

VCH Nottinghamshire
On-line Texts in Progress
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VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY 

Nottinghamshire

SUTTON BONINGTON

Location and boundaries

The township of Sutton Bonington occupies 2,184 acres¹ about 11 miles south-west of Nottingham. It is bounded to the north-west by Kingston on Soar, to the north-east by West Leake and to the south-east by Normanton on Soar. To the west are Long Whatton (Leics.) and Kegworth (Leics.). The north-western boundary is mainly field hedges and a small part of Melton Lane. The north-eastern boundary is formed by the Kingston brook, which flows north through Kingston on Soar to the Soar. The eastern boundary is field hedges and a small stream which flows northwards to join the Kingston brook. The south-west boundary is along the Ashby de la Zouch (Leics.) to Melton Mowbray (Leics.) road via Rempstone. The river Soar forms the southern and western boundaries and is also the county boundary with Leicestershire. In the south is the hamlet of Zouch, most of which is in the parish of Sutton Bonington. The township (later civil parish) consists of two ancient parishes, originally Sutton and Bonington, which became Sutton Bonington St Anne and Sutton Bonington St Michael. They now form a united benefice. The civil parish is Sutton Bonington. No changes to either the civil or ecclesiastical boundaries other than the union of the two parishes appear to have taken place before 1974.²

Geology and geography

¹ *VCH Notts.*, ii. 314.

² Youngs, *Admin. Units*, ii. 369.

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To the south-west of Sutton Bonington, there is an area of alluvium with sand and gravel near the river Soar and there is a similar area near the Kingston brook on the north-east edge. Most of the rest of the parish is on sandstone and mudstone with gypsum. There is some clay to the north.³ The village lies in a small valley at about 110 feet above sea level. The ground rises to the north and north-east to about 140 ft. On the eastern side it rises to over 200 ft. In the south it is only 120 ft as it is in the river valley. On the river Soar, which flows along the western edge of Sutton Bonington, there are two cuts and in the south the Zouch cut, together with a millrace and stream. These were made when the river was opened to navigation in the 1770s. On the north-east of the parish is Kingston brook which flows from south-east to north-west to join the Soar at Kingston on Soar. Other small watercourses flow into the Soar. In the north there is an area of parkland at Sutton Fields. Further east is Domleo's Spinney and on the eastern edge is California Plantation. In the village there are small areas of parkland around St Anne's Manor and The Hall.

Population

In 1674 61 households in Sutton Bonington were assessed to the hearth tax and a further 17 were discharged by reason of poverty.⁴ In 1743 there were 72 families in St Michael's parish and about 20 in St Anne's.⁵ In 1801 the population of Sutton Bonington township was 790. This rose to a peak in 1841 of 1,307⁶ and by 1861 had fallen to 1,019 in 270 households.⁷ During the later 19th century the population continued to fall to 993 in 1891 and 956 in 1911, but after 1931 began to increase. In 1971 the population was 1,315 in 485 households and in 1991 there were 1,553 people in 621 households. In 2001 there were 1,765 people in Sutton Bonington.⁸

³ Geol. Survey map 1: 50,000, sheet 141.

⁴ *Hearth Tax*, 83.

⁵ *Visitation Returns*, 132-3.

⁶ *VCH Notts.*, ii. 314.

⁷ *White's Dir. Notts.* (1864), 553.

⁸ Census reports.

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Communications

Sutton Bonington lies just north of the Coleorton to Rempstone road which was turnpiked under an Act of 1781-2, as part of the Ashby de la Zouch to Loughborough turnpike road established in 1756-7. From this road, Park Lane runs northwards through the village to join Soar Lane to the west, leading to the river, and Landcroft Lane to the east joining Melton Lane from Kegworth towards West and East Leake. Park Lane continues northwards as Marlpit Hill and then College Road towards Kingston on Soar. Just before the main part of the village Hungry Lane runs to the east to join Trowell Lane which links the turnpike road and Melton Lane, on the east side of the parish. Small lanes within the village give access to properties.

