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Foreword

Six years after Wellow Toftholders undertook repairs to the banking of the dam by the Somerset firm Willowbank another stretch has had to be professionally repaired using the same traditional methods of willow-weaving. This booklet forms part of our commitment to the second project just as ' Wellow and Wellow Dam • A fine Heritage' did for the first. Information about both projects and many other aspects of the village can also be found at www.wellowvillage.co.uk.

Our funding partner on this occasion is Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT), who is itself supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As a member of the Sherwood Habitats Steering Group, SFT is committed to the protection and enhancement of the ecology and landscape of the area, so you will perhaps notice that here we deal more with matters directly affecting the land than last time, although we do not neglect our historic buildings. More information about the work of Sherwood Forest Trust appears later, and we extend our grateful thanks to them for their prompt advice and practical help when the problem with the dam first came to light.

We are indebted to many people, including:- Thoresby Colliery Angling Club for their work in back-filling the willow to reinforce the bank of the dam and to John Parker for generously providing the clay. To George Haggett for his assistance with printing and Margaret & David Lees for their invaluable assistance with the material. But, especially to Audrey and John Vann for their hard work with fundraising and both the booklet and website. We would also like to thank all our contributors for sharing their experiences and memories. We hope you will agree that they have given us a fascinating glimpse into more of the history of our village, one which we think you will thoroughly enjoy. We hope in the near future to embark on a new project which aims to make Wellow Dam a much more user-friendly place for people with disabilities. Perhaps our third book is on the horizon!

Eddie Ilett, Chairman, Wellow Toftholders and Owners Association

Wellow Allotments
(Poor Lands Charity)
(from Eddie Ilett)

Originally, the early Inclosures awarded land on Newark Road to the people of Wellow for allotments and because of the nature of the land, which is not easy to dig, it is known locally as "the clay gardens".

Additionally, at a later date, lighter quality land on Eakring Road was bequeathed to the village and in 1817 this established the Poor Lands Charities, as mentioned upon a plaque sited in St. Swithin's church.

In 1894 the civil responsibilities of the church vestry were transferred to the newly formed Parish Council and it is their responsibility to appoint two Trustees, not necessarily councillors, who undertake to select a Treasurer and administer the Charity. Under the charity, any surplus monies are distributed to the poor of the village at the direction of the Parish Council, which is quite a problem in the apparently affluent community of today.

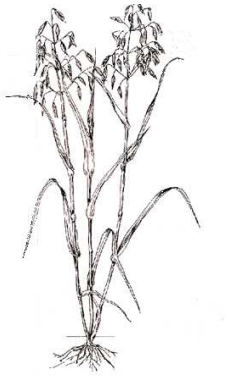
Following village tradition the people who wish to work an allotment pay their rent on Lady Day and throughout the year benefit from being able to grow a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables. This ensures that competition is very high on the day of the annual garden show.

The Agricultural Landscape of Wellow (from Janet Carr)

The parish of Wellow, at around 1000 acres, is quite small in terms of its area. Most of the parish stands on clay land, classified now as Mercia Mudstone but formerly known as Keuper Marl, but with the western fringe bordering on the Bunter Sandstone. The underlying soil favours particular crops, and therefore affects the look of the landscape.

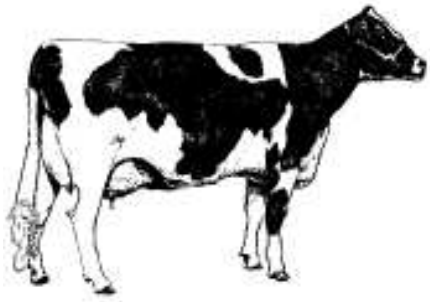
In agricultural terms, the clay was always considered better land for farming, and so Wellow's open fields lay to the eastern side of the settlement. As the road leaves Wellow towards Ompton, they were, in order, Townend, Middle and Top Field. Enclosure came relatively late to Wellow in 1842, after official meetings had initially been convened at the Durham Ox to discuss the matter.

The main arable crops were cereals and beans, but hops were also grown in the parish during the 1800s (there were quite extensive 'hop-gardens' at Boughton and Ollerton). The variety grown in Nottinghamshire was eventually superseded by a better one in Kent, which resulted in hops falling out of favour in this area. However, it is still possible to find hops growing in one or two hedgerows in the parish to this day. Of the cereals, oats and barley were fed to the livestock, and wheat was used for bread making. The field beans were also used for livestock rations. Root crops were grown for both humans and livestock, but nowadays these are concentrated on the sand land in the county.



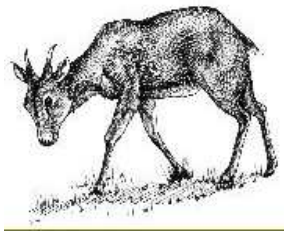
Farming in the parish used to be more mixed than it is today. Dairying finally came to an end in Wellow in the 1970s, as smaller herds became less viable. Whereas Wellow and the surrounding area are

today mostly arable, historically there would have been a mixture of pasture and crops. Grass was grown for the livestock to graze, and also to be made into hay for winter fodder. The common land of the village was also used by the toft holders to graze their livestock, and this of course included Cocking Moor. Today this area looks very like the neighbouring Wellow Park Wood, but up to the 1930s it was used as a communal grazing ground. After this time, with changes in farming practice, it fell into disuse and was gradually colonised by bushes and trees.



