks, to name just a few. Historic England has judged the stocks to be a historic building, listed Grade II. The stocks are next to a post box and a phone box. The phone box is also listed Grade II. All are on the edge of the green with an adjoining convenient lay-by for parking.

Historic England, a government body, maintains the National Heritage List for England, an official, up to date register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites. Witham on the Hill has twelve listed buildings, Manthorpe by comparison has only one: the bridge. Thus, the stocks are a protected building, with dire penalties for interference, as is the telephone box.

The official listing reads: “The Village Stocks and Whipping Post under the canopy are Grade II listed. They date from the 17th century but were altered in the 20th century. The structures are of timber, with a conical

Collyweston slate canopy roof. The stocks have upper and lower boards with four apertures which are set between two posts, one post is taller, presumably a whipping post. The 20th century canopy is supported on four timber posts". The wording must mean that the stocks comprising the two boards set between the two posts and doubtless the bench seat behind, are at least 300 years older than the conical roof with its four supporting posts. The whole is enclosed on three sides by a stone wall which bears plaques to commemorate awards to the parish council.

Stocks are not to be confused with a pillory. Stocks just retain the ankles, whereas a pillory holds the neck and wrists forcing the sufferer to stand up with a bent back. Either device was used to punish drunkenness, theft and other petty transgressions. Miscreants were also pelted with rotten fruit, bad eggs and other unspeakable items by the working people some of whom were victims of their crimes. They have been used in parts of Europe for more than 1000 years, possibly much longer in Asia, and as far back as ancient Greece.

In England the Statute of Labourers was a law created in 1351 by Parliament in the reign of King Edward III. A clause in the statute prescribed the use of the stocks for "unruly artisans" and required that every town and village erect a set of stocks. The statute was enacted in response to a scarcity of labour caused by the Black Death. The epidemic wiped out at least a third of the population leading those left over to demand higher wages causing a loss of income to the landed gentry. The statute

prohibited workers requesting, or landowners offering, higher wages. The 1351 statute was repealed in 1863 along with many other statutes from 1235 to 1685 which were deemed to be no longer necessary. However, some sources indicate that the stocks have never been formally abolished in England. Their last known use was in June 1872 at Newbury in Berkshire when one Mark Tuck was fixed in the stocks for four hours for drunkenness and disorderly conduct.

All I can find out about the history of the stocks in Witham on the Hill is two old photographs of the stocks, dated 1920 and 1954. The Historic England official listing says that they are 17th century. But to comply with the 1351 act there must have been an earlier set and the 17th century stocks are a replacement. It would be interesting to know where they were originally sited, how often they were put to their intended use and what happened to them when the 1351 act was repealed. The official listing also says that they were altered or restored in the 20th century. It is possible that the stocks were rescued, restored, and placed in the specially built enclave and the conical roof supported on four posts were erected over them to protect the stocks from the worst of the weather. It is this arrangement that we see today. My two old photographs also show this arrangement, which means that the enclave must be over a century old. All that is missing is the extensive growth of trees on the edge of the green. The photographs also show that the walls of the enclave were sloped, whereas now they are stepped.

Sadly, there are gaps in my information about the old stocks, which is unfortunate because they must have a fascinating history. So I am reduced to speculation, or, if you prefer, guesswork. Whether records exist to support or contradict my guesswork is more guesswork. All I can be definite about is that the stocks are well worth a visit and a close look whether or not you are bothered about their history.

Mention must be made that the Old Stocks has been fenced off for some months and that there are no notices telling visitors the purpose of the fencing. I refer readers to the June 2025 issue of The Three Towers, containing the Witham on the Hill Parish Meeting Chairman's annual report of 12th May. In summary it says that a concerned resident was worried that the posts supporting the roof might collapse, and raised the matter with the Clerk, who thought the SKDC should investigate. The responsibility for the Old Stocks maintenance has been a cloudy issue for many years but the Parish Council hope that SKDC will carry out some remedial work in the near future.

