

Middleton Cheney Heritage Trail

Welcome to the Middleton Cheney Heritage Trail [this walk is Dedicated to the Memory of Mr Leonard Jerrams and Mr William Wheeler, we hope that you will find the journey both rewarding and enjoyable.](#)

(Please park with consideration) 1. Start the walk at the top of Washle Drive, thought to be a derivation of, "Wash Hole" where the villagers in times gone by carried out their annual laundry.

Follow the main road through the village, noting the large house on the right hand side of the road, although no remains of the original manors can now be found; Middleton House is situated in an area, which was known as Manor Farm on old maps of the village. The village was originally two hamlets, Upper or Church Middleton, and Lower or Nether Middleton where you are presently walking. The village was divided In this way as early as the reign of Henry II (i.e. 1154-1189)

2. On the left is Lower Green, one of the cottages on the right - hand side was once the home of a village carrier, Fred Penn.

The tailboard of Fred's cart was known as the 'cratchett' this could be lowered and held in place by chains. Boxes of oranges were stacked here and local boys used to follow the cart and squeeze the oranges out through the wooden slats, their friends giving the game away by shouting, "Whip behind" - Fred would flick his whip over his shoulder to prevent any of the pilfering but eventually had to wrap up the fruit in sacking to put a stop to the game.

The New Inn Public House was originally a farmhouse and probably the venue for the first Baptist Community meeting in the village in about 1740. The Baptist Chapel was later built in Upper Middleton and made an unfortunate appointment in 1781, when the new Minister from Wales, 'being imperfectly acquainted with the English language' continued only for a few months.

3. Turn left into Salmons Lane.

At the end of the Pub car park you will see a very old house on the left which was until recent times a bakery. The house was originally built in the 16th Century and enlarged In the 18th and 19th Centuries.

Mr Edward Kilpack was one of the village bakers and delivered his bread by carrying it In two baskets before becoming affluent enough to purchase a horse and cart and venture further afield.

Follow the road around to the right, into Bragginton's Lane.

A row of houses on the left hand side have all been demolished.

This row all had their backs to the lane and the entrance was via a passageway, which led to more cottages at the top of the garden.

The only original cottage is the old house on the left, which belonged to the Bayliss family for many years. In the early 1900's a schoolteacher Blanche Warner, was shot accidentally by her young man, Fred Bayliss, luckily, she received only a flesh wound and later married him.

4. Turn right into Royal Oak Lane.

The cottage immediately on your right was noted as the Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1814. Standing in the present day garden was a further cottage and a barn or weaver's shop. All these properties were sold in 1849 for the princely sum of £70.

Next door to the Chapel was a Grocery Shop and a coal and wood merchant's business. When this shop was trading you could buy the weekly groceries in quarter pound weights. (113 grams) The modern houses on the right hand side are built on what was once a Paddock, used by a number of allotment holders for threshing corn. This was always a dusty, thirsty job and therefore called for liquid refreshment. On one occasion the workers eagerly approached the wicker-covered stone jars and one of them pulled out the cork for the first swig... of varnish

The next house on the left, set at right angles to the lane was known as the Royal Oak. This used to be owned by the village Carpenter and Wheelwright. It was in this yard that you could actually see a sawpit, where a crosscut saw was used to cut trees into planks or the requisite lengths of wood. This method of hand sawing required one of the operatives to be in the sawpit. The last house on the right was another village shop, also a grocer's. Once, an old sword was discovered hidden in the wall when it was being repaired, the sword was rusty but had a long blade and the remains of an ornamented handle. Could it have been removed from the site of the skirmish, which took place at Middleton during the Civil War in 1643?

5. Turn left and follow the main road, crossing Rose Hall Lane.

Notice the two old cottages at the top of this lane, both built in the 17th Century. A number of other cottages were condemned and demolished in the 1930's, in all fourteen places housed seventy-eight people in this area.

Continue along the main road, passing a barn conversion and some fine old buildings on your left. This area of the village is known as Middle Green. The last two houses on the left were originally the village Butchers Shop. The large wooden doors led to the yard where the slaughterhouse was located. On at least one occasion a bull managed to make a bid for freedom and caused havoc on the green, until he was eventually recaptured and met his untimely end.

