

Bottesford



Local History Trail



Explore the historic village

Two easy walks around Bottesford,
in the vale of Belvoir, Leicestershire

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Origin of the image is the Record Office for Leicestershire Leicester & Rutland.



Bottesford is a Domesday village closely associated with the Counts, Earls and Dukes of Rutland, as is the neighbouring village of Muston. The names of adjacent hamlets, Easthorpe, Beckingthorpe and Normanton, indicate a mixed Saxon-Danish-Norse population before the Norman Conquest.

Evidence of the medieval villages includes the parish churches and market crosses of Bottesford and Muston, earthwork traces of lost buildings in fields at Easthorpe and Muston, and extensive "ridge-and-furrow". Final Parliamentary Enclosure of the great fields and conversion to hedged fields occurred in 1771.

The Grantham Canal was built through the parish in the 1790s, and two railway stations opened in 1850 and 1879 respectively, yet the area remained dominated by farming into the 20th Century. It was a centre of pastoral farming, widely known for cattle and pig breeding, cheese and market gardening. Its vineries once sent grapes and other produce to Covent Garden. Bottesford and Muston are still surrounded by open country close to where Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire meet.

There are several features from the 17th and 18th Centuries, such as the packhorse bridge known as Fleming's Bridge. The Earl of Rutland's Hospital was started late in the 16th Century. Four chapels were built and the village had five pubs or alehouses, not to mention a small barn theatre.

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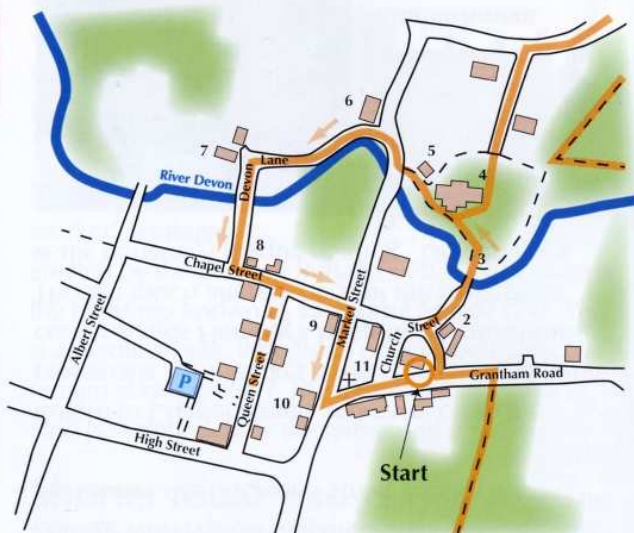
Most of the village formed part of the Duke of Rutland's estate till after the 1st World War. It became a local shopping and tourist centre: on May Bank Holiday, 1920, 700 people visited Bottesford by train. Horse-drawn waggonettes took rail visitors to Belvoir Castle. Industries have included brick and tile manufacture, e.g. the "Bottesford Blue" pantiles. The village had its own gas works until the Second World War.

Bottesford Airfield was constructed during 1941 as a bomber base, and there was also an important military fuel depot on the edge of the village. Bottesford claims the dubious distinction of being the last place in Britain to be bombed during the Second World War, on March 20th, 1945: fortunately, there were no casualties.

Today, the village retains its rural character in the setting of a modern village with shops, pubs and restaurants. It can be reached by train from Nottingham and Grantham, and buses connect with surrounding towns.

There is roadside parking and a free car park on Walford Close, signposted from the main road from Nottingham.

We wish you an enjoyable visit, and welcome your comments and suggestions.



Our walk starts outside the 18th Century **Red Lion Inn (1)**, in the centre of Bottesford on the old A52, the turnpike coach road from Nottingham to Grantham.



Take St Mary's Lane, the 'ginnel' which runs along the side of the Red Lion car park, then turn right into Church Street, passing **Six Bells**

House (2), an alehouse before the 1st World War. Six Bells and the Wyggeston Cottages behind it, belonged to Wyggeston Hospital, Leicester, from 1518 till fairly recently. To the left, No.7 Church Street is a handsome Georgian house with a date stone of 1761. Behind the wrought iron gate is the formal garden of the Old Rectory, which dates from the 17th Century.