Monastic Houses

In our modern secular world, the idea that men and women would voluntarily withdraw from society to live in seclusion under strict religious vows, and reject the rewards, comforts and pleasures of normal life, is a concept almost impossible to grasp. Yet for almost a thousand years, up to the 16th century, thousands of men and women became monks and nuns, and did exactly that. And all for faith in God. Their faith must have been very strong, far stronger than we can imagine.

Monks lived in monasteries, abbeys, priories, preceptories and friaries, which were sets of buildings comprising a chapel or church, living quarters, kitchens and refectories. A convent or nunnery is the equivalent for women. Preceptories are monasteries which belonged to the military monastic orders, such as the Knights Templar, founded during the 12th century crusades to the Holy Land. Friars originally lived among poor people to whom they preached and on whom were dependent for support. Thus, they were called monks without a church. Friaries where they could live were only established in the 13th century.

Monks and nuns followed several different religious orders, each with a basis in the Roman Catholic faith. These orders differed mainly in the details of their religious observation and how strictly they applied their rules. The major orders in England were the Benedictines, Cistercians and the Carthusians. Friars

belonged to the orders of Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians.

There were over 100 monastic houses in Lincolnshire each following their respective orders, with at least twelve examples in our local area and another five in Stamford alone, three of which were Friaries. There was the Greyfriars, a Franciscan friary, the Blackfriars was a Dominican Friary, and the Austin (Augustinian) Friary. This latter site was first occupied by a small house of Friars of the Sack, an order suppressed in 1317. Their land was eventually granted to the Austin Friars.

The first monastery in England was founded by Augustine in Canterbury in 598. Augustine had been sent to England by Pope Gregory to convert the pagan Anglo-Saxons to the Christian faith. Many more monasteries followed. However, the English monasteries were devastated by the Viking raids of the 9th century. Yet King Alfred the Great defeated the Vikings and revived the monastic movement by founding new houses in Somerset. Their numbers increased rapidly up to the 16th century when King Henry VIII ordered their dissolution.

In addition to a life of work, prayer and study, monks and nuns fed the poor, ran hospitals where they helped the sick, and provided hospitality for pilgrims and travellers. Monasteries

established schools, preserved learning and created libraries. The monks were by far the best-educated members of society, often they were the only educated members of society. Monks laboriously copied ancient texts and created new versions, often with beautiful hand painted illustrations called illuminated manuscripts. Examples are the Luttrell Psalter probably created in Irnham by scribes from Lincoln in 1320, the Lindisfarne Gospels of about 700, produced on Lindisfarne off the coast of Northumberland and the 12th century Winchester Bible held in the Cathedral. These manuscripts are justly famous throughout the world.

By the 16th century over 850 religious houses existed in England and Wales. Many were rich and held vast estates. In 1534 King Henry VIII broke with Papal authority by the Act of Supremacy, making him and his successors, the Supreme Head of the Church in England replacing the Pope. Between 1536 and 1541 Henry dissolved Catholic monasteries and convents in England, Wales and Ireland and helped himself to their wealth. A few of the abbey churches near centres of population survived as cathedrals or parish churches, but most of the others were demolished. The remains of the buildings were used by local people as a source of building material. Monasteries did not return to England until the late 18th century.

At the dissolution of the monasteries, Peterborough Cathedral survived, along with Abbeys at Bourne, Crowland and Thorney, where the remains of the churches were allowed to continue as Parish Churches. Nothing exists of the remainder. In Stamford, some of the buildings at St. Leonards Priory (pictured above) still exist, as does the splendid gatehouse of Greyfriars. Witham Preceptory, near South Witham, was a Knights Templar house but nothing remains. Temple Bruer, north of Sleaford, was also a Preceptory, and its tower remains as a rare survival of this military order (pictured here).