Woodland was often found at the outer edges of a parish, and Wellow Park is no exception. The wood sits on a steep scarp slope, which was no good for food production. It is thought that the origins of this ancient woodland go back to medieval times at least, for its boundary is marked in places by a deep 'wood bank'. These were often constructed around deer parks to prevent the animals escaping. The boundary of the wood with Cocking Moor Lane shows this particularly well. Subsequently Wellow Park was managed by the Rufford estate for the production of timber and firewood.

Nowadays the wood is home to wild red deer, as well as several Muntjac deer unfortunately, together with foxes and badgers. It is actually the largest ash-dominated wood in Nottinghamshire, and is wholly owned by the Forestry Commission. Wellow Park is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, which bestows protection by Natural England, and so remains a living link with the landscape of a thousand years ago.

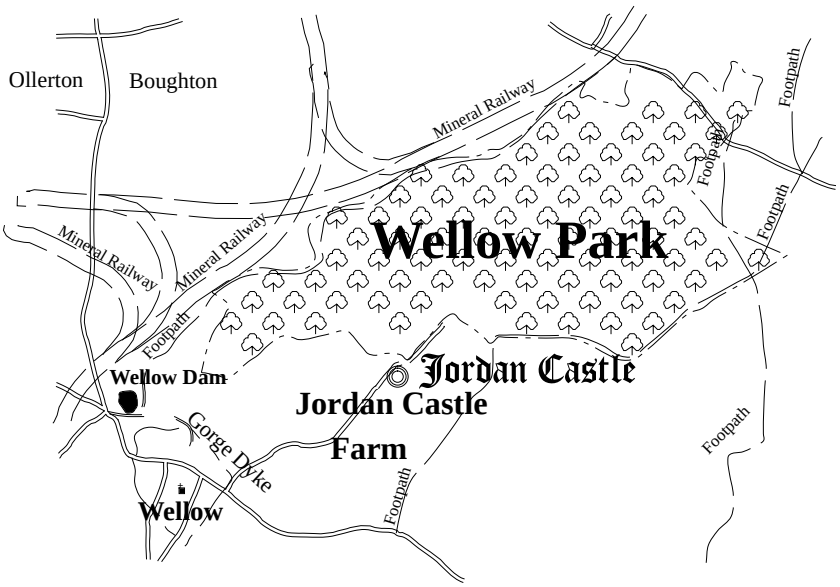


Wellow Park – a Site of Special Scientific Interest

We are fortunate to have a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) in Wellow, one of around a total of 4000 throughout England.

SSSIs can be anything from beaches to heathland, and can include meadows, peat bogs and many other natural environments. What they have in common, however, is the distinction of containing what is the very best in a combination of their geology, botany or wildlife in the country. As such they are especially valuable as our natural heritage, and just as worthy of preservation as our beautiful old buildings. Modern life can be very difficult for the survival of natural things, and the extra protection offered by SSSI status helps to support plants and animals which might otherwise find survival tricky in the wider countryside.

Once designated, an SSSI is listed in a schedule covering its local planning authority area(s), and its designation helps to prevent inadvertent damage by, for example, development or water authority works. English Nature works with landowners and managers to conserve these special sites.



Our own Site of Special Scientific Interest is Wellow Park, notified in 1972; the reason for designation is that it is 'the largest remaining example of ash-wych elm woodland in Nottinghamshire, and is representative of semi-natural woodland developed on somewhat base-rich clays in the North Midlands'.

The reason that this place is so special becomes apparent when you consider the diversity of plants described in English Nature's description of the flora of Wellow Park;

'A fine example of semi-natural broad-leaved woodland developed partly on a north-west facing slope on soils derived from the Triassic Keuper Waterstones and partly on fairly level ground on soils derived from the Triassic Keuper Marls. On the slope, the woodland is dominated by ash, wych-elm and small-leaved lime, with a shrub layer characterised by the abundance of hazel, hawthorn and sloe. The ground vegetation is locally dominated by dog's mercury, but is very diverse, containing a large number of plants indicative of ancient woodland, including ramsons, wood anemone, yellow archangel, wood sorrel, primrose and giant bellflower. On higher, more level ground to the south, the original woodland is represented by a species-rich scrub which has developed following a felling operation...A number of small watercourses and drainage ditches occur on the site. On the slopes, certain of the watercourses have been colonised locally by the opposite-leaved golden saxifrage, whilst on the higher, level ground drainage ditches are used as breeding sites by amphibia. Additional interest is provided by the numbers and variety of wintering bird species, the quality of the breeding bird community and the diversity of the invertebrate populations'.

The Pinfold

On Newark Road, at the entrance to Jordan Castle Farm drive stands the 19th-Century Wellow Pinfold; it is a stone-walled enclosure which despite its simple construction provides a fascinating insight into part of the history of our village.

The Inclosure Acts of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries had enabled landowners to enclose land owned by them but previously freely grazed by local people. This meant that, throughout England, villagers' ability to feed their animals – on which the very lives of some families depended – was so reduced that grinding poverty, even starvation resulted; an exodus from the countryside into the growing towns in its turn threatened the agricultural base of the country. Common Land, which was granted under the feudal system in perpetuity to peasants– in Wellow the Toftholders - to compensate them for their lost grazing because of enclosure became ever more important; in 1856 the Commons Preservation Act was passed to ensure its protection.

