

Jurassic Way

A Northamptonshire County Path

CENTRAL SECTION ASHBY ST. LEDGERS to THE HERMITAGE



Ashby St Ledgers Gate-house

'Heights of History'



Northamptonshire
County Council

The Jurassic Way

The Jurassic Way is a long distance, recreational walking route which travels the length of Northamptonshire, and more. The termini are Banbury in Oxfordshire and Stamford in Lincolnshire, two historic market towns separated by beautiful undulating countryside lying over rocks from the Jurassic age (c. 140-195 million years old). The whole route is 88 miles in length, described by a set of three guides.

Finding your Way

The Jurassic Way guides illustrate the route in map form and describe, within the text, your passage through the villages en route (from south to north). This is supported on the ground by fingerposts, waymarkers, stiles and gates which bear distinctive Jurassic Way logo discs. These discs have a directional arrow and within it the form of *Kallirhynchia sharpi*.

Kallirhynchia sharpi

This brachiopod was first named in 1938 in honour of one Samuel Sharp (1814-1882). He was an inspirational figure; archaeologist, numismatist as well as a geologist. "His wide and varied stores of knowledge were always placed at the service of those who sought his aid... many a young collector and student of science was indebted to him for useful and friendly advice". From 1857 Samuel Sharp lived at Dallington Hall, Northampton. He was an enthusiastic collector of fossils across the county. He discovered the very limited time range of this fossil and, its abundance in rock beds in the middle of the Jurassic system. These attributes make *Kallirhynchia sharpi* extremely important as it can be used to date rocks very accurately. *Kallirhynchia sharpi* is normally 15mm long, 18mm wide and 11mm thick. Its pointed 'umbo' carried the pedicle which acted as its anchor to the shallow seas which covered Northamptonshire 165 million years ago.



Samuel Sharp in 1868



Ashby St. Ledgers to The Hermitage - 25 3/4 miles

The central section of the Jurassic Way carries the walker along the Northamptonshire Heights, from the south-west frontier of Danelaw 878 AD at Watling Street (A5) to the scarp of the Welland Valley and entry to Rockingham Forest. Along this south-west / north-east axis is the watershed of Middle England.

The route here traverses one of the more sparsely populated areas of Northamptonshire, though this is partly due to the concentration of deserted medieval village sites along this upland spine.

The Jurassic Way passes a number en route, at Winwick, Elkington, Sulby and Little Oxendon. The majority of these sites were deserted following the enclosure of the earlier open field system in the late Middle Ages. There are other examples where desertion or 'eviction' was to make way for the creation of landscaped parkland or as a result of the Black Death.

The early enclosure process and the Enclosure Acts of the 18th and 19th Centuries, which affected half the total area of Northamptonshire, are largely responsible for shaping the field and roadway pattern which we see today.

This part of the Jurassic Way skirts round the west and north of the countryside which saw the decisive battle of the English Civil War at Naseby in June 1645. We pass through the fields which were on the southward approach of the King's army to the battlefield just 1 1/2 miles south of Sibbertoft.

All along this section are some of the most expansive views in Northamptonshire; around Honey Hill, north from Hemplow Hills and west from Hall Close, East Farndon. The beauty of this countryside is only matched by the drama of the history which has unfolded along our chosen path.

Jurassic Way
(88 miles)
Central Section
(25 ³/₄ miles)



FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE:

- Keep to the line of the path
- Shut gates behind you
- Keep dogs under close control
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected by law, respect them and all archeological sites
- Respect and care for the countryside so that everyone will be welcome to enjoy it

Northamptonshire County Council are interested in your views on this route and leaflet. Any comments should be sent to: Northamptonshire County Council
Countryside Services
PO Box 221
John Dryden House
Bedford Road
Northampton NN4 7DE

The contributions received towards the development of the Jurassic Way from: Dennis Boyce, Cormac Higgs, Kirsten Bennett, Dr Hugh Torrens (Keele University), local communities and individuals, landowners, neighbouring local authorities, Northamptonshire Heritage and Countryside Services' colleagues, are gratefully acknowledged. Leaflet written and project managed by Andy Johnson.

