

# A Chellaston Walk About

by  
Chellaston  
History Group



Alabaster, Chellaston Standing Angel c1419

Derby

## Introduction

About a thousand years ago the original settlement was probably established by an Anglo-Saxon family sailing up the Trent and disembarking at Swarkestone gravel terraces. Climbing to higher ground above flood levels, the invading family would have chosen a site with good visibility of the surrounding countryside and a supply of fresh water. It would have become known by taking the name of the original family of settlers.

The derivation of its place-name is given in Cameron's "Place Names of Derbyshire". Firstly the form of the earliest record, 1009, Ceolardesbeorg (beorg-hill). "It appears in the bounds of Weston upon Trent and is almost certainly Chellaston Hill."

Then came Ceolh(e)ard's tun (tun-farm) which by 1086, the time of the survey for Domesday, had become Celerdestune or Celardestune. Various forms of spellings are traced until it became fixed in the form we now know.

Chellaston History Group has taken as its emblem a standing angel holding a shield. For many years alabaster has been used when carving effigies for tombs, the earliest record of Chellaston carvers Thomas Prentys and Robert Sutton is in St Peter's Church, Lowick, Northamptonshire. The contract, written in medieval French, is displayed alongside the tomb of Ralph and Katherine Green and is dated February 4th 1419.

As the tomb is clearly dated, it can be used to identify other carvings of the Prentys and Sutton workshop.

Identification of Chellaston work is by comparison of the angel weepers around the base of the tomb chests.

In "A History of Chellaston", published by the Chellaston History Group, a survey is taken of various churches where examples of these carvings can be seen.

## The Walk

- 1 Our walk starts at the centre of the old village — the medieval church of St Peter. Facing the north door, we are looking at what is now the main entrance, through the oldest wall of the building.



Turn left and circumnavigate the church, noting

(i) The very large irregular stones. These are undoubtedly Saxon and may be part of an old chapel dating from the 1200's.

(ii) The simple pointed arches of the nave windows and the square topped windows of the chancel.

(iii) The two east windows — the only stained glass one, dated 1920, and the tall, beautifully proportioned one alongside, the only window of its size in the church.

(iv) The Garden of Remembrance at its foot, where cremated ashes are interred. The particulars of the deceased are entered in the Book of Remembrance in the church.

(v) The blocked south door, main entrance when the village lay to the south-east of the church.

(vi) The Victorian tower completed in 1842 now housing a two dialled striking clock and six bells.

Now pass through the Lych gate, the village memorial to the 1914/18 and 1939/45 wars. Among the casualties of the Great War is an army nurse who died from an illness contracted through war service.

We are now at the junction of the original three streets of the old village.



Facing, is School Lane, a dead end. Straight down the hill from east to west is the High Street, known variously as Village Street and on the Enclosure Map of 1804 as Town Street. To the right, where we are going, is Green Avenue, so named in the 1920's by the parish council, known for centuries as 'The Green'.

Notice in passing, the nailed-up door in the churchyard wall. This encloses a tap from an underground cistern, holding rainwater from the church roof. Before piped water came to Chellaston, there was a good supply of well-water, but it was too 'hard' to use for washing. Soap turned it into hard 'curds' and in a dry summer the church verger sold the rainwater for ½d. a bucket.

**2** On the corner is a pleasant little garden formed by the remaining two walls of the ancient pound or pinfold. Modern traffic necessitated the removal of the walls and the gate as it was a blind corner. The story of Nathan Bentley's ass is taken from William Forman's diary of that date.



The 'TOP SHOP' now a private dwelling.

The path we follow marks roughly the west and south boundaries of the village green. Notice the line of yew trees on your right, they are between the old and new churchyards. It was previously the site of a farmyard and a little village school.

Stop where the footpath turns left, opposite the footpath are three houses.

**3** The first one, in the 1920's, was Miss Carson's School, a Dame School of high reputation. Here, with much individual attention and hymn singing, she prepared her pupils for Derby Grammar Schools. In the second lived Miss Carson's landlady, Miss Nellie Harwood, a great character, eldest daughter of Dr Harwood of Shardlow, who was first medical officer of the Shardlow Workhouse. Between these two cottages and the third house were high wooden doors across the road, marking the end of the green. The land beyond was sold in the 1950's and developed to form the present Green Avenue.

We now walk up 'The Jitty' imagining it with the village pond on the left, with farmhouses and cottages surrounding it.

