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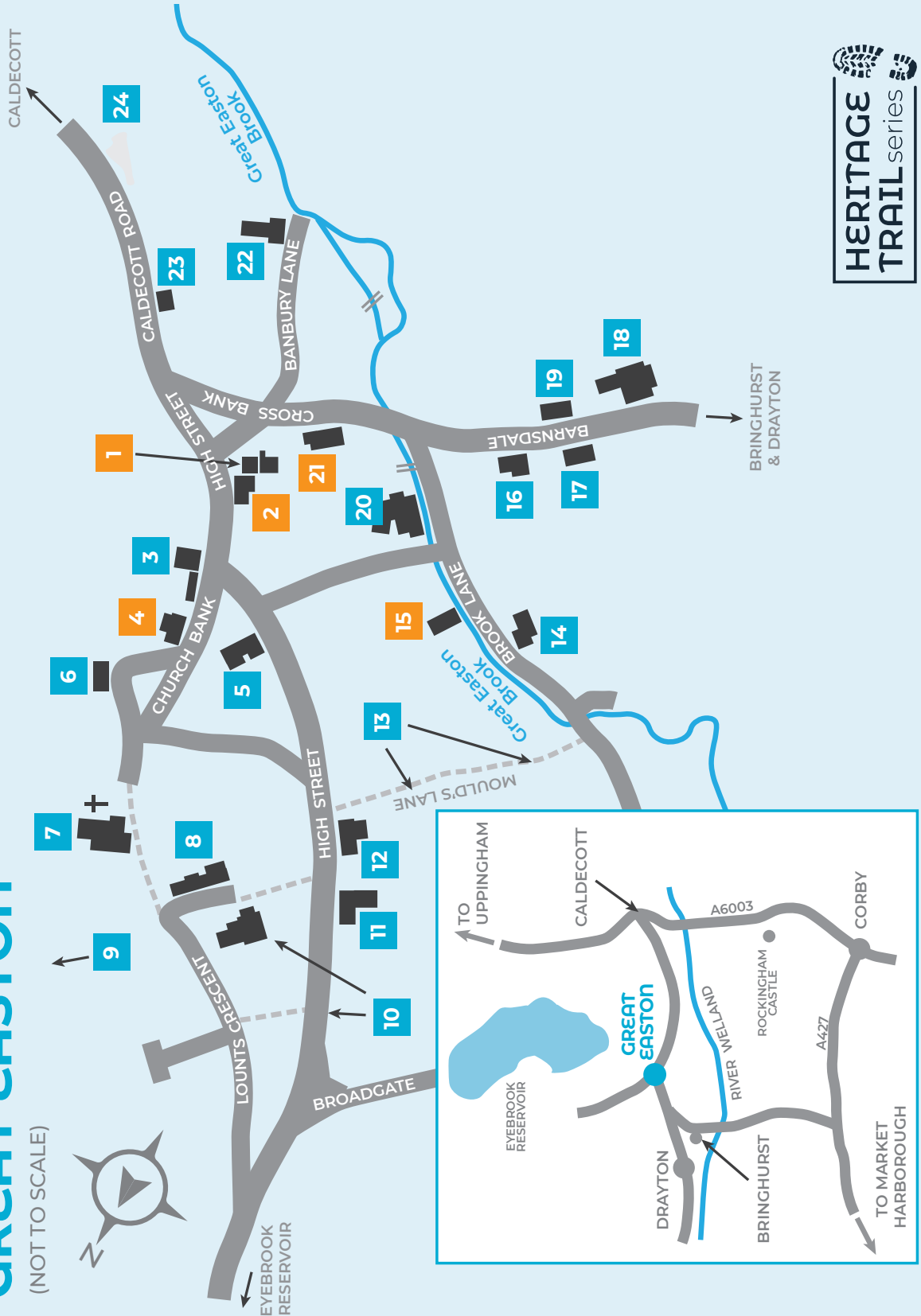
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Enjoy our historic village trails
in beautiful south Leicestershire



GREAT EASTON

(NOT TO SCALE)



Situated in the Welland Valley and overlooked by Rockingham Castle, the village of Great Easton is particularly attractive. Close to the Eyebrook Reservoir, a noted haven for wildlife, the village nestles harmoniously in the rolling Leicestershire countryside.

Locally quarried ironstone has provided much of the building material and this has given the village its distinctive character with numerous honey coloured stone cottages. A variety of building styles can be observed and of particular note are the traditional roofing materials with Collyweston stone slates, pantiles, thatch, and Welsh slate.

For most of its life much of the village has been the property of the church, being given by Ethelred, King of Mercia, to the Abbot of Peterborough about the year 700. This ownership, which in part continues to this day, has meant that Great Easton has never had the traditional local squire, but merely tenants.

