Kibworth
Guide Book

Featured on
Michael Wood's
'Story of England'

Three walks around historic

Kibworth

and Smeeton Westerby

www.kibworthvillage.co.uk

Michael Wood's **Story of England**

'Who Do You Think You Are?' for a whole community.

As broadcast by the BBC in 2010, this 6 part TV series (and accompanying book) was groundbreaking because it told the story of one English village through 2,000 years of history.

Unlike any before it, this was not the story of Kings and Queens and Lords and Ladies, but a history of ordinary people as told through collections of old documents and memories.

The series was based around the ancient parish of Kibworth in the Gartree hundred, which today comprises three villages: Kibworth Harcourt, Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby.

The project began for the villages on a weekend in July 2009 with the Big Dig, organised by Michael's production company (Maya Vision International) and co-ordinated by Dr Carenza Lewis, who, with local archaeologists, worked alongside over 150 volunteers to dig 55 one metre square test pits in their gardens and recorded everything they found as they worked their way back through time to the Roman period. One of the pits, dug in the corner of the car park of The Coach & Horses pub on the A6, where the team were based throughout the weekend, produced one of the most interesting artefacts – a tiny fragment of bone comb from the Dark Ages.

Moving between the national and the local narratives, Michael and the production team filmed until October 2010 to set the lives of the ordinary people from the three villages in the context of great events: from the Viking invasions and the Norman Conquest to the Industrial Revolution and the two World Wars.

Fittingly, the series finished in September 2010 with the burial of a time capsule in The Coach & Horses' car park by Michael Wood and the pub landlord, Andrew Southerden.

This Kibworth Guide Book is part of the legacy that the Kibworth Improvement Team (KiT) volunteers, with financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, local businesses and parish councils, believe will help to make a lasting contribution to the ongoing story of the three villages.

Introduction to the Kibworth Harcourt, Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby Heritage Trails

The two villages of Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt lie on the A6 road between Leicester and Market Harborough; Smeeton Westerby lies to the south of these villages.

There is a heritage trail to guide you around each village, which highlights historical and interesting points and gives the opportunity to see where many of the scenes in the series were filmed. The three trails can be walked independently. In addition, but published separately, there are variations to the Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt trails called 'Betty's Trails' (named after Betty Ward, a long time resident of Kibworth Harcourt, who uses a mobility scooter around the villages) which are suitable for mobility scooters, wheelchairs, pushchairs and those with limited mobility. Unfortunately the roads and pavements in Smeeton Westerby are not suitable for a 'Betty's Trail'. For further information and trail leaflets please go to **www.kibworthvillage.co.uk**

Free parking is available at Raitha's Restaurant (trail No. 2, post code LE8 0NN) and at the Church car park, opposite the Church (post code LE8 0NB) at the junction of Church Road and The Tithings.

The Kibworth Beauchamp and Harcourt trails commence at the Coach and Horses Inn (Trail No. 1) and it is a matter of choice which is completed first. The Smeeton Westerby trail starts on the Kibworth side of the village at Smeeton House, Main Street (post code LE8 0QJ).

As there are no designated public car parks in Smeeton Westerby, a few parking places can usually be found in side streets near to the start of your walk.

The routes of these trails pass along pavements, narrow in places and alongside busy roads, please be aware of traffic at all times particularly when crossing the road.

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Heritage Trail

If you require more information on guided walks
please email info@kibworthvillage.co.uk

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2 Raitha's Restaurant (formerly Rose & Crown)
3 Main Street
4 10 Main Street
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25 Jubilee Green
26 The Village Cross
27 The Old House
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30 The City
31 Kibworth Harcourt Windmill
32 Former Land Army Hostel
33 Former Harcourt House
34 Rector's Plantation
35 Lychgate & Cemetery

Kibworth Harcourt
Heritage Trail

Welcome to the historic village of Kibworth Harcourt.

In 1235-36 Richard de Harcourt held land in Kibworth from the Earl of Warwick, and it is probable that the manor was named Kibworth Harcourt after him. The manor was later held by Saer de Harcourt, the younger son of Richard, and finally passed to Walter de Merton, Bishop of Rochester, in 1270. He gave it to further endow the foundation of Merton College, Oxford which still holds the manorial rights to this day and also a unique archive about social life from the 13th century to the present day.

Excavations in and around Harcourt have provided indications that a farming and trading community was in existence here right back to the time of the Roman occupation. To this day, farming is still very much in evidence. As befits an ancient agricultural village on a busy coaching route, there were many inns or alehouses in the 18th century, but none have survived as public houses to the present day.

The central part of Harcourt village has around seventeen listed buildings and enjoys Conservation Area status. There are a number of fire insurance plaques affixed to buildings – a relic of the days when insurance companies funded fire brigades and fire fighters would only deal with fires at properties insured with their own insurance company. See if you can spot some of them as you follow the trail.

The full route takes about 1½ hours to complete.

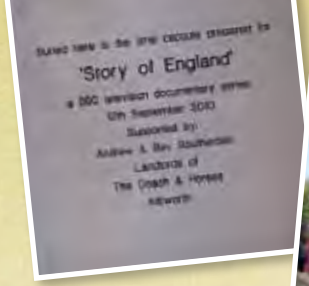
Please respect the privacy of the residents when on the trail walks.

The route of this trail passes along pavements, narrow in places and alongside busy roads; please be aware of traffic at all times particularly when crossing the road.

1 The trail starts at the Coach and Horses Inn, a Grade II listed building. It was an 18th century Coaching Inn situated on the old turnpike road. A wooden pump and a horse trough with a mounting stone once stood at the front of the Inn. The horse trough is now part of the Victorian Street setting at the Newarke Houses Museum in Leicester.

Coach and Horses Inn

Harcourt House c1910



Michael Wood and Andrew Southerden lowering the time capsule into the ground

The car park at the Inn was the scene of one of the first 'Kibworth Digs' in July 2009 and the burial of a time capsule on Sunday 18 September 2010 was broadcast on the 'Story of England' series. The site is marked by a plaque on the wall at the west end of the car park.

From the Coach and Horses turn left towards Leicester then turn right, crossing the road at the pedestrian crossing.

2 Raitha's Restaurant, formerly known as the Rose and Crown Hotel, is believed to have been built in the 18th century. This was the most famous coaching stop in Kibworth; with up to twenty-four coaches a day stopping day and night for passengers' rest or refreshments, and to change horses.

Rose and Crown c1930

Turn right into Main Street.

3 Main Street, formerly known as the King's Highway became a turnpike route from Leicester to London in 1726, with the first passenger coach travelling through the village in 1744, followed by the first mail coach in 1785. Most of the buildings date from the 18th and 19th centuries. Note the cottages on the opposite corner from Raitha's, which retain thatched roofs and traces of blocked-in doorways, indicating that originally there were four separate cottages in this block.

