

Mrs Honoria Whigham

FOUNDER OF HALLATON MUSEUM



Honoria Bewicke was born on 24th October 1898 in Blackheath but the wider Bewicke family roots were really in Hallaton. After her father retired from the army they settled in Cheltenham in a dwelling they named Hallaton House, although spending occasional holidays at The Grange, Hallaton.

Aged about 18 Honoria worked as a nurse but early in 1918 she determined on joining the newly formed Women's Royal Air Force as a driver. So the first thing to do was to learn to drive, and this she did both in motor cars and on motor bicycles.

She soon met the man who was to be her husband William Menzies Whigham who lived with his father at Keythorpe Grange. The couple married in 1924 and moved to Buenos Aires where there followed many years of exceptional achievement which can be read in her book 'Tapestry of a Life'. In the 1970s Honoria, now widowed, returned to Hallaton to live in Cross Cottage.



In 1978, aged 80 she started Hallaton Museum in the small building in Hog Lane. Initially a fairly random display, it gradually took on a more structured format focusing on Hallaton, its life and agriculture.



In 1987 she stepped down but remained President, knowing that she had pioneered something truly remarkable - one of Leicestershire's first small museums.

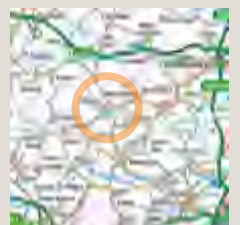
After many happy, fulfilling years in Hallaton, Honoria eventually moved with her daughter Helen, to Wiltshire, dying on 6th December 1992 aged 94.



A truly wonderful woman to whom Hallaton owes a great debt of gratitude.



Hallaton is here



Horninghold

THE WITCH TRIALS



Did you know that after the 1542 Witchcraft Act, Whitsun week Witch Trials held in Horninghold were well attended, drunken events, where many and varied dowings took place ?

The diary of Rev'd. Humphrey Michel, Horninghold and Blaston's priest, contains the following entries from June 1709:

11th JUNE 1709:

Being St Barnabas' Festival and Whitsun eve, one Thomas Holmes was dowsed three times for a witch, and did not sink but swim, though his hands and feet and head were all tyed fast together, in the Dungeon Pitt in Blaston, before 500 people and by commutation of punishment for stealing Mr Atkin's malt.

17th JUNE 1709:

Being Whitsun week, Elizabeth Ridgway and Jane Barlow of Horninghold, were both by concert dowsed for witches, and did not sink but swim, though their hands and feet were tyed before some thousands of people at the Dungeon Pitt in Blaston Lordship.

18th JUNE 1709:

Jane Barlow, 40 years old, would be dowsed again to clear herself, but in the Great Close Pond, because she said that was not enchanted as Dungeon Pitt was, and yet in sight of many hundreds of people and myself she did not sink there but swim again, though she was ty'd as before whereas one Joseph Harding being bound hands and feet did not swim, but sunk immediately like a stone before us all.

If the suspected witch floated, it was because the 'sacred water of baptism' had rejected them because of their crimes. If the accused sank, however, it was because they had been embraced by God's water and were therefore innocent of the charges.



Horninghold is here



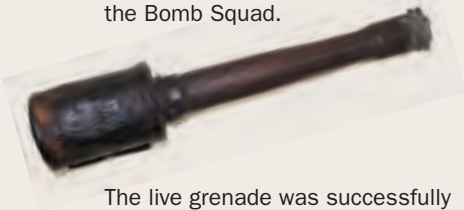
COMMENTS FROM The Chairs

DENIS KENYON

Chair, 1986 - 1996

A CLOSE CALL !

The random collection of objects in Mrs Whigham's original Museum included a WW1 Germany army stick grenade which so concerned a visitor that the police were summoned, arriving with blue flashing lights and the Bomb Squad.



The live grenade was successfully disarmed by controlled explosion, and the grenade remains in the museum's possession.

JOHN MORRISON

Chair, 1996 - 2006

DEAD HORSE DAY



1999's exhibition about Hallaton's famous horse fairs saw original documents carefully conserved and transcribed, but the fascinating paperwork desperately needed something visual. So we created (more accurately, fabricated !) a 'photograph' of an 18th century horse fair at North End. You'd be amazed how many people were convinced !

Following a visit to Braybrook, a totally realistic life-sized fibreglass horse (complete with hair) was acquired for the display's centrepiece. With considerable effort it was hoisted onto my car roof for the journey back to Hallaton. The entire hunt stopped, staring in silence as we passed them at the Blaston turn.

Later, I was regaled with a story of

how one of the hunt's horses had been put down and, instead of being discretely borne away in the bloodwagon, was unceremoniously carted off for all to see on the top of a Range Rover !

