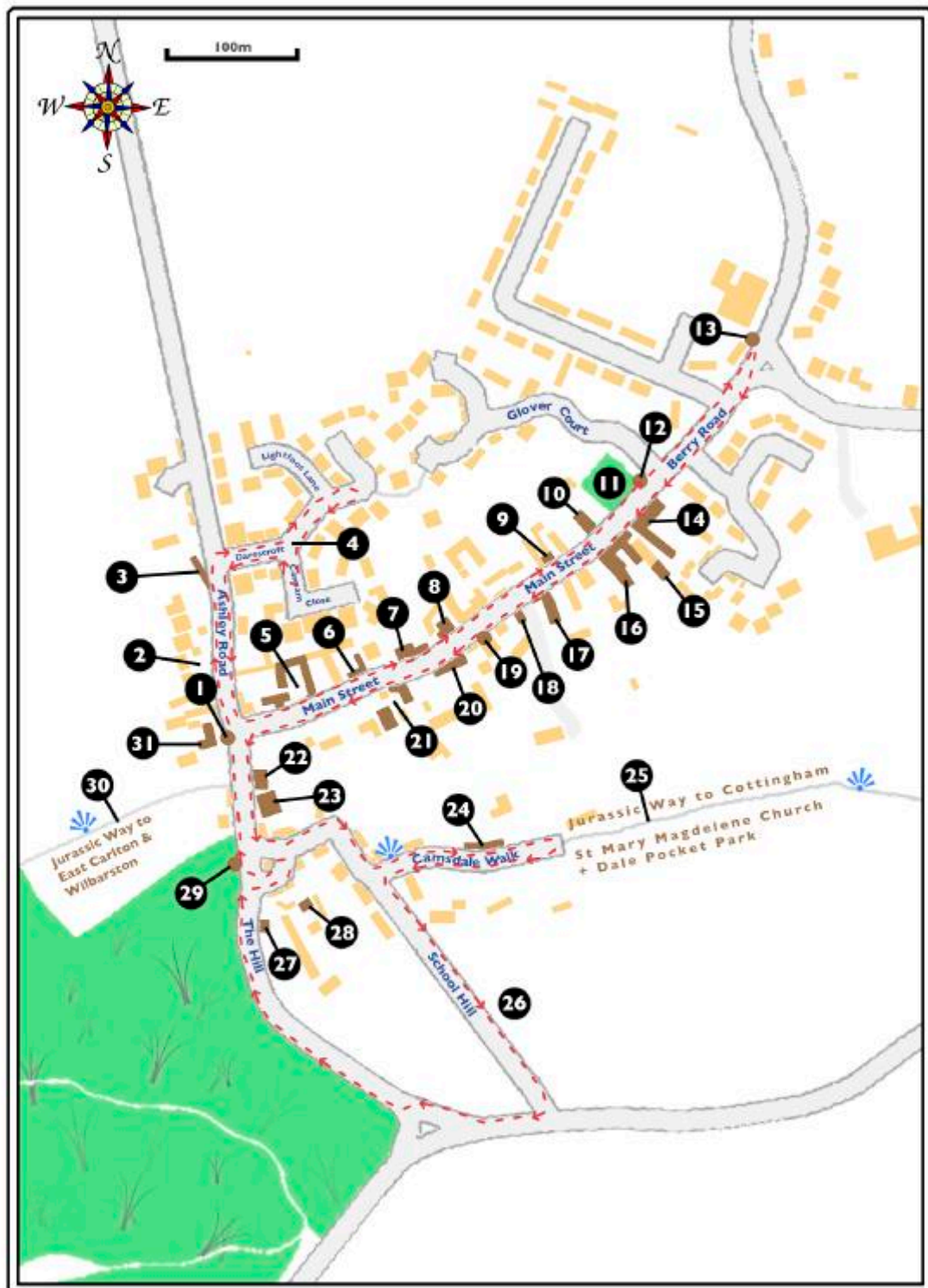


GETTING TO KNOW: MIDDLETON





GETTING TO KNOW: MIDDLETON, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

THE VILLAGE WALK

Middleton (SP840900) is 3½ miles NW of Corby and 2½ miles WSW of Rockingham Castle. It is a conservation village. The origin of the name is possibly Danish meaning *Middle Farm*. Its early history was connected with the fates of Cottingham and East Carlton, both close-by. It was mentioned independently by name from the 12th century although it is still often linked with Cottingham under the 'Cottingham-cum-Middleton' designation. The parish used to be quite a bit bigger extending almost to Great Oakley to the south-south-east and included half of East Carlton park to the south-west. The practice of 'beating the parish bounds', meaning walking the boundaries, continued until the late 20th century. The village is notable for the many date stones on its houses and for the names of the houses that often reflect the history of the village. These names include: Farriers House, The Maltings, Milestone Mews, Quarry House and Woolpack, among others.

Walk distance: 1 mile (with optional extensions up to around 6 miles)

Walk duration: 50 mins (plus extensions)

Walk type: Mostly pavement, with some hills, quite steep in places.

Please observe all the highway and countryside codes.

Start at the village sign at the end of Main Street

1. The Millenium Village Sign

The sign (which was designed and crafted by Cottingham's Chris Owen) depicts notable elements of the village and general area: the village fountain/trough, a horse-rider, a heron, the village church, a windmill.

The village fountain/trough is still evident and we'll see it on the walk. It is fed by a natural spring. Natural springs have been important for the villages in this area since pre-Roman times and give rise to the name spring-line villages. Middleton is part of Rockingham Forest where kings and noblemen hunted regularly and this horse rider symbolises this. Although the actual forest has diminished greatly, the area is still known as Rockingham Forest. The heron indicates the vicinity to the River Welland's floodplain grazing marsh. A windmill is important as there were three mills in the vicinity of this village over the centuries. The village war memorial is shared with Cottingham as is the village church and the village hall.

From the village sign go up Ashley Road.

2. Peake Close

