The Market Harborough Round: Introductory Remarks

Market Harborough: The Old Grammar School, after refurbishment. St Dionysius church is to the left and the Symingtons building - a former corset factory which now has multiple uses, to include Harborough District Council Offices - stands behind.

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You are advised to use OS Landranger Maps, 140 and 141.

Total Distance c. 81 miles. All our stated mileages are approximate and rounded: the grand total depends on selected options.

<u>This Round intersects with, and/or uses parts of, the following long distance footpaths</u>:

The Jurassic Way
The Leicestershire Round
The Macmillan Way
The Midshires Way
The Richard the Third Trail (our own)
The Uppingham Round (our own)

Having mapped ***The Uppingham Round*** and ***The Melton Round*** – both substantial long distance footpaths – we decided to do the same for Leicestershire's southern market town. Our aim was as before: using the named town as a centre we would walk a route that by necessity took the form of a very imperfect circle, using wherever possible off-road paths. In some ways, mapping the *MHR* was more of a problem then our previous two efforts, due to the availability of paths in certain locations, and because of the presence of wind farms in the southern sector. We reasoned that walkers might want to keep clear of these controversial objects, even if they would be visible for miles around. So one of our first draft routes which went very close to the Kelmarsh wind farm was changed, even if this meant a longer route overall.

As ever, the Round can be entered at any point and we've split the directions into easily manageable sections. And as before, we've tried to set a course that takes advantage of many fine views, as well as places of historical and cultural interest. The fact that we don't mention any particular place should not be taken as an indication that it is unworthy of attention – especially where village churches are concerned. Ours are primarily directions for walking, rather than a survey of the area, though some sites deserve a decent paragraph.

Mapped at a time of onerous cutbacks in local authority funding, we should point out that the conditions we encountered may not be maintained – paths may become somewhat overgrown, stiles a little unstable, waymarkers less visible as hedges grow up around them. Try as they might, those who look after footpaths and other rights of way now rely on members of the public to notify them of problems. We've certainly found that such notification brings a helpful and considerate response. Farmers generally cut paths through crops, but this cannot be guaranteed, and obstructions may occasionally be encountered at times in the growing season – oil seed rape being the biggest culprit. If necessary and practical, walk around the edge of the field to rejoin our directions. Please report problems to the appropriate local authority (Leicestershire County Council, or Northamptonshire County Council, via their very useful *Street Doctor* website, which contains the necessary interactive map for precise identification). Where appropriate because of conditions on the ground, or other factors, we have notated alternatives. For example, walkers who pass through Kelmarsh Tunnel on *The Brampton Valley Way* might like to repeat the experience further on with Oxendon Tunnel, rather than pass through Arthingworth. We strongly advise walkers to plan *The Brampton Valley Way* section in advance.

We have included most of our supplementary information in the directions text (see blocked paragraphs in bold type), aside from remarks about Market Harborough itself, which you will find at the end of this document. Bear in mind that website addresses may change over time, and that any quoted information we supply may also be updated. We will always try to maintain the accuracy of our information, but there are bound to be occasions when links fail. In these circumstances use your search engine to locate up to date web addresses.

For those interested in Leicestershire and Rutland's churches, which are often on the line of, or close to, public rights of way (PROW), the following website should prove interesting. It's 'Directory' lists the churches covered: ***https://www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk*** Bear in mind that websites come and go:

we will try to keep up with developments, but if anything disappears please let Leicestershire County Council, our primary host site, know.

We are extremely grateful for the help and cooperation we've received from members of Leicestershire County Council, Northamptonshire County Council (Highways) and Harborough District Council. Their assistance with footpath problems and/or website hosting facilities remains invaluable.

Finally, please keep in mind the Country Code. Please look out for the welfare of livestock and other animals, to include keeping an eye on your dog(s), leaving gates as you find them, and passing quietly through villages. If, like us, you use a two car system of point-to-point walking, please park with due consideration for other road users and local residents. Take you litter home, or use waste bins if you can find them.

All photographs were taken by DAW unless otherwise stated. We are very grateful for permissions to reproduce others, as noted in our captions.

NB: References to '5 bar gates' are generic; they include gates which are generally the same size as traditional wooden 5 bar gates, but which may be made of other materials and have additional bars. 'Gravel tracks or roads' covers a number of more-or-less similar identities – such paths may have more or less gravel than earth. 'Metalled roads' includes various permanent surfaces: tarmac, concrete, whatever. They are to be distinguished from gravel tracks, grassy tracks, etc. 'Farm tracks' may include any of the foregoing. Note too that all waymarkers were present at the time of our walking the route; they sometimes rot through and fall over, and can be less easy to spot from a distance because of hedge growth over time. But at no stage did we encounter any trouble with deciding on the way forward, simply using the OS maps indicated above.

Enjoy!

Elizabeth Bacon,
David A. Wragg,
Sue Wragg,

August 2017.

Hallaton to Tugby

Part of Hallaton churchyard.

Hallaton has a church described by Pevsner in *The Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland* as 'one of the most imposing' in 'one of the most enjoyable villages' in the county. Hallaton is the site of the annual 'bottle kicking' event; although this takes place on Easter Monday there are arguments for regarding it as a pre-Christian phenomenon. The Butter Cross is also a notable, Grade II listed, structure, near *The Bewicke Arms* on Church Lane. Hallaton was served by The London and North Western Railway (LNWR), which came to its end before the Beeching cuts of the mid 1960s. Parts of the trackbed are walkable, as a Permissive Path. Some fine bridges remain, to include structures with helicoidal arches. If you care to take a look, carry on along the road past *The Fox Inn* and the pond, then take the lane which leads off on the right to Allexton. Go down the slope to find the old bridge abutments. On the left you can climb up to the trackbed. The walkable section runs for a fair distance before it becomes overgrown, unfortunately some way short of East Norton tunnel. Further information about the LNWR can be found in Geoffrey Kingscott's very useful *Lost Railways of Leicestershire & Rutland* (Countryside Books, 2006), which puts its emphasis on walkable remnants.

See also our remarks about Market Harborough station and its historical railways at the end of this document.

Hallaton was the site of the discovery in 2000 of over 5000 late Iron Age and Roman coins (the largest such discovery on Britain), a Roman cavalry helmet, the remains of about 400 pigs, and other objects buried between about 50 BC and 60 AD, known as *The Hallaton Treasure*. Some of these discoveries can be viewed at Market Harborough Museum.

See ***www.harboroughmuseum.org.uk/hallaton-treasure/***

NB: Option 1 below has some fine views, but it runs through a very short downhill section which can be muddy in wet weather (marked between single asterisks * in paragraph 2 below), although there is a grassed area on the left which makes things easier. Additionally, Keythorpe Hall Farm can sometimes have a patch of slurry on the road, though there is a narrow verge which can be used here, and the farmyard usually has areas free of muck.

Option 1: 4 Miles

On the opposite side of the road to the *The Fox Inn* and the village pond locate the stile behind the verge, opposite to the footpath sign. This field may be full of horses, in movable paddocks. Take whatever route is indicated to the diagonal top right hand corner, keeping the barn up ahead on your right. Cross two stiles and aim for the top right hand corner of the field where you will find a waymarker and gate. Pass through and keep the hedge on your right. Holding your course, pass through another gate with a waymarker. Carry on with the hedge now on your left. Exit the field and hold your course, now the hedge on your right. You will come to another gate with a waymarker, giving access to a long and fairly narrow field, which you must cross to find another gate. Pass through and keep the wood on your right.

As the wood bends right and down to the bottom of the field locate another gate with a waymarker in the corner. Carry on down to the bottom of the dip to find the next waymarker at a broad farm track. *Turn left and continue down the slope, swinging right at the bottom.* After the metal gate and cattle grid, turn right at the waymarker and continue up the slope. As you breast the rise you will see the next waymarker up ahead. Continue on this course to pass the waymarker en route to Keythorpe Hall Farm. You are now walking on a hardcore farm track. Pass between the farm buildings until you arrive at a 'T' junction. Turn right and pass the pond. **The road swings left and arrives at a cross roads with a signpost. Go straight across and continue up the road into Tugby.

Option 2, Alternative wet weather route: **5 miles**

Go down North End opposite *The Fox Inn* and keep going out of the village. This road becomes Goadby Road. It does not carry through traffic and so is a good route for walkers. You will pass the hill on your left which was the site of a motte and bailey castle before crossing a stream. Those who wish to take the footpath across fields will see a waymarker on the right. (The alternative route is mapped out in our next paragraph, below). Climb up the grassy bank to the stile and waymarker. Enter the field and bear at a

slightly right diagonal to pass the hedge on your right. You are aiming for the top right hand corner of this huge field. (The hedge on the right bends away and eventually comes to an end at the point you are walking towards, which is invisible at the moment) As you continue this section of the walk there are splendid views all round. Cross the farm track at the end of the field, and take the stile with its waymarker. (This is the point where the hedge on your right ends, to allow the farm track to continue.) Turn through a sharpish right diagonal to find the metal gate which allows you to pass through the hedge and across the stream. Hold course into the next field (there should be a path cut through any crops) and continue up the rise of this immense field. Go through the hedge at the next metal gate and waymarker, and continue to hold course across this next smaller field. Go past the waymarker with no gate into the next, and larger, field. At the end of this field, cross the stile at the waymarker. The waymarker disc here indicates straight on (the path leads down to Goadby) but you must turn hard right to follow the farm track towards Tugby, which is not signed at this point. You have now joined part of *The Midshires Way*. Simply carry on - the track becomes a metalled road in due course - eventually passing Keythorpe Hall Farm on your right. Keythorpe Hall then comes into view up ahead. Follow the directions with a double asterisk ** in the previous paragraph to walk into Tugby.

