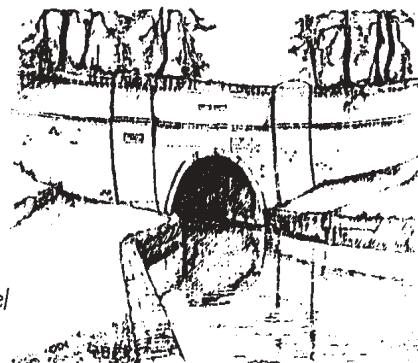


THE GRAND UNION CANAL WALK

This walk incorporates the local features of the Leicestershire Section of the Grand Union Canal.

Starting from the Old Green, (*I2 on map*) head downhill and take the bridle road, Broad Lane. Soon the remains of the level-crossing of the abandoned London and North Western Railway branch from Rugby to Peterborough will be seen. Immediately beyond is Bridge 46, which spans the canal. From the bridge top there is a superb view of the wooded cutting leading to Husbands Bosworth canal tunnel.

Take the path here, down to the canal towpath, under the bridge and follow this to the tunnel portal. The dates 1813 and 1924 show when the tunnel was built and when the portal was rebuilt. Although the official sign says the tunnel has a length of 1170 yards, the eagle-eyed will see the original stone with the accurate length of 1166 yards, 2 feet.



Bosworth Tunnel
Eastern Portal

It is possible to view the canal from the portal top by following the towpath which continues at a higher level between the canal and the railway. The railway continues to converge on the line of the canal and at the point where the towpath crosses the railway by a three-arched bridge, the canal tunnel is directly below you and the trackbed!

In a short while the main Leicester road (A5199) is reached. The towpath continues ahead, over the hill to the tunnel's other entrance. To the right are the spoil heaps created by the construction of the tunnel. Originally this track enabled the canal horses to be walked overland from one end of the tunnel to the other, whilst the boats would have been 'legged' through by the male crew members.

Return to the village by turning left along the A5199 and up the hill, keeping left. Turn left onto Dag Lane, immediately after Fernie Court, back to the Towpath Walk start point at the Old Green.

Refreshments

Bar-snacks, lunches and evening meals are available most days at The Bell Inn, Kilworth Road, (tel: 01858 880246). Sandwiches, light refreshments and beverages are available at the High Street Post Office & Store, (tel: 01858 880201).

The Wharf Inn, near Welford, two miles south of Husbands Bosworth village, is in Husbands Bosworth Parish. They have a full bar and restaurant service, (tel: 01858 575075).

Local accommodation

Mrs. J. Smith

Croft Farm B & B

Husband Bosworth

LE17 6NW

01858 880679

Mrs. C. Goffe

Honeypot Lane B & B

Husbands Bosworth

LE17 6LY

01858 880836

The Old Hall Bed & Breakfast

The Old Hall

Husbands Bosworth

LE17 6LZ

01858 880833

The Wharf Inn

Welford Wharf

Welford

NN6 6JQ

01858 575075

Village Store

Husbands Bosworth is fortunate in possessing a village store and Post Office, where a wide range of groceries, household requisites and refreshments can be obtained.

Shop hours of business are:

Monday - Saturday 5.30am - 7.30pm

Sunday 6.00am - 4.30pm

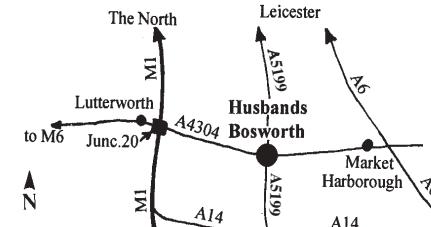
Post Office:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri. 9.00am - 5.30pm

Wednesday & Saturday 9.00am - 12.30pm

Husbands Bosworth Historical Society

The Society holds a vast archive of old photographs, other documents and artefacts relating to the village and village life. Contact the Society Archivist, Melvyn Forman (01858) 880281 or e-mail: m.forman@talk21.com for more information.