The Pinfold connects us to this period in history; it was built to hold 'stray' animals, those which their owners had failed to take home from grazing by nightfall. These were rounded up by an officer called the Pinder, and, once impounded, it required the payment of a fine by their owner to get them back again! Conditions and rules for the stocking of Common Land, including the number and type of animals permitted to be turned out there and the fines to be levied by the Pinder were

decided at meetings of the Toftholders and sometimes representatives of the landowners; minutes as early as 1858 of one such meeting of Wellow Toftholders survive to record the decisions made. An example of a fines schedule is shown below. The grazing rights of Toftholders remain to this day and the presence and preservation of these rights safeguards the common land for the benefit of all.

So next time you walk or drive past, spare a thought for an unlucky and possibly – especially in the early days - impoverished Toftholder having to scrape together enough cash to recover his horse, beast, sheep or pig from this very Pinfold!

Minutes of a Toft Holders meeting held on 10th, November 1919 record;

"A meeting of the toft holders interested in the Commons and open Lands in the Parish was held in the Parish School room this tenth day of November 1919 for the pupose of entering into an agreement as to the charges to be made by the Pinder for impounding stock trespassing on the said Commons and open Lands.

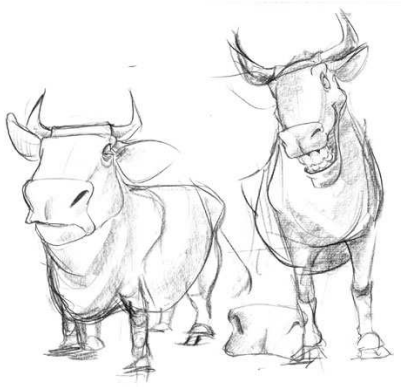
Moved by Mr. G. Ragsdale and seconded by Mr. A.R. Retford and, resolved that the fees chargeable by the Pinder for impounding stock trespassing on the Commons and open Lands shall be as follows:-

For each Horse	**-**	**One shilling**
For each Beast	**-**	**One shilling**
For each Sheep	**-**	**Two pence with a minimum charge of One shilling**
For each Pig	**-**	**Two shillings**

Moved by Mr. W. Richards and seconded by Mr. T.H. Newton and resolved that in future any stock not removed from the Commons and open Lands by one hour after sunset shall be liable to be impounded, this not to apply to the common known as Cocking Moor and the lane leading thereto.

A farming reminiscence (from Muriel Haggett)

‘Like her contemporaries, my mother attended the National School on Wellow Road, which is now a garage. Her father had a joiner’s yard in Wellow where he used to mend the farmer’s carts, wheels and carry out various other repairs.



He also kept a small herd of cows, a bull called Billy, pigs, and a horse with a goat as a companion. One of the cows had a crooked horn and was a favourite called Daisy.

On the way home from school my mother would collect these cows from the field and would tent them on the green by the Dam for a short while before milking. When it was time to go, the herd would start for home, all except Daisy who, nine times out of ten would make for the Dam and stand up to her stomach in water. No amount of shouting would get her out.

My mother said that Daisy would deliberately watch her getting into the punt – which was moored at the water’s edge at that time – and wait until she was a few feet out into the dam before coming out to join the rest of the herd and amble off home’.

‘Recollections’ (about 1885) (by Mrs. Eliza Lockwood of Sheffield)

Mrs. Lockwood stayed as a child with an aunt and uncle in Ollerton;
‘The next village on one side of Ollerton was Wellow, where I once saw an adult baptism in the pond on the village green; I think the baptized was dressed in white, I was much disgusted with the dirty water into which she went’.

Memories from Mrs. Joyce Truman (nee Crofts)

‘When I was a young girl of eight or nine I would love to go with my Dad up to the allotment on Newark Road (in a sloping field where the last houses stand). As soon as the barrow came out I was in there like a shot, the spade down one side of me, the fork down the other, the bucket of seed potatoes at my feet, and off we’d go! I sat on the upturned bucket while dad dug a piece of garden, which was very hard going as it was clay; I only set two rows before I got fed up and went to the bottom of the garden to make daisy and buttercup chains. It was lovely watching the rabbits and occasionally a hare running about, you could even hear the birds whistling it was that quiet. We never knew what time it was, time didn’t matter in those days, and we knew our dinner would be ready when we got home.

One day I went with a couple of friends down Wellow Common to pick sloes for our Mums to make Sloe Gin, and spent nearly all day there. We also went to Mr. Wombwell’s field to pick cowslips for Cowslip Wine, he didn’t mind so long as we kept the gate closed to keep the cows in. I remember going down Coggles Lane with my sister Annie. It smelled lovely because the hedges were full of honeysuckle and wild roses; we found a dyke with watercress in and brought a bunch home for our tea – it was beautiful and fresh and we really enjoyed it.

Those were the days, no looking over your shoulder; you were free as a bird’.

A nostalgic look at farming with Horses (from Eric Cuddy)

I would like to recall the time well over 60 years ago, when I worked at Lodge Farm for Jack and Bill Ragsdale, when the farm work was done with Horses. My Dad, Tom Cuddy worked at Lodge Farm for Mrs. L. Ragsdale, in charge of the Horses, and like him I had a great love of the Horses. There were eight altogether (2 teams). In the summer they were taken up Eakring Road to the first field after the houses, known as Tall Trees. They were ridden through the village – all the lads in Wellow hoped to be able to have a ride on them. They then grazed there and were collected in the morning back down to the farm.

The day started at 7am when the Horses were fed, other jobs were carried out, feeding calves and milking the cows, then the Horses were prepared and harness got ready for whatever job they had to do, ploughing, harrowing, harvesting, muck-carting. When returned to the farm in an afternoon the Horses were groomed and the stables were kept really clean; the Horses really did look a picture.

