

Welcome to the heritage of North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth. This leaflet will take you on a journey back in time to discover the fascinating stories, people and places that have influenced and shaped the towns and communities you see today ...

Communities shaped by the land beneath their feet

North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth nestle between the ancient Forest of Arden in the west and Charnwood to the east, parts are within the National Forest. What lies beneath our feet has shaped much of our landscape and human activity.

Carboniferous rocks formed 354 – 200 million years ago led to the Warwickshire and the Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfields. Daw Mill, the last operating coal mine, closed in 2013. For generations men and children as young as 6 toiled at the pits and came from villages such as Nailstone, Desford, Bagworth, Kingsbury, Dordon and Baddesley. Pooley Country Park was formerly a mine.

Quarrying for aggregates continues and local rock types can be seen in historic buildings and types such as Groby granite are used for road surfacing.

The mines and quarries have resulted in significant nature sites: the regionally important geological site at Billa Barra Nature Reserve (see map ☆), Hill Hole (see map ☆) Alvecote Lakes SSSI and Kingsbury Water Park. The Tame Valley Wetlands containing regionally important wildlife sites, extend from Coleshill to Tamworth.



Birthplace of the Tudor Dynasty

On 22 August 1485 Richard III famously became the last English King to die in battle at Bosworth Field on Ambion Hill between Sutton Cheney, Dadlington and Stoke Golding, slain by the Lancastrian Henry Tudor.

His victory depended on a clandestine meeting at Atherstone's Outwoods (see map ☆) between Henry and his stepfather Lord Thomas Stanley, who happened to be King Richard's Lord High Constable of England. In the lead up to the battle King Richard held hostage Lord Stanley's son, George, to try to ensure his loyalty. Stanley reportedly replied that he had other sons. Henry's troops assembled around Merevale Abbey waiting for battle. At the Outwoods, it's believed that Lord Stanley and his brother, Sir William, agreed to support Henry. On 22 August the troops set off through Atherstone (praying at St Mary's), Mancetter, Witherley, Fenny Drayton and Atterton.

Lord Stanley watched the battle from Ambion Hill. Only at a decisive point did he send in his men to support Henry and seal King Richard's fate. Stanley immediately crowned King Henry VII at Crown Hill, Stoke Golding and the Tudor dynasty was born watched

by villagers from St Margaret of Antioch Church (see map ☆). St James the Greater church in Dadlington became the final resting place of the fallen soldiers. The Wars of the Roses were settled.



Re-enactment image courtesy of Carl Vivian, University of Leicester

What did the Romans do for us?

Roman roads criss-cross our area, Watling Street (now the A5) being the most well-known. Leicester (Ratae) sat on the Fosse Way and was the capital town of the Corieltavi people. A road led directly from here to Manduessedum, now Mancetter, on the Watling Street, passing through Peckleton, Kirkby Mallory and along Fenn Lanes, look out for the very straight sections!

Manduessedum was a Burgus (town) encompassing Witherley and up to Hartshill. A Roman fort on the site of Mancetter church was replaced with the burgus and became the centre of pottery making. Why not stand on the hill at Hartshill Hayes Country Park (see map ☆) looking towards the Watling Street and beyond to imagine the many kilns which once fired?

It is this landscape which also very probably saw the last battle of Boudica, the warrior queen who led the revolt of the Celtic Iceni against the Roman invaders in AD60 or 61. Her army of up to 300,000 was defeated by Suetonius's 10,000 legionaries who had the better position up the Hartshill escarpment with a wood behind them. The Roman Mancetter & Boudica Heritage Centre (see map ☆) tells the story amidst its display of Roman artefacts.

Evidence of Roman temples has also been found on Grimstock Hill at Coleshill and near Sutton Cheney (find out more at Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre).



The Grey family's ill-fated queens of Astley and Groby



Astley Castle (see map ☆) and Bradgate Park now resonate with peace belying the turbulent lives of their residents in medieval times. The Grey family owned lands at Groby, including the Bradgate estate, and also Astley Castle.

Elizabeth Woodville married Sir John Grey of Groby in 1452 and they apparently lived at Astley Castle. Sir John was killed in 1461 fighting for the Lancastrians in the Wars of the Roses. His properties were confiscated by the Yorkist King Edward IV. Elizabeth and her first two sons were cast out, penniless. Reputedly the most beautiful woman in England, Elizabeth, caught the eye of King Edward and they married in secret in 1464. The court was scandalised that the King had married a Lancastrian. Elizabeth's two sons with King Edward IV became the infamous Princes in the Tower who disappeared shortly after their uncle Richard III became king.

