

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank the Rolleston Civic Trust, which does so much to protect and care for our environment, for the opportunity to produce this small guide to our village. It is not intended to be a history book, of which there are plenty, but perhaps hopefully to give an insight into how Rolleston has evolved and to illustrate a little about the lives of those who came before us.

The proceeds from the sales of this guide will go to the Rolleston Civic Trust.

D. W. Coxon

Second Edition

We are grateful to Don Coxon for allowing us to produce a second edition of his booklet, which has proved so popular with both residents and visitors to the village.

As in most villages close to major conurbations, there are pressures to expand and develop, but little has changed in relation to the contents of this booklet. The Parish Council and the Civic Trust seek to retain and maintain the Conservation Area and historic core of Rolleston on Dove, which makes it the attractive place within which we live.

Volunteers from village organisations have produced a "Village Design Statement" which describes the special character of the place and sets out design objectives to ensure that repairs and developments are in harmony with the local environment. This Statement has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance by East Staffordshire Borough Council and its implementation should help to preserve the history that you see on your 'stroll' well into the new millennium.

Rolleston Civic Trust June 2000

**STROLLING THROUGH
THE HISTORY
OF
ROLLESTON-ON-DOVE
with
Don Coxon**



STROLLING THROUGH THE HISTORY OF ROLLESTON-ON-DOVE

FOREWORD

The village name has evolved from a 7th century Anglo-Saxon named HROTHWULF who had a settlement or Tun on the banks of the Alderbrook, a tributary of the river Dove. The Rollestons were the freehold Lords of the Manor from the early history of the village until Sir Edward Mosley, first Baronet and Attorney to the Duchy of Lancaster, purchased the rights in 1614. The main influence of the rural life of the villagers for the next three hundred years was the Mosley family upon whom the villagers were very much dependent for their living and a stroll around the village will show not only evidence of this but will also cover footpaths, roads and bridleways, many of which have been in use for a thousand years.

The "on Dove" appendage has only been added in recent years. The original Rolleston-on-Dove was the collection of houses which grew around the railway station a mile or so from the village of Rolleston. The station and the track running from Burton to Tutbury have now gone—a legacy of the 1960s when it was decided that such small branch lines must be closed and the money invested in more lucrative services. Where the track ran through a deep cutting to Stretton there is now the "Jinny Trail", a nature walk for the benefit of all and so-called after the locally well-known "Tutbury Jinny" – the train which served the community for a century carrying milk churns, brewery workers, boys and girls to schools in Burton, mothers with prams and parcels and packages.

We must care for our heritage. Once lost, like the railway, it is gone forever and we have a responsibility to future generations to protect our inheritance.

WALKING AROUND ROLLESTON

All good walks should start and finish at the village pub and there is no prettier aspect than that from the Spread Eagle, standing as it does on the banks of the Alderbrook and being the hub of the roads and lanes which are developments of the old ploughroads and footpaths from the village to the pastures, common fields and the Needwood Forest.

Before starting our walk we will stand for a few minutes opposite the Spread Eagle and look around at a scene which has changed little for several hundred years.

Although the village sign above the waterfall was only inaugurated in 1995, to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of Rolleston Civic Trust, it incorporates reminders of the Rolleston scene and some of the people and families who have influenced the village. It shows part of the Mosley Coat of Arms, a bishop's mitre (to signify Robert Sherborne), the Rolleston family crest and John Bull, the nickname of a former Sir Oswald Mosley at the end of the 19th century.

The grass triangle at our side displays an anvil which commemorates the death of the last village blacksmith who was born in 1904. This triangle was also the probable site of the village cross and the stocks.

We are now looking at the front of the Spread Eagle and it is thought that an ale-house may have existed on this site for 1000 years. There is a record that in 1583 the inn-keeper was prosecuted at the local court, probably for selling ale without a licence. Because of its proximity to the Church, it may well be that in its history part of the site has been either the Church House or the house of a village landowner. It is known that at one time the Courts were held in a room which is now part of the pub.

The right hand side of the building incorporates several old terraced cottages and the original schoolroom, to which we will return later. At one time the pub was called "The Eagle and Child" which is part of the crest of the Stanleys taken from the period when Henry VII was the Lord of the Manor of Rolleston. The name was changed to the "Mosley Arms" in the 1840s and then to the "Spread Eagle" in 1851. The eagle with wings outspread is on the crest of the Mosley family.