4 The street used to have several shops and inns. Berry's slaughterhouse and butchers at 10 gave this part of Main Street the name Berry's Hill after 'Beefy' Berry, the butcher between the two World Wars.

5 15 Main Street, on the right, 'The Smithy', housed the local wheelwright, a vitally important trade in the days of horse drawn transport. The forge, which was in service until the 1940s, was on the right hand side of the cottage, now the cottage's garage. Legend has it that the wheel of a wagon, belonging to the famous preacher John Wesley, was repaired here when he passed through the village on one of his evangelical journeys.

Forge and Wheelwrights at 15 Main Street, c1900

6 The Fox Inn was at 16, and the Old Bakehouse at 18. This was a bakers complete with delivery yard at the rear of the building. The end of the Old Bakehouse used to be perfectly square, but several coaching accidents occurred at this spot and the end wall was rebuilt at the angle you see today. At least one incident resulted in a fatality, when a coach overturned and several outside passengers were pitched through the windows of nearby houses.

7 A barn, formerly situated to the rear of 25 Main Street was, in the early 19th century, the setting for the Kibworth Theatre. On the theatre bill for the evening of 28th October 1802 was the comedy play 'School for Scandal'.

8 20 Main Street was originally two cottages. Note the date 1794 on the gable end.

9 This part of Main Street boasted two inns. The Navigation Inn at 24 (Harcourt Cottage), where the original window above the arch and the shutter catches are an unusual feature. Opposite was the Admiral Nelson at 31 which had a skittle alley at the rear and ceased trading in the 1930s. Note the granite setts in the pavement indicating horse drawn traffic using the gateway.

10 28 Main Street is the oldest cottage of this group. Notice the attractive first-floor windows and the distinctive brickwork. Once the sweet and provision shop for Harcourt, the front room was used as a shop whilst the shop door, located just to the right of the existing door, has long been blocked up.

11 Turn left and into Harcourt Terrace which was an unsurfaced road starting at a gate, that was removed in the 1930s, situated between 44 and 46. Note the late Victorian cottages which were built after the houses at the Main Street end of the Terrace. The deeds for 60 show it had a mortgage value of £250 in the 1930s.

Now follow the narrow jitty/footpath on the right between Nos. 60 and 62.

The Munt

12 The public footpath passes through a kissing gate and emerges into a privately owned open space with a prominent mound to the right. Known as the Munt, it is believed to be a 12th century earthwork motte and bailey fortress, sometimes known as Kibworth Harcourt Castle. Excavations have unearthed a bone bodkin and traces of a paved floor, possibly a cist (a small stone built coffin like box or ossuary used to hold the bodies of the dead). Burnt wood, iron, teeth and bones have also been discovered.

An alternative origin, suggested by Michael Wood (in his 2010 TV series Story of England) after discussion with various Middle Ages experts, is that this could have been the burial mound of an Anglo-Saxon chieftain. Could this be the final resting place of Cybba - from whose name the 'Kib' in Kibworth is possibly derived?

The Jarrow Marchers (1936) stopped at the Munt - where they were addressed by Ellen Wilkinson, the MP for Jarrow and organiser of the march during a 10 minute rest on their 280 mile journey to London.

After the second kissing gate, turn right where the path exits on to Leicester Road, the A6.

13 This section of road is the new turnpike route built in 1810, bypassing Main Street, at a cost of £1,500. The bypass was built following a report by the The Turnpike Trust, responsible for the improvement and development of the turnpike routes, which said of Main Street: 'The man who could gallop a four in hand through such lanes must have been hard to find'.

Continue along the Leicester Road to the junction with Main Street (on your right).

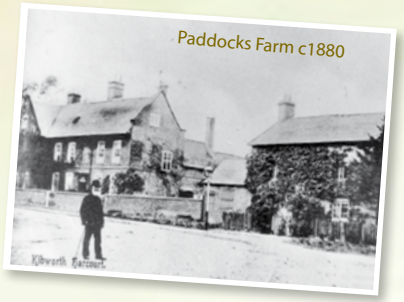
There is a choice of routes at this stage, the shorter route turns right into Main Street to trail no. 17, however for the longer route carefully cross Main Street and continue along Leicester Road to trail no. 14 adding approximately 650 yards (585 metres) to the route.

14 Just beyond the junction with Main Street is The White House, 51 and 53 Leicester Road, which was formerly known as the Old Crown Inn. Legend has it that, following the mysterious death of an elderly female resident who fell down the stairs, the house is haunted. In the 11th century a kiln for the communal drying of corn stood adjacent to this site.

Non-Conformity in Kibworth

The first meetings of Protestant Dissenters were held in the loft of the stables behind the Old Crown Inn, and in 1672 William Sheffield licensed the premises for non-conformist worship.

The Revd. John Jennings founded the Kibworth Dissenters' Academy in 1715. The academy became a centre for theological education, with a large number of pupils including Philip Doddridge, who took great interest in Jennings' work. In 1723 Philip Doddridge, famous for his hymn writing, assumed pastoral duties following in his tutor's footsteps, by being both a minister and tutor in Kibworth.


Paddocks Farm c1880

15 Paddocks Farm, 69 & 71 Leicester Road, was originally built as a farmhouse. The building is dated 1704 in dark bricks high up on the right-hand end gable, and of interest is the number of window changes that have taken place on this wall. Unfortunately, due to the growth of trees in the garden this is partially hidden from the pavement. The farm is owned by Merton College, Oxford, as is much of the surrounding farm land. Note the stone block inscribed 'MC' built into the boundary wall, beyond the stables adjacent to the road.

16 The Congregational Chapel was built by voluntary subscriptions and in 1761 was licensed for worship. The last service at the chapel was on Sunday 15th June 1997 and it is now a private property. There is a marble plaque commemorating Doddridge inside the premises. The Chapel was renovated in 1930 and the pews were replaced.

One day in 1841 the travel pioneer, Thomas Cook, was travelling from Market Harborough to a Temperance Meeting in Leicester, when he had a brilliant idea for a railway excursion, possibly the start of modern tourism. A plaque on the Chapel wall commemorates this occasion.

17 Joined to the chapel by a brick arch, the Manse, a three storey building, was built in 1794. The building has been used as a boarding school and the residence of the Minister. Historically the kitchens were used to prepare meals for the congregation which stayed for both morning and evening services. The house is now private residential accommodation.

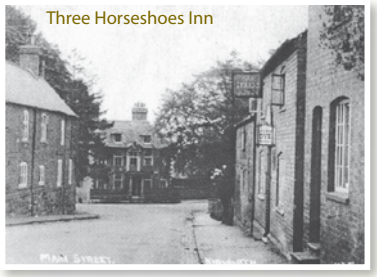
Retrace your steps to Main Street and turn left.

