

# Fabian Summer Walk – Some Background Notes

## Alwalton – Some history

Traces of early man have been found.

In Roman times a building of some kind evidently existed at Alwalton, and various coins and pieces of pottery, etc., have been found.

[King Edred](#) granted the land at Alwalton in 955 to his [thegn Aelfsige Hunlafing](#).

It was afterwards given to the Abbey of Peterborough, which held Alwalton at the time of the Conquest.

Alwalton was listed in the Domesday Book [1086] as “Alwoltune”. It records that there were 20 households with a population between 70 and 100. In the 2011 census the population was 317.

Alwalton used to be in the administrative county of Huntingdonshire until 1965. Apparently locals are still fiercely loyal to the old county – or at least identify with it as a shire district, rather than Cambridgeshire.

## References

[Archive images – Alwalton](#)

[British History Online – Alwalton](#)

[British History Online – Parishes, Alwalton](#)

[Welcome to Peterborough – Alwalton](#)

[Wikipedia: Alwalton](#)

[Wikipedia: Huntingdonshire](#)

## Alwalton Marble

Alwalton marble is known to have been used from the 12th century until 1875\*\*.

It was used in the cathedrals at Lincoln, Peterborough, Bury St Edmunds and Ely, and in Southwell Minster, as well as many parish churches, such as Barnack.

The quarry site has been identified as the Alwalton Lynch escarpment on the banks of the River Nene (which provided a convenient way of transporting the stone).

(\*\* though one source indicated that quarrying continued into the 1920's)

## References

[Virtual Microscope – Limestone – Alwalton Marble](#)

[Alwalton Lynch Escarpment Marble Quarry](#)

[An Alwalton Marble Capital](#)

[Cambridgeshire Geological Society – Nene Valley](#)

[Historic England – Alwalton Limestone Quarries](#)

[Nene Living – Finding our Marble!](#)

[Virtual Microscope – Limestone – Alwalton Marble](#)

## **Alwalton Hall**

The red brick wing dates back to the 1780's.

It was originally called Alwalton House but when ownership passed onto the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam it was enlarged and renamed Alwalton Hall in 1851. Alwalton Hall became the home to a string of Hon. Wentworth-Fitzwilliams, notably the spendthrift eighth son of the 6th Earl Fitzwilliam.

In 1948 Alwalton Hall was acquired by [Frank Perkins](#) who created the Perkins Diesel Engine and founded Perkins Engines.

It is now a "[beauty and wellness sanctuary](#)".

## **References**

[The History of Alwalton Hall](#)