This leaflet has been prepared by Husbands Bosworth Historical Society, supported by Husbands Bosworth Parish Council, local businesses and the Research Fund of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH

South Leicestershire

Historic Village Trail & Canal Towpath Walk



Wheatsheaf House

**Husbands Bosworth
Historical Society**

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH

The village is close to the Northamptonshire border, about 14 miles south of Leicester and equi-distant between the market towns of Market Harborough and Lutterworth. Situated on a ridge, the village straddles the watershed between the river Avon, which flows west to the Severn and the Bristol Channel and the river Welland, which flows east to the Wash.

The unusual double-barrelled name is of relatively recent origin. In the Domesday Book it was known as *Bareswarde*, the place or farm of Bar. In the 17th century it acquired the prefix 'Husbands', the village of husbandmen or farmers, possibly to avoid confusion with the other Leicestershire Bosworth, which became known as Market Bosworth.

A feature of the village is the large number of farmhouses within its precincts, now converted to other uses, which supported the thriving grazing farming of the fertile Welland valley farmlands nearby. Surrounding the village are fields with markings of 'ridge and furrow', a legacy of the farming carried out prior to the enclosure of the Parish in 1764. Other earthworks were created by the Grand Union Canal, which tunnels through the ridge, and the former Rugby to Peterborough railway line, which passes through the parish on embankments and through cuttings.

Husbands Bosworth was almost self sufficient in the 19th century with craftsmen, tradesmen and shops supplying almost every need to the large number of 'big houses' situated close by. It was a good centre for hunting, within reach of several packs and many of the larger houses were built to be let out as 'hunting lodges'. Today the village is fortunate in retaining an above average number of facilities, small industries and services.

Car parking

There is usually space in the Village Hall car park, or the Recreation Ground car park on Kilworth Road, and a limited amount of on-road parking around the Village Green. Please park considerately!

The village trail starts from the Village Green opposite The Bell Inn. There is also an extended walk, (see overleaf), just over a mile in length, which features an attractive walk along the towpath of the Grand Union canal.

(1) The Village Hall's rightful title is the Turville Memorial Hall, which was built in 1895 in memory of Sir Francis Fortescue-Turville of Bosworth Hall. It served as the village assembly room, library and reading room in its early years. At the outbreak of World War II the Village Hall was commandeered by the army and used as the mess for NCO's and other ranks of the 4th Hussars and later, the Royal Worcesters, who were billeted in unoccupied houses around the village.

(2) The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel next door was officially opened on May 5th 1912. The village has always had a strong Non-Conformist tradition and the chapel replaced the original Methodist place of worship in the village (*see No. 24*).

(3) The village school, built in 1858, has played an important part in village life for over 150 years. In distinctive polychromatic brickwork, the building originally incorporated the headmaster's house in the roadside block. The total cost of building the school came to £852.13s.9d!

There is a long history of education in the village from an early grammar school (*see No.18*) to a 19th century Seminary for Young Ladies, which proudly announced that each boarder had a separate bed!



(4) The stables and outbuildings to the left of The Bell Inn indicate that this has been an important staging post for travellers for almost 300 years. Today the Bell is still a welcoming stop-over for the weary traveller! The road junction here has always been dangerous - the above illustration being taken from an early photograph!

(5) Wheatsheaf House, 3 Bell Lane, is one of the oldest houses in the area. It is a good example of 16th century close-studded timber framing, a sign of wealth and prosperity. The house was once an inn and also a farm. The lower range of buildings to the right is reputedly even older in parts and is most probably the oldest house in the village. Internally it features a typical 14th century cruck-beam frame construction. The massive stone chimney was added at a later date, when the original open hall was converted into a two storey building.

(6) Opposite Brook House Residential Home is 32/34 Bell Lane. Its steeply pitched corrugated iron roof covers the original thatch, which is still *in situ*. This was one of the many farmhouses within the village and the converted buildings next door were once the farm outbuildings.

Poles apart

The telephone pole located nearby is one of Husbands Bosworth's curiosities. Unusually it is made of steel instead of wood. Another one can be found on the walk, complete with maker's plate. See if you can spot it!