The Limes

18 Built on the site of an older property 43, The Limes is an extensive villa dated 1880. In amongst much older buildings, this imposing house, which had extensive stabling and paddocks at the rear, is a good example of Victorian domestic architecture.

Priory Farm (formerly Ivy Cottage)

19 Priory Farm, 41, Main Street, is a 16th century Grade II listed building, formerly known as Ivy Cottage. It is a rectangular house built partly of ironstone with a timber framed upper storey, later faced with brick. The use of differing materials indicates that the house was built in stages over many years.


Three Horseshoes Inn

20 Across the road is Boboli Restaurant, 88 Main Street. It was formerly The Three Horseshoes Inn and was purchased by the Northampton Brewery Company in 1935 from Merton College.

21 Manor Farmhouse has medieval origins and is a Grade II listed building. Michael Wood describes its probable history in his "Story of England" book and in the BBC TV series. From Merton College's archives, it was known as 'Brown's Place' from the 1380s, until it became the bailiff's house in the 15th and 16th centuries. From recent dendrochronological investigations, the oldest surviving part of the present house was built somewhere between 1320 and 1350.

22 On the opposite side of the road, 78 Main Street was yet another public house, known as the Red Lion Inn.

23 On the left between Manor Farmhouse and the pump is an overgrown track which in the 13th century was known as the 'Slang', a droveway from the village to open fields.

24 The village pump (Cross Pump) is located under a substantial horse chestnut tree and supplied a never- ending flow of water to the dwellings in Albert Street and Main Street, in addition to steam traction engines that needed to replenish their water tanks. The pump has been restored, but is no longer in working order since part of the mechanism was removed.

View down Main Street towards the Old House (June, 1987 – Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee)

25 Jubilee Green, named in honour of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee in 2002, is a small park which lies next to the Slang. During the archaeological dig in 2009, when Michael Wood's Story of England BBC TV series was made, a stone cannonball from the English Civil War (1642 to 1651) was found.

26 The village or market cross, in the form of a simple pillar structure, was re-erected in 1994 in Jubilee Green just inside the right-hand gate, as the result of a local initiative. The original base stones were located around the village, whilst the pillar shaft was re-created in a style that matched the original.

The Village Cross

The Market

The village was never granted a royal charter for a market, but there is evidence that markets were held in front of the Old House. The sketch mentioned at trail no. 27 shows the village pump on an isolated island and a cross in the centre of an open area much larger than today.

27 The Old House, a fine brick Grade II* building with stone dressings, is a rare example in Leicestershire of a 17th century fully developed brick Renaissance house. Built in 1678, the house was the first brick built house in the village and was built by William Parker, who died in 1699. The central first floor window to the front of the house is flanked by pilasters and surmounted by a scrolled pediment containing a shield of arms believed to be those of William Parker. Below the pediment is the date 1678.

Merton College archives hold a sketch thought to have been drawn c1780 showing no front garden to the Old House. It is said that one of the later occupants enclosed an area at the front of the house to keep noisy children away from the front door. During part of the 20th century the Old House was occupied by a well known local personality, Brigadier General Jack, a distinguished World War I soldier, who had a passion for horses and fox hunting.

Follow the road to the left of the Old House, straight on into Albert Street (formerly known as Hog Lane in recognition of the pig markets once held there).

28 Next on the left is the Old Barn, which, until recent times, was the stable block belonging to the Old House and has since been converted into living accommodation. It was built in 1678 as indicated by the plaque on the wall adjacent to the gate.

29 Continuing down Albert Street is another attractive row of cottages. Joiners Cottage, 12, once incorporated a sweet shop with a high counter inside the front door, and is believed to have been a joiner's workshop in earlier times. Opposite is a new road, Beech Tree Close, built in the orchard and paddock of the Old House, and the probable site of Harcourt Chapel, which is mentioned as a separate place of worship in 13th century documents and on maps up to the early 16th century.

30 Further along Albert Street and on the left is the The City. The origin of this name is unknown, but the area built outside the village limits is believed to have housed the poorest members of the village. It was described by local historian, F.P. Woodford, in the early 20th century, as 'three mud thatched cottages and three small brick and thatched cottages as well as other houses'. Excavations to the north of The City have uncovered evidence that property existed in this area during and after the Roman occupation.

Thatched mud cottage in The City

Cross the road and follow the road to the right into Langton Road.

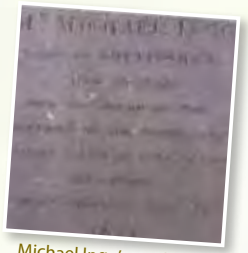
Kibworth Post Mill - Flour Stone

31 Prior to turning right into Marsh Drive, look up the hill (and only partially visible) is the Kibworth Harcourt Windmill, a wooden post mill believed to have been built in the early 17th century, although the central trestle dates from the 14th century. The mill stands on private land and access is only permitted on open days or by prior permission.

32 Turn into Marsh Drive and on your right imagine the Women's Land Army hostel built in 1942 to house women who worked on the land to assist with the war effort. The hostel was demolished in the early 1950s to make way for housing. Marsh Drive was a gated footpath known as Marsh Way leading to Church Road, and was marked on 17th century maps. The first house in Marsh Drive was built in 1937.

33 At the top of Marsh Drive the footpath ran adjacent to the former Harcourt House (see page 6), demolished in 1937 to make way for the Harcourt Estate on the A6, now consisting of shops and dwellings, the first of which was built in that year.

At this point you have a choice of routes, turn right past Harcourt Estate to the pedestrian crossing where you cross the road to the end of the trail at the Coach and Horses Inn – OR, alternatively, turn left along Harborough Road.



Michael Ingo's tombstone

34 Just after the start of the lay-by on the right a stream runs under the road at a place known as the Rector's Plantation. On the 21st April 1834 at about midnight a coaching accident occurred and a passenger, Mr Michael Ingo aged 73 years, was killed. His tombstone can be seen on the north side of St. Wilfrid's churchyard.

35 The village cemetery lies on the left where the recently restored Lychgate, built in 1894, can be seen (the word Lychgate is derived from the Saxon word lych meaning corpse and gate meaning entrance).

Retrace your steps along Harborough Road returning to the Coach and Horses Inn and the end of the trail.

We hope you enjoyed your walk around Kibworth Harcourt.

Merton College links with Kibworth

Over 700 years of Kibworth Archives

Saer de Harcourt, a supporter of Simon de Montfort, who led a rebellion against Henry III, was captured after the Battle of Evesham in 1265, and on his release was pardoned on condition he redeemed the value of his estates at seven times their annual value. As he already owed debts to Jewish moneylenders, he sold his Kibworth Harcourt estate to the Lord Chancellor of England, Walter de Merton, in 1270, for the sum of £400. The purchase document is stored in the archives of Merton College in Oxford.