For those who prefer a hard surface, simply carry on after the stream on Goadby Road. In time you will encounter an 'S' bend, after which the metalled road becomes gravelled, before reaching the top of rising ground to encounter a fairly flat open area with wide views. You will then arrive at a gap in the hedge up ahead, with a waymarker. This is the intersection with *The Midshires Way*, which comes in from your left, and is signed. Here, you must turn right onto the grassy track. (If you reach a T junction with the narrow country lane leading from Glooston to Goadby you have gone too far!) You are now heading pretty much due north towards Tugby. The track eventually becomes a metalled road and passes Keythorpe Hall Farm on your right, after which Keythorpe Hall comes into view. **Then follow the instructions above in Option 1 marked with the double asterisk** to arrive in Tugby**.

Tugby to Billesdon, via Rolleston: 5 miles

Go past *The Fox and Hounds* and find Main Street as a left turn. Walk past the 'Tugby Centre' to the dead end and pass through a gate with a house on the right. Continue with hedges on either side to go through the gate, then continuing with the hedge on your right. At the end of this long field hold course, still with the hedge on your right. At the end of this next field continue past the waymarker, passing the electricity pylon on your right to find the next waymarker in the hedge just up ahead. Cross the wooden footbridge and swing through a right diagonal to walk through the trees. (Do not take a right angle here into private land.) You will come to another waymarker with a hedge on your right, but as the grassy track swings to the right your route lies at a diagonal left across the field, which should be marked with a sign, and a line through the crops. The next waymarker should be visible up ahead at a gap in the hedge at the top of gently rising ground. The footpath continues at a right diagonal towards the trees. Enter the copse at the waymarker and continue to a 5 bar gate with another waymarker. Continue with the trees on your left to the next 5 bar gate and waymarker. Pass through and continue along the hardcore and grassy track to find the estate road at its end. For a view of Rolleston Lake turn left. The Round continues by turning right into Rolleston, with the Hall and church on your left as you progress.

Between Rolleston and Tugby, and Rolleston Lake.

Pass through another gate, and turn right onto the road marked 'Gated Road to Skeffington' ignoring the turn on your left marked 'Gated Road to Billesdon'. Proceed along the road through two 5 bar metal gates and walk on with the long line of trees on your left. You will in time come to another metal 5 bar gate. Continue along the road until you find the green sign marked 'Public Footpath to Billesdon 1¼ miles' on the left. Take this route and look for the next waymarker in the hedge on your right. Climb over the stile and continue at a left diagonal to the waymarker in the top left hand corner of the field. Cross the stile and note the next waymarker a few yards ahead which directs you to the other side of the hedge. Walk on keeping this hedge on your left. As the path swings right at the end of this field, find the waymarker at the edge of the copse. Pass through the trees and over two wooden footbridges, the second with a wooden gate. Pass through and head at a right diagonal through the field, carrying on past the waymarker at the corner of the hedge. Hold course for a 5 bar gate with its waymarker, up the slope ahead. Passing through, aim for the corner of the hedge in the field on your left. Hold course to find the exit from your field at the B6047. Cross the road and continue over the stile, using the spire of Billesdon church as your direction finder. Hold course to locate the waymarker in the hedge on the other side of the rise. Cross the stile and head once again for the spire – a waymarker should be visible atop the next rise. Pass by to find the exit onto the road in the field's bottom left hand corner. Turn right and walk into Billesdon. Pass the church and *The Queen's Head* pub. When you arrive at the T junction (*The New Greyhound* pub behind you) turn left into Leicester Road.

An early autumn view out of Rolleston, en route to Billesdon, initially via the road just visible on the right hand side of the trees up ahead.

Billesdon to Houghton on the Hill: 4½ miles

From Leicester Road turn right into Coplow Lane at the sign to Keyham, and then take the footpath just past the first house on your left, which proceeds between the hedges before very shortly swinging right at the waymarker to track the edge of the field. As you crest the rise, the A47, and beyond it Billesdon Coplow Wood, come into view. Carry on to cross the A47 via stiles and steps before crossing another, double, stile. Bear diagonally left to find another stile in the hedge. You may then find a stile standing all by itself without a fence. Proceed from here with the paddocks on your left. Cross another double stile with a waymarker and carry straight on across the field to find the next waymarker, visible over the field. Cross the bridge and carry on across the field to the next stile. Pass through a gap in the hedge to the next waymarker and stile in the hedge, and then head for the buildings up ahead. Exit this field at the waymarker in the right hand corner. Cross the stile and proceed to the five bar gate in the right hand corner of the field. Pass through this and the next gate to walk between the buildings. Carry on along the drive until you reach the road.

Cross the road and turn right, then almost immediately left at the footpath sign. Pass between the trees until you enter the field. Take a left diagonal course to find a wide track at a 'T' junction, and turn left. Pass through a gap in the hedge up ahead, and again at the waymarker, eventually keeping a hedge on your right. Pass through the next gate at the end of this field and continue with the hedge now on your left. Pass through the next gate with its waymarker and head at a slight right diagonal to find the waymarker in the right hand corner of this long field. Swing right to walk between the hedges. Pass through the gate, keeping the hedge on your right. At the next metal gate take the left hand option, as signposted by the disc next to the metal gate and aim diagonally across the field towards the trees. Locate the metal gate at the bottom of the slope which gives access onto the road. Turn left and just after the stream which passes under the road go through the second of two metal gates on the right into a large field, with a copse up ahead, as in this image:

A waymarker will come into view to the right of the trees. Carry on down the track (which may be muddy in winter) now with trees on your right, until you find a metal gate at the waymarker on the left hand side. Go through the gate and take a right diagonal up the field until you find a five bar gate with its waymarker in the hedge. Go through this gate and keep the solar farm on your left, with the hedge on your right. At the next waymarker swing right and aim for the farm buildings and farm cottages, ignoring the stile and waymarker which come up on your right. Still keeping the hedge on your right, go through the metal gate near the cottages and carry on until you reach the A47.

Houghton on the Hill to King's Norton, via Gaulby: 3 miles

Cross the A47 and proceed down Dean Gate Drive, taking the first left turn into Linwal Avenue, then turn right into St Catherine's Way, following this road round its left hand bend until you reach the T junction opposite the church. The footpath sign is just on your left; it points across the road and into the churchyard. Pass through the churchyard and exit via the metal gate, with a hedge on your left. (Ignore the option to turn left through this hedge, just before you reach the gate.) Pass through double metal gates and hold course up the rise to pass through two more. Cross the field heading towards the right hand corner. Pass the waymarker (whose direction disc points a misleading diagonal) and hold course down the gentle slope to the waymarker and gate at a gap in the hedge. Here, take the left option at a diagonal towards the copse in the distance. (This field usually has a path cut through the crops.) Carry on over the ridge until you reach the bottom of the field, where you can cross the stream by a wooden bridge. Bear diagonally right to find the next waymarker in the trees a short distance up ahead. Pass through the hedge line and turn left to keep the tall hedge and trees on your left. You will come to another waymarker where you must take a right diagonal up the rise to find the next one at a small gap in the hedge. Carry on through and across the field to the bottom left hand corner, where you will find the next waymarker. Go over the little plank bridge and take a left diagonal through the trees to continue at a slight left diagonal. Gaulby church now comes into view as you head up the rise. You will come to the bottom left hand corner of this field. Proceed up the next rise with the hedge on your left, emerging onto the road via a track between two houses. Turn left and immediately right into Norton Lane, and continue down this delightful country road into King's Norton.

St. Peter, Gaulby, makes an interesting comparison with the remarkable church at King's Norton (see below). Pevsner sees it as transitional to the latter's architectural consistency. The original late Perpendicular style chancel was not altered by re-building in 1741, and some of its elements were taken over into the nave, but the tower is 'far less accurate or archeological…[t]here is a great deal of progress from Galby [sic] to the church in King's Norton…but the fenestration of the nave at Galby points the way'. (Though it is possible to walk directly from Houghton on the Hill to King's Norton, we have taken the route through Gaulby so these comparisons can be registered).

St. Peter, Gaulby, church tower.

St. John the Baptist, King's Norton. Pevsner: 'The [west] front is approached by classical gatepiers with a fine IRON GATE, originally at the Hall'.

St. John the Baptist church in King's Norton (1757-75) is much valued by Pevsner:

> **Of the churches of the Early Gothic Revival this is one of the most remarkable in England …[t]he whole and especially the tower show a seriousness of purpose not surpassed before about 1800…the W tower is an amazingly archeological piece of work: the stages are divided by three friezes of different, all accurate, designs…[w]here else in England would there have been so powerful a neo-Gothic tower at so early a date?...The interior is wonderfully complete and unchanged.**

St. John the Baptist, King's Norton.
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St. John the Baptist, King's Norton. Interior View.
Image copyright *LeicesterPhoto Ltd*., reproduced by permission.