This present development was named after the family who used to own/rent the land. The Peake family were here in the late 18th century and maybe prior to this. John Peake's will in 1780 mentions five children but he was obviously displeased with John, his son, who received very little and then only if he complied with conditions such as not arguing with his brothers and sisters! |

3. The Rockingham Forest Wheelers (Cycling Clubhouse)

This is a very active cycling club founded in 1950 by a local, John Scrimgeour. The aim was and still is to encourage the sport and pastime of cycling in all its forms. He realised that a clubhouse was needed. The members were involved in many fund-raising activities and negotiations until in 1966, they finally got a grant and permission to convert three old dilapidated cottages into the complex you see today. This includes a bar, kitchen, toilets, games room and more. If the clubhouse is open you can see photographs of the transformation inside.



This is the site of some of the former poor houses of Middleton and Cottingham that were built from a joint village grant in 1796. In 1837 a Cottingham resident, Francis Cooke, had to certify that the poor houses belonged to Middleton Parish because the deeds were missing. A nearby house and grounds were apparently built over the remains of the rest of the poor houses. The striking weathervane was bequeathed to the clubhouse by a former member.

Walk further down Ashley Road and turn into the first road on the right

4. Darescroft, Cannam Close, Lightfoot Lane and Swingler's Path

The names of these few roads tell quite a tale for Middleton. The Cannams were an important and influential family in the area who used to own this land - hence the name. You'll see Cannam House later on the walk which is directly at the back of this Close on the right. Catherine and Jane Lightfoot are recorded as surrendering their land in Middleton to Sir John Henry Palmer in 1855, but the family name remains attached to the lane here. The Palmers were part of the Huntley and Palmer biscuit dynasty and lived in the large Chateau-style building in East Carlton nearby. There is a footpath at the end of Darescroft called Swingler's Path that leads to Glover Court in the sister village. The land that carries the path was owned by the Swingler family and was donated to the Middleton parish council to allow the path to be built.

Turn around and go back to the end of Main Street and begin to walk down it on the left-hand side.

5. Middleton House

This was an impressive farmhouse attached to quite a substantial farmyard as you can see from the archway leading to outbuildings. Part of this set of buildings is now a pre-school nursery called 'Wellingtons'.

