

## GREAT BOWDEN

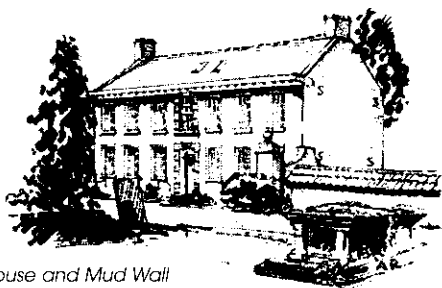
Great Bowden, a conservation area, lies on the edge of the Welland Valley, close to the Northamptonshire border and Market Harborough, below the hill which gave Bowden its name.

Great Bowden was once the centre of a Saxon royal estate, and the parent village in this corner of South Leicestershire, mentioned in the 1086 Domesday book Bugegone, or Bucga's dun or hill (Bucga being a woman's name), significantly predating its offshoot Market Harborough.

Agriculture has always played an important part in the economic life of the village, although towards the end of Victoria's reign until the 1920s, fox-hunting and the breeding of horses dominated its life.

The most obvious feature of the village is the grouping of houses around various Greens, of which three now remain, Nether Green, Upper Green, and "the Green". Virtually all the different styles of local domestic building can be seen, with examples of early cruck construction, seventeenth century timber-framed and stone built farmers' houses, and even a mud cottage for the poor, now much altered but representing many others demolished in the 19th century. There are also fine brick houses of all sizes of the 18th and 19th century.

The walk starts from the Memorial Green, in front of the Village Hall, where there is roadside parking.



*Rectory House and Mud Wall*

### 1 • THE VILLAGE HALL

Built in 1903 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII, this was to be used as a reading and games room for the grooms employed in the village by John Henry Stokes and the owners of the Hunting Lodges or boxes.

### 2 • RED BRICK GATE PIERS

Built in the 17th century, these gave access to the Rectory Estate of Great Bowden.

### 3 • GREAT BOWDEN OLD SCHOOL

Charles Shuttleworth, in 1838, was the prime mover in the scheme to provide the village with its first school. Unfortunately, he died before the school was completed. A plaque is inscribed "National School built by public subscription and opened December 2nd, 1839". In 1983 the old school was purchased by the Church to be used as a Church Hall, when a new school was built in Gunnsbrook Close.

### 4 • GREAT BOWDEN CHURCH

This dates from the early 13th century and is dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. It is the Mother Church to the church in Market Harborough, and at one time all of Market Harborough was within the parish of Great Bowden. The tower, with pinnacles at the corners, is crowned by a short 14th century spire. Inside a 15th century fresco on the North Wall depicts the Last Judgment. A separate detailed guide to the Church is available within.

### 5 • RECTORY HOUSE

In 1546 at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, Henry VIII granted the Rectory Estate of Great Bowden to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford who continued as owners until 1926. Rectory House is situated in the heart of the village and there is believed to have been a house on the site since medieval times. The existing property dates from the Elizabethan period, with major additions carried out in the reign of William and Mary, and during the Georgian period. It is mainly built of quality limestone. At the gates to the grounds in Sutton Road stand another pair of the fine brick piers.

### 6 • THE MUD WALLS

Some local boundary walls and out buildings are made of mud, a mixture of clay and straw. Mud walls need "strong boots and a good hat"; that is a stone or cobble plinth and a coping of thatch or pantiles. The mud boundary walls to the churchyard and the adjacent footpath were rebuilt in the 1980's, with clay pantiles, hand-made at Barton upon Humber.

### 7 • NETHER HOUSE

In 1910 Stokes enlarged the original small house here dating from c.1700, and added the stables. At the same time the avenue of chestnuts and limes was planted. In 1950 the house was damaged by fire and one wing was subsequently removed. Opposite Nether House there is an indoor training area for horses, also used by the Leicestershire Yeomanry in the Second World War. The old Stokes' stabling is now part of a mushroom farm. Stokes bred two Grand National winners, the most famous being "Music Hall", which was trained at East Langton.



*Bishops House*

### 8 • THE FERNIE HUNT

The area between Nottingham and Market Harborough was originally hunted by the Quorn. The present Fernie Hunt was an off-shoot formed in 1856 when the Quorn divided, with Mr. Tailby of Skeffington Hall taking the southern area, with kennels based at Billesdon, later at Medbourne. In 1888 Charles Fernie a Scot from Edinburgh, succeeded Sir Bache Cunard as Master, remaining for 31 years. This continuity ensured the eventual independence of the hunt from the Quorn. The hunt took the name of Fernie in his honour in 1920, two years after his death, when the Quorn at last relinquished all claims.