King's Norton to Kibworth Harcourt, via Burton Overy: 4½ miles

When you arrive at the T junction turn left taking the road signposted to Illston. Along the road to Illston pass through the 5 bar metal gate on your right just outside the village before the no speed restriction sign, having ignored the footpath sign opposite the church. Aim for the stand of trees up ahead and pass them on your left. Go through the 5 bar metal gate (or use the stile) at the waymarker up ahead. Pass across the ridge of the field to find another gate and waymarker in the hedge. Hold your course to find the next waymarker at the far side of this field. Take a left diagonal down the slope to the left hand corner of the field up ahead. Cross the stile at the waymarker and then another stile immediately before you to arrive on a track with a stream and footbridge to your left. Cross the bridge and take the footpath signed to the right through the metal gate. Carry on with the hedge and stream on your right to the next metal gate, passing through to hold your course over the rise. You will come to a little wooden bridge at the bottom of the field, then immediately a metal gate, each of these with a waymarker. Hold course for the 5 bar metal gate up ahead. Pass through and hold course again, with the hedge on your left. Go through the wooden gate and continue down the track straight ahead (not the footpath option on your left). When you reach the road, turn right and swing left around the bend to walk into Burton Overy.

Simply carry on right through the village until you come to *The Gravel*, a little road on your left as you leave the built-up area. Take this road and turn right at the top (you will see a signpost to Kibworth) and as the road peters out swing round to the right and go through the metal 5 bar gate at the waymarker. Carry straight on to the next waymarker in the right hand corner of the field. Negotiate the double stile and head diagonally left through the field to the top right hand corner. Cross the stile at the metal gate and hold your course, keeping the hedge on your right, to arrive at the right hand corner of the field. Cross the stile (or otherwise pass through the fence - the arrangement was a gap in the fence when the route was mapped) and turn hard left to keep the hedge on your left. At the bottom of this field swing right at the waymarker to keep the hedge on your left. After about a third of a mile you will find another waymarker at a gap in the hedge. Turn sharp left to follow the farm track with the hedge on your left. Swing right to pass the barns on your left and continue along the track. When you reach the hedge up ahead, note the waymarker and turn sharp left to cross the stile. Keep the hedge on your left as you swing right at the bottom of this field. When you reach the complex of gates in the top left hand corner, pass through the first metal gate on your left (or cross the stile if it has been repaired). Head diagonally across the field to the next waymarker, with its small metal gate. Pass through and head diagonally right towards the hedge. (A path should be marked.) Cross the stile and go through the gate to head diagonally across the field to a metal gate and stile, to emerge onto the road. Turn left at the T junction. At the signpost to Kibworth turn right along March Drive.

Kibworth Harcourt to Foxton Locks, via Smeeton Westerby: 4 miles

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Kibworth, to include Kibworth Beauchamp and Smeeton Westerby, became nationally famous following the six part BBC TV documentary 'The Story of England', originally transmitted between 22nd September and 27th October 2010, subsequently made available as a DVD. There is also an eponymous book by Michael Wood. The projects were enabled by unusually extensive archival record, covering the history of a 1500 year period. More information can be found online.

See also: ***www.kibworthvillage.co.uk/***

At the T junction with the A6 go straight across past *The Coach and Horses* on your right. You are now in Kibworth. Carry on along Church Road and past the church. The road crosses the Leicester to London railway line, before you come to a roundabout. Turn right and walk down High Street, keeping to the left hand pavement. You will need to keep a sharp eye out for a 'hidden' jitty on this side of the road, just opposite Rosebery Avenue. It lies behind the Scout and Guide Headquarters, but the footpath sign to Smeeton Westerby via the Recreation Ground is hidden from your approach. See the photograph below.

The 'hidden' jitty on High Street Kibworth, opposite Rosebery Avenue.

Go down the jitty and through the metal gate at the waymarker. Hold your course, ignoring the waymarker for a route on your right. Cross the stile and carry on ahead, ignoring the option which takes you to the right. Passing under the power lines cross the next stile and again hold course to find the next stile in the hedge. You will emerge from these small fields via another stile. Carry on with the house on your right. Cross the lane and continue; at the metal gates hold course for the waymarker at the other side of the ridge and furrow field. Pass the church via two stiles, before a final stile brings you to the road in Smeeton Westerby.

Turn left and ignore the road on your right to Gumley. At the bend in the road there is a footpath on the right which continues between hedges. Carry on across a stile, and then a double stile with gardens and paddocks on your left. After the next stile do not continue ahead (when we mapped the route in March 2016 a direction disc was missing at the stile's waymarker) but swing right and aim for the bottom of the field, where you will find the next waymarker. Here, pass over two stiles (or through two metal gates) to cross the stream, and then head at a slight right diagonal to find the next stile and waymarker in the hedge. (In March 2016 the waymarker here was planted upside down!) Now proceed at a fairly tight left diagonal, passing the second of two wooden pylons on your right. The next waymarker at the Grand Union Canal (which is invisible from your current position) can be seen up ahead. Cross the bridge over

the canal and carry on with the hedge on your left. The route swings round to the right at the house, and then continues through a gap in the hedge immediately on your left before reaching the road. Turn right and walk down the road until after about a third of a mile you will come to a signpost with options. Follow the direction marked to Foxton, heading gradually away from the wood on your right. Pass through the metal gate and aim for the farm buildings where you will find a path though the farmyard marked by two waymarkers and stiles. In the next field proceed at a right diagonal to find a 5 bar metal gate in the hedge. Pass through and turn left along the hedge line to come to the footbridge over the same Grand Union Canal. Turn right and walk to the brick bridge (Rainbow Bridge, No. 62), cross over, and continue to Foxton Locks.

Foxton Locks Basin: Rainbow Bridge.

This is a 'turnover' bridge, used to get the barge horse over the canal when the towpath changes sides. It has a sloped access, rather than steps. The 1927 date shown refers to the re-built parapet. Our route through the Locks is on the right hand side, past the barge in this photograph and past the locks shown in the photo below. The canal branch left leads to Market Harborough, 5.5 miles away – see below. The signpost here tells us that London is 106 miles along our route, while Leicester is 18 miles behind.

The Grade II Listed Locks are one of Leicestershire's important features, and a tourist attraction with a number of facilities, including pubs and a museum. The Locks are part of the *European Route of Industrial Heritage* (see *www.erih.net/*). There are ten locks in all, in two staircases, each lock being only five feet wide, just permitting a narrow boat to pass. They were built between 1810 and 1814. The Inclined Plane deserves a visit. Constructed in 1910 to alleviate the bottle neck of the Locks, it lasted for only a decade due to excessive running costs, and was dismantled in 1926. Powered by a stationary steam engine, the mechanism carried traffic up and down the 75 foot rise, with a journey time of about 12 minutes. (The actual transit time of the Locks these days should be between 45 minutes and an hour).

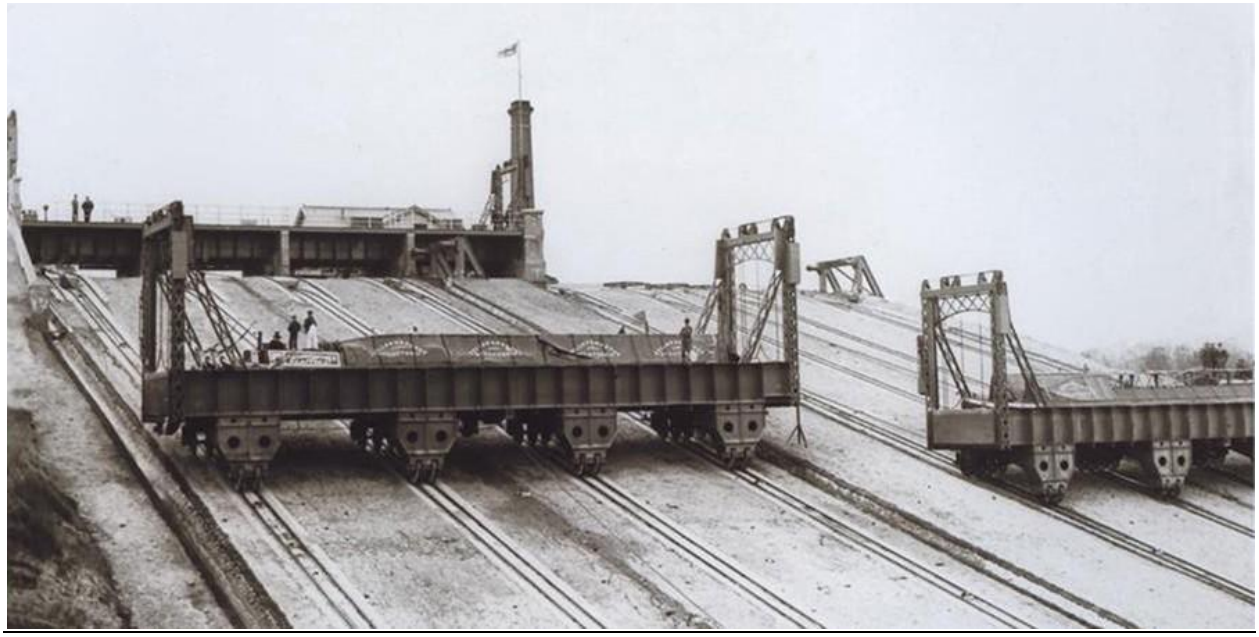
Useful websites:

https://www.foxtonlocks.org.uk/

www.goleicestershire.com/outdoors/foxton.aspx

https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/destination/1/foxton-locks

NB: It is possible at Rainbow Bridge to walk along the canal into Market Harborough. Should you decide to do so, pass under the bridge and continue along the towpath, ending at Union Wharf. See our section on Market Harborough at the end of these directions.



Foxton Locks: Historical image of the Inclined Plane, now a grassy bank with some remains, including the hulk of an old barge.