6. Old Bakehouse and Merchant's Store: 11 Main Street (Now Willow Cottage B&B)

This building has a diverse past. The garage outbuildings used to be stables and the yard was described as a barnyard whilst one part was a bakery, another part a shop and lending library, and yet another part was a café. Thought to be about 400 hundred years old, this is now a delightful Bed and Breakfast offering two rooms.

7. Cannam House and railings (Grade II listed)

Here is the fine early 18th century Cannam family house remodelled in the late 18th century. It is crafted limestone with a slate roof. Smooth, cut and fitted limestone, like this, is known as 'Ashlar' limestone. The front doorway is particularly noticeable. This has toplights – extra windows on top of the main door to allow light inside – and an arched fanlight with moulded stonework. There are sash windows under stone surrounds with central keystones that are different from ones we'll see because they are flush with the stonework. Usually these are more prominent. Sash windows open from the bottom and the middle and were made of wood. The railings and gates are cast iron from the 19th century. There are Cannams in Middleton listed in the Northamptonshire Militia List 1777.



8. 21 Main Street (Grade II listed)

This was originally a mid 18th century L-shaped farmhouse. It was built with squared bands of ironstone and has a slate roof. The three front windows are casements with stone surrounds and keystones. Casement windows open sideways. There are Ashlar limestone parapets with brick stacks at the ends. Notice the oval tablet to the left of centre. The house is known locally as the 'black horses' from the fine weather vanes displaying black horses that you can see through the yard. At the rear of the main house, there is a two story stone-built extension with a well-preserved internal dovecote/pignonerie in the loft. You can't see anything externally so please respect the owner's privacy by not disturbing them.

9. The Old Forge

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, in the mid 18th to early 19th century, nearly every village had a blacksmith. Apart from making horseshoes, they made many iron artefacts. They were called 'Blacksmiths' because the metal they worked with was black, and 'smith' meant skilled worker. The word 'forge' means shaping metal by heating and hammering. Samuel Swingler ran this forge in the 1800s and it was working till the 1930s, but later it was then converted into a private house. It has a date stone of 1868, restored in 1982. The Swinglers were an important village family and Sam's relative, Walter, owned the last house we described and the land used to make Swingler's Path mentioned in Number 4.

Notice the hand-pump and filled in trough just past Farmer's House. We'll be seeing a few more of these along the walk. Water was very important for villagers and the natural springs of the area served them well until mains water arrived.

10. Vine House Grade II listed (Number 37)

This building is from the mid 18th to 19th centuries. It is made of squared ironstone bands with a slate roof. Notice the sash windows and the narrow first floor centre window that have stone surrounds with prominent centre keyblocks. There are Ashlar limestone edges to the gable ends of the house with a tablet in the right end gable.

11. Old Orchard

This old orchard has been turned into a pretty garden for the village with the help of the Parish Council. Some of the old fruit trees have been retained and the wall has been restored.

12. Boundary Marker (Grade II listed)

Just at the end of Main Street on the left by the old orchard you'll find the boundary post for Middleton and Cottingham, the sister village. This post is probably mid 19th century and is three-cornered cast iron with a hollow back. Cottingham and Middleton have almost merged as you see but originally there was open land between them.

13. War Memorial: Mill Road (about 50 yards into Cottingham) and Village Hall

Remember this was depicted in the village sign. It was erected just after the 1st World War and lists those from the two villages killed in that war. The memorial actually says 1914-1919. 1919 was the year when the Treaty of Versailles was signed. On the back, it lists those killed in the 2nd World War 1939-45. You can see the shared village school nearby and the shared village hall is at the back of the school.

14. Manor House: 58-60 Main Street (Grade II listed - formally Manor Farmhouse)

This is now a residential care home for 22 people. But you'll see from its name that the house itself has a strong significance for Middleton. Dating from the early 18th century, it has a date stone of 1785. Built of squared ironstone, it has an Ashlar limestone frontage and a Collyweston roof. Collyweston is a Northamptonshire village near Stamford. Collyweston roof tiles are not actually slate but are thin limestone tiles that are prized for their difference. You'll notice the arched fanlight framed by Ashlar limestone for the main front door. The attached outbuildings were probably stables and hay lofts. The house is listed as having an internal dovecote to the right of the front door although there's no external evidence of this. There's yet another dovecote in the village that is quite well preserved and we'll see this later in the walk. More will be explained about them there.