After the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 Elizabeth Woodville and Edward IV's daughter, Elizabeth of York, married the Lancastrian victor Henry VII and the Wars of the Roses

came to an end. The Greys though continued to be at the centre of power struggles. Lord Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, Woodville's great grandson was the father of Lady Jane Grey the 'nine days queen'.

Grey was prominent in King Henry VIII's court but was not in favour with the regal council of his son, King Edward VI, so returned to Bradgate. As a strong Protestant Grey swayed the young King Edward VI to change the succession in favour of Lady Jane Grey instead of his sister Mary who was Catholic. It was an unpopular move. Aged 16, in July 1553 Lady Jane Grey was pronounced queen, but public outrage led to Mary being proclaimed queen only 9 days later.

Queen Mary's plan to marry the Catholic Philip of Spain incited Lord Henry Grey to plot a rebellion with Sir Thomas Wyatt and others. In early 1554 the 'Wyatt Rebellion' failed, Grey fled and was found at Astley reportedly hiding in a hollow oak tree. He and Jane were beheaded for treason. The oak trees in Bradgate Park were pollarded (beheaded) as a permanent reminder. Sir Henry's ghost is believed to still haunt Astley Castle and a monument now stands on the site of the oak tree.

The monument can be seen from the waymarked footpath opposite Post Office Row in Astley. There is also a 'lantern' heritage feature at the junction of Nuthurst Lane and Post Office Row.



Stone monument on the spot of the oak tree where Henry Grey took refuge. The tree was blown down in 1891.

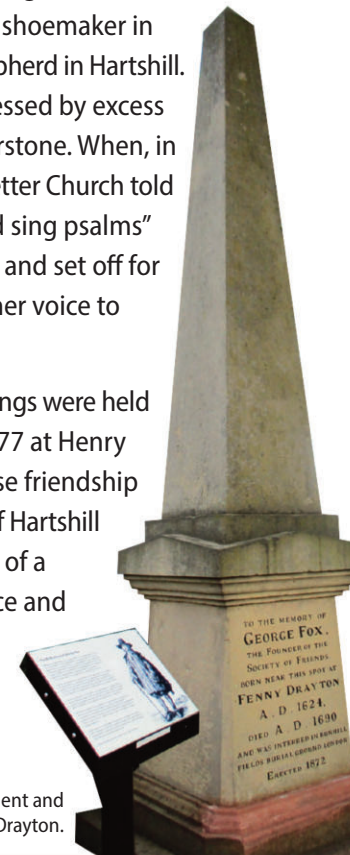
Quakers revolutionaries of religion



In July 1624 George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends, better known as Quakers was born in Fenny Drayton. A monument in the village records his life and he worshipped at St Michaels & All Angels Church as a child. What is it about these villages which fomented dissent from the established Anglican Church?

Fox grew up at a time of great unrest leading to the Civil War in 1642. His family and the 'Lord of the Manor' Purefoy family were of strong Puritan views. He was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Mancetter and was a shepherd in Hartshill. Apparently he was distressed by excess drinking at a fair in Atherstone. When, in 1643, the priest at Mancetter Church told him to "take tobacco and sing psalms" he was further alienated and set off for London following his inner voice to find answers.

Some early Quaker meetings were held in Baddesley Ensor in 1677 at Henry Siddon's home. Fox's close friendship with Nathaniel Newton of Hartshill led to the establishment of a permanent meeting place and the Friends still meet in Hartshill today.



George Fox monument and information board in Fenny Drayton.

Jennens' Messiah!

Since its first performance in 1743 'The Messiah' by George Frideric Handel is probably the most performed choral work in the world; its origins lie in the fine houses of our small villages.

Charles Jennens was the son of a wealthy iron founding family from Birmingham living at Nether Whitacre Hall. Charles moved to Gopsall Hall near Twycross where he wrote the words for The Messiah and other pieces. Handel visited regularly.