6. Cross Horton Road.

You are now entering Upper, or Church Middleton.

Mary Ann Horton, Lady of the Manor, built the Almshouses in 1863 for retired workers on her estate. Each almsman had to be sixty years old, fifty five for a woman.

The committee had the power to evict any inmate who was guilty of insobriety, immorality or villainous misbehaviour. Men received an allowance of seven shillings a week, women six shillings with an extra payment of five shillings at Christmas which could be given in either money, coal or clothing.

Mock Tudor carvings decorate the Victorian Almshouses.

The Avenue stands on what were village allotments. These were the first council houses to be built in the village after the First World War at a cost of approximately

£900 each. They had all mod cons; a short walk along the road will lead you to one of the communal water pumps!

Continue along the Main Road, noting the widening of the grass verge outside number 95. This was where the shed that housed the horse-drawn village fire engine once stood.

It required four men to operate it, the water being pumped by hand. The engine, which bears the date 1837-1898 can be seen at Ablington Museum In Northampton.

7. If you would like a leaflet for Farthinghoe Local Nature Reserve . then call in at our newsagents.

. (See note at the end of the village trail).

Cross the Main Road at the traffic lights.

The Primary School was built in 1856, although the first schools in the village started In 1750 in what is now the churchyard.

In country districts It was the custom of labouring families to send their children to work at an early age. In 1868 a visitor to the county noticed that, 'All the boys in the agricultural villages begin work at the age of eight, a few as young as seven'. At a time when a man was earning eleven shillings a week, the four pence a day that a boy could earn was a valuable addition to the family budget.

Young girls in the village learned to make lace from the age of five or six. In fact this village was famed for the fine quality of the fabric produced. These girls were kept at work for many hours each day with little freedom to move. In 1841 a doctor commented on the high incidence of tuberculosis and digestive disorders, and bad circulation, which led to swollen ankles and chilblains.

8. Cross the High Street to the Dolphin.

Notice the War Memorial, this was given to the village by a Mr and Mrs Barnett in memory of their son who died of meningitis, aged 16, while training to be an officer. During the 1914-1918 War 185 men from the village served in the armed forces, 22 lost their lives. The holly tree which has been extensively cut back in recent years was a source of income to the village crier, as the parish council allowed him to sell the branches at Christmas time to supplement his wages.

Arthur Mold a local lad who found fame playing cricket for Lancashire and England in the 1880's once owned this pub.

In 1878, Joseph Arch, organiser and leader of the English Agricultural Labourers addressed a meeting at the Dolphin when farm labourers were beginning to protest against low wages and harsh living conditions in the village.

9. Continue along the High Street until you reach the Red Lion.

Notice the date stone 1696. The car park on the opposite side of the road was known as Red Lion Close and for many years this was where a visiting fair would set up roundabouts and swings.

Coconut shies and other stalls lined the grass verge, which was between the very rough road and equally rough footpath.

Next we come to the village Forge. Farm machinery was taken to the Blacksmith to be repaired, harrows to be re-sharpened, ploughs repaired. Long lengths of wrought iron were stacked outside ready to be cut into shorter lengths for shoeing. The blacksmith's garden was on the opposite side of the road, as was his toilet, consequently the family had a longer journey than most when they felt the call of nature.

The Old Forge

10. Continue along the High Street to Rectory Lane, then turn left. Rectory Farmhouse on the left once had a rick-yard, stables and a cattle yard. Children of the village used to sit along the adjoining church wall to watch as hundreds of sheep were driven along the dusty lanes to the farm for dipping.' On the opposite side of the lane, behind the wall, is the Rectory (now a residential home for the elderly). It was built in 1792 by the Rector Ralph Churton. Seventy years later it was completely restored by the Reverend Buckley, largely at his own expense. It is interesting to note that at this time there was an agricultural strike in the village in protest at the low wages being paid!

11. Turn left at the end of Rectory Lane.

The last cottage in the row on the right was once a Public House known as The Snob and Ghost (Snob is a Northamptonshire term for a shoemaker). The Church and graveyard are well worth visiting; a separate leaflet is available if you are interested.