Map of Kibworth Harcourt c1608

Walter added the estate to the growing number being used to support scholars in his new Merton College in Oxford. Over the centuries, various buildings owned by Merton College have been sold but even today, much of the agricultural land around the village is still owned by Merton College and leased to local farmers.

Archived documents

The Warden and Fellows of Merton College took over the patronage of the 13th century St. Wilfrid's Church after 1780. Merton College Fellows were installed as Rectors for the following 150 years, until the formation of the Diocese of Leicester in 1926, when the Bishop became joint patron.

The Kibworth Improvement Team thank and acknowledge the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford for permission to use images in this booklet of the college and archived material.

Kibworth Beauchamp
Heritage Trail

If you require more information on guided walks
please email info@kibworthvillage.co.uk

1 Coach & Horses Inn **START**
2 Grey House, Church Road
3 30 Church Road
4 St Wilfrid's Church
5 The Villas
6 Station Hollow
7 Former Railway station (Isabel Lane)
8 The Pharmacy
9 The Railway Arms
10 Village Hall
11 Stuart Court
12 Old School Surgery
13 Former Infants' School, Paget Street
14 The Bank
15 33 High Street
16 The Manor House, 30 High Street
17 Cross Bank House, 14 High Street
18 Lantern House, 4 High Street
19 Former Gas Works
20 Thatched Cottage, Weir Road
21 Barrack Yard
22 Tudor Cottage
23 Smeeton Road
24 Smeeton Court
25 Clock Tower
26 36 High Street
27 Mud Wall
28 St Wilfrid's Hall
29 Methodist Chapel, School Road
30 Kibworth Grammar School Hall
31 Old Grammar School
32 Former Railway Sidings
33 Ridge & Furrow
34 Little Lebanon
35 Navvies Row, Leicester Road

Kibworth Beauchamp
Heritage Trail

The name Beauchamp is derived from the de Beauchamp family who held the Manor here and also the office of Chief Panteler (banner carrier, dresser, butler) to the King in the 13th century.

In the 17th Century the Manor passed into the hands of the Halford family. Subsequently the village did not stay in single ownership and this made it possible for entrepreneurs to develop areas of land. This allowed small industries to become established, giving Kibworth Beauchamp a very different character from its sister village. The main industry was framework knitting which developed from a cottage industry to small workshops and finally, by the beginning of the 20th Century, to several factories, the largest of which employed over 400 people.

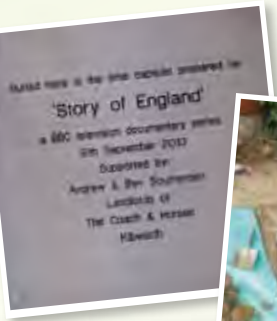
The full route takes about 1½ hours to complete.

Please respect the privacy of the residents when on the trail walks.

Coach and Horses Inn

Pump and horse trough

1 The trail starts at the Coach and Horses Inn, a grade II listed building. It was an 18th century coaching inn situated on the old turnpike road. A wooden pump and a horse trough with a mounting stone once stood in front; the horse trough is now part of the Victorian Street setting at the Newarke Houses Museum in Leicester. The car park at the Inn was the scene of one of the first Kibworth Digs in July 2009 and the burial of a time capsule on Sunday 18th September 2010 was broadcast on the 'Story of England' series. The site is marked by a plaque on the wall at the west end of the car park.



Dr Carenza Lewis helping dig pit 13 in the Coach & Horses car park.

Walk towards the Church, along Church Road.

2 On the right is The Grey House, an 18th century house which has a fine set of cast iron railings, and one wonders how they avoided the demand for metal during World War II. Opposite is an interesting row of cottages from the early 19th century and one of the cottages, 31 was the birthplace of Francis Pateman Woodford, a historian and the author of 'History of Kibworth and Personal Reminiscences'.

At this point carefully cross the road and continue towards the church.

3 Opposite the church stands Rectory Cottage, 30 Church Road; this was previously a village Post Office.

4 The Parish Church of St. Wilfrid serves both Kibworth Beauchamp and Kibworth Harcourt. There are two porches: north for Harcourt and south for Beauchamp. Most of the building dates from the second half of the 13th Century. The church is dedicated to St. Wilfrid (634-709); there is a stone statue of St. Wilfrid over both porch doors.

St Wilfrid's Church

The tower was rebuilt between 1832 &1836 and houses the clock, which is signed by John Hanbury of West Haddon and dated 1834. Only the north and south facing clocks were completed in the 19th century; the third, west facing, was completed by Richard White of Smeeton Westerby in 1997.

The ancient font was removed from the Church by John Yaxley, the puritan minister, in the 1650s and was used as a horse trough. It was reinstated in1864 and the plain 17th century font was given to a church in Zanzibar.

High Jump Champion

The original church tower and spire had a height of 160 feet and the six-faced spire was said to have been visible for seventy miles. On 23rd July 1825 the whole structure collapsed across the road and into the field beyond. One small girl ran home and announced that she had just jumped over the church steeple, to be soundly rebuked by her incredulous family!

5 Continue toward the village centre and on the right is a row of large Victorian houses, The Villas, built in the late 19th century by John Mason, a local builder.

Station Hollow

6 As you approach the railway bridge on the right is Station Hollow. Known in the past as Under Church Hill, Little End and Ducks' Paddler, this is one of the oldest parts of the village. Imagine this road before the railway bridge was built and the very steep slope from here towards the Church.

7 Until the station was closed, on your left were sets of steps leading down from the road to the platforms on each side of the railway lines. After crossing the bridge you can walk down the road to the left, Isabel Lane, the old station entrance, where you will see the remains of the Midland Railway Station with its distinctive decorated windows. Opened on 8th May 1857, it was a victim of the 'Beeching Cuts' and closed on 1st January 1968. Around this site stood the pre 1788 Rectory.

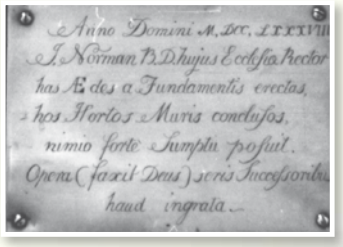
Station buildings from the station entrance

The steps down to the platforms from the road bridge.

Who Slept Here?

Legend has it that either Cromwell or Charles I visited the pre 1788 Rectory on the night prior to the decisive Battle of Naseby in 1645. If truth be told probably neither did.

The Rectory was rebuilt in 1788 and demolished in the 1960s and the plaque below was recovered from the Rectory during the demolition.


Anno Domini M.DCC.LXXXVIII
I Norman B.D hujus Ecclsiæ Rector
has Ædes a Fundamentis erectas
hos Hortos Muris conclusos
nimio forte Sumptu posuit.
Opem (faxit Deus) serio Successoribus
haud ingrata...

