

North Crawley History and Fitness Walks 2

THE THREE RECTORY AND DOLLARS GROVE WALK

A village favourite. - 3 miles- About 1 hour

This walk commences at the Chicheley Road Junction opposite “The Old Rectory” (Actually the second rectory). Behind you is the Old Police House which in 1941 housed Percy and Hetty Newbury. Percy was the village constable and Don Savage always told the story of standing with Hetty one night watching Coventry burn in a bombing raid reducing 60,000 buildings to rubble.

The second Rectory resulted from an enquiry in 1799 by the Bishop of Lincoln because the “Old Rectory” nearly a mile from the church was in a ruinous and dilapidated state. William Selby Lowndes who owned the land agreed a mutual exchange and so this second rectory was built with materials from the first rectory on the site of the old Manor House of Haudlo Manor. It was used until 1933 when financial circumstances warranted a smaller rectory and the second rectory was sold to Major AJB Chester.

Walking now towards the village centre, on the right passing the corner house at the end of Folly Lane, the second house was the site of an old pub called (pictured on the left) “The Duke William” locals called it “The Jerry” because of its German connections. Later it became a Post Office run by the Higgins family until 1940 when it moved further up the street to their shop next to the family’s Blacksmith business. On the left we soon come to the house which stood on the site of the Blacksmiths Yard (The Old Forge) and then Pear Tree Cottage once occupied by Ralph Collier who ran the village bus service. People at Newport Pagnell called it “The Crawley Bedstead”.

We are now opposite “The Chequers” and we turn left past the shop. These two businesses became “The Saviour” of North Crawley during the Covid19 Lockdown, Pardeep at the shop delivered groceries to the door and Tracey and Garry at the Chequers did take away meals delivered to the door.

We now walk across the recreation ground (Named “Crouchers”) in a diagonal angle to the right hand corner. The Cricket Club has been in existence for over 100 years, every Autumn applying 60 bags of Kettering Loam as a top dressing to the wicket ensuring a high class playing surface to enable certain Bucks County Matches to be played on it. Even Graham Swann the former England off spinner has performed here. To the far right are several memorial benches to former players at the club in their haunt of “Codgers Corner” where many a bottle of wine was consumed while watching the cricket.

Past the MUGA and through the trees we emerge on to Pound Lane where we cross, turn right and enter the path on the opposite side of the road. We cross two stiles and then turn right down a path keeping the hedge to your right of you until you arrive at the corner of the field where you cross another stile. Travelling diagonally left we cross three more stiles.

We are now behind Crawley Grange once owned by Cardinal Wolsey and visited by Elizabeth 1st in 1575. Subsequently it was been owned by the Hackett family, the Lowndes family and the Boswells and during the second world war was used to house the Wrens at Bletchley Park. Nowadays owned by private individuals. Proceed through a small spinney and continue diagonally left across the next field. At a bridge over a stream we leave North Crawley Parish and enter Hardmead. This narrow protrusion of land was the site of Cock Fighting. It was so far out of Hardmead village that the village constable would not attend and it was out of the jurisdiction of the North Crawley Constable. We follow the track to the corner of a spinney where we enter North Crawley Parish again.

At the end of the spinney Dollars Grove Farmhouse comes into view. It is a Georgian style house with the appearance of bricked up windows. These were common before Income Tax was introduced in 1799 as taxes were raised on windows so it was common to brick them up to save the tax, however it is believed that this was just an architects feature in this case.

We take a diagonal left course towards a gap in the hedge towards the farmhouse before emerging on to a concrete drive. This is an ancient track known as Monks Wood Lane and we turn right to follow the track to the East End Road. We quickly pass Monks Wood on the left, with views of Astwood on the left and Crawley Grange on the right.

At the end of the drive we see Manor Farm on the opposite side of the road. This was a Moated Farmhouse which was pulled down in 1950. At the time of enclosure in 1773 it was owned by Lord Robert Trevor. He was the illegitimate son of the 4th Baron Trevor of Bromham. He was Receiver General of the Post Office Revenue

and in 1776 was created 1st Viscount Hampden of Great and Little Hampden in south Bucks, although Horace Walpole of Strawberry Hill House said he only got the title through the influence of his son in law the Duke of Suffolk who was leader of the Whig Party. C'est la vie!!!

Turning right we continue down East End Road until we reach The Ford, where we turn right and ignore a path to the right to pass through what is now a nature reserve. In living memory it was an ordinary drive through road but the Parish Council and indeed all farmers are now on an urgent course to encourage butterflies, bees and all pollinators which have declined rapidly in recent years and are essential for pollinating our crops.

At the end of the Ford over to your right in the field is the site of the first Rectory in North Crawley, now open farmland. The Crawley Rector Robert Newell in 1639 who was Archdeacon of Buckingham and Sub Dean of Lincoln Cathedral tells of a grand residence of 18 rooms and a full array of outhouses, which was fine for him with a huge private income, but when the young Charles Cole was appointed by the Hackett Trustees in 1717 it was clearly too large for someone without much additional income. William Lowndes of Winslow bought the Rectory in 1722 which gave him the right to appoint the next Rector but his Estate had to wait until Charles Cole died in 1771 before his grandson Thomas Lowndes (Vicar of Astwood since 1752) could be appointed. The building was then in a bad state of repair which led to the building of the second rectory from the materials of the first.

As we emerge from the Ford we ignore the footpath to your right, by Broadmead Lodge and instead at the second gravel path on your right we proceed up it to enter "The Rookery" along "Peter's Path". This path was named after Peter Jeffries who arranged for clearance and maintenance of the path by Milton Keynes Council and who made a huge contribution to North Crawley History research which led to the publication of the parish field map on sale by the parish council. The land itself is owned by "North Crawley United Charities" and is rented by the Parish Council for £40 a year for public use. Over a number of centuries people have left money and assets for the benefit of the Poor of the parish. Poverty has on many occasions in the past been extreme. Nowadays all the Charities are run as one, one of the committee members is always a Parish Councillor to decide business. It gives help now to young people of the village for studies as well as running the "Town Lands" allotments in Folly Lane on land awarded to it by the Enclosure Award of 1773.

At the end of Peters Path take a left turn and follow the path where in front of you is the Third Rectory. This was built on a smaller economical scale to replace the second rectory sold to Major Chester in 1933 and continued until 1973 when the Parishes of North Crawley, Chicheley, Sherington, Hardmead and Astwood combined as the United Benefice.

On alighting at the Cranfield Road, cross and enter the footpath on the Slipe, keeping the hedge to your right and exiting on to Chequers Lane opposite Lancaster Cottage. Jim Lancaster was a villager of renown who when on military service in the Far East wrote a poem about North Crawley which was later set to music. Turn right and at the end of lane is The Chequers on your left and the old Bake House on the right where you have arrived back in the centre of the village.

The Old Bake House

The Chequers