It is known that the famous Dove angler, Isaac Walton, whose grandfather lived at nearby Yoxall, used the "Spread" as it is called locally and Sir Oswald Mosley, father of the British fascist of that name, served free ale from behind the bar on feast days and holidays.

The bridge over the brook by which we stand was first built in 1539 replacing a ford and the present structure also bears the crest of the Mosley family.

It is time we commenced our walk, so let us cross the bridge but pause again. The road to the left is Station Road and relatively new; prior to it being built people had to pass down Brookside and through the fords to reach Meadow Lane and the common lands between Rolleston and Stretton.

Opposite where we stand is the black and white Post Office which has been used for many purposes over the years, including a cheesery and buttery, a bakery and a village store and includes an upstairs room which was, amongst other things, a flour store.

Adjacent to the Post Office is the cottage which was the original Rolleston Post Office until this century, past which is the yard which was the site of the blacksmith's shop and forge. He died in 1984.

The majestic weeping willows which line the brook are not as old as they may appear. It is understood that in 1953

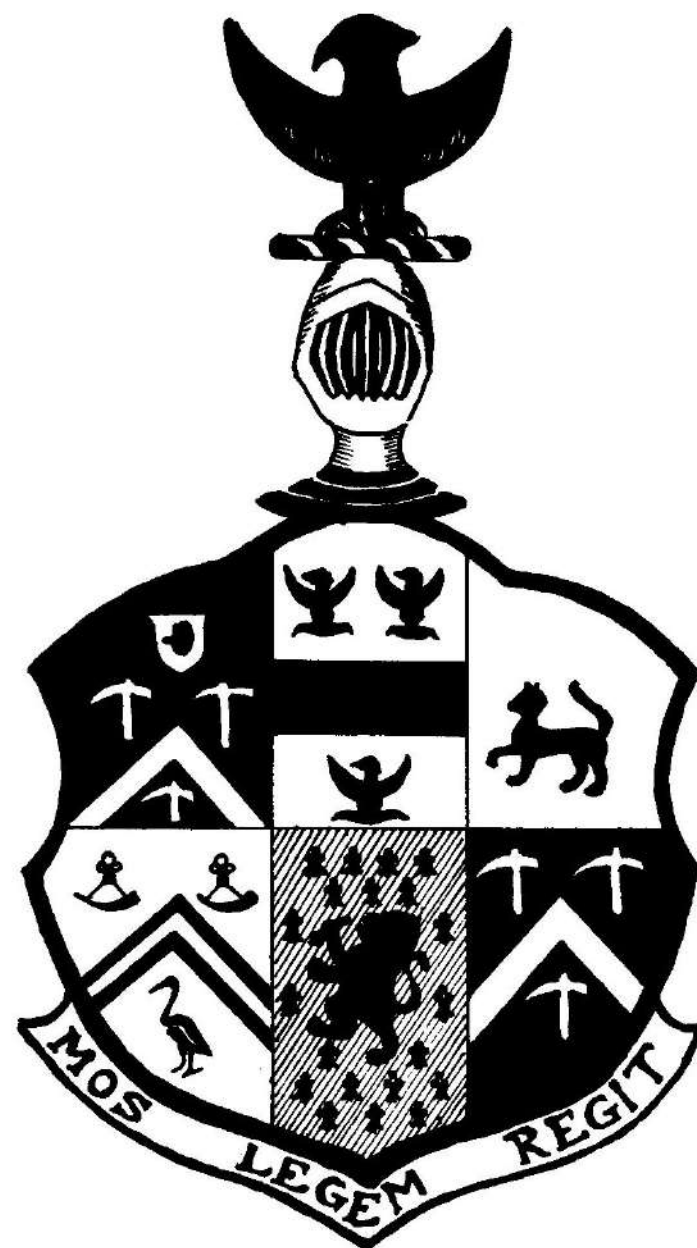
Rollestonians had money left over from the end-of-war celebrations and it was decided to improve the appearance of the brook to commemorate the coronation of Elizabeth II. I was temporarily working for a nearby landscape gardener at that time and my first job was to help in their planting. I can remember admiring the results of our efforts from the bar of the "Spread"!

