

A young person's historical guide to West Littleton

Introduction

Welcome to West Littleton. It is proposed that we take a short walk through the village stopping at points of interest starting at the top end of the village on the southern boundary. The first house in the village on you left as you come from Marshfield is Upper Farm (Old Farmhouse) .

Travelling back to the year 1600

The exact date of the earliest settlement is not clear but we do know that properties and villagers living here in about 1600. An Estate map surveyed by William Senior in 1637 for William Cavendish, Earl of Newcastle, grandson of Bess of Hardwick forms the front cover to this guide. William Cavendish was the Lord of the Manor of Tormarton, West Littleton and Action Turville. (The Estate map was discovered by Gwynne Stock of Tormarton following historical research on the village)

In the year 1600 if you came to West Littleton from Marshfield you would probably have walked or ridden a horse along a muddy track. As you passed over the stream at the bottom of the hill there may have been women washing clothes in the stream (Washbrook) or you may have seen yeomen (farmers) collecting water with a horse and cart for the farm animals. (note the turning area adjoining the bridge) The water supply to West Littleton came from wells but the supply of water was limited. (Mains water supply was not installed until 1954) The walls and fields you passed would not be as you see them today. Fields would be ploughed by oxen pulling a single furrow plough.

Before starting our walk, can you picture the clothes we may have been wearing 400 years ago? Figure 1 indicates style of clothing likely to have been worn by the wealthy.

STOPPING POINT 1

Our first observation is the Parish Boundary. If you look at the map on the front cover you can see where our walk starts

The Parish Boundary between Marshfield and West Littleton runs along Slait Lane and is physically defined by the stone walls and stone boundary markers spaced along the boundary. It was customary for villagers to walk the boundary once a year moving along boundary from stone marker to stone marker. (Figure 2)

Question 1: Can you spot the Boundary Marker ?

STOPPING POINT 2

Moving down the lane towards the barn on you right (just before the sharp right hand bend). Look at the end wall of the barn and identify the Victorian ordinance survey bench mark cut into the wall. This reference point gives the height above sea level. (Figure 3)

Question 2: Can you guess how high you are above sea level?

STOPPING POINT 3

The corner ahead is dangerous. Take care and move in single file on the left of the road. The house on your right is The Limes, move into the drive for the next observation. Look at the map on the front cover, it shows the house in the left hand corner of the plot. A Robert Alsop lived here. He was a yeoman and was born in Marshfield in 1600. The section of the house to the left of the porch is the original building with out buildings behind. Documents show that in 1642 a mortgage in the form of 1000year lease was taken out. The money raised was probably used to extend the house to the right of the porch. During the reign of Charles II a hearth tax of 1 shilling per hearth was introduced.

Question 3: Can you guess how many hearths The Limes had ?

STOPPING POINT 4

Move further up the drive beyond the house (The Limes) and you will come to the yard and barn. The single door was originally a half door to the stable for a horse. The big double doors gave access to a village workshop for a business linked to horse transport. The business continued up to the First World War.

Question 4: Can you guess what the village business was?

STOPPING POINT 5

Go back down the drive and turn right. Moving down through the village the farm on the right is called West Farm (named after the farmer a Mr West). At the junction with Furlongs Lane there is a small building on your left with a pyramid shaped roof and a large door way (built up). The present use of this building is as a garage/outbuilding to the bungalow, but the indications are that in the past it served a different function

Question 5: Can you guess some of the previous functions of this building in the village?

STOPPING POINT 6

Carry on down the road past the post box. The building on your right is Home Farm (Littleton House) now a private dwelling. On the left next to the village notice board is a small compound.

Question 6: Can you guess the reason for this small compound?

STOPPING POINT 7

Move down the road to the end of the path to the church opposite the phone box. Look back across the road to the barn at the rear of Home Farm. Steps lead up to the first floor door of the barn. Look at the shape and you can see why this is called a keyhole doorway. (Figure 4)

Question 7: Can you explain why the doorway is shaped in this way?

STOPPING POINT 8

Cross the road and make your way along the top edge of the grass triangle opposite. The lime tree to your left was planted to commemorate the Queens Jubilee. On your right at the far end of the grass triangle is the Manor house. This is a typical sixteenth century Cotswold manor house with three gables, mullioned windows and a two storey porch. The farm facing you is Manor farm the only other working farm in the village.

Question 8: Turning and looking across the common can you name the farm next to the church?

STOPPING POINT 9

Cross the road again and stand at the end of the church path. Look at the ground between where you are standing and the ash tree to the right of the path. The small stone lined dipping chamber shows the height of the water table at this point.

Question 9: Can you guess what other water feature you would have seen at this point prior to the 1980's. Can you see where it might have been located ?

STOPPING POINT 10

Look across the common (previously known as the Greene) in the past there was a village smithy and a school house.

Question 10: Can you guess which buildings were once the school and smithy?

Our journey ends at the gates to St James Church.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



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STOPPING POINT 1

Question SP1: Can you spot the Boundary Marker ?

On the corner to the external wall of Upper Farm at the entrance to Slait Lane

STOPPING POINT 2

Question SP2: Can you guess how high you are above sea level? 620.5 feet (185m)

STOPPING POINT 3

Question SP3: Can you guess how many hearths The Limes had ? Six hearths

STOPPING POINT 4

Question SP4: Can you guess what the village business was?

Wheel wrights, Carpenters, Funeral directors up to the First World War

STOPPING POINT 5

Question SP 5: Can you guess some of the previous functions of this building in the village?

Chapel, Village meeting place, Second world war first aid centre

STOPPING POINT 6

Question SP6: Can you guess the reason for this small compound?

Village pound to contain animals that have wandered

STOPPING POINT 7

Question SP7: Can you explain why the doorway is shaped in this way?

Grain Barn: upto 40 years ago grain was handled in large two bushel (2.25 cwt) "West of England " sacks the size of which required a larger door when carried on the back of the farm labourer

STOPPING POINT 8

Question SP8: Turning and looking across the common can you name the farm next to the church?

Church Farm: property names were often linked to locations or features in a village eg The Limes

STOPPING POINT 9

Question SP9: Can you guess what you would have seen at this point prior to the 1980's.

The village pond filled in as recently as the 80,s the perimeter of the pond can still be seen

STOPPING POINT 10

Question SP10: Can you guess which they were? See map