

VCH Nottinghamshire

On-line Texts in Progress

This version: December 2012

Author: Sheila Leeds

VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Nottinghamshire

WEST LEAKE

Location and boundaries

The ancient parish of West Leake occupies 1,608 acres¹ about 10 miles south-west of Nottingham. It is bounded to the north by Gotham, to the east by East Leake, to the south by Normanton on Soar, to the south-west by Sutton Bonington and to the west by Kingston on Soar. The northern boundary consists of field hedges and the edge of Crownend Wood and Leake New Wood. The eastern boundary is mainly field hedges with a small part of the Kingston brook near the centre. The south-western boundary is formed partly by a section of Brickyard Lane and partly by a small stream which joins Kingston brook, which in turn flows westward towards the Soar. The north-western boundary runs along field hedges and through the western edge of Crownend Wood. No boundary changes to either the civil or ecclesiastical parish are recorded.²

Geology and geography

The portion of West Leake along the Kingston brook is alluvium with sand and gravel. To the north east and west of the village are areas of gypsum, with clay and limestone in the eastern part.³ The village lies about 150 feet above sea level. The land rises to over 300 ft to the north-east and 200 ft to the west at Moulter Hill. In the north the West Leake Hills are 200 to 300 ft. To the east Fox Hill reaches 290 ft. The Kingston brook flows from east to west through the parish, just south of the

¹ *VCH Notts.*, ii. 314.

² Youngs, *Admin. Units.* 362.

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

VCH Nottinghamshire: Texts in Progress: West Leake

village. It is joined by other small streams from the north. It flows on to Kingston on Soar where it joins the river Soar. There is a large area of woodland, Crownend Wood and Leake New Wood, to the north of West Leake. In the north-east there are smaller areas of woodland at Oak Wood, Ash Spinney, Crow Wood, Fir Dale Plantation and Foxhill Wood. On the west side near Moulter Hill is Scotland Plantation.

Population

In 1674 20 households in West Leake were assessed to the hearth tax and a further two were discharged by reason of poverty.⁴ In 1743 there were 28 families in the parish.⁵ In 1801 the population was 171 and rose slightly to 208 in 1841.⁶ By 1861 it had fallen to 171 in 37 households.⁷ It continued to fall to reach 112 in 1901. In 1971 there were 110 people in 40 households and in 2001 there were 128 people in West Leake.⁸

Communications

The main road into West Leake from East Leake turns north to cross the Kingston brook and then west along the main street. Just past the church is another sharp bend to the south along Pithouse Lane, which also crosses the Kingston brook before joining Brickyard Lane which forms part of the southern parish boundary. This joins another lane from East Leake which in turn joins the road from Rempstone to the Derby- Leicester trunk road. At the end of the main street is Dark Lane, which runs north-west towards Kingston on Soar and eventually joins the Kingston to Gotham road. Wossock Lane is a small lane off this which leads only to the West Leake Hills. The outlying farms are reached by minor lanes and tracks.

⁴ *Hearth Tax*, 84-5.

⁵ *Visitation Returns*, 85-6.

⁶ *VCH Notts.*, ii. 314.

⁷ *White's Dir. Notts.* (1864), 550.

⁸ Census reports.

VCH Nottinghamshire: Texts in Progress: West Leake

The nearest railway stations were at East Leake on the Great Central line, which opened in 1899 and closed in 1969,⁹ and Kegworth (Leics.), on the border of Sutton Bonington, on the Midland Railway, which opened in 1840 and closed in 1968.¹⁰

Landscape and settlement

West Leake is named from the Old Norse *leche* for a brook, referring to Kingston brook, which flows near the settlements of both East and West Leake. It was sometimes called Little Leake in contrast to Great or East Leake. Moulter Hill on the west side of the parish may have been a meeting place of the moot.¹¹

Although no evidence of Roman occupation has been recorded, two Roman trackways, on possibly older ridgeways, have been noted. The Portway went north of West Leake from the area near Redhill, where the Soar and Trent meet, to the Fosse Way. The Streetway ran from the west of the village south towards Rempstone.¹²

The village grew up along the main road from East Leake, after it had crossed the Kingston brook, which runs parallel and south of the road now known as Main Street. On the south side of Main Street is St Helena's church, with the former rectory on its west side. There is evidence of medieval settlement in several other parts of the parish. South of the church is the site of a homestead moat, next to the Kingston brook.¹³ To the east of the moat there were fishponds. Other earthworks represent banks, building platforms and ridge and furrow in the fields.¹⁴

⁹ Butt, *Railway Stations*, 88.

¹⁰ Butt, *Railway Stations*, 129.

¹¹ *PN Notts.*, 252-4.

¹² R. O. Wood, *Two Millennia of Village Life* (1999), 1-2; M. Patterson, *Roman Nottinghamshire* (2011), 176.

¹³ *VCH Notts.*, i. 311.

¹⁴ SMR, L301-3, L 8981-2, L8985-6, L 9003, L273.

VCH Nottinghamshire: Texts in Progress: West Leake

West Leake House on the east side of the church was formerly a farm. Other farms along the village street were Town End farm, School Side farm and Village farm. In addition there were smaller crofts, usually named for the tenant families who lived there, Place's croft and Platt's croft. There were also outlying farms. On the west side Scotland farm, to the east Foxhills farm, to the north White Hills farm and Leake Hills farm and to the south Manor farm.¹⁵ Only the latter was still a working farm at the time of writing.¹⁶

Other buildings along Main Street are a mixture of older cottages and some later properties. Opposite the church are 20th-century houses built on former farmland. At both Town End farm and Village farm outbuildings were converted into domestic properties in the early 21st century. The buildings in the village are all of brick with tile roofs. Part of West Leake House and one of the houses opposite to it also have some tile-hung decoration on the upper storey.

In 1850 a school was built on the north side of Main Street.¹⁷ After the school closed the building was given to the village by Lord Belper, then lord of the manor, to be used as the village hall, as it remained at the time of writing.¹⁸

In 1884 a pinfold on the north side of Main Street and a smithy on the south side were recorded.¹⁹ There appeared to be no trace of either at the time of writing.

The first village post office opened in 1891 on the corner of Dark Lane. When the first postmistress resigned the following year it was closed. It reopened in 1896 in a thatched building next to the school. It closed in 1977 and an upper storey was added to the building which now has a tiled roof.²⁰

¹⁵ H. Meadowcroft (ed.), *The Manor of West Leake 1750-1900* (1999), 19-55.

¹⁶ D. E. Clark, *West Leake Past and Present Part Two* (2010)

¹⁷ *White's Dir. Notts.*, 410.

¹⁸ D. E. Clark, *West Leake Past and Present* (2000)

¹⁹ OS map, 1:10,560, Notts. (1884).

²⁰ D. Humphreys, 'History of the Post Office in West Leake', *Leake Historian No. 11* (2009), 37;

VCH DRAFT