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Supported by



Ashby St. Ledgers

Ashby St Ledgers

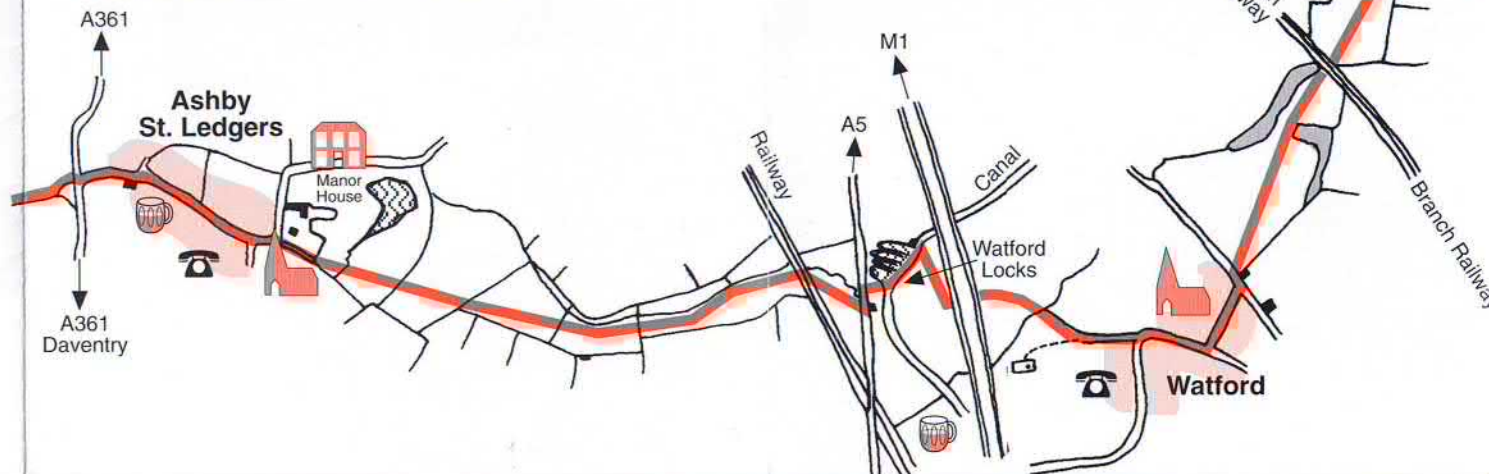
In 1086, it was 'Ascebi' - the ash settlement. The outstanding feature of this superb conservation village is the Manor House. The manor passed to the Catesby family by marriage in the 14th Century. The present building was established between 15th and 17th Centuries then, to be remodelled and enlarged during the first third of the 20th Century by renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens.

William Catesby, Chancellor of the Exchequer to Richard III was born and buried here. When Richard died on Bosworth Field in 1485, his loyal supporter was captured and beheaded. Five generations later another Catesby was to achieve even greater fame or infamy.

Robert Catesby had thrown his lot in with the Roman Catholics and suffered financially for this at the hands of the corrupt Chancellor Francis Bacon. He was forced to sell his own estates and move to Ashby to live with his mother. Standing by his principles he allied himself with the Gunpowder Plotters.

The timber framed gatehouse was the meeting place for the conspirators. Through this entrance at dusk on 5th November 1605 rode Robert Catesby and his companions, after travelling the 80 miles from London in seven hours, to bring news that the Gunpowder Plot had been discovered. He was finally tracked down on 8th November and shot dead after refusing to surrender.

The house passed through a number of hands from this time on. From 1904-38 much work was done for Ivor Guest, 2nd Lord Wimbourne, under the direction of Sir Edwin Lutyens. He was also responsible for many changes throughout the village, notably The Cottage built for Lord Wimbourne's agent - coursed limestone and ironstone rubble plinth, peddledashed brick, two storeys, five bays and two storey central porch with hipped roof.

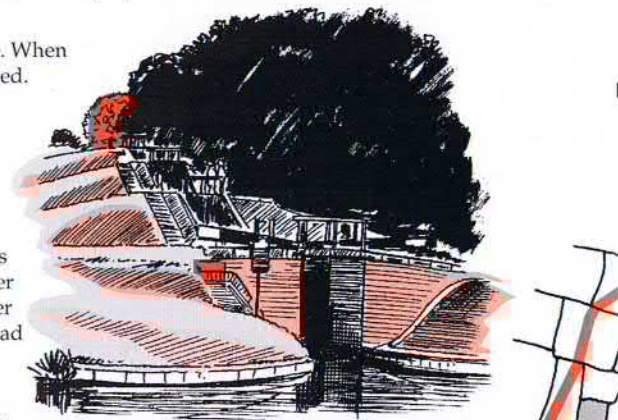


Watford Gap

The Watford Gap is just a mile north-west of the village. It marks the edge of the main watershed across Midland England. This has been an important transport corridor for 2000 years carrying; the Roman Watling Street (A5), the Grand Junction Canal, the London - Birmingham railway and most recently, the M1 motorway. The Jurassic Way shares the canal towpath for a short distance alongside Watford Locks. This is a flight of seven locks; the central four being in a staircase with a series of terraced side ponds.



Henley Bridge



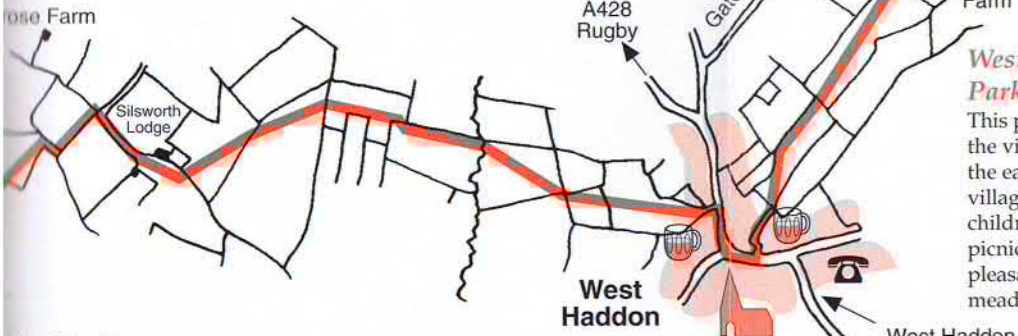
Watford Locks

Its ownership and management of the land over centuries was what sustained the village. An early Lord of the Manor was Sir Thomas Malory, author of La Mort d'Arthur. The work was printed by Caxton in 1470 and provided the foundation for the tales of Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

West Haddon

You reach the village by the primary school into The Green. At West End (A428) turn right to the mini-roundabout, turning left up High Street. Take the next left, Crown Lane, to its top where the path leaves for Winwick.

