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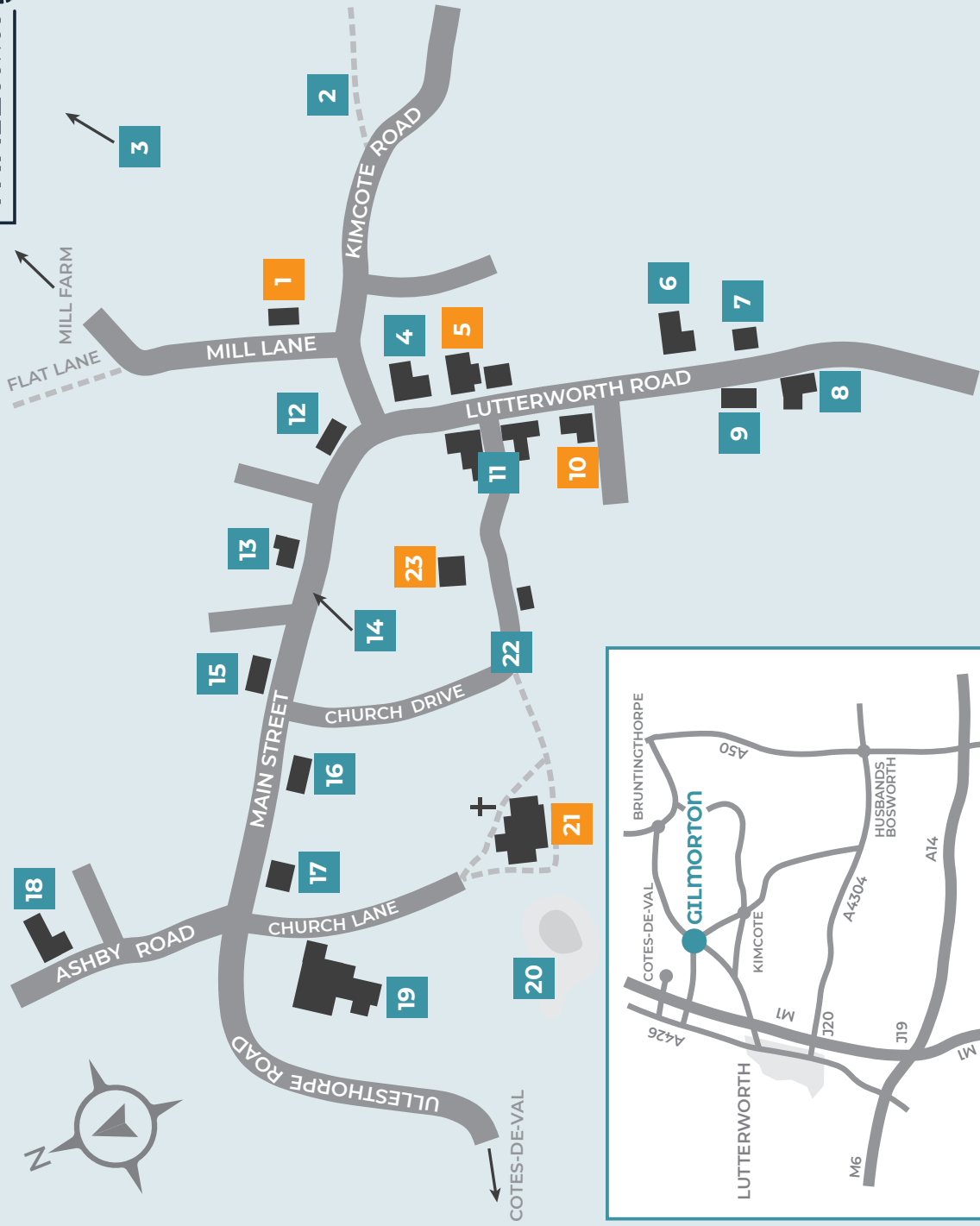
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Enjoy our historic village trails  
in beautiful south Leicestershire