15. Barn (Grade II listed - near Manor House)

To the right of Manor House down the driveway towards the back of the set of buildings is a barn dating from the late 18th century. It was a single unit barn and has a central door under a wooden lintel. It is built of squared bands of ironstone and has a slate roof.

16. Row of three houses: nos. 50, 52, 54 (Grade II listed)

Number 50 is on Main Road while 52 and 54 are through the fine archway. They date from the late 18th and early 19th centuries showing bands of squared ironstone. They have a mix of slate and concrete tiled roofs. The windows differ too. Numbers 50-52 have sash windows with glazing bars under wood upper surrounds on the first floor and stone on the ground floor, while number 54 has casement windows under wooden upper surrounds (lintels). The carriage arch is striking with its segmental working.

17. Number 34: 'The Maltings'

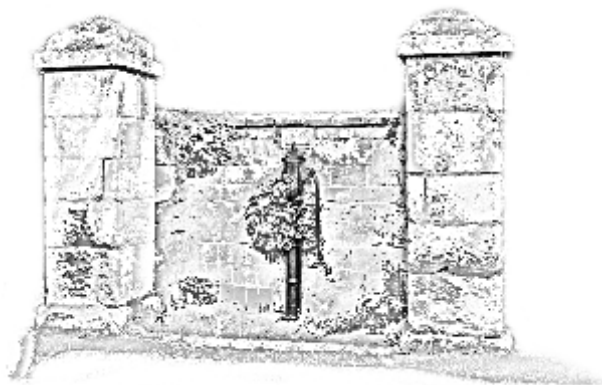
This house displays a date stone of 1871 and names Birmingham Street, but no one knows why.

18. The Congregational Chapel: 32 Main Street

This building is now a private house but you can appreciate that it was a chapel from 1834 or 1844 until it closed in the late 1960s. The actual date this was built is unclear as some records appear to mix its location and build date. The back room of the chapel used to serve as the meeting room for the parish council. There are rumours that there are gun shots in the facade that were fired in anger early in the building's life because of the nature of the building.

19. Village hand-pump

Notice the impressive hand-pump set back into a pretty alcove that often has wild flowers enhancing it. There's a date stone of 1851 at the back. This was certainly still in use up until the second world war. It is unclear when it stopped being used although it is likely mains water arrived in the late 1950s.



20. 18-20 Main Street: The Uplands (Grade II listed)

These two houses were built from early to late 18th century. There's a blank date stone on number 20 but the other date on number 18 (1883) is thought to relate to the raising of the roofline. The houses display different types of ironstone construction. Number 20 has squared bands of ironstone with Ashlar limestone embellishments. Number 18 has regular bands of ironstone. Both have slate roofs. The windows differ too. Number 20 has casement windows surrounded by Ashlar limestone with keystones and linked by a 'string' line of cut limestone. Number 18's casement windows are surrounded by wooden lintels.

21. 10 and 12 Main Street (Grade II listed)

These two houses are from the mid 18th century. They are squared bands of limestone and ironstone with slate roofs. They were originally two L-shaped units. The windows are 19th century casement style under wooden lintels.

Just before the green at the end of Main Street you'll pass a bus shelter. This used to be another village pump like the previous one you saw earlier in this street, but now the alcove has formed the back of the bus shelter. Turn left at the end of Main Street up The Hill

22. Tudor-style houses

Notice the semi-detached tudor-style houses on your left. They are very different from the other village houses. There's a date stone of 1862. The houses have distinctive doors with diamond-lead windows and Collyweston slate roofs.

23. The Red Lion Pub

This pub has served the village for a couple of hundred years at least. Originally the pub seems to have been located further back from the main road (1887 British History Online map). Unsure when it moved to its present position, we do know that it closed in 2012 for a time but has since reopened under new management. Middleton used to have two more pubs. The Woolpack used to be on the junction of Ashley Road/Main Street, and The Exeter Arms was in Main Street opposite the old forge.

Turn left into School Hill (unmarked). Around here (maybe on the right where there is a plaque in the wall) the old village pound was found. It was used to keep stray animals until they were claimed and was still in use in the early 20th century.