## **Village Hall**

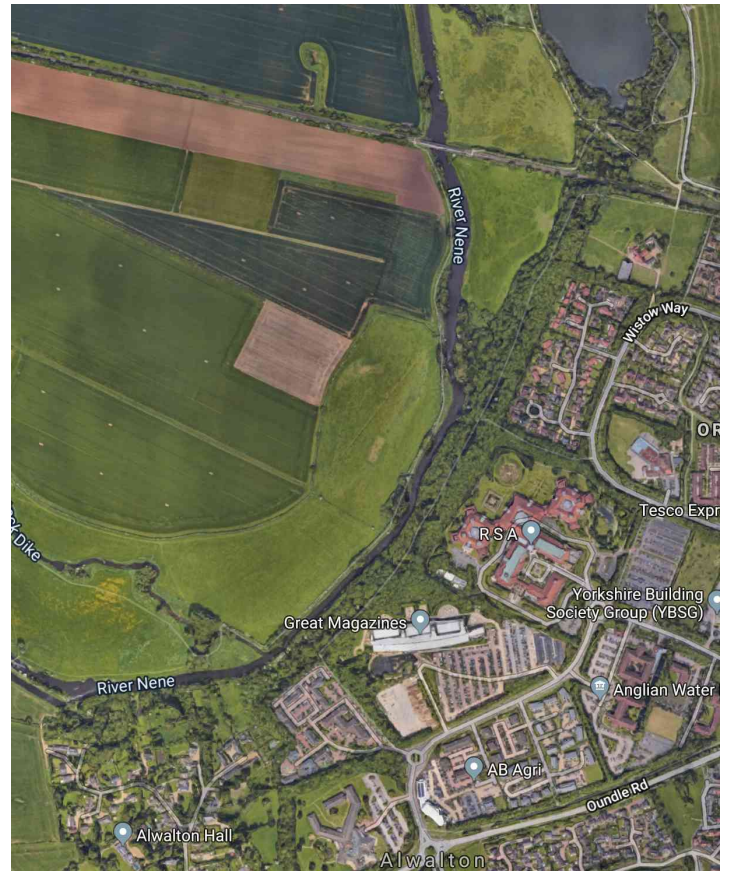
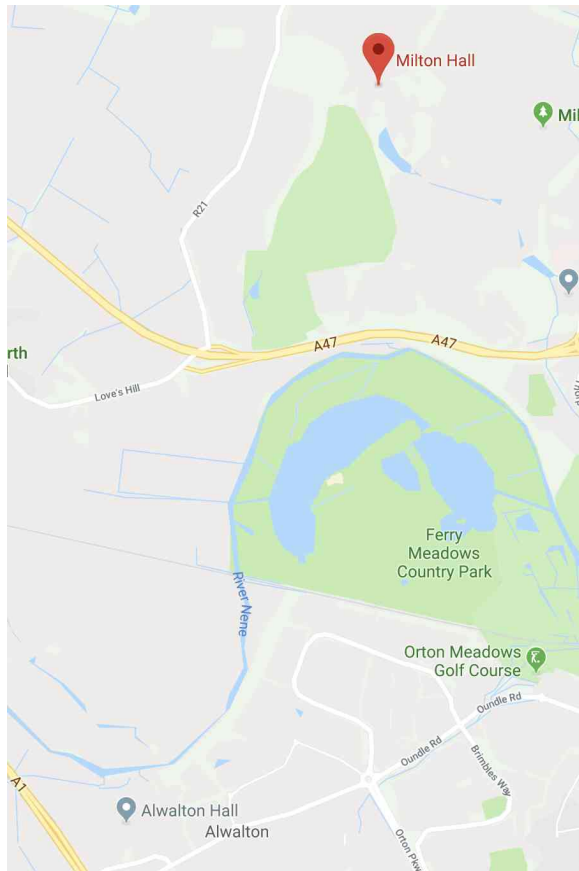
Originally a wooden building but replaced in the 1980's. Named after a donor.

## The Gate House

The Gate House (a grade II listed building) was built in around 1807 to stand at the entrance to the Lynch drive to Milton Park, which belonged to the Fitzwilliam family\*\*. The family used Alwalton Hall as a [dower house](#).

The drive followed the higher path through the Lynch and then across what is now Ferry Meadows and the larger boating lake to Milton Ferry Bridge (built in 1716).

The maps below give you an idea of the line that the drive would have followed between The Gate House and Milton Hall.



The main, taller part of the Lodge had already been in existence for nearly two centuries before that. In its original form, it was the porch of Chesterton, a Jacobean house in the neighbouring village built (according to Pevsner) in about 1625. In the mid-17th century Chesterton was the home of the Dryden family and was visited by John Dryden the poet, cousin and namesake of the then owner.

The families who lived in the Lodge would have had the duty of opening the gate to people coming and going from Milton Park.

People still paid a toll charge in the 1940's/1950's.

It was taken over by The Landmark Trust in 1983 who restored it to its original form and [now rent it out](#).

\*\* Jacob Rees-Mogg is married to Helena de Chair, daughter of Lady Tadgell (only child of the 8th Earl Fitzwilliam)

## References

[Archive image](#)

[Archive image – Milton Ferry](#)

[Lynch Lodge](#)

[Heritage & Culture – What's the story: Milton Hall](#)

[Lynch Lodge – History](#)

[The Landmark Trust – Lynch Lodge](#)

[Wikipedia: Milton Hall](#)

## The Lynch

The wood and river area between Alwalton and the railway bridge by Lynch Farm.