In earlier times the river Soar could be forded at Zouch and Kegworth. Soar Lane and Pasture Lane may have led to these crossing places. An early 14th-century stone bridge was built at Zouch to give easier access to the mill there. This mill is mentioned in Domesday Book, when it was held by Hugh, earl of Chester. Over the years the payment for repair of the bridge was a source of dispute between the parish and the counties.⁹ By 1789 the bridge needed major repairs and it was decided to build a new three-arch bridge. This was built by John Cheshire of Over Whittacre (Warws.) using stone from the old bridge as well as new stone from Castle Donington (Leics.). It became part of the turnpike road and remained in use until 1930.¹⁰ With the increase of traffic from the 1920s a new bridge was needed and in 1930 the stone bridge was replaced by a more substantial structure.¹¹

The river Soar, which forms most of the western boundary of Sutton Bonington, flows into the Trent at Red Hill, near Ratcliffe on Soar, to the north of the village. In the late 18th century it was decided to make the river navigable to enable coal to be brought from the Erewash Valley coalfield

⁹ C. & D. Crawford, *Sutton Bonington, Widening Horizons, Roads, River & Railway* (1994), 7-9.

¹⁰ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 15.

¹¹ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 21-2.

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to Loughborough. With a few artificial cuts this could be achieved. The first scheme proposed proved to be too expensive, but in 1776 an Act was passed and work commenced. This coincided with the enclosure of St Anne's parish in 1775 and St Michael's in 1777. William Jessop was appointed to oversee the project.¹² A cut was made from near Zouch mill, which ran westwards to rejoin the river, with locks at either end. There were problems over the use of water as both the mills and the canal needed a plentiful supply. In 1800 the proprietors of the Loughborough Navigation bought Zouch mill to give them more control. Two more cuts were made on the river further north and a horse towing path was added.¹³ Although coal was the main cargo other goods were carried including night-soil from Nottingham which was spread on local fields. Gypsum was brought from the wharf at Kingston to be ground at the mill at Zouch before being sent on to a paper-making firm in Birmingham.¹⁴ The 1820s saw the most traffic on the Soar but as elsewhere this declined with the coming of the Midland Counties Railway in 1840. Since the Second World War the navigation has been used mainly by leisure craft.¹⁵

In 1836 the Midland Counties Railway was established to build lines to link Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. After negotiation with local landowners the route for the line through the parish was decided. It would run east of the main street in Sutton Bonington to avoid the demolition of several buildings, many of which were owned by the Paget family who supported the railway financially. However, this new route meant taking the line through a cutting north of the main village and providing bridges over four roads.¹⁶ Kegworth station, just north of the Sutton Bonington parish boundary, was the nearest passenger station when the line opened in 1840.¹⁷ As well as linking the three Midland county towns the line connected with services to Darlington, York, Manchester, Birmingham and London. By 1872 traffic had increased, the track was quadrupled and

¹² Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 27-9.

¹³ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 30-1.

¹⁴ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 36-7.

¹⁵ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 39-40.

¹⁶ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 41-2.

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bridges had to be widened. The farm bridge behind the hall was altered to span all four tracks with one arch.¹⁸

In 1874 a brickworks was opened near the railway and the turnpike road which was later owned by the Hathern Station Brick & Terra Cotta Company. A private siding was constructed and in 1868 Hathern station was opened just over the parish boundary in Normanton on Soar.¹⁹ Hathern station closed in 1960²⁰ and Kegworth station in 1968.²¹ The line remained in use at the time of writing as part of the main line from Sheffield to London. The nearest stations were at Loughborough and East Midlands Parkway.

Landscape and settlement

As Sutton and Bonington were originally two villages built along a single main street there is some duplication of buildings. There are two churches, which each had a rectory, and two manor houses. There were pinfolds, smithies and inns in each. As the villages grew the buildings on the main street gradually met. With the arrival of the Midland Counties Railway in 1840 there was even a station at either end of the village. The railway also confined building to the west of the line, with no new building to the east. This meant that in the 20th century when new building was needed it had to be further south along the main street. The northern edge of the village was taken over by the Midland Dairy Institute in 1895, later the University of Nottingham's School of Biosciences, to which in 2006 was added a new School of Veterinary Medicine and Science. Most of the hamlet of Zouch on the river Soar is within Sutton Bonington parish.

¹⁷ Butt, *Railway Stations*, 129.

¹⁸ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 51-2.

¹⁹ Crawford, *Roads, River & Railway*, 52-3.

