

HALLATON

One of England's most picturesque villages, Hallaton lies approximately 16 miles south east of Leicester, and 8 miles north east of Market Harborough.

The village name is derived from two Old English words meaning a settlement in a narrow valley. At the time of Domesday in 1086, Hallaton had at least 26 male villagers. For many years the village was an agricultural centre, a fact demonstrated by the fairs and markets which existed from the mid 13th until the mid 19th centuries. Earlier methods of agricultural cultivation are evidenced by the ridge and furrow cultivation strips, cut across by the enclosure hedges of 1771, that surround the settlement.

Five roads lead into the village making it a local communications centre. This importance has long been recognised, for, in the late 11th or early 12th century, Hallaton's famous 'Motte and Bailey' castle was constructed.

The 1851 census recorded a population of 691 with occupations ranging from apothecary to castrator and watchmaker as well as the full range of agricultural trades. The decline in agricultural employment has led to a corresponding decline in population which today is in the region of 450.

Hallaton exhibits a wide variety of building materials. The early houses were of wooden frame construction; a number still exist with cruck beam gable ends. Later buildings utilised the local ironstone and limestone. Many houses had extra storeys added in the 18th century, often using locally made bricks. Other items to be noted are the mud walls and the ancient cobbled pavements which are visible in some gateways.

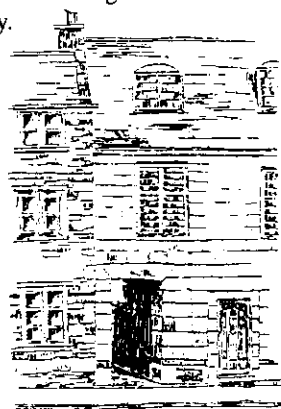
The village is fortunate in retaining its amenities. These include a church, chapel, two pubs, a garage and a shop/post office that sells everything!

On street parking is available throughout the village. The walk starts from the village green, a central location convenient for the village facilities.

1) The squat conical Butter Cross is medieval, of possibly 16th century construction. Traditionally it was used by farmer's wives as a place to sell their dairy produce. Adjacent is the War Memorial which incorporates seating and a sundial.

2) The cottage on the north side of the green behind the memorial was originally a smithy.

3) Cross the green and enter the passageway, Teters, under one of the village houses. Continue along the path until the footbridge over the stream is reached. The view across the fields to the church and the old rectory is superb. Return to the village centre by retracing one's steps. The rear of the properties shows the ad-hoc nature of construction of these buildings.



'Teters Archway'

Bottle Kicking

This pathway leads to Hare Pie Hill, the site of the annual Bottle Kicking contest held every Easter Monday between teams drawn from Hallaton and neighbouring Medbourne. After a church service a Hare Pie is presented to the rector to divide and distribute. A procession, accompanied by a local band then collects the decorated 'bottles', and proceeds from the Fox Inn to Hare Pie Hill. Here the pie is thrown to the crowds. This is the starting point of the contest which involves each team trying to get the 'bottle' over a defined boundary. It should be mentioned that a 'bottle' is a small wooden cask. There are few rules and the result is based on the best of three such contest. The beer from the 'bottles' is then drunk by the victors at the Butter Cross. Peculiarly, one of the 'bottles' is a dummy - only two contain beer.

4) Hallaton Grange date 1691 is the impressive house on the left. The front door is noteworthy for its high quality brass door furniture. Of interest is the adjacent brick out-building with its two bricked in doorways. Opposite lies the walled kitchen garden; look for the arrow denoting a well beneath the pavement. To the left of the wall is the imposing 1842 carriage house.

5) The Church of St. Michael and All Angels is one of the finest Leicestershire village churches retaining as it does many of its original medieval features. The broach spire is particularly fine as is the George Fenwicke memorial on the north wall. In the north porch is a Norman tympanum showing St. Michael slaying evil in the form of a serpent. Inside is a Saxon gravestone, suggesting a much earlier church. The Victorian stained glass windows are by Kempe, identified by the 'wheatsheaf' signature. Listen for the chime of 'Old Dunmore' - a musical box made in 1779 which chimes every three hours:

*'Old Dunmore's dead, that good old man
Whom we no more shall see
He made these chimes to play themselves
At six, nine, twelve and three'.*

Outside in the churchyard are many fine limestone and Swithland slate tombstones.