Translation:

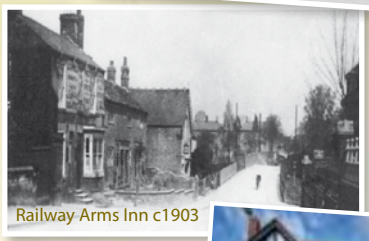
In 1788 J. Norman BD Rector of this parish built this house from its foundations and enclosed these gardens with walls at perhaps too much a cost. The tasks were performed (by the grace of God) for which his future successors will not be ungrateful.

Return to Station Street and turn left.

The Pharmacy

8 Opposite is the pharmacy (chemist), formerly the business of Alonzo Freeland, who settled in the village in 1886. Alonzo Freeland was the village chemist, dentist, mineral water manufacturer, photographer, publisher and poet.

9 Next on the right is the Railway public house, formerly the Railway Arms Inn. The original Inn was built c1846 and was demolished along with the adjoining cottage in 1926 when the Inn was rebuilt, with a further extension added in the 1960s.


Railway Arms Inn c1903

10 On the left can be seen the Village Hall, opened in 1866, where early highlights were the fortnightly entertainments known as 'penny readings', a showcase for local talent.

Village Hall

11 Next is the entry to Stuart House. This house contains a carved beam c1627 and a stone chimney of the same date. Beyond the house can be seen Stuart Court, a home for retired Anglican Clergy.

12 Opposite is the old school (now a surgery) with its distinctive bell tower. The first Parochial School was built on this site in 1812, the existing buildings being constructed in 1842. From 1907 this school became the junior school taking pupils from the age of 8 years from the infant school (trail no.13). The adjacent house to the left was the Headmaster's.

Carefully cross the road using the central refuge.

The former Infants' School

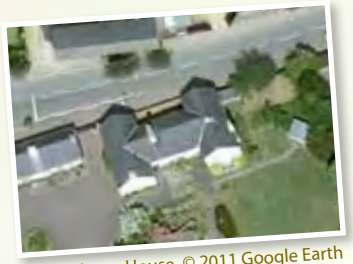
13 Behind the library and adjacent Paget Street (formerly Pudding Bag Lane) named after Major Paget, a village benefactor, you will see the old infants' school. Built in 1907, this was the starting point for most village children's education. It closed in 1959 when a new school was opened in Hillcrest Avenue.

The Bank Island c1950

Bank Island 2010

14 The island at the junction of Station Street and High Street is the village centre, once known as the Bank, or Cross Bank, and was the site of a market cross. In 1221, Henry III granted Walter de Beauchamp a licence for a Monday market. During the early 19th century a statute fair was held for the hiring of servants and labourers. The actual island dates from the late 1950s.

15 Turn right along High Street to 33 High Street, (facing the pedestrian crossing and behind a high wall) an early 18th century house re-fronted in the early 19th century. In 1833 this was one of four private schools in the village. By the 1880s it was the home of W.W. Underwood and local Baptists held services in the outbuildings (trail no 28).



The Manor House © 2011 Google Earth

16 Cross the road via the pedestrian crossing to The Manor House, 30 High Street. This is the oldest house in the village, dating from the 16th century. It is timber framed above an ironstone ground floor, in an 'H' shape, possibly as a compliment to King Henry VII or his son Henry VIII.

17 Walk back towards the island (trail no. 14) where, facing Station Street is Cross Bank House, 14 High Street, another of the fine Georgian houses in this area. This particular house was the home of a succession of village doctors.

Dropped from the sky

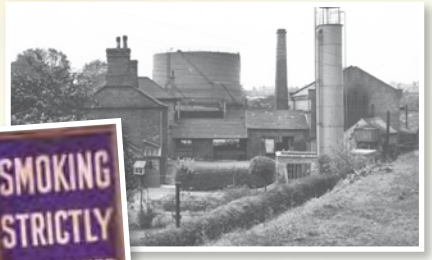
Across the road and to the right of HSBC bank, is a shop, formerly F.G.Hare's drapery shop. During World War II, on 10th January 1942, a barrage balloon collapsed on to it and enshrouded it for two hours before it could be removed.

18 Continue for a short distance to 4 High Street, Lantern House, a well-proportioned late 18th century red brick and Welsh slate house, with an impressive central Gothic window and an unusual fanlight and bell pull.

At this point, the walk may be shortened by turning right into Weir Road and rejoining at trail no. 20.

The village stocks stood on the corner of High Street and Weir Road.

OR carefully cross the road and continue along New Road towards the railway bridge.



Kibworth Gas, Light and Coke Works

19 Just before the railway bridge on the left hand side lies the site of the Kibworth Gas, Light and Coke Works. The gasworks was financed by the parish and opened in 1862. At one time the works boasted three gasholders, but all that remains are the old gas house and buildings converted into accommodation. An original Smoking Strictly Prohibited enamel sign is still attached to the old gas house.

Retrace your steps along New Road towards the village, carefully crossing the road, and turn left into Weir Road, previously Weir Lane, keeping to the right hand pavement.

20 On the left is a restored thatched cottage, built at a right angle to the road. This was once part of a group of buildings. During the 19th century one was occupied by John Collins, a blacksmith whose skills ranged from furniture making to clock repair and who was known as an avid reader of Spurgeon's sermons (a 19th century Baptist Preacher).

21 Continue along Weir Road and you will find a gap in the house numbers on the right between 17 and 37 in what was known as Barrack Yard. **(The footpath towards Barrack Yard is private, please do not enter).**

Footpath to Barrack Yard

Only three cottages now remain and these have been combined into one residence. At one time the cottages housed war pensioners. On the other side of the road, 24 to 34 were known as Factory Houses as they were converted from a framework knitters' shop that failed in the mid-19th century.

22 Also on that side of the road is Tudor Cottage, the location of the discovery of the 'Kibworth Beauchamp Pre-historic Ox', the largest ox ever discovered in Leicestershire. Unearthed during building work the ox measured 96cm (3 feet 2 inches) between the horn tips. It is now preserved in a Leicester museum, although currently not on display.

Continue along Weir Road and carefully cross over the entrance to Home Close, continue for a short distance to a green area with a public seat and take the footpath to the right, passing the playing field of Kibworth High School. Turn right into Smeeton Road. On the left hand side of the road is a lay-by which was the original line of the road. Continue past Kibworth Court and Kibworth Health Centre.

Framework Knitters' Cottages

23 You now pass 11-1 Smeeton Road on your left. These cottages housed the families of framework knitters. Larger windows on the first floor replacing the original small windows, together with additional windows over the front doors, installation of gas lighting and the provision of outside toilets was undertaken by the owner after the cottages had been condemned and threatened with demolition in the early 1930s.

24 After passing 1 Smeeton Road, on the left is the entrance to Smeeton Court, the site of two former industries: Poyners, one of the major hosiery employers in the village, and later in the second half of the 20th Century the design studios of J.E. Slater (see Smeeton Westerby trail no16).