We now leave the bridge and turn right following the brook. Immediately across the road is the Commemoration Hall, built to celebrate sixty years on the throne by Queen Victoria in 1897. The local gentry had collected £180 for this purpose and the Burton Chronicle reported that "Sir Oswald Mosley with his accustomed kindness, offered a site and doubled the money collected". For the opening, the village police sergeant marched with the fire brigade and twenty boys dragging a canon and forming a guard of honour for the laying of the corner stone by Sir Oswald the 4th Baronet.

It is interesting to note that he said he wished the hall to be free from class, political and religious controversy, but he barred socialism, anarchism and gambling. His grandson went on to become a socialist M.P. and later the leader of the British Fascists!

In 1973 the Club Committee decided to extend the Club but nothing could be done until the freehold was acquired. Sir Oswald (the sixth baronet of fascist repute) who was living in Paris was approached and the committee were reportedly "staggered at his generosity" when he agreed to sell the freehold for £1100.

Inside the club is a unique coat-of-arms of the Mosley family. Only two were ever made and this is the sole survivor. It incorporates four families, the predominant being the Mosleys who had made considerable money from the iron industry-thus the hammers on either side of the shield. One



branch of the family purchased plantations in Ulster - thus the red hand of Ulster on the shield. The Rolleston family is depicted by the black leopard and Lord North of Nottinghamshire by the crane. The rampant lion is from the Duchy of Lancaster. The symbol of the spread eagle indicates a claim to have been on the crusades to Russia. The helmet above the shield confirms the rank of Knight Baronet, above which is the eagle crest. The red rose of Lancaster is in the decoration surrounding the shield.

An explanation is needed as to why Sir Oswald was living in Paris and not in Rolleston of which he had seen little since his childhood. After an education at Winchester and Sandhurst, he sat as Conservative M.P. for Harrow following the first world war. In 1922 he became an independent for two years and then joined the Labour Party until 1930. He was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in the Labour government in 1929-30. However, he was convinced that none of the existing political parties were capable of dealing with the worsening economic crisis and he seceded to form a new party - the British Union of Fascists. He failed to win a single seat in the 1931 election and during the following years up to the second world war the activities of the fascists occasioned violent mob riots. After the outbreak of the war, he and some close colleagues were arrested under the Defence Regulations and interned. In 1948 he founded a new Union movement which again failed to obtain a seat after which he gave up political activities and went to reside abroad.

Behind the club is a very fine building (now divided) which was built in 1707.

Opposite the club and at the back of the Spread Eagle were a large and small croft. Oxen were kept here for the night for safety and watered in the brook for which a charge would have been made in medieval days.