The medieval Church of All Saints stands at the heart of the village. One of its great treasures is a rare 12th Century font. Hollowed out from a massive block of stone, over 800 years ago, it is carved on all sides with scenes of Christ's life; the Nativity, Baptism, the entrance into Jerusalem and the Ascension into Heaven.



Watford

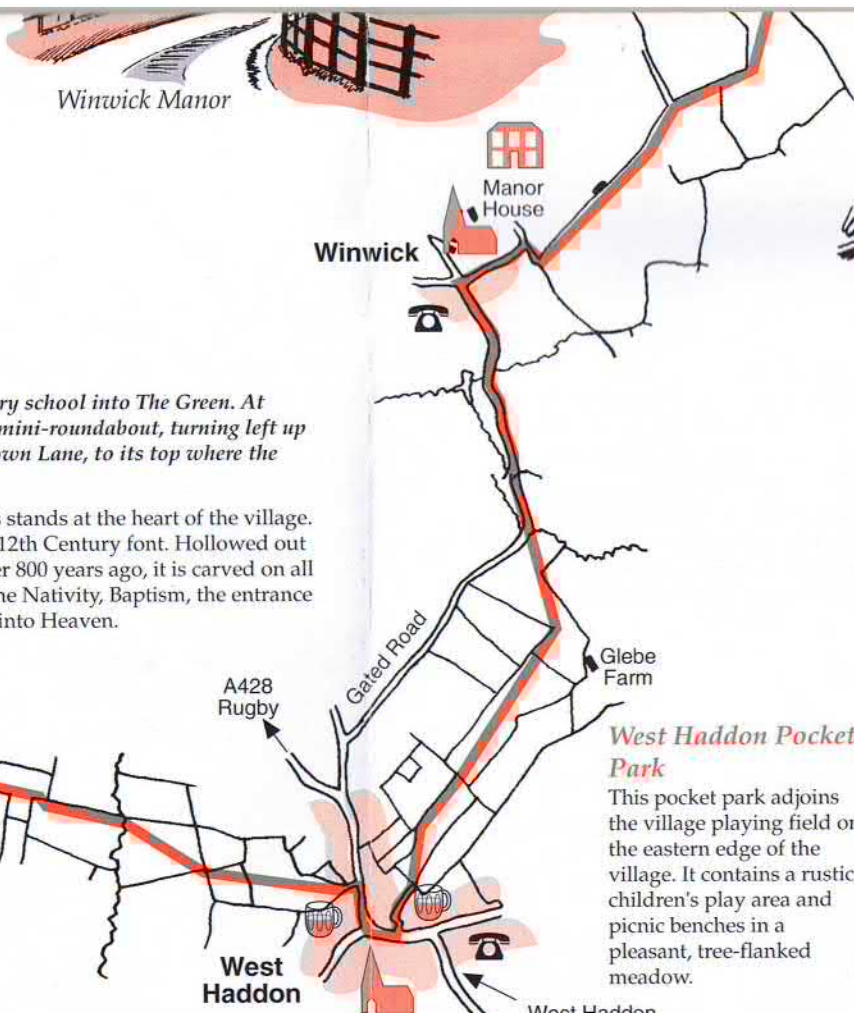
After crossing the railway line and A5 with great care, climb the Watford Lock Flight and follow the waymarks to the village. Coming into the village turn left at the sharp bend onto the main street. Follow this halfway up the hill to turn left along Church Street to its end. Turn left at the junction then, right onto the footpath by the barn.

The land around the village, across which our route passes, is characterised by the parkland remains of Watford Court. This great house was founded in the Elizabethan age. Its legacy is the glorious parkscape with groups of chestnuts, sycamores and beeches, spaced over ridge and furrow fields. The last family owners were the Henleys. After three heads of the family died in quick succession the house fell into disrepair. It was eventually demolished in the 1970's and new houses built on its site.

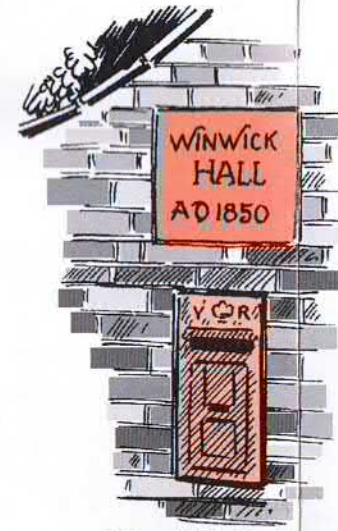
One Lord Henley's legacy is the ornamental railway bridge, north of the village. It was built to his instructions because he didn't want an unsightly construction within the bounds of the park. The ironwork bears his arms.



Watford Park



Honey Hill



Winwick Letter Box



SCALE
1/2 MILE

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KEY

- Jurassic Way
- Other routes
- Church
- Public House
- Historic House
- Telephone Box
- Woodland
- Water
- Parking

DISTANCES

- Ashby St Ledgers to Watford
- Watford to West Haddon
- West Haddon to Winwick
- Winwick to Elkington
- Elkington to Welford

MILES

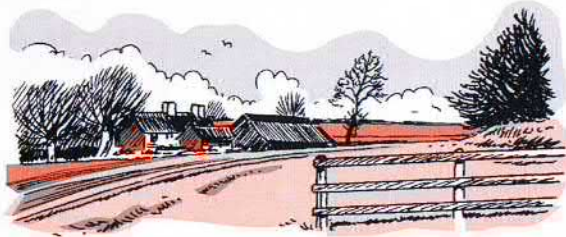
- 1 3/4
- 3 1/2
- 1 1/4
- 3 1/2
- 3 3/4

TOTAL

13 3/4

Hemflow Hills

This tiny, wooded range looks down to the west over Stanford Hall, estate and reservoir. The William and Mary House was built in 1697 for Sir Roger Cave and remains the home of his descendants having been passed through the families of the Caves, Verneys and now the Brayes. It is on the meadows that lay between Stanford and the hills that one Percy Pilcher lost his chance of immortal fame. He visited the hall in 1899 to demonstrate his gliding machine, the Hawk, but crashed from 30 feet and died aged 33. A monument stands where he fell. Percy was on the verge of completing his project to attach a 4 hp motor to a glider and looked destined to become the first man to fly.