In 1923 the Hunt Committee purchased from the Stokes Estate stables at Great Bowden, and built new kennels which were in use the following year. They also bought Nether House and outbuildings and various other properties around Nether Green, including the present Huntsman's house. Nowadays the Hunt has two meets a week, on Wednesday and Saturday, and runs 45 couples of hounds. The Boxing Day Meet is traditionally held on the Green in front of the Shoulder of Mutton.

### JOHN HENRY STOKES

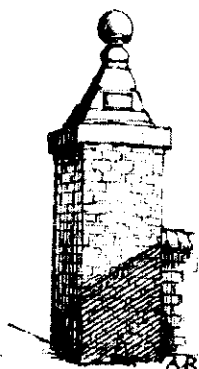
Stokes (185()-1920) was undoubtedly the most influential man in the village between 1900 and 1920, both for his successful cattle breeding and his house building activities. He also loaned the money for the building of the Village Hall. From modest beginnings he established himself by the turn of the century as supplier of hundreds of really fine horses to clientele which included Edward VII, George V, the Emperor of Austria and the Kings of Spain and Italy. He was in addition a noted prize winner with animals in the show-ring until 1910.

### 9 • NETHER GREEN LODGE

This was built in 1906 in the vernacular style by John Henry Stokes for his own occupation, but as his wife then died, he never took up residence. The ironstone came from the old Post Office on the Green, on the site of the general grocery store, and other stone cottages in the village. It was first occupied by Hugh Owen a jockey and National Hunt rider killed in 1909. There is a memorial window to him in the south aisle of the Church. After World War II the house was used for a time as a nursing home for the elderly.

### 10 • 5/7 SUTTON ROAD

This property was previously known as The Cottage and also Welham Bush Farm. There is a Regency brick frontage of around 1800, although the main stone house is of early 17th century date. The house was owned by Stokes at the turn of this century, and let as a Hunting Box to Count Hockberg, a German Count and brother to the Prince of Pless. The Count had stables at the rear of the buildings. He was noted for riding side-saddle. He also bought from Germany a fore runner for the idea of double glazing, and evidence of his windows can still be seen. Village rumour had it at the time that in the period leading up to the First World War Great Bowden had its own German spy. However, when the Count returned to Germany at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, it was the Red Cross he joined and not German Intelligence!



### 1 • GREEN LODGE

This is another Stokes house, built in 1906 as a Hunting Lodge. John Henry's only child, Ernest Stokes lived here for a time. He kept a pack of harriers here after the First World War. The house was built on the site of the old Congregational Chapel which had fallen into disuse in 1886. A new Chapel was subsequently built in Main Street.



Nether Green Lodge

### 12 • BISHOPS HOUSE

This is again a property built by Stokes in 1901 for use as a Hunting Lodge. It was built on the site of a thatched farm house. In 1918 the house was occupied by the Bishop of Peterborough, whilst his palace was being used as a military hospital after the Great War. Since his occupation it has been known as Bishops House. In 1920 Lady Jersey lived here and decorated the interior all in white, contrary to the fashion of the time.

### 13 • THE GREEN

The houses were nearly all built during the early 19th century. The post office is on the site of an old bake house, where a Sunday roast could be cooked for a penny. The joint could be delivered on the way into church and collected on the way home. The baker also baked penny loaves, which were left on a special shelf in the church to be collected by the poor and elderly of the village. The Shoulder of Mutton was built partly in the 17th and partly the 18th century. Surrounding houses mainly date from the 19th century, and this area used to be known as Stocks Green, site of the village stocks. Nos 32 to 33 were formerly a single house, built of ironstone with a thatched roof. No 30 was occupied by Thomas Knight, grazier of land in Back Lane, now called Knights End Road.

### 20 • THE OLD HALL

An early Manor House of Great Bowden. It was timber framed until rebuilt in stone in the 1600s. Further additions were made in 1864. The Westerby Basset Beagles were kept here in 1958, when the then Master, Mr Weston, owned the house. In the 1900s the Old Hall was lived in by Alec Chater, a farmer and grazier, and reference to him can be found on a plaque on the Congregational Chapel in Main Street. Chater Close is also named after him.

### GREAT BOWDEN PUBS - Past and Present

The number of pubs has fluctuated over the years, the remaining ones being the **Red Lion**, in Main Street, the **Shoulder of Mutton** on the Green, and the **Countryman** on Station Road. Amongst former ones the **Royal Oak** was once in business on Upper Green, the **Three Horseshoes** on Horseshoe Lane, and the **Britannia Inn** on the canal. **The Bowden Inn**, standing some distance out of the village, was once a coaching inn where additional horses could be hired to help coaches climb the hill leading up to the Bowden/Foxton cross-roads. The **Queens Inn**, now a private house, was on the Green.

### 14 • 5 MANOR ROAD

Facing the Lane stands this fine yeoman stone farm house from the 17th century. In the early part of this century Patrick's bakehouse stood in the yard.