Pass Six Bells, to approach the parish church via **Flemings Bridge (3)**. This arched sandstone footbridge takes its name from that of the rector, Dr Samuel Fleming, who had it built in 1620 as well as the almshouse still known as Fleming's Hospital. The story told is that the Reverend Fleming, crossing the River Devon in spate, was swept from his horse and nearly drowned. To prevent future mishaps, he ordered the bridge's construction.



Go through the gateway into St Mary's parish churchyard. The church (4) is well worth visiting in its own right, for its variety of architecture, its



gargoyles, and particularly for the beautiful 17th and 18th Century monuments to the Earls of Rutland, including the famous 'Witchcraft Tomb'.

This refers to the sad story of the Witches of Belvoir. St Mary's extensive churchyard has tombstones going back to the 1700's and the Civil War. A number commemorate airmen who lost their lives in the Second World War.



Leave the churchyard by the path past the north door, below the tower, where stone plaques show heraldic symbols and the de Roos arms. The Old Rectory is on the opposite bank of the River



Devon, and had its own footbridge until the 1980's. Leaving the churchyard, you pass **Providence Cottage (5)**, on which the date 1723

is picked out in its gable brickwork, though limestone masonry in the rear wall is probably older.

Over the road from St Mary's is the **Duke of Rutland's Almshouse (6)**. Begun in 1593, this was a home for elderly local men called Bedesmen and known for the elaborate uniform they wore to church. A separate women's almshouse, known as Dr. Fleming's Hospital, stands on Market Street. Take great care crossing the road, and follow Devon Lane to the left of the Almshouse to the ford. Here stands **The Green (7)**, a once timber-framed farmhouse with a date stone of 1621. In the corner to the right is the Primitive Methodist Chapel (1820).



Cross the late 18th Century footbridge by the ford, admiring the view of St Mary's spire, the highest in Leicestershire (207 feet according to Pevsner; others put it at 210 feet). Turn left at the junction with Chapel Street. On this corner is the **Old Bakery (8)** with a faint dated stone reading 1703. Among the grouping of old cottages here is the Wesleyan Chapel (1845).



A detour along Queen Street, now the main shopping street, leads to the Police Station with its blue lamp, built in 1842, one of the earliest purpose-built police stations in the country. Almost opposite is an old cottage with typical diapered brickwork, next to the former site of Queen Street windmill.

Return to Chapel Street, and carry on to the crossroads with Market Street. On the right hand corner stands **Fleming's Hospital (9)** almshouse. Though much altered, parts of the early stone walls remain. A plaque reading "Dr Fleming's



Hospital 1620" embedded in brickwork over the doorway commemorates its establishment.

Next door is 18th century Craven House, and then the remains of a cottage close with an old hand pump. Mains water did not reach the village until 1951. Further on stands an old coach house, now housing a small gallery and building society office.



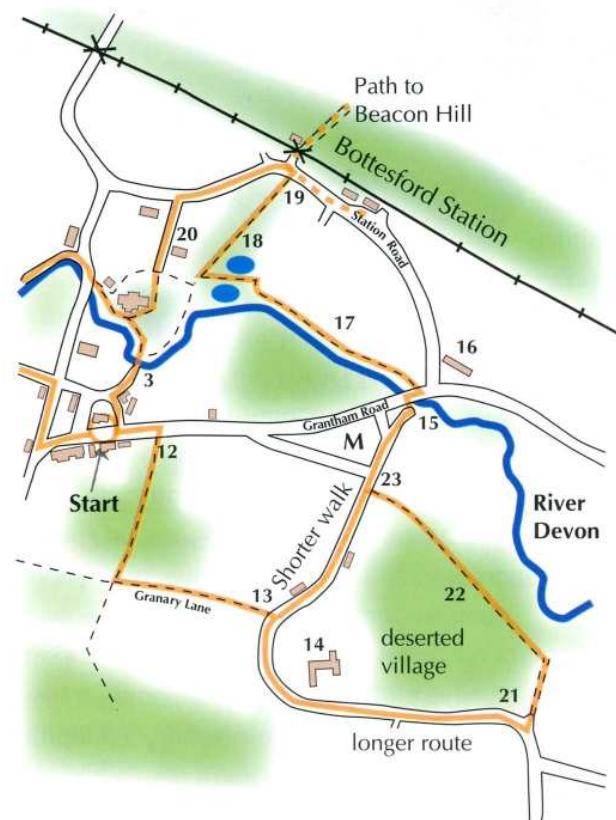
Market Street leads you to **The Bull Inn (10)**. Probably the oldest pub building in the village, this was once run by Olga Healey, sister of Stan

Laurel, and mementos of the visit of Laurel and Hardy in 1955 are carefully displayed. Adjacent to The Bull Inn is the former Belvoir Coffee House, built in 1881, the heyday of the Temperance Movement.