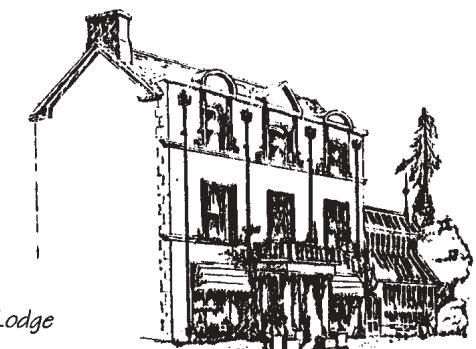
(7) Before turning down Hillcrest Lane, pause and look at the Victorian houses here. The doorway and windows of 1 Hillcrest Lane and the decorative roof tiles and bargeboards of the house opposite in Bell Lane indicate that these were built as houses of quality.

(8) Berridges Lane is named after a village family who were bakers in the 19th century. To the right is Bosworth House, a former hunting lodge, which is noted for its collection of superb terracotta chimney pots and distinctive tripartite windows. Opposite, in the roadside wall of the modern development, Adnitt House, are the foundation stones of the Baptist Chapel which previously occupied this site.

A Victorian Family

The 1851 census provides details of one of the Baptist ministers and his remarkable family. Living in the small manse at that date was William Williams, the minister, and his wife Maria with their eleven children, born between 1829 and 1849. Their names were Mercy Mary, Maria Ann, Truth Jane, Grace Catherine, Peace Rebekah, Elizabeth Dorcas, Hannah Sekerson, Emma Emma (yes that is the name recorded!) Samuel Elimelech (the only boy), Jemima Rachel and last but not least, Eliza Bumpus!

(9) If you look back down the street at this point you will see the modern mews development, Fernie Court. This is built on the site of The Fernie Lodge Hotel, which was built originally as a private residence and hunting lodge called Highcroft with stables, coach house and farm. Later, as a hotel 'The Fernie' enjoyed a fine and wide reputation for its hospitality and restaurant menu.



Fernie Lodge

(21) On the corner of Butt Lane is a brick house with the date 1738 and the initials T G on the gable end wall. This was once a bakehouse and the Tilley family baked bread here for nearly one hundred years. One of the Tilley families consisted of 7 sons and 5 daughters and so nearly reached a Baker's Dozen! Next door to this house was the village smithy, now converted to a dwelling but once the meeting point for the men of the village. You could always pick up the latest gossip, warm yourself at the forge and watch the world walk or trot slowly past on the road!

(22) The main street was the 'commercial' part of the village. At one time there were two bakers, two butchers, four grocers (including a small branch of Market Harborough Co-op), a draper, saddler, blacksmith and off licence as well as the Post Office, a tailor and three public houses! There was also a carpenter and builder, who also provided undertaking services and cess-pit emptying services to the village!