Despite a hair-removing power wash, the horse was sufficiently impressive to help us to win 2nd prize in the Heritage Awards.



CAROL KIRBY

Chair, 2006 - 2015

CONTACTS ROUND THE WORLD

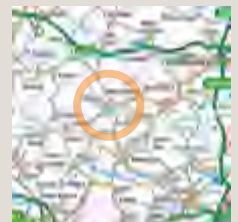
Our assistance with ancestral research has resulted in links with New Zealand, Australia and America, and provided background information for family research and several published books closer to home.



One highlight was renewing contact with Honoria Whigham's family (now living in Spain), and showing them that her determination to record and share Hallaton's history remains central to the museum's ethos.



Hallaton is here



Blaston

ROYAL CONNECTIONS, WITCHES & GHOSTS



The Domesday Book's Leicestershire page

Most houses in Blaston are tithed to the 1,000-acre working estate owned by the Murray-Phillipson family since 1936. The Domesday Book records two distinct Lordships held by Robert de Todenii, William the Conqueror's arms bearer and founder of Belvoir Castle.

The 1193 Crusades earned Hugo de Nevill one Lordship, with the other held by the Abbey of Peterborough until 1539 when it was gifted to Thomas Cromwell by King Henry VIII following the dissolution of the monasteries. The estate remained in the Cromwell family until 1594. Stone House (c1640), is thought to have been built on the site of Cromwell's original manor and to have been used by King Henry VIII as a hunting lodge.

In 1750 John Owsley of Hallaton became Lord of the Manor and Rector of St Giles. During his 68 year ownership he built Blaston Hall, demolished in 1930 with only the stables and former Billiard Room surviving.



King Richard I of England

The 12th century St Michael's church was founded by Richard I and rumoured to be a tribute to his wife, Queen Berengaria of Navarre. Since its last service during the First World War St Michael's has become a ruin. St Giles' church, last rebuilt in 1878, is still active.



The ruins of St Michael's church 2018

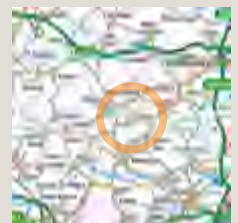
During the 16th century witch hunts, the ducking pond was much used as nearby Horninghold reputedly had a number of witches. Many of Blaston's cottages have beams bearing witch-markings to ward off evil.



Vine Cottage was once a school for 16 children. Founded in 1830 it closed 8 years later when Hallaton school opened.



Blaston is here



Glooston

GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

Nestled in a valley with south facing slopes and natural springs, it's hardly surprising that Glooston's history dates back to the Mesolithic period, with a Domesday Book listing and field walks revealing pottery providing evidence of a continuous settlement.

Glimpses of Glooston's past include:

Moat Farm includes medieval fish ponds, and the date stone in the gable shows that Home Farm has been worked since at least 1688.

After becoming part of the Brudenell Estate in the early 17th century, many inhabitants of the village were displaced to make room for sheep.

Land along the Goadby and Harborough Roads were once the sites of long gone houses and allotments.

The church of St John the Baptist, built in 1866-7, and replacing a 13th century church on what was possibly the site of an even older chapel. The American relatives of Rector John Owsley, who - with his wife - is buried in the church, still visit the village.

The old thatched Blue Bell pub is now known as The Old Barn

The good news is that, whilst the population of the village dropped from 180 in the 1800s to just 54 in 2001, the 2011 census revealed that 147 people now live in the thriving village, which shares its village hall – donated by the Brudenell Estate – with Cranoe and Stonton Wyville.

5, Adelphi Row is not all it seems, having been the village school until 1843.

The Roman Gartree Road to the west.

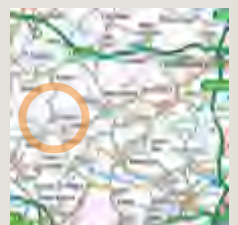
The excavation of a Roman villa in the 1940s/1950s.

Crossburrow Hill played host to the Home Guard during the Second World War.

Hidden
HISTORIES



Glooston is here



Medbourne

MAKING ROOM FOR THOSE AT REST



St Giles, Medbourne, 2018

Medbourne 1916.

The churchyard of St Giles in Medbourne was full. A derelict cottage abutting the church was taking up an area much needed for graves. The problem was that the young, active, and physically capable men were away at war, and the women they had left behind were already coping with many of the previously male-orientated tasks to keep their families fed and the wheels of the village turning.



Cottages in the grounds of St Giles, Medbourne, 1916

Demolishing a cottage was quite a challenge, but the women rose to it and on one day during the summer the cottage was dismantled by able bodied women and girls, and a few of the men still in the village. The entire village, dressed in their best clothes, watched as the cottage was pulled down.