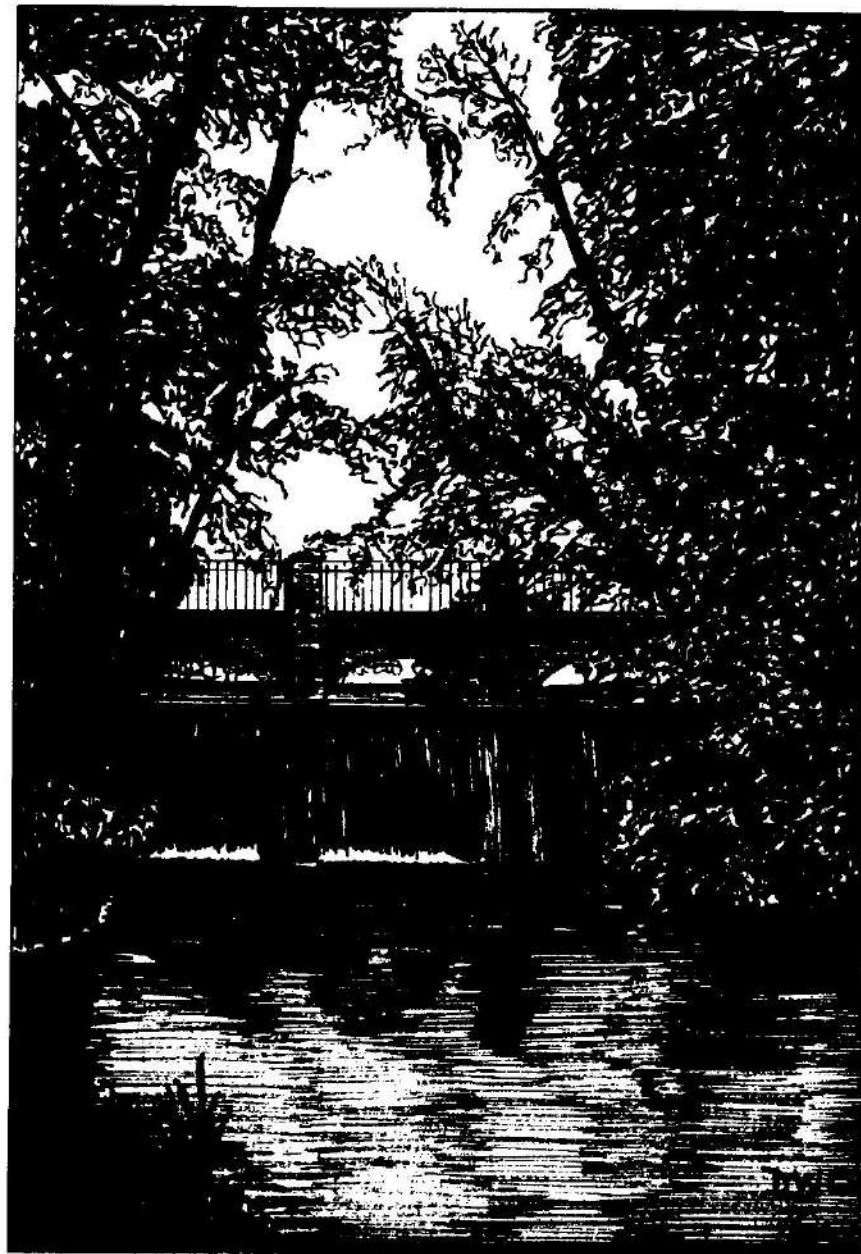


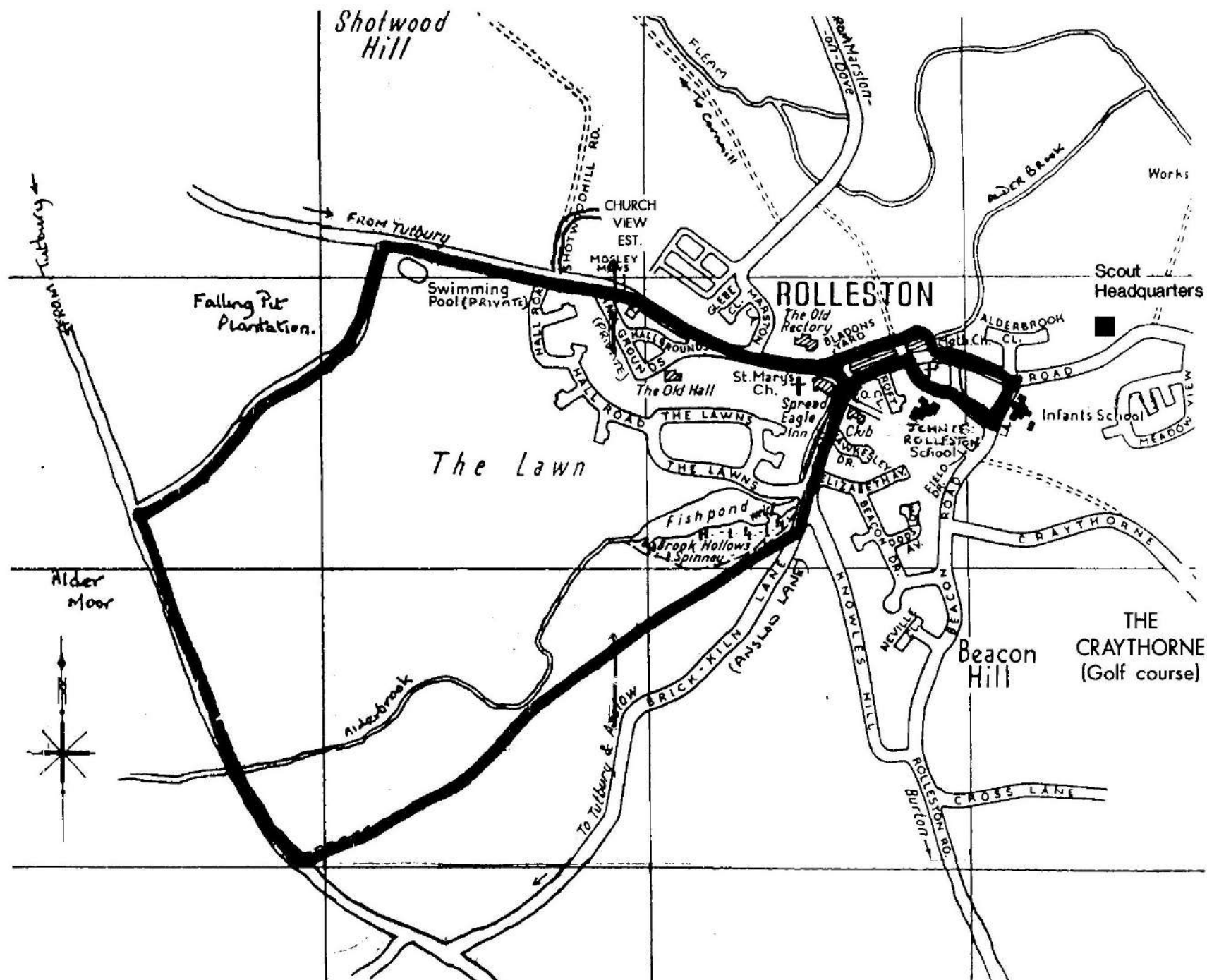
THE ALMS HOUSES

As we continue, we see that adjacent to the crofts are the Almshouses which were built in 1712 under a legacy of William Rolleston. Over the centre door is the crest of the Rolleston family and an inscription in 18th century style. "This hospital was founded by William Rolleston Esq. who gave £100 per annum to this town for ever; £6 a piece yearly to six poor people; and the residue to several other pious and charitable uses. 1712." The hand pump was the only communal source of fresh drinking water for the houses until earlier this century. Also in the grounds of the Almshouses are two pollarded red beeches, both planted by Sir Oswald Mosley on the birthday of Edward VII to commemorate his coronation in 1902.

The adjacent old white houses are very obviously of considerable age. I cannot firmly establish the date either by enquiry or research but it is known that they are 17th century and the building was probably originally one house. At the end of Burnside and past the entrance to The Lawns we see the waterfall above which is the lake of the Mosley Park. This lake and stream provided sport and fish for the table of the Hall and today it still provides entertainment for the anglers of the village where, in the lake and the brook, they catch the occasional trout together with chub and other coarse fish.

We follow the left-hand path through the spinney, over the stile and into the fields following the footpath towards Tutbury Road. At the next stile we will pause again for a while. To the left of us the field is bordered by Anslow Lane leading to the village of Anslow, at one time part of the Rolleston Manor. If we look to the right across the brook we can see The Lawns housing estate built in the old Hall grounds. The Hall estate itself was sold between 1919 and 1928 and the Hall demolished except for one remaining wing and outbuildings. The estate cottages, farms and small-holdings remain, now