25 On the right hand side of the junction with High Street you will see an ornamental clock tower, built in 1913, on the stables belonging to the 16th Century Manor House (trail no. 16). The clock, which chimes every 15 minutes, is by Smiths of Derby and was the last one installed by them prior to World War I.

Clock Tower

26 Carefully cross Smeeton Road and turn left into High Street where you pass 34a and 36, once part of the Royal Oak Inn.

Local reports state that one day in the 1870s a tightrope was strung from here across to a thatched cottage on the corner of School Road. Villagers watched agog as the famous French born Blondin, balanced a stove and cooked a pancake whilst aloft the tightrope - a rather tame feat after pushing a wheelbarrow over the Niagara Falls!

Continue along High Street.

The Mud Wall

27 On the left is a mud wall, all that survives from an old mud cottage, which had a thatched roof and was demolished in 1947.

The distance involved precludes the trail from continuing along Fleckney Road, however it is interesting to outline what is beyond this point. Firstly there is the Scout Hut, well used by the Kibworth Scout and Guide Movements. The hut was originally an auction room and also used as a cinema.

Further along Fleckney Road, on the right, is the Kibworth Working Men's Club.

Next on the right at the junction with Dover Street are new flats (Barnes Close) built on the site of the old Johnson & Barnes' hosiery factory, built in 1901. This was a power-driven hosiery factory and ceased production in the early 1960s. In its heyday it employed in excess of 400 people from Kibworth and surrounding villages.

Further along are the Kibworth Fire Station, the Kibworth Cricket Club and the Kibworth Bowling Club.

Carefully cross the road and turn back along High Street.

St Wilfrid's Hall

28 To the right of the Co-op car park you will see St. Wilfrid's Hall, known as Beauchamp Hall prior to 1924, after which it was used by St Wilfrid's Church (see trail no. 4) for social events and Sunday School until the 1980s when it was sold to help pay for a new Church Hall adjoining the church. It was originally built in 1885 as a Baptist Church at a cost of £450. The foundation stones were laid by the Underwood family who lived at 33 High Street (trail no. 15).

Continue towards the village centre turning left into School Road.

Methodist Chapel

29 On the left you will find the Methodist Chapel partially hidden by a cottage. It was built in 1846 on the site of an earlier building. To the right of the chapel's main building is the 1874 extension which was formerly the minister's residence. A further extension was built in 2003.

30 Continue along School Road and on your left you will see a car park that used to be the Grammar School tennis courts. To the right of the car park is the old Grammar School Hall which is now a wonderful facility for the whole of the ancient parish of Kibworth. This hall was built in 1936 as an extension to the main school buildings (trail no. 31).

31 After you leave the car park, you will see the rest of the 'L' shaped buildings that remain of the old Grammar School. The front left-hand corner of the school buildings used to be the Headmaster's house and next to this were the original classrooms. The foundation of the school is believed to have been as early as c1359, thereby making it one of the earliest schools in the country. The present school house and master's house date from 1725 and were extended in the 19th century. Local legend suggests that an underground tunnel once linked the Grammar School and St. Wilfrid's Church.

32 Continue over the railway bridge and look to the right along the railway tracks towards Station Street bridge. To your left over the bridge, and before the Station Street bridge, is where the railway sidings used to be, the photograph at trail no. 7 clearly shows the sidings to the right of the main line. These were spread over an area well beyond Station Hollow (trail no. 6). It was from these sidings that cattle and sheep were sent to Market Harborough and other markets. Hundreds of thousands of baby chicks were also dispatched across the world, from the Evans' hatchery which used to be situated on the A6.

Site of former railway sidings

Work on building the line began in 1854 and was completed in the spring of 1857, the line opened for mineral traffic on 15th April, for goods traffic on 22nd April and for passenger traffic on 4th May.

33 Walk along the footpath through the recreation ground, with its medieval ridge and furrow system still evident, then continue along the footpath to Hillcrest Avenue. The houses here were built after World War II primarily to house returning servicemen and their families.

Cross over Hillcrest Avenue and continue along the jitty/footpath to the A6 Leicester Road. Between Hillcrest Avenue and the A6 was an Italian prisoner of war camp during World War II.

Turn right along Leicester Road.

Sir Nicholas Harold Lloyd Ridley

34 On your right is Little Lebanon, No. 70, formerly The Gables, the birthplace of Sir Nicholas Harold Lloyd Ridley an innovator in eye surgery and undisputed inventor of the intraocular lens (IOL) used to replace eye lenses clouded by cataracts. He achieved some of the most important discoveries in ophthalmology and medicine during the last 100 years.

35 Continue along Leicester Road to 56-62 Navvies Row or Navigation Row that were built to house those working on the construction of the Midland Railway line between Market Harborough and Leicester. At this point the A6 forms the approximate boundary between the two Kibworth villages.

Continue along Leicester Road returning to the Coach and Horses Inn and the end of the trail.

We hope you enjoyed your walk around Kibworth Beauchamp.

Smeeton Westerby
Heritage Trail

If you require more information on guided walks please email info@kibworthvillage.co.uk

1 Smeeton House **START**
2 The Elms
3 Corner House, Mill Lane
4 The King's Head
5 Sub Post Office
6 Springfield Farm
7 Main Street
8 Village Hall
9 Rose Cottage, Debdale Lane
10 Farmhouse
11 Blacksmith's Lane
12 33 Main Street
13 The Bank
14 62 Main Street
15 Main Street Wall
16 Beaker Close
17 Stattis Fair area
18 53 Main Street
19 63 Main Street
20 Westerby House
21 Smeeton & Westerby border
22 Christ Church
23 Pit Hill Allotments
24 Ivy Cottage, Gumley Road
25 Smeeton Terrace
26 Apple Tree Cottage
27 Highfields
28 Smeeton Farm
29 Rose Cottage
30 Footpath detour
31 Debdale Wharf

Smeeton Westerby
Heritage Trail

Welcome to the historic village of Smeeton Westerby.

The village is situated four-tenths of a mile south of the Clock Tower in Kibworth Beauchamp where Smeeton Road leads you past Kibworth High School to Main Street, Smeeton Westerby.

Although there are no designated car parks in the village, a few parking places can usually be found in side streets near the start of your walk around the village.

The main road through the village is narrow and winding with footpaths mainly only on one side of the road. Please be careful when you need to cross the road where the footpath continues on the opposite side, especially near the curved sections in the road.

Smeeton Westerby was originally two separate villages, Smeeton and Westerby.

Smeeton was originally known as Simitone but before that Smeeton had an Anglo-Saxon metalworkers' settlement origin – from 'smiths tun'.

Westerby has Viking origins – from the Old Norse name of Vesterbyr (West Farm) to the west of Smeeton, possibly founded around the 9th century.

