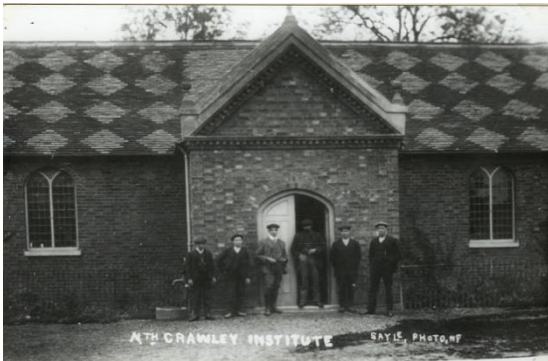


North Crawley History and Fitness Walks 3

THE RELIGIOUS TURMOIL WALK - 4.7 miles- About 1¾ to 2 hours

The walk commences outside the Institute which was originally a Wesleyan Chapel, but was by 1910 used as a Men's Institute and Workingmen's Club.



← On the Left is the old Working Man's Club

On the Right is the Institute today →



This is now the major hall for large village events, but in 1889 there were renovations and a large debt on the building whilst a Wesleyan Chapel, so a public tea party was arranged to raise money towards the debt. The actual Village Hall is on the opposite side of the road down towards the Cock and was built around 1910 as a Ladies Hall. The Blacksmiths shop just down the road was built about 1900. This had been at East End but there were complaints about the incessant noise and so it was moved to the Centre of the Village!!!

We cross the road and walk down Chequers Lane and soon we see our first building representing religious turmoil. It is Church Farmhouse where there is a Priest Hole inside. These were common in the reign of Henry VIII when many families still clung to the Catholic Religion and was a hiding place for a Priest built into many of the Principal Catholic houses of England during the period when Catholics were persecuted by law in England. Church House itself was built on the site of an old monasterium, and started life as a three bay hall of raised cruck construction, probably dating from the end of the 13th Century.



Church Farmhouse



←The Slipe

Turning left we enter "The Slipe" and follow the path past the back of some cottages and through the next kissing gate. Continuing along this path until a stile appears on the right which we cross. The vista opens out into the beautiful valley towards Folly Lane. As we pass along the hedge at the back of Church Farm grounds and continue until the St Firmins Churchyard comes into view.

There are only two churches in Britain dedicated to this little known Saint who was the first

Bishop of Amiens and martyred in AD287

This is the site of the next religious turmoil. In 1653 the Quaker John Whitehead wanted to preach the truth to the people. He stood up in this churchyard and as the congregation came out of church he declared the truth according to the Quakers. He was quickly set upon by the crowd who beat him and kicked him until they drew blood.



The Quakers of course had their own strict rules. Mary Kingham from Crawley was charged with “Walking Disorderly”. Her crime was that she had attended a dance and walked afterwards with “A man of the world”.

At the kissing gate by the school, turn left and proceed through the electric fencing to the stile at the bottom. Taking a diagonal right path across the next arable field where we emerge on to Folly Lane and cross the road and go through the next kissing gate and keeping straight on arrive in Moors Lane where we take a left turn. Through the next gate and keeping straight on we pass an active badger sett and through another gate we carry on up the hill towards Hurst End Farm.



←The Badger Sett



Moors Lane →



← Finnalls Ground

The field on the left before we arrive in the road is known as Finnalls Ground. Before enclosure in 1773 A C Chibnall says it was where many of the Foskett family are buried. The Fosketts are a fascinating family. William Foskett was the sole legal objector to North Crawley Enclosure Award, He was a Baptist and opted out of Anglican Church affairs. His grandfather was Cromwell’s commissioner for Bucks

and his father was a butcher in Cranfield. His Uncle Bernard also born in North Crawley was a big player in the Baptist movement in the West Country and Wales and is famous for founding The Baptist College in Bristol.

Anyway William himself seems to have been awarded less land in enclosure compared to the Open Fields he was said to own beforehand. Hurst Farm itself where the Fosketts lived was formerly the site of “Bocland Manor House”. He advertised his whole freehold estate for sale in the Northampton Mercury of 26th April 1779.

Turning right we walk along the road on the left field was a Farm owned by a Frances Rigg who lived in London and let the Farm to William Foskett.

On the right hand side through a gate on the corner was a Farm owned by a David Mortier who also was awarded land in the enclosure award of 1773.

→



Carefully negotiating bends and a dip in the road we arrive at a footpath sign on the right which we take and proceed diagonally right over the next field.



As we arrive at the field boundary in the dip. This was meadowland by the brook before enclosure and 6 acres was awarded to the Earl of Exeter. There was some ancient rights which purported the Earl to be the paramount Lord of the Manor in North Crawley but the local Bailiff said “I am not willing to distraint, they are all my neighbours and most of them are very poor”, many were in debt for a 1p which proved uncollectable and Exeter’s claims fell away to nothing.

We now proceed up the next huge field towards the left of the wood in front. This field in its entirety was the Open Field before Enclosure known as Tindery Field and the whole field was mainly awarded to William Foskett.

As we go across the bridge at the side of the wood we are leaving North Crawley Parish and entering Moulsoe.

At the end of the Wood we turn left along the hedge to a further stile where we take a diagonally right path towards Wharley End.



The Cranfield border is where the next religious turmoil took place. Ramsey Abbey had huge Estates in Cranfield, they had been treated harshly by the Normans and Henry I had ordered the division of the two parishes of Crawley and Cranfield in 1130. Ramsey Abbey took legal action about “a heavily wooded section in no mans land”, King David of Scotland who was also Earl of Huntingdon brought a counterclaim. Henry 1 in agreement with King David commanded that the boundary be perambulated on the Oaths of upright men of the Hundred which has resulted in the crazy interlocking of the parishes persisting to this day. The main crazy interlocking took place towards the far end of Shire Lane.



At the corner of the next field we continue diagonally across the next field to the road where we turn left and walk up the road to a sharp bend where Folly Lane exits on to the road to Cranfield University. Proceed across the road and enter Shire Lane. This is the boundary between Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. We continue up this lane until we see a footpath to the left. Take this path veering slightly right across an arable field to a hedge corner ahead where we pass through a kissing gate. Crossing another field and over a stile we arrive at the corner of another hedge where we take the right turn through the gate and turn left up the hedge of the next field and through another gate continuing with the hedge on your left until we reach the kissing gate into the Slipe where we began our walk and then out into Chequers Lane and the centre of the village.

