



HALLATON • MUSEUM •

A walk round Hallaton: A Historic Village Trail



Introducing Hallaton

One of England's most picturesque villages, Hallaton lies approximately 16 miles south east of Leicester, and 8 miles north east of Market Harborough. Popular with horse riders, cyclists and walkers, the countryside around the village provides stunning vistas of beautiful undulating countryside, with a patchwork of ancient ridge and furrow fields, rich grazing and agricultural land, meandering streams, woodland and leafy lanes. The early ridge and furrow methods of cultivation, cut across by the enclosure hedges of 1771, surround the village.

Mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 under the old name of Alctone (derived from two Old English words meaning a settlement in a narrow valley), Hallaton had at least 26 male villagers and was worth 100 shillings. It is thought that Castle Hill, with its motte and bailey earthworks, may have been in existence more than 1,000 years before the Normans reached the village. Over time, Hallaton became an important market town with charters going back to the 1300s and, until the mid-19th century, large agricultural fairs and an annual horse fair were held here. However, as Market Harborough grew in importance, so Hallaton's significance waned.

Hallaton has grown over many centuries and therefore exhibits a wide variety of building styles and materials. The early houses were of wooden frame construction; a number still exist with cruck beam gable ends. Later buildings utilised the local ironstone and limestone, with many houses having extra storeys added in the 18th century, often using locally made bricks. Other constructions of interest to be seen on a walk around the village are the mud walls, and the ancient cobbled pavements.

The village also has more than 60 Grade 2 listed (by Historic England) properties, one Grade 1 listed building (Church of St Michael and All Angels) and one scheduled historic monument (Hallaton Motte and Bailey Castle).

The 1851 census recorded a population of 691 with occupations ranging from apothecary to castrator and watchmaker as well as the full range of agricultural trades. Over the years there has been a significant decline in the number of people employed in agriculture and most of the local trades and shops have closed. The village now has a population of over 600 most of whom work outside the village.

Bottle Kicking & Hare Pie Scramble

No quintessential English village would be complete without an annual tradition, and Hallaton is no exception, with its annual Hare Pie Scramble and Bottle Kicking Contest, held on Easter Monday. This ancient custom is well-documented in a display at Hallaton's 'Tin Tab' museum, and on the internet, but as a brief introduction, after a series of parades around the village, the vicar distributes Hare Pie and penny loaves to the crowd before the festivities move to Hare Pie Bank where two opposing teams engage in a battle to carry 'bottles' of beer across their boundary line in a loose fore-runner of the game of rugby. The winners then scale the historic Buttercross to sample the beer. The origins of the contest are shrouded in the mists of time, and are as hotly contested as the Bottle Kicking itself, but for present-day villagers, visitors and contestants enjoy a day of merriment.



Revolting behaviour! - The annual Bottle Kicking has always had a reputation for exuberant behaviour, often caused by over-indulgence of the local ales. One parson decided to put a stop to this by banning the contest. To achieve this, he refused to provide the hare pie. The angry villagers stormed across the rectory lawns and demanded re-instatement of the ancient custom with cries of NO PIE - NO PARSON'. The villagers won - the parson asking his housekeeper to bake the pie immediately. To this day the ancient custom continues.



Why not pay a visit to the museum, at the Tin Tab next to the church at the top of Churchgate.

Alternatively, more information about the village can be found at these two locations:

<https://www.hallaton.uk.com/history/>

[Hallaton The Story of the Village: The Pre-War Years](#)

Museum Opening Times:

Easter Monday 12-2pm

Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays

from 1st weekend in May until the first weekend in October

2.30—5pm

Weekdays—by appointment

Conducted village walks are available by prior arrangement, as are guided walks to Castle Hill.

A per capita fee is charged for each walk.



If you have enjoyed your walk around, and learning about, our beautiful historic village, we would invite you to consider making a donation to the museum. All donations to the Hallaton Museum fund are welcomed.

Contact:

The Secretary
museumhalla-
ton@gmail.com



Hallaton Museum

The Village Trail

The trail starts at the village green. Stand with your back to Cross Farm, looking slightly uphill at the green

1 The squat conical Butter Cross is medieval, possibly 16th Century, in construction and was traditionally used by farmers' wives as a place to sell their dairy produce. Adjacent is the War Memorial listing the names of fallen soldiers.

2 The thatched cottage on the north side of the village green behind the memorial was originally a smithy.

3 Turn to your right and walk past The Bewicke Arms. One of two surviving of the seven former pubs in Hallaton, this 400-year-old thatched pub used to be called The Leaden Lover.