Peterborough Cathedral, founded as a monastery in 655, was one of the first centres of Christianity in Eastern England. It was destroyed by Vikings and re-founded as a Benedictine Abbey in 966. The cathedral building itself was started in 1118. The magnificent ruins of Crowland Abbey, also a Benedictine House, was founded in the 8th Century, ransacked by the Danes in 870, restored, then destroyed by fire in 1091, rebuilt, then destroyed again by an earthquake in 1118. The Abbey was re-built, but suffered another fire in 1143 and was besieged by Parliamentary forces in 1643 during the English Civil War. The North Aisle of the Abbey is used as the Parish church today. St. Leonard's Priory met its demise in the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538. The

nave of the Priory church was used as a barn up to the 19th century when the Marquess of Exeter restored all the remaining buildings.

The monks and nuns of medieval times were undoubtedly saintly people in all that they did. They were gifted builders and talented artists and have been called the social workers of medieval times. Monastic life may seem bizarre to 21st century people but at least the monks left us with a wonderful legacy and should not be judged by 21st century standards.

Stamford Castle

Anyone with the slightest interest in the past must be aware that there was once, long ago, a Norman castle in the middle of Stamford. True, there is little left to see, but what there is, and its history, is well worth looking into. In times gone by, the castle dominated the north bank of the River Welland, which flows through Stamford. Occupying a large area between the present Sheepmarket and Bath Row, and to the west of Castle Dyke, the castle must have been an impressive sight. It was built by William the Conqueror, and was part of his strategy of castle building to support the conquest of the north of England in the early years of his reign.

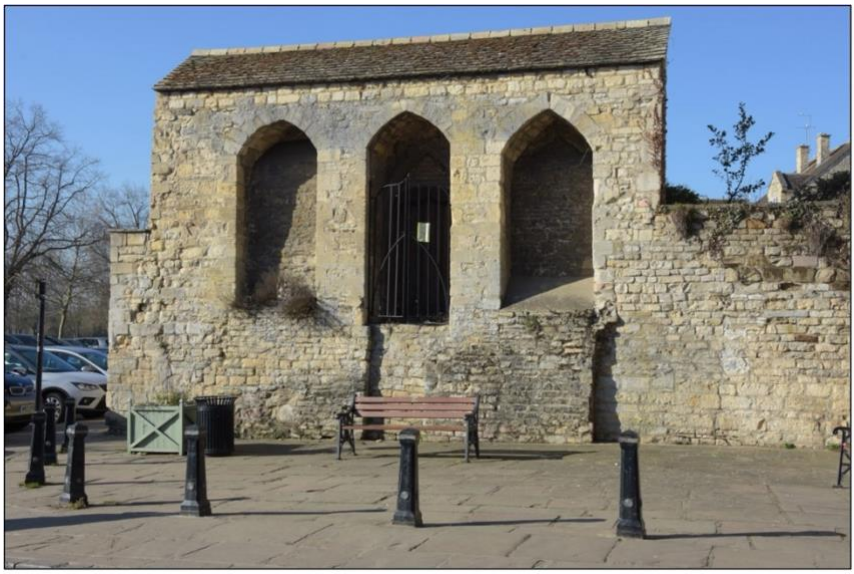
The castle had a conventional motte and bailey layout. The motte being an earth mound on which the defensible keep was built, surrounded by the bailey which contained domestic buildings like a chapel, kitchens and the great hall where the lord of the manor entertained his friends and conducted business. The whole castle was surrounded by a wall with the gatehouse on the east towards the town centre. In the late 12th century the motte was enlarged, its surrounding ditch filled in and a shell keep about 66 feet across was built. A shell keep is a tall circular stone wall with an internal firing platform, often containing wooden buildings. Apparently five houses were pulled down to

make space for the new castle according to the Domesday Book of 1086.

