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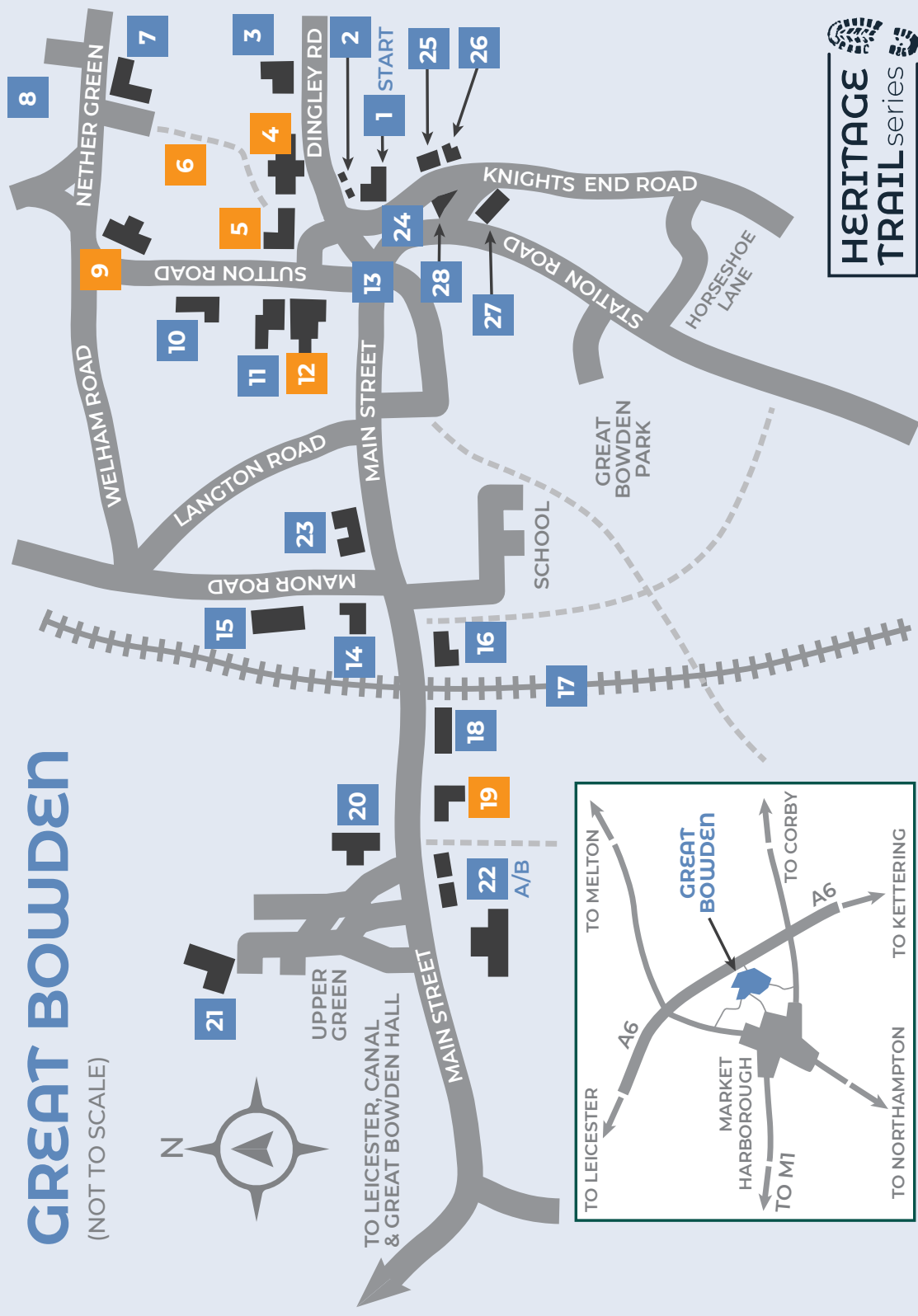
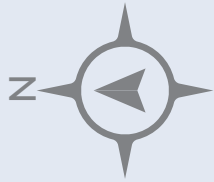
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VISIT  
HARBOROUGH  
DISTRICT

# GREAT BOWDEN

(NOT TO SCALE)



**Great Bowden, a conservation area, lies on the edge of the Welland Valley, close to Market Harborough and the Northamptonshire border, below the hill which gave Bowden its name.**

Great Bowden was once the centre of a Saxon royal estate, and the parent village in this corner of South Leicestershire, mentioned in the 1086 Domesday book Bugegone, or Bucga's dun or hill (Bucga being a woman's name), significantly predating its offshoot, Market Harborough. Agriculture has always played an important part in the economic life of the village, although towards the end of Victoria's reign until the 1920s fox-hunting and the breeding of horses dominated its life. The most obvious feature of the village is the grouping of houses around various Greens, of which three now remain, Nether Green, Upper Green and 'the Green'. Virtually all the different styles of local domestic building can be seen, with examples of early cruck construction, seventeenth century timber-framed and stone built farmers' houses, and even a mud cottage for the poor, now much altered but representing many others demolished in the 19th century. There are also fine brick houses.

