

## LOCAL INTEREST

### Wothorpe Road

It probably marks the line of a Saxon roadway and river crossing. The Roman river crossing was further upstream. On the right there are steps leading down to the railway station and, under the road, trains from Peterborough emerge from the tunnel under St Martin's.

### St Martin's Within and St Martin's Without

Originally they were both part of the same parish. All the area south of the river, known as Stamford Baron, was outside the walls of Stamford and in the middle ages it belonged partly to the abbey of Peterborough and partly to Crowland abbey. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540, Henry VIII granted the land to Richard Cecil, a local merchant and so came under the control of the family at Burghley. In 1832 the parish of St Martin's Within became part of the borough of Stamford. The outlying buildings, mainly in Burghley Park, were given the name St Martin's Without. They stayed in what was then Northamptonshire, but now, with Wothorpe, are part of the Peterborough Unitary Authority

### Wothorpe

This residential area has grown up over the last 200 years around 2 bridleways, known as "drifts". From First Drift there is a good view of the former Priory College building, now back in residential use. It was built by the Stamford architect, Edward Browning, about 1840 for his own use. It was then known as "The Elms".

### Great North Road

The road between Stamford and Wansford was improved by the turnpike trust in 1749. The journey time for stage coaches from Stamford to London was reduced to one day, but highwaymen were still a menace. In the 1830s more than 70 stage and mail coaches a day passed through Stamford.

When the Helpston poet, John Clare, made his first visit to London in about 1820, he travelled in the "old Stamford coach". On the way he saw people "at his old occupations of ploughing and

ditching in the fields by the roadside" while he was "lolling in a coach". He said he felt like a stranger in his own skin.



*The former Priory College*

### Wothorpe Towers

It was built in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas, eldest son of William Cecil, the first Lord Burghley "to retire out of the dust while his great house at Burghley was a sweeping". It appears to have been used mainly as a dower house. It was built round 3 sides of a courtyard. The main building in the middle was square and each corner had a tower capped with a cupola. There was a service wing for kitchens and servants' rooms on either side. It appears that some of the stone was removed and re-used in the stables at Burghley House in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and the cupolas were removed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The whole building, including the stables and an octagonal cockpit, have been allowed to fall into disrepair but are currently under restoration.

### Disused reservoirs

The ponds on the hillside are reminders of the Exeter Estate Waterworks dating back to 1837. Prior to that, Stamford's water was obtained from wells, some public and others in private houses. After severe outbreaks of typhoid caused by polluted water, the Marquess of Exeter, who owned much of the town, built these reservoirs, which were filled by water derived from springs on this hillside in Wothorpe. It was taken through pipes and supplied 15 public pumps.

### A1

The Great North Road went through Stamford until 1961, when the north-south by-pass was built.



## John Clare Country Wothorpe



*Wothorpe Towers*

**One in a series of circular walks issued  
by Parishes in Barnack Ward**

## WOTHORPE

Start and finish: Station Road long stay car park, (fee payable).

Position: Wothorpe is south west of St Martins, the part of Stamford south of the River Welland.

Train station: adjacent to car park.

Bus station: nearby, across the river and Stamford Meadows.

Distance: under 3 miles for the Wothorpe Walk, about 5 ½ miles for walk returning via Easton on the Hill and Stamford Meadows