Popular in Victorian times but also in the early 20th century, up until the 1950's. People, children especially, used to bathe in the river. Busloads of people used to go there.

Near the gate there is a shallow area which originally extended across the river and was a ford which locals used to get across to Caster. There was a provision for fire engines from Castor to come across it.

## References

[Google Images – Alwalton Lynch](#)

[Lynch Wood Park](#)

[Woodland Trust – Lynch Wood](#)

## The Watermill

No longer exists but some evidence of it on the approach to the lock.

Was mentioned in the Domesday book (11th century) and three mills were reported in 1128. They produced flour but also used to process wool products and to convert animal bones into fertilizer.

The mill was bought by James Royce\*\*, father of Henry Royce, in 1858. The business failed in 1867 and James Royce died in poverty in 1872, aged 41.

After being auctioned off in 1867 it was no longer used as a mill. It appeared to be present in 1885 but was gone shortly afterwards and the feeder waterway transformed into a location for boathouses.

If you take the left turn after the church (Mill Lane) and walk towards the locks, you will pass the site of the mills.

\*\* though one source stated that James and Mary only leased the mill from Peterborough's Ecclesiastical Commissioners, rather than own it themselves

## References

[Archive image – The Watermill](#)

## The Manor House

The Manor House, Alwalton is a grade II listed building built around 1600 with some late 17th additions.

Had some use as a farm, though I believe there wasn't much land associated with it. It now has gardens which are sometimes open for the public.

If you walk to the left of The Gate House you can get a view of it. Also, you can see it as you walk along the path by the river.

## References

[YouTube of visit in 2015](#)

[Professional Gardener's Guild – The Manor House, Alwalton](#)

[YouTube: Alwalton Manor House Garden visit June 2015](#)

## St Andrews Church

The earliest parts of the building date back to 1170.

It was considerably extended in the early 13th century and a major alteration was made in the 15th century.

Extensive repairs were carried out in 1840 and restored again in the 1960's.

Henry Royce and Frank Perkins are buried there.

## References

[Archive image – 1912](#)

[Alwalton Church](#)

## Alwalton Rectory

Grade II listed building. Now a private residence.

## References

[Archive image – 1911](#)

[Archive image – 1925](#)

[Archive image – 1957](#)

## **Alwalton School**

Grade II listed building.

This was opened in 1846 but, through falling rolls, closed in 1981.

Now a private residence.

### **References**

[Archive image](#)

[2016 photo](#)

[Issuu – Seller brochure](#)

[The Old School & School House](#)

## **The Cuckoo**

18th or early 19th Century.

Was a farm with stables but then became the “Wheatsheaf Inn”.

It had this name for 98 years before Bass decided to change it to “The Cuckoo” in the 1990's, ignoring the protests of the locals (who still use the old name).

A life-time resident told me in disgust that “*the sign doesn't even show an English cuckoo*”.

### **References**

[Archive image – 1950's](#)

## **Alwalton Post Office**

Was a grocer's shop in the early 1900's.

The original post office was further down Church Street.

### **References**

[Achive image – 1901](#)

[Archive image – 1908](#)

## **The Blacksmith**

This was on the left as you turn into the village. It's still there and called “The Forge”.

## Lynch Farm

Appears to be a relatively modern building, incorporating a considerable quantity of late 16th- or early 17th-century material, some from the Dryden house in Chesterton.

The turret is a folly. It originally contained a working chimney but was sealed with a concrete cap during (it is thought) the 1950's.

It was an extensive farm with many buildings, many of which had fallen into disrepair.

The land was leased to the riding centre in 1978 by Peterborough Development Corporation (after it was acquired from the Fitzwilliam estate). The brief was to create a riding centre for the local population. The decline of the buildings has been halted and there is now attempt to expand the site.