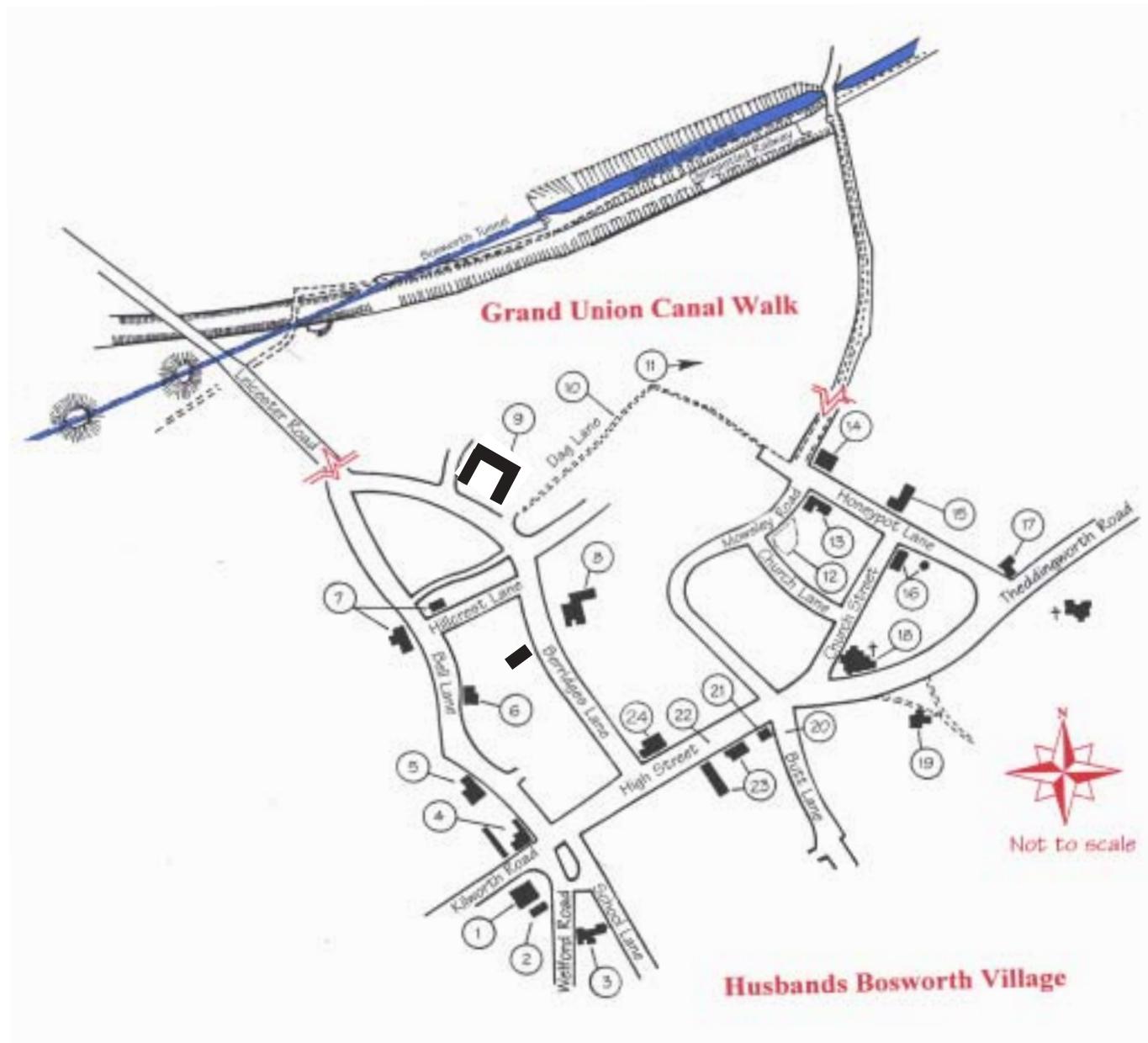
(23) Today The Bell Inn is the one surviving pub in the village. At one time there were seven inns or ale houses in the parish. The Red Lion, 34 High Street, was the meeting place for the village Oddfellows Society and The Cherry Tree Inn stood where the entrance to Cherry Tree Close is today. The Graziers Arms, 30 High Street, has long ceased to serve ale but it still sports the sign *Phipps & Co, Ales and Stouts, Northampton* painted on the brickwork.



Vine House

(24) The stoutly built houses on High Street are in a wide variety of styles. Number 29 was the village's original Methodist place of worship, whilst 19 High Street, Vine House, was once the home of Harry Cross and his son Dick, the villager carrier. He operated a regular transport service of goods and passengers to Market Harborough and Lutterworth, and Leicester on Market Day, which continued until motor buses were introduced.

A few hundred yards further on is the Village Green where the trail started. We hope you have enjoyed your walk!



(10) Take the small footpath adjacent to Fernie Court. This is Dag Lane and marks the original outer boundary of the village. Dog, Dag or Dug Lane is a common name for small paths and roads in this part of Leicestershire. The origin is unclear - it might be that, like the proverbial dog's leg, the paths were bent or it might be they were 'dug' to mark the boundary between the village and fields.

(11) Where the path turns sharp right, pause to enjoy the extensive views of the Welland valley grazing meadows and the Laughton Hills. On the skyline is the spire of Theddingworth Church.

The path emerges at the top of Broad Lane, the bridle road to Mowsley - the starting point of the Towpath Walk.

(12) To the right can be seen a small area of grass dominated by an oak tree, planted to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. This is the Old Green, the traditional centre of the village. It was probably much larger before building encroached.

