

Village of Manton

Derivation: Maen and Tun of English origin meaning 'Town on a Rock'

History of the Manor

Manton is not recorded in the Domesday Book, but it is probable that in 1086 it was one of seven berewicks of the king's Manor of Hameldune Cherchesoch.

One of the earliest mentions of the Manor in Manton comes during the reign of Henry 1, and for the next few centuries it was to be the dominating feature in the life and development of the village. The manor changed hands many times between the Abbots of Cluny, the English Kings and those they rewarded, until it eventually ceased to exist in the early 20th century.

The village of Manton stands on high ground with an underground water source running along the northern slope, where a line of several wells still exists today in properties in St Mary's Road and Priory Road. Through the centuries, villagers have been able to observe on all sides typical rolling, rural scenery of pastures, grazed mainly by sheep, but also some cattle and horses, as well as fields cultivated for grass, wheat and other crops. Dramatic changes have occurred in more modern times, with the advance of road transport, the coming of the railways and the construction of Rutland Water. The central point of the village is still the tiny, triangular village green with its three beautiful mature lime trees planted to commemorate the coronation of King George V in 1911.

Architecturally, Manton is a mixed village with several large, older, stone-built houses and erstwhile farms, having collyweston slate rooves, as well as historic cottages and more modern detached and terraced houses. In the past there were mainly farmhouses and cottages as mentioned above, as well as a Hall (now the Old Hall on Stocks Hill) with its various outbuildings (now homes), a forge, a bakery, a butcher and slaughterhouse, a Post Office, the church, two public houses, a small Victorian school, a general store, a sweet shop and a chocolate factory! The picture is very different today as most of the above have been converted to dwellings, with just the church, one public house, 'The Horse and

Jockey', a Village Hall (adapted from the old school), a Residential Home (converted from the 'New Hall' on Lyndon Road) and an antique shop (formerly cottages) on St. Mary's Road.

It is recorded in 1579 that one of the main routes from London to Richmond in the north of England went through Wing, Manton and Oakham. The constant flow of horse driven carriages must have been an interesting sight and this traffic may have contributed to the prosperity of the village. Evidence of this can be seen in the many well-built houses constructed in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1732 a severe fire swept through the village and caused such damage that a national appeal was set up. In spite of this disaster several of the earlier houses survived, particularly those in Pudding Bag End, now Priory Road.

Pudding Bag End was the original name given to this end of the village because sheep were funnelled here. Hambleton View was a very small cottage known as Stable Door, which was sold 'after the war years' for just £50. Stonefield Farm was originally a draper's house, the owner going around the village selling his wares from his horse and cart. Other farmhouses were Manor Farm and The Hollies. The Yews is one of the oldest purpose-built houses in Manton (1625). It was once the home of the village mole-catcher and later it was used in part as a factory for 'Huntsmen' luxury chocolate. At one time 12 girls were employed there, but production ceased in the 1940s. Like the church, the origins of The Priory and Priory Cottage are Norman and it also has 14th century features. A four foot tunnel is said to have led from the cellar of The Priory to Martinsthorpe, thus providing safety from hilltop assassins! To the right of the gate to The Priory was once the shoemaker's log bungalow. Opposite was The Blue Ball Inn, now a private residence. The village pump stood outside.

Stocks Hill, so-named because the village stocks stood at the corner with St Mary's Road, also has several old and interesting buildings. The Forge (1582) was a smithy prior to 1739, when it became the Talbott Alehouse. In 1764 it

reverted to a smithy once more and then to the village Post Office which closed in 1980. The thatched cottage at no 5 was the last village butcher's shop.

Haberdashery was sold from the 'shop window' next door. The largest property in the village was Manton Old Hall, built in 1688 by the Heathcote family. It had several outbuildings such as stabling, a coach house, an apple store, maltings and some cottages. All these estate buildings are now residences. The Old Hall was a vicarage in 1900 and was subsequently occupied by the Duchess of Montrose who trained horses under the pseudonym 'Mr. Manton' as women were not allowed to register as trainers. The Three Wells (17th century) at the top of the hill still has three pumps. The Old Coach House is next door.

Other farms in the village were Dairy Farm and Pheasants' Roost, as well as the nineteenth century hunting lodges with stabling such as Manton Lodge Farm, The Croft and Manton Grange. The latter was built in 1879 and used as Lord Asquith's 'hunting box' in about 1906 and subsequently by Lady Bailey, a solo pilot in the early days of aircraft. Nearby, at the top of St. Mary's Road, was the village pond and further down the hill is the Horse and Jockey Public House, which is still a popular 'watering hole' especially for cyclists on the ride around Rutland Water. Vine Cottage, at the corner, was once a post office and bakery, with a pork butchery next door.

Many of the establishments mentioned above, set in Manton's 1200 acres of land, generated employment for the villagers in the 19th and early 20th centuries, in the form of the following allied trades and occupations:

Corn Miller Draper Baker

Coachmen/Chauffeurs Grazier Blacksmith

Cake Agent Indoor and Outdoor Staff Butcher

Mason Gardeners Grooms

Carpenter Boot and Shoe Maker Wheelwright

Postmistress and Telephonist Schoolmistress Victuallers

Auctioneer and Valuer General Storekeeper

At the east end of the village on Lyndon Road was the pinfold for stray animals, a fine of one shilling per stray beast being imposed. Beyond this was the site of the village windmill, which was burnt down by local boys in 1891. In the 19th century there were two quoit beds to the right of the then village school. The object of this popular game was to throw a flat ring of iron weighing 6-9lbs over an iron pin or hob thus scoring a ringer. Manton also had a Football Club, which was disbanded in the early 20th century when 'its dressing room was stolen during the night'. In the 1960s and 1980s badminton was held in the village hall. Manton Cricket Club, located at the west end of Lyndon Road, ceased to function in the 1990s, when the clubhouse was vandalized. Some horses are still kept locally.

Further historic details (published in 1935) can be found on British History online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66208>. Other information is also available on http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit_page.jsp?u_id=10037785&c_id=10001043

The Thomas Fryer Almshouses

Two cottages in Priory Road, now converted into one house, 'Fryers Cottage', were bequeathed in 1903 by the late Thomas Fryer Esq. (born in Manton) to be used for "the benefit of any poor, aged or infirm persons, being inhabitants of the villages of Manton or Hambleton, Rutland."



In 1981 two modern bungalows were built to replace the original cottages. They still comply with the bequest.

The first eight council houses were built in 1934 on the south side of Lyndon Road.

With the construction of Rutland Water to the north of the village in the early 1970's, the loss of some beautiful countryside was compensated by new and splendid views over the water. A bird sanctuary, was created providing habitat to a great number of species which can be observed from several hides as well as two bird-watching centres at Eggleton and Lyndon. Manton is situated very close to the western end of the reservoir known as Manton Bay. Rutland Water is currently the largest man-made reservoir in Europe and supplies much of the water needs of Northamptonshire. It offers watersports such as fishing, sailing and windsurfing, as well as a 27 mile cycle track around its shores.

Birdwatching, in particular, has brought many visitors to the now famous nature reserve, which has recently pioneered a successful project to return the osprey to

England. The reserve is a Ramsar site as designated by The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, and it is also protected by English Nature.