Over the years the village has changed its name, previously being known as Eston, Easton juxta Welland or Easton juxta Rockingham. The reason for the addition of 'Great' or its Latin equivalent 'Magna' is unclear as there is no 'Little Easton'.

Agriculture has always played an important part in the economic life of the village, although that role is considerably reduced today. However, the numerous farm buildings in the village bear witness to its former importance.

Dad's Army - During World War II a local emergency arose, and the Home Guard were called to 'Action Stations' during the middle of the night. As most of the part time soldiers had to be risen from their beds it took some time for the force to muster. However, one member was missing. Enquiries showed he had set off but had failed to report for duty. Only much later was it revealed that the sleepy guardian of the peace had misheard the instruction and had made his way to Ashley Station, four miles away.

The walk starts from the War Memorial located in the centre of the village.

1 The former **old butcher's shop** is a late 19th century extension to a much earlier stone house. It is built in polychromatic brick, an unusual material for villages in South Leicestershire. The meat rails on the inside have been retained as have the exterior rails where game would have hung.



2 Next door is '**The Old Post Office**' which is only one of several buildings which have housed this facility. The building probably dates from the late 16th century. Of note is the long straw thatch, traditional to the area. The small windows are a particularly charming feature of this house; they are, however, quite modern.

3 Opposite is the village shop. Next door, **Walnut Tree Cottage** shows signs of considerable rebuilding over the years. Originally thatched, the roof line has been lifted and rubble stone inserted above the well-dressed stone below.

4 **Clock House** is a Victorian red brick villa dated 1881. The clock set into the left-hand side of the house gives the house its name and originally advertised the fact that this was the home of the village clockmaker. The original workshop adjoins the house on the left.



5 Stonewalls, a fine house dated 1694 with Collyweston stone and tiles was once one of the village bakehouses. It still contains remains of the ovens.

6 Fork right up **Church Bank**. The thatched stone cottage to the right beyond the green was until 1909 the Crown Inn. The house is one of the oldest in the village and dates from the 15th century.

7 Enter the churchyard. The fine 18th century limestone tombstones to the right of the path contrast with the 19th century Swithland slate examples on the left. All were carved by local craftsmen. **The Church**, dedicated to St Andrew, is mainly of 13th century construction and built of local ironstone. A separate detailed guide to the Church is available from within.

8 Continue through the churchyard. To the left is an interesting group of farm buildings which emphasise Great Easton's strong historic links with agriculture. The view across the buildings is to the hilltop village of Brighthurst dominated by the squat tower of its church. Slightly to the right on the far horizon is the spire of Nevill Holt, once the home of the Cunard family, of shipping fame.

9 Leave the churchyard by the **iron wicket gate**. Notice to the right the unusual circular stone well head across the fields of Rectory Farm.

10 Turn left down the footpath to the rear of the farmbuildings. At the bottom, the High Street is rejoined. To the right standing in its own grounds is the **Old Rectory**. It is a 17th century farmhouse much enlarged about 1870 when it became the Vicarage. Beyond it on the same side of the road is a fine example of mud walling capped with pantiles.

11 Opposite is **Granby House** which until 1914 was the 'Marquis of Granby' public house. The sawn-off beam which once supported the inn sign can still be seen high on the wall to the left of the front door.

12 The gable end at **Holme Leigh House** is notable for the striped effect produced by the use of alternate bands of ironstone and limestone. This feature is characteristic of the Welland Valley. The house itself was built in two stages: the east end on to the road in 1614, and the rest in 1688.

13 Passing down **Moulds Lane** the walls to the right show the variety of materials used in the village – mud, limestone, ironstone, and hand made brick.

Brook Lane is reached at the bottom. To the right are several old cottages intermingled with modern housing.

14 Turning left along Brook Lane the imposing house to the right is **Brookside House**. Built between 1630 and 1670 it is unusual in that it shows its back to the road.

15 Opposite is the 17th century **Brookside Cottage** built at right angles to the road.

The new extension built at the far end is considerably less obvious than the brick gable. However even this has mellowed over the years.



16 At the end of the road turn up **Barnsdale** where the warm ironstone cottages impart a typically Cotswold look to the village. No. 8 Barnsdale was from 1814 to 1914 a pub called 'The Kings Head'. It once belonged to the Cooke family hence the date stones with the initial 'W.C.'.

17 Number 16 Barnsdale, **Furleigh Cottage** dates from the 15th century and is one of the oldest buildings in the village. Of interest is the owl feature in the thatch.

18 Opposite is **Barnsdale House**, a large dignified Regency property. For more than 100 years it was the home of the village doctor.