separately owned. The whole of the area across the brook, including the fields are shown on the ordnance map as "The Lawns" and not merely the housing estate. The name probably derives from the Anglo-Saxon "launt" or "lant" and refers to a method of draining fields in the communal farming system. Each ridge or lant would be between 3 and 10 yards wide and up to 220 yards in length. In the communal system, the whole field was ploughed and harvested at the same time to get a full utilisation of labour and also ensure that no crop ripened before another and the corn would be transported to the mill at Tutbury in bulk. The lant system also ensured that as far as possible villagers had a fair mix of good and poor soil strips. Normally eight oxen would be used for the plough and each villager contributed to providing the oxen, hiring if they did not own. Turns were taken on an annual basis to be the foreman or "reeve". It is interesting to note that the mill at Tutbury in Cornmill Lane was in the Rolleston manor until the boundaries were re-arranged shortly after the Norman invasion in 1066 by Henry de Ferrers, one of the commissioners of the Domesday Survey, a favourite of William the Conqueror and holder of Tutbury Castle. From then on, Rolleston villagers not only had to pay a levy to the miller for his services, but also a fee to the Norman landlord in Tutbury Castle.

The field we are now crossing was known as the Priest's Ditch Field which would infer that it belonged to the Church in by-gone days. As we progress, it will be seen that lants are clearly visible in many of the fields.

And so to Tutbury road, the main A50 passing through Burton and Tutbury.

This road was formerly known as the Portway and used by pack trains on their journeys between Lancashire and London. It was also known as "the Street" which indicates that it has a Roman origin. The Portway Cross (or Rolleston

boundary stone) was at the intersection of Anslow Lane and the Portway. The London mile post is on the opposite side of the road.