The trail starts from the small Memorial Green, in front of the village hall, where there is roadside parking.

**1 The Village Hall** - Built in 1903 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII, this was to be used as a reading and games room for the grooms employed in the village by John Henry Stokes and the owners of the Hunting Lodges or boxes.

**2 Red Brick Gate Piers** - Built in the 17th century, these gave access to the Rectory Estate of Great Bowden.

**3 Great Bowden Old School** - Charles Shuttleworth, in 1838, was the prime mover in the scheme to provide the village with its first school. Unfortunately, he died before the school was completed. A plaque is inscribed 'National School built by public subscription and opened December 2nd 1839'. In 1983 the old school was purchased by the Church to be used as a Church Hall, when a new school was built in Gunnsbrook Close.

**4 Great Bowden Church** - (pictured on front cover) This dates from the early 13th century and is dedicated to St Peter and St Paul. It is the Mother Church to the church in Market Harborough, and at one time all of Market Harborough was within the parish of Great Bowden. The tower, with pinnacles at the corners, is crowned by a short 14th century spire. Inside a 15th Century Doom Painting on the North Wall, considered one of the best surviving examples in Leicestershire. A separate detailed guide to the Church is available within.

**5 Rectory House** - In 1546 Henry VIII endowed the Rectory House and Estate to the Dean and Chapter of Christ Church, Oxford, who continued as owners until 1926. Rectory House is situated in the heart of the village and there is believed to have been a house on the site since medieval times. The existing property dates from the Elizabethan period, with major additions carried out in the reign of William and Mary, and during the Georgian period. It is mainly built of quality limestone. At the gates to the grounds in Sutton Road stands another pair of the fine brick piers.



**6 The Mud Walls** - Some local boundary walls and out buildings are made of mud, a mixture of clay and straw. Mud walls need 'strong boots and a good hat'; that is a stone or cobble plinth and a coping of thatch or pantiles. The mud boundary walls to the church yard and the adjacent footpath were rebuilt in the 1980's, with clay pantiles, hand-made at Barton upon Humber.

**7 Nether House** - The original house dates from c.1700. John Henry Stokes moved to this property in 1875 and over a period of years altered the house with extensions and a large enclosed area of stabling. There is a magnificent late Victorian viewing window on the side, overlooking the paddock. The existing frontage was built around 1910. In 1951 the south wing burnt down in a mysterious fire and further degradations followed. The whole area was sympathetically redeveloped in 2015. The avenue of chestnuts and limes was planted around 1890.

**8 The Fernie Hunt** - The area between Nottingham and Market Harborough was originally hunted by the Quorn. The present Fernie Hunt was an off-shoot formed in 1856 when the Quorn divided, with Mr. Tailby of Skeffington Hall taking the southern area, with kennels based at Billesdon, later at Medbourne. In 1888 Charles Fernie, a Scot from Edinburgh, succeeded Sir Bache Cunard as Master, remaining for 31 years. This continuity ensured the eventual independence of the hunt from the Quorn. The hunt took the name of Fernie in his honour in 1920, two years after his death, when the Quorn at last relinquished all claims. In 1923 the Hunt Committee purchased from the Stokes Estate stables at Great Bowden and built new kennels which were in use the following year.

**John Henry Stokes** - Stokes (1850-1920) was undoubtedly the most influential man in the village in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. From modest beginnings he had established himself as a successful breeder of hunters, supplying fine horses to clientele including Edward VII, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Spain and Italy. He was a regular prize winner in the show ring and two of his horses became Grand National winners. He altered the whole appearance of the village and it was his idea to build the village hall with donation from his rich clients.

**9 Nether Green Lodge** - Built by John Stokes in 1906 and first occupied by Hugh Owen, a Welsh aristocrat. He had been an international jockey and National Hunt starter and was well known in the hunting world. He worked on commission for Stokes. In 1908 Hugh Owen was killed in a riding accident, aged 56. There is a memorial window to him in the south aisle of the church. The window was designed by Louis David who was a member of the Art and Crafts Movement and is considered "the last of the Pre-Raphaelites".



**10 5/7 Sutton Road** - This property was previously known as The Cottage and also Welham Bush Farm. There is a Regency brick frontage of around 1800, although the main stone house is of early 17th century date. The house was owned by Stokes at the turn of this century, and let as a Hunting Box to Count Hockberg, a German Count and brother to the Prince of Pless. Village rumour had it at the time that in the period leading up to the First World War, Great Bowden had its own German spy. However, when the Count returned to Germany at the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, it was the Red Cross he joined and not German Intelligence!

**11 Green Lodge** - This is another Stokes house, built in 1906 as a Hunting Lodge. John Henry's only child, Ernest Stokes lived here for a time. He kept a pack of harriers here after the First World War. The house was built on the site of the old Congregational Chapel which had fallen into disuse in 1886. A new Chapel was subsequently built in Main Street.