The dedication of the newly extended graveyard, St Giles, Medbourne, 1916



St Giles, Medbourne, 2018

A few months later, the Bishop of Peterborough (at that time Medbourne was part of the Peterborough Diocese) performed the ceremony of dedicating the newly exposed area as a burial ground.

A village dilemma solved by determined women.



Medbourne is here



Nevill Holt

FAKES AND FORTUNES



Nevill Holt Hall. This magnificent Grade 1 listed hall, now a preparatory school, occupies a glorious elevated position above the Welland Valley.

The estate continuously owned by the Kirkby family from 1272 became Nevill Holt in 1631 when it was acquired by the Nevills, a major Leicestershire Catholic family. The Nevills owned the estate when dwindling power and finances resulted in Cosmas Nevill leaving the estate in 1868.

In 1876, Edward Cunard purchased the estate at auction, but died 12 months later, passing ownership to his brother, Sir Bache Cunard, who substantially restored and remodelled the Hall, constructing a stone bay window bearing the Cunard rest, and creating a commemorative window for his brother as part of the chapel's refurbishment.



Despite marrying an American heiress, Sir Bache's financial woes forced him to leave Nevill Holt whereupon the estate was reclaimed for the Nevills by Cosmo Nevill Peake.



Horse's Head by Nic Fiddian Green, Nevill Holt

However, his tragic death in 1918 resulted in the house being purchased in 1920 by Reverend Bowlker, and turned into a Preparatory School.

A rather quirky story in the Times Educational Supplement in 2003, told of a Swansea-born teacher who cheated parents, pupils and his bank manager by changing his accent and pretending to be a graduate from the Sorbonne, a qualified French teacher,

and a 30-year-old aristocrat with military honours as a former squadron leader, secret service agent and medal-winner in the First World War. In fact he had only completed military training at Uxbridge and attended summer school at Besancon University, France.

The school closed in 1998, and was purchased in 2000 by its current owner, David Ross, who has restored the house to full glory. Today it is famous for its award-winning opera festival, gardens, and an outstanding collection of modern British art and sculpture. Recent refurbishments won a RIBA conservation award.



Nevill Holt is here



Slawston

750 YEARS OF HARNESSING THE WIND

The earliest evidence for a windmill at Slawston was one owned by William Boyville in 1285. 400 years later it had been replaced by a post mill, which stood on the site until the early 20th century.

In the late 1700s the illustrator Mr Tailby recorded that the surrounding land was particularly suitable for growing cereals, and presumably these crops were milled in the village by the two Slawston-based millers that Mr Tailby mentioned.

Slawston windmill stood on the top of what is 'Windmill or Slawston Hill', on the Medbourne Road, but by 1884 maps of Slawston show the site marked as 'old windmill', suggesting it had ceased to be operational.

By the early 1900s the mill was in a dilapidated condition, and what happened next in the mill's history is a little confusing !



Slawston Postmill operational c1880s

The windmill was seen by several locals to be struck by lightning on 29th July 1930. However, one account states that it was not the original mill that was struck, but a replica, constructed by the Fernie Hunt to enable Mrs Fernie to have a landmark whilst she was hunting.

The other story tells that lightning destroyed the original, derelict mill, and was then replaced by a new post mill which was also struck by lightning and further rebuilt, this time by the Fernie Hunt.

Whichever story is true, by the late 1930s there was no longer a windmill standing sentinel on Slawston Hill.

VANISHING WINDMILLS

From Lady Thursby

Sir _ I can add to your correspondent's letter (August 31) on Vanishing Windmills by giving some facts about the windmill at Slawston, Leicestershire.

It was painted, and restored, by my sister, the late Mrs C. W. B. Carais and left to Slawston, in her will. Some years ago I had a letter from our old stud groom's wife, who lives in the next village, Hallaton, and she told me there had been a terrible thunderstorm, and that Slawston Windmill had been struck by lightning and burnt to the ground.

I am wondering if this also happened to the Woodhouse Eaves Mill mentioned by Mr J. F. Laseliers (?) in his letter of August 3.

— MARY A. THURSBY,
Fountain Court, Brook, Lyndhurst, Hampshire.



Slawston Hill 2018

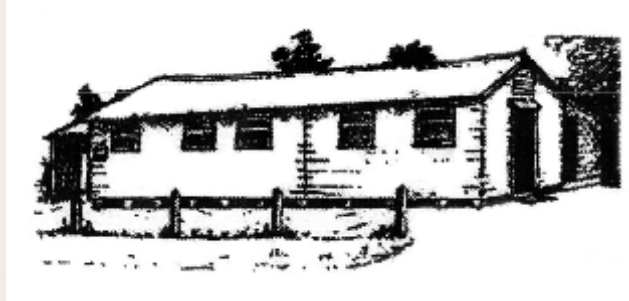


Slawston is here



Tugby

VILLAGE HALLS



Tugby Village Hall

A hall for recreation and social activities was – and still is - commonplace in villages.

