

Local Snippets

Thrapston is a pre-Christian name and is derived from an early personal name, Draefstestun meaning the farm of Draefst. It was known as Thrapestone in 1086 and Strapetona in 1130.

Thrapston was a small agricultural based community whose status as a market town was secured in 1205 by Baldwin De Vere. Its prosperity was due to its situation at a narrow crossing point on the River Nene which is now spanned by the Nine Arches Bridge. The town was almost rebuilt in the 19th century with red brick buildings although a few older houses do remain.

Halfway between Thrapston and Aldwinckle the extraction of gravel, this century, revealed the remains of the Roman timber bridge which carried the Gartree Road from Godmanchester to Leicester over the River Nene. The wooden framework which supported the metalled road surface was well preserved in the river bed.

The Corn Exchange was built in 1850, seating 400 people; it was also licensed for stage plays and public entertainment. Above its columned entrance are two distinctive signs, one a wooden horse-drawn plough, the other a sheaf of corn carved in limestone. Since 1900 the exchange has belonged to a family business of Auctioneers and Estate Agents.

Since 1857, the largest employer in Thrapston has been Smith and Grace Ltd. Formerly known as the Nene Ironside Works they gained international fame for their 'split Pulleys' and 'V' drive belts. Nathaniel Smith invented the split pulley and his partner is said to have been related to the cricketer W.G. Grace.

A Walkers' Code:



1. Always keep to the path to avoid trespass. If the path is obstructed you are allowed to seek a reasonable way round the obstruction, taking care to avoid causing damage. Please report the obstruction to the highway authority.
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 leash.
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.
7. Remember that Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected by law in order to ensure their survival. Please respect them and other archaeological sites.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges please report them to the Principal Rights of Way Officer, East Office, 73 London Road, Kettering. Tel 524100.

Your general comments on this leaflet and the routes will be welcomed by the Director of Planning and Transportation, Northampton House, Northampton. NN1 2HZ.

Drawn and compiled by Sue Payne. 1990.

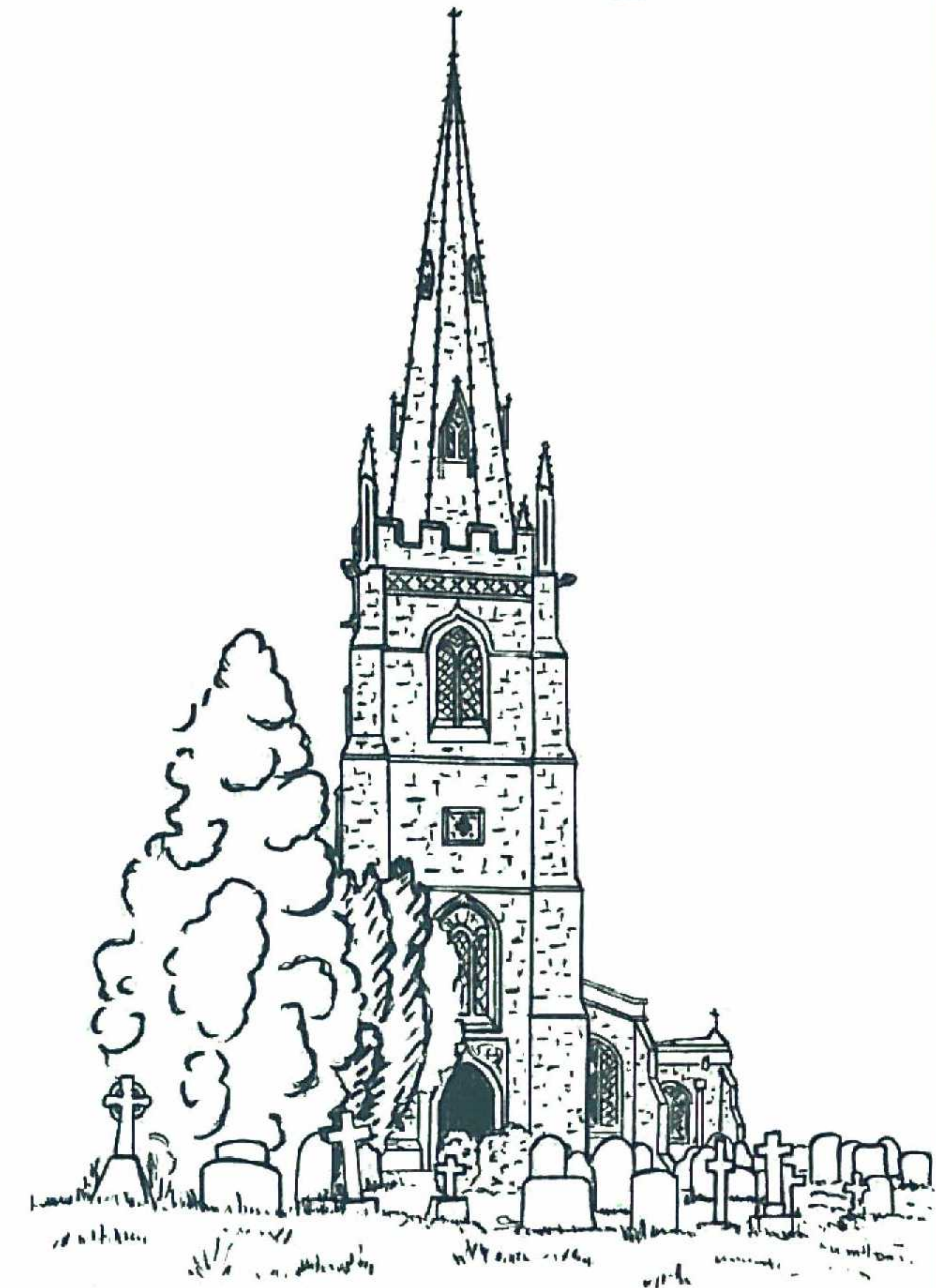
Countryside Walks Leaflet No. 29.