The full route takes about 1½ hours

Please respect the privacy of the residents when on the trail walks.

Smeeton House

1 Our walk around Smeeton Westerby starts on the Kibworth side of the village at Smeeton House, Main Street. This originally consisted of two small cottages that were built in 1734. These were converted into one cottage, with the addition of the three-storey front extension around 1800/05, when it became the Smeeton House Academy until closing in 1875.

Walk towards the village on the pavement opposite Smeeton House and down the hill towards Mill Lane.

2 On your left stands The Elms built in 1790 with later additional extensions.

3 On the opposite side of the road is Mill Lane and you will see Corner House, 2 Mill Lane, standing on the right-hand corner of the lane; it is brick built on ironstone foundations.

Then glance up the lane to the next house, The Barn; the exterior walls date from around 1800 but the un-sawn timber framework to the internal walls on the first floor is believed to date from the late 1600s.

The Kings Head Inn

4 On the left-hand corner once stood the small Kings Head Cottage, attached to The Kings Head. The inn was re-built in 1881. In 1937, the brewery demolished the cottage to construct the car park so their draymen could make their deliveries to the rear of the inn.

Smeeton's second Sub-Post Office c1940

5 Opposite the inn, the cottages on Main Street were all built on ironstone foundations around the same time as the building on the left-hand corner of Springfield Lane, which was built in 1731. This building became Smeeton's second sub-Post Office and grocery shop from c1902 until c1922. It then closed for a number of years until the 1940s, before finally closing in the 1960s. The right-hand third beyond the doorway was a bakehouse.

6 Turn left into Springfield Lane where facing you at the end of the lane stands Springfield Farm. This building originally was at least two cottages, with the left hand side dating from the early 1600s with the remainder dating from around 1830. They were converted into one farmhouse around 1900.

Now return to Main Street and and glance into the small farmyard opposite, at the rear of Yew Tree Cottage, where a butcher's shop was once located.

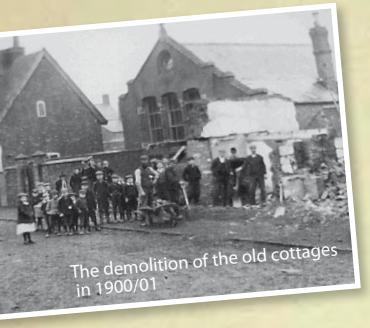
Main Street c1910

7 Turn left and walk along Main Street towards Debdale Lane. Imagine the thatched cottages that were all destroyed when a spark from one of their coal fires ignited the thatch and engulfed them around 1930. In 1935, four council houses were built on the site.

8 Next stands the village hall, which was formerly the National School. When it opened in 1862 it catered for 88 children. The school closed in July 1968.

In 1833, there were three private day schools in Smeeton; the ground where the Village Hall now stands was sold in September 1834 to build an Arminian Methodist Chapel. This only lasted until 1857 before a Calvinistic Chapel was opened there in May 1857, but that had closed by 1861.

Next to the school, on the corner of Debdale Lane, a pair of thatched cottages used to stand but these were demolished in 1900/01. The Coronation Cottages were built in 1902.


The demolition of the old cottages in 1900/01

9 When you arrive at Debdale Lane, walk sixty yards down the lane to Rose Cottage, 11a, its walls painted white and standing adjacent to the lane. At the rear of that cottage stands a block of flats, 5 to 11, which were built in 1962 on land where a Baptist Chapel, built c1743, once stood. The chapel closed in 1956 and was demolished in 1961. To the east of the flats and cottage is the Baptist burial ground, where the earliest remains were laid to rest in 1767 (now the garden of the cottage). **Return to Main Street.**

10 On the opposite corner of Debdale Lane stands a farmhouse, the lower half of which is of ironstone and probably dates from the 17th Century. Around 1950, a stucco finish was applied to the external walls but they have now been restored to their original condition.

52 Main Street, the farmhouse on the corner of Debdale Lane

Carefully cross the road.

11 Opposite Debdale Lane is Blacksmiths Lane; the house at the far right-hand end of the lane was, until it closed between 1863 and 1871, the Crown & Sceptre Inn.

The Blacksmiths and Post Office c1895

12 On the left-hand corner of the lane was a Blacksmith's shop until it closed in 1902. To the left of this on Main Street was Smeeton's first sub-Post Office; the buildings date from 1731 and are now all part of 33 Main Street.

The two-storey extension on the left-hand side of Home Farm, 35, was at one time a girls' private day school which closed in the 1850s and reopened in1896 as Field House School which closed in 1906. (see trail no. 27)

13 Beyond these houses is the green known locally as The Bank. Until the 1890s a fair was held there and also along Main Street at the time of the Smeeton Feast. No. 41, the small cottage that stands on the left of the green was, until c1900, where framework knitters worked on both floors.

14 On the other side of the road and looking back towards to Blacksmiths Lane is 62, the white detached house that was The Queen Charlotte, a beer house, until it closed between 1868 and the 1880s; 66 was a grocer's shop.

62 to 66 Main Street c1900

Main Street c1910

15 Next to 66, as the road widens out, stands a wall that still remains a mystery as no records for it have survived. It is the remains of either a long forgotten house or chapel and is built of ironstone, which possibly came from another site. The mullioned windows had been blocked up by 1910, and then removed in the 1970s when the new home at the rear of the wall was built.

16 Opposite the ironstone wall are four terraced houses, next to which stood a high brick wall that was demolished. Behind the old wall was the former J.E. Slater factory. (Kibworth Beauchamp trail no 24). This is now the entrance to Beaker Close, named after the burial ground of Beaker People found in 1975 on Smeeton Hill, Gumley Road. The Beaker People were farmers and archers and also the first metal smiths in Britain, working first in copper and gold and later in bronze, giving its name to the Bronze Age.

17 In bygone times Smeeton was one of the larger villages in the district and this area was the scene for the gatherings of villagers for their Statute, known locally as the 'Stattis Fair' held annually for the hiring of servants and maypole dancing.

18 In front of 55 and 53, the pair of semi-detached houses, is the Kibworth Band on their way to the Whitsuntide service at Christ Church in 1891. On the opposite side of the gateway, at 57, is the Old Bakehouse; its front door is at the rear of the house.

55 and 53 Main Street in 1891

19 At 63, the oldest parts of the building are the internal walls, dating from the late 1500s, and this house competes with Springfield Farm (trail no. 6) as one of the oldest houses in Smeeton. A long building used to stand at the rear of 63 to 57. The southern (left) half nearest to Christ Church was, until the mid 1800s, one of Smeeton's long lost Chapels (although its calling is unknown), while the northern half was a barn. These were converted into workshops, and remained there until Beaker Close was constructed.