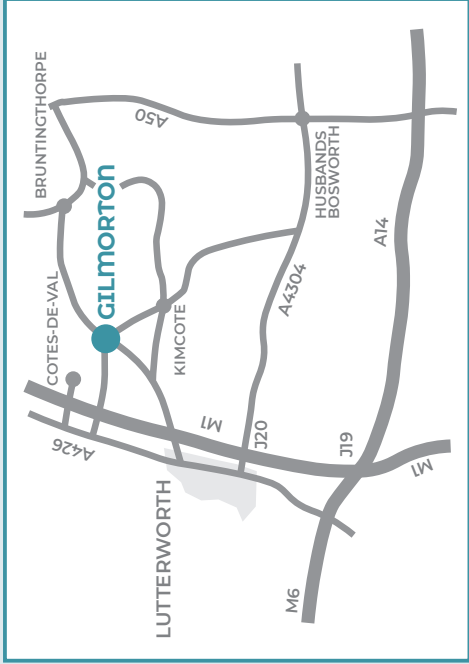


VISIT  
HARBOROUGH  
DISTRICT

**GILMORTON** (NOT TO SCALE)



MILL FARM  
FLAT LANE



The village of Gilmorton is located some twelve miles south of Leicester and three miles north east of Lutterworth. Situated within a gently undulating landscape, the settlement is of Saxon origin. The parish lies on a watershed with streams rising to the north flowing into the North Sea via the Humber whilst those to the south disgorge into the Atlantic via the Bristol Channel.

The name Gilmorton may come from "gilden", translated as golden fields of wheat or a knoll of golden appearance. "Morton" is the Saxon term for enclosure or homestead – a village. At the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086 the population was around 140; today it is approximately 1500. The local economy was based on agriculture with many of the better quality houses being built by farmers. With the relative decline of this industry, the village is now largely occupied by people who work elsewhere.

The walk starts at the 'Crown' public house.

**1** At the junction of Kimcote Road and Mill Lane is a mud walled **thatched cottage**, possibly of 17th century origin. The brick built extension was a Griswold frame-knitting factory which produced socks. It closed just before World War 1. Several such establishments existed in the surrounding villages from the 1840s gradually losing out to the mass production factories in Leicester.



**Way out – to the north** - Approximately 400 yards along Mill Street on the left-hand side adjacent to a pond, is a bridleway, protected by a gate. Known as Flat Lane its origins can be traced back to an Anglo-Saxon boundary road. It runs almost straight to Willoughby Waterleys, 3½ miles away and was for many years the main road to Leicester. Indeed, it was used by carriers until the end of the 19th century.

**2** Moving down Kimcote Lane, the footpath on the left leads through an area called Hilly Hollow. This area was created through the extraction of clay for local building work in times gone by and is now home to a small play area. The slope is still used in winter as an area for sledging.

**3** Over the fields it is possible to see the **mill tower** which dates back to circa 1810. Located at one of the highest points in the village, it replaced an earlier timber built post mill. For many years the Hobill family ran the business living in the adjacent cottage. The end of this mill, which was worked by wind and latterly steam, was sudden – it was wrecked in a gale on 28th December 1915.

**High Flying** - Beyond the ranks of trees lies Bruntinghorpe Proving Ground. Built as a wartime airbase, it opened in November 1942 and was used as a training base for bomber crews. During this period a Vickers Wellington bomber crashed, ending up in a field alongside Mill Lane. The recently built housing development has a road named in memory of this event. Abandoned after World War II, when operational there were occasions when RAF personnel halted traffic on Kimcote Lane to allow take off and landings. It was converted to a vehicle proving facility for Coventry based Roots Motor Company and is now a vehicle storage and auction facility. From here re-trace your steps to the village centre.