6) Facing the church in Churchgate are three almshouses. Built of ironstone and hand made brick the central stone inscription records how George Fenwicke (with £500 left by one Catherine Parker) bought and gave these three apartments 'for three ancient poor women'.



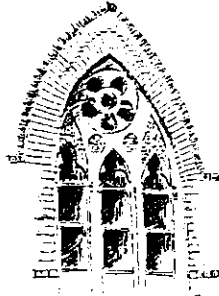
The Almshouses in Churchgate

7) Hallaton has had three rectories; two of them are located between the Church and the school. The oldest lies down the drive ahead and was probably a medieval open hall. The second, to the left, is early Victorian and built of finely coursed limestone. Both of these imposing structures should be compared with the present day rectory - a functional bungalow further along Churchgate.

Revolting Behaviour!

The annual bottle kicking has always had a reputation for exuberant behaviour, often caused by over-indulgence of the local ales. One parson decided to put a stop to this by banning the contest. To achieve this he refused to provide the hare pie. The angry villagers stormed across the rectory lawns and demanded re-instatement of the ancient custom with cries of 'NO PIE - NO PARSON'. The villagers won - the parson asking his housekeeper to bake the pie immediately. To this day the ancient custom continues.

8) With its decorated brickwork, the village school and adjoining teacher's house is a fine example of Victorian civic architecture. One hundred and thirty years later the buildings are still fulfilling their vital role to the village community.



Village School
Detail of ornament stone & brickwork

9) Vine Cottage and number 36 Churchgate show evidence of considerable rebuilding with raised rooflines and brick infilling. The datestone of 1852 indicates when the work was probably carried out.

10) Continue up Tugwell Lane. Across the field with its 'ridge and furrow' field pattern is a view of the 'Motte and Bailey' castle. Its age is uncertain, possibly dating from King Stephen's reign (1135-1154). For a closer inspection turn left at Glebe Farm following the road for 1/2 mile. Otherwise turn right, and right again down the sunken Hunts Lane.

11) The first cottage on the right, of thatch and ironstone construction has evidence of a cruck beam on its north wall. Opposite is the old wheelwright's and carpenter's shop. Turn left at the end of the lane, retracing steps to the village green.

The 1851 census showed 22 properties with 80 inhabitants in Hunts Lane. This must be compared with the present six houses with fewer than twenty inhabitants. This significant change is paralleled elsewhere in the village.

22) The house with the large window and the fancy bargeboards was originally a butcher's shop, (one of six in 1851). Behind it lies the slaughterhouse which has recently been converted into residential accommodation.

23) On the opposite side is a mixture of Victorian and individual older cottages. The thatched cottage on the corner (No.22) was originally a village shop.

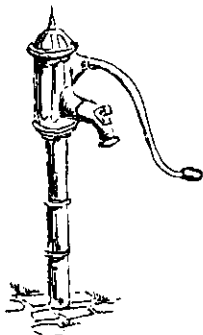


The Village Shop

24) Nos. 19 to 23 High Street are an interesting group of properties. No.23, a town house is noteworthy for the fine round topped window over the door. Next to it is the Old Oak House which used to be the 'Royal Oak' pub until 1993 whilst the gable end of No. 19 dated 1872 shows considerable evidence of rebuilding both upwards and backwards.

25) Nos. 12 to 16 High Street are almshouses built as part of the Stening endowment. Adjoining them around the corner in Horn Lane is the Stening Hall, built in 1925. The architectural features referred to under item 18 are conspicuously repeated!