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Thrapston and Islip

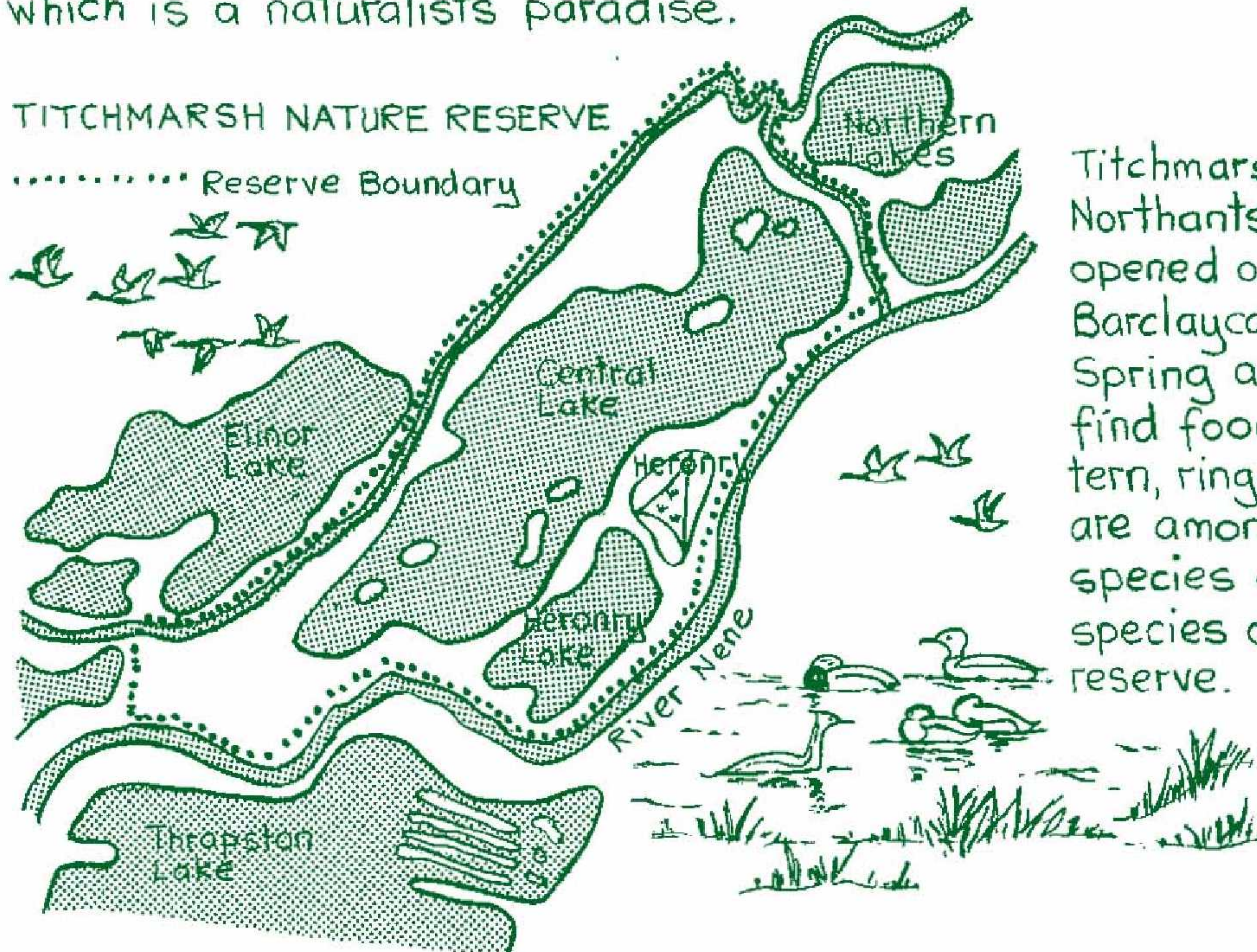