**4** The **Crown Inn** now incorporates the former village school, which was founded in 1774 by Edward Chandler, a successful villager, who made his fortune in the City of London. The niche that held the bell, which called children to school, can be seen above the large window in the former schoolroom, now part of the restaurant. The bell was relocated when the school moved to the Old Rectory in 1962 and can be seen over the main entrance door. (see 19 below)

**5** The former **village post office** can only be described as vast. The name of the builder, Clayton Willey, is in terra-cotta tile work above the entrance. It was possibly built speculatively as a hotel in the late 1890s when the Great Central Railway was being constructed from Sheffield and Leicester to London. Unfortunately, the railway passed 1½ miles to the west and Gilmorton was never provided with a station.



**6** **The Gables** is a Victorian Villa with decorative barge boarding built in the late 19th century. Next to it is Nether Farm, the only working farm remaining in the village. In 1955 there were fourteen, some of which continued on into the new millennium. The collection of traditional outbuildings to the rear of Nether Farm are now unique within the village.

**7** The single storey building adjacent to The Forge was once a **blacksmiths**. To its right is Ashley House, where once hooks from which the meat was hung could still be seen around the door frame until about 2000. Two branches of the same family, the Matthews, ran butcher's shops in the village, the last closing in 1990.

**8** **The Grey Goose Restaurant**, formerly the Talbot Inn has been on the same site for over 200 years. In 1830 it was raided to arrest 'three tobacco smugglers' who were probably trying to avoid paying duty. The parish constables were paid £1.12s.6d (£1.62½p) for taking them to trial at Leicester plus 4/1d (20½p) for ale.

**Water, Water Everywhere** - Opposite the recreation ground is a row of council houses built in 1931. Even at this relatively late date, a mains water supply was not available, hence the provision of the two hand-pumps in front of the gardens.

This spot is the extremity of the trail in this direction. Please retrace your steps towards the village centre.

**9** To the left of **Barnwell House** are the remains of a former mineral water and drinks factory, shut over 70 years ago, now Woodbine Cottage. Nearby is the 17th century timber framed 'Old Cottage'. Until 2010, at its rear was a small company manufacturing scale model soldiers which are sold all over the world.

**Will Power!** Between the 'Old Cottage' and 'Woodbine Cottage' runs a cobbled footpath which was the subject of a long running dispute between the old villagers who lived either side of it. One Bill would block the pathway at night so as to effectively close it. The second Bill who wished to keep it open subsequently removed the obstacles. This 'warfare' went on for years. Today it is no longer a footpath to the fields and church behind.

**10** The Regency '**Old Homestead**' was another former farmhouse, this time built onto an existing cottage. Built in the early 19th century, it still retains its original windows and attractive entrance. Of interest is the insurance fire mark affixed to the property. For many years the householders were required to pay 2/6d (12½p) per annum for a bread charity – a contract that lasted until recently.



**11** On either side of the junction with Church Drive are two fine farmhouses. **Gilmorton Farm** with its Georgian front retains period window features and an elegant portico. The plain brick-built **Whitehouse Farm** carries the date 1801 over the door fanlight and as the changes in brickwork show, has been extended considerably over the years.

**12** In the village centre at the junction of the village roads stands the attractive timber-framed '**Tudor Cottage**'. Main Street contains a variety of building styles with most of the older properties being constructed of hand-made brick.

**13** '**Cherry Tree Cottage**' once known as 'Box Tree House' is dated 1710 and is probably the oldest brick built cottage in the village. It was once two dwellings but recent restoration work has largely obliterated the evidence. An ancient iron plough share resides in the front garden.

The modern houses next to the cottage, at the entrance to Burdett Close, are on the site of a house which burned down in 1911, reputed to have been called The Haunted House. For many years, the lady of the house refused to accept the fact that her son had died there and was still preparing meals and place-settings for him long afterwards.

**14** Opposite Burdett Close, the eagle-eyed will spot a large stone half buried in the pavement. This was a mounting block once used extensively by horse travellers. To its right was the last village bakery which ceased trading in the mid 1950's.