Foxton Locks looking along the route (reproduced by permission), and the statue of a barge horse, presumably pulling a barge.

Foxton Locks to Marston Trussell: 3½ miles

Continue along the towpath with the canal on your left, noting the view behind as you climb past the locks. Once past the locks, carry on to the bridge over the canal and walk across to continue along the towpath, now with the canal on your right. Pass under consecutive bridges, nos. 59 and 58. Leave the towpath at the far side of the next bridge, no. 57, turning right onto the road. Leave the road immediately at the footpath sign on your right and cross the two stiles. Take a slight left diagonal over the field to find the next waymarker in the hedge. Cross the double stile to find a waymarker immediately on your left. Cross the stile here and continue at a diagonal across the field to find the next waymarker in the bottom left hand corner. Hold course to cross the next field. Cross the little wooden bridge and stile and hold course again, with the hedge on your left to the next waymarker and stile. You are now crossing the trackbed of the old Market Harborough to Rugby railway line. Head for the farm buildings up ahead at the next waymarker. Pass through the farmyard and continue with the mobile home park on your right. Cross the A427 to find the footpath sign reading 'Marston Trussell ½ mile'. The route is a dog leg to your left to continue along the track bordered by trees, to the next waymarker. Pass through the stand of trees, cross the footbridge and carry on down the avenue with a hedge on your left and trees on your right. Go through the metal gate and pass the farm buildings after another metal gate to arrive at Marston Trussell. Turn left and walk to the signpost at the end of the village by the church.

Through the churchyard.
St. Nicholas' church, Marston Trussell, and its unusual North Porch timbers.

Marston Trussell to Sibbertoft: 3 miles

Go through the churchyard, exit by the gate and take a right diagonal to find the footbridge in the hedge up ahead, to pass over the stream. The route here can be a bit confusing because there appears to be a half height yellow waymarker in the right hand corner of the field at the metal gate. (It is actually a metal gate post.) Your route lies diagonally across the field to the left hand bottom corner where you will find a little wooden bridge across the ditch, to the road. Turn left and almost immediately right at the signpost in the hedge on the other side of the road. Cross the stile and continue with the hedge on your right, walking towards the farm buildings. At the top of the field you should find a small marker post with option discs. Take the option straight ahead to keep the barns on your right. Then head diagonally for the right hand side of the field and simply keep going; waymarkers have disappeared here but this very long field passes an avenue of trees on your left and continues, eventually meeting a stream on your right. At this point you will see a gate up ahead, so continue to keep the hedge on your right until you reach said gate, where you find signposts for *The Jurassic Way* (marker discs for which then start to appear as you progress), which we are following for a while.

Cross the lane and the stile and go through the ridge and furrow field to find the next stile a little way in from the left hand corner. If there is no route through the crops in the next field (there usually is) your

direction follows the line of the stile as the ground rises gently. Cross the next stile and carry straight on along *The Jurassic Way*. (Please do not deviate from this course; other tracks access private land.)

Carry straight on along *The Jurassic Way*. The marker disc shows the characteristic JW sign.

Walk ahead up the rise keeping the fence of the pheasant breeding area on your right, ignoring other tracks on your left and right. At the top of the rise the track swings left and peters out. Head diagonally across the field (there should be a path cut through the crops) until you come to another stile which you should cross. Hold your course to pass a post with a JW disc at a stile without a hedge or fence. Take a slight left diagonal and proceed to meet the hedge coming up on your left. Keep this hedge on your left to find the next stile. Cross the next field diagonally to find the top corner, where you cross the stile to emerge onto the road just outside Sibbertoft. Turn left and walk through the village.

Sibbertoft to Welford, via the Naseby Battle Field

Naseby Battle Field Site

This extensive site (whose Permissive Path is incorporated into our Round) marks a key moment in English history. As part of the English Civil War, the battle which took place on 14th June 1645 between King Charles I's Royalists and the New Model Army of the Parliamentarians resulted in victory for the latter, thus to establish the basic principles of our current democracy. The site includes information

boards (in addition to the one included in our Round, others can be found just above East Farndon on the road to Clipston, and just before the A14 on the road from Clipston to Naseby), monuments, and a small museum in Naseby church. On the night before the battle, the Royalist army camped on the ridge between Little Oxendon and East Farndon, just below what is now part of *The Jurassic Way* which runs between Stamford and Banbury. More information about the NBF and *The Jurassic Way* can be found online, to include a website for the Naseby Battlefield Trust.

Naseby Battlefield site: one of the nature information boards.

When you get to the 'village green' triangle take the left fork and walk down the road to the bend. Cross over and pass by the metal gates onto the hardcore track. Swing round the right hand bend between the cottage and the barn, and then swing left. Then:

Option 1: 4 miles

If you do not wish to view the Battlefield Information Boards, take the grassy causeway at the gap in the hedge, just before the Battlefield Permissive Path sign. At the end of the causeway (ditch on left) carry on into the next field at a left diagonal (a path should be cut through any crops), go through the hedge

and continue, now at a slight right diagonal, to the top of the field (again, a path should be marked). Pass through the hedge and bear slightly left (another cut path) to the bottom of the field. Then swing right towards the woods up ahead. *Keeping the hedge on your left and passing through a gate (or stile) on your left after the path narrows between hedges, you will enter the wood (which may be muddy in very wet weather), to carry on ahead. As you emerge from the wood, pass by the water and small game area on your right and walk down the track, though the gate and onto the road.

Option 2: 4½ miles

Instead of turning right through the hedge (**see Option 1**), carry on past the Battlefield Permissive Path sign. Keep to the track as it swings round bends. You will reach a point where the track forks. To visit the Battlefield Information Boards, turn left - they are just up ahead (you should be able to see a flag). Having done so, retrace your steps to the fork. Carry on ahead keeping the hedge on your right. After a while the track reaches the end of a hedge in front of you, where the ditch on your right runs underground. At this point a circular walk doubles back at a diagonal across the field on your right (eventually reaching the grassy causeway you ignored earlier), but you should carry on ahead towards the wood. ***Follow the directions here in Option 1 above at the asterisk** until you reach the road.

Hawthorn blossom and Dandelion clocks on the NBF Permissive Path, May 2017.

Turn right and walk a little way to find the signpost opposite. Pass through the 5 bar metal gate and head diagonally across the field to find a similar gate in the fence, with a large house to your left. You are now on the 'Abbey Walk' which will join *The Jurassic Way* in due course, recognized by its specific way marker discs (though there are no waymarker posts as such). Go to the left hand corner of the field where you will find a gate. Passing through, ignore the left diagonal option, cross the brick bridge and carry on with the stream on your right. Follow the course of the stream until you come to a double stile in the hedge up ahead. Cross and hold course to cross the two streams which come together at another bridge, then pass through the 5 bar metal gate just in front of you. Keep the hedge on your left to find the next 5 bar metal gate and continue through, now aiming at a slight diagonal to reach the next 5 bar metal gate and stile in the hedge. Cross and take *The Jurassic Way* option along a left diagonal through the field. Locate the next 5 bar metal gate and stile with JW discs about half way along the hedge. Pass through and proceed between the hedges. The next stile is in the hedge up ahead, a little way in from the left hand corner. Hold course for a double stile at the top of this dog leg field. Then take a slight diagonal to find the next double stile and JW disc about half way along the hedge line. Cross and continue diagonally to find the stile in the right hand corner, next to the 5 bar metal gate. Continue, emerging at the next stile onto the A5199. Turn right and then left into Church Lane. At the T junction turn left to walk down West End and out of the village.

Welford to Elkington: 4 miles

You will eventually arrive at a T junction. The *Jurassic Way*, which is signed, carries on opposite down a metalled drive marked 'private'. Proceed ahead and after a while you will pass a farm on the left and then another on the right. The JW used to bear right here but now carries on down the road until this becomes a dirt and gravel path. Look out for a wooden gate on your right, just past the house behind the hedge on your right, and before you get to a 5 bar wooden gate up ahead on the path. Pass through and walk across the field to find a similar gate. Carry on and keep to the right of the pond as you aim for the trees. The next gate is in the right hand corner of the field, where you enter a wood which is full of bluebells in the spring. Pass through the wood, walking downhill to emerge into a field which should have a path cut through it. You are aiming for the far left hand corner of this field, crossing the concrete farm track before you get there. Emerge on to the road, turn right and cross the bridge over the canal to walk down at the JW sign to turn right onto the towpath, thus to head south east. Continue along the towpath, passing under bridge nos. 30, 29A (the A14) and 29 before leaving the towpath at bridge no. 28. Once on the road turn left to pass over this bridge and carry on into the hamlet of Elkington.

Unusual residents: Alpacas, in a field off the road to Winwick.

