

TILTON

Located 700 feet (213m) above sea level and set within beautiful undulating countryside, the village of Tilton on the Hill is noteworthy for its extensive views. Situated at one of the highest parts of Leicestershire, the Church spire is the dominant feature for miles around.

The name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Tila's tun (Tila's settlement) but the village is probably considerably older, being at the crossing of ancient, possibly Bronze Age, trackways.

By Domesday the settlement was well established. Although it originally comprised three separate villages, by c1200 Tilton, Halstead (situated a little higher on a neighbouring hill) and Whatborough (deserted by 1494) were considered to be one village. To this day, Tilton Church is located in the Halstead Ward of the Parish.

From medieval times until the 17th Century the Digby family were the landowners. The most famous, or infamous, was Everard Digby, who was knighted by James I at Belvoir Castle in 1603. However, only two years later he was involved in the Gunpowder Plot. Today, Digby Close commemorates the family connection.

The variety of building styles reflect Tilton's continuity as a village. The traditional building materials are brick and stone, the latter being available locally.

Parking is permitted as a courtesy in the car park of the Rose & Crown public house. Additional on-street parking is available in Melton Road opposite. The walk starts from the crossroads in the centre of the village.

1) The Rose and Crown public house has long been the social centre of the village. Although dated 1707, it has a considerably earlier core with the many timber posts suggesting a timber framed structure. The carved timbers over the fireplace are unusual. The name sign from the old railway station is located in one of the passageways.



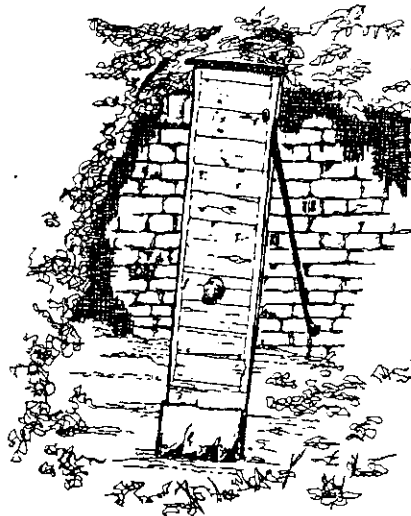
2) The crossroads are believed to be the meeting place of two ancient long distance trackways. One ran along the Jurassic Heights from Wiltshire to the Lincoln Edge whilst the other linked Stamford with Leicester.

3) Blacksmith's Cottage, diagonally across the crossroads from the pub, marks the site of the former village smithy which closed in the 1930s.

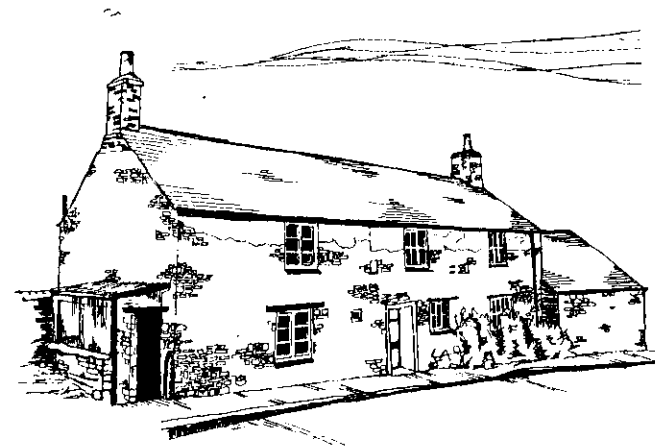
4) The adjacent cottage used to house the village wheelwright and carpenter.

5) Return to the crossroads and turn left down Oakham Road - one of the oldest in the village. The reason for the names of the first few cottages; "Parson's Close", "Church Cottage" and "Church View" is not hard to find!

6) The old village pump is still in place, although not in use. The wooden protective casing would have helped protect the mechanism from winter frosts - very necessary hereabouts!