Wood Cottage, Hemflow Hills

Elkington

Down in Elkington, turn right out to the road junction. Turn left here and along to the canal bridge to join the towpath, right.

Now a collection of just a few houses and outlying farmsteads, Elkington was a village mentioned in the Domesday Book. The lands and village were given to Pipewell Abbey by 1143, where they remained until the Dissolution. By 1412 the parish was described as being almost destitute of all inhabitants, except for a few servitors of the monastery. By the middle of the 16th Century sheep grazing had taken over, with 4000 head in the parish. Some indistinct village remains are crossed as you reach Elkington from the Honey Hill side. A hollow-way curves north of the site, its line then swings north-west to climb Honey Hill (following the course of our path) and on to Cold Ashby - this was still the road in 1731.

Honey Hill, with its commanding views over Warwickshire and Leicestershire, is thought to be the site of a Mesolithic settlement on this outcrop of Northampton Sand.

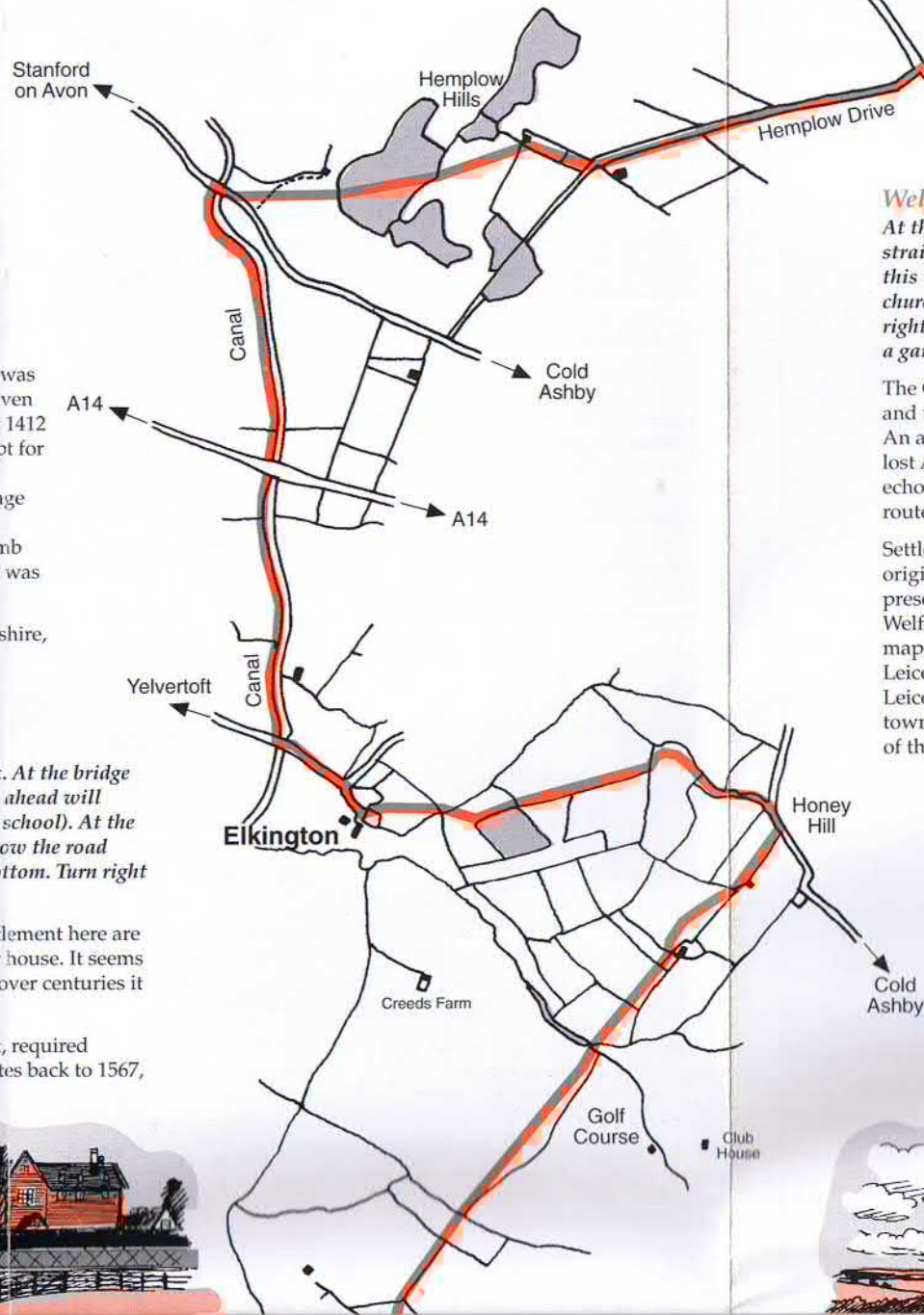
Winwick

The Jurassic Way reaches and turns right onto the gated road to Winwick. At the bridge crossroads the route turns right up a small hill (a brief excursion straight ahead will allow you to view the wonderful setting of the Manor House, church and school). At the top of the hill bear right with the road, then left through a field gate. Follow the road ahead, over a brow, through another gate to the byway junction at the bottom. Turn right onto the byway then bridleway to your left.