Harvesting; At this time all corn fields had to be opened out two yards wide by hand with scythes right round the fields so that the Binder could get in. This corn had to be gathered up and made into sheaves, tied up with a straw band and put into the hedge-bottom for collection later. It was a difficult job sometimes getting the Binder into the field because of the width of the machine. Once it was in the field the Horses would be yoked up; the pole had a horse each side of it. The Binder cut the corn, it went up the canvas to the knotter and was tied, and two arms fetched the sheaves out on the side. Large sails went round to bring the corn onto the cutting bed, and the workmen walked behind and made the sheaves of corn into stooks, (not a very nice job when it was a thistly old field!). Eight sheaves

made up a stook, and these were made up all around the field. It was said that the Church bells had to ring for three Sundays before the sheaves were ready for taking down to the farm to be made into stacks.

It was hard work, and lovely refreshments were taken up the fields for the workers. Tea was in very large cans, and pastries and sandwiches were enjoyed by all.

When it was time for the sheaves to be taken home to the farm, the horses would pull the carts or mofreys with gormers on the front and sides which allowed more corn to be loaded up. The sheaves were then made into stacks; the person actually making the stack had to know what they were doing. Workers would pass the sheaves up, using 'Long Tom', a long-shafted hay fork made especially for stacking and threshing. The sheaves were placed with the corn inwards and the butts outside, and when complete the roof was thatched to keep the corn dry.

When everything was completed, a Harvest Supper was held in the Farm House for everyone who had worked on the harvest, and a good time was had by all.

Cocking Moor and Grazing on Maypole Green (from Sydney Carr)

Sydney Carr, of Jordan Castle Farm, remembers his godfather Bill Ragsdale speaking of 'tenting' cattle on Cocking Moor, the sixteen acres of common land on the parish boundary against Laxton. Bill first performed this task as the age of about seven years old, being sent with his food for the day to look after the livestock and prevent them straying. This was in the 1920s, but the grazing of Cocking Moor had ceased completely before the beginning of the Second World War.

Sydney himself can remember how different Cocking Moor was when he was a child. "There were giant anthills up to three feet high dotted all over Cocking Moor. This would be during the 1950s until the mid sixties. After that, the bushes and trees grew taller, the vegetation changed, and the anthills gradually disappeared."

There were dairy herds in Wellow until the 1970s, with several of the farms were on or near the Maypole Green. After each cow had been milked, she would be sent out onto the green. Hunts (at Manor Farm), Johnsons (Church Farm) and Ragsdales (Lodge Farm) all had their land along Eakring Road, and so they usually staggered the time at which they each took their respective cows back to their fields. The Dickensons (Moat Farm), on the other hand, had their land along Newark Road, so their cows were trained to walk on the left hand side of the road to reach the pasture. I can remember the bus to school having to follow the cows along the main road at a very steady pace!

The Maypole Committee minutes record that each year a date was agreed with the village farmers from when the area around the maypole would be fenced off. This would be about two weeks before Maypole Day, and was in order to prevent the area being contaminated by cowpats. Any remaining evidence before the big day would necessitate the use of a shovel!

Memories of Lodge Farm 50 years ago (from Margaret Lees)

Jean Warrilow let me have a copy of the above letter, sent to her mum;

'Mrs. Hammond; We wish to notify you that we shall be closing our retail milk trade on Saturday 31st March 1956 owing to regulations coming into force that all milk sold retail must be bottled as from 10th April. In your own interest we advise you make early application to suppliers of bottled milk. We thank you for your trade and support over the past years. Ragsdale Bros. 24th March 1956'

I well recall our 'Milk place'. There was a long shelf marked into sections with every customer's name. People came along each day to collect their full jugs of milk and leave an empty jug for next day; most people had a regular order and paid cash weekly.

The cows were milked by hand; the large buckets of milk were then taken to the milk place where the milk was put through a cooler with cold water running through it. First it went into a separator into which sile pads were placed to remove impurities from the milk, then into churns. Full churns were rolled down to the entrance to the farm and collected from a milk stand there by lorries. There was a large copper because the churns had to be scalded down for the next day. This copper was also used to make 'porridge' for the baby calves. In a bucket they had a special calf meal which was mixed into a paste with warm water and stirred with a stick. They loved it, and the buckets were soon empty! Sometimes, to get the really young calves used to sucking, we had to put our fingers into their mouths until they could drink from the bucket on their own.

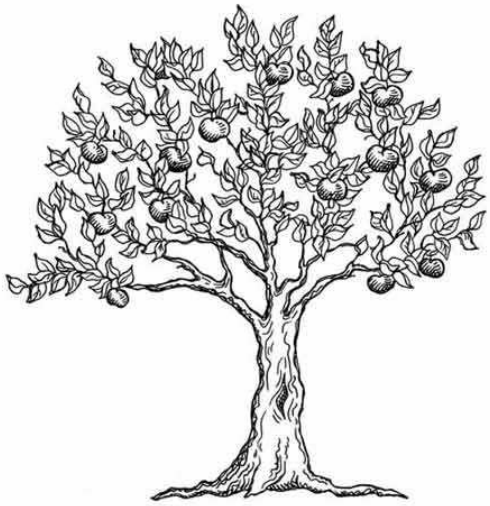
The cows were fed with cow nuts, ground oats and turnips or Swedes. These were put through a chopping machine and came out like chips; each cow had a trough of food when they came in to be milked, although of course, their main food was grass as they were out in the fields for a good part of the year. They were gentle animals and I enjoyed looking after them.