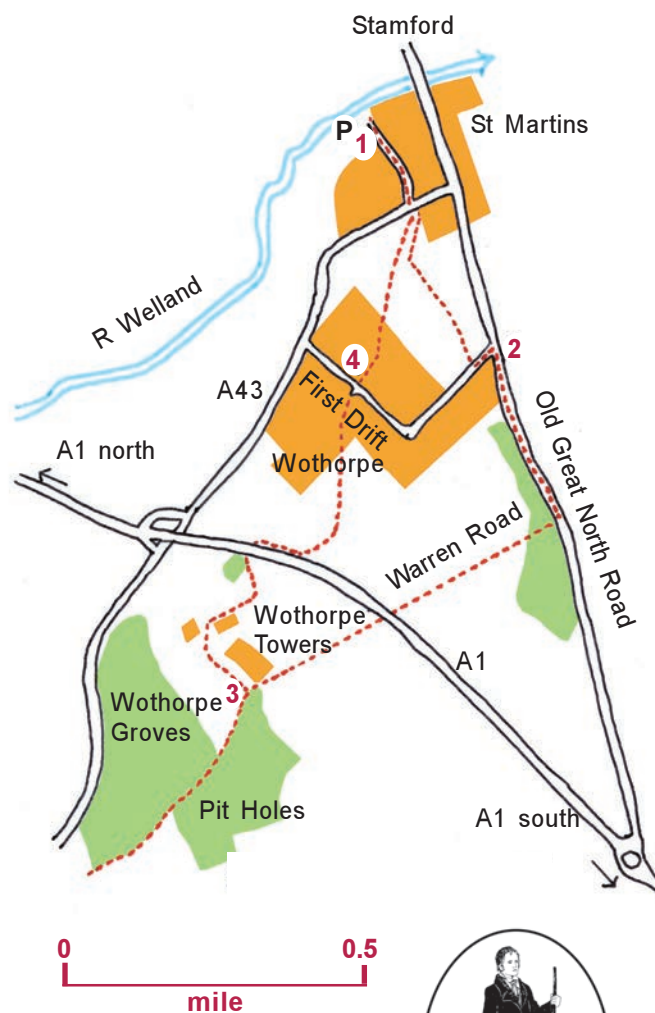
Time: about 1 ½ hours for the Wothorpe Walk.

OS map: 234 Explorer 1:25,000

## THE WALK

**1** Turn right out of the car park and walk up Wothorpe Road to Kettering Road, A43. Cross the road and look for the public footpath sign opposite Fryers Almshouses. Go through the kissing gate and then diagonally across the grass field and through another kissing gate. Over to the left there is a good view of the Bottle Lodges entrance to Burghley Park. Follow the footpath through the rough grass to a footbridge and then over a stile into a grass field. Keeping to the right of the hedge, walk up the hill to the stile at the top of the field. There are some good views over Stamford and Wothorpe. Turn left into First Drift and then cross the Old Great North Road.

**2** Turn right and continue up the hill as far as Warren Road, the bridleway on the right. This starts off as a hard track lined by chestnut trees. Go round the barrier and over the bridge, which crosses the A1. Soon after that, the track becomes more rural and the traffic noise is lost. Pause to look over the wall at the ruins of Wothorpe Towers and Wothorpe Farm, currently under restoration. The path continues between two woods, Pit Holes and Wothorpe Groves. Both are managed by the Forestry Commission and are excellent wildlife habitats. There are numerous stiles and paths and visitors are invited to wander through them.



### One in a series of circular walks issued by Parishes in Barnack Ward

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(The track continues until it meets Kettering Road and there is a lovely walk, past the church at Easton Hill and then, following Hereward Way, back into Stamford Meadows).

**3** After exploring the woods, retrace your steps and turn left before Wothorpe Towers. The path has been re-routed but is easy to follow. At the next junction, cross the stile to the left of the cottages. There are markers, but if the path is hard to see, keep to the right of the reservoirs in the little wood and then between the stone animal shelter and the area of newly planted trees. The track leads down to a tunnel under the A1. Go through the gate and walk parallel to the A1 as far as the next wall. Cross the wall by the signpost, turn left, keeping the wall on the left. Then cross the grass field diagonally. Head for the far corner, where there is a stile, a footbridge and another stile. The path is then confined between hedges until it emerges into a short cul de sac. Turn right up it and on to First Drift.

**4** Cross the road and look for the footpath next to "Long Acre". Again the path is between hedges. After a foot bridge and a gate the path crosses diagonally over a grass field to a gate in the corner adjacent to the sports pavilion. Ignoring paths to left and right, continue over the footbridge and stile until the path reaches Kettering Road. Cross the road and continue down to the car park.



Warren Road beside Wothorpe Groves