Later Jennens lavishly rebuilt Gopsall Hall making it the finest house in Leicestershire, and Handel provided the specification for the organ. Having never married Jennens was buried in the family vault at Nether Whitacre Church (see map ☆) where a fine memorial can be seen. Sadly Gopsall Hall was demolished, though the garden temple he built remains. The organ survives at the private chapel of St James at Packington Hall having passed to Jennens' relative Lord Guernsey. The grounds of Jennens' family home at Whitacre Hall (see map ☆) now have a tea room and walks open to the public.



Until very recently it was possible to be clothed from your head to your toes in locally made items. Walking around towns like Hinckley, Atherstone and Earl Shilton the once buzzing factory buildings are still clear to see.

The Barwell and Earl Shilton Boot and Shoe Trail tells how the industry moved here from Leicester in the 1860s.

Footwear was exported to Russia and South Africa and workers were allowed to drink a half pint of beer while they worked.



Hinckley is the cradle of the hosiery industry which started in 1640. Framework knitters' cottages exist in many surrounding villages as well as being the home of Hinckley and District Museum. Steam power from 1855 moved stocking production in to factories. The Atkins factory was the last to close in 2002. It is now Grade II Listed and houses the Atkins Gallery.



Clothing top to toe!



Atherstone was the centre of Europe's hatting industry with wool felt hats exported worldwide. Starting in cottages during the 1600s, developing through 'the Yards' off Long Street to factories in the nineteenth century. Trilbies, fezzes, billycock and bowler hats were all made here. A stetson hat was made for Dallas's JR Ewing in the 1980s and a Fez for Tommy Cooper. Wilson & Stafford was the last factory to close in 1999 and can still be seen from the Coventry Canal. Atherstone Heritage Centre and the soon to open Hatters Memorial Garden celebrate and preserve the industry.

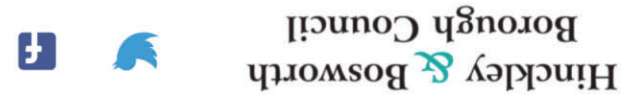
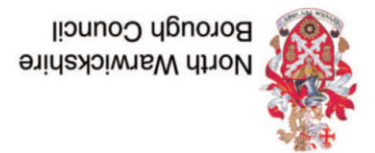


The above image reproduced from the 'Our Warwickshire' website ©

Silk ribbon weaving flourished in villages such as Anasley, Arley and Fillongley serving these textile trades.

The fortunes of all these industries mirrored the national economic peaks and troughs; strikes over working conditions in the 1890s, booms through supplying the military in the world wars, and then in the late twentieth century the gradual decline in the face of cheaper imports and changes in fashion. Fond memories remain of the strong sense of community these industries generated.

Front cover re-enactment image of Richard III courtesy of Carl Vivian, University of Leicester



Produced by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council and North Warwickshire Borough Council

Hinckley history trails:
www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/hinckleyhistorytrails

Rural heritage trail for Hinckley & Bosworth:
www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/heritagetrail

www.earlshilton.co.uk/Heritage-Trails.aspx
www.polesworthpoetrytrail.org

www.romanmanancetter.org.uk/guided-walks/
www.visitnorthwarwickshire.com/leaflets

www.visitnorthwarwickshire.com/heritage-trails-around-north-warwickshire

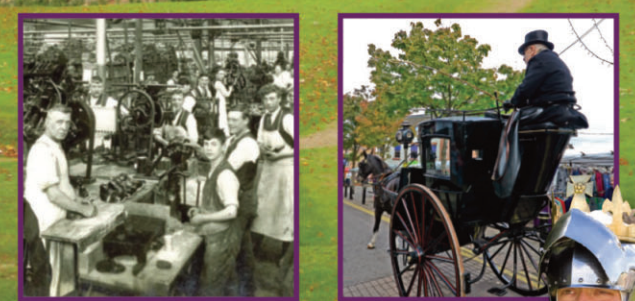
The following local trails can be downloaded:

www.visitnorthwarwickshire.com/heritage
www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/heritage

More heritage information can be found at:

Our Shared Heritage

Explore the heritage of Hinckley & Bosworth and North Warwickshire



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

1 Rafael Holinshed (c1525-1580)

Historical aspects of Shakespeare's plays and Michael Drayton's poems are known to be based on Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland published in 1577. This extensive series written by a team of contributors described these countries' histories from their first inhabitants to the 1500s.

