Ringstead

Ringstead means ‘circular place’ and the shape of the parish suggests it was once part of Raunds parish.

Gravel extraction at Kinewell Lake revealed an iron age hut circle some 10 metres in diameter. The remains of a Roman Villa were also found and excavations uncovered a tessellated floor as well as many Roman and Iron Age artefacts.

The deserted medieval hamlet of Mill Cotton lies in the west of the parish. (Cotton being a medieval word meaning cottages.) Little is known of the population or period of desertion and due to disturbance by the railway, gravel digging and modern ploughing the village remains are all but non-existent.

Medieval open field agriculture was practised here until 1843, two years before the Northampton to Peterborough railway line crossed the parish.

Industry seen in the parish over the years has included stone quarrying, shoemaking, lace-making and the assembly of soft toys as a modern ‘cottage industry.

Kinewell Lake, covering some 80 acres, was leased to the village by the gravel extraction company who had worked the site for 20 years. It is now a Pocket Park where insect life is particularly abundant and is a haven for migrating birds and waterfowl.

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.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges please report them to the Rights of Way Officer, Northamptonshire County Council, 15 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

Countryside Walks Leaflet No. 26

Northamptonshire Countryside Services is a branch of Northamptonshire Planning and Transportation Department.
Denford Churchyard leads to an impenetrable wilderness of scrubland covered with stinging nettles, which are the food plant of the caterpillars of the small tortoiseshell and peacock butterfly. Ash, willow and hawthorn covered with ivy are also present. Leading down to the river bank the ground is wet and has a wide variety of wildflowers and birdlife is also plentiful. This area is managed as a Nature Reserve by the Northants Wildlife Trust.

The gravestones have a particularly rich variety of lichens and mosses.

Woodford

Woodford was known in 1086 as Wodeford meaning ‘ford by a wood.’

General Charles George Arbuthnot, when living at Woodford House, started the ‘Woodford Iron Ore Company’ in the late 1850s, mining from an adit in the grounds of his house. His enterprise was further helped when the Kettering to Cambridge railway line was opened in 1865, and passed close to his land. Experienced labour was imported into Woodford and these workers were housed in newly built homes in New Town. Under a new owner, Charles Henry Plevins, the company prospered and the prospect of work attracted men countrywide, making the village economy dependent on ironstone.

The Parish Church of St. Mary the Virgin combines the styles of many centuries from Norman times onwards. In all probability there was originally a Saxon building on the site. During major restoration work in 1866-7 a box containing a human heart wrapped in a cloth was discovered in one of the pillars. Today it can be viewed in a glass case where it was found and is thought to be the heart of Roger de Kirkerton who died in Norfolk in 1280. Unusual oak effigies of Sir Walter Trallie and his wife Eleanor date from the 14th century. Originally they would have been brightly painted but few traces of colour now remain.

In 1964 the photograph of a ghostly figure of a knight kneeling at the altar was taken. Although tests have been carried out to establish its authenticity it has never been proved to be a forgery.