**15** **Old Home Farm** is the multi-gabled farmhouse on the right of the village shop. Ralph and Grace Woodstock moved to the house on their marriage; their memorial is the datestone with the inscription R16G85W over a rear doorway.

**16** Next to the new village hall lies '**Tansley's Thatch**' one of the oldest village houses being of 16th century origin. The far end once housed the village carpenter and undertaker. Cottages lie in the quiet yard to the back. This once common feature is nowadays quite rare. In 1980 the wooden hall burnt down but Tansley's Thatch was saved.

**17** '**The Red Lion**' with its handsome porticoed doorway has been restored and converted in 2019 into Morton's Bistro Café. Built in the 1820s, it is the newest public house in the village.

**18** Along Ashby Road is '**Claywalls**' – a mud walled house built end-on to the road. Until the 1950's, it housed the last village milkman who delivered milk fresh from the cow. Pushing a cart, he ladled milk from the churn into villagers' own jugs.

**19** **The Chandler Church of England school** now serves several surrounding villages and moved to the site on its opening in 1962. The building is based on the original rectory, however the numerous later additions have considerably changed its appearance. In an attractive garden, the school still retains its original 1774 foundation stone. Of interest, is the school bell, which was taken from the old school, now part of the Crown Inn. (see 4 above).

**20** The field adjoining the church contains a **motte** 90 foot in diameter. It was probably a stockade defence point with a ditch, built in the civil wars of King Stephen's reign (1135 – 1154). At the bottom of the field lie the possible medieval fishpond remains. If there was a manor house, it has totally disappeared.

**21** **All Saints Church** tower dates back to Norman times. The present church was extensively rebuilt in 1861 with the spire being rebuilt in 1909. The oldest of a fine peel of eight bells dates to 1671. The interior houses costly Victorian fittings and the church features some excellent stained glass by C.E. Kempe who 'signed' many windows with a wheatsheaf. The porch, built to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 contains some superb floor tiles. Outside, her image still confronts those passing within.

The Churchyard contains many fine old Swithland slate gravestones, some with quaint inscriptions. It is possible to follow whole families, notably the Burdetts, Woodcocks and Chandlers. In 2013, the set of 8 church bells and frame were removed and restored by Taylors Foundry in Loughborough. Local volunteers removed and re-installed the bells.



21 All Saints Church

**22** Pass through the modern lychgate into **Church Drive**, on its inner walls are carvings of steam threshing machines at work. On the right is a thatched mud wall hut or hovel of 18th century origin, used for animals or storing farm implements. Once a common feature, this type of structure is now most unusual.

**23** Opposite and in complete contrast, is **Bent's Farmhouse**. Built of local brick under a Swithland slate roof, it is without doubt a house of character. Of particular note is the 19th century cast-iron fencing which escaped the World War II scrap drive, unlike most other village properties. Continue down Church Drive, noticing the superb old brick wall to the right. At the junction with Lutterworth Road, turn left to the Crown Inn, the starting point of the walk.

**Cotes-De-Val** - Situated 1½ miles to the west of Gilmorton, is the moated site of Cotes-de-Val. Reached by the Ullesthorpe Road and the A426, it is one of Leicestershire's lost villages. At the time of Domesday it was referred to as Toniscote; later it was held by the Cotes family and by 1279 was called Cotes Deyville. It was depopulated between the Black Death (1348) and the early 1500s. The moat is visible on three sides of the site, only the western arm has been infilled. This was known to have been intact in the 18th century, at which time access was gained by drawbridge.

Today, the island site contains a farmhouse, and the southern arm of the moat has been incorporated into a domestic garden. The northern and eastern arms are part of the surrounding pasture field.



23 Bent's Farmhouse

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This leaflet has been prepared by Harborough District Council with support from Gilmorton Parish Council, Gilmorton Conservation Association. Thanks to **RJ Brand Design** for design and photography ([rjbranddesign.co.uk](http://rjbranddesign.co.uk)).

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All the information in this leaflet is correct at time of printing.