The castle saw action several times during its history. By 1070, when William the Conqueror had suppressed the uprising known as the “harrying of the north”, the King considered Stamford to be a safe place. For in that year, Thorold, the Norman Abbot of Peterborough, took refuge in the castle with 160 knights when Hereward the Wake plundered Peterborough Abbey. The “Anarchy” was the name given to the civil war of 1139 to 1153 between King Stephen and Princess Maud. Stephen was the nephew of King Henry I and had usurped the throne from Maud, the daughter of King Henry and his only legitimate offspring. Maud invaded England to pursue her claim to the throne and civil war ensued. Maud’s son Henry of Anjou, the future King Henry II, invaded England at the age of 16 to support his mother. In 1153, this Henry attacked Stamford which was held by supporters of King Stephen. Henry broke into the town but had to lay siege to the castle. The castle withstood many assaults and the garrison only surrendered when they gave up hope of King Stephen coming to their relief. In 1189 the castle served as a refuge for the Jews of Stamford when a group of crusaders converged on the town's fair. The crusaders, fired by religious zeal, had killed a large number of the town's Jewish population and the rest fled behind the castle walls for safety. In 1204 King John lost the Duchy of Normandy and most of his other French lands to King Philip II of France. The loss of England’s French

possessions sparked another civil war with most of the nobility, known as the barons, led by Prince Louis of France, opposing the King. In 1215 the barons met in Stamford before proceeding to Runnymede where Magna Carta was sealed by King John.

The castle remained in use throughout the 13th century but by 1340 it was recorded as being “old, and the walls decayed”. Much of the castle appears to have been pulled down in the reign of King Richard III (1483 to 1485), and the stone used to rebuild Whitefriars Friary in Stamford. By 1600 very little remained of the medieval fortress but a part of the great hall had been transformed to serve as a Law Court administering the manor of Stamford - a function it served into the 19th century. The three arched doorways seen now at the corner of Castle Dyke and Bath Row (pictured below) with their Early English style

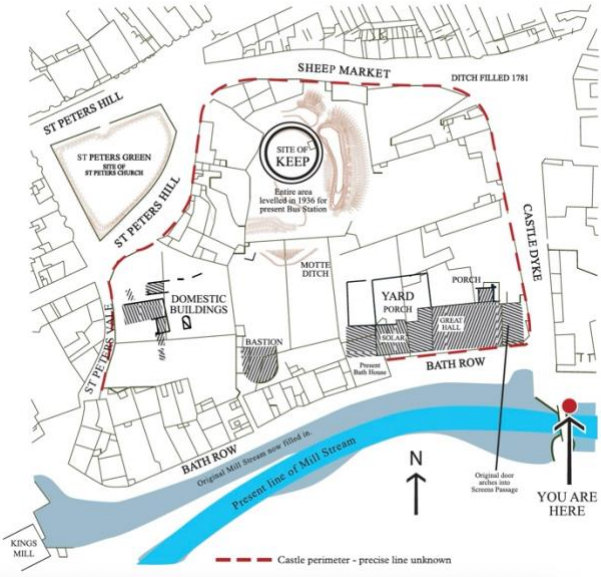


arches on the other side were part of the east wall of this building.

In a massive act of municipal vandalism, the motte was removed in 1935 along with the remains of the shell keep to build a car park which later became the bus station. The remaining castle site survived as a large green space well into the 20th century and most of the bailey was made into gardens. In the 1970s the gardens were dug up in a major archaeological excavation which resulted in all the information known about the structure of the castle and the buildings in the bailey. The Burghley Estate, who owned the rest of the castle site, sold it in 1977 to provide the Warrenne Keep housing estate. The south wall of the bailey ran along a former mill stream which was filled in to provide Bath Row and its car park. This wall, probably not the original but follows its line, forms the boundary of the gardens of the houses in Warenne Keep. A lady resident told me that English Heritage pay for the upkeep of this area and that no building is permitted on its frontage to the river.

All that remains of Stamford castle are the three arched doorways and the south wall already mentioned. There is the small plaque on the south wall giving the date of the castle's construction. A reset doorway survives amongst the cottages in Bath Row. From Sheepmarket up to the bus station is a sloping access road which might follow the incline to the top of what remains of the motte. An information panel opposite Castle Dyke

was produced and erected by Stamford Civic Society in 2008. This includes an excellent map of the castle imposed on the modern street plan. And some useful artist's impressions of the castle in its heyday along with snippets of its history.



