

# Carlton

The name Carlton derives from the Old English *Ceorl's tun* which means “settlement of the freemen”. The name probably originated in the sixth century when a group of Anglo-Saxon tribes known as the Middle Angles settled in this part of Leicestershire, and the ‘*tun*’ ending is held in common with neighbouring villages.

The village site was undoubtedly occupied much earlier than this, though no archeological remains have yet been found in the Parish. In pre-Roman times, Carlton was within the territory of a Belgic tribe called the Coritani whose tribal centre was at Leicester. This tribe probably surrendered to the Romans in AD43 when the emperor Claudius visited Britain. Fragmentary remains from a Roman villa have been found along Barton Road in Market Bosworth, and the area would have been settled and cultivated at this time.

In the early 7<sup>th</sup> century Carlton was incorporated into the expanding kingdom of Mercia. The name of the neighbouring village of Congerstone (*Cyning tun* – king’s settlement) suggests that it may have been the local administrative centre at this time. If so, this is where landowners from Carlton would have been required to render rents and produce to the king’s reeve.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century Viking invaders began to push into Mercia from the north-east, and by 877 Mercia had been divided and Carlton had become part of the Danelaw. This was an area of Viking rule and customs which stretched from the east coast to the line of the Watling Street. Danish armies occupied Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Stamford and Lincoln. By 920 Mercia had recaptured Carlton and the rest of the Danelaw, though Danish customs and a different system of government persisted into the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

Carlton is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey, and the earliest documentary references to the village are in an Episcopal Register of 1209 and an inquisition dated 1270. In 1317 the Carlton Charity Lands were endowed with a gift of land; other donations followed, and the charity continues today. The rental income from the charity lands is now used to offer a Christmas gift to eligible pensioners.

Geologically the area is underlain by the clays, siltstones and shales of the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group which are themselves covered by variable glacial deposits of Quaternary age. Carlton is one of a string of villages sited along the spring line on fingers of higher ground projecting westwards from a low escarpment. These areas of higher ground have been protected from erosion by layers of harder rock known as skerries. One of the skerries is known locally as Carlton stone and was once quarried to the NW of the village [1]. It can be seen in many old walls and buildings, most notably in The Stone House, 24 Main Street.

The aerial photograph shows how both the Ashby Canal, opened in 1804 [2], and the Battlefield Line Railway, opened in 1873 [3], cut through an older field pattern. The Parish was fully enclosed between 1625 and 1674, and probably by 1642: there was no local enclosure act. Many hedges in the Parish contain four or five species of non-invasive trees and shrubs in each thirty-yard length which suggests that they could be 4-500 years old. The hedge along the west side of Nailstone Road is particularly rich in species with an average of 6 in each 30-yard length.

The parish registers go back to 1574, but the original building burned down and a new village church was built in 1764. The building was of brick on a stone plinth with a short square tower decorated with pinnacles, and was dedicated to St Michael. In 1867 this building was gothicised by Goddard & Son of Leicester, and this was when the dedication was changed to Saint Andrew, the windows were altered and the tower with its distinctive saddleback top was added. The church clock was presented to the village in 1937 by the Rector's daughter who raised the money herself by selling needlework from door to door.

The oldest remaining grave stone is dated 1776 and commemorates Thomas Farmer. The later memorials document gradual changes in material, style and sentiment. There are fine views to the south from the back of the church, and a seat from which to enjoy them. A surfaced path to Main Street provides easy access for wheelchairs.

The church was originally endowed with 43 acres of glebe, and a rectory [4] was built in 1871. A Primitive Methodist chapel [5] was built along Congerstone Lane in 1852, but became derelict and was demolished in the 1950's.

The oldest houses in the village cluster around the church. The Stone House, 24 Main Street, is partly late 17<sup>th</sup> century with stone architraves and a blocked fire window facing the road. The Cheese Barn next door was a 19<sup>th</sup> century brick extension to the original farmhouse. Church Cottage, 38 Main Street, was originally the village bakehouse. Hall Terrace, 42-46 Main Street, was originally part of the estate yard of Carlton Hall which stood back from the road in what is now a garden. The Hall was destroyed by fire, but the decorative brickwork of the remaining outbuildings betrays their origin.

Traces of the foundations of other cottages can still be made out in the grass verge across the road from Hall Terrace. Manor House Farm, 45 Main Street, is recorded as of late 18<sup>th</sup> century date, but parts of it look much older and it probably occupies the site of the original Carlton Manor. In the field behind 53-59 Main Street there are still traces of earthworks which once covered a wider area but have now been built over [6].

The Old Post Office, 29 Main Street, was the village post office and general store – in the churchyard is a memorial to the Alcock family who ran it for nearly 100 years. The Victorian letter box (1871-81) was moved from here to the churchyard wall when the building was renovated in 1989. The Malt Shovel, 25 Main Street was the original village public house. Old School Cottage, the former school, stands at the west end of the village in the middle of Carlton Green [7]. A stone tablet above the door records that it was erected “... for the education of poor Children of the Parish A.D. 1847”. The school finally closed in 1968.

The name of Mill House on Nailstone Road is now the only reminder that a windmill once stood in the field across the road [8]. Similarly, the winding hole (barge turning place) near Carlton Bridge is now the only visible trace of a wharf and buildings which formerly stood between Congerstone Road and the Ashby Canal [9]. There was once a brickworks here too: the remains of kilns have been found in the field across the canal and the sunken fields may represent former clay diggings.

Carlton village lies at the hub of a network of public footpaths, all of which are fully waymarked with arrows and yellow posts: there are many enjoyable circular walks in the area. The Battlefield Line preserved railway runs through the Parish from Shackerstone to Market Bosworth and Shenton. The towpath of the Ashby Canal has been surfaced and provides excellent all-weather walking between Hinckley and Snarestone. There are plans to restore the northern part of the canal, initially from Snarestone to Measham. The canal is renowned for its flora and fauna, and the northern end from Carlton Bridge has been designated an SSSI.

This display board was erected by Carlton Parish Council in AD 2000 to mark the millennium, to foster interest in the history of the Parish, and to encourage responsible countryside recreation. The information presented here has been compiled from a variety of sources, and the Parish Council would welcome comments, corrections and new information from anyone with an interest in the history of the Parish. The Leicestershire Record Office is thanked for advice and help with sources, Leicestershire County Council for a grant towards the cost of production, and the Department of Planning & Transportation, Leicestershire County Council for supporting this project.

Chris Peat (Parish Clerk and Heritage Warden)  
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The text above appears on the Millenium Notice Board, in Little Lane, just off Shackerstone Walk in Carlton. The Board was erected in February 2000.

The text was also published in Carlton News, March 2000.