### Mr. W.H. HAY

Born in 1849 and educated at Eton and Cambridge, Mr William Harrington Hay was a great character who lived in the village nearly all his life, and was regarded by many as the Squire. He was a talented sportsman, who had played cricket with W.G. Grace, against the Australians, for his county, and of course, in the Village eleven! He very much enjoyed shooting and hunting with the local hunt, too. He was much involved in local life, being a J.P., School Manager and even Sunday School Teacher for fifty years.

Around 1900, the schoolchildren's annual outing was at his home, Great Bowden Hall, to which they were conveyed in a large farm wagon. He had a bevy of seven daughters, who were equally well-known and active in the district.



Stone Cottage Manor Road

### 15 • TUDOR HOUSE

This is a cruck framed house with a 17th century facade, and a date stone 1746 over the door which probably denotes a restoration. This appears to be the only cruck beam building in the village and was originally thatched. It now has a Swithland slate roof. The eyebrow window is a recent addition.

### 16 • STONE HOUSE

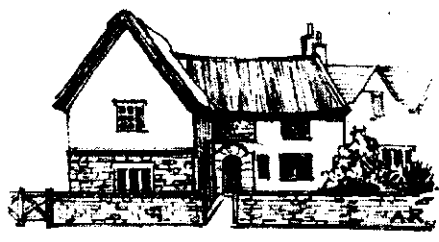
Yet another ironstone farm house, dating this time from 1671, with an 18th century brick side wing and a Victorian addition around the main entrance. Inside are exposed beams and sloping floors. It was used as a hunting box in the early 1900s.

### 17 • THE RAILWAY

The railway effectively split the village in half. The first line was built by the London and North Western Railway in the 1840s with the Midland Railway's second line arriving between 1853 and 1855. The houses in Leicester Lane, "Navvies Row", were built to accommodate the workmen. The original level crossing in Main Street had to be replaced by a bridge around 1880, because of frequent accidents both to villagers and cattle. The old line of the crossing can still be seen quite clearly.

### 18 • RAILWAY COTTAGE

This originally comprised three cottages for railway men at the time of the building of the railway.



The Old Bakehouse

### 19 • THE OLD BAKEHOUSE

This probably dates from around 1614, like the Old Grammar School in Market Harborough. Evidence of its early timber construction is clearly seen in the overhanging gable ends facing the road. The adjoining building was yet another bakehouse.