St. Nicholas Church, Islip.

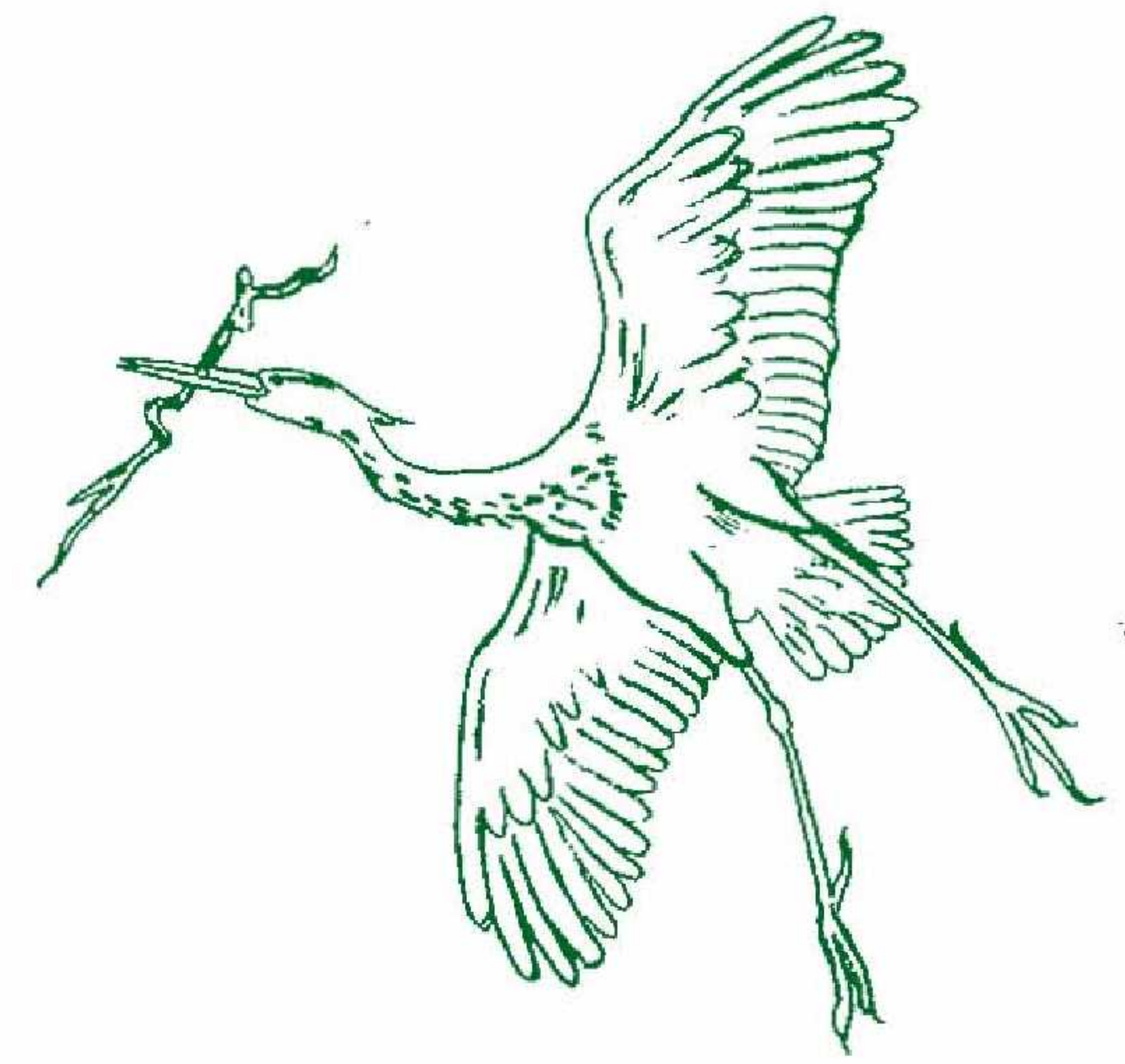
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Thrapston Gravel Pits

