



12 • Three Horseshoes Inn/The Forge

From the mid 18th century, 32 Main Street was a forge, and in the early 19th century the then blacksmith opened adjoining buildings (No 34) as an inn, The Three Horseshoes (you can still make out the name on the upper wall). In 1904 the landlord was Daniel Burton.

Go past Spring Lane, and take the next left into Sycamore Lane. The first house on your right is 'Sycamore House'

13 • Sycamore House

No 2 Sycamore Lane was formerly known as Acacia House because of the large Acacia tree that was once in the front garden. It is now called Sycamore House because of the enormous sycamore tree that in former years stood at the junction of Sycamore Lane and Main Street (see picture overleaf, taken in 1904). Sadly this beautiful tree is no longer there. It was struck by lightning a few years ago.

Originally built as a hunting lodge, Sycamore House was requisitioned in World War I for prisoners of war and again in World War II for Land Army girls. One of the latter apparently knocked on the door a few years ago and said she had learned to dance in the front room there.

When it was auctioned in 1916, the estate comprised nearly two-and-three quarter acres, including a cottage used for staff, a paddock and extensive stabling.

At this point you can go along Bursnell's Lane onto Polka Walk; a few yards on, diagonally to your left, you will see the Thatches.

14 • The Thatches

This dwelling, 5 Rookery Lane, is shown on the first known map of Wymondham, dating to 1652. There is evidence it was originally timber framed. A large number of coins were found in its original clay floor, the earliest a Charles II farthing of 1679 and the bulk being George I, II and III. This discovery supports the idea that the house was a hostelry, especially during the period the Oakham canal was in use. The house had been extensively 'modernised' in some style c1770-80, not much of which survived further alterations of 1928.

Now return to Main Street and turn right. Cross over the road and continue along Main Street and you will see 'Old Bakery Antiques' on the left.



15 • Old Bakery Antiques

This delightful little shop, as the name indicates, was once a bakery and also at one time a general store. This was one of many shops that once existed in the village. In bygone days, before cars, villagers would have had all they wanted in the village and would never have needed to leave it. Today the antique shop is well worth a browse around as it sells a very interesting selection of architectural antiques, reclamation items, rural and domestic bygones and decorative accessories, all genuine antiques.

Continue further along Main Street and at No 45 (yellow paintwork) you will see Japonica Cottage.

16a • Japonica Cottage

Japonica Cottage and the adjoining old bakehouse are listed buildings. An external wooden stairway used to go up to the first floor green doorway of the bakehouse. The striking, tent-roofed porch of the cottage is early 19th century. The ground floor was the village post office between c1948 and 1970.

16b • Stilton Cheese Replica

If you glance across the road at this point you can see a stone replica of a Stilton cheese on the front of 'The Bowery'. John Morris, a fine cheese maker, lived at this house at the turn of the 19th century.

Continue along Main Street. On your left at the Post Office is the site of the old Pinfold.

17 • The Pinfold

Wymondham was on the route from Melton Mowbray to the A1 (Great North Road), which links Edinburgh and London, and was the stopping-off point for cattle drovers. On the site of what is now the village store and post office was the Pinfold, a compound for stray livestock; there is a small plaque on the wall there. The Pinfold was run by the village constable and owners would have to pay him a fine to get their animals back.

The next and final building on our trail is the Berkeley Arms, where you may wish to rest your feet and refresh yourself!

18 • The Berkeley Arms

Now an award-winning pub and restaurant, this one remaining village inn is named after the Berkeley family, who owned land in Wymondham and Edmondthorpe from the 14th to the 17th century – 11 generations in all. Previously it was called the Angel Inn.



The cellar is reputed to be haunted, the ghost being affectionately named 'George' by all who speak of him. Rumour says that the pub once had an underground tunnel leading to the Priory on Chapel lane and from there to the church. This would enable priests to escape if need be (or to get in a pint after hours, perhaps). Though there is definitely evidence of a doorway having been blocked up in the cellar, some of these explanations are rather improbable. The Priory is Victorian and so is not old enough to have this kind of history. It is much more likely that there was a tunnel from the church to somewhere to the south of the Priory, for the purposes, in medieval times, of escape when besieged. Evidence of this was found in the paddock on Back Walk some time ago.