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Evidence of early settlement at Sutton Bonington includes finds of a pebble macehead, near St Ann's manor, and a stone axehead, in the rectory garden, probably of the Neolithic or Bronze Age.²² In 2001 excavation at the former rectory, prior to development, recorded Roman and medieval features.²³ Several Roman coins had previously been found, including one of Commodus (AD 176-192).²⁴ When Hathern station brickworks was built in 1825 Roman coins and urns were found.²⁵ An Anglo-Saxon cremation cemetery was also recorded.²⁶

The place-name combines the names of the two original settlements which in 1086 were *Sudtone* and *Bunnington*. Sutton or south farm, sometimes with 'supra Soar' added, and Bonington, *Buna's* farm, were the early names but by the 14th century the combined name appears.²⁷

The villages grew up as ribbon developments along the main street. Recorded earthworks provide evidence for building plots, hollow ways, banks and terraced ground. There are also remains of ridge and furrow in the fields.²⁸ The excavations at the rectory garden revealed medieval features, including gullies and post holes.²⁹

A few buildings which date from the 17th century still exist in the village. Hobgoblins on Park Lane was built in this period but was probably a rebuilding of an earlier structure. The house was originally a grange of Repton priory (Derb.). After the Dissolution it was owned by several families before becoming part of Sir Thomas Parkyns's estate which was later sold to the Paget family.³⁰ It is

²⁰ Butt, *Railway Stations*, 115.

²¹ Butt, *Railway Stations*, 129.

²² SMR, L5194, L7933.

²³ 'Archaeology in Nottinghamshire', *TTS*, cvi (2002), 158-9.

²⁴ SMR, L24, L26.

²⁵ SMR, L5200; Pastscape Mon. No. 317440.

²⁶ SMR, M17.

²⁷ *PN Notts.*, 255-6.

²⁸ SMR, L7891-5, L7897-7902.

²⁹ *TTS*, cvi (2002), 159.

³⁰ C. & D. Crawford (eds), *Sutton Bonington: A Patchwork* (1999), 3-5.

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now two houses. Built of dressed coursed rubble with a slate roof, it has two storeys and four bays.

Over the right hand gable is a carved head.³¹

Tree-ring dating of timbers from 1 Soar Lane gave a date of 1651-2 which matched that of 1661 carved on a first-floor bressumer.³² It is a timber-framed house with red brick noggin in a herringbone pattern. It has a plain tile roof and a gable end of two storeys with a first floor jetty. The first-floor windows were altered when it was used as a framework knitter's workshop in the 19th century. Another framework knitter's workshop is at 80 Main Street.³³ A timber-framed house on Main Street, at the corner of Bucks Lane, also dating from the mid 17th century, is now a cottage and shop. The timber frame is filled with whitewashed red brick and has a front gable with a jettied first floor. It has two storeys and doorways on both Main Street and Bucks Lane.³⁴ On St Anne's Lane is a row of houses built in the early 16th century with alterations and additions in the 18th and 19th centuries.³⁵

Sutton Bonington Hall on Main Street dates from the early 18th century and has later alterations and additions. It was built for Beaumont Parkyns and then bought by the Paget family. It is built of red brick with ashlar dressings and quoins and is on a rubble plinth. It has a hipped slate roof. It has five bays with a central doorway over which is a 19th-century broken segmental pediment with a coat of arms. It has two storeys with attics which have dormers to the front. The interior has a fine staircase and panelling.³⁶

There are several houses of note on Main Street. The Hollies (No. 153) has the initials I L and the date 1704 picked out in blue bricks on the right gable against the red brick of the building.³⁷

³¹ EH List.

³² R. R. Laxton, C. D. Kilton & R. E. Howard, 'Nottinghamshire Houses dated by Dendrochronology', *TTS*, xcix (1995), 51.

³³ EH List.

³⁴ EH List.

³⁵ EH List.

³⁶ EH List; Pevsner, *Notts.*, 342.

³⁷ EH List; *Discovering Sutton Bonington (1982)*, 7.