Recollections of more than 50 years ago (from Margaret Lees)

The break in the Autumn term at school was a little earlier than now, and was known in Wellow as ‘potato-picking’ or ‘spud-picking’ holiday.

The first Saturday of the holiday a lot of us children would go spud-picking for Mr. Fred Dickinson, some up Rufford Road, others on Newark Road. We all were transported by tractor and trailer to the field, equipped with our Buckets, a bottle of Tizer or lemonade and perhaps a packet of Smith’s crisps. We were all paid ten shillings (50p). We enjoyed going and soon got into the swing of picking the potatoes and putting them into hampers, which were emptied into a trailer ready for transport home. The second Saturday would be a trip to Ompton to Mr. John Watson’s field to harvest his potatoes, again being paid ten shillings for the job.

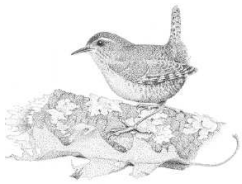
During the week I am sorry to admit, we would go ‘scrumping’ around the various orchards for apples. Other peoples’ must have tasted better! If the Hunt was meeting at nearby villages we would all bike up to the fields to watch what was going on. Another bike ride was to Rufford Lake, it was the old lake layout then, and we all enjoyed the trip there.



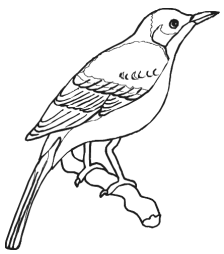
In November there was a big Bonfire on the bottom green down near the dam. There was not the variety of fireworks that are available now, but we all looked forward to buying a box of firework and seeing them go off!

Bird nesting when I was a lad in Wellow (from John Ragsdale)

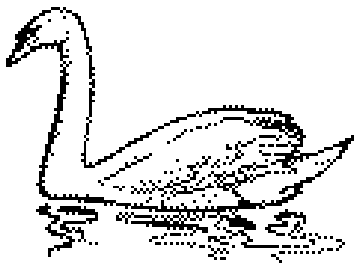
One of my hobbies was bird nesting, but not doing any harm, damage or destruction to the birds' nests.



I would start down Darkie Lane, on Bowman's side where the spring used to be; a Jenny Wren always nested there. Under the road bridge a Robin nested. Along the dyke bottom more Robins and Wrens; (the Wrens sometimes built more than one nest and then chose which one to lay their eggs in), a very nice dome-shaped nest with a hole in the middle. Blackbirds nested in Mr. Bowman's wood shed, a Woodpecker and a Wagtail in the hollow tree. All among the ivy roots near the bridge on Back Lane (Potter Lane) a Song Thrush; these birds usually built their nests fairly low down and lined them with mud. In the aeroplane tree a Tree-Sparrow nested, and this was a great find!



Up Back Lane Hedge Sparrows nested and also Chaffinches (what builders they were with all that moss!). Skylarks in David Rhodes' field, pee-wit (Lapwing) and Skylark in Cowfield, and a Jay in Bill Moore's wood. Carrion Crow in an oak tree down Coggles Lane, Rooks in Miss Massick's plantation, and Ducks and Swans on the Dam.



I would spend many hours looking for birds' nests and enjoying learning more about them; I still look for nests.

Please look after our birds, feed and enjoy them, don't destroy them.

Jordan Castle
(from Janet Carr)

The parish of Wellow has several interesting historical features apart from the designated common lands. Among them is the scheduled ancient monument of Jordan Castle, which has a documented history stretching back to the 13th century. This was the fortified manor house of successive members of the Foliot family who were actually lords of the now disappeared manor of Grimston, which lay on either side of the road between Wellow and Ompton.

The Foliots actively developed their estate by taking in land from the surrounding woodland (known as 'assarting'), creating a rabbit warren (for the supply of meat), and fortifying ('crenellating') their manor house in 1264. The monument is named after one of this family, Jordan Foliot (also spelt Foliat). The family also established a market in Wellow at about this time.

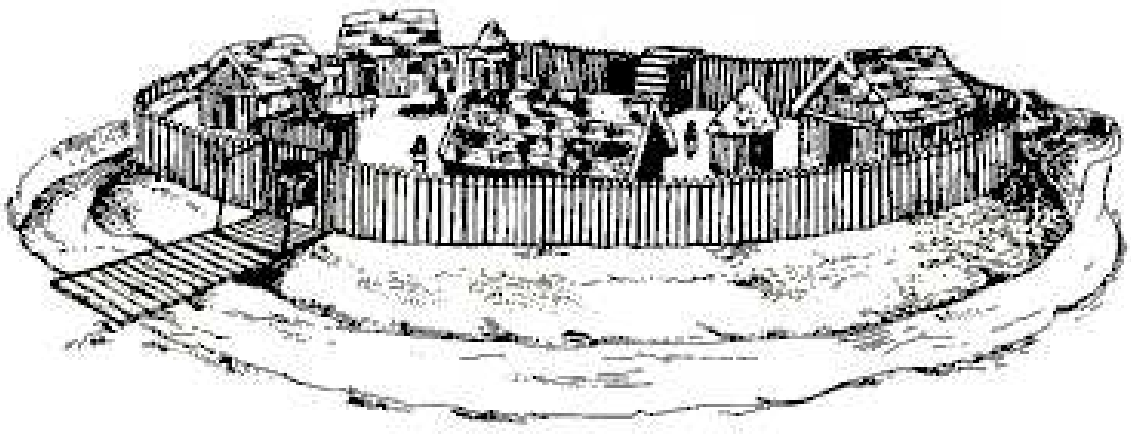
Jordan Castle takes the form of a medieval castle known as a 'ringwork'. It is a very simple enclosure with a circular bank and ditch enclosing a courtyard within which the buildings would have stood. The bank and ditch can still be seen today, together with surrounding earthworks known as 'ridge and furrow'. These extensive parallel humps and bumps are the result of medieval ploughing. The castle site itself is also crossed by ridge and furrow, which indicates that, sometime after the castle fell out of use in the 14th century, even the internal area was turned over to farming.