A short car drive away, approximately three miles east of the village, but still in the parish of Wymondham, is Cribb's Meadow.

19 • Cribb's Meadow (Grid reference 899189)

On 28th September 1811 Wymondham became the focus of the sporting world with the fight for the world heavyweight boxing title. Boxing was illegal then, fought with bare knuckles and few rules, but had a huge following, from the working class to people like Lord Byron and the Prince of Wales.

Tom Cribb, a Bristol-born coal porter, undisputed champion of England, was challenged by Tom Molineaux, a former slave from Virginia, who had been given his freedom for winning a fight on which his master had staked his entire fortune. In their first match, Cribb secured a doubtful victory, so a rematch was unavoidable. The location was 'Thistleton Gap', close to the Great North Road where the counties of Leicestershire, Rutland and Lincolnshire meet, so proceedings could be easily moved into another legal jurisdiction, if necessary – though the magistrates from all three counties were likely eager spectators themselves.

About 15000 people travelled to see the fight, and many would perhaps have lodged in Wymondham. Molineaux, unused to celebrity, had succumbed to excesses of alcohol and rich living and was in poor shape, unlike Cribb. The fight only lasted 11 rounds, when Cribb broke Molineaux's jaw.

Tom Cribb returned to a hero's welcome in London. He never fought seriously again, became a publican and remained a popular celebrity until his death in 1848.

Cribb's Meadow is now a Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with orchids, butterflies and great crested newts.

Introduction

The village of Wymondham has both Neolithic and Roman remains, and there is also evidence of Iron Age occupation.

Place names ending in (-ham) were villages in the Anglo-Saxon period. In Saxon times Wymondham lay within the boundaries of the Kingdom of Mercia, one of whose kings was Witlaf (827-840). He had a son Wymand (Wygmond), after whom this village took its name, probably because he had it for part of his maintenance and upkeep.

By the Norman period, The Domesday Book (1086) calls the village Witmeham, Witmeha and Wimundesham, generally interpreted as meaning "Wigmund's ham", ie Wygmund's homestead.

In more recent times the village was associated with one of the area's most famous products, Stilton cheese, and it was a Wymondham cheesemaker who supplied the famous Bell Inn at Stilton (see Item 5: The Hunter's Arms).

From Stone Age relics and Roman artefacts through the Domesday Book and Church and Parish Council records, Wymondham's published historians have a wealth of material to draw upon. In this leaflet we also include brief details of Wymondham's association with the very first international bare knuckle boxing championship, in which the Englishman Tom Cribb defeated the American former slave, Tom Molineaux.



The sycamore tree c1904



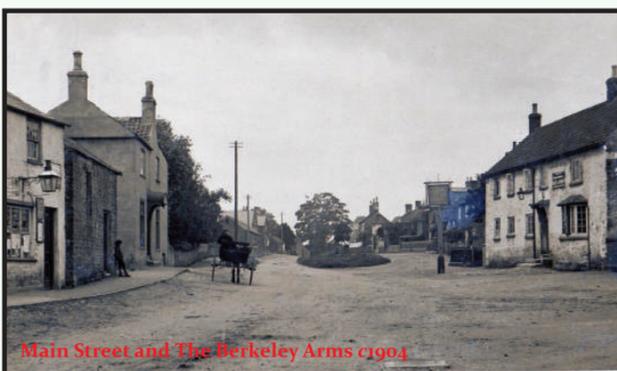
For more information, read *A History of Wymondham* by Ralph Penniston Taylor and *The History of Stilton Cheese* by Trevor Hickman.

Every care has been taken to ensure the information herein is accurate, but the Civic Society accepts no responsibility for any error or omission which may have inadvertently occurred.

The walk is very flat and easily walked on surfaced footpaths but does have a kissing gate at the exit from the churchyard.

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Main Street and The Berkeley Arms c1904

Wymondham Heritage Trail

a gentle stroll through a traditional and historic Leicestershire parish



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