

KETTON VILLAGE WALK

Introduction

The centre of the village contains many excellent buildings constructed with the famous butter-coloured Ketton limestone which has been quarried locally since the Middle Ages. Ketton limestone is a "freestone", ie. it can be worked in any direction and is regarded as the perfect example of the oolitic limestone. Many of the stone buildings are roofed in Collyweston slates. These lovely frost-split slates have been extracted from shallow mines at Collyweston and Easton on the Hill just across the Valley from Ketton. The walk has been prepared from notes left by the late Geoff Fox and the late Jeffrey Smith, plus various additional pieces. The walk is circular and starts and finishes at the church,

The Walk

Outside and opposite the church there is THE PRIORY. Despite its name, it was not a priory but it marks the site of the principal house of a manor of Ketton held by the Priory of Sempringham, from at least 1304 until the Dissolution in 1538. The oldest part of the Priory has been dated as early as the mid 16th century. Note the date stones of 1618 and 1682. For many years it served as the Prebendal Manor House until it was converted into a private residence in 1723. The Priory its barns and outhouses have been converted into flats and dwellings.

With the church porch behind you turn right towards the lych-gate, note the neat 17th-century house in the churchyard. Pass through the lych-gate to the Railway Inn. Opposite is a house called EMMANUEL COTTAGE, also early 17th century. For a short excursion: cross the road and walk down Mill Lane to the late 18th century MILL, now a house, but with clear evidence of the mill pond and traces of the mill pit. Return back to the Railway Inn and walk up Chapel Lane between the Inn and the CHESTNUTS, an early 19th century house, with particularly fine ashlar stone work. Walk past the former CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, which dates from 1829, and beyond two black metal bollards into a narrow passage known as THE BRICKS, and on into REDMILES LANE. Immediately opposite is BUCKWORTH HOUSE (1741), beautifully faced with Ketton stone.

{If you wish you can make a detour to the bottom of the lane to see REDMILES FARM an early 18th century building with the former House of Industry (Parish Workhouse), in the field beyond. This closed in 1836 when Ketton joined the Stamford Workhouse Union and was converted into three WORKHOUSE COTTAGES. Retrace your steps}

Continue up Redmiles Lane and note the house at the top on the left with a date stone of 1699, with its first-floor stone mullioned windows. Walk into the High Street at STOCKS HILL.

The focal point of STOCKS HILL is the QUEEN VICTORIA JUBILEE FOUNTAIN erected in 1887. The Fountain had an adjacent horse trough that also replenished steam engines. The original stocks were still here in the late 19th century. This small area was the centre of the village with cobblers, blacksmiths, bakeries and butchers shops surrounding the fountain and had a flagpole

Cross to the north side of the High Street using the pedestrian crossing, and walk west past the Old Police House. When you reach the house called LAIKIPIA look back across the road and view the tiny BIER HOUSE, with its little metal plate saying "stick no bills". The Bier, the trolley used for carrying the coffins of dead villagers to either the Chapel or Church, is now in Rutland County Museum. Continue to the crossroads to see the HIBBINS HOUSE. The Hibbins family were noted stonemasons and the house provides a unique display of the Masons skills. Behind Hibbins House, in the 19th-century stood, a dissentient Methodist Chapel. At that time Ketton was notable for its nonconformist chapels, including: Congregational, Dissentient Methodist, Primitive Methodist, and Wesleyan Methodist.

The CROSSROADS here marks the point where the ancient trackway leading from Collyweston towards Empingham crosses the Deeping – Morcott Turnpike. Ketton residents were forbidden to hang any washing etc. over the Turnpike Road with a penalty of 40 shillings for any transgressors and a reward for those informing on their neighbours to the authorities!

Diagonally opposite the crossroads behind the wall, to the south west lies KETTON HALL. The original Hall built in 1683 and occupied by the Noel – Edwards family was demolished in 1873 by a Mr Hopwood, who was a partner in a famous music firm. It was he who built a large music room complete with magnificent organ which was sold to the Warrington Corporation when the Hall was demolished in 1926, and yet another Hall was built in its stead. Properties to the south side of the street, opposite Hibbins House, were once part of the TOWNS LAND CHARITY. Cottages on this site were let rent free to old village residents, until 1919 when they were sold. Note the cottage with its side to the road that shows evidence of having had its roof raised three times.

Retrace your steps along the High Street, past Stocks Hill, and continue until you are opposite the LIBRARY/SURGERY/VILLAGE HUB. The library building is faced with stone from the former village school which was built in 1857 and where pupils paid one penny a week to attend. On the right of the library is the SCHOOL HOUSE. It has an arched door, that before 1857 was part of an earlier school. The school was enlarged in 1902 and completely rebuilt in an adjacent field in 1969.

Proceed along the High Street. On the left is a row of some of the oldest COTTAGES in the street, numbers 94 – 96; the floor level being much below the level of the Street is an indication of their age. The buttresses help relieve the strain on the the former large arched opening, which, allegedly, originally provided access for coach and horses travelling the main road. The Stanyon Family, noted Congregationalists, lived at Tansor House (no.98). When they refused to pay a parish rate under the Education Act of 1902 towards a Church of England village school. They were fined and an attempt was made to auction some of their furniture to pay the fine. The villagers organised themselves to oppose the auction, which according to the village lore was abandoned in disarray.