The tiny village is approached along the gated road. Remains of early settlement here are visible at the north-west end of the village, beyond the church and manor house. It seems that Winwick may never have been much larger than it is today but that, over centuries it has gradually moved up-stream to its present location.

The Church of St Michael and All Angels dates from the 13th Century but, required considerable restoration in the 19th Century. The Parish Record which dates back to 1567, suggests that Winwick was a popular 17th Century wedding venue for Northamptonshire couples; there were many more ceremonies than eligible villagers of the time.

The brick-built Elizabethan Manor House stands next to the church.



Welford



Welford

At the crossroads at the end of Hemflow Drive go straight ahead to enter Welford via West End. Follow this through to the church, turning right through the churchyard to emerge on Northampton Road. Turn right here to reach the footpath on your left opposite a garage.

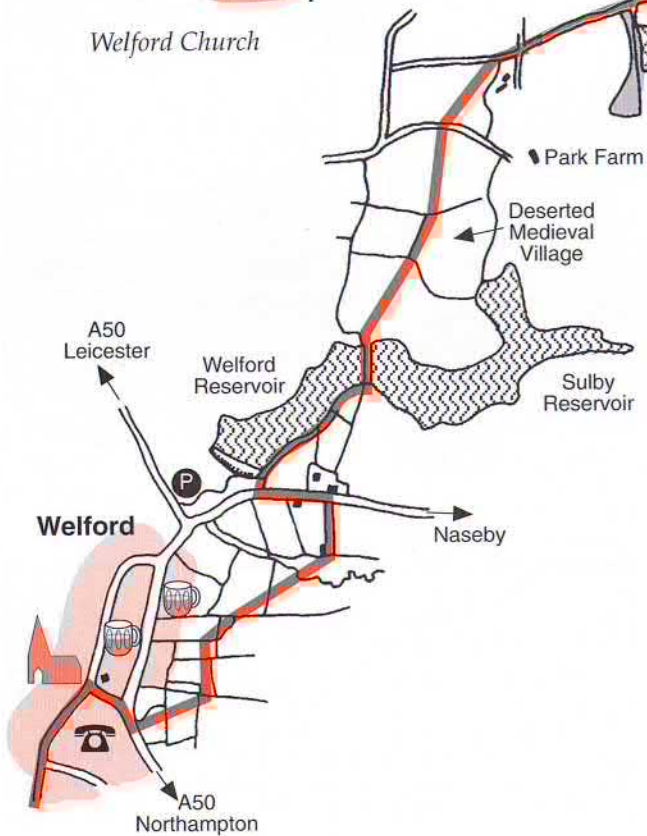
The Church of St Mary dates from the 13th Century and was a Chapel of Ease of the nearby Sulby Abbey. An ancient tunnel is reputed to have joined the now lost Abbey with the church. It is said that strange echoing sounds can be heard in the fields along its route.

Settlement remains suggest that Welford was originally planned with three parallel streets, the present West Street being the main village concourse. Welford Road, 'the London Waye' on Speeds 1610 map, was an important route from London to Leicester. Lying halfway between Northampton and Leicester, Welford became an important coaching town. This was further enhanced by the construction of the Welford Arm of the Grand Union Canal.





Welford Church



Sibbertoft

Reaching the village, turn right at the road, round a bend then left into Westhorpe. After 100m turn right onto the footpath which passes north of the village to the church. Once through the churchyard turn left along the road to the next footpath 100m on your right.



Clipston

Castle Yard

Sibbertoft

Sulby

The Jurassic Way crosses the causeway between the Sulby reservoirs. These were constructed along with another at Naseby to supply the canal system. As Sulby Reservoir neared completion tragedy struck when a sudden thaw burst the banks causing the Avon to flood the Stanford area, killing two people.

North of the reservoirs the path crosses the Deserted Medieval Village of Sulby. This is one of the best preserved examples in the county; from the path you can make out rectangular house platforms and the hollow-way roads through the village. In 1215 the manor was sold to the Premonstratensian Sulby Abbey. The abbey had been founded in 1155 in nearby Welford, by William de Wideville. After the grant of Sulby Manor the abbey was moved to the east of Welford and was situated on the edge of the infant River Avon 3/4 mile south of Sulby village.

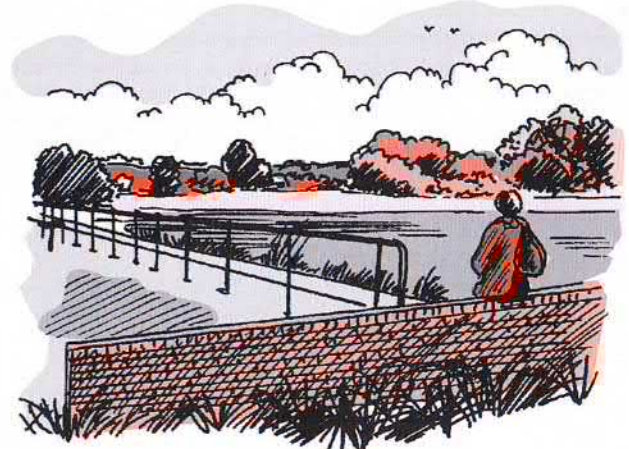
Records show that between 1377 and 1428 the village disappeared and was replaced by the present pattern of scattered farmsteads. As with many similar sites encountered along the Jurassic Way, this was probably to make way for sheep pasture. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries some 2000 sheep grazed the area. In 1567 the land was acquired by Sir Christopher Hatton, Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth I.