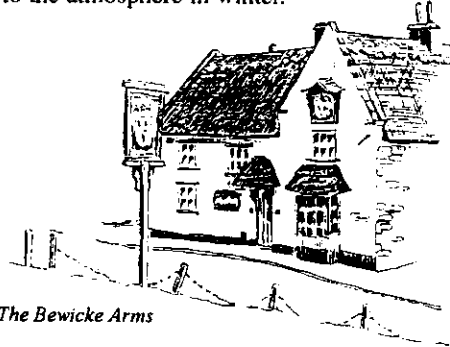
26) The water pump marks the junction with Hog Lane. The tiny garden is the site of the brewhouse which used to supply the 'Angel' pub, now the Old Stone Cottage.



The Village Pump in High Street

12) On the left is one of the village pumps, complete with wooden surround. The wooden protective casing would have helped protect the mechanism from winter frosts.

13) Pass the green to the 'Bewicke Arms' public house. This 400 year old thatched country inn is well known for its high quality menu complemented by local traditional beers. Log fires add to the atmosphere in winter.



The Bewicke Arms

14) Continue straight up Eastgate. To the right is Rectory Cottage, unusual with its window mouldings which are believed to have been rescued from a redundant chapel in neighbouring Blaston.

15) Turn left down the footpath running alongside the brick and ironstone house. This building used to belong to the local fellmonger - the tanning pits and drying shed are still visible in the back garden.

16) Turn right up Eastgate. Number 36, the Old Bakehouse, has a datestone of 1718 on the gable end. The decorative brickwork known as diapering is superb. Opposite are the grounds of Torch House, formerly Hallaton Hall. Currently it is a centre for the blind and partially-sighted people.

17) Continue along Eastgate towards the top of the village. On the West side of the road is a most attractive group of houses - each one very different. Rose Cottage was originally the Queen's Head Inn with its cellar extending under the adjacent Stone House.

Hallaton Can Can

When Rose Cottage was used as licensed premises, it had a somewhat dubious reputation and was not frequented by respectable folk. A very old lady remembered walking past as a child and 'seeing girls dancing on the tables'.

27) The bottom end of the High Street contains a mixture of brick and stone houses with slate and thatch roofs. Many of the older properties have had their roof lines raised - an indication of increasing prosperity. An unusual feature is the 'candy stick' window surrounds of No. 4.

Sew there!

The very high wall between No. 2 and 4 High Street is supposed to have been erected by the then owner of No. 4 to stop the apprentices of the tailor, who owned and traded from No. 2, seeing his wife and daughter walking in the garden.

18) Opposite, along North End is a terrace of four houses constructed in the mid 1920s. Built with the proceeds of the Stening bequest, a local charity, these are one of three important village amenities. All are noteworthy for their prominent drain pipes!

19) The Fox Inn marks the top of Eastgate, with Hackluit's Pond beyond. This shallow spring fed pond has a hard base and was used to clean cart and carriage wheels as well as watering the considerable number of horses used for agriculture and hunting. A sluice on the southern end was used to flush the Victorian sewer system. Ducks are the main occupants and attraction today.

Oil on troubled water?

In the days when Hallaton's streets were lit by oil lamps, the local lamp lighter was known to be of a somewhat intemperate disposition. He was once found lying on top of his ladder in the pond having attempted to place his ladder against the reflection of the light shining on the surface of the water.