Parking is free in Bath Row, and there are usually spaces if you can get there early enough. This is the best place from where to visit what is left of the castle and view the information board. Opposite Bath Row is The Meadows from where a visitor can get a good impression of the castle site. That, and a wander around Stamford, makes a good educational morning out to see another aspect of our rich local history.

Dick Mundy

Note: The above map is an extract from the Stamford Civic Society information board.

A Short Guide to Phone Boxes

Public telephone boxes first appeared on the streets in the late 19th century. There were a variety of designs until the General Post Office (GPO) took charge of the telephone system and produced a standardised kiosk. It was named K1 (Kiosk one), made of concrete and usually painted cream with a red door. Just 150 were ordered at a cost of £35 each. The K1 was not particularly popular and in 1924 a competition was held to design the K2. The winner was architect Giles Gilbert Scott. His design is the first time a phone box started to look like the traditional red phone box that we know so well.

The K2 was made of cast iron with a wooden door and more than slightly classical in design. This was the first time kiosks had the familiar domed roof and were painted bright red. The thinking was that red things stand out and are easy to spot. Red is the colour of the Post Office. Even now there are red post boxes and red Royal Mail vans driving about. Designs moved on, from the K3 to the K6. The K6 is perhaps the most recognisable and widespread telephone box. Designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott the architect responsible for Battersea Power Station, Liverpool Cathedral and the K2. It was introduced in 1935 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. Throughout the 20th century, telephone boxes appeared throughout our cities, towns and villages. Their number reached a peak in 1992 when there were 92,000 phone boxes across the UK.

The red British phone box can also be found in many overseas locations, such as Malta, Antigua, Barbados, Portugal, Cyprus and Gibraltar. They appear to be popular in America including one outside the British Embassy in Washington DC. All phone boxes were embossed with some version of the Royal Crown, often painted gold, signifying that the GPO was a British government agency. However, the Scots just had to be different. Following protests over the use of English insignia, phone boxes in Scotland carried the Crown of Scotland.
[Editor's note: Quite right too!]

In 1984 the public telephone network was taken over by the newly privatised British Telecom (BT). Within a year BT announced a £160 million investment programme for the network. This promised to modernise the network with a series of new kiosks, prefixed with the letters KX. The new kiosks were designed to be easier to maintain, to keep clean, and stronger to protect against vandalism. The most common KX, designed to be the direct successor to the K6, was the KX100. It is a four-sided rectangular box with a flat roof. The back panel is formed of stainless-steel panels, the three other sides of the box are made of glass, with two large window panels set above and beneath a slim, black plastic panel.

But with the advancement of technology, like the internet and mobile phones, phone boxes were needed much less than before. There are now around 20,000 remaining working payphones across the UK, around 3,000 of which are the

traditional red kiosks. Gone is the familiar (to my generation) four pennies in the slot, button A and button B. The former button was pressed to speak when the phone was answered, the latter to get your money back if engaged. Nowadays phone boxes do not accept cash.

There is a red K6 phone box at Edenham which has a push button phone and will only accept a credit or debit card, or a BT charge card. At Manthorpe the telephone equipment is long gone. I visited Swinstead on a day in March 2025, when it had a phone in it. A month later, the phone had gone. The phone at Witham on the Hill (pictured here) disappeared in the same timeframe. Toft had a modern KX100 box just outside the golf club car park (also pictured on next page). Not content with removing just the phone, BT removed the entire box. Perhaps the fact that the phone boxes in Witham on the Hill and Swinstead are both listed grade II by Historic England meant that they escaped the fate of the box at Toft. In fact, more than 3,000 K6 boxes are also listed, including the one at Edenham. As of January 2026, the phone box in Manthorpe has become “The Manthorpe Book

Exchange" thanks to the sterling efforts of a local resident. The rule is that you can take a book out but must replace it with another. The Witham on the Hill phone box has also now become a book exchange. We must be avid readers in our two villages.