Turning towards Tutbury we again meet the Alderbrook and immediately after the brook on the left we see a footpath and a sign to Rolleston Park. It was here that cattle were grazed, rather than using the land nearer the village which was more productive and used for tilling.

Beyond Rolleston Park was the Deer Park. Here is also a sign to Lounts Farm, indicating its heritage.

Halfway up the hill we turn to the right down the bridleway called Fidlers Lane and we are on our way back to Rolleston. Opposite the entrance to Fidlers Lane is Alder Moor and nearby Moorfield, the latter being another of the six common fields of Rolleston.

As we stroll down Fidlers Lane we have an excellent view of The Lawns and the number of oaks in the area are a feature-obvious reminders of the Needwood Forest which covered the area until the beginning of the last century. The lane dips and from the bottom of the dip to the left can be seen Falling Pit Plantation. Falling Pit was also a common field and at one time there was an old road from Burnside, passing Rolleston Hall and crossing Fidlers Lane towards Falling Pit and Tutbury Road. This road was closed in the 19th century and the coppice planted across it by the Mosley family to obliterate any sign of a right of way in front of the Hall.

We now reach the road between Rolleston and Tutbury which was formerly the ploughroad to Shotwood and the Dove field-again a common field. Shotwood is the small hill directly opposite the exit from Fidlers Lane. It has a small clump of trees on top which were planted by the Mosleys in the 18th century. Historians differ over the derivation of the name of

the hill. Some say it was the hill from which Tutbury Castle was besieged in the Civil War, whilst others claim that it was the scene of an armed skirmish in earlier years. Locally it is also known as Shotters or Shotters Hill. In one historical record it is described as Shot-at-hill. A shott was a block of lants and as the Dove field is on the side of the hill it would appear that this is by far the more likely source of the name, although it is known that a troop of soldiers were billeted in the village during the civil war and a skirmish may well have taken place in the area.

As we turn right we can see the water tower which served the reservoir of the estate—now a swimming pool. It was here that the young Oswald Mosley was taught to swim. Whilst a child at the turn of this century, the family attended the Sunday morning Church service in the usual way. After Church, Oswald's father took them to the reservoir and, still dressed in blazers and straw boaters, Sir Oswald punted the young Oswald to the middle of the water where the punt was overturned and he was left to flounder ashore. The eccentricity of the aristocracy!

On the left we shall now pass the signposted bridleway to Tutbury which was once the main track to Shotters Hill and on to the Cornmill at Tutbury. On the right is the lodge of the estate and on the bend is the courtyard of the Mosley Mews. The innocuous post box set in the wall on the left is worth a second look. Many would think that ER refers to the present Queen but closer inspection will show that it is E VII R (Edward VII) and therefore older than those who use it to post their letters!