The Fox Inn & Village Pond

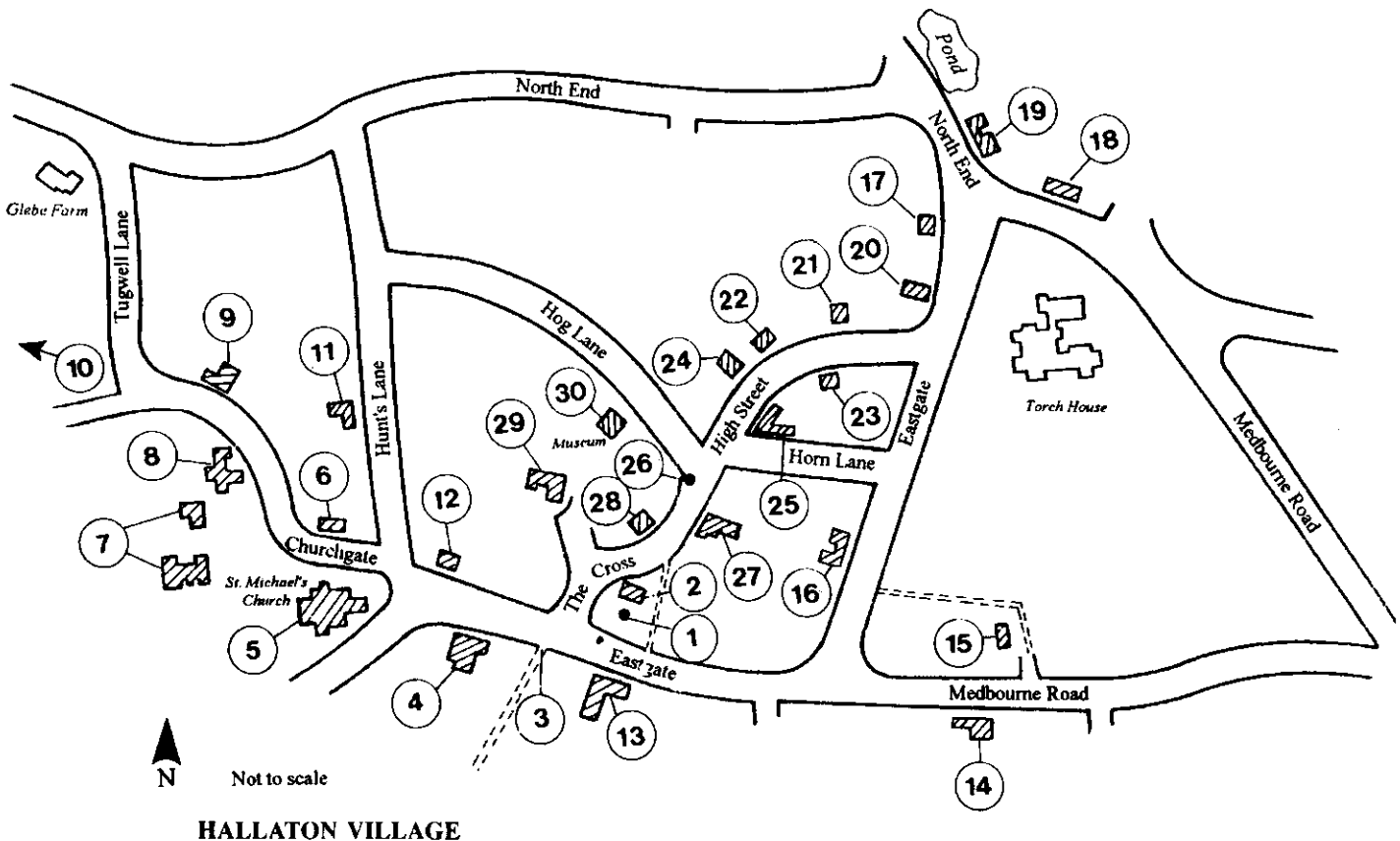
20) Retracing steps to the High Street, the gable end of No.45, 'Corner House' has an enduring piece of political graffiti. The painted sign 'Vote for Bankart' can just be seen on the brickwork. Mr Bankart, owner of Hallaton Hall was the first chairman of the Parish Council in 1894. This road junction is marked by two very fine Georgian houses on either side of the road.

21) The High Street contains a variety of cottages and houses. The brick terrace of cottages built in 1873 are particularly attractive. Adjacent is a thatched working farmhouse with a vintage seed drill in the garden.

28) The village shop forms part of another group of interesting stone and brick houses. The name 'Aveling House' denotes the owner's interest in Aveling and Porter steam rollers! On the other side of the road is a stone conduit which used to supply water to this part of the village.

29) To the right at the end of the terrace is the 1822 Baptist Chapel. This well proportioned building has its own small graveyard which contains monuments to the Bains family. This family were wealthy Non-conformists and largely founded the establishment of the Chapel.