The Daily Telegraph reported that the residents of a village in Norfolk queued up to make calls from their phone box, which was under threat of removal. BT say that a minimum of 53 calls per year must be made from a public box to keep it in operation. The villagers made 146 calls in just a week. They kept their phone box. Elderly residents find it convenient and ramblers use the box because of unreliable mobile phone coverage. They must prefer making phone calls to reading in Norfolk.

I confess it is many years since I made a call from a phone box. Thus, I have no reason to be interested in them. So why write about them? The answer is history, or street history if you like. Red phone boxes are a traditional feature of towns and villages, just like manor houses, churches, village greens, and pubs. If they are removed, we lose a wonderful local feature, and worse, we lose history.

In Celebration of Listed Buildings

One thing we are quite good at in this country is protecting and preserving our ancient monuments, old buildings, historic sites, bridges, cathedrals, castles and churches. But this happy situation was not always the case. In fact, it is only recently that strong, legally binding protections have been put in place.

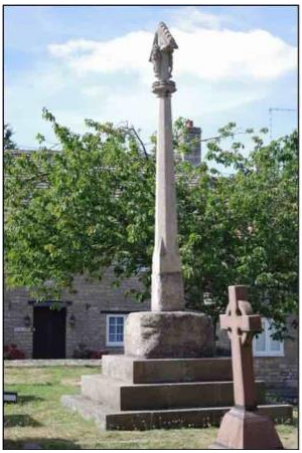
By the mid-19th century, much of Britain's heritage was being slowly destroyed. Tourists were chipping bits off Stonehenge or carving their initials into the megaliths. The owners of the ancient monuments at Avebury and Silbury Hill planned to have them cleared away to make room for housing. The 15th century Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire was sold to an American who promptly tore out the medieval fireplaces. Construction of the railways in Victorian times damaged sites such as Berwick and Northampton Castles, as well as the ancient walls of York, Chester and Newcastle.

However, a few heroes came to the fore. In 1872 John Lubbock, an MP and botanist, bought Avebury and Silbury Hill in Wiltshire to prevent the owners from selling them off. The former viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, stepped in to buy back Tattershall castle. He rescued and reinstalled the fireplaces and restored the castle. In 1847 the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust was formed by a local act of Parliament to prevent the sale of the Stratford property to American showman P. T. Barnum.

John Lubbock's actions led to the Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882. But the legislation was regarded by some as a grave assault on the individual property rights of the owner. The act was extended in 1900 to protect a wider range of buildings. In 1908 The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) was established to document ancient monuments and buildings and to identify those most worthy of preservation. The most significant changes took place after the end of the Second World War. The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 began the system of listing buildings and structures of architectural or historical importance, with dire penalties for any alteration or demolition.

The 1983 National Heritage Act established English Heritage, a government agency with a broad remit to run the national system of heritage protection and to manage state-owned historic properties. On 1 April 2015, English Heritage was divided into two parts: Historic England inherited statutory protection functions including the listing of buildings and to maintain the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), and English Heritage Trust, a charity that manages the historic properties and took on the English Heritage name and logo. Historic England has listed almost 380,000 historic properties in England and each one is graded according to its level of importance. Only 2.5% are grade I, 5.8% grade II*, the remaining 91.7% grade II. All are entered on the NHLE.

Listed Building status is only given to above ground structures. Archaeological sites entitled to legal protection are entered on a schedule and are thus called scheduled ancient monuments. There are almost 20,000 entries for scheduled monuments on the NHLE. Only deliberately created structures, features and remains can be scheduled. Monuments on the schedule include prehistoric standing stones, burial mounds, castles, monasteries, abandoned farmsteads and villages.



War Memorial at St Andrew's Witham on the Hill

Witham Stocks

The NHLE is organised and is searchable by County Parish (CP) (which often consists of more than one village) within District within County e.g. Witham on the Hill in South Kesteven in Lincolnshire. An entry includes an Overview with photographs and a map, and the Official Listing containing a detailed description.

