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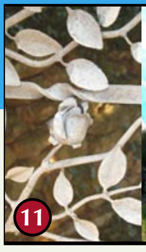
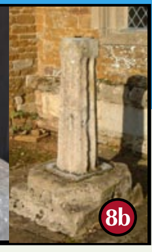




Although the trail can be picked up at any point in the village – where there is ample parking on Main Street – for the purposes of this trail we have started the walk at the Windmill on Butt Lane. Here there is a tea room, play area and gift shops with seasonal opening. For info, tel: 01572 787304.

1 • Wymondham Windmill

Built from local ironstone and topped with brick, the Windmill on Butt Lane is a five-storey tower mill *c*1814 (pictured overleaf in 1904). It originally had six sails – it is one of only four six-sailed windmills remaining in the country – and is known as a 'Six Arm Lincolnshire Cross'. Some locals believe the Luftwaffe navigated between the mills at Wymondham and Whissendine for their raids on Coventry during World War II. It ceased grinding corn in 1952 (by then it was powered by an engine) but continued with cattle feed until 1960.

This was one of three mills that once existed in Wymondham, the others being a brick built post mill at the top of Brickyard Lane, and a steam mill on Edmondthorpe Road (Joe's Garage). Nothing now remains of these.

The windmill here is partially restored, and the cap was replaced in the 1980s. It is open for viewing, providing a superb view of the village and surrounding unspoilt countryside.

A 'Wymondham Junction' sign is mounted on a wall at the Windmill. This is obviously a replica, but the original might have come from the other Wymondham, in Norfolk, as there was never a junction here and the station was actually called Edmondthorpe and Wymondham Station.

Turn right out of the Windmill car park and head down Butt Lane – named after the archery butts that used to be here in the Middle Ages, for battle practice no doubt. John Berkeley was granted 'Free Warren' of a large field called Big Conery, on the south side of Wymondham by Edward III, in recognition of the skill of the Wymondham bowmen at the battle of Crécy in 1346. The first property on the right before the bridge is point 2a, Station House. On your left, visible from the bridge, is 2b, The Old Station.

2 • Station Master's House/The Old Station

As you walk down the hill from the Windmill, on the right is Station House (2a), which was the station master's house. This looks like a modern bungalow, but is in fact a 19th-century timber building with a modern brick cladding. At the rear, on private property, remains one of two timber 'navvies cottages', now used as a storeroom and Grade II listed.

Look over the bridge parapet to the left to see the old station (2b), now a private house. It was once possible to buy a through ticket from here to Wymondham in Norfolk (pronounced 'Windum'), though you would have had to change trains. This line was the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway from Saxby to Bourne. Charles Stansfield Wilson, well known to railway enthusiasts, was the engineer who supervised the works on the line and he lived at a house on Main Street during that time.

The large brick building in the field on the right across the bridge was

a loading shed for rail freight. The small derelict red brick building at the entrance to the field used to be a weighbridge.

At the bottom of Butt Lane, turn left onto Main Street, named the 'Kings Highway' on old maps, and immediately on your left you will see the (new) Manor House. There is a better view from across the street.

3 • The (new) Manor House

This building was erected by William Mann *c*1835, on land owned by Lord Harborough, as a shrine to Stilton cheese. Nicholas Pevsner, however, in his Leicestershire guide, dates it at about 1700. The design gives a birdcage effect, the arched brickwork on the roof, disguising the chimneys, being the handle. It was apparently a copy of a similar one in Stilton, no longer there.

William Mann made a fortune from farmhouse Stilton cheeses. Along with the Day family, who possibly made Stilton cheese in the Old Manor House dairy opposite, he monopolised the Stilton trade from the village after Frances Pawlett retired (see item 5, The Hunter's Arms).

John Morris made Stilton cheese in the dairy at this house, at the end of the 19th century. It is now owned by the Tollemache family, major landowners in the area (the Tollemache Arms is a pub in nearby Buckminster).

Stay on this side of the road to view the next point, which will be Manor Gardens (site of the old Manor)

4 • Manor Gardens – site of the old Manor

A new housing estate now occupies the site of the original manor house, owned by the lords of the manor of Wymondham – the families of Hamelin (*c*1150-1290),Berkeley (1290-1635) and Sedley (1635-*c*1700). Archaeological excavation prior to the new development uncovered the remains of the old manor house known to exist from an estate map of 1652. The old Manor was no longer smart enough for the now more wealthy owners, who built the new Manor you have just seen opposite. So this old house was then abandoned and the buildings used for farm purposes.