7) Jasmine Cottage, dated 1733, and the adjoining cottage are built in the attractive local ironstone. The infilling below the eaves indicates a raised roofline from that of the former thatch.



8) Cross the road at this point and look back at the cottages. The farm buildings to the right of Jasmine Cottage were once the stables of the Old Vicarage and probably housed the grooms. This indicates the wealth and status village clergy held in society.

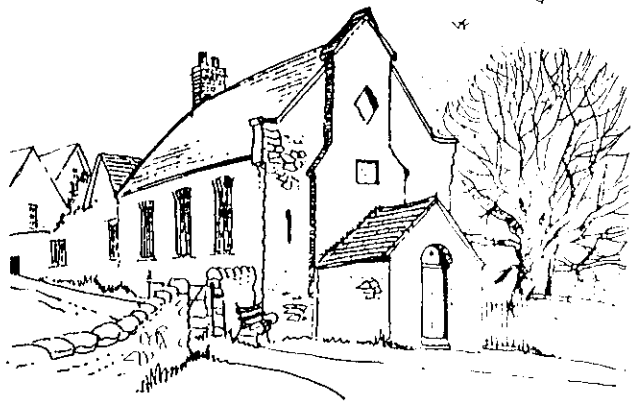
9) The Old Vicarage, dated 1850, is an imposing house built in extensive grounds. The changing economic and social fabric of society and the Church is indicated by the style of today's Vicarage - built in 1984 in the vegetable garden of the Old Vicarage.

10) Venture up the footpath through the churchyard. One of the features is the avenue of cherry trees on the left. The Church of St. Peter mainly dates from the 13th Century; a separate guide and history is available within. A feature of the Church is the wealth of stone gargoyles - the observant visitor will note that some are quite obscene!

11) Within the churchyard is the shaft of a medieval cross. It is believed to have been surmounted by a floriated cross. Often referred to as a 'preaching cross' it may, however, be a memorial to all buried in the churchyard prior to the custom of providing headstones.



12) Continue through the churchyard and immediately on your left is the Old School. This was built privately in 1844 as a National School with accommodation for 75 pupils. In the past, school activities temporarily ceased to allow children to help with the haymaking. The school was replaced by the present building in Marefield Lane in 1974.



13) Continue down Main Street. On the right is Manor House Farm, formerly the home of successive Lords of the Manor. Built on the site of an earlier dwelling, it dates from the late 17th Century. The last Digby to own the Manor sold it in 1639.

Pond Life

The story goes that Harry Liquorish (See 19) was set afloat in a barrel to dunk the sheep with a long T-shaped pole. His enthusiasm was maintained by his favourite beverage, cider. Needless to say, after a day's work he was somewhat the worse for wear!

23) 'The Moat'. The overgrown area marks the site of a former moated house, probably dating from the 13th Century.

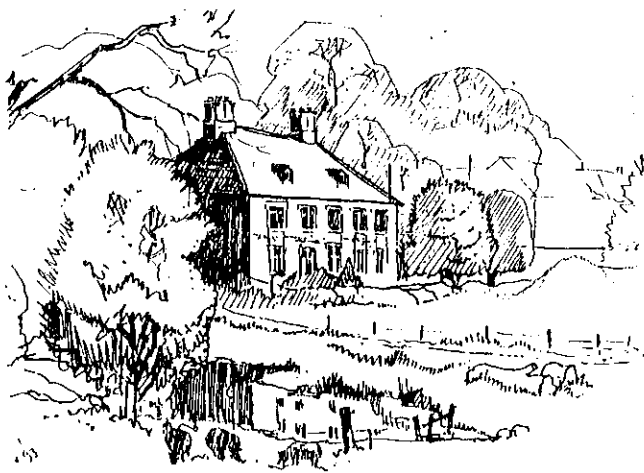
24) Return to the village centre. The Village Hall and play area occupy the site of the old cattle market. Sheep pens were where the shop now stands.

25) Cross the main road by the pedestrian crossing. Enter Digby Close and turn right. The dark grey brick path between the end two houses leads to "The Mound". Apparently never fully investigated, it is believed to be prehistoric - possibly a burial barrow.