At this point, Jordan Castle entered its own 'dark age', as there is little known about the site for several hundred years. It is likely that the land continued to be farmed, and it is known that the field patterns pre-date the enclosure of Wellow village. The next hard evidence of habitation is actually in the form of a carpenter's mark in the door-frame of Jordan Castle Farm's oldest barn, which proclaims the date of 1796. Various maps from the early 1800s onwards chart the progress in the size of the farmstead, with barns being added at intervals in the

first half of that century. The land was part of the Rufford estate, with various families in successive occupation as tenants until the whole estate was sold in 1938.

Jordan Castle was scheduled as an ancient monument in 1935. In order to preserve and maintain the earthworks, the area of the castle and its associated ridge and furrow are given over to pasture. In the summer of 2005 Nottinghamshire County Council commissioned a geo-physical survey of the site, which detected magnetic variations in the soil caused by the archaeological remains. The survey helped to gain further technical knowledge about Jordan Castle without physically disturbing the site.

Since 1993 the farm has been entered into the Countryside Stewardship Scheme, and its successor, Environmental Stewardship. These schemes have helped to protect not only the castle site, but also other important historical features on the farm including the ridge and furrow, traditional orchard and extensive hedgerows. The ancient site of Jordan Castle now plays its part in educational access to the farm by a variety of groups interested in the historic environment, conservation, agriculture, biodiversity and wildlife.



This is an artists impression of what a medieval ringwork may have looked like.

Wellow Hall and its gardens, (from Paul Nuthall)

Wellow Hall was probably built for the Molyneux family and stands at the west side of the village, the Georgian part facing the road. The family, who originated from an area of France known as the Bourbonnais, was descended from William de Molines, a companion of William the Conqueror. The house was commenced around 1570; the remains of a stone-arched Tudor fireplace in the library is dated to this time and at the other end of the Hall is a beam which, because of the stop and chamfer (decorative cut and decoration) can be dated no later than 1600.

Originally the house was built to an 'H' plan, that is, the great hall formed the crosspiece and two wings formed the uprights. This was a common form of building in the Tudor age and at the time of its construction the hall would have reached up to roof level. Although built on a small scale, the weight onto the walls was immense, and the roof beams (many of which survive) are massive. From cellars to about ten feet above ground the walls are 3 – 4 feet thick.

The hall was extended in 1700 by adding two rooms to the front, with much higher ceilings than the older rooms, and steps were made on the first floor to accommodate the height of the downstairs rooms. This alteration caused a Tudor window to be blocked up on the then outside wall, and this was rediscovered by later owners. The only surviving decoration in the extension is a fine fireplace of Mansfield sandstone, and an external lozenge set into the wall outside which records the date and the initials of the then owner.

In about 1740 the windows were set back further to comply with changes in fire regulations and at the same time the previously-exposed beams were plastered over and decorated – but only on the ground floor. Such rooms were designed to receive guests, and appearances were important. The bedrooms were untouched.

About 1810 -20 a canted bay was added to the drawing-room, together with a larger bay window in the library, and the Tudor fireplace covered by a new one in black cockleshell marble. This was quarried at either Matlock or Uttoxeter – both quarries are long-since worked out. By 1832 the Hall was described as a farmhouse, and by 1864 William Squire Ward, a surgeon, was living there, and a six – bedded 'District Hospital and Infirmary' had either been built or installed in a converted part of the existing building

No further structural changes are known until about 1900-1910 when the north wing was demolished to make way for new servant's quarters; prior to this staff were housed on the third floor of the Hall, in three rooms accommodating twelve people.

Apparently the army was billeted in the Hall during the Second World War; certainly there are openings in the chimney of one of the fireplaces to accommodate stoves. Ultimately though the Hall

reverted to being a private dwelling, and so it remains.

The house was only part of a larger complex comprising a coach house, stables, a barn and a large walled garden which would have provided fresh fruit and vegetables for the household. In 1792 Lord Torrington wrote in his diaries, 'Sir Francis has a house and a kennel full of Pointers'. The whole is surrounded by a wall of 18th and 19th –century brickwork. Recent excavations have revealed an early 18th – century wall running under the bay and up to the wall facing the road. It is likely that this formed part of an exit to the road, as the gateway had been bricked up at some time.