19 Returning towards the centre of the village, the next house on the right, '**The Thatch**', is probably as old as Furleigh Cottage opposite.

20 Just past the junction with Brook Lane on the left-hand side is '**The Lindens**'. Through the fine stone gate pillars, the large Regency house belies the fact that originally this was a small 17th century farmhouse.

21 Having crossed over the bridge, the single storey building on the left, 19 Crossbank, was for over 50 years a **corset factory** having opened in 1908.



22 At the far end of **Banbury Lane** is a large cross passage house with a slate and thatch roof. In spite of its ecclesiastical decorations, the origin of the property is uncertain. Towards the end of the 19th century it was used as a Salvation Army hostel.

23 Pass the **War Memorial** and turn right along the Caldecott Road, formerly known as '**Cowgate**'. About fifty yards along there is the former workshop of the village wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker.

24 Adjoining a paddock is the burial ground of the former **Independent (Congregational) Chapel**, which stood alongside. The view is across the Welland Valley to Rockingham Castle. The end of the village is now in sight and steps should be retraced to the village centre where the walk commenced.

Staying In - Great Easton's corset factory was founded by Hugh Moore of Caldecott in the mid 1830's. Later, by 1861 the business employed forty women, one man and a boy. All the corsets were hand made with a considerable proportion being produced by 'outworkers' who lived in neighbouring cottages.

Eyebrook Reservoir - A mile north of Great Easton straddling the border with neighbouring Rutland lies Eyebrook Reservoir, Leicestershire's second largest sheet of water. Located within low rolling hills, the water area extends over 400 acres and is a noted haven for wildlife. Nearly 200 species of birds have been seen, and the site has been scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The reservoir was built by Stewarts and Lloyds (now part of British Steel plc) to supply the water requirements of Corby steelworks. Work on the dam started in 1937 and was completed in 1940. The first supply of water to the works was made in the last week of that year.

The Dam Buster Raid - For several months in 1943 up to a dozen Lancaster bombers regularly used Eyebrook Reservoir as a training ground prior to setting off on the famous Ruhr 'Dam Busters Raid'. Initially the low flying night flights caused considerable disturbance to the surrounding villages. However local residents, who recognised their sleep would be interrupted, regularly congregated around the lakeside to witness the spectacular rehearsals.

Trout Fishery - The fishing potential of the reservoir was recognised from the start and as soon as the dam was finished the reservoir was stocked with brown trout. 15,000 3"/5" fingerlings and 50,000 fry were put into the water. Not surprisingly war time difficulties and restrictions hampered initial development. Even so, by 1942 a few intrepid anglers bicycled to the site when 21 rods caught 25 fish averaging 2lb. The largest was 4 1/2 lb. An ongoing restocking policy was adopted from the beginning and Eyebrook is now recognised as a major fishing centre. In 1992, 24,808 fish were caught.

A private road, for use by those fishing only, leads from Great Easton to Caldecott Road to the fishing lodge where day permits are available.

Great Easton has strong community ties with the neighbouring villages of Bringhurst and Drayton. A 'Three Villages Festival' was held in 1975.

Bringhurst - This attractive little village stands on top of an isolated hill 300 ft. above the Welland flood plain. It is one of the earliest Saxon settlements on the Leicestershire side of the Welland, dating from the 6th century. The churchyard probably occupies the original settlement of Bryni and his people. Many of the village homes are from the 17th century and they cluster around the church dedicated to St. Nicholas. It is of 12th century origin, rebuilt in the 18th century, and was the 'mother church' to the offspring settlements of Drayton and Great Easton. It features a low, solidly built west tower topped by golden weathercock of interesting design. Its commanding position makes it a conspicuous landmark.

Bringhurst School - In 1874, in accordance with the Education Act of 1870, a School Board was compulsorily formed to provide education for the children of Bringhurst, Drayton and Great Easton. The school was built in 1875 between the three villages, with the aid of a £2,000 loan from the Education Department 'To provide education for 150 children'. In 1929 the school became a Junior school and now operates as a County Primary school.

Drayton - Situated on the road between Medbourne and Great Easton, with footpath access to the River Welland, the village of Drayton can claim to have the smallest village church in Leicestershire. Occupying a prominent position on the village green and originally constructed as a 'chapel-of-ease' to the parish church of Bringhurst, the Medieval church of St. James has had a chequered history, being used as a bakehouse in 18th century. It was restored to its former use in 1878-9 through the efforts of the Watson family of Rockingham Castle.

Situated on a triangle of land at the road junction between Bringhurst and Drayton is a tree with a surrounding iron seat, erected in memory of those villagers killed in action in the Great War.

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All the information in this leaflet is correct at time of printing.

