

MEDBOURNE

Situated on the edge of the Welland Valley within quiet unspoilt countryside, the village of Medbourne is found seven miles from both Market Harborough and Uppingham. Highly attractive, its central feature is the stream which runs alongside the church and under the medieval pack-horse bridge. The cottages are mostly built from honey coloured stone and these together with the brook make Medbourne a photogenic location, especially in the spring.

There is evidence to show that Medbourne has been a settlement since pre-historic times. Subsequently it was a staging post on the Roman (Gartree) Road. The Saxon period gave the village its name, it being derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Meadbourne' meaning Meadow Stream. The population was recorded as being 22 at the time of Domesday and rose to a maximum of 580 in 1861. It now stands at 405.

Medbourne Brook, usually a tranquil stream can become a raging torrent in a matter of hours and it was not unknown for the residents of the adjacent cottages to be flooded out of their homes on a regular basis. After the last major flood in June 1981 when more than twenty homes were flooded, a flood defence scheme was constructed higher up the valley. This has controlled the rate of flow, but the ford in the village centre can be quite deep on occasions. **BEWARE!**

Parking is permitted as a courtesy in the car park of the Nevill Arms public house. The walk starts from this point noted for its feature dovecote.

1) Fernie Hunt Stables were built in 1890 by Sir Bache Cunard, owner of Nevill Holt Hall, whilst he was Master of the Hunt. The stables were used until 1924 when the Fernie moved to Great Bowden, near Market Harborough. The round hole above the arch was intended for a clock but this was never installed following a disagreement with the Parish Council. The stables have been converted into housing but the fox weather vane records the building's former use.

2) The Nevill Arms is one of two pubs in the village. The original building on this site was destroyed by fire in 1856. It is thought that a spark caused the fire after the village blacksmith wagered he could support an anvil on his chest whilst a horseshoe was forged upon it. Rebuilt in 1863 in the Tudor style using local ironstone, the initials MGN over the doorway are those of Captain Nevill, brother and heir to the Holt estate. At the side of the building is a fine carriage archway.



The Nevill Arms

The cottages adjoining the Nevill Arms are all thought to date from the 1700s. The initials JK on the date stone refer to John Kirby who refurbished the cottages. The antique shop, now a specialist in the repair of ivory and bronze, was once the village bakers and according to tradition, each week the villagers would bring their Sunday joints to be roasted in the ovens.

3) The thatched cottage is Saddlers Cottage, once the home of Thomas Seasey who was the last saddler to live here. Inside there is a date of 1689. In 1721 a tessellated pavement, the atrium of a Roman villa was found in the grounds immediately around the cottage. It was removed and subsequently lost. Additional remains were found only a few years ago.

4) Waterfall House is the property overlooking the brook. This used to be a farm from where the village milk was delivered in churns. The building has been much changed with brick infilling at first floor level, decorative cast iron window frames to the rear with the date 1883 immediately under the chimney.

Brookside

There used to be a ford to the right of the footbridge. Now the site is occupied by the ducks that live hereabouts. The path beside the stream is a delight especially during the spring when the bulbs planted in the bank enhance this pleasant walk.

5) Manor Farm dates from the early 1600s although the large rear wing was added later in the 17th century. In 1859 a fire started in the farmyard, a south-westerly gale blew sparks across the brook and a number of cottages were totally destroyed. The church was saved by the wind changing direction and the onset of rain.

6) The medieval packhorse bridge is of 13th century origin. The large cutwaters on the north side give an indication of how ferocious was the flow of the stream. More details can be obtained from the plaque which was erected in 1977 to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee.

7) Situated in its circular churchyard is the 13th century Parish Church of St Giles. It is believed that a church was on this site before this date but was destroyed by fire - the calcined stones being re-utilised. It has also been conjectured that the site was once moated. The church was restored in the 19th century which was just as well for it had been described as being "in a vile state of dirt and disorder and encumbered with the most detestable pews".



The Parish Church of St. Giles

8) Set back from the road is Old Queen House. Dating from 1733 it was once a public house called the Queens Head Inn until 1905.

Village Communications

No 4, Springbank, the stone house with the gable end facing the road was once a garage owned by a Mr Tobbit. It was from here that the village bus used to run to Market Harborough. Mr Tobbit was also noted as owning the first radio in the village, a fact which created considerable interest at the time.

9) Like most villages, Medbourne had several shops. The Victorian shop with the decorative bargeboards was the butchers until 1986. Inside the tiled floor and the butcher's block can still be seen - a perfect time capsule. At the corner of the terrace stands the village shop and post office - now the only retail outlet.

Maurice Stanton's father (Bert) was cycling home from the Plough at Drayton having had a few drinks. It was a windy night and the carbide lamp on his cycle blew out. He had trouble re-lighting the lamp, so turned his bike round to shield the lamp from the wind. Having re-lit the lamp he pedalled off and ended up in Drayton !!!