The dig also found evidence of earlier, medieval structures in the form of post holes and ditches. The old 16th century dairy, hastener and maturing rooms, for making cheese, have now been incorporated into the new build and can be seen from Edmondthorpe Road.

These could be some of the oldest surviving cheese maturing buildings in England, dating from before 1650. Stilton cheese was made in the dairy for many years, until restrictions imposed in 1940 stopped production.

Turn right into Edmondthorpe Road. A short distance down, past the new housing estate, on your right hand side at No 4, is 'The Hunter's Arm's.

5 • The Hunter's Arms

This Grade II listed building, was formerly a pub, The Hunter's Arms, which closed in June 1997. In the 18th century it was the home of Mrs Frances Pawlett, who did much to establish the reputation of Stilton cheese. Her recipe produced a quality cheese of much higher standard than some others being produced in local dairies.

She and her second husband William Pawlett, who also had a good head for business, marketed the cheese well. They supplied Cooper Thornhill, the landlord of the Bell Inn at Stilton on the Great North Road, with considerable quantities of Mrs Pawlett's own recipe cheese.

Mrs Pawlett died a wealthy woman on Christmas Eve 1808 at the age of 88. The inscription on her slate headstone (which can be seen in the churchyard not far from the church door) reads: 'Remember to Die', as she had outlived her son and most of her other close relatives, who could have expected an inheritance.

Continue along Edmondthorpe Road and turn right into Nurse's Lane. Follow this lane along and around to the right. At this point you will pass two paths giving access to St Peter's Church on your left. Continue past both of these, as we will be visiting the Church at a later stage in the trail (item 8).

Old Crown Cottage (No 12 Nurses Lane) was bought by the Church wardens and overseers as a poorhouse in 1778 for £21.

As you proceed up the lane, if you glance across to your right you will get an even better view of the (new) Manor House.

Continue along Nurse's Lane, rejoining Main Street, and turn left. Walk along, then turn left into Church Lane. To your right you will see the Village Hall.

6 • The Village Hall

Construction of the Village Hall was financed through local fundraising. Colonel Grenfell of Rookery Lane was the chairman of the fundraising committee. Events to raise money included a Gala Fête held by Colonel Gretton at Stapleford Hall, a collection at the annual meet of the Cottesmore Hounds on the green here in the village and considerable donations from a great many villagers.

The hall, built in a traditional style, was opened in 1928 by Colonel Gretton of Stapleford Hall. It was originally lit by large gas lamps that had to be lowered every time they were lit. Also the water came from a well remaining from a row of cottages that were originally on that site. This well is still there, under the floor, about one metre in front of the stage.

The use of the hall was stepped up during World War II, when there was a huge influx of British and American soldiers and airmen and also Land Army girls. Regular dances were held in the hall to boost morale. Many romances were probably generated in this atmosphere. It was also used for some time as a classroom annex by the old primary school next door.

Today it is used regularly by Wymondham Players, the Badminton Club and the Civic Society for films, stage shows etc.

The last building on the left, before the churchyard, is the Reading Room.

7 • The Old Grammar School/Reading Room

This stone building to the left of the Lych-Gate was originally 'The Old Grammar School'. Built *c*1670 on the instigation of the Trustees of the Sir John Sedley Charity, as a school for the education of the children of Wymondham.

Sir John, who died in 1638, left £400 to be used for educational purposes for the villagers of Wymondham. A plaque on the wall said 'Founded by Sir John Sedley Barr AD 1637'. This original plaque is now in the church.

In 1881 the grammar school moved to the new building on the Melton Road. This original old grammar school was then bought and restored by the Rector and Church Wardens and opened as a parish reading room. The necessary purchase money was apparently raised by public subscription.