Locally, we are well-served with listed buildings. Witham on the Hill has 12 including St. Andrew's Church, the War Memorial in the churchyard, the old stocks, the Six Bells pub and the telephone box. They are all listed grade II apart from the Church which is listed grade I. The official listing for the War Memorial says: "Former cross now a War Memorial. C14, converted c.1919. Ashlar and sandstone. 3

sandstone steps support the C14 square base with stopped angles, into which is fitted a contemporary square chamfered shaft. From this rises a C20 tapering octagonal shaft with crucifixus".

Gate Piers at St Michael's Edenham

In Edenham with Grimsthorpe and Scottlethorpe there are 49 listed buildings including Grimsthorpe Castle and St. Michael's Church both grade I, the gate piers of the church, Elm Terrace on the Scottlethorpe Road and the phone box on the main road all grade II. The listing for the gate piers reads "Pair of gate piers. Mid C19. Ashlar. Square gate piers with chamfered plinths and angles rising to pyramidal copings having gablettes on the 4 sides. To the front are deeply sunk lancets". The listing for Elm Terrace states "Former terrace of 12 estate workers' houses, now terrace of 6, circa 1880, altered C20".

In Swinstead there are 32 listed buildings, which, from the list, appear to be mostly private houses. Also, Grimsthorpe Castle and St. Mary's Church both grade I, Swinstead village cross is scheduled, and another phone box listed grade II. The entry for Grimsthorpe Castle appears to refer to the park and not to the house. For the village cross the official listing reads "Village cross, Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 144, C14. Ashlar. Octagonal plan. Cross shaft and square base stand on chamfered plinth and 2 octagonal steps. The shaft rises via stop chamfers and is about 4'0" high".

In Toft with Lound and Manthorpe CP there are five, all listed grade II. Toft has two: the bridge over the River East Glen and the cottage to its west. Lound has one: Manor Farm House. Manthorpe has two: the bridge, and to the south of Manthorpe, Bowthorpe Park Farm House. For the bridge at Manthorpe the official listing reads: “Road bridge. 1813, repaired C20. Squared limestone rubble with ashlar dressings. Single span elliptical arch, with rounded keystone. Above an oval panel bearing the date 1813 in raised letters. Rounded coped parapet is ramped up to the centre and splayed at the ends”.

Manthorpe Bridge

For all these and far more we must thank the foresight of the more enlightened of our forebears. The likes of John Lubbock and Lord Curzon whose efforts helped give England the enviable position of prominence in the preservation of our visible history. Although you may need an architectural glossary to interpret the official listings of these old buildings, it is far easier, and very rewarding, just to take a short drive to visit and admire them.

The Power of the Church

As an avid reader of historical tomes, I am always surprised to learn that the Church of England has changed considerably over many centuries. From an almost tyrannical, autocratic regime to the benign and welcoming institution that we have today. And that we have King Henry VIII to thank for it.

I have read that in medieval times the English Church was Roman Catholic under the authority of the Pope. The Church penetrated every area of life: politics, law, government, the economy, education, art and architecture. The Church baptized and buried virtually everyone in England. People who married did so in accordance with its rites and laws. It had its own language, Latin, with services conducted in Latin, and the Bible in Latin. It had its own system of law, known as "Canon Law", its own property which extended to more than a fifth of the land in England. It was extremely wealthy with contributions known as tithes demanded from everyone. The Church also required that all accept its authority. Monarchs were no exception. Dissent was seen as heresy and could lead to excommunication, meaning expulsion from the Christian community.

But the King of England needed educated men to run

the country. He needed administrators, lawyers, accountants, teachers and clerks. Such men only came from the clergy and were thus deemed to be in holy orders. For the Church had a monopoly on learning and the teaching of Latin which had become the language of government and public and private administration.