10) The large red brick building decorated with polychromatic brickwork was built by the Independent Wesleyans as their Mission Hall in 1870. It was used as a place of worship until 1986; subsequently it became a fashion designer workshop. The chapel gates were hand forged by Mr Len Barlow, the last village blacksmith. Alongside is Chapel School House, built at the same time as the chapel for Mrs Bryan Ward of neighbouring Slawston.

11) Opposite Old Holt Road is Pagets Farm, originally built in the 17th century. Beside the road is an old barn which shows obvious signs of having its roof raised. Unusually the crane is still in situ.

Beyond the farm are the fields which show evidence of 'ridge and furrow' husbandry - practised from medieval times until the land was enclosed.

12) Medbourne had its own railway, opening in 1883. However it suffered an early closure being the victim of the nationwide rail cuts instituted in 1916. The three terraced cottages were built for railway employees whilst the road between the massive stone capped brick piers once led to the station.

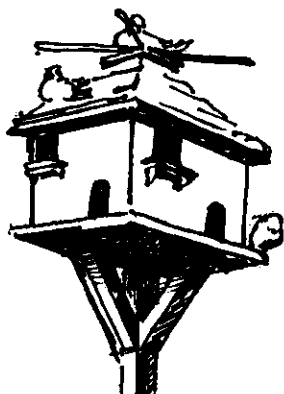
20) Set in the wall on the right hand side is one of the many wells which once supplied the village's water supply. Opposite is a tile hung terrace of four houses dated 1884, built specifically to house the staff that supported the Fernie Hunt. A few doors away is Spring Cottage and Nevill Cottage (No 18 & 20 Manor Road). Again the MGN mark of Captain Nevill will be seen.

21) Towards the end of Manor Road, on the left hand side is Dale Farm a large H - plan house built by John Wade in 1731. It is surrounded by a new wall structure incorporating two stone piers from the original structure.

22) Beyond the war memorial is a row of cottages, School Row, and the old village school. Designed by the Goddard family of architects, it and the adjoining school house, were built in 1868/9 in the Gothic style. It is richly ornamented with fishscale roof tiles, terracotta ridge tiles and cast iron window frames. The heavy doors are particularly fine. All this for a cost of £1,277! The school closed in 1981 and is now used as a community centre. Teas are served on Summer Sunday afternoons.

23) Beyond the village bowling green, is the 'Horse & Trumpet', Medbourne's other pub. It is an 18th century rubble wall building complete with thatch under the corrugated iron roof. Inside there is skittle table, whilst outside is a hook for tethering horses and a reminder of previous drinking habits - Watney Red Barrels!

Old Green leads to Drayton Road opposite Brook Terrace. The cottages here were once the homes of stable men and their families. To the right is the car park, the commencing point of the trail.



The Dovecote to the front of The Nevill Arms

From the top of the bridge the Station Master's house can be seen on the left whilst both platforms, and various station outbuildings can still be clearly discernable.

On Christmas Eve 1994 an American visitor (John) arrived at the Old Forge at 3.30am without his doorkey. Being full of Christmas spirit he decided not to disturb the household. He spent this cold and frosty night walking round the village and sheltering in the 'phone box (seen by a remarkable number of people). At 7a.m a frozen, shivering John arrived on the door step again, and was welcomed in. During his adventure he had seen two foxes and an over grown skunk (badger).

13) Built in 1908 No 35 was originally the Co-op. It sold groceries and other household requirements to Medbourne and the surrounding villages and also operated a delivery round until 1968 when trading ceased. At the rear are an interesting range of outbuildings giving an indication of the trade that was once carried on here.

14) Old Holt Road used to be a through road to Nevill Holt before the railway was built. The bier and the village dirt cart were once both kept at the top of the road; the latter being used to collect sewerage from each house once a week.

15) The stone house with the gable end facing the road is Crown House. This used to be the pub 'The Crown Inn' until it was de-licensed in the late 1920s.

16) The Old Forge was built in 1875 by William Letts on the site of the village workhouse. The shoeing shop was at the front - the wide arched doorway can still be clearly identified. The shoeing of horses ceased in 1958, but as a reference to the building's former use, blacksmith's implements in wrought iron decorate the gable.

Crown House & The Old Forge



Before turning up Rectory Lane, observe by the church gates the last remaining gas lamp standard in the village. Originally Medbourne had its own supply complete with gas house manufacturing gas for the local stables, cottages and Nevill Holt Hall.

17) Shielded by mature trees is the Old Hall - one of the large houses which give Medbourne its distinct character. It is an imposing H-plan house built in the mid seventeenth century and features a fine Collyweston stone roof.

