Other Attractions
The National Heritage Motor Museum at Gaydon, Battle site at Edge Hill and National Trust properties of Upton House, Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall. The Museum of By-gones at Claydon, The Museum of Southam currently at Beech Loft, Chesterton Windmill (Old Lady of Warwickshire), the Dassett Hills and Castles at Warwick and Kenilworth.

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It becomes obvious that the footpaths around Southam were very important to people living in surrounding hamlets, farms and settlements and these paths were eventually acknowledged as ‘Rights of Way’ which is why we can still enjoy the paths today.

Southam appeared as Suham in the Domesday Book. In 1227 it was granted a Charter for a weekly market at which local produce and farm animals were sold. In 1257 it was granted another Charter for an annual fair which became a hiring fair or ‘mop’ which still takes place every year.

Southam developed on ground rising from the Stowe valley. Both fishing and watering holes for animals would have been available in the Rivers Stowe and Itchen, which flow together in the field known as Mill Pits. It was recognised that natural spring water at the Holy Well provided beneficial relief for certain eye problems and later the waters were used at an Eye and Ear Infirmary which was built by Mr Henry Lilley Smith on Warwick Road.

It is recorded that the Holy Well was a holy spring of spirits which was used to cure fever and took its name from the Sacred Spring which was taken to holy wells in the Forest of Dean and the New Forest. This holy spring is located on the outskirts of the town and is served by the bus service.

Although the Holy Well has been the subject of many stories and legends, it has been regarded as a place of pilgrimage and it is said that many people have been cured by its waters.

Southam has a long history of providing a welcome shopping place for visitors and is still an important centre of arts and unusual events.

Welcome

Holy Well History

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Holy Well History

Whilst, particularly in good weather, the walk from Southam to the Holy Well and on around the circular trail is very pleasant, it did not start out as just a pleasant walk….

The paths that are followed originated long ago when people needed to travel from one area of the countryside to another. Not many would have the luxury of owning any form of transport - not even with four legs.

First records in 998 identify that Southam and its Halliwell (now the Holy Well) were granted to Earl Leofwyne (father in law of Lady Godiva) by King Ethelred. But we have reason to believe, from certain historic finds both within and outside the area of the circular walk, that there were Anglo-Saxon and possibly Roman settlements even earlier than this.

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The Holy Well has been in existence for over one thousand years. This walk takes you around the Holy Well and along the paths of ancient history. Just follow the red route on the map opposite; you will find the Southam Heritage Trail red markers placed on key posts to help you along the way.

Duration - 1 hr
The circular walk takes about one hour. Please wear sturdy boots in inclement weather.

Distance - ????
The red route distance is around ????.

Car Park - Wood St
Free parking.

OS Map - Explorer Map 222
Discover Southam on the Rugby OS map.

Refreshments - Market Hill
Food & drink can be found in the main streets.

For more information on Southam's interesting history, please refer to Southam’s Town Trail leaflet.

### Holy Well Walk

1. **Stoneythorpe Hall**
   - The Holy Well will have stood on this site until the early 14th century. Recently the house has been subject to conservation work.

2. **The Holy Well**
   - A Grade 2 listed building which was first recorded as part of the Manor of Southam in 998. The natural spring water provided treatment for certain eye problems.

3. **Polo Grounds**
   - The home of the Royal Leamington Spa Polo Club where matches take place throughout the summer.

4. **Avenue of Limes (8)**
   - From the bottom of Woodbine Hill on the Leamington Rd towards Stoneythorpe Hall, is an avenue of lime trees. This avenue was never laid waste in 1410 possibly on an island in the middle of the river about 200 metres north of Thorpe Bridge. This area was quarried for local limestone long ago. There are also signs of ancient ridge and furrow cultivation in the vicinity.

5. **Weir and site of old water mill (5)**
   - The weir was built to make a mill pond to supply power to Stoneythorpe Mill. The mill ruins were finally demolished in the 1960’s. A mill may have been on this site since Domesday Book Recording. The last mill was built in the 18th C. on older foundations. It was still used to supply electricity to the Hall in the 1920’s. Parts of the mill race walls can be seen where the water flows out of the pond.

6. **The Old Barn**
   - Of medieval origin and built of Blue Lias stone this building, which might have been a chapel, is the second oldest building in Southam after St James’ Church.

7. **Mill Pits and Quarried Area (7)**
   - The Domesday Book mentions two mills in this area - one at the weir and the other which was laid waste in 1410 possibly on an island in the middle of the river.

8. **Stoneythorpe Hall (4)**
   - From the fields near the weir are views of the Hall (currently unoccupied). The house was rebuilt, on medieval foundations, in 1623 and modernised in the 19th C. In its heyday there were extensive gardens with many trees. Tradition says Augustinian Black Canons lived there until the early 14th C. The property belonged to the Chamberlayne family from 1671-1997 when it was bought by Dr. Dallas Burston who is converting this part of the estate into polo grounds.

### Monks Ailments & Traditions

5. **Weir and site of old water mill (5)**
   - Tradition once a corpse has been carried along a path or road it makes a public right of way for 100 years. The path from the Hall to the Holy Well should traditionally be a public path until 2006 - the path beyond that is a permanent right of way under the Enclosure Act 1761.

6. **The Dallas Burston Polo Grounds (6)**
   - Transformation from farmland to polo ground began in 1998. It is the home of the RLS (Royal Leamington Spa) Polo Club.

   Under this field (6a) towards the north end of the footpath is the site of a medieval deserted settlement. Earthworks suggest it contained 10 crofts with probably stone pits or fish ponds.

### Disability Access (1 - 2)
Disability access is only available as far as the Holy Well between points 1 & 2. Approx. 10 min to Well.

### The Holy Well (2)
A Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade 2 Listed Building. It is reputed to have been used by monks at Stoneythorpe - hence the Holy Well.

In 1761 the Holy Well was specifically excluded from the Enclosure Act with the proviso that it should be fenced with oak posts and rails and free access to the Well was to be provided for all Southam inhabitants.

The current stonework was probably built late 18th / early 19th C. with further repairs around 1926.

Following improvements in the water supply in 2004, sympathetic restoration was carried out in 2005/6 supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This water is exceptionally cold and comes from below the quarry area on the Coventry Road. The water was reputed to be very efficacious for many eye ailments.

### Ancient Custom (3)
When the Squire William Tankerville Chamberlayne died at the Hall in 1906, his coffin was carried along the footpath to St James Church. According to ancient Warwickshire
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**KEY POINTS**

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   Of medieval origin and built of Blue Lias stone this building, which might have been a chapel, is the second oldest building in Southam after St James’ Church.

8. **Stoneythorpe Hall (4)**

9. **Site of old mill**

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**THE HOLY WELL AND TRADITIONS**

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Stoneythorpe Hall

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Avenue of Limes (8)

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Old ‘Barn’ (9)

Of medieval origin built of local Lias stone this building, which might have been a chapel, is the second oldest building in Southam after St James’ Church.

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**Flora & Fauna**

‘There is an abundance of wildlife here; trees and shrubs, flowers and grasses as well as birds, small mammals plus fish in the rivers.”

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**KEY**

Church / Chapel
Car Parking
Disability Access
Public Toilets
Recreation Ground
Field Boundaries
Roads
Holy Well walk
River
Footpath
Other Attractions

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