26) Return to the main road and turn left. In 1/4 mile Mill House is reached. Dating from 1807 the mill worked until the 1920s. The view from here is simply superb.

Traces of Steam

The Tilton area was served by two stations - Tilton and Lowesby. Each was situated over a mile from the village centre at the bottom of long hills. Returning passengers had a hard climb to face. Freight was the main business: coal and timber via Boston, fruit and vegetables from the Fenlands as well as local produce such as wool, milk and iron ore. Tilton station on the LNWR/GNR joint line from Market Harborough to Melton Mowbray closed in 1953 - long before the "Beeching Axe". Lowesby on the GNR route to Leicester lasted until 1962. The route was popular with the thousands of holidaymakers who headed for Skegness and Mablethorpe annually.



14) The outbuilding known as 'The Chapel' (best seen from Back Road) was possibly a former dwelling dating from the 1500s or earlier. It may well be a fragment of a small monastic hospital founded at Tilton in the 13th Century. In summer the view is obscured by the growth of mature trees.

Secret Passage

A secret passage is understood to have led from the Manor House to the Chapel. Unfortunately it was filled in. The workman concerned died before the present owners bought the property. Consequently the location of the passage will forever remain a secret.

15) The well proportioned mellow red-brick house dating from the early 19th Century is the Old Rectory. It is particularly attractive being set behind a walled garden. There was a period when the living became 'sequestered' due to the misdoings of the vicar and the Church was put in the hands of 'lay rectors'. Subsequent vicars resided here until the Old Vicarage was built in 1850.

16) Brookside House, dating from the late 18th Century, was originally two separate dwellings. Before the Second World War it had been established as a butcher's shop. The abattoir was behind.

17) Turn left down Loddington Road. The building housing the Old Village Store dates from the late 18th or early 19th Centuries. It closed in the early 1980s.

Shop Here?

One villager has a childhood recollection of "the meanest shopkeeper in the land". When asked for two-penn'orth of sweets, if the scale bottom touched the counter, she would cut a sweet in half!

18) The Old Beer House was formerly an off-licence selling Ruddles' Rutland Ales. A former owner had a daughter who tried to commit suicide by jumping down the well in the yard. Fortunately she was too big and got stuck half way down. She was rescued by a young man who had to go down in a bucket, put a rope around her and haul her up.

Health and Safety?