4 Continue straight up Eastgate (don't turn left as the road bends). On the right is Rectory Cottage. Note its unusual window mouldings: these are believed to have been rescued from a redundant chapel in neighbouring Blaston.

5 Shortly after Rectory Cottage, turn left down the footpath 'Crow Alley' Which takes you past a brick and ironstone house which used to belong to the local fellmonger, and the tanning pits and drying shed are still visible in the back garden.

6 At the end of the path, turn right up Eastgate. The gable end of the Old Bakehouse (no. 36) has a datestone of 1718, and the house has examples of some superb decorative brickwork known as diapering. Immediately opposite are the grounds of Hallaton Hall, which was used by the hunting fraternity in the early 20th century.

7 Continue walking up Eastgate and look right along North End where you will see a terrace of 6 houses, built in the 1920s with the proceeds of the Stenning Bequest, a local charity which still benefits the village today as part of the Hallaton and Isabella Stenning Trust. These properties are noteworthy because of their prominent drainpipes.

8 The Fox Inn marks the top of Eastgate, and looks down North End, the site of the annual horse fairs which by Royal Order in the mid-1500s had been moved to this new location from the High Street.

10 Retrace your steps down Eastgate past an attractive group of very different houses. Rose Cottage was once the 'Queen's Head' inn, its cellar extending beneath Stone House next door.

During its time as a licenced premises, Rose Cottage had a somewhat dubious reputation and wasn't frequented by respectable folk. One very elderly village resident recalled a childhood memory of walking past and 'seeing girls dancing on the tables'!

9 Just beyond the pub is Hacluits Pond, a shallow spring-fed pond with a hard base named after the Lord of the Hacluit's Manor of Hallaton, John Hacluit, around 1350.

12 The High Street contains a variety of cottages and houses. The brick terrace cottages (on your right) built in 1873 are particularly attractive.

The wide, long street now known as North End was set out specifically for use as a horse fair, where the horses could be shown and traded. People came to these fairs from as far afield as London including one buyer who was recorded as a 'Mr. Taylor of Islington, near London'. Leicestershire, at that time, was famous for the 'Midland Black' they were brought here for the carriage trade in London.

11 Just before turning into the High Street, note the gable end of No. 45 'Corner House' which has an enduring piece of political graffiti. A remnant for the first Parish Council Elections in 1894, the painted sign 'Vote for Bankart' can just be seen on the brickwork and is reputed to have been written on behalf of Mr Bankart, owner of Hallaton Hall, who was duly elected the first chairman of the Parish Council in 1894. It's a rare piece of history, difficult to read but still visible with careful scrutiny. This road junction is also marked by two very fine Georgian town houses on either side of the road.

13 On your left is a mixture of Victorian and individual older cottages. The thatched cottage on the corner (no. 22) was originally a village shop.

15 Nos. 19 to 23 High St are an interesting group of properties. No. 23, a town house, is noteworthy for the fine round topped windows over the door. Next to this is the Old Oak House which used to be the 'Royal Oak' pub until 1993. The gable end of no. 19, dated 1872, shows considerable evidence of re-building both upwards and backwards.

16 Nos. 12- 16 High St are alms-houses built as part of the Stenning endowment. Around the corner in Horn Lane is the Stenning Hall built in 1925, the architectural features referred to in 7 above are conspicuously repeated!

14 On the opposite corner, the house with the large window and the fancy bargeboards was originally a butcher's shop (one of six in 1851). Behind it lies the slaughterhouse which has now been converted into residential accommodation.

19 Another former village shop forms part of a group of interesting stone and brick houses. On the other side of the road is an interesting building. Contrary to popular belief, this is not a gaol, but a stone conduit which used to supply water to this part of the village.



20 As the road bends to the left, take a look up to the right at the end of the terrace where you will see the former 1822 Baptist Chapel. This well-proportioned building, now converted to a private house, has its own small graveyard which contains a monument to the Baines family.

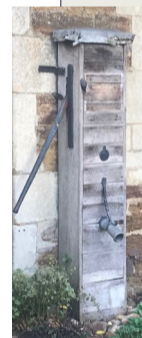
18 The bottom end of the High St contains a mixture of brick and stone houses with slate and thatch roofs. Many of the older properties have had their roof lines raised - an indication of increasing prosperity. An unusual feature is the 'barley twist' window surrounds of no. 4.

21 For those interested in seeing the village from afar, consider taking a detour of no more than a mile (1.6km): as you come back down past the green (on your left), cross the road and enter the passageway called 'Tenters Path' under one of the village houses. Continue along the path and cross the footbridge over the stream into Hare Pie Hill, the site of the annual Bottle Kicking contest held every Easter Monday between teams drawn from Hallaton and neighbouring Medbourne.