Turn left and cross Market Street (take care!) to the remains of the Fourteenth Century **Market Cross** and restored **village stocks and whipping post (11)**. Across the main road is the handsome Victorian school building (1854). An 1897 Jubilee Clock looks down from the building which now houses



the village library, Parish Room and Youth Club. After passing the stocks, you are back at The Red Lion (1).



The second walk goes, eastwards along the main road from the Red Lion.

Opposite are old part stone-built cottages, the 18th Century Daybell's Farmhouse and a stone-built barn. Daniel Daybell, who died in 1930, was an internationally famous pig-breeder who won 174 prizes at the Royal Show. Cross the road (take care!), pass through the gate (12) and follow the path through the paddocks, with traces of ridge-and-furrow in adjoining fields, to a gate into the corner of the playing field.

Now turn left along the leafy path, Granary Lane, to Easthorpe Lane (13). To the left are ornate Victorian farm worker's cottages



erected by the Duke of Rutland's estate. Opposite is the buildings known as **Easthorpe Manor (14)**. This is a medieval site, though no original buildings remain above ground. The almost circular area of land is surrounded by the remains of a moat.

Shorter route. At this point you can go to the left, passing the Millenium Green (M) to the main road. Cross this (again, with care!) and walk a few yards to the right, crossing the modern bridge over the River Devon, to the junction with **Station Road (15)**. In the trees a short way upstream is Bottesford water mill (no access). On the opposite corner is a late 18th Century terrace, **Bunkers Hill Cottages (16)**, named after the battle in the American War of Independence. One carries the words "Erected for the Poor, 1779". In 1851 they housed 17 families with 71 people.

Retrace your steps and take the footpath beside the River Devon (17) past modern houses and then between the ponds, usually occupied by noisy flocks of geese and ducks. At the junction with the footpath from the church, turn right and ascend the path (18) between meadows to reach Station Road (19). To your right is what remains of Victorian **station buildings** erected in 1850 by the Nottingham architect T.C. Hine for the Ambergate Railway.



A little closer is the later Station Master's house and opposite a level crossing keeper's cottage: both examples of Victorian workmanship. **If you**

wish you can take the footpath carefully over the level crossing to the top of Beacon Hill (10 minutes) to enjoy the wide view of Bottesford and the Vale to Belvoir Castle.

At the end of the field path (19) turn left along Station Road until you come to Church Lane on the left. Follow Church Lane with on your left converted buildings of Church Farm, formerly the Dorking Poor Farm (20), which once provided twice-daily milk deliveries to the villagers. The handsome Victorian building to the right is Beckingthorpe House. At the churchyard gate, you can walk through the churchyard as shown on the map, or turn left to skirt the churchyard and then right along the leafy riverside path, to cross back over Fleming's Bridge, and so back to the Red Lion.

Alternatively, at point (13), if you have stout footwear and are prepared to clamber over two stiles, turn right and follow the road around the curved perimeter of Easthorpe Manor, passing old cottages on the right. The road reaches a small green where a public footpath leads to the left (21) while the road itself bears right past Corner House, once a row of old cottages. Take the footpath and then, after 100 yards or so, cross a stile into the large field on the left. Keep dogs under strict control: the field often has cattle in it.

The path leads diagonally over this large rough field, crossing a series of mounds and marshy hollows that mark the site of a **medieval village (22)** (Scheduled Ancient Monument) that was abandoned at some point, perhaps when the Black Death afflicted the area in the 14th Century. A second stile leads up and out on to the road (23). Turn right and join the route already described past the Millenium Green (M).

We hope you enjoy your exploration. Although this booklet describes a tour largely confined to Bottesford, the parish also includes the small villages of Muston and Normanton, both of which have their share of old farmhouses and cottages. Muston also has a beautiful medieval parish church dedicated to St. John the Baptist, a late Georgian rectory, the remains of a medieval market cross and earthworks on the site of a medieval glebe farm.



For more information we recommend "The Book of Bottesford", by Michael Honeybone (the 2nd edition, 2002, may still be in print, and copies can be found in local libraries).

www.bottesfordhistory.org.uk