Elkington to West Haddon, via Winwick: 4 miles

Pass through Elkington on a road which becomes gravelled beyond the hamlet. Do not swing left at the bend which leads to the farm, but pass by the double metal gates at the 'Byway' sign to take the grassy track. Essentially, this track leads all the way to Winwick, so carry on to pass by a 5 bar metal gate, eventually meeting a fence and the farm beyond it on your left. You will come to a metal gate, with a sign to Winwick Lodge Farm on your left. Swing gently right here onto the road. A little further on go with the road as it swings right, ignoring the 'Byway' sign on your left at this bend. You have now rejoined *The Jurassic Way*. Pass through a 5 bar gate and continue over the rise. At the gate and cattle grid, follow the road round to the right and then as it swings left into Winwick. At the T junction at the bottom of the village continue by turning left, signed to West Haddon (you can turn right to look at the church if you wish). Proceed along the lane with the brook on your right. Pass through a 5 bar metal gate, and the lane becomes a track through the field. At the next 5 bar metal gate make sure you take the correct line, which is a sharp diagonal left across the field (thus leaving the track) towards a gap in the hedge up ahead. Signage here could be better. Take a diagonal through the field on your right and walk to the top right hand corner where you should find a fence. Turn right here and carry on up the rise

to the wooden gate with *The Jurassic Way* marker disc. Pass through and hold course over the rise. You will then walk under the West Haddon bypass via the pedestrian tunnel. Pass through the wooden gate and proceed at a very slight right diagonal, still on *The Jurassic Way*. Go through the gate and continue, now with the houses of West Haddon over the field on your left. Go through the gate at the end of this field and carry on to emerge onto the main road through the village. (Alternatively, find the road by walking through the churchyard.)

Landscape near Coton.

West Haddon to Coton: 3 miles

Turn left along West Haddon's main through road, and at the bend and bubble roundabout carry straight on to locate Old Forge Drive across the road on your right. Enter this housing estate and bear left, right and right again, following the road round until it reaches its end, with a footpath in front of you, next to no. 73. This leads to a regulation issue green footpath sign which points you onto the grass between hedges. When you get to the playing field on your right pass through the hedge on your left and walk across the field to find a gate which lets you cross the West Haddon bypass. Pick up the route

on the other side of the road (there is another signpost) and cross the field by whatever means possible if a path is not cut through the crops. Your exit is in the bottom right hand corner, through a gate. Turn right to keep the hedge on your right. At the end of this field swing left, still keeping the hedge on your right. You will come to a wooden bridge with gates across a ditch. Carry on across the next field at a sharpish right diagonal to find the gate in the bottom right hand corner. Go through and continue with the hedge on your right until you come to another bridge and gate in the right hand corner. Cross the brook and turn right, once again following the hedge line on your right (with the brook behind it). As you proceed you will eventually see Coton Lodge Farm and the spire of Guilsborough church over to your left. Cross the farm track and continue, still with the hedge on your right. When you arrive at the hedge coming up on your left there should be a path that leads away at a left diagonal, but if not simply carry on to the end of the field, and swing left to find the next footbridge over the brook/ditch on your right. Cross and continue ahead up the rise (there should be a path cut through the crops). Swing past the farm buildings on your left to walk on the wide dirt and gravel farm track. Coton is visible up ahead. Carry on until this track swings round to the left; proceed straight ahead onto the grassy path. Before this path swings round to the right towards the houses, locate the gap in the hedge on your left, cross the field to a similar gap in the hedge up ahead, and continue ahead to pass the barns on your right (i.e. not through the barnyard). When you emerge onto the road turn right and walk through Coton, past the entrance to Coton Manor, on your right.

From: ***www.gardenstovisit.net/coton-manor***

> **Coton Manor lies in peaceful Northamptonshire countryside providing an ideal setting for the ten-acre garden. Originally laid out in the 1920s by the grandparents of the current owner, it comprises a number of smaller gardens, providing variety and interest throughout the season. The 17th century manor house acts as a central focus for the garden, with the walls supporting unusual climbing roses, clematis and shrubs, while the surrounding York stone terraces are populated by numerous pots and containers overflowing with pelargoniums, verbenas, heliotropes, salvias and agapanthus. The rest of the garden slopes down from the house and is landscaped on different levels, lending a natural informality. Old yew and holly hedges complement the many luxuriant borders packed with unusual plants (mostly available in the specialist nursery) and displaying inspirational colour schemes throughout the season. Water is abundant with natural flowing streams, ponds and fountains everywhere. Beyond the confines of the garden there is a magnificent bluebell wood (early May) and established wildflower meadow (mid-June to mid-July).**

Coton to Cottesbrooke, via Hollowell: 3 miles

As you leave the village take the first left (with Coton Manor car park on your left) down a narrow lane. At the T junction, turn left. When you reach the cross roads take the signposted footpath at a right diagonal on the other side of the road, towards Hollowell. (Look back for a view of Ravensthorpe Reservoir.) Cross the stile here and head diagonally to the far right hand corner of the field. Cross the next stile and carry on with the hedge on your right until at the bottom of the field you must take the right hand option over a stile, heading towards the church. Go through the gate and proceed with the church on your left. At the road, turn left and walk down the hill to the T junction. Turn right and carry on through Hollowell until you reach a sharp right hand bend, just before the last house in the village. Take the bridleway on your left, next to the pocket park, to walk between hedges and trees. (This track may become muddy in the dip about half way along in wet weather.) You will arrive at the A5199 (the old A50). Cross with care to find the stile immediately opposite. Enter the field and proceed at a slightly left diagonal (or take whatever path is cut through the crops). At the bottom of this field you will find a 5 bar gate. Pass through and now take a slightly right diagonal (or again, whatever path is cut through the crop) until you pass through the hedge at the bottom of the field (where the marker disc may be concealed by vegetation). Cross the grassy track to continue on your way, over another stile. Hold course, keeping the wooden electricity pole up ahead to your left. At the bottom of the field, turn sharp right (<u>not</u> through the gate) to keep the hedge on your left. In the left hand corner of this same field cross the footbridge and turn left to keep the hedge on your left. Go through the gate at the end of this field. Keep the hedge on your left for a while before swinging away to go round the corner of the hedge jutting out into this field. Now take a right diagonal to find the 5 bar gate into a small field next to the last house you can see up ahead. The signposts immediately before you let you out onto the road through Cottesbrooke.

Approaching Hanging Houghton: the landscape looking roughly north.

Cottesbrooke to Hanging Houghton: 4 miles

Turn right to walk through the remainder of the village, past an entrance to Cottesbrooke Hall on your left and the church on your right.

From: ***www.gardenstovisit.net/cottesbrooke***

> **Cottesbrooke is fine Queen Anne house (1702) with a twentieth century Arts and Crafts garden (c1930) mostly designed by Robert Weir Schultz. The garden has enclosed courtyards with urns and statues. Geoffrey Jellicoe added a parterre in 1937. It is planted with yew and has lead statues, beds of 'Iceberg' roses and agapanthus in tubs. There is also a wild garden, herbaceous borders, pools, lily-ponds, and ancient cedars.**

The road swings round a right hand bend. Take the next left, signposted ‘Brixworth, Gated Road’. Walk past the main entrance to Cottesbrooke Hall and Gardens, over the brick bridge and out of the village, with the Hall’s parklands now on your left. You will soon come to a concrete road on your left, with two barns situated just inside and a notice which says ‘Unsuitable for Motor Vehicles’. Take this route and walk along the field road past the farm buildings on your right. As you proceed you will catch a glimpse of Cottesbrooke Hall away to your left as the trees give way to an open view. In due course you will find trees on both sides of the road, and immediately after it bends round to the right you cannot miss a gravel track on the right descending at a gentle gradient into the Brampton Valley. Simply continue for approximately one and a quarter miles. You will cross over a little stone bridge over a stream before reaching *The Brampton Valley Way*, the old trackbed of the Northampton to Market Harborough railway line, now frequented by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Hold your course across the BVW and you will find yourself walking uphill into Hanging Houghton. (There is a seat on your left hand side up ahead which affords a glorious view of the landscape looking roughly north – see our photograph.) Follow the road round and walk through the village until you reach the A508.

Lamport Hall stands just down the road to your left. **Our route skirts its site.**

From: ***www.gardenstovisit.net/lamport-hall***

> **A mainly eighteenth century house with a park and nineteenth century garden, on the site of a seventeenth century house and garden. There is an 'Italian garden', made by Sir Charles Isham, with a large rockery. Brent Elliot writes that 'In 1881, an engraving was published showing a toy monkey swinging from one of the miniature trees, and by the 1890s the rockery was swarming with miniature china figures, mostly gnomes, of continental provenance. . . This is the first recorded appearance of gnomes in an English garden, and the motive for their addition was religious. Isham was an ardent spiritualist.' [*Victorian Gardens*, Batsford, 1990].**

Further on down the hill, *The Brampton Valley Way*, which we will join later on, crosses the A508. When the railway line was in use, the Royal Train would park in the sidings behind Lamport station while members of the Royal Family remained overnight at the Hall.

A hazy distance, between Hanging Houghton and Draughton,
en route to *The Brampton Valley Way*.

Hanging Houghton to Arthingworth: 9 or 10 miles, depending on options.

<u>NB</u>: This is a lengthy section, but it can be broken at Maidwell, just off *The Brampton Valley Way*, about 4½ miles along from Hanging Houghton. There is a car park on the BVW itself here.

Cross the A508 with care (this is a fast and busy main road) to the bridleway signpost and continue into the field, keeping the hedge on your left. About half way along pass through the hedge and take the slightly right diagonal path, which should be cut through the crops. Continue until you come to a 5 bar gate, and passing through, another one. Keep the fence on your right to find the third such gate. Pass through until you reach the road at a double 5 bar gate. Cross at a right dog leg, and continue round the metal gate to walk between the hedges. This section of the Round continues for about a mile in total, via a single wooden gate further on which leads you between trees. When you reach the next gate turn left

and carry on down the concrete track to the road. Turn right and walk along this road (which runs between Lamport and Harrington) for about 400 yards to find the signpost on your right, pointing across the road. Enter the field as indicated and you should find a path cut through any crops. If not, carry on at a slight right diagonal, over the rise, to the hedge at the bottom of the field. Pass by the point where this hedge comes to an end, and carry on, now with a hedge on your left. When you reach the road turn left and proceed into Draughton. Pass through the village and as the road bends round to the right you will see a stile beside the drive of a large house (which may be invisible at this point). Go over the stile and walk a short distance down the drive until you reach a stile on your right as the drive swings left to the house. Cross the stile into the small field, then cross another stile in the right hand corner. Proceed at a slight right diagonal towards the hedge which becomes visible over to your right (Leywell Spinney is over to your left), keeping to the left of the pond behind some trees. Locate the gap in the hedge and pass through, carrying on at a left diagonal to find the exit from this field on to *The Brampton Valley Way*, just before the iron footbridge relic. Turn right and continue along the BVW.