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Near to it the White House (No. 145) was built in the late 18th century, although it is probably on the site of an earlier house.³⁸ Within the grounds is a two-storey square brick dovecote with a pyramidal slate roof.³⁹ Many of the other houses are red brick two-storey buildings of the late 18th or early 19th century.⁴⁰

St Anne's Manor is one of the few buildings to the east of the railway. Built in 1849 as The Cliffs, by 1864 it had acquired its modern name.⁴¹ The house was partly destroyed by fire in 1908 but was rebuilt.⁴² Near Kegworth station is Sutton Fields House, built c.1875 in the Gothic style. In the late 20th century it was divided into two properties.⁴³

Within the main village area are some smaller cottages and some newer small houses built on the site of older cottages. The first council houses were built on Pasture Lane in 1930. They were modernised in 1980. A whitebeam tree was planted in front of them in 1935 to mark King George V's Silver Jubilee.⁴⁴ At the southern end of the old village is Swan Court where in 1978 a small group of bungalows was built to provide sheltered accommodation in the village.⁴⁵ Where Main Street becomes Park Lane, at the south end of the village, a new residential area was developed in the 1960s and 1970s.

In addition to housing the village retains a variety of other buildings. At the time of writing there were still some shops and a post office. Of the five inns listed in 1832 the King's Arms and the Anchor were still open. The Boot was in existence in 1782 but ceased to be an inn in 1922. The Star, near the border with West Leake, is usually associated with that village rather than Sutton Bonington. It was also known as Pit House because it was used by miners from the gypsum 'pits'.

³⁸ EH List; *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 7.

³⁹ A. E. Woolrich, *Notes on Nottinghamshire Dovecotes* (2010), 82.

⁴⁰ EH List.

⁴¹ *White's Dir. Notts.* (1864), 553

⁴² *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 15.

⁴³ Sale details Sept. 2012.

⁴⁴ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 13.

⁴⁵ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 16.

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The fifth was the Bull's Head at Zouch later the Rose and Crown. There was also the Old Plough which brewed its own beer.⁴⁶

In 1719 an endowed school for boys was built on Buck's Lane and in 1844 a National school was opened next to St Michael's church. In 1886 the endowed school took only infants, remaining open until 1965. In 1908 a council school was built on Park Lane. In the 1960s this building was enlarged to accommodate all the primary children from the village, as well as those from Kingston on Soar, West Leake and Ratcliffe on Soar. In 1957 the older children transferred to the East Leake secondary modern school.⁴⁷

In 1883 the Union Jack Temperance Hall and Coffee House was opened at the corner of Bollard's Lane. The money for the building was raised by public subscription, led by Admiral Sir William King-Hall, then owner of St Anne's manor. There was a coffee room where newspapers and magazines were available and a games room at the back. In 1955 it was sold by the parish council and the money raised was used for improvements to the village hall.⁴⁸ The hall, on St Anne's Lane, was built in 1914 and donated by the Paget family. The main hall was extended in 1954 and in 1971 a new entrance, cloakrooms, library, committee room and kitchen were built on.⁴⁹

During the First World War the Midland Dairy Institute was used as a prisoner of war camp for German officers. It was from there that there was an escape by 22 officers who had dug a tunnel from one of the huts. All but one were recaptured.⁵⁰ During the Second World War Sutton Bonington was used for various military purposes. There were armament depots, a firing range, air raid shelters and a Home Guard headquarters.⁵¹

⁴⁶ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 9, 3, 16.

⁴⁷ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 9, 12, 18.

⁴⁸ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 15.

⁵⁰ *Discovering Sutton Bonington*, 4.

⁵¹ SMR, M6004-14.

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Until the late 18th century the farmhouses of the parish stood on the main street. After the enclosure of St Anne's parish in 1775 and St Michael's in 1777⁵² some outlying farms were established. California farm, off Trowell Lane, Frog Hole and Lodge farms (which are now part of the University estate), Cold Harbour farm on the turnpike road, Rectory farm on Landcroft Lane and Black Pool farm where Sutton Fields now is, near Kegworth station, were all developed in the late 18th century or afterwards.⁵³ During the 19th century there were between ten and sixteen farmers recorded.⁵⁴ In 1988 ten farms were recorded as still working. This included the two on the University campus and one at Zouch. Eighteen farms, of which thirteen were along Main Street, were recorded as no longer in business.⁵⁵

The clay soil of the area was particularly suitable for brick making. In 1874 the Hathern Station Brick Co., later the Hathern Station Brick & Terracotta Co., was established next to Hathern station.⁵⁶

⁵² Tate, *Enclosures*, 50-1, 58-9.

⁵³ *Work and Leisure: Remembering Sutton Bonington: 2* (1988), 18.

⁵⁴ Dirs. *Passim*.

⁵⁵ *Work and Leisure*, back cover.

⁵⁶ *Work and Leisure*, 33.