On the north side of the church you will notice a First World War Memorial, it is alleged that this memorial has been erected on top of the graves of parliamentary soldiers (Roundheads) who were killed in the Battle of Middleton Cheney on 6th May 1643. The King's papers report that a Royalist detachment commanded by a Captain Trist encountered Roundhead troops in close formation in the Town Field at Middleton Cheney. The Roundheads made a stand, firing their brass cannon and volleys of musket shot - however the Royalists counter-attacked and completely defeated them. It is stated that 217 Parliamentarians were killed and 300 taken prisoner - along with their brass cannons, 400 muskets, 150 pikes and almost 500 swords. The church register mentions that 46 Parliamentary soldiers were buried in the churchyard the next day.

To the south of the church, take time to notice the large, ornate tomb on the far side of the churchyard, which was restored in the 1990's. It was erected in memory of the Horton family who built a Manor House (now demolished), contributed to the restoration of the Church in the 1860's, erected the almshouses and were generally held in high regard in the village. The Horton family had made their fortune in the Framework-Knitting industry in the 18th Century.

Continue along Church Lane until you reach Queen Street. The Methodist Church is on your right. In 1875 when the population of the village was 1,200 the Non-Conformists, often known as Dissenters comprised almost half of the inhabitants. In 1886 all three chapels were accused-of preaching politics.

12. Continue along Queen Street passing the Baptist Chapel on your left.

Most clergymen were hostile to the Dissenters and Middleton Cheney appears to be no exception. An extract from the parish records notes, "A passing bell, goes if desired, for every death in the parish; but no bell on the day of the funeral if the corpse is to be interred at the (Baptist) Meeting House. This rule was adopted in 1797; several persons, not dissenters, having been kept long after dark at a funeral at a meeting.' The housing development on the right known as 'Ten lands' is the site of The Holt, the manor house built by Mary Ann Horton in the 1860's. Sadly the house has been demolished but the impressive building to the right of the entrance which has been extended and modernised, was once the coach house and stables.

13. Turn left at the end of Queen Street and retrace your steps along the Main Road. These allotments on your left were known as the little Ground and were originally allocated to the infirm or pensioners.

gifts of coal were included in this charity. We believe the village work house was located in this area.

14. When you reach Middle Green detour left the last house on the left, 'The Five Bells' was originally a coaching Inn. Entrance to the stable yard would have been via a lane, called 'The Leys', leading from the Main Road to the back of this building.

15. The thatched cottage to your right was originally two wellings, one being the home of clock and watchmaker, Thomas 'infold in the 1760's. He was particularly noted for his turret locks but is also known to have made the church clock in shipping Warden and repaired many of the church clocks in the surrounding district. Have a look at the garage of this cottage - it 'was once a framework-knitting workshop. The long wooden lintels indicate its original use as the workers needed as much natural light as possible when they were weaving.

continue round 'The Green' noticing the house near to the post box in the wall. This was also a village bakery; the cottages would take their Sunday roast along to be cooked in the large oven. A barn used to be situated to the right of the gateway and was converted to a clubroom and dance hall, it is said that any of the village romances started at Markham's Hall.

16. The large house, Lexton House, with the imposing gates (recent addition), was originally a farmhouse and has a date-stone 1691. In the 1860's a Surgeon, Frederick Croome, occupied this house. The family were interested in the village people and his daughters made many visits to the school, to serve children at their lessons and to provide sewing for the needlework classes. Doctor Croome was particularly interested in the welfare of the village children and the school log records show on January 31st 1866 - a gentleman of the medical profession visited the school for the purpose of examining the success of vaccination practised in this district by Doctor Croome.. This visit took place one year before vaccination (within the first three months of a child's life,) was made compulsory. In spite of recent outbreaks of smallpox in Banbury, the local population was very suspicious of the process and not everyone appreciated the medical profession's endeavours on their behalf. In June, 1875 the Banbury Guardian read that the first local man to be imprisoned for not having a child vaccinated was a labourer from Middleton Cheney, who was greeted by bands, flags and a purse of sovereigns when he marched to Banbury after his release from Oxford Jail.