Rafael Holinshed edited this great work whilst also apparently being Steward to the Burdet family, owners of the Bramcote estate near Polesworth. His will in 1578



confirms he lived at Bramcote at that time. He is believed to have died in late 1580 and buried in Polesworth. The ruins of the later Bramcote Hall can be seen from Footpath AE3.

18 Andy Green (1962-)

The fastest man on earth, Wing Commander Andrew Green OBE was born in Atherstone. An RAF fighter pilot he was recruited by the Thrust SSC team to drive the car for the attempt to break the World Land Speed Record.

On 15 October 1997, Green successfully set a new world record when Thrust SSC reached 1,228 km/h (763 mph). It also became the first land vehicle to officially break the sound barrier. MIRA helped develop some aspects. The car is displayed in Coventry Transport Museum. Andy now drives the Bloodhound LSR and hopes to set a new land speed world record.

17 HORIBA MIRA



The world-renowned HORIBA MIRA on the A5 near Higham on the Hill is Europe's most advanced transport technology site. The world's first full size wind tunnel for testing cars opened here in 1960. It used 4 aircraft propellers each driven by a 325hp motor. Olympic cyclist Chris Boardman used it when preparing for his gold medal winning performance at the 1992 Olympics. In 1968 the most advanced crash laboratory opened and the site continues to be at the cutting edge of automotive technology.



16 Swarfega

This heavy-duty hand cleaner reputedly started out as a compound developed by the Amoa Chemical Company on Hawley Road, Hinckley. Amoa had relocated to Hinckley when its premises in East London were bombed during the Blitz. Its commercial name became Swarfega.

2 Michael Drayton (1563-1631)

The poet and playwright was born in Hartshill, and became a Page to the literary Goodyer family at Polesworth Hall (now Polesworth Abbey) before moving to London.

His works were popular in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period when he introduced use of the word 'ode' for a lyrical poem. At 15,000 lines his poem 'Poly-Olbion' is one of the longest in English. The River Anker and the Forest of Arden are fondly remembered in his poem 'Idea'.

A great friend of Shakespeare and Ben Johnson, it is reputed Shakespeare died following a night of their heavy drinking together. Drayton is buried in Westminster Abbey. A plaque and a school commemorate him in Hartshill.

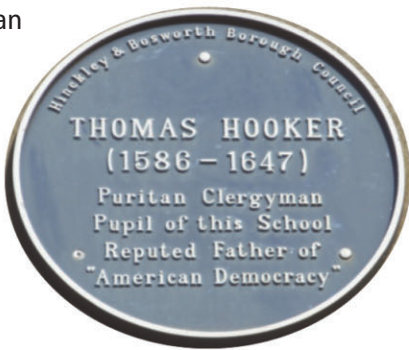


3 William Burton (1575-1645)

Burton lived at Lindley Hall and authored the Description of Leicester Shire in 1622, one of the first county histories to be published. This inspired his friend William Dugdale who acknowledged his help with the 'Antiquities of Warwickshire'. He was also a friend of Michael Drayton. A manuscript of Burton's 'Antiquities of Lindley' is in the British Library.

4 Thomas Hooker (1586-1647)

Born in Markfield and schooled at Market Bosworth, Hooker was a Puritan who immigrated to America and established Connecticut state. Sometimes called the 'father of American democracy' because he set out a written constitution emphasising that government must answer to the people.



5 Sir William Dugdale (1605-1686)

The owner of Blyth Hall near Shustoke, Dugdale was an Antiquarian. In 1656 he compiled such a complete history of the county of Warwickshire that it set the model for other historians to follow. 'Antiquities of Warwickshire' describes and records geographic, archaeological and historical information.

6 John Cleveland Poet (1613-1658)

Paving the way for modern journalism and satire, the son of a Hinckley vicar, John Cleveland attended Hinckley Grammar School and then Cambridge University. He was a staunch Royalist in the English Civil War, a view which influenced his poetry. Starting with 'The Character of a London Diurnal' in 1647 and published for over 25 years his work was very popular due to its satirical and political nature. In 1974 Hinckley Grammar School was renamed John Cleveland College.