One in six of the population were in some form or other of holy orders. If they committed misdemeanours they were allowed "benefit of clergy", trial in more lenient ecclesiastical courts rather than secular courts, avoiding imprisonment, harsh punishment and the death penalty.

All this came to an end with the Protestant Reformation which was a widespread revolt in Europe against the perceived autocracy of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformers such as Martin Luther in Germany and John Calvin in France protested against practices of the Catholic Church not rooted in the Bible. The trigger of the Protestant Reformation is generally considered to be Luther's posting of his "Ninety-five Theses" (its core message is that salvation cannot be bought but is a gift from God received through faith) on the door of Wittenberg Church in October 1517.

Our friends north of the border were influenced by the teachings of Martin Luther, and the preaching of John Knox and themselves broke away from the Catholic church and established the Protestant Church of Scotland. But the English were different. The English Reformation was sparked off by King Henry VIII (pictured below) who wanted to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, so he could marry Anne Boleyn. However, the Pope refused the divorce under Canon Law. As a result, Henry detached England from the authority of the Pope and achieved his divorce.

Henry summoned the Reformation Parliament which sat from 1529 to 1536. This Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy of 1534 legally designating King Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England permanently severing England from the Roman Catholic Church, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries Act of 1535 initiating the closure of monastic houses, ultimately leading to the mass transfer of Catholic wealth and land to the English Crown.

Henry VIII died in January 1547 aged 55 years. He was succeeded by his only son, crowned Edward VI in February 1547 at the age of nine. Edward died aged 15 years in July 1553 probably of tuberculosis. Edward was a staunch Protestant and his short reign made a lasting contribution to the English Reformation and the Church of England which changed from an essentially Catholic liturgy and structure to Protestant, helped by a prayer book in English issued in 1549.

Whereas Edward was a staunch Protestant, Henry's daughter Mary was the polar opposite, a staunch Catholic. Acceding to the throne after the death of Edward in 1553 she was the first Queen Regnant in England. She restored papal supremacy in England, abandoned the title of Supreme Head of the Church, reintroduced Roman Catholic bishops and began the reintroduction of monastic orders. She brutally executed those who would not recant Protestantism. Mary died in 1558, possibly from cancer, leaving the crown to her half-sister Elizabeth.

During Elizabeth's 45 year reign a secure Church of England was established, a compromise between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Elizabeth and her advisers sought a Protestant solution that would not offend Catholics too greatly while fulfilling the desires of English Protestants. As a result, the Parliament of 1559 legislated for

a church based on the Protestant settlement of Edward VI but with many Catholic elements, with the monarch as its head. But fines were levied for failure to attend a church service once a week. The Elizabethan Religious Settlement remains the doctrine of the Church of England to this day.

We keep being told that the Church of England is losing popularity and congregations. I take issue with that. Many sources report that attendance, especially by younger people, is increasing. Baptisms for adults is also increasing. By a small margin admittedly, but an increase is an increase.

In our area the church is strong. An army of volunteers supports our lovely churches, with cleaning, gardening, grass trimming and flower arranging. The Three Towers parish magazine has a circulation of 440 printed copies all hand delivered by volunteers to every household, and avidly read. All the churches that I have visited are similarly well supported by local people. The power of the church in medieval times might help to explain why there are so many churches in our small area. About nine or ten between here and Peterborough. All built before the 16th century, therefore originally Catholic.

The Church of England does not have the power over the people it had in medieval times. Tithes were abolished by a series of Parliamentary statutes in the 19th and 20th centuries. Fines are not levied for non-attendance at church. Services are conducted in English. The Bible is in English. The church no longer has a monopoly on education and healthcare. Since the 19th century monasteries have been re-established. Benefit of clergy was abolished in the United Kingdom in 1827 with the passage of the Criminal Law Act 1827. Those living in a parish have a right to a christening, a marriage and a funeral in their

parish church. Nobody gets turned away, no matter how unbelieving they are. Things have changed considerably over the past 500 years. Few would argue that this is not a good thing.