Part of the remains of the iron footbridge crossing *The Brampton Valley Way*, between Draughton and Maidwell.

The rusting rails of the Northampton to Market Harborough line, before the tracks were lifted, but after closure in August 1981. A signal box controlled the level crossing gates for traffic between Maidwell (left) and Draughton (right). Reproduced by permission, from the archive of Colin Garrett.

Artwork on the BVW: the figure on the left is presumably a walker, with backpack.

Artwork on the BVW; this one showing part of the footbridge.

The Brampton Valley Way **was opened in 1993, 12 years after the Northampton to Market Harborough railway line officially closed. It runs for about 14 miles from the edge of Northampton to Market Harborough, with the final mile crossing the Northamptonshire border into Leicestershire. The BVW is part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network, Route 6. The line included two tunnels, at Kelmarsh and Great Oxendon; one bore of each now provides continuity of travel along the Way. Each tunnel has a ventilation shaft (note the architectural features), which let in a little light, but darkness prevails – albeit in each case the far end is clearly visible. Little or nothing is now left of Kelmarsh, or Clipston and Great Oxendon stations, both of which stood some distance from the villages they were meant to serve. The BVW carries part of *The Midshires Way* (230 miles between Stockport and the Chiltern Hills), and is crossed by *The Jurassic Way* (88 miles between Stamford and Banbury) above Great Oxendon tunnel. At the Northampton end of the BVW there is the Preserved *Northampton & Lamport Railway*, which has been slowly expanding its reach alongside the Way as funds and permissions allow. An admirably detailed history of the Northampton to Market Harborough line can be found in John Gough: *The Northampton and Harborough Line*, Railway and Canal Historical Society, 1984 (paperback edition).**

NB: Though Kelmarsh Tunnel can be walked without a torch it has no internal lighting and the footing may have pot holes. Watch out for cyclists! The tunnel can be avoided (see signposts just after passing under the A14) but this lengthens your walk by about a mile and a half, and spoils the fun.

The Brampton Valley Way **between Lamport and Draughton Crossing, June 2017.**

BVW, Kelmarsh Tunnel (c. 480 metres – the other end is just visible). This is the south portal, on a bright March day. There are two tunnels, the western bore, separated from our route by the bank on the left, is now closed off. The rails divided at a point behind the photograph because of the separate tunnels.

BVW: Kelmarsh Tunnel, just beyond the north portal, on a wet winter's afternoon.

Continue for the best part of two and a quarter miles to the Arthingworth turn. En route, you will very shortly pass through a car park after crossing the road between Draughton and Maidwell. After a while you will pass under the A14, before entering the south portal of Kelmarsh Tunnel's eastern bore. (The western bore is closed off). After emerging from the tunnel, continue along the BVW, passing the foundations of the old Kelmarsh Station (just the other side of the bridge over the Kelmarsh to Arthingworth road). Carry on along the BVW for approximately 1¼ miles until reaching the railings of a small bridge over a farm track with a signpost announcing 'Clipston 1½ miles' to the left. Go down the bank here and turn right through the gate to pass under the bridge, emerging on the other side of the BVW.

NB: If you are walking this section in wet weather and want to avoid the field route to Arthingworth, carry on for about half a mile to the site of the old Clipston and Great Oxendon Station. (The large house now standing between the BVW and the A508 is not the original station building.) At the access point from the A508 go through the gate on your right and along the metalled road (which doubles as a farm track) to Arthingworth. The footpath sign for the next section of the walk is on your left after the village name sign. (The sign on the other side of the road points down the farm track at the end of the route over the fields which we now describe.)

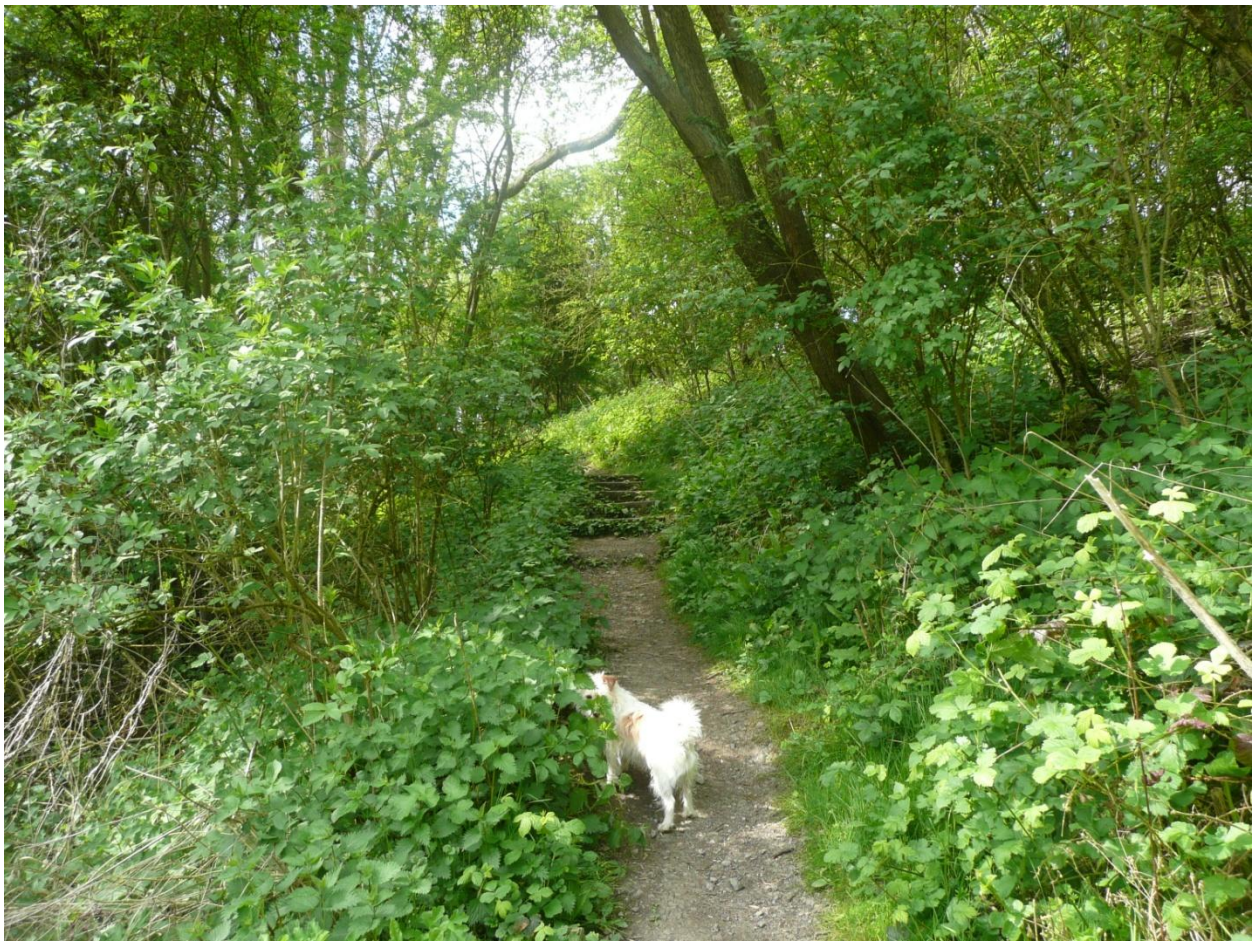
Leave *The Brampton Valley Way* at the signpost which says 'Clipston 1½' (not quite visible on the other side of the post in this photograph). The waymarker disc points down along the short path you can just see in the bottom left hand corner of the image. Go down the bank, though the gate and turn right to pass under the BVW, heading for Arthingworth.

Go through the 5 bar gate (which should have a marker disc) and then almost immediately another straight in front of you (**not** the one on the right with a stile, which marks the entry to a permissive path leading back to the BVW near the site of the old Kelmarsh station you passed earlier). Carry on with the hedge on your right. At the end of the field go through the 5 bar gate and head diagonally left to pass the small brick farm building on your left. Beyond this point, take a slight left towards another 5 bar gate a few yards in from the left hand corner in the hedge up ahead. Pass through and head straight on for the corner of the field, passing the pond on your left. Go through the gate and cross the bridge to join a farm track which leads to the edge of Arthingworth. This track can have a short muddy stretch, but there is enough verge to provide secure footing.

Approaching Arthingworth across the fields, having left the BVW at the 'Clipston turn'. The farm track lies over a bridge in the trees.