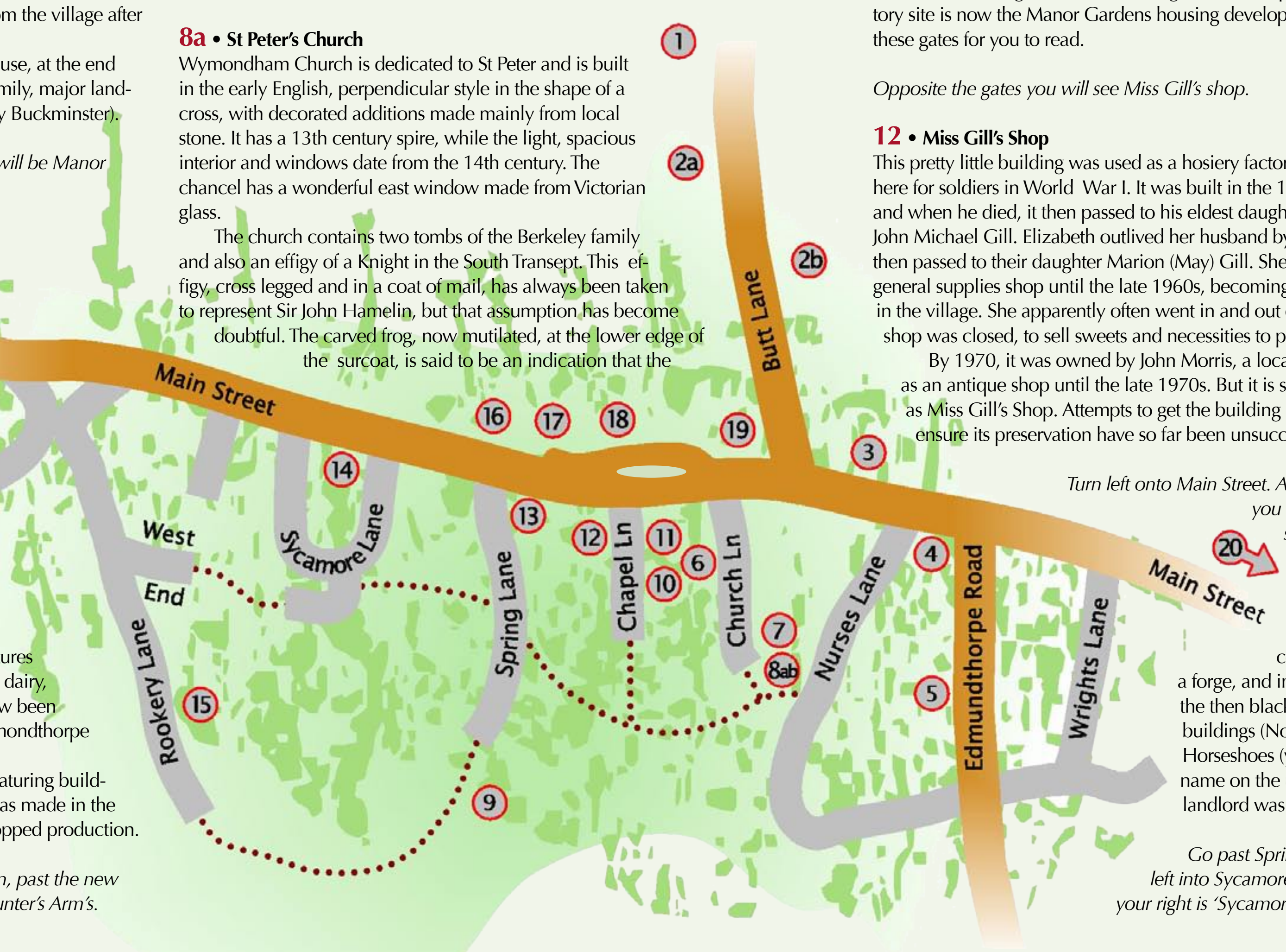
A slate slab (now gone) was then erected with the inscription 'St Peter's Reading Room'. Sadly, the Reading Room lost all its books in the 1950s and then became a snooker club. It was eventually sold and is now a private residence.

Pass through the Lych Gate and enter the churchyard. The Lych Gate was built in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and is Grade II listed.

8a • St Peter's Church

Wymondham Church is dedicated to St Peter and is built in the early English, perpendicular style in the shape of a cross, with decorated additions made mainly from local stone. It has a 13th century spire, while the light, spacious interior and windows date from the 14th century. The chancel has a wonderful east window made from Victorian glass.

The church contains two tombs of the Berkeley family and also an effigy of a Knight in the South Transept. This effigy, cross legged and in a coat of mail, has always been taken to represent Sir John Hamelin, but that assumption has become doubtful. The carved frog, now mutilated, at the lower edge of the surcoat, is said to be an indication that the man represented had participated in a Crusade. This being the case, the representation would be that of Sir William Hamelin, Great Grandfather of Sir John, who is known to have accompanied Robert, Earl of Leicester on The Third Crusade.