Note:

It's not to be confused with the Lynch Farm archeological site at Coney Meadow, Ferry Meadows.

## References

[East Anglian Archaeology – Iron Age and Roman Settlement](#)

[Lynch Farm Riding Ltd](#)

[Peterborough Archaeology](#)

## Nene Valley Railway

In 1845, the London and Birmingham Railway (L&BR) company was given parliamentary assent to construct a line from Blisworth in Northamptonshire to Peterborough. Completed in 1847, it was Peterborough's first railway line.

The line was of little significance until the late 19th century, when the London & North Western Railway constructed a line via Nassington and King's Cliffe to Seaton, below Welland Viaduct. This turned Wansford, previously an unimportant village station, into a major junction.

During the first half of the 20th century the line formed an important connection from Norwich, Cambridge and eastern England to Northampton and the Midlands

The railway was one of the last passenger line closures of the Dr Beeching era, remaining open until 1972 for freight traffic only.

The Peterborough Branch of the East Anglian Locomotive Society was formed in 1969 and in 1971 it changed its name to 'Peterborough Railway Society' and the idea of the Nene Valley Railway was formally launched.

In 1974 the Peterborough Development Corporation bought a section of the Nene Valley line between Longville and Yarwell Junctions and leased it to the Peterborough Railway Society to operate the railway.

It's now one of the region's biggest tourist draws.

## References

[Disused Stations – Peterborough Nene Valley](#)

[Heritage & Culture – Steam along the Nene](#)

[Nene Valley Railway – About us](#)

[Wikipedia: Nene Valley Railway](#)

## **Ferry Meadows**

The view of Ferry Meadows from the railway bridge at Lynch Farm may in future be dominated by the climbing facility the park is proposing.

### **References**

[History and Heritage in Nene Park](#)

[Nene Park: Plans to build Olympic climbing centre in Peterborough](#)

[Peterborough Telegraph – History of Ferry Meadows](#)

[Welcome to Ferry Meadows](#)

## **Henry Royce**

[Henry Royce](#) (1863 – 1933), the co founder of [Rolls-Royce](#), was born in Alwalton and his ashes were buried in St Andrew's Church.

The youngest child of James and Mary Royce, he moved to London – aged 4 – but returned to Peterborough when he was 14 to take up an apprenticeship at the Great Northern Railway Works. He subsequently became an electrical engineer with a partner, forming F.H. Royce & Co in 1884.

The firm went into a decline and Henry became ill through overwork and stress. His doctor suggested that one of the new-fangled automobiles might be a welcome distraction and help prevent him from over-exerting himself.

The first Royce car appeared on April Fool's Day, 1904. It was a two-cylinder model with 1.8-litre 10hp engine and finished to an exceptionally high standard. He was put in touch with and met Charles Rolls (who ran a car agency) in May 1904 and who then agreed to sell Royce's car – with the proviso that they would be badged as Rolls-Royce.

The company followed in 1906.

### **References**

[Rolls–Royce: Born in Peterborough](#)

[Sir Henry Royce – A Biography](#)

## **Frank Perkins**

Frank Perkins was born in Peterborough in 1889.

He was a farmer and a soldier (rising to the rank of major) at first but then joined his father's engineering business.



He went on to develop the use of smaller diesel engines designed for road vehicles, rather than agricultural machinery, and in consequence created F Perkins Ltd in 1932, moving in to offices in Queen Street.

The company took a significant role in the country's war effort, producing a total of 1,485 engines during 1941.

Frank left the company he had founded in 1959 when it was taken over by Massey Ferguson.

He bought Alwalton Hall in 1948 where he died in 1967. He is buried in St Andrews Church

## **References**

[Perkins – The Frank Perkins Story](#)

[Wikipedia: Frank Perkins \(engineer\)](#)

## **Acknowledgements**

Grateful thanks to the residents of "The Forge", Alwalton who, during our informal chat, were able to supply first hand knowledge of the some of the details.

Peter Gregory

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