(13) Just below the green, on Honeypot Lane is The Old House. Look carefully at the front of the house which has timber framing filled in with narrow handmade bricks. There were several clay pits in the village and the older bricks may have been made locally. The T B D and the date 1712 mark the year when the house was modernised for Thomas Blakesley and Diana, his wife. The house is certainly older than this. You can see the line, above the timber frame, where the roof was raised.

(14) On your left is The Homestead. Once a farmhouse, it was owned by the Marsh family until 1979. They farmed in the parish for 145 years, were stalwart villagers and served as churchwardens for many decades.

The core of the Historical Society's extensive Archive Collection was donated by the Misses Marsh, who seldom threw away anything, no matter how insignificant or trivial! God bless 'em!



(15) The attractive name of Honeypot Lane may refer to the rich farmland hereabouts! The White House, one of the village's 18th century farmhouses, was renamed Railway Farm when the holding was sliced in two by the railway. Vestiges of the limewash that gave the building its original name survive in the brickwork on the frontage. The coloured brick headers make an attractive pattern, a feature of many buildings in this part of the village. Next door is Honeypot Farm, which is the last remaining working farm within the village.

(16) At the corner of Church Street is a brick and slate building with large, high, iron-framed windows, which was once housed a small factory making specialised shoes. At one time it was a school room. Further along on the right hand side of the road is an old pump. This pumped water from Judy's Well, which is under the sunken area in the small layby and was the last public pump in the village. Mains water was not connected to the village until 1956. Before then everyone relied on a clutch of wells and pumps, of which there were at least 45! Old maps held in the Society's Archive show Honeypot Lane as Well Lane.

(17) At the far end of Honeypot Lane are two cottages built by the Turvilles of Bosworth Hall in 1873. Their family crest is set into the brickwork under the dormer windows. The end cottage was the head gardener's house and next door was the laundry. On the opposite side of the main road, hidden by the trees is St. Mary's Roman Catholic church, built in the grounds of Bosworth Hall in 1873.



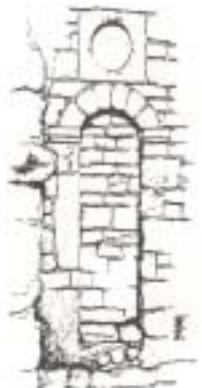
The Bosworth Witches

In 1616 nine Bosworth women were executed as witches in Leicester. The grandson of Erasmus Smith, then living at the Hall, suffered from what was probably epilepsy. The ailment was little understood at the time and the women were accused of causing the fits by witchcraft and evil spells. They were convicted at Leicester Assizes and hanged. The boy's fits continued and a further six women were arrested. King James I was visiting Leicester at this time and he examined the boy himself and took justice into his own hands and five women were released, one having died in gaol.

Retrace your steps and turn up Church Street. Here are a variety of properties, mostly built of hand-made brick.

(18) The Parish Church of All Saints dates from the 12th or early 13th century. The broach spire is 14th century and was badly damaged when struck by lightning in 1755. The porch is dated 1746 and is noted for the two sundials incorporated into the gable. The church clock was restored in 1983 by Geoff Armitage, a village resident. A particular feature is the churchyard with its fine array of Swithland slate gravestones. To the right of the porch is a small doorway, now blocked up. Behind is the vestry, the site of the original village 'grammar' school held here between 1707 and 1820. There are records of complaints of noisy children playing and shouting - nothing changes!

(19) From the graveyard can be seen the Victorian lodge cottage of Bosworth Hall. The Hall, which is a private residence, stands on the site of one of the original Manors of the village. The Hall has been a centre of Catholicism for many centuries, ever since Grace, widow of Sir Francis Fortescue came to live here in 1635.



(20) Butt Lane recalls the days when the men of Bosworth practised archery each Sunday, as they were required to do by the Statutes of the Realm. The defence of England then depended on the skill of its archers and every man who could draw a bow was expected to keep in practice at the village butts.



All of a quiver

A zealous steward of the Manor once attempted to fine all the men in the village two pence each for 'not shooting according to the Statutes'. However, by then the practice had died out and although the records do not tell us the outcome we suspect that the shrewd men of Bosworth did not pay up!