Gravel extraction first began at Thrapston in 1926 and recently the accelerated demand has resulted in pits of various size stretching from Thrapston to Aldwinckle. All these pits are flooded and both the River Nene and Harpers Brook wind through the complex. Excellent leisure and recreational facilities such as sailing, fishing, camping and caravanning can now be enjoyed. At the centre of the complex is the Titchmarsh Nature Reserve which is a naturalists paradise.



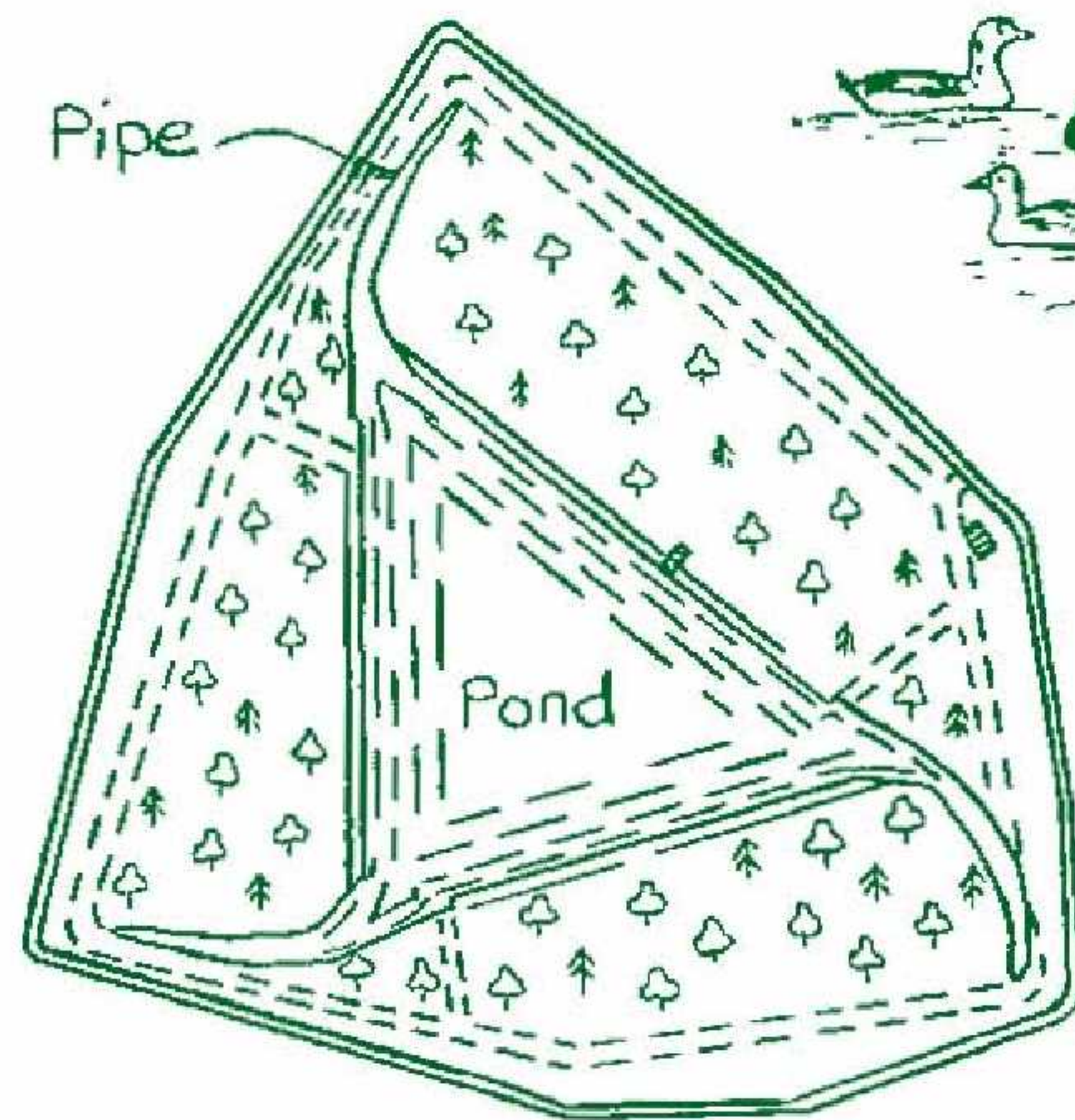
Titchmarsh Nature Reserve is managed by the Northants Wildlife Trust and was officially opened on 29th June, 1987 with financial help from Barclaycard and the World Wildlife Fund. In Spring and Autumn migrating waterfowl and waders find food and refuge there whilst the common tern, ringed plover, little ringed plover and oystercatcher are amongst the regular breeding birds. Some 138 species of bird, 21 species of butterfly and 10 species of dragonfly have been recorded on the reserve.