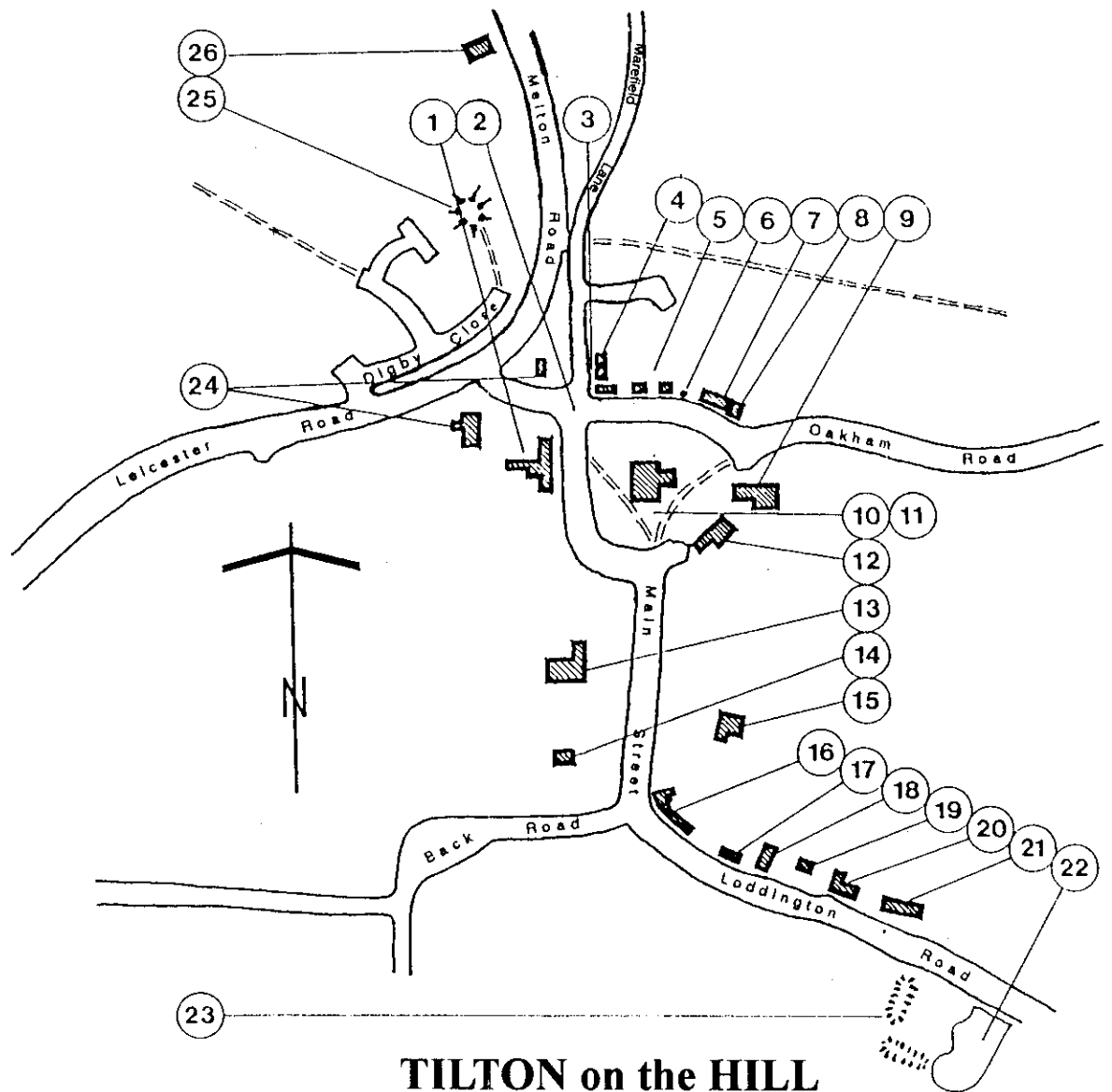
A previous owner kept a cow in a field a mile and a half away. Each morning he would set off with a pail and ladle, milk the cow and then deliver the milk - sometimes asking for a spoon to flick out bits of dirt. In the afternoons he was the village chimney sweep.

19) In Manor Cottage lived Harry Liquorish, a very small man who had a very tall wife. Rumour has it that he needed to stand on an orange box to climb into his enormous bed. His grave is in the churchyard.

20) The 19th Century brick-facing on the 'Three Cottages' is affixed to a much earlier structure and reflects the then fashion of house improvement. Stone-cladding to brick structures is the modern equivalent. How fashion turns full circle!

21) 'Ashdene' is the home and working premises of the village undertaker. Originally it was three timber cruck framed thatched cottages with wattle and daub walls. In the 1920s the roofs were raised but the original oak beams are still in existence.

22) Continue down the road out of the village for a hundred yards. To the right is a small sheet of water known as "The Dam". This pond, formed by damming the stream with a massive piece of granite, was used for sheep-washing.



TILTON on the HILL

NOT TO SCALE

HALSTEAD

Now recognised as part of Tilton, Halstead still retains its separate identity. Physically quite separate, it still has its own chapel and pub- the Salisbury Arms.

Travelling away from Tilton, Halstead Grange is half way up the hill on the left hand side. Dating from 1844, the cellar was originally used for making that Leicestershire speciality, Stilton cheese. Although production has long ceased, to this day a fresh Stilton will begin to mature in that cellar in a couple of days.