20 On the opposite side of the road stands Westerby House, built in 1829, and from 1849 this was the first rectory in the village. From 1900 to1914 it was the home of the Suffragette, Mary 'Nellie' Taylor who was one of over 200 women arrested in early March 1912 during a window smashing campaign in London. Nellie - who used an alias Mary Wann - and two fellow suffragettes were given a three month sentence for breaking the windows of a Knightsbridge post office. The cottages adjacent to the left side of the house date from the late 18th century.

Westerby House

21 After passing Westerby House and the gardens at 63, the last properties in Smeeton, we cross over the boundary that once divided the two separate villages into Westerby. The two villages have been referred to as one since at least 1773.

Continue along Main Street and after the sharp bend in the road and just prior to the church is the site where sand was extracted from the pits around 1893 and a modern house now stands.

Christ Church

22 Adjacent to the sand pit, stands Christ Church, designed by Henry Woodyer, an architect of the Oxford movement and a graduate of Merton College. The foundation stone was laid on 1 August 1848. It was built of grey stone by Mr. G. Myers in the style of the 14th century. It consists of a chancel, an aisled nave of four bays, a south porch, and a north vestry. At the west end is an octagonal bell turret containing two small bells that were cast in 1848. It is surmounted by a spire. The Service of Consecration for Christ Church was held on the morning of 31 August 1849.

23 Opposite the Church are the Pit Hill allotments, with Smeeton Terrace in the distance. These allotments are where a number of mud-thatched cottages used to stand; at that time, seven families were living in the 'Pitts'. The cottages were pulled down prior to the start of the extraction of sand around 1886.

24 To the left of the allotments is Ivy Cottage, built c1890.

Ivy Cottage

As there are no pavements to the left of Ivy Cottage on the Gumley Road, we shall continue past Christ Church and then carefully cross the road turning left into Pit Hill.

25 Walk along Pit Hill and look to your right towards Smeeton Terrace, built as the workhouse for the three villages around 1730. Here twenty of the poor people of Harcourt, Beauchamp, and Smeeton were housed. The poor were also housed in other cottages in the three villages that were owned by the Guardians of the Union, their upkeep paid for out of the Parish poor rate.

Smeeton Terrace

Pit Hill House c1924

26 We then come to the small cottages built end-on to Pit Hill, then Pit Hill House, 26. Its name derives from when it was built in 1736 but from around 1910 until 2004, it was known as Apple Tree Cottage. This is one of many cottages in the village that had their roofs replaced with corrugated iron on top of the remains of the thatch after the gales de-thatched them in 1895. The thatch is now beautifully restored.

27 At the end of Pit Hill, is Highfields, Gumley Road, which faces towards Gumley. The oldest part of the house is the rear section dating from 1840, with the front of the house built in 1854/5 by a Mr Buzzard, when he moved his academy from Peatling Hall to Smeeton, and opened it in 1855 as Highfield House Academy. By 1896, a new owner moved the school back to 35 Main Street (see trail no. 12).

Highfields

Take in the magnificent views down Gumley Road; then retrace your steps along Pit Hill, and turn left immediately after passing the small end-on cottages into the public footpath that leads to Westerby Lane.

28 Arriving at Westerby Lane, on your left is Smeeton Farm, which until it closed in 1888, was the Cricketers Arms. Opposite is 11, the cottage that stands on the corner of the lane; this was a general store until around 1943.

29 After walking past Rose Cottage, 23, built in 1756, you come finally to 31, the last cottage in the lane. Glance over the stile along the route of the public footpath down to the canal and aqueduct in the valley. The Langton Brook runs under the aqueduct where a watermill once stood on this side of the canal at least until 1851.

Rose Cottage c1910

Having reached the end of Westerby, retrace your steps along Westerby Lane to Saddington Road, carefully cross the road and then turn right towards Smeeton. After about one hundred yards beyond Christ Church you have a choice of the direction for your return journey: you can either return the way you came, which is a total of two and half miles for the entire walk - OR

30 Cross the road with extreme care before you reach the sharp left hand bend then walk along the grass verge on the opposite side until you reach the public footpath. This field walk is especially pleasant on a fine day as it takes you across the fields at the rear of the properties leading you back to Debdale Lane, at the same time observing the superb panoramic views before you. From the west is Smeeton Hill, where the remains of the Beaker graves were found (trail no. 16), then, the hills leading to Gumley and Debdale Wharf, and finally the views of part of Kibworth Beauchamp.

If you take this option, you will have five stiles to cope with and a kissing-gate when you reach Debdale Lane. This adds about one-third of a mile to the walk, but the picturesque views are well worth the extra distance.

At this point, you have a further option: you can either turn left and walk up Debdale Lane towards the village then turn right into Main Street until you arrive at The Kings Head, where the walk ends - **OR**

31 Turn right and walk along the lane crossing the bridge over the tributary to the River Welland, and walk along the gated road to Debdale Wharf, while still taking in the grandstand views of all three villages.

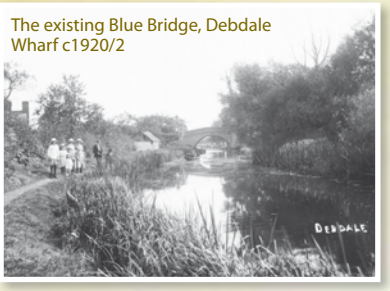
The former Debdale Wharf Inn c1910

As you reach the point where the dirt road is adjacent to the canal, the views to the north include St. Wilfrid's Church at Kibworth, as well as the church towers at Tur Langton, Church Langton, and Thorpe Langton.

On your right are the remains of the old 'Red Bridge', demolished by British Waterways in 1992 due to its deteriorating condition and allowing the wharf basin to be expanded to its current size.

At the same time, the dirt road was moved to the east side of the canal and the road now exits the lane at the 'Blue Bridge', opposite the extinct Debdale Wharf Inn, which closed in 1873.

The existing Blue Bridge, Debdale Wharf c1920/2



The canal opened in April 1797 and originally ended at Debdale. The construction of the remainder of the canal southwards was delayed due to lack of funds, and was not opened until 1809.

Although coal and gravel ceased to be delivered by barges to the wharf at Bridge Farm, Wistow Road, Kibworth around thirty-years after the coming of the railways in 1857, barges still continued to deliver coal and gravel to Debdale Wharf until around 1912; it was then transported by horse and cart to Gumley and the surrounding villages.

After viewing the Debdale Wharf Bridge, surrounding area and concrete wharf (the wharf basin is private property), return the way you came and head back to Smeeton Westerby, adding another two miles for the round trip.

At Main Street, turn right until you arrive at the Kings Head, where the walk ends.

We hope you enjoyed your walk around Smeeton Westerby.

Should you require any further information about any of the three trail walks or any of the other Kibworth Improvement Team (KiT) projects then please email: info@kibworthvillage.co.uk

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