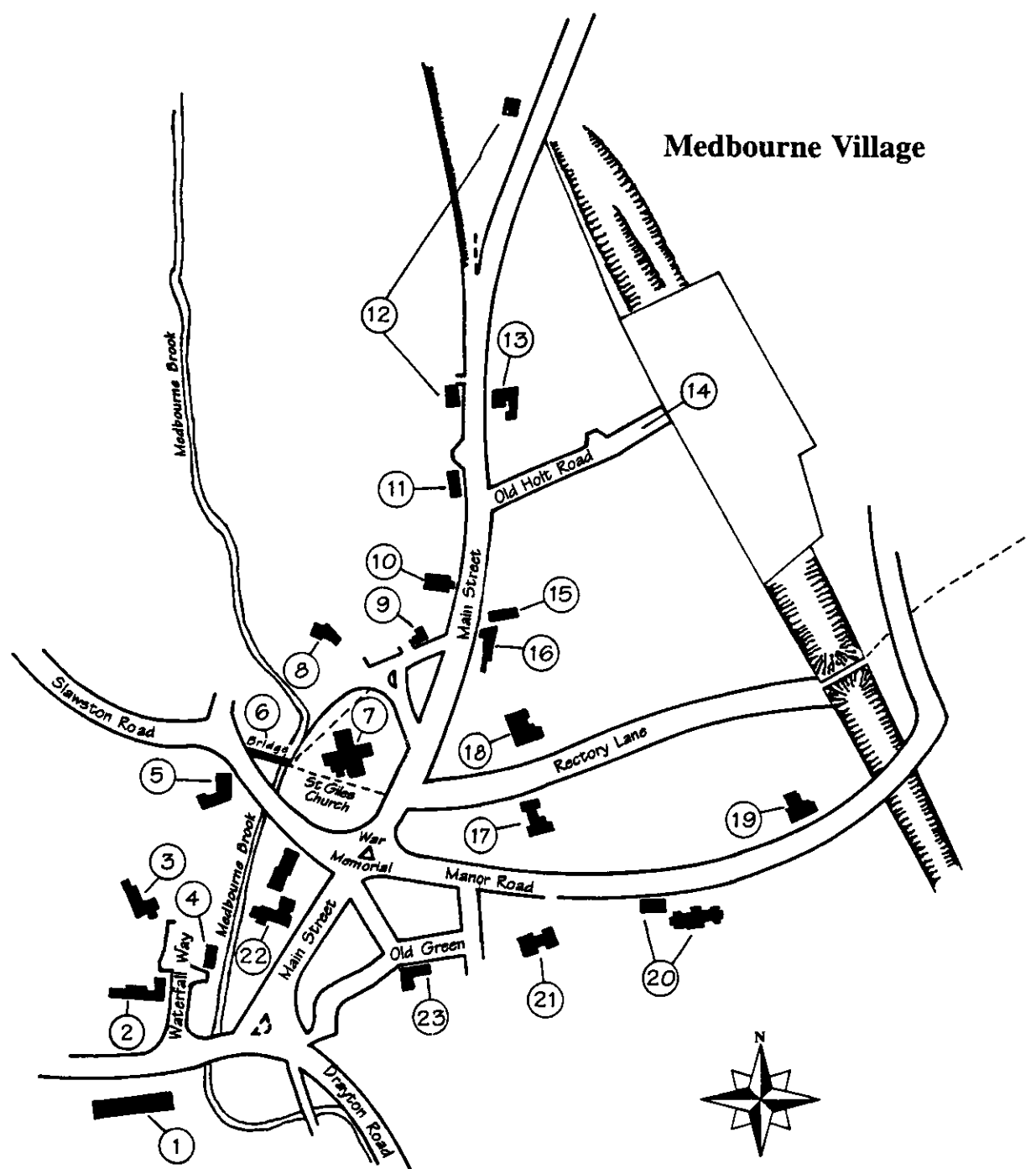
18) Opposite is the Old Rectory, dominated by the magnificent plane tree on the front lawn. The house was remodelled in 1845 at a cost of £1,300 by the Leicester architectural practice of the Goddard family (see 22 below). The house was sold in 1952 for £3,800 and a new rectory built in the paddock further up the lane.



The Old Rectory

Continue walking up the Lane and along the path over the old railway cutting. Note how the stone capped brick piers first encountered at the station are repeated. At the second set of kissing gates turn right down the hill.

19) The first stone house on the right is the Manor House. It is the oldest house in the village and is thought to date from the thirteenth century. During renovations wall paintings believed to date from the reign of James I were discovered. In 1878 the house was renovated by Sir Bache Cunard for his huntsman. Outside a mounting block can be seen - a memory of a bygone age.