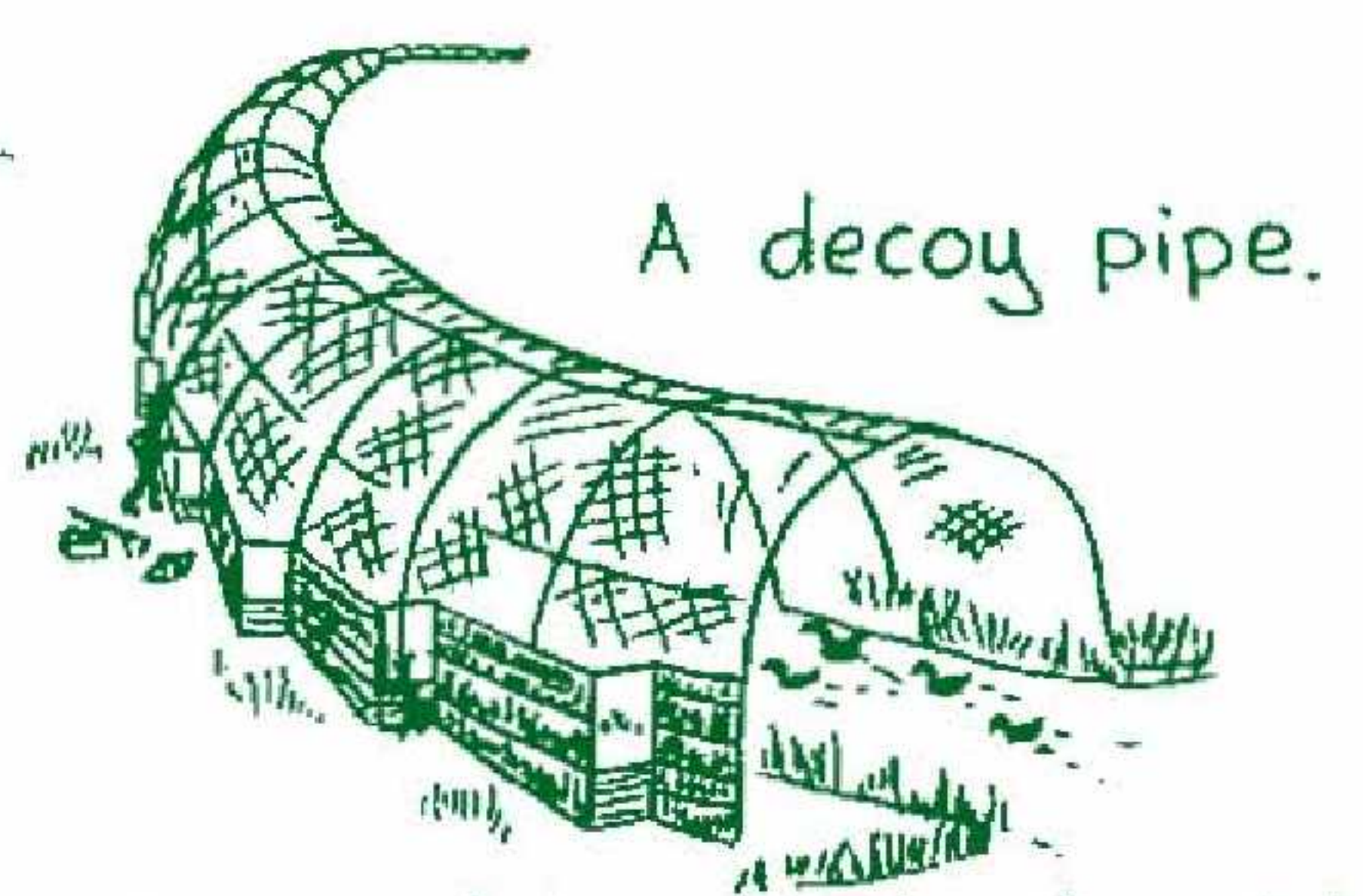
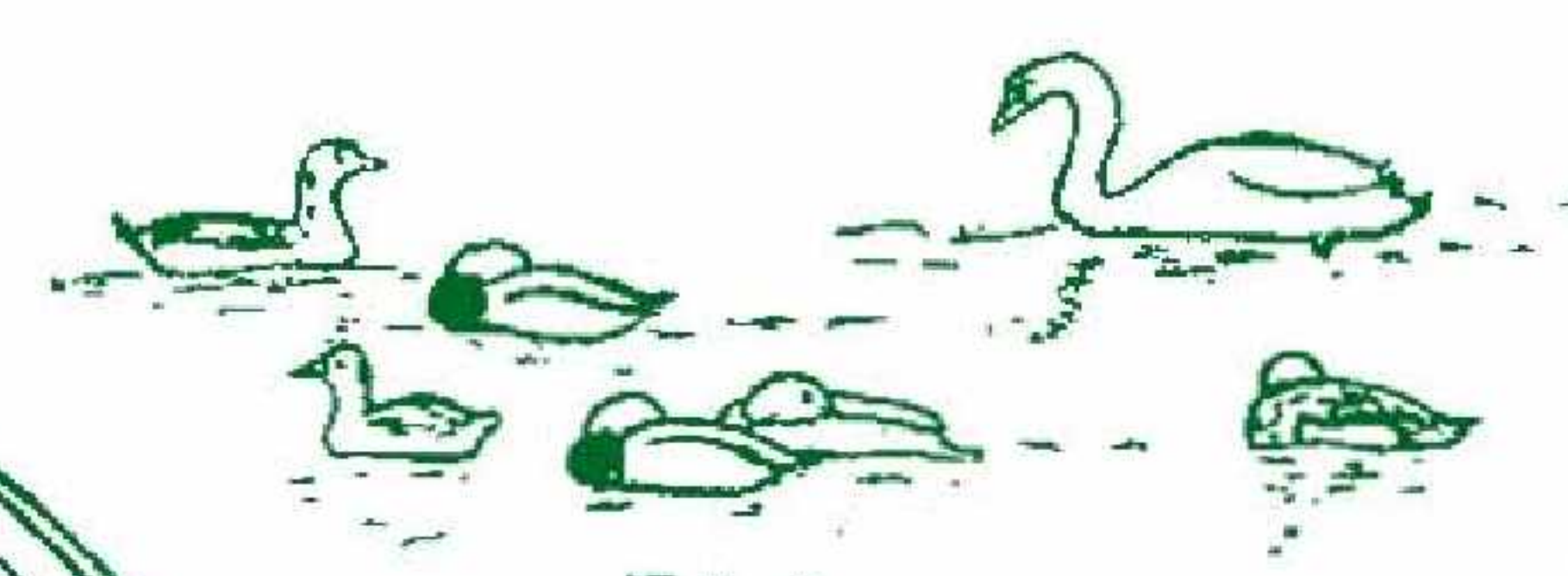
Heron usually nest in traditional colonies in tall trees. In flight, the neck is drawn back in an 'S' position and the legs trail behind. Nests are made of twigs and sticks, lined with animal hair and feathers. They are added to each year and eventually become too large and fall to the ground. Some nests may weigh 25 kilo's and approach 1.25 metres in diameter. Herons feed on fish, frogs, voles and eels. Indigestible matter is regurgitated as pellets.