Sibbertoft

Arriving at the western edge of the village, you enter the area of Westhorpe. In the field immediately outside the existing settlement are two large, irregularly shaped mounds and other signs of early dwelling. It seems that there may have been two distinct areas to the village.

Across the fields is the Church of St Helen, from the 13th Century, with records dating back to 1220. A more recent resident was the Rev Miles Joseph Berkeley, vicar of the parish from 1868-89. He was a renowned botanist, specialising in fungi and mosses, described Charles Darwin's collections from the Beagle voyage and ultimately, presented Kew Gardens with his 10,000 fungi species collection. The Welland rises here in the vicarage cellar. Sibbertoft was on Charles Stuart's final approach to the decisive battle of the Civil War at Naseby on 14th June 1645. The king raised his standard on Moot Hill half a mile east of the village, before entering the fight just over a mile south of here. North-east of the village the route passes through woodland which conceals 'Castle Yard', a motte and bailey probably dating from the Norman Conquest. Its strategic and commanding location would have aided the control of ancient trackways through the valley below.



Sulby Reservoir

Further Information

A *Jurassic Way* Factsheet will be available from Spring 1995. This will be a regularly updated directory of facilities along the route; pubs, shops, accommodation, camping, public transport links and information on any changes to the route. Please send a stamped S.A.E. with your request to:

The Countryside Centre
9 Guildhall Road
Northampton NN1 1DP
Telephone: (0604) 237220

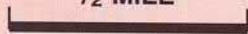
The *Jurassic Way* is an integral part of Northamptonshire's recreation route network with many links to other walking routes; Nene Way, Knightley Way, Midshires Way, Grand Union Canal Walk and connections with neighbouring counties via the Oxford Canal and the Hereward Way. There are also many village based walks leaflets which share parts of the Jurassic Way. For more details contact the Countryside Centre for a publications price list.

Pocket Parks are small areas of countryside which are 'owned', managed and cherished by a local community for its own enjoyment and for the protection of wildlife. Guidance and financial help is available to those who might like to establish a pocket park in their own neighbourhood. For more information contact the Pocket Parks Officer - Telephone: (0604) 237222.

Countryside Stewardship. This Countryside Commission management scheme gives farmers and land managers incentives to enhance and conserve important features of the English landscape. In Northamptonshire the scheme targets waterside, limestone grassland and historic landscapes through ten year management agreements. Additional payments are made where sites give open access to the public for quiet, informal recreation.



SCALE
1/2 MILE



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DISTANCES

MILES

Welford to Sibbertoft	3
Sibbertoft to East Farndon	3 3/4
East Farndon to Great Oxendon	1 3/4
Great Oxendon to Braybrooke	2
Braybrooke to The Hermitage	1 1/2

TOTAL

12

KEY

Jurassic Way



Other routes



Church



Public House



Historic House



Telephone Box



Woodland



Water



Parking



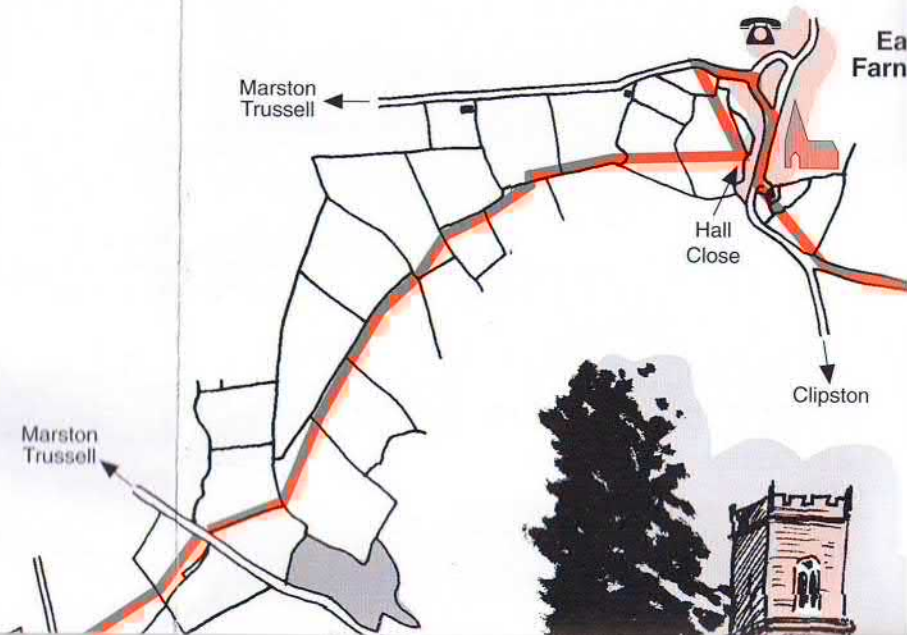
East Farndon

From the Hall Close Field with its superb westward views, double back slightly left to the Marston road. Turn right into the village and right again past the hall. At the main street turn right up to the church. The route passes through the churchyard to the right of the church. (The Jurassic Way follows the country road from East Farndon to the edge of Great Oxendon. There is a public access point from this road to the deserted medieval village of Little Oxendon which is in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme).