**12 Bishops House** - This is again a property built by Stokes in 1901 for use as a Hunting Lodge. It was built on the site of a thatched farmhouse. In 1918 the house was occupied by the Bishop of Peterborough, whilst his palace was being used as a military hospital after the Great War. Since his occupation it has been known as Bishops House.



**13 The Green** - The houses were nearly all built during the early 19th century. The post office is on the site of an old bake house, where a Sunday roast could be cooked for a penny. The joint could be delivered on the way into church and collected on the way home. The baker also baked penny loaves, which were left on a special shelf in the church to be collected by the poor and elderly of the village. The Shoulder of Mutton was built partly in the 17th and partly in the 18th century. Surrounding houses mainly date from the 19th century, and this area used to be known as Stocks Green, site of the village stocks.

**14 5 Manor Road** - Facing the Lane stands this fine yeoman stone farmhouse from the 17th century. In the early part of this century Patrick's bakehouse stood in the yard.

**15 Tudor House** - This is a cruck framed house with a 17th century façade, and a date stone 1746 over the door which probably denotes a restoration. This appears to be the only cruck beam building in the village and was originally thatched. It now has a Swithland slate roof. The eyebrow window is a recent addition.

**16 Stone House** - Yet another ironstone farm house, dating this time from 1671, with 18th century brick side wing and a Victorian addition around the main entrance. Inside are exposed beams and sloping floors. It was used as a hunting box in the early 1900s.

**17 The Railway** - The railway effectively split the village in half. The first line was built by the London and North Western Railway in the 1840s with the Midland Railway's second line arriving between 1853 and 1855. The houses in Leicester Lane, 'Navvies Row', were built to accommodate the workmen. The original level crossing in Main Street had to be replaced by a bridge around 1880 because of frequent accidents both to villagers and cattle. The old line of the crossing can still be seen quite clearly.

**18 Railway Cottage** - This originally comprised three cottages for railway men at the time of the building of the railway.

**19 The Old Bakehouse** - This probably dates from around 1614, like the Old Grammar School in Market Harborough. Evidence of its early timber construction is clearly seen in the overhanging gable ends facing the road. The adjoining building was yet another bakehouse.



**20 The Old Hall** - In the 1930's Alec Chater was living at the Old Hall. He was a farmer and grazier and Chater Close was built on his land. The Chater family were wealthy farmers and Congregationalists. His uncle Jonathan T Chater was involved in the building of Great Bowden Congregational Chapel on Main Street. His name is recorded on the Memorial plaque outside.

**21 Upper Green Farm** - On a plaque above the main entrance of this ironstone yeoman farmer's house, with its Swithland slate roof, is the date 1675. The house also possesses some fine Victorian stabling.

**22 (A/B) Upper House and The Lodges** - The house was built in 1880 with later additions in 1911. The Lodges also date from 1911 and were occupied by the butler and the chauffeur.

**Great Bowden Hall** - The energetic walker can view Great Bowden Hall and the Grand Union Canal from Leicester Lane, which has an avenue of lime trees, planted by the Bowden Society to commemorate European Conservation Year, 1970. The Hall is a Victorian mansion built around the old Britannia Inn on the canal tow path. It was once owned by the Hay family. Now retrace your steps to Main Street and the Chapel.

**23 The Congregational Chapel** - This was built in 1885, with the adjoining hall added in 1897. It replaced the old one, which occupied the present site of Green Lodge in Sutton road.

**24 19th Century Granite Horsetrough** - This was erected by the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association. The lower part was for use by dogs and cats.

**25 No. 43 The Green** - This is a 17th century building with ironstone lower storey below, and timber framing above, typical of this area. The steeply pitched roof suggests it was once thatched.

**26 No. 45 The Green** - This is an 18th century cottage, with Victorian additions to the rear. The attached garage was once a tailor's shop with living accommodation above. It was, however, later used as a grocer's shop, Symington and Thwaites, which closed in the 1950s.

**27 The Forge** - Arthur and Frank Wilford were the last working blacksmiths in the village, the forge ceasing to be operative just prior to the Second World War. The property has been much altered, but not the square panel framing on the end gable. The timbers are largely original, although the brickwork has been renewed over the years. This house is contemporary with the Old Grammar School in Market Harborough and the Old Bakehouse in Bowden, constructed around the turn of the 17th century.

**28 Pond Green** - Here is what used to be called Pond Green, site of the village pond. This was used as a watering hole for the cattle and sheep, en route from the Langtons (nearby villages) to the local cattle market in Market Harborough, and also to the railway sidings (along Great Bowden Road) for transport to London. Carts also stopped at the pond to wash the mud from their wheels. It was much frequented by the ducks. It was filled in during 1928.

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This leaflet has been prepared by Harborough District Council with support from the Great Bowden Historical Society. The Society have more historical publications which are available from Weltons in the village. They also offer guided tours!

**Email:** [limesatbowden@btinternet.com](mailto:limesatbowden@btinternet.com)

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