

RUTLAND HERITAGE TRAIL #1

BISHOPS, BOMBS

DISTANCE: 4 miles (approximately)

START & FINISH: The Green, Main Street, Lyddington

TERRAIN: Mostly footpaths and bridleway through fields. Short stretches of road and/or pavement in villages and along the A6003. Some steep hills and high stiles.

REFRESHMENTS: Marquess of Exeter (Lyddington), The Old White Hart (Lyddington)

MAP DETAILS: This route is covered by the Ordnance Survey Explorer Series Numbers 15 (234) & 224.

Lyddington and Stoke Dry are located South of Uppingham, off the A6003.

ALLOW TWO TO THREE HOURS FOR THIS CIRCULAR WALK, TAKING IN THE VILLAGES OF LYDDINGTON AND STOKE DRY. YOU COULD MAKE A LEISURELY DAY OF IT, STOPPING FOR LUNCH AT ONE OF THE FANTASTIC PUBS EN ROUTE AND VISITING THE BEDE HOUSE IN LYDDINGTON.

The pretty ironstone villages of Stoke Dry and Lyddington are linked by more than just their south Rutland location. Today's quiet village streets hide an eventful past – a tale of bishops, bombs and bonfires.

Nearly 1,000 years ago, the estates of Lyddington, Stoke Dry and Caldecott belonged to the great bishops of Lincoln, whose officials enjoyed visits to the Bishop's Palace at Lyddington, as well as hunting in the deer park to the north east of Stoke Dry.

During the 16th Century, the great church estates were dismantled by Henry VIII and given or sold to new owners. In 1602, the Bishop's Palace in Lyddington became an almshouse, providing shelter for twelve poor men. Stoke Dry became renowned as the home of the Digby family, whose infamous 'son', Sir Everard Digby, was executed for his role in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot.

More than 400 years later, the Lyddington and Stoke Dry skies were a temporary home to a squadron of Lancaster Bombers, practising night-time bombing raids over the newly built Eyebrook Reservoir.

THE WALK

Start your walk in Lyddington. From Main Street, take the Stoke Road (near the Old White Hart pub) out of the village. As you pass the last house on the left, look out for the footpath on the right.

Cross the stile and head across the fields, climbing slightly uphill. In the next field, you face a steeper climb – look back for a beautiful view of Lyddington's church spire. A double stile and bridge take you into a pasture field, cross it diagonally, then into another field. By now you can probably hear the sound of traffic on the A6003 ahead of you. Veer left, aiming for the far corner of this final field.

You exit the fields next to the Lyddington / Stoke Dry crossroads. Cross the road carefully, following the sign for Stoke Dry. A gentle downhill stroll along this quiet side road takes you into the village, with Eyebrook Reservoir coming into view on your left.

EYEBROOK RESERVOIR

Eyebrook Reservoir was built between 1937-1940 by Stewart & Lloyds Steel to supply Corby Steelworks. Now owned by British Steel, the reservoir has operated as a trout fishery since 1942.



AND BONFIRES

As you reach the village, the parish church of St. Andrew is on the left. Information about the church is available inside. Leaving the church behind, walk out of the village, passing a wellhead on your right. A bridleway is marked on the left. Leave the road here and keep to the right hand edge of the fields. Glimpses of the reservoir are visible between the trees.

Continue along the bridleway and through a gateway into a pasture field, heading straight across it. The bridleway now deviates away from the water, climbing upward through fields and gateways to a summit. You then head downhill again, towards the A6003.

At the A6003, turn right. You need to walk along this busy road for a short distance – take care, walking facing oncoming traffic.

SNELSTON MEDIEVAL VILLAGE

The fields to the right contain the earthwork remains of Snelston, with a sunken lane and rectangular house platforms still visible. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, the village is last referred to as a settlement in 1548.

After 500 yards, there is a gas pumping station on the left. Cross the A6003 (take care!) and follow the footpath sign. A stile takes you into the first field; head straight towards another stile and bridge into the next, then diagonally across to another.

Now head to your right, skirting the field with its interesting earthwork lumps and bumps. After a short distance, there is a stile in the hedge line, cut across the corner of the next field, looking out for the large circular Priestly and Bee hills ahead of you.

Soon another stile is visible on your left. Head diagonally across this final field, with its highly visible ridge and furrow, looking for the farm buildings ahead of you on your left.

As you reach the farm buildings, veer left, with the farmyard on your right. Follow the footpath onto the road to emerge next to the village sign. Walk along into Lyddington, with its many attractive 17th and 18th Century ironstone buildings.

As you reach the Bishop's Eye (tower), you must decide whether to continue straight on to your starting point and possible refreshment at one of the village pubs or whether first to explore St. Andrew's Church and the Bede House.

Take Church Lane to the right and follow the English Heritage signs for Bede House. The footpath crosses St. Andrew's churchyard and runs through an alley, under the Bede House itself, into the outer grounds.

To the left, a gravel path – Bluecoat Lane (so-called after the costume worn by residents of the almshouse in the 1600s) – will lead you out onto The Green and back to your starting point.

If you wish to explore further, a right hand path will take you across an area of land known as Little Park, part of the Bishop's Palace gardens. At the end of this unmarked path are the remains of the medieval fishponds.

Retrace your steps to return to your starting point on The Green.

SAFER WALKING

- Be prepared – wear suitable clothing and sturdy footwear, take refreshments and directions.
- Respect the countryside – take care in crops and be considerate of livestock.
- Take care when crossing or walking on roadways and walk facing oncoming traffic.
- Fasten all gates, keep dogs under close control and guard against fire.
- Remember to take nothing but photos and leave nothing but footprints!