The climb up to East Farndon from the west, arrives at 'Hall Close', an extensive area of earthworks in a commanding spot, with wide views west and south-west over fields stretching towards the Naseby Battlefields. It is most likely that these features are quarry-damaged-remains of a back lane which once separated the village and fields. Other romanticised and less plausible theories have been put forward; fortifications against the Danes, an ancient camp or, Civil War defences.



Sibbertoft Church





A508
Northampton

Great Oxendon

In the 13th Century Church of St Helen lie the remains of the Rev. John Morton, there is a stone tablet to his memory in the chancel. Morton was one of the first recorders of the county and wrote the 'Natural History of Northamptonshire'. Like Samuel Sharp he was a willing and helpful tutor; his shells from river beds and valuable fossil collection would willingly be sent to any interested party. The unusual feature of the church is to be discovered by anyone standing 673 feet to the west. A remarkable echo from the belfry is repeated 13 times.

Brampton Valley Way

The Jurassic Way's junction with the Brampton Valley Way is over the north entrance to the Oxendon Tunnels. The Way is a 14 mile recreational route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Once a busy rural branch line run by London and North Western Railway; it provides a safe, rural route between Northampton and Market Harborough. Countryside Rangers manage the Way as part of the County's network of Country Parks.

The tunnels are 410 and 440 metres long, the east tunnel is open to users of the way (except horse riders).

Motte and Bailey Castles

These medieval fortifications were introduced to Britain by the Normans. The 'motte' was a large conical mound of earth and rubble on top of which a stone or timber tower was built. With most of these castles an embanked enclosure, the 'bailey' adjoined the motte.

These castles acted as garrisons, strongholds and aristocratic residences. They were often centres for local or Royal administration. Built in towns, villages and open countryside, they occupied strategic positions dominating the surrounding landscape. Many were occupied for only short periods, as was necessary. They continued to be built through the 13th Century, after this time they were superseded by later castle design.

The Other Jurassic Way?

In the 1930's and 40's archaeologists believed they had found evidence of a prehistoric trackway which stretched across Middle England between the Humber and Severn estuaries. It was thought to follow the great watershed created by Jurassic limestone escarpments, and so, the 'Jurassic Way' came into being.

The theory was that the well drained limestone could only have supported light woodland, not the dense coverage which was thought to have existed over much of prehistoric England. Their suggested alignment linked many known prehistoric sites, particularly those from the Iron Age.

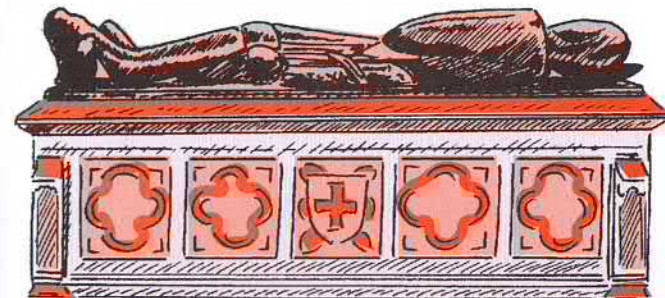
Two possible routes were suggested for a trackway across Northamptonshire; one following the Banbury Lane to Northampton then north to where the Welland rises, the second north and west of Daventry to reach the Welland. From there the consensus was that it took a course along the south-east slopes of the Welland Valley to Stamford.

However, since the 1940's numerous additional prehistoric sites have been discovered. Iron Age England is now known to have been more densely populated than previously thought, with much of the land already cleared of trees.

While it is no longer possible to argue for a single trackway from Bristol to the Humber, the imagery is still appealing. The Jurassic Way long distance path follows most closely the second of their suggested routes.

Latymer was given licence to strengthen and embattle the manor, suggesting that the moated castle was built shortly afterwards. The castle was sited in the centre of the present mass of earthwork remains. It passed to the Griffins early in the 15th Century, but by the middle of the 16th Century it was in poor condition. The castle buildings were finally pulled down in 1633. The site has educational access under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Towards the end of the 18th Century Braybrooke's main industry was weaving. One small field is still known as 'Osier Beds' and willow used in weaving can be seen lining the River Jordan at our crossing point to the east of the village.



Sir Thomas de Latymer

Ridge and Furrow

The pattern of fields found today in Northamptonshire is quite different to the field systems of the early Middle Ages. The open field systems of this age surrounded the villages of the time; the oldest cultivated land being that closest to the settlement. To increase land for cultivation; communities worked together to improve the ground and shared the result. The fields were measured in furlong blocks and divided into narrow strips ('selions'). The ridges developed over time as the strips were ploughed separately, turning the soil in towards the centre. On some sites you can see the ridges or 'riggs' continuing through the present field boundaries, demonstrating the difference in time of the medieval and present systems. The principal change in the field pattern came with the enclosure of land for sheep grazing; hedges were planted to contain the livestock and pasture became the order of the day. The regular and gently undulating feature can be seen early in the morning or late in the evening when the low sun casts its shadows. It is also highlighted in dry summers when the ridges can become scorched and in harsh winters when the furrows hang onto the snow-fall.



