Collyweston Slate

Collyweston has always been a centre for the slating industry. Its slates can be found throughout the land and have even been exported to America to roof a mansion in New York.

In the 17th Century these slates were used in Stamford to lessen the spread of fire and many villages in the area owe their rustic charm to the combination of Northamptonshire limestone and Collyweston slate roofs.

At one time every farmer had his own pit from which he produced slate when farm work was slack. Slates came in 28 different sizes ranging from 6 to 24 inches and had names such as Outrills, Mopes, Mumford, Batchelor, Job, Wibbet, In-bow and Out-bow. They were split by hand with a claving hammer, after freezing during the winter months.

Farmer-slaters also used to make mortar, in which to bed the slates on the roof, by burning lime from their pits. This home-made mortar was 'elastic' and as can be seen, a Collyweston slate roof assumes a graceful curve with age.

By the 1920’s the industry was on the decline and there were only six slatting pits remaining. This was due to economic factors and mild winters preventing the splitting of slates. In 1982 a Stone Slaters’ Trust was set up to research splitting slate by artificial methods and a prototype process was successful in 1983. A new quarry to be operated by this trust has recently been approved.

Ptilochi Bentley is a rare fossil shell found only where Collyweston slate occurs. Known to the quarriersmen as 'water spider' it was named after John Flowers Bentley, a local fossil collector, whose 3 specimen fossils are in Peterborough Museum.

A Walkers’ Code

1. Always keep to the path to avoid trespass.
2. Remember to close gates behind you. Straying stock can cause damage or spread disease and carelessness may lead to tragedy.
3. To avoid harm or distress to farm animals and wildlife it is best to leave dogs at home. If you have to bring them they should be kept on a lease.
4. If your route takes you onto a road keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic and use the verge if one exists.
5. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear for the season and remember to allow plenty of time to complete your chosen walk.
6. Remember that every piece of land in the countryside belongs to someone, so please treat it with respect and other walkers will be made welcome.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges, please report them to:

Northamptonshire: Principal Rights of Way Officer, Area 1 Office, 73 London Road, Kettering. Tel: 524100.
Cambridgeshire: Dept of Property, Rural Management Section Shire Hall, Cambridge. Tel: 317445.
Leicestershire: The Director Dept of Planning and Transportation, Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester. LE3 9LJ.
Lincolnshire: Countryside Access Development Officer, N.D.F.S. Building, Newland, Lincoln. LIN 1YL.
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Duddington is an attractive Northamptonshire village built of limestone and Collwinston slate. Lying within the Rockingham Forest the local place-names remind us that it was originally retained forest land. Over the years it has been known as Dodintone, Duddinton and Duddington.

The estate was held by non-residents until 1843 when it was bought by Nicholas Jackson of Stamford who later built the Manor House. His property consisted of farms, houses, large plots and most of the cottages were in other hands.

Lying at the crossroads of two of the Country’s main trunk roads, Duddington suffered the noise and pollution of heavy traffic until the early 1970’s when a bypass was built. Following on from this the village was cleaned and renovated by the County Council. Two awards were won in 1975, as a result of this work namely the European Architectural Heritage Year Award and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors/Times Award for improvements.

The Church of St. Mary is built of limestone rubble with freestone dressings and has a low, octagonal broach spire. The earliest surviving parts, dating from the 12th century, are to be found in the Nave where there are also traces of medieval wall painting. A major restoration was carried out in Victorian times (1844) when the chancel was added. The abnormal position of the Tower, south of the chancel, is probably due to the ground on the south-west falling steeply to the River Welland.