<u>Alternative route to Braybrooke, bypassing Arthingworth</u>: 3 miles from the <u>second</u> turn off the BVW to Arthingworth (see above)

Instead of taking either the footpath across fields, or the metalled road at the site of the old Clipston and Great Oxendon station (see above), to Arthingworth, those who enjoyed Kelmarsh Tunnel might like to repeat the experience at Oxendon Tunnel by carrying on along the BVW. (This route omits Arthingworth altogether.) The design of the tunnel is similar, the length a little shorter, and the ventilation shaft closer to the south portal. Unless money has been found for repairs, watch out for potholes here. When you emerge at the north portal carry on for a short distance and <u>before you reach the bridge over the trackbed</u>, turn left to find a flight of steps which double back on your course, climbing up to the level of the abutments. You will be able to see the closed off western bore of the tunnel through the vegetation.



It's this way! Leaving *The Brampton Valley Way* after Oxendon Tunnel for the route to Braybrooke avoiding Arthingworth, climbing the path to the abutments.

Turn left at the top to walk between the trees across the tunnels and take the stile into a field. You will see from the waymarker discs that this point already carried three long distances routes: *The Jurassic Way*, *The Macmillan Way*, *The Midshires Way*, and now *The Market Harborough Round*.

Head up hill and down dale, roughly straight across the field to its right hand corner (you can see East Leicestershire and Market Harborough in the distance over to the left), cross the double stile, then take a left diagonal down the new field to cross another stile, holding course towards the copse and residential buildings (Waterloo Lodge on the OS map) up ahead. Enter the trees via the stile to emerge from the copse at a fence. Turn right, to find a gate in the corner, marked with a *Jurassic Way* disc. Pass through and hold course to keep the buildings and their gardens on your right. Go through another gate, then a 5 bar gate to cross a stile, then another stile. Proceed with the hedge on your left. At the bottom of the field cross the stile, go through a gap in the hedge and continue at a slight right diagonal up the rise. At the end of this field cross the stile and turn left onto the track which heads for Braybrooke. **From here follow the directions marked with an asterisk * in the penultimate paragraph of our directions 'Arthingworth to Braybrooke' below**.

Arthingworth to Braybrooke: 3 miles

When you arrive at the bottom of Arthingworth village, note the village name sign. There are two footpath signs here; you need the one which points down a concrete drive. When this drive bends round to a property on the right, carry on along the grass. Cross the stile (or pass through the gate) and proceed ahead with the hedge on your left. Go over a wooden bridge and continue, still with the hedge on your left. *About 3/5ths of the way along, locate a gap in the hedge (the waymarker disc may be hidden by foliage) and pass through to continue your direction now with the hedge on your right. At the end of the field take a left diagonal up the rise to pass the clump of trees on your left. Head for the top right hand corner of this field. Hold the diagonal direction to pass through the gap in the hedge on your right (not the gap now to your left) and aim for the left hand side of the hedge just up ahead (so this hedge will now be on your right) to find the route through crops which leads to a road coming up from Great Oxendon, emerging near the Trig Point stone.

Cross the road and continue along the grassy path on the other side. Here, the route to Braybrooke is very straightforward. Simply keep the hedge to your left (hedges come up on the right now and then, which means you'll be walking down a green avenue) until after about a mile or so swinging right along a gravel track. This part of the route is a veritable thoroughfare, containing as it does the *Macmillan Way*, *The Midshires Way*, and *The Jurassic Way*, which joins the path from your left about a third of a mile in from the road – see our directions for the **Alternative route to Braybrooke, bypassing Arthingworth above**. (The path can be hard to see when *Daucus carota* - Queen Anne's lace - has grown up. If you spot it, there is a bench between your route and the stile, though your view is restricted!) * If you wish to chop off the right hand turn on the gravel track noted above, you will see a footpath sign on your left about two thirds of a mile along, pointing diagonally right, with a passage usually cut through the crops. Simply follow this path across two wooden bridges until you meet the gravel track again.

Carry on past the houses on your right to the T junction. (Braybrooke church is just up ahead on the left.) Turn right into Griffin Road, and continue round the S bend, with the village hall on your right. Turn left into School Lane opposite *The Swan* pub. Proceed to the T junction and turn right along the road signposted to Desborough and Kettering. Carry on along this road for a few hundred yards, and just beyond the barn on your left you will find a signpost and waymarker disc continuing *The Jurassic Way*.

Braybrooke to Stoke Albany: 4½ miles

For most of the route to Stoke Albany the *Jurassic Way* (and sometimes the *Macmillan Way*) is marked by its distinctive discs with the acorn sign, with the exception of the first section you are about to undertake, and the passage beyond Hermitage Wood past Brampton Wood and Stoke Wood (see below). To continue then: cross the stile and proceed at a right diagonal, heading towards the hedge up ahead which turns a corner. Carry on to keep this hedge on your right, and over the rise you will locate the wooden bridge with double gates (signposted with local waymarker discs) in the hedge. Go across and take a left diagonal to a similar arrangement in the hedge now in front of you. Go to the other side of the narrow field to track the hedge now on your left after you've turned right. At the corner coming

up, turn left to go through the gate and under the bridge which carries the main railway line from the North, through Market Harborough, to London St. Pancras.

The passage under the Market Harborough to London St Pancras main line, just beyond Braybrooke.

Cross the stile, turn right, and walk around the edge of the field to the top right hand corner; cross the little wooden bridge to emerge onto the lane. Cross the stile opposite (do not force open the electronically controlled main gate), pass the barn on your left, then head diagonally left to keep most of the horse paddocks on your right. There is a grassy 'lane' between paddocks, after which you must cross another stile to head up the rise at a slight left diagonal, towards the far hedge. When you get there cross the stile and proceed now at a right diagonal – the green *Jurassic Way* sign will become visible as you progress. Go through the gate at this sign, to cross the A6 just before the roundabout. Hold course on the other side between hedges and trees to find the next *Jurassic Way* sign. Turn right here to reach the lane to Brampton Ash. Turn left and walk a short distance along the lane to find the next *Jurassic Way* sign, just before Hermitage Wood. Cross the stile to track the wood on your left. Cross the double stile in the left hand corner of the field and carry on, still with the wood on your left. Pass through a gap (or go through the gate if there is one) at the end of this field and continue. Just past the end of this next field you will reach a farm track.

If a path is not cut through any crops it is not clear where to go from here. In fact, you must take a slight left diagonal to pass the mid point between two wooden electricity poles just up ahead. This line will take you over the field to find an entry into the distant trees across the field. Cross the stile here and take the path which winds its way for a short distance through the trees before emerging into the next field. Again, there is no immediate sign of how to proceed. The route of *The Jurassic Way* carries on at a quarter left diagonal (a path should be cut through the crops) to find a stile through the hedge. This area has generated correspondence with Northamptonshire County Council because the stile is easily overgrown by the hedge, and not very visible across the rough ground just before it. By the time you read this, things should have been sorted out (to include a waymarker post to make things clearer), but if not we suggest you do the following as you emerge from the trees mentioned above.

Hold course to keep Brampton Wood on your right. Then swing left down the *short* slope at the bottom of the field (if you turn left to head down the longer slope, you would reach the point described above) and carry on along a (possibly narrow) path through the undergrowth. We encountered horse riders here, so this short 'off piste' alternative is obviously used.

In either case, you will then enter a huge field. You must aim for the far corner of what is now Stoke Wood, at the top left of the field (which may not be immediately visible). Because of crops or thick grass you may find it easier to go round the edge of this field, keeping the wood on your right at all times. When you reach the end of the field pass through a gap in the hedge, turn right and then swing left as you head down the slope, with what remains of the wood still on your right. A short way along you will find a stile which takes *The Jurassic Way* (there should be a waymarker disc) through the trees for a very short distance before crossing a bridge and through a gate. Continue here at a slight left diagonal to find a double stile in the hedge over the rise. Cross and take a sharp left turn. Head towards the far hedge and pass through a 5 bar gate a little way in from the corner. Carry on with the hedge on your right and continue to the right hand corner of the field. Pass through the gate (or over the stile) and take a slight right diagonal across the field. You will arrive at what used to be a gate - its marker signs are still in place on the fence. Turn right here to keep the hedge on your left until, just before the metal double farm gates, you will see a stile in this same hedge. Cross and walk down the track to emerge next to the westbound slip road of the A427, Market Harborough to Corby road. Walk under the bridge of the A427 and into Stoke Albany. Hold course at the cross roads and proceed down Ashley Road to find the church and the village hall.

Stoke Albany to Weston by Welland, via Ashley: 5 miles

NB: This part of the Round has generated considerable discussion with Northamptonshire County Council (Highways) Footpath Officers, because of broken or blocked stiles, or paths not cut through crops, where the dreaded oil seed rape has been a particular problem. We have walked this section twice, most recently on 26th April 2017, when things had improved considerably (all stiles replaced and/or cleared of undergrowth; paths marked out), though the field after the second footbridge had still to be sorted out completely. If you experience problems, please report matters via NCC's online *Street Doctor* facility. If the field in question causes difficulties, find whatever way you can through the crops to

locate the wooden bridge (marked below with an asterisk*) at the top of the field. The important thing is to keep in the correct field in order to find said bridge. If in doubt, we recommend continuing along the edge of the current field after you 'swing right' (see next para) until you get to a metal electricity pylon, opposite which a footpath arrives from Wilbarston on your right. Then turn left up the field through whatever gap presents itself – there are usually impromptu paths made by tractors. Then turn left along the hedge line to find the gap and wooden bridge. The rest of the route through to Ashley should then be accessible enough.