Forking left, at the summit the roadway leads to Halstead House, formerly the house of the Lords of the Manor of Halstead. The building dates from the late 18th/early 19th Centuries. Today the farmstead is chiefly involved in rearing poultry.

Return to the main road and turn left down the hill. Nearby on the left hand side is the massive man-made hollow and the only remains of the former ironstone quarry. In 1959 a worker unearthed Saxon remains including a sword, bones and pottery which are now housed in Leicester Museum.

Ironstone quarries

Commercial quarrying began in 1879 when the railway opened and carried the stone for smelting at Holwell Ironworks, near Melton Mowbray. Until 1933 all overburden (mostly clay) and ore was hand dug and loaded. The daily requirement was to fill seven wagons of 2½ tons which horses towed to the tippler over the railway wagons. Later, a dragline excavator was introduced and when obtaining the ore became more difficult, blasting began. All work ceased in 1968.

Farm Shop - Halstead House Farm.

Meats sold include fresh and smoked poultry, lamb, pork, game, ham and venison. In addition there is a range of preserves, pickles, fruit, vegetables and eggs.

The Village Shop

A wide range of products is available from the village shop and Post Office. It is open on weekdays from 6.00a.m. to 5.45p.m. (closed for lunch; early closing Wed.). Sunday hours are from 9.00a.m. to 12.30p.m.

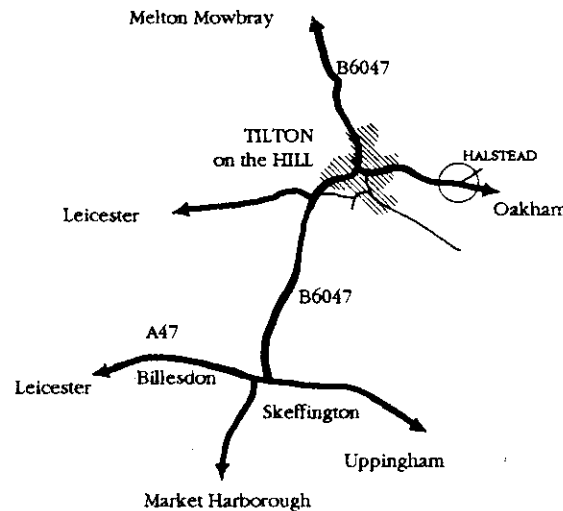
Refreshments

Bar snacks, lunches and evening meals are served in the Rose and Crown and Salisbury Arms every day. Lunches and teas with home made cakes are available from the Tea Room at Halstead House Farm.

Transport

Tilton on the Hill can be reached by car. Please use the nominated parking areas. Bus services are infrequent, details are available from "Busline", Telephone 0533 511411.

This leaflet has been prepared by the villagers of Tilton on the Hill and Harborough District Council. Support has been received from Tilton Parish Council and the Countryside Commission.

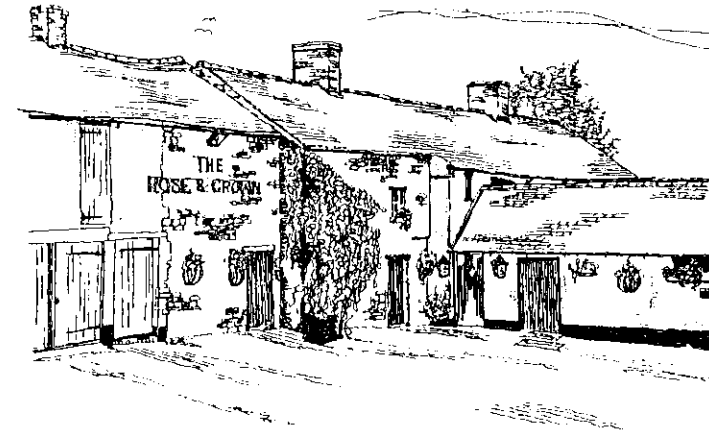


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TILTON on the HILL

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ROSE & CROWN - TILTON ON THE HILL

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