Not to Scale

Nevill Holt

The hamlet of Nevill Holt situated one mile away from Medbourne up the steep Manor Road, has been closely associated with the village for many years. Enjoying spectacular views, the magnificent grouping of buildings that was the Nevill Estate rarely fails to impress.

The estate passed into the hands of Catherine Palmer, wife of William Nevill in 1474. They were the first of a long line who gave their name to Nevill Holt for almost 400 years until the estate was auctioned by Cosmo George Nevill in 1868. Bought by Henry Grieveson, he re-sold it in 1876 to Edward Cunard. Unfortunately he died the following year as a result of a polo accident, aged 23, and the estate was inherited by his brother Bache Cunard who held the estate until 1912. The brothers were grandsons of Samuel Cunard, founder of the Cunard Shipping Line. Vacant for several years, it was purchased in 1919 since when it has been used as a preparatory school.

The public road from Medbourne to Nevill Holt passes through the magnificent iron gates adjacent to Buffalo Lodge. Beyond is a superb avenue of lime trees.

The main building complex incorporates the 14th century Great Hall and 13th century church of St Mary which was used as a place of worship until the Nevills departed. Adjacent is the 17th century stable block with its symmetric west front dominated by a fine clocktower.

The school is private property and access is restricted.



Nevill Holt School

This leaflet has been prepared by the Medbourne History Society and Harborough District Council. Support has been received from the accommodation providers and the Countryside Commission.

Medbourne Village Post Office & stores.

A wide range of products is available from the village Post Office & stores. It is open from 8.00am (8.30am Sat) to 12.30pm every weekday & from 2.15pm to 5.30pm on Mon, Wed, Thur, & Fri.

Refreshments

The 'Nevill Arms' offers a wide range of meals and bar snacks.

Afternoon teas are served in the Old School every Sunday between Easter and mid October. Contact Mrs. S. Cooper for details. (Tel: 01858 565203)

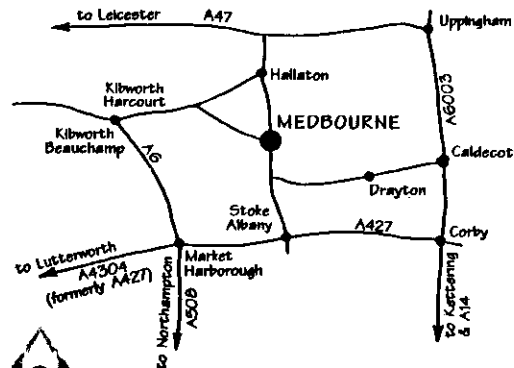
Accommodation.

The following accommodation can be obtained locally:-

Mrs J. Wainwright
Homestead House
5, Ashley Road
Tel: (01858) 565810

Mrs. S. Beaty
Medbourne Grange
Nevill Holt
Tel: (01858) 565249

The Nevill Arms
Waterfall Way
Tel: (01858) 565288

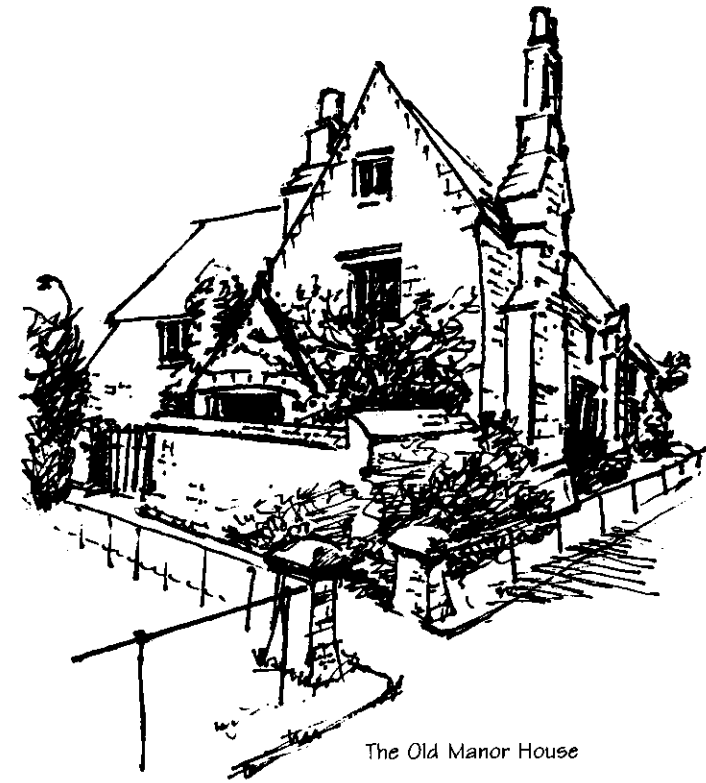


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MEDBOURNE

Welland Valley

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The Old Manor House

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