Farndon Church

The Deserted Village of Little Oxendon

This superb site lies just north-east of the road journey between East Farndon and Great Oxendon. Though not mentioned specifically in the Domesday Book, it does appear in later tax records; 50 people over the age of 14 paying the Poll Tax in 1377. In 1405 at least 8 people remained as they registered a complaint that the chapel had not yet been consecrated. It seems that the village was another casualty of deliberate clearance to create pasture for sheep.

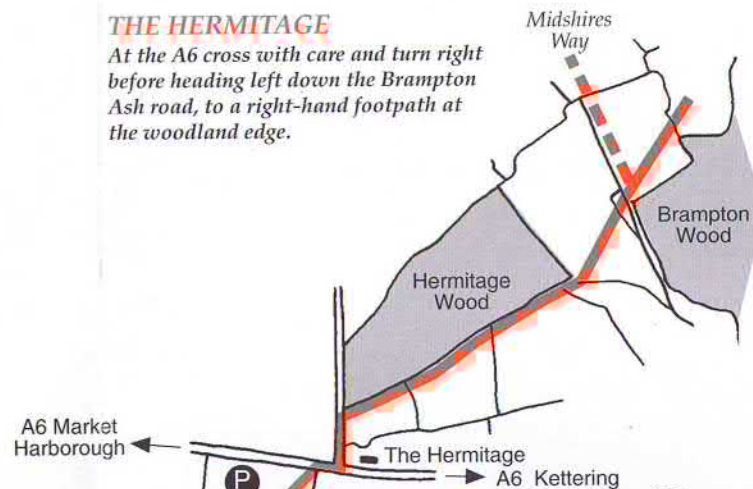
There is public access to this whole site through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. A permitted path leads over a couple of fields, from the road to the village remains.



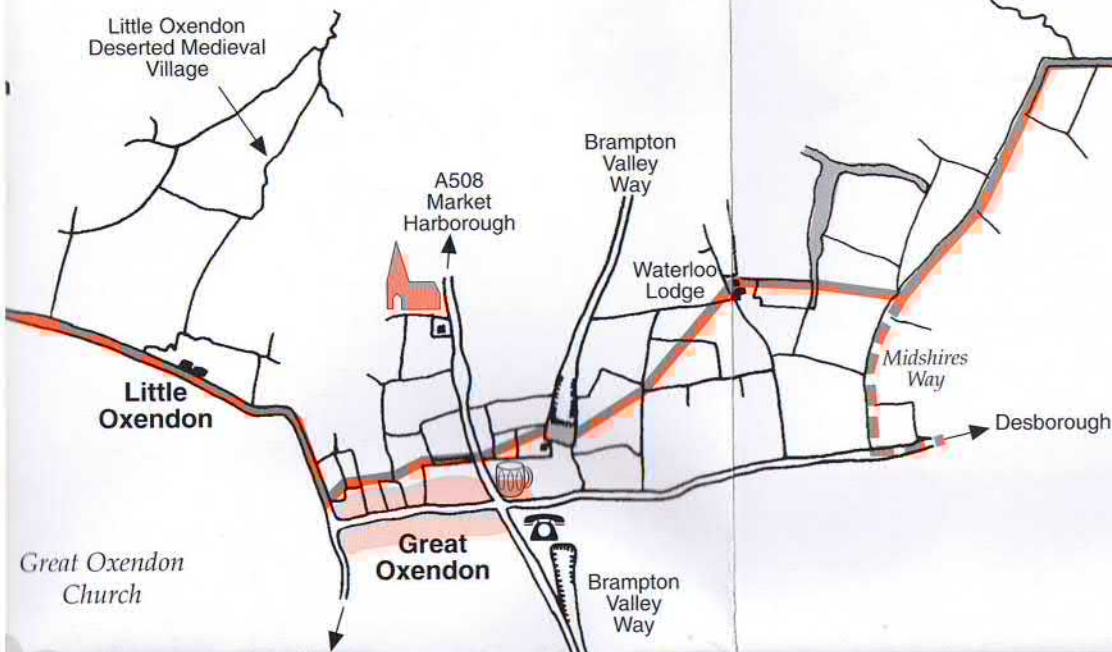
Braybrooke Church

THE HERMITAGE

At the A6 cross with care and turn right before heading left down the Brampton Ash road, to a right-hand footpath at the woodland edge.



River Jordan



Market Harborough

Midshires Way

River Jordan

Braybrooke

Arthingworth

Braybrooke

Enter the village along the unsurfaced Oxendon Road. At its end turn right into Griffin Road and continue to the pub. Turn left here along School Lane then, right onto the Desborough Road. Pass the castle site to the footpath on your left.

The route into Braybrooke is via the unsurfaced Oxendon Road, it comes down from the local watershed between the Welland and Nene Rivers, and their respective tributaries the Jordan and Ise. This track is bounded to the west by a hedgerow of ash, dogwood, field-maple, midland hawthorn and wild-hop.

The majestic 13th Century Church of All Saints is the home for a wealth of interesting interior monuments, particularly of the families associated with Braybrooke Castle. The finest piece is the oak figure of Sir Thomas de Latymer, his features clear and his shield in his hand. This is one of only a small number of carved wooden figures which survive in the whole country. By Sir Thomas is a huge 16th Century, moustached head of a Military man. The Griffin family succeeded the Latymers at the castle and, an elaborate Elizabethan monument commemorates one of them with griffins crawling all over the tomb.

The manor was originally held by Robert de Braibroc. In 1213 his son Henry was granted timber for 'a fair chamber' at Braybrooke. The manor passed to the Latymers by marriage at the end of the 13th Century. In 1303-4 Thomas de