Sulby

The parish of Sulby once contained the village of Sulby and Sulby Abbey.

Before being deserted in later years, the village was recorded in the Domesday Book (1086 A.D.) as two manors, one with a population of 18 but even then the other was laid waste. Sulby's Parish Church was dedicated to St. Botolph and stood in a meadow known as St. Botolph's Pool. It had two its nave long before 1461 and was completely destroyed at the dissolution.

The village probably disappeared between 1377 and 1428 and was replaced by the scattered farmsteads that can be seen today.

The site is in a good state of preservation, and can be clearly identified whilst walking the footpath laying diagonally across it.

The history of Sulby Abbey began in 1155 when William de Wideville gave the Welford Church plus nine carucates of land at Sulby to a house of Premonstratensian Canons. Following the grant of a manor and church at Sulby, the Abbey also moved to that parish. Edward II stayed at Sulby Abbey on a number of occasions. In 1338 the Abbey was dissolved and in 1567 the land was acquired by Sir Christopher Hatton, of Holdenby, who was Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth I.

A Civil War grave lies in Sulby Parish and is thought to be connected with the 1645 Battle of Naseby when casualties were buried on the field of battle.

A Walkers’ Code

1. Always keep to the path to avoid trespassing. If the path is obstructed you are allowed to seek a reasonable way around the obstruction, taking care to avoid causing damage. Please report the obstruction to the highways authority.

2. Remember to close gates behind you. Straying stock can cause damage or spread disease and carelessness may lead to tragedy.

3. To avoid harm or distress to farm animals and wildlife it is best to leave dogs at home. If you have to bring them they should be kept on a leash.

4. If your route takes you onto a road keep to the right, facing oncoming traffic and use the verge if one exists.

5. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear for the season and remember to allow plenty of time to complete your chosen walk.

6. Remember that every piece of land in the country belongs to someone, so please treat it with respect so that other walkers will be made welcome.

7. Remember that Scheduled Ancient Monuments are protected by law in order to ensure their survival. Please respect them and other archaeological sites.

8. Take extra care near locks and don’t be tempted to assist boat crews unless you are certain of what to do. Remember because boats cannot stop immediately if someone falls into the water, the risk of injury is great.

If you experience any difficulty on your walk such as barbed wire, locked gates or damaged stiles and footbridges, please report them to the Principal River of Way Officer, West Office, Ainnex House, London Road, Daventry, Tel. Daventry 706081.

For information and matters relating to the Canal and towpath: The Waterway Manager, The Stop House, Braunston, Northants. Tel. Braunston 0788 840666.

Drawn and compiled by Sue Payne (1992)

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Northamptonshire County Council

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Countryside and Canal Walks Welford

The Wharf Inn, Welford

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Local Snippets

Welford was an established settlement well before the Domesday Book (1086 A.D.) when it was known as Wellesford. This name meaning ‘Ford by the spring or stream.

Settlement remains suggest that Welford was originally planned and consisted of three parallel streets. The present West Street with its Church and Manor House was probably the main street.

The site of a previous Manor House is believed to lie on West Street also but is now under a modern housing development. Its history lies in the mists of village folklore, but the 1848 Tithe Map does show an area on this location as Hall Field indicating its attachment to a large house.

A rectangular fishpond, with a central island, lies to the north west of the allotment gardens. It was fed by water from the nearby stream. Its origin is unknown.

Welford Road is described as the London-Wey" on Speeds map of 1610, an important route to London and Leicester. Lying halfway between Northampton and Leicester, Welford became an important resting place for stage coaches having seven Inns or Coaching Houses along the present High Street.

An ancient tunnel is reputed to have joined the now lost Sulby Abbey to Welford Church, its Chapel of Ease. It is said that strange sounds can be heard in the fields along its route.

A piece of 15th century church plate was discovered in the fields at Welford in 1968. Known as the Welford chalice it now resides in the British Museum.

Sulby and Welford Reservoirs.

Water supplies for the canal system were always desperately needed so reservoirs at Naseby, Sulby and Welford were constructed.

When the Sulby Reservoir was nearing completion a sudden thaw burst the banks causing the River Avon to overflow and subsequently flood the Stanfard area killing two people. However, the completion of the Welford Arm in early 1815 also saw the opening of Sulby Reservoir.

Another reservoir was then constructed below this in 1837 and known as New Sulby or more commonly Welford Reservoir. The Canal Company's supervisor on this project was paid £70 per annum, plus £20 for horse fodder and the use of a company house. His property however, proved to be so damp he was permitted to live in Welford and received £20 per annum in lieu of the house.

The reservoirs today are an angler's paradise. They have many species of flora and fauna as well as giving pleasant views over the surrounding countryside from the central dam which carries the footpath.