Continue to Nutts Farm and look across the road to the house with its gable to the road. Note the bluebell over the gate way. This was formally the BLUEBELL INN, one of the nine village inns to close in Ketton during the 20th century. Near here is where the famous inter village game of quoits was last played. Mr Arthur Knox of Ketton was three times the national champion, 1928-1931. The quoit, heavy, of cast iron, and about 9 inches diameter, was thrown over fifty feet on to pins stuck into a clay bed, and there were several such beds in Ketton.

A short distance further along the road is SAINT MARY'S HOUSE, established in 1892 as Saint Mary's Diocesan Home. This Home for 'fallen women' housed twenty-two girls" and after two or more years sent them out, restored in health of body and soul." The home operated a laundry in the rear of the premises to help with the girls' re-education, and offset some of the running costs of the institution. It was said that if one of the girls escaped a bell was rung to alert the villagers to help in her recapture. The Home was closed in 1944 as running costs rose and the moral climate changed.

A little further on, two houses numbers; 72 and 74 HIGH STREET, show Ketton stone at its best No.72 was a doctor's surgery before later becoming headquarters of the local Home Guard during the Second World War.

Continue past the POST OFFICE until you reach number 58 the BELGIAN COTTAGE, which bears an inscription which records the appreciation of the kindness and hospitality shown to some Belgian refugees who came to Ketton during the First World War. The name 'Ketton' was filled in on the inscription during the Second World War, as a security measure so that any passing German invader would not readily discover which village he was in!

Continue along the High Street and cross over the road via the pedestrian crossing. Turn right into BULL LANE, so named after the Pied Bull Inn, which was on the corner, and was destroyed by fire in 1935. At the bottom of Bull Lane, just past the site of the original Methodist Chapel, is the OLD BAKERY, with its outside steps, leading to an upstairs granary. There were, at one time, three bakeries in the village. A little further on was the Barley Mow Inn, and in the corner was the blacksmiths forge. The attractive cottage with the stone – mullioned windows facing up Bull Lane was a dairy, until the early 1980s. Walk around the corner, with its high stone wall, and downhill to arrive at the METHODIST CHURCH (1864).

Continue down the footpath by the side of the stream. The stream is fed by a spring that once formed one of the main sources of water for the village, and had watercress beds. Here was also an osier bed from which willow baskets were made. It was not entirely pleasant though as water swept from a slaughterhouse and that from Saint Mary's laundry also flowed into the stream, thankfully beneath the spring/water supply! We are now in SINC LANE with the River Chater at the bottom, and good views of the church beyond the Recreation Ground (HALL CLOSE) on the way. Continue to the river and cross over the bridge into ALDGATE.

{You may want to spend a few minutes exploring the back lanes and alleys of ALDGATE to view some of the interesting old and listed buildings. Can you find the three-storey stone house built on a T-junction by Noggy Naylor in 1867 from stone from the site of the old Hall? It carries two date stones near a first-floor window, '1867' and '1686', the latter presumably from the original Hall Building.}

Proceed past the recently restored cottages (No. 2 & 5) to the junction and turn right. Continue round past both No. 48 and the entrance to Edmunds Drive until you are near the road bridge over the river. On the right is the entrance to THE COTTAGE, an interesting house in a beautiful setting, formerly occupied by the Burroughes family, who at the beginning of the 20th century, laid out parkland each side of Church Road from the river to the station. The parkland contained some beautiful gardens including a notable Davidia (handkerchief) tree. The 'Cottage' building itself has been very much altered and changed out of recognition from once being a mere 'cottage'.

The 17th-century BRIDGE over the RIVER CHATER is a picturesque foreground to the church and has featured in many photographs and postcards. The bridge was widened in 1849 and at that time it was supplemented by a ford. It is recorded that the bridge originally had six arches and it is possible that the other three remain in the causeway leading to the bridge but hidden by the abutments built when the bridge was widened.

On CHURCH ROAD is the early 17th-century GARDEN COTTAGE (1629). This was the original vicarage, with 'Stamford' bay windows to the front and a thatched tithe barn butted up at the back. Also note the stone dovecote on the opposite side of the road, on the left hand side of Priory Cottages drive. The house before the church on the right-hand side was built in 1822 to replace the earlier vicarage and remained as this until 1974, when it was sold.

Although this walk has encompassed most of the centre part of the village, it has by the necessity of time and space left out many interesting properties on the Stamford Road. Manor Farm with its dovecote; Northwick Arms and Oddfellows Lodge; Molesworth's brewery and bungalows; Orchard House; the Maitland Residence, and the Cement Works. And the whole area of Pit Lane, with a noted valuable nature reserve at its top which is well worth a visit on its own. In addition the bridge over the River Welland leads towards the Railway station and Collyweston.

HC & IR