The Gorge Dyke

The earthwork known as the Gorge, or George, Dyke – this is a name only recorded from the nineteenth century - marks the perimeter of the original village of Wellow; over the years it has been the subject of debate about its origins and purpose. There is however no doubt both that it is ancient, and that a substantial proportion of it is man-made, with the rest following the line of a stream with even this more than likely deepened artificially. Part of the dyke is a designated Ancient Monument; an extract from the Schedule of 1987 is reproduced below, and a map opposite shows the extent of the earthwork;

Monument Title; Gorge Dyke, Wellow

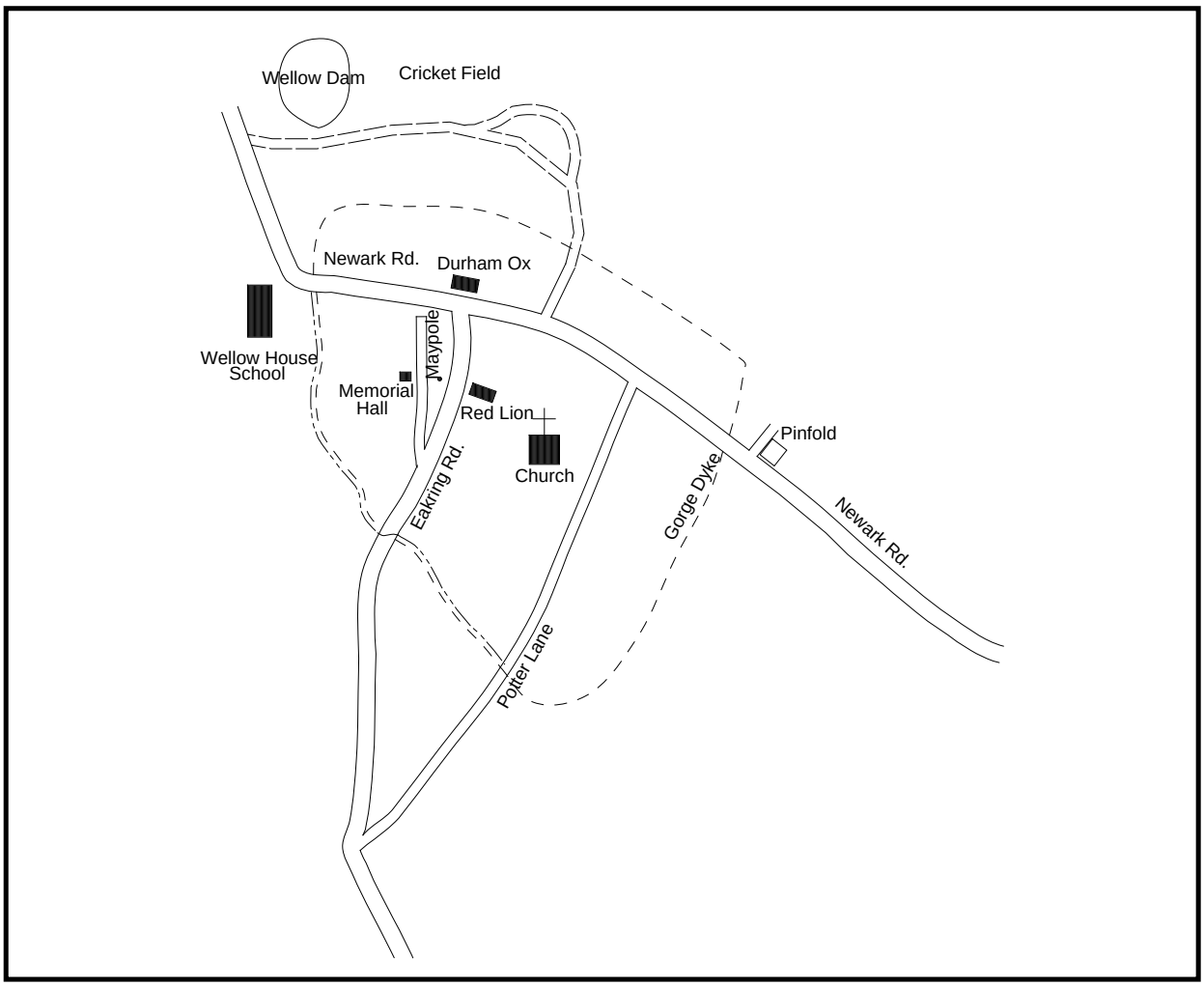
Monument Types	Confidence %
DYKE (DEFENCE)	100

'Round the E. corner of the village of Wellow there is a 6ft – 8ft. vallum with deep fosse on the outside. There are traces on the S and W side. Mr. Barley* reports that this earthwork is of considerable importance. Village dates from mid C12 and occupied by peasants evicted from their lands due to the foundation of Rufford Abbey……
The remains of the earthwork comprise, in the main, a broad ditch, with in places the remains of an inner bank. Breaks can be attributed to roads, some modern, levelling in gardens, and some silting up. On the N, NE and SE the feature is entirely man-made, whilst on the W a stream course has been utilized and probably deepened….'

*M.W. Barley, in 'Three deserted villages and their moated successor'.

Because the Dyke is too large, extensive and complex a structure to have been placed around the village just to stop cattle straying, it is generally accepted as being a defensive measure in what were dangerous and often lawless times. Barley says that 'A small bank,

surmounted originally by a fence or hedge is not uncommon among midland villages; its function was to keep animals grazing the stubble of the open fields from straying into the home closes and gardens. The ditch at Wellow is much larger than surviving examples of such rings' (Nottingham Media Studies, 1957, p.77).



To enclose the village completely like this must have been a huge task even assisted by the natural advantage of the stream course in places, and to embark on this type of project is likely to have meant that the villagers perceived a clear threat of personal attack, or, at the very least of losing their animals to raiders. The unusual shape and size of the open space - which is now called the Maypole Green - supports the concept of a community prepared to defend its livelihood by moating their village and enabling livestock to be brought within that moat and held in safety on the green when necessary.