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Locate the footpath that begins on the left hand side of the church. Keeping the hedge on your left, pass through the single gate, now with a fence on your right. This passage turns a right hand corner before you arrive at a stile and footbridge. Cross over and take a right diagonal into the field, and then carry on with the hedge on your right. After a while this path swings left and heads through the field towards the left hand edge of the trees up ahead. When you get there, cross another footbridge, and then swing right before almost immediately heading diagonally right across the field. Pass through a gap in the hedge and hold course until you reach the top of the field. *There should be a wooden bridge here to take you through a narrow gap in the hedge. Cross the field on the right hand side of the wooden electricity poles. At the top of this field you should find a waymarker disc on a fence post. You must enter the field on the left, and continue with the hedge on your right. At the end of this field find a stile in the right hand corner and continue into the next field. Take a very slight left diagonal to the bottom of the slope to find a plank bridge in the hedge. Cross over and take a slight right diagonal towards the next hedge up ahead. The exit from your present field is in the right hand corner of the field beyond the hedge, which marks the position of a wooden bridge to let you through. Continue ahead to the top of the rise, heading for a point a short distance in from the right hand corner of this field. Cross the stiles and continue ahead, then down the hill, aiming for the bottom left hand corner of this large field to find a 5 bar gate. Pass though this, and then another, gate and turn immediately left. Simply carry on through two wooden gates (the second has a footbridge), going past the house on your right to find another gate which lets you onto the road between Stoke Albany and Ashley.

Walking up to the Five Way Sign from Ashley (just visible in the background), on a late morning in April 2017 – a grand view all round along this section of the walk.

Cross the road and pass through the metal gate with the hedge on your right. Go through the next gate and hold course for the hedge up ahead. Go through the gate and take a slight left diagonal (a path should be cut through the crops). Pass through the hedge at the end of the field, where a disc indicates your direction – more or less straight ahead up the hill, keeping well to the right of the electricity pylon. (A path may or may not be cut through the crops.) As you climb, long views begin to open out. You should arrive at the left hand corner of the field (which is not visible until you get there), where you will find a gate. Pass through and take a right diagonal to reach the Five Way Sign. (If a path is not indicated through the crops you might short cut this field by turning hard right to continue with the hedge on your right until you reach the 5 bar gate referred to in the next sentence.) When you reach the Five Way Sign, turn right, with the hedge on your left to reach the 5 bar gate in the left hand corner of the field. Pass through and continue still with the hedge on your left. Go through another 5 bar gate to reach a third gate at the end of the field. Do not carry on here but turn sharp right, to keep a new hedge on your left. Pass through the gate in the bottom left hand corner of this field, and swing left to walk between a hedge and a fence. At the gate turn right, now with a hedge on your right. Walk downhill to the bottom of this ridge and furrow field to the gate in its right hand corner. Go through and you will see the next

gate ahead, which lets you into the final field before Weston by Welland. You will emerge onto a road at the signpost. Turn right and as the road swings round to the right keep straight on to reach a T junction.

The (dilapidated) Five Way Sign between Ashley and Weston by Welland, April 2017. This structure is reported to date back to at least the Second World War, and at the time of writing was due for renovation following entreaties by a local Parish Council. You may see the result!

Weston by Welland to Hallaton: 4½ miles

Walk past *The Wheel and Compass* (there is a good garden area at the back for those who pause here) and turn right into the country lane immediately after the car park. This single track road continues the *Macmillan Way*. Continue all the way along this lane, passing the remaining abutments of the bridge of the London and North Western Railway, until you reach a T junction. (The old LNWR trackbed can then be seen from the bridge a little way to your right along the road, as in the photograph above.) Go straight across onto the track opposite (the sign reads 'Field Road to Hallaton') and keep going until this ends at a road. Turn left and at the first set of gates on your right, pass into the field. (There is no signpost here, but this is a legitimate route, as the notices about keeping your dog on a lead testify.)

Walk with the hedge on your right to the next gate up ahead, in the right hand corner of the field. Pass through and continue to the next gate, and then onto the track. Carry on until you reach the waymarker on the right, and pass through the gate into the large field, where you will see Hallaton up ahead.

On the way to Hallaton. View of a waterlogged section of the closed off (and sometimes flooded) London and North Western Railway trackbed on a spring afternoon, taken from the bridge on the Medbourne to Slawston road.

Take a very slight diagonal course away from the fence on your right to aim for the waymarker at what appears to be the bottom of the field. When you reach it you will find that the fence and trees turn a right angle, to allow you to carry straight on to the bridge which crosses the stream at the next waymarker. Proceed up the jitty to emerge onto Church Lane, Hallaton. Here you can view Hallaton church to your left, and the Butter Cross just opposite. (See our remarks included in the directions for Hallaton to Tugby, above.) To continue the Round, go across Church Lane and walk up 'The Cross' swinging right behind the thatched cottage, then following the road round until it emerges at the T

junction. Turn left to find *The Fox Inn* and the duck pond. If, like us, you began the Market Harborough Round in Hallaton, you have now completed it!

Hallaton: The Butter Cross and War Memorial.

Market Harborough – a few points of interest

Though we do not recommend WIKIPEDIA because its content is not automatically peer reviewed, its entry on Market Harborough may provide some useful background information on the town and its environs, which it would be pointless to repeat here. Additional information can be found online simply by searching 'Market Harborough'.

The town and its surrounding villages in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire are considered to be desirable places to live, partly because improvements in rail transport have been bringing down journey times to London to just over an hour by the fastest service, which may further improve if the line is electrified. Market Harborough is well placed for access to cultural centres; aside from Leicester (less than fifteen minutes by train; about half an hour by car) Birmingham, Cambridge, Nottingham, Oxford, and Peterborough can all be reached by road in between one hour, and ninety minutes.

Suffice to say that the market town retains aspects of its earlier identity, but it has been expanding for some years and the town centre is, like so many, infested with traffic, despite or because of its proximity to the A14 East-West link. The cattle market is now a huge car park, though the Grade II Listed Settling Rooms used by livestock auctioneers has been kept in melancholy isolation from the supermarkets surrounding it. The pedestrianized area between the car park and the A508 (which passes through the town to connect Leicester and Northampton) includes the River Welland and is a pleasant place to shop. The area contains a covered market with various stalls; there is a visiting farmers' market, and a farm shop just outside town on the road to East Farndon. There are numerous cafés, and quite a few charity shops. Estate agents have proliferated.

The Old Grammar School (Grade I Listed) stands on High Street. It was founded by the local Robert Smythe, who rose from poverty to become Comptroller of the Lord Mayor's Court in the City of London. (His school, which became the Robert Smyth Academy for 11 to 18 year old students, now stands on Burnmill Road.) The OGS was built on stilts to preserve the butter market below. The building is adorned with inscriptions from the Bible. Subjects taught were Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

Next to the Old Grammar School, the ironstone St. Dionysius church (originally c. 1300, with Perpendicular, and Early to High Decorated elements in the chancel windows, plus 19th century galleries), has one of the finest spires in England. Pevsner: 'It marks the final answer to the question of how broaches can be handled without imparting any heaviness to the outline and proportion of a spire'.

Market Harborough stands on the main railway line from the North to London St. Pancras. Until other connecting lines were closed in the mid 1960s it was an important junction for passenger and freight traffic coming to and from Northampton (now ***The Brampton Valley Way*** – see above), Rugby, Nottingham and Peterborough. At the time of writing, work is due to commence on a substantial re-development programme, which will straighten the line through the station, lengthen the platforms, and expand the car park. The Grade II Listed Queen Anne style building of 1885 pictured below (the present booking hall) will be retained, though not necessarily for station use.

The Grade II listed Market Harborough Station main building, in Queen Anne style by John William Livoc, 1884, before the new development to straighten the track of the one remaining main line service. The embankment for the dismantled lines to Northampton and Rugby (which became the station car park) can be seen on the left. The existing main line is on the right, with Platform 1 (northbound) behind the building.

Market Harborough Station before its redevelopment.
Walking down to the main booking hall and exit, from Platform 1.

***Going Home*. Market Harborough Station, a 'folk' (sometimes called 'naïve') painting by M. K. Eaton, 1973. Oil on board, 46 x 35 cms. Collection of Sue and David Wragg.**

This work shows the bridge (on the left), now demolished, which carried the Northampton and Rugby lines over the main road, and through the outskirts of the town. The Old Grammar School, St. Dionysius church, and the Symington's building are represented in the background, with High Street on the rise. Sue is pushing the pram, containing daughter Molly, with son Ben in the yellow coat.

Market Harborough: The Settling Rooms. Cars now proliferate where cattle pens used to stand. This entire area has been given over to supermarkets as the town has expanded.

Market Harborough: St. Dionysius church.

Market Harborough town centre: view north from The Square in the early spring. This has been the site of a farmers' market and other activities.

The Square, sometime in the 1930s. The roundabout has long been replaced by traffic lights. The later shop fronts (see previous image) are a debatable asset. Source of photograph unknown.

Union Wharf: The Grand Union Canal, Market Harborough Basin

Having designed our route to pass Foxton Locks, we have indicated above that it is possible to walk from Rainbow Bridge into Market Harborough along the MH branch of the canal. (**See above: Foxton Locks section.**) At journey's end, Union Wharf is now an attractive mix of private residences, a marina (including boat hire facilities), craft workshops, and a restaurant. Union Wharf can be found as a left turn from the Leicester Road, a little way past the police station beyond the north end of Market Harborough town centre and before the roundabout.

Useful information – the first website below includes a map of the relevant part of the canal and Union Wharf itself. Use the location search facilities within this website.

https://canalrivertrust.org.uk

www.unionwharfmarina.com/amenities.htm

Market Harborough Union Wharf, looking across the marina with a clearing sky in June 2017.