23 On reaching the road, turn left and head toward the church.

Hallaton Grange, dated 1691, is the impressive house on the left with a front door noteworthy for its high quality brass door furniture. Of interest is the adjacent brick outbuilding with its two bricked in doorways. On the other side of the road lies the former walled kitchen garden and the imposing carriage house, built in 1842.



24 On the right is another of the village's pumps, complete with wooden surround. The wooden protective casing would have protected the mechanism from winter frosts.

25 Just in front of the church, turn right up 'Hunt's Lane'. As you draw level with the new bungalow on your left, turn round and look at the north wall of the thatch and ironstone cottage next door, where you can see evidence of a cruck beam. The 1851 census recorded 22 properties and a total of 80 inhabitants in Hunt's Lane, as opposed to today's 8 houses and far fewer residents!

22 Continue to the top of the hill, passing some of the village's '45 Sentinels', the trees planted in 2020 in memory of each Hallaton soldier who lost their life in the Great War. At the top of the Hare Pie Hill, overlooking the village, is the site of the 'lost' chapel of St Morrell. Findings from recent archaeological digs suggest that the site has been in use for more than 2000 years, was a place of pilgrimage in medieval times, and probably the site of a roman temple. Return to the village via the same route, enjoying superb views of the village.

26 As you approach the allotments on your right, you are now in the ancient 'sunken lane'. If you wish, turn right into Hog Lane, and then enter the allotments where you can enjoy a brief rest at the picnic tables provided for villagers and visitors, whilst enjoying views of the village and its green spaces

27 At the top of Hunt's Lane, turn left and follow the road until you reach Glebe Farm. From here, you can follow the road approximately 1/2 mile (800m) where you will have a superb view of the castle. Alternatively, turn left down Tugwell Lane (a track). At the bottom, turn right through the gate and into the playing field, with its view over ridge and furrow fields and across to the castle.

'Hallaton Castle is the finest example of its type in Leicestershire. The monument survives in exceptionally good condition'.



28 Re-join the road: you are now in Churchgate. The first two houses on your left are Vine and Walnut Cottages, probably built in the 17th/18th centuries and showing evidence of considerable re-building, including raised rooflines. The building construction includes coursed and squared limestone rubble and ironstone rubble with some brick in gables, possibly replacing mud.

29 With its decorated brickwork, the village school and adjoining teacher's house is a fine example of Victorian civic architecture. One hundred and thirty years later the buildings are still fulfilling their vital role in the village community.

30 Two of Hallaton's three rectories are located between the Church and the school. The oldest lies at the end of the drive to your right and is, possibly, the site of the oldest known building in the village, which was probably a medieval open hall. The second, to its left, is early Victorian and built of finely coursed limestone with an imposing frontage to Cranoe Road. Both these structures should be compared with the modern rectory, further along Churchgate, which is now an annex to the

31 Here you will also find the village museum, situated in the 'Tin Tab' and with a range of interesting exhibits celebrating Hallaton's rich and varied history. The original museum was established by its benefactor, Mrs Honoria Whigham (née Bewicke) in 1978.

Oil on troubled water! - In the days when Hallaton's streets were lit by oil lamps, the local lamp lighter was known to be of a somewhat intemperate disposition. He was once found lying on top of his ladder in the pond, having attempted to place the ladder against the reflection of the light shining on the surface of the water.

32 Before visiting the church, take a look at the row of cottages facing the churchyard. On the left, constructed of ironstone and handmade brick, are three (now merged into two) alms-houses, with the central stone inscription recording how George Fenwicke (with £500 left by one Catherine Parker) bought and gave these apartments 'for three ancient poor women'.



There is a cool serenity about this lovely church, it is well worth a visit.

33 The trail finishes with a visit to the Church of St Michael and All Angels; one of Leicestershire's finest village churches retaining, as it does, many of its original medieval features. The broach spire is particularly fine, as is the George Fenwicke memorial on the north wall. In the north porch is a Norman tympanum showing St Michael slaying evil in the form of a serpent. Inside is a Saxon gravestone, suggesting a much earlier church. The aisles are 14th-century and there is some good 13th-century decoration to the chancel, as well as some exquisite 19th-century stained glass. Outside in the churchyard are many fine limestone and Swithland slate tombstone.

Listen for the chime of 'Old Dunmore' - a musical box made in 1779 which chimes every three hours.

'Old Dunmore's dead, that good old man, Whom we no more shall see. He made these chimes to play themselves. At six, nine, twelve and three'.