8 Dr Robert Chessher (1750-1831)

The first British Orthopaedic Surgeon. Trained as a doctor in Hinckley, his ingenuity enabled him to create splints and devices for broken limbs. His skills saw him move to work in London but he returned to practice in Hinckley living on London Road. Patients travelled from afar for his care, the Prime Minister George Canning brought his son. Chessher employed mechanics and brace makers to create the apparatus.



7 Francis Willughby, FRS (1635-1672)



Pioneer of science Willughby was born and brought up at Middleton Hall and studied at Cambridge where he met the naturalist, John Ray. Wealth from his landowning family enabled Willughby to pursue his passion for science at a time when there was a revolution in thought about the natural world. Willughby and Ray were at the forefront of the new practice of observing, experimenting and recording their findings.

His book Ornithology set out to describe all known birds using a system for categorizing animals by their features. But it was John Ray who published Ornithology as Willughby died aged only 36 leaving Ray an annual income to continue their studies. Francis is buried at St John the Baptist Church in Middleton and his home at Middleton Hall is open to the public, appropriately next to an RSPB reserve.

9 Joseph Hansom (1803-1882)

An architect by training, Hansom designed and patented the Hansom Cab while living at Caldecote Hall. In 1835 the first 'Patent Safety Cab' was built on Hinckley's Regent Street and trialed on Coventry Road. The improved safety features led to the Hansom Cab being ubiquitous in Victorian London and even used in Paris and New York. A reproduction can be seen in the Atkins Gallery on Lower Bond Street.



11 Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880)



One of our greatest writers, she used the pen name George Eliot for her work to be taken seriously. Her novels draw deeply on her young life in North Warwickshire. A formidable intellectual she was unconstrained by convention. Our modern use of the terms 'Pop music' and 'browser' stem from her writing.

12 Charlotte Mary Braemes (1836-1884)

A prolific writer of romantic fiction which was very popular amongst working classes in the mid nineteenth century. According to her biographer, local historian Greg Drozdz: "Her literary endeavours, in a male-dominated field, her works of charity, and her personal stamina and resilience, in the face of family tragedy and ill health, represent a triumph in adversity".

From a well-to-do Hinckley family, following financial troubles connected with her husband's businesses she returned to live at 35 Castle Street. Her writing was undoubtedly influenced by her observations of life around her. Charlotte's grave is in the Ashby Road Cemetery in Hinckley.



13 John Boulton Brooks (1846-1921)



Inventor of the world famous sprung bicycle saddle in 1882. Born and brought up in a home on Stockwell Head in Hinckley. Brooks remains an upmarket cycling brand.

14 Florence Dixie (1855-1905)

Author and campaigner for women's rights, Lady Dixie, lived at Bosworth Hall in Market Bosworth. She was well ahead of her time and advocated equality of the sexes, a change to royal succession rules to allow a first born girl to reign and foresaw a female Prime Minister by 1999. She is thought to be the first British journalist to report from a war zone, covering the Anglo-Zulu War for the Morning Post in 1879. As the first patron of the British Ladies' Football Club she was instrumental in kicking off women's football.



All roads lead here

Lindley, near Fenny Drayton, marks the geographic centre of England. Our location and the national importance of local industries has led to this corner of Warwickshire and Leicestershire being at the heart of the nation's transport networks. Logistics parks have replaced heavy industrial sites.

From the 1600s stagecoaches travelled the roads requiring staging posts every 10 to 15 miles to change horses and allow passengers to eat or stay overnight. Coleshill was on the London to Holyhead or Liverpool routes and once had more than 20 coaching inns to service this trade. Coaching inns can still be recognised in towns and villages with the archways which allowed coaches to drive through to the stables at the rear.

The stagecoaches' wealthy passengers attracted highwaymen. Jack O'Watton reputedly chose the bend in the road just past Coleshill to rob his victims and the lane to Water Orton has been named after him. Dick Turpin is believed to have roamed the Fenn Lanes near Sibson.

The industrial revolution moved goods on to the canals and then railways, but now road transport and logistics are very much part of our work and home lives.

- Key - star symbols
- ☆ Billa Barra
 - ☆ Hill Hole
 - ☆ Hartshill Hayes Country Park
 - ☆ The Roman Mancetter & Boudica Heritage Centre
 - ☆ Astley Castle
 - ☆ Atherstone's Outwoods
 - ☆ St Margaret of Antioch Church
 - ☆ Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre
 - ☆ Nether Whitacre Church
 - ☆ Whitacre Hall