The disturbance of large young just before they become competent fliers can result in them being frightened away from the nest and perishing from starvation. Human disturbance also causes the nests to be exposed to predators. Despite these problems the oldest known ringed heron was 24 years 7 months.

The wood at Titchmarsh Nature Reserve is a thriving heronry and an S.S.S.I. (Site of Special Scientific Interest). Formerly a duck decoy, constructed for Lord Lilford, in 1885, it was triangular in shape with three pipes and surrounded by a small drainage ditch. The arms are now only just recognisable and the pond is overgrown. Most of the trees are alder but there are also willows and Scots pine. The R.S.P.B. (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) film "Big Bill, the Heron" was made at this heronry in 1972.



Duck decoy (1885)



A duck decoy was used to supply the old country houses with their waterfowl. Using the natural curiosity of the birds a fox-like dog was trained to run away from the pond, alongside one of the pipes. The ducks duly followed to finish up trapped and bound for the Squires table. A case of curiosity killed the ducks!

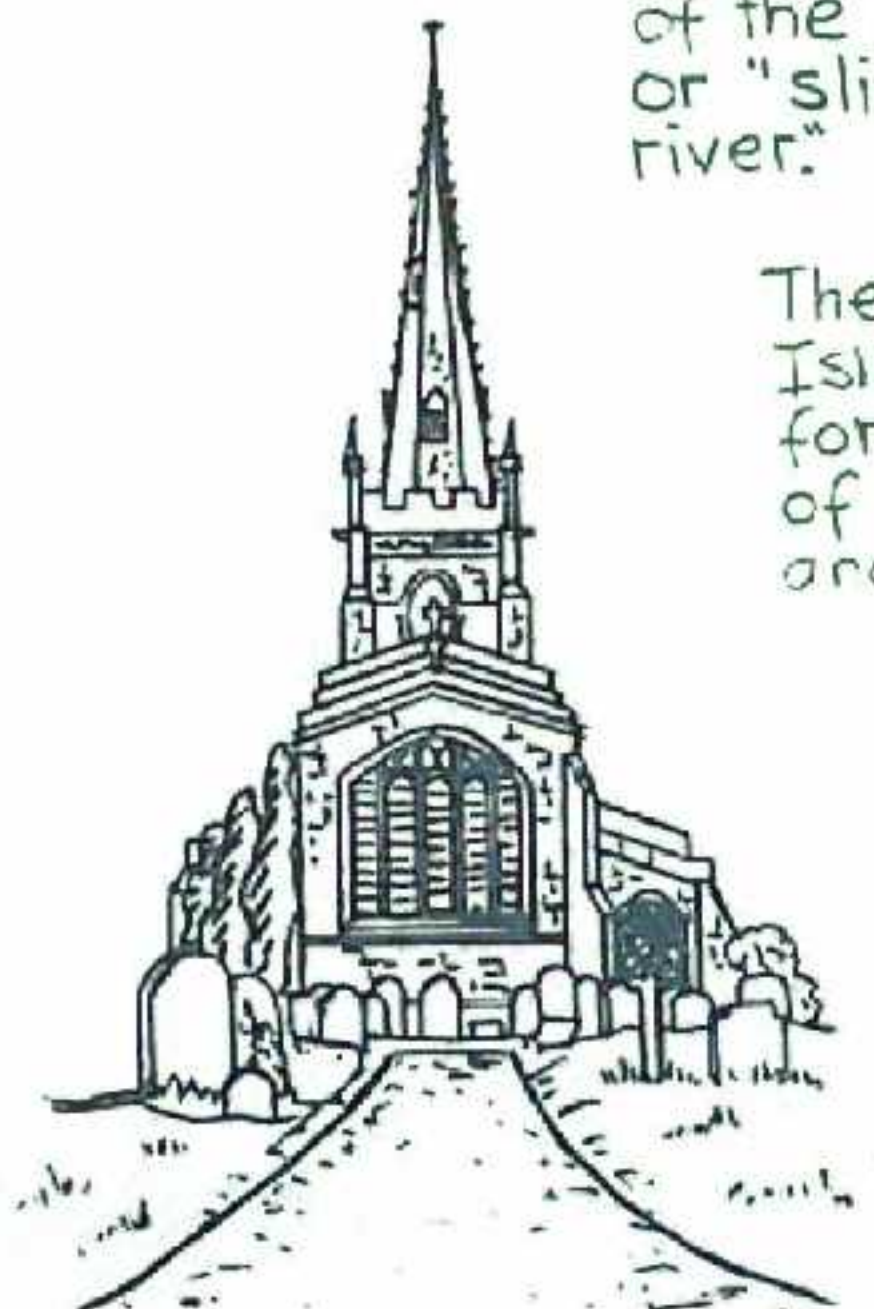
There is evidence of iron working at Islip in Roman times and also for brief periods thereafter but relatively large scale production did not start until 1871 when Charles Plevins formed the Islip Iron Company. The four blast furnaces were situated on the Thrapston to Kettering road about one mile from Islip. At the zenith of their production 80,000 to 100,000 tons of pig iron were produced per year. The company was served by the Midland railway Kettering to Cambridge line and also had its own rail link with the London North Western line at Thrapston. After most of the shallow ore had been removed, underground mines were opened. During the war corrugated roofing was erected over the surface working platform and pig bay to shield the glare from German aircraft. In 1930 the company was taken over by Stewarts and Lloyds of Corby and a gradual run down occurred until closure in 1942.