Continue up the hill, round the bend and then left again into Camsdale Walk. Notice another village hand-pump at the intersection in front of 'The Pump House'.

24. 7 Camsdale Walk (Grade II listed)

This was the old schoolhouse. The datestone says 1766. It is built of squared bands of ironstone with an Ashlar limestone frontage. There are casement windows under wooden lintels. Its outstanding feature is the central sundial. Sundials were important before clocks and watches were widely available to keep the time. Churches used them so that ministers could ring bells to warn parishioners that a service was about to start. The school house here might have used the sundial to mark the start and finish of the school day. The name plaques are interesting too. The left names might be the builders and the right names indicate William Aldwinkle and William Hikon were Bailiffs.

At this time the title Bailiff could mean two things. The first was an official of the court appointed by the sheriff to assist Judges and collect fines. This role has evolved into the type of Bailiff that we have today. But in the Middle Ages there was another type of bailiff. This second type was an official appointed by the Lord of the Manor. They would oversee buildings and lands of the Lord as well as collect rents and fines. They were more like accountants. Probably these bailiffs fulfilled this second role.

Instead of Lords of the Manor, Cottingham and Middleton had 'copyholders'. These were important land-owners in the villages and they asserted their rights as equivalent to Lords of the Manor. In 1766 they found that they had some money that could be put to common use and decided to build a school. They placed the money in trust with Sir Robert Palmer of East Carlton and he provided the land at Camsdale Walk. Ten boys received schooling from a schoolmaster who could supplement his employment by private tuition. In 1856 a larger school, Middleton School, was built separately but attached (now number 5). This was enlarged in 1869 but then schooling transferred to the larger purpose-built school in School Lane in Cottingham. The copyholders were also responsible for providing all the water pumps for both Middleton and Cottingham villages.

25. Jurassic Way track to Cottingham (Optional extension)

At the end of Camsdale Walk there's an unmade track that leads over the ridge into Cottingham, the shared Pocket Park and village church of St Mary Magdalene (Grade I listed. See more Page 6). The views along this track over the villages and beyond are well worth the effort. But the track can be muddy after rain and it leads through grazing fields so if you have a dog you are advised to keep it on a lead. Apparently this important path between the villages was tarmaced and maintained but has been left to run down over the past 50 years. The return trip would take you about 30 minutes and is about 1¼ miles.

If you are not doing the trek to Cottingham and the park/church, turn around and retrace your steps to the end of Camsdale Walk and turn left up School Hill. Camsdale Walk used to be called School Hill and this makes sense because the school house is there. But, the Post Office wanted the road to be renamed to help delivery. The area used to be called 'Camsdale Leys' - hence the last house is called 'Camsdale' - and the road is now called Camsdale Walk.

26. Old Lime Kiln: School Hill Road

Just before you reach the top of School Hill, there used to be a lime kiln in the field on your left. This is noted on maps from the late 1880s. There is nothing to see now, but lime was an important money-earner in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was used for building (mortar and plaster) and as a fertiliser for farming. Lime was made by burning limestone with coal inside a furnace.

At the end of School Hill turn right, on your right, the field undulates quite a lot. There was an old quarry here according to old maps of the mid 1800s. There were several quarries around here at one time or another – possibly lime or ironstone. At the junction, cross the road carefully to the pavement, and head down The Hill.

When you see a road turning on your right, cross back over. This is a split part of School Hill that we went up before. But here, if you veer to the right, you'll find Hill House and Hill Farm gates.

27. Hill House

Hill House was originally a farmhouse and is over two hundred years old. At one time Rockingham Castle owned it. Notice the false, painted, top-floor windows. There used to be a 'window tax' on the number of windows a house had, so some were bricked in or falsified to save the owner money. Sometimes though this was done just for architectural reasons.