8b • The Market Cross

Outside the church, just immediately to the right of the church door (as you look towards the porch), stands the rather dilapidated remains of the medieval Market Cross. It used to stand on Main Street, near the present Post Office, but was moved to this spot, possibly in the 1830s for safe keeping.

On February 12 1303, when his army was at Dunfermline, Edward I granted John Hamelin and his heirs the right to hold a weekly Monday market at the manor of Wymondham, probably a reward for services rendered in battle.

As you leave the porch of the church, take the path to the right of the war memorial, leading down to the metal kissing gates. In the paddocks on your left, you may be lucky enough to see two pet llamas, named Lopez and Mr Peru.

Follow the path ahead. At the next junction, you have the opportunity to follow the map to the location of the former Roman Villa, although we must point out that it is now covered up and there is nothing to see.

9 • The Roman Villa/Medieval Village

In 1796 and 1865 local antiquarians uncovered geometric mosaics in farmland to the south side of the village that were assumed to be part of a Roman villa. The site was then left untouched until the summer of 2002 and 2003, when archaeologists from the University of Nottingham and the Belvoir Community Centre at Bottesford investigated it. Preliminary geophysics revealed the presence of structures in two fields: Great Gann's (east) and Gann's Close (west). A series of trenches were subsequently dug and extensive mosaic flooring revealed.

By the end of the project the floor plan of an extensive villa had been partially recovered with evidence of hypocaust systems (underfloor heating) and a range of tessellated floor surfaces indicating the high quality of the buildings. Pottery finds dated predominantly from the late 2nd to 3rd centuries AD and were made up largely of Nene Valley beaker sherds.

Pottery finds tailed off in the later 4th century, suggesting the villa was then out of use. The excavations revealed that the villa lay very close to the surface of the farmland and that the remains had suffered some plough damage. Unfortunately, further excavations have not yet been possible, so many questions remain unanswered: chiefly, where is the fine mosaic (pictured below), uncovered in 1796 and illustrated in John Nichols' *Antiquities of Leicestershire* (1798).

Gann's Close field also contains evidence from a medieval village and it is unclear how these may relate to the earlier Roman structures.

If you do not take the detour to the Roman villa site, turn right up the path leading to Chapel Lane. As you walk the path, diagonally to your right over the wall, you will see the Priory.

10 • The Priory

This grade II listed house can be best seen as you start to walk up Chapel Lane. It is not as old as it looks, however, as it is actually Victorian. It was built *c*1840, when some cottages along Back Walk, near the entrance to the church, were demolished. It is believed some of the stone decorative features used on the front of the house came from the old Manor when it was pulled down. The plaque on the front is dated 1637, which coincides with the date of the old Manor House.

Continue along Chapel Lane to the top where you will see the Norfolk Herb Garden gates.

11 • The Norfolk Herb Garden gates

On Chapel Lane, close to the junction with Main Street are these wrought iron gates which were crafted by an 80 year old man. They allude to the Hill family's business of making sauces and stuffings at the old Space Foods factory. The factory site is now the Manor Gardens housing development. There is a plaque by these gates for you to read.

Opposite the gates you will see Miss Gill's shop.

12 • Miss Gill's Shop

This pretty little building was used as a hosiery factory and socks were made here for soldiers in World War I. It was built in the 1880s by Edward Garnham, and when he died, it then passed to his eldest daughter, Elizabeth Mary, wife of John Michael Gill. Elizabeth outlived her husband by several years and the shop then passed to their daughter Marion (May) Gill. She continued running it as a general supplies shop until the late 1960s, becoming a well known character in the village. She apparently often went in and out of the back door, when the shop was closed, to sell sweets and necessities to people she knew well.

By 1970, it was owned by John Morris, a local businessman, who ran it as an antique shop until the late 1970s. But it is still known today by villagers as Miss Gill's Shop. Attempts to get the building listed by English Heritage to ensure its preservation have so far been unsuccessful.

Turn left onto Main Street. After the chapel on your left you will see 'The Three Horseshoes' and the Forge.

13 • Three Horseshoes Inn/The Forge

From the mid 18th century, 32 Main Street was a forge, and in the early19th 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'.