Islip Mill nestles in a quiet picturesque position by the River Nene in close proximity to Thrapston Lake.

In the mid 1880's it had two water wheels, an undershot wheel and the more powerful breast wheel. An auxiliary portable steam engine was used in times of high and low water. Eels were also trapped and transported to London. To increase production the mill was modernised in 1923/24 and again in 1946/47. In 1950 it was converted to electricity. By 1960, like many small mills it ceased production due to competition from imports and large scale milling. A diary of events ranging from world wide importance to the pulling out of hedges was recorded on the wooden lining of the elevator shaft by W.P. Stafford who worked at the mill from 1926 to 1960.

The name Islip is thought to mean either "slippery hill of the young men or warriors" or "slippery bank of the Ise river."

The Loveday family business of Islip harvested rushes for use in the manufacture of horse collars, saddles and matting.



Islip Church.

St. Nicholas Church, which is of the Perpendicular style, has a graceful spire and stands in an elevated position above the village of Islip. It has an interesting ornate west tower, a chancel screen of carved oak and contains a monument to Dame Mary Washington, wife of Sir John Washington of Thrapston. The replica brasses on the chancel floor are the work of the Rev. H. Macklin, who was the author of one of the standard books on brasses.

ISLIP

Anglo-Saxon burial found 1965

Mill Lane

Islip Mill

Sluice

Recluse

Rectory Farm

Playing Field

Thrapston Bridge

Works

Hotel

Thrapston Castle

Works

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