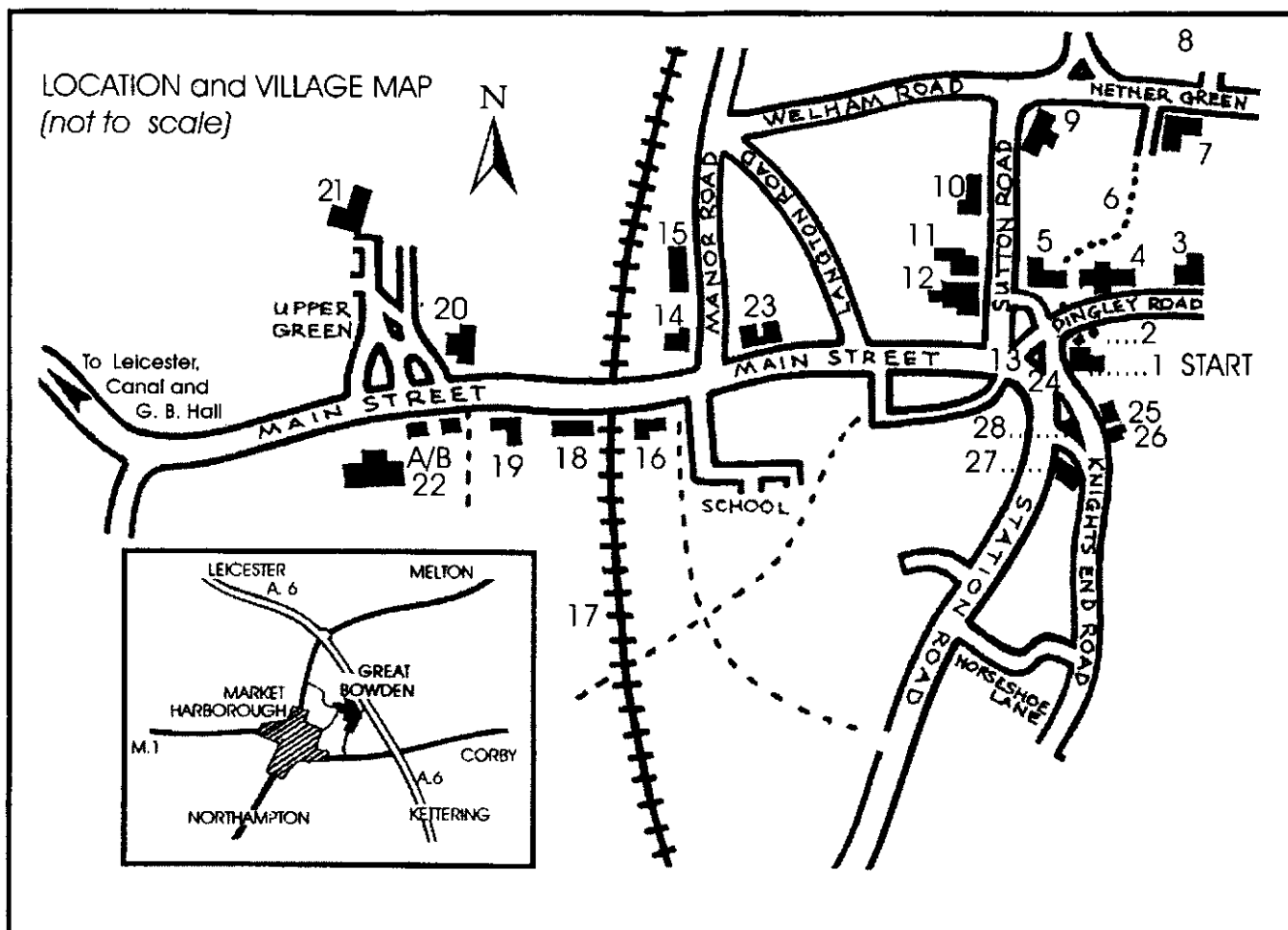
### 21 • UPPER GREEN FARM

On a plaque above the main entrance of this ironstone yeoman farmer's house, with its Swithland slate roof, is the date 1675. The house also possesses some fine Victorian stabling.

### 22A/B • UPPER HOUSE and THE LODGES

The house was built in 1880 with later additions in 1911. The Lodges also date from 1911, and were occupied by the butler and the chauffeur. The House was used as a Hunting Box, and from 1958 to 1969 was occupied by Captain Gillilian, Master of the Hunt at various periods.

## Great Bowden



## GREAT BOWDEN HALL

The energetic walker can view Great Bowden Hall and the Grand Union Canal from Leicester Lane, which has an avenue of lime trees, planted by the Bowden Society to commemorate European Conservation Year, 1970. The Hall is a Victorian mansion, built around the old Britannia Inn on the canal tow path. It was once owned by the Hay family.

**Now retrace your steps to Main Street and the Chapel.**

## 23 • THE CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL

This was built in 1885, with the adjoining hall added in 1897. It replaced the old one, which occupied the present site of Green Lodge in Sutton Road.

## 24 • 19th CENTURY GRANITE HORSETROUGH

This was erected by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association. The lower part was for use by dogs and cats.

## 25 • 43 THE GREEN

This is a 17th century building with ironstone lower storey below, and timber framing above, typical of this area. The steeply pitched roof suggests it was once thatched.

## 26 • 45 THE GREEN

This is an 18th century cottage, with Victorian additions to the rear. The attached garage was once a tailor's shop with living accommodation above. It was, however, later used as a grocer's shop, Symington and Thwaites, which closed in the 1950s.

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This leaflet has been prepared by Great Bowden Historical Society, supported by Harborough District Council. Thanks to Alec Riddett for Layout/Design and Illustrations.

The village shops, one of which is the Post Office, supply a variety of products. There is a regular bus service between Great Bowden and Market Harborough, which stops on request anywhere in the village.

Refreshments may be obtained at:- the Shoulder of Mutton on the Green, the Red Lion on Main Street, and the Countryman on Station Road.

## 27 • THE FORGE

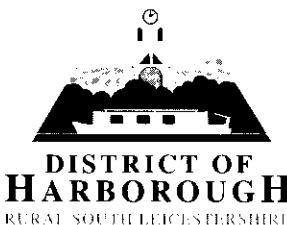
Arthur and Frank Wilford were the last working blacksmiths in the village, the forge ceasing to be operative just prior to the Second World War. The property has been much altered, but not the square panel framing on the end gable. The timbers are largely original, although the brickwork has been renewed over the years. This house is contemporary with the Old Grammar School in Market Harborough and the Old Bakehouse in Bowden, constructed around the turn of the 17th century.



45 The Green / 1 Knights End Road

## 28 • POND GREEN

Here is what used to be called Pond Green, site of the village pond. This was used as a watering hole for the cattle and sheep, en route from the Langtons (nearby villages) to the local cattle market in Market Harborough, and also to the railway sidings (along Great Bowden Road) for transport to London. Carts also stopped at the pond to wash the mud from their wheels. It was much frequented by the ducks. It was filled in during 1928.



# GREAT BOWDEN

South Leicestershire

## Historic Village Trail



Village Hall and Church