30) Finally, having sampled the historic delights of the village why not retrace your steps to the Village museum which lies in Hog Lane. Here some of the artefacts relating to the village can be examined at leisure.



HALLATON VILLAGE

Hallaton Village Museum

Opened originally with the help of its benefactor Mrs Whigham (nee' Bewicke) it lies tucked away behind the pretty thatched cottages of the High Street. The museum offers both the valuable understanding of the history and architectural traditions of a Leicestershire village.

There is a permanent display of agricultural implements, tools, machines, documents, photographs and archeological finds. These provide an insight into the farming heritage, the former railway station and the numerous forgotten pubs, shops and craftspeople. Examine the exhibits and discover the ways the population lived, worked and relaxed. Spend a little time discovering the collection associated with the renowned Hallaton Hare Pie scramble and the Bottle Kicking event, the origins of which are lost in the midst of pagan myths.

More frequent visitors are never disappointed, as each season a new display detailing a particular aspect of Hallaton's heritage is staged. Previous examples have included Domesday Hallaton, the 1851 Census, Hallaton at War, and Local Railways and Hallaton Charities.

*Opening Times: May - October, 2.30 - 5.00pm
Saturdays and Sundays and all Bank Holidays.*

*Other times available to larger parties by pre-arrangement
Free Entrance - donations would be appreciated.*

*Contact:
Alan Clayton; Tel. Hallaton 555216.*



Thatched Cottages - High Street

Hallaton Village Shop

A wide range of products is available from the village shop and Post Office. This includes specially produced Hallaton souvenirs and post cards. It is open on weekdays from 8.30am to 5.30pm (closed for lunch 12.45 to 2.15pm; early closing Tuesday).

Refreshments

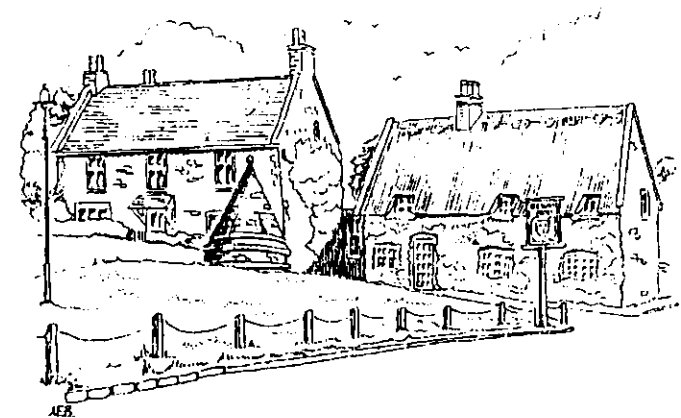
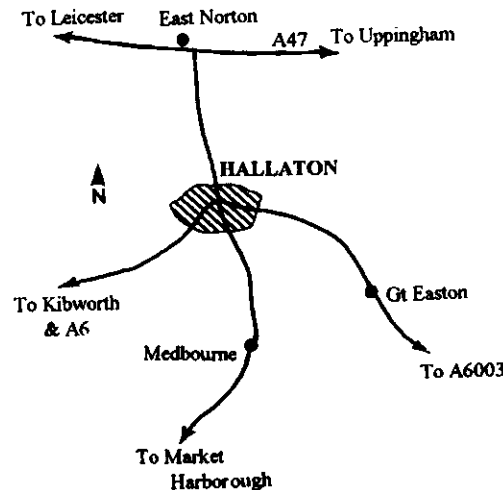
Bar snacks, lunches and evening meals are served in the 'Fox Inn' and the 'Bewicke Arms' daily.

Accommodation

The 'Bewicke Arms' offer a large luxury apartment for six to eight people. This comprises four bedrooms (1 double, 3 twins), a fully equipped kitchen and a large lounge/dining area.

Enquiries to Neil Spiers, Tel: Hallaton 555217.

This leaflet has been prepared by the Friends of Hallaton Museum, Hallaton Parish Council and Harborough District Council. Illustrations are by Anne Billing.



Village Green & Buttercross



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HALLATON

South Leicestershire

Historic Village Trail & Museum Guide

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