The first house on the right, now much extended and modernised is old. Behind the stucco on part of the wall is a section of 'Wattle and daub' with which the old frame buildings were infilled.

**4** Chellaston Cottage c1760 has plaster bedroom floors and walls of stone which include lumps of gypsum. It is also much modernised. These old homesteads were originally thatched with wheat-straw. The Jitty now joins Chapel Lane.

**5** No. 24 Chapel Lane is the old chapel built in 1816 and used until the chapel in the High Street was built in 1873. It has been recorded that 200 people were crammed into this building at its opening. The census of 1821 gives the population of Chellaston as 338 souls.



**6** Looking to the right, i.e. south, is Pit Close, the wooden building is the Scout and Guide headquarters. The land beyond was quarried for alabaster and gypsum and still bears the scars of the old workings.

This is now the site of the Brickworks Nature Reserve, which has many of its own walks.

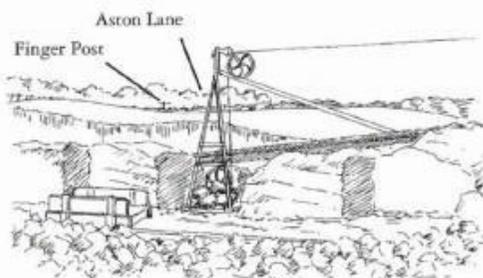
The site was sold to the parish council for £200 in 1920, by Sir Vaucey Harpur Crewe. It is to be 'used in perpetuity as a recreational area by the villagers'. Footpaths across Pit Close lead to the 'Tumbling Road' which gave access to the quarry from Aston Lane. The quarry was filled in by the council and has now been landscaped. All the old adits and mine shafts in this area have also been filled in.

Through Pit Close ran the old Bridle Path from Alvaston to Weston-upon-Trent, parts of which still exist.

7 From Back Lane/High Street corner to Aston Lane was the last site of commercial alabaster working in Chellaston-Leys quarry, which closed in 1919. During the period it was in operation, evidence of previous workings were discovered as recorded by Richard Forman.

'During our working we found two one gallon pots or jars, one broken and one sound, the latter being presented to Sir Vauncey Harpur Crewe. We also found a large sandstone, covered with grooves, made by the old workmen when sharpening their picks and tools, but I do not know what became of it.'

Efforts were made to date the pottery and it was possible to fix an approximate date from similar medieval Nottingham ware at circa 1272 to 1377. It is possible, therefore, that some of the earliest Chellaston alabaster came from the Leys site and trade with Nottingham may have been begun as early as the 13th century.



Leys quarry from Back Lane showing saw used to cut alabaster in situation.

## School Lane

8 The original Board School, opened in 1878, is on your left. It is now Chellaston Infants' School. Its centenary was marked by an exhibition of old log-books, records and photographs. The opening of the school one hundred years previously was highlighted by the roasting of an ox, the last time of such a happening here. The smaller red brick building was the Headmaster's House but has long since ceased to be a residence.

Note the stone garden walls, did some of the old stone come from the original Manor House of which no trace now remains?



We next come to an older red brick house, for many years the home of the Gresleys, Chellaston's family of artists. Here Frank Gresley brought up his family and was a familiar figure in the 1890's to 1914. Setting out almost daily, he walked to the villages around, chiefly Swarkestone and Ingleby, painting his water colour scenes now much in demand.

His son, Cuthbert, was a successful flower painter and worked at one time for Royal Crown Derby. The younger son, Harold, was the best known of the family. He was an Art Master at Repton School.

Some of their work is on view in the Derby Art Gallery.

Retracing your path, continue by Walker Buildings to the recreational area known as The Flatts, the traditional place for public festivities.

9 Turning past the Junior School, Maple Drive joins Derby Road at a point opposite Peartree Cottage c1799. At one time an ale house, its owner Samuel Rose was a Victualler, Blacksmith and Brick Maker. In 1822 Samuel Rose married Mary Ann Foveaux, daughter of Lieutenant General Foveaux, the Governor General of Sydney, Australia.



Pear Tree Cottage

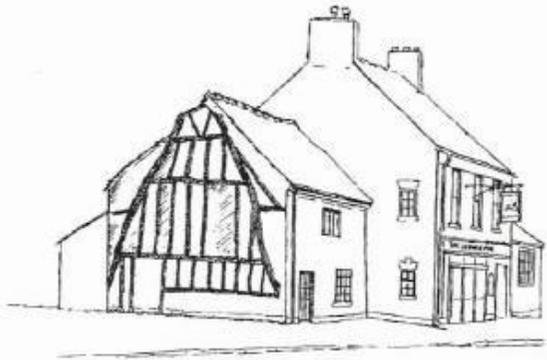
Samuel and Mary are both buried in Chellaston Churchyard.