In 1880, a cottage in Tugby provided rooms for reading, cards and billiards, for use by working and married men. The Reading Room included newspapers and publications such as *Graphic*, *Punch*, *Leicester Advertiser* and the *Chambers Journal*, all donated by the Lord of the Manor.

Around 1920, the cottage was superseded by a long wooden building, possibly an ex-army hut, which was placed alongside a footpath opposite the school. For almost 30 years, this building, with a main room featuring two huge mirrors and a lovely floor for dancing, was used as the village hall. As well as hosting whist drives, the kitchen, toilets and Reading Room containing a dartboard, billiard table and small library provided a range of facilities for the villagers.



When, in 1947 a new 'Assembly Rooms' building became redundant and was advertised for sale in local papers by instructions of the Parish Council in August 1950, with tenders invited by 30th September.



Advertisement in Leicester Advertiser 26th August 1950

The successful tender of £110, made by Ashley Social Centre, resulted in the wooden hall being transferred by tractor and trailer to the Northamptonshire village of Ashley, where it opened on 13th December 1951, remaining operational until 28th November 1998 when wear and tear resulted in enforced closure as a result of non-compliance with health and hygiene regulations.



Tugby is here



The 'Tag, Share, Like' Trail

GIVE IT A GO !

For those of you wanting to see where all the Hidden Histories in this year's exhibition take place, we have created a walking or cycling trail.

You can do the whole thing in one go (17.3 miles) or, if that's a bit daunting, we've broken the route into three smaller stages for you to do at your leisure.

Please feel free to take one of our leaflets to guide you and give you information.

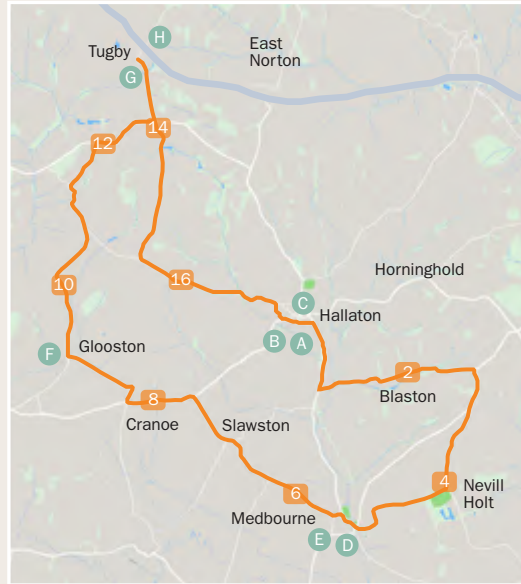
To complete the 'Tag, Share and Like' Trail:

1. Take a selfie to prove that you're at any of the villages whose Hidden Histories are part of the exhibition
2. Post the photo on Facebook (@museumhallaton) or Instagram
3. Tag yourself and the location
4. Share the post
5. The more likes you get, the more chance you have of winning a prize !

There's no limit to the number of photos you can tag, share and like – as long as they're on the cycle trail and part of the exhibition.

If you're not part of the Facebook generation(s), take a photo and bring it to the museum to prove you've been to one of the location, and you will receive a free gift.

THE FULL ROUTE - 17 miles

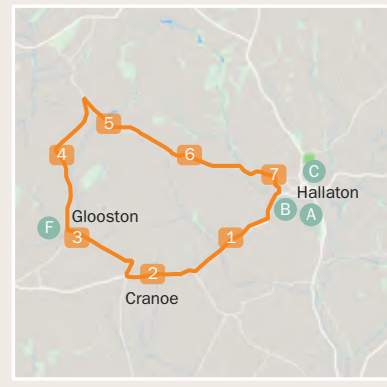


- A The Bewicke Pub, Hallaton
- B The Hare Pie Cafe, Hallaton
- C The Fox Pub, Hallaton
- D The Nevill Arms Pub, Medbourne
- E The Nevill Tea Rooms, Medbourne
- F The Old Barn Inn, Glooston
- G The Fox & Hounds Pub, Tugby
- H Cafe Ventoux, Tugby
- 4 Miles from the start of the route

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE 1 - 9.1 miles



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE 2 - 7.2 miles



Most of the route is covered by the Ordnance Survey Explorer 233 (Leicester and Hinckley) map.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE 3 - 8.7 miles