St. Swithins Church

The beautiful Church of St. Swithin is believed to have been built around 1189, in the reign of King Richard 1st; and, despite major renovation works in 1810, in 1878 and also 1968-69, it retains many ancient features, including a small splayed light on the north wall which is dated 1190 and two fourteenth-century arches. The new Millennium window features the maypole and scenes from the village.

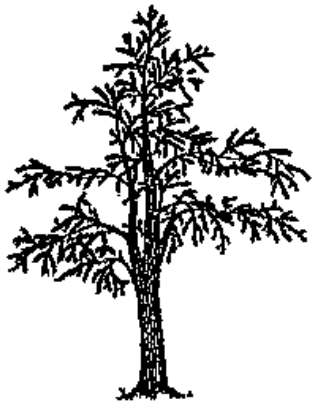
But who was St. Swithin? History records him as a Bishop of Winchester, who died on 2 July 862; very little is known of his life, except that he was one of the two trusted counsellors of Egbert, King of the West Saxons, and that he was canonised by popular acclaim after a number of miraculous cures were attributed to his piety. Legend has it that as he lay dying Swithin asked that he should be buried outside the north wall of his cathedral, ‘where passers-by should pass over his grave, and raindrops from the eaves drop upon it’. However an attempt was made later to move his body to a more pompous and ‘fitting’ setting and the saint it is said showed his displeasure with a period of torrential rainfall which lasted for forty days during which his remains could not be moved by the monks. This led to the popular legend and the familiar rhyme;

'St. Swithin's day if thou dost rain
For forty days it will remain
St. Swithin's day if thou be fair
For forty days t'will rain nae mair'

St. Swithin's Day is commemorated on 15th July each year when a special Patronal service is held at the church.

Four bells hang in the belfry, the oldest dated 1560, the most recent 2005; soon this will be increased to six, which will bring the tower to its full capacity; the circle ringing of the bells resumed in 2005 for the first time in living memory although they could, and still can, be rung by rope and hammer. The tradition is still maintained in Wellow that the death of a villager is marked by the sounding of a 'Passing Bell' with one stroke for each year of their life.

If you hear the bells ringing on 19th September – known locally as 'Old Lady Day'- you will be experiencing another little part of the history of Wellow; this recalls the day when Lady Waldane, a visitor to Wellow Hall over 200 years ago, became lost whilst walking in Wellow woods. She followed the sound of church bells and arrived safely back at the Hall; in gratitude she bequeathed a sum of money to fund the ringing of the bells on each anniversary of her 'rescue'.



The beauty and charm of Wellow's church is not confined to its interior, for the churchyard contains not only some very old tombstones, but some fine yew trees.

If you would like to learn more about St. Swithin's Church, a more detailed account can be found in the interesting booklet ' A Short History of the Parish of Wellow' obtainable from the church.

The Rallying Cry!

SHERWOOD FOREST TRUST

UK Registered Charity No. 1051991

"Ancient Sherwood Forest,
birthplace of England's folklore son,
is once again calling
for people to stand as one.
As Robin Hood rallied Saxon folk
against the Norman iron fist,
so now we, in Trust,
rally everyone to join us on our quest…"

'Man and the land are inextricably linked'… Over the last 200 years our precious Sherwood Forest landscapes have been reduced and fragmented by commercial forestry and agriculture, industrialisation and urban expansion.

But all is not lost! The Sherwood Forest Trust, the key charity dedicated to ensuring the survival of Sherwood Forest, unites everyone from government agencies to local authorities, landowners and local communities in the common fight to save the unique landscapes and culture of Sherwood Forest.

Our flagship programme, the 'Sherwood Initiative', is the largest area partnership of its kind in the country and there are two main strings to our bow :

Landscape Heritage Restoration is recreating traditional landscapes of wood pasture, heathlands, river corridors and wetlands - all vital habitats for a wide range of native wildlife, insects and birds.
This work, invaluably supported by Community Ranger and Archaeology volunteer programmes, is like replacing jigsaw pieces lost through modern pressures.

Local Heritage Projects help people celebrate their special place in Sherwood Forest's landscape and history by supporting a wide range of creative projects inspired by individual stories of cultural heritage.

Old customs like maypole dancing and Plough Plays - originally based on the farmer's calendar – are the communities' roots. By breathing new life and relevance into rural customs and celebrating Sherwood's heritage, we help cultivate local pride and provide focal points for vibrant community celebrations.

'As the land shapes man, so man shapes the land'

Through understanding and active involvement, people care for and protect what they hold dear. **As the Sherwood Forest Trust reflects on over 10 years of successful work, we are proud that are planting trees and ideas with far reaching ecological and social benefits.**

But we can't afford to be complacent! We must all be green men and women caring for this special place, and we continue to rely on peoples' support locally and worldwide in the fight to save Sherwood Forest's natural and cultural landscapes for future generations of people and wildlife to enjoy!

The Sherwood Forest Trust is a non profit making organisation and registered charity (UK Reg No 1051991) established in 1995 by a partnership of organisations active in the area who share the common goal of restoring the heritage of Sherwood Forest for the benefit of the public. For further information please contact us on **Tel: 01623 758231 or Web: www.sherwoodforest.org.uk**

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'Cistercian land clearances in Nottinghamshire – three deserted villages and their moated successor' – M.W.Barley (Nottingham Media Studies, 1957).
English Nature: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (http://www.englishnature.org.uk)
Newark & Sherwood D.C. Monument Details – Gorge Dyke, Wellow
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