The first Red Lion was built in 1829 and lasted 134 years. On the 25th of July 1963, it ceased trading, the present establishment commenced on the same date. The old building was later demolished.

Arriving at the modern centre of the village, you are at the junction of High Street, Station Road, Derby Road and Swarkestone Road.

Station Road is so named because it led to the railway station which was built in 1868. The station lay on the Derby-Melbourne-Ashby, Trent and Nottingham routes and provided work for the village for some years. It was closed to passenger traffic in 1930 and, inevitably, in 1966 the station and signal box were closed and have since been demolished.

**10** At the corner of Station Road is the Corner Pin (formerly the New Inn) erected in 1863. Attached to the Corner Pin is a Cruck Cottage which possibly dates from 1660-1688. The Cruck is built of two trees not a single split trunk and, in its construction, has mortice and tenon joints which can be taken as an indication of an earlier date.



The "Corner Pin"

Next to the Corner Pin was the Rose and Crown, which dated back to at least 1753, but was demolished in 2019.

To the rear of the supermarket car park is Chellaston Bowls Club Ltd., which was formed in 1905.

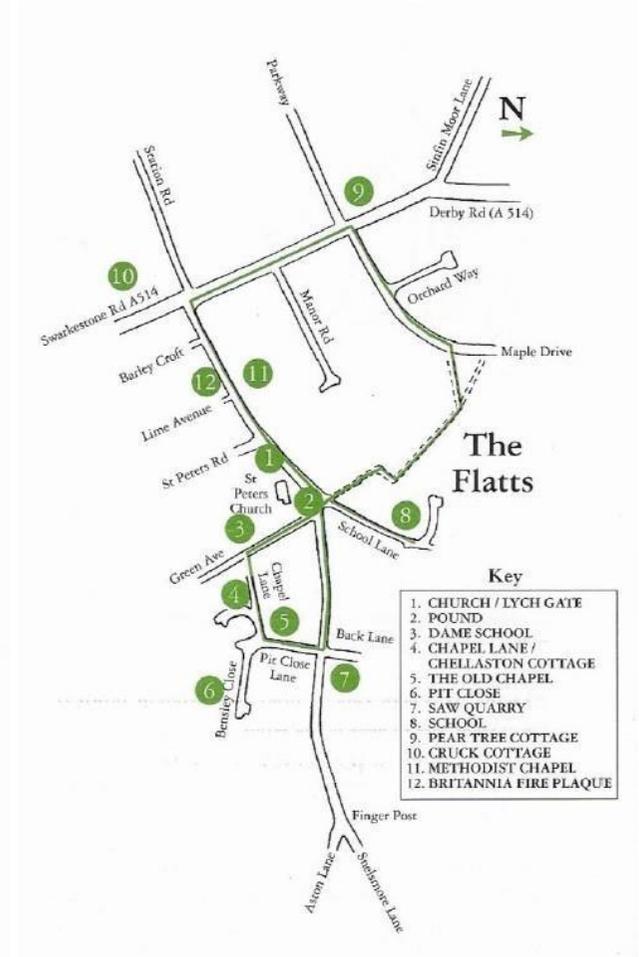
Beyond the The previous Derby Co-operative Society building, which stood on the corner of the High Street, was closed in 1974. It had the distinction of being the only Co-op store to be built during the 1914-18 war and was opened in 1915.

Continuing up the High Street towards the Church, we pass the shop which in earlier times housed the village telephone exchange. On the opposite side of the road is the Lawns Hotel, originally a house built by Ralph Forman. It was a bakery from 1936-52

**11** Next to "The Lawns" is the Methodist Chapel. Built in 1873 at a cost of £681.0.6, it contains the largest pieces of alabaster in the village. The circular font, pulpit and reredos are all of Chellaston Alabaster.



**12** On the corner of Lime Avenue stands a cottage with one of the original Britannia fire plaques. In its day, Lime Avenue was a busy commercial area of the village, known as Charlie's Yard. It boasted a bakery and a butcher's shop as well as an informal paraffin service. As you return to the Church, your Chellaston Walk is complete.



Map by Kath Marvill  
 Drawings by Barbara Elliott  
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