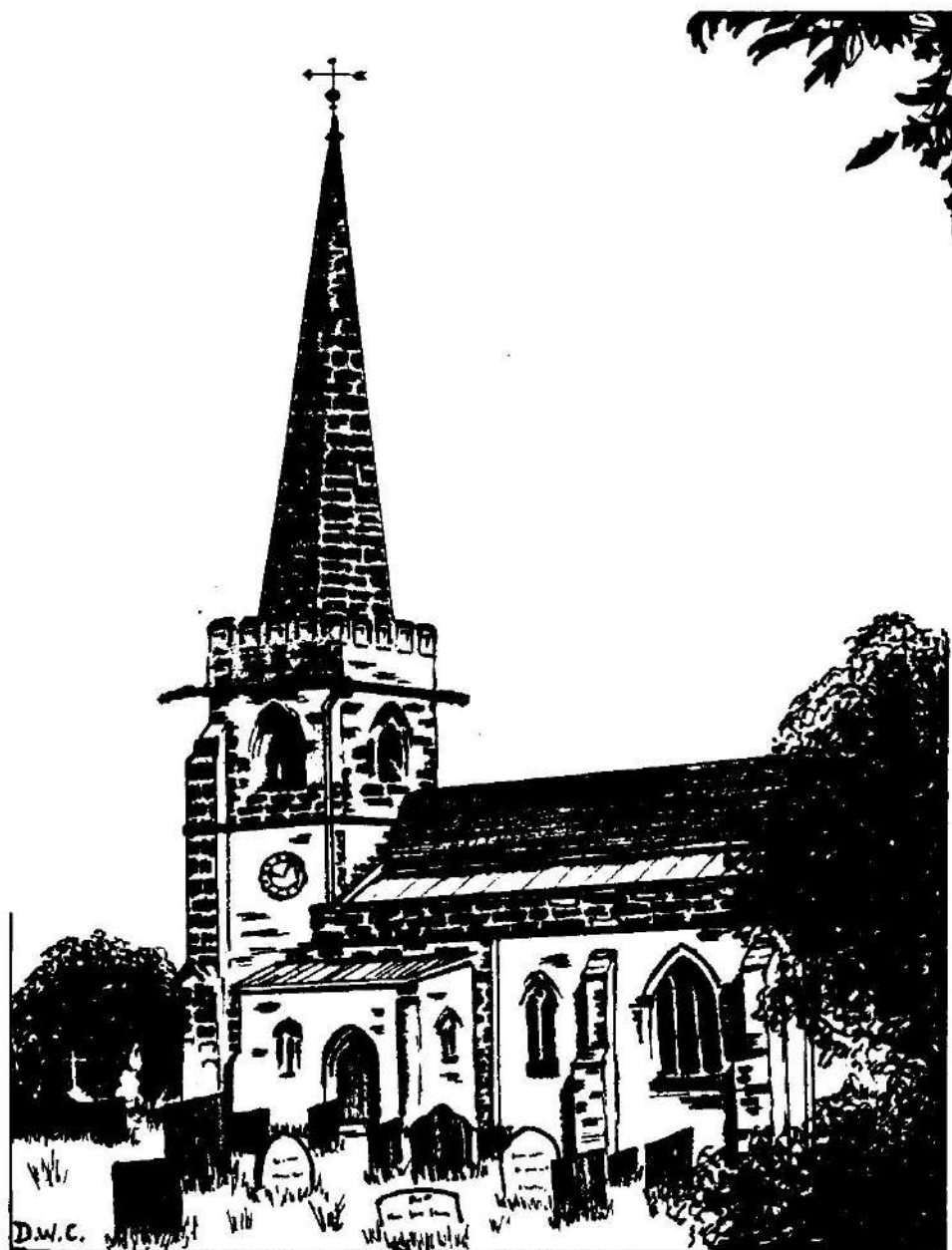
Most of the houses and cottages along this road were at one time estate properties and as we pass the second lodge we can see a good example of the Mosley crest on the fine-looking half timbered house opposite. The sole remaining

wing of the Hall, rebuilt in 1871/2 when the previous Hall was gutted by fire, is through the lodge gates, to the left.

As we pass Marston Lane, formerly Thorny Hollow Lane which leads to the glebe lands from which the Church derived its income (about 60 acres in total with a further 35 acres in Anslow), notice the black and white cottages down the lane. The date is uncertain but one of the present owners tells me that they are probably 16th century, although a recent survey states 17th century. This lane also leads to more common land and there is still an alternative path to the cornmill at Tutbury.

The Church was originally Anglo-Saxon serving the Needwood Forest, Anslow, Tutbury and Rolleston. The structure existing at the time of the Conquest was replaced by the Normans about 1100 A.D. The present building dates from 1270 but parts of the original Norman remain. The oldest bell in the tower is dated 1588 and is known as the Armada Bell—presumably cast to celebrate victory over the Spanish Armada. At the west end of the Church there is a pre-Norman Cross which was removed from Tatenhill Churchyard by Sir Oswald Mosley where it had been used as a paving stone. He built a gravel path for Tatenhill in return for removing the cross. Within the Church are a number of tombs in stone and alabaster (the locally mined stone) circumscribed to the Rolleston and Mosley families and their relatives, amongst others. For the interested visitor the Church is well worth attending. The Parish Register was begun in 1565 when Edward Rolleston was the Rector.

To the right of the churchyard we see the old Free Grammar School which is reputed to be the first of its kind in the country and which was founded in 1520 by Robert Sherebourne, Bishop of Chichester and a native of Rolleston, the present building dating from 1640 and built by Sir Edward Mosley.



To the east of the Church and now forming part of the Spread Eagle buildings is the old village school, currently used by the British Legion. Above our heads on this side of the pub we see a carved face which could be that of a Puritan. Presumably this is a reminder of the pre-Norman superstition of guarding the inhabitants of the dwellings from evil spirits which may be abroad in the churchyard.

Oposite the Church is a fine