28. Dovecote (Grade II listed to the left of Hill Farm gates)

The dovecote is very overgrown and so its features are difficult to see. It is probably mid 18th century and is built of squared bands of ironstone with brick. It has timber framing with lattice and plaster infill. It's a square shaped, two-storey dovecote. There is a blocked-up cart entrance at ground level and the nesting boxes are part lined with brick in the gable ends. This building is on private property, so please respect the owner's privacy and just view from the road side of the gates. Similar dovecote/pigeonnier constructions are found all over Europe, even dating to pre-Roman times. In Medieval times, dovecotes were controlled by law as only nobles were granted permission to have them. Later, they became important sources of food and could be found more widely such as in farmsteads. In some parts of Europe the pigeon droppings were/are used in leather tanning to soften the hides.

Cross over Hill Road again and walk down the left-hand side until the fountain/trough.

29. The fountain/trough 1844

This is represented on the village sign. It is fed by a natural spring. The ready availability of water in this area was a bonus and utilised by pre Roman and Roman settlements near here. Nowadays we take tap water for granted. Before mains water arrived, people had to take buckets and fill them from central sources such as this trough for all their needs from drinking and cooking to washing clothes.

30. Jurassic Way track to Wilbarston (Optional extension)

This path is a continuation of the Jurassic Way walk from Cottingham and takes you to Wilbarston (about 2½ miles) via East Carlton (about ¾ mile). This is a pleasant country walk and if you go to Wilbarston and back it will take you about 1½ hours. East Carlton has a country park with its own walks. It also has a café and heritage centre covering the history of Corby and steel-making. You can get access to the park in several places along the footpath. You'll also see evidence in the fields to your right of the middle-ages' 'ridge and furrow' farming technique. The non-reversible plough that was used caused an effect a bit like terracing on the landscape because the soil was moved into the centre each turn. Northamptonshire, and more especially around Middleton, is one of the last places in the UK to find evidence of this in fields that have not been ploughed in recent times.

31. Longridge, The Hill (Grade II listed)

This house is mid to late 18th century. It's built of squared bands of ironstone and has a Collyweston roof. The windows are casement-style 19th and 20th century under wooden lintels. The door and porch are 20th century too.

Continue back down The Hill until you are back at the Millenium Sign.

That is the end of the walk.

We hope you've enjoyed the Middleton Walk and feel that if you are a villager that you have learnt something new, and if you are a visitor, you feel you're now almost a villager yourself.

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Photos and illustrations by Andy Finney

Thanks to Keith Allsop, Kay Dickens, Walter Campbell and Colin Bradshaw for their comments

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Information about the Dale Pocket Park and church if you do the extra section

The Dale Pocket Park

The idea of Pocket Parks began in Northamptonshire. They are small, local natural areas that have been adopted by villagers. This one was bought off the church in 1985 with the help of the county and parish councils, the Amenity Society and strong support from the villagers. They wanted to save it from agricultural change. The Dale is a natural limestone valley with steep sides and is particularly popular when it snows. It has a seasonal succession of traditional meadow flowers. Enjoy them, but please don't pick them. You may also see some cattle, possibly a rare breed, grazing the pasture. Similar grazing has happened for centuries here. To the left under the sycamore tree, you can still see the remains of a ridge and furrow strip field – an old farming method which is becoming harder and harder to find. Opposite the gate into The Dale in the former Rectory Garden is a rare small-leaved lime tree which is one of the largest in Britain.

St. Mary Magdalene: Grade 1 listed building (represented in the village sign)

The church itself is now only open for designated services which are listed on the notice board. Until the mid 1960s there used to be a permanent Rector who played a great part in the village history. The Parish Rolls recording births, marriages and deaths from 1533 - late 19th and early 20th centuries are available at Northampton Record Office or via The Northamptonshire Family History Society. The Parish Rolls and gravestones bear many of the family names that shaped the villages and still do.

St. Mary Magdalene church dates from the 12th century and has building styles from many of the following centuries as well. The construction shows a mixture of bands of ironstone and limestone - square and regular. The spire is crafted from Ashlar limestone. All around the tower you'll notice more carved heads. Many of the windows have tracery, trefoils and quatrefoil circles. If you look carefully there are three gargoyles. The graveyard displays many memorial stones and tombs dating across several centuries. There are some fine views of the villages and countryside from the top of the graveyard.



Free Cottingham walk available at www.atsf.co.uk/walks/Cottingham_Walk.pdf

This walk also available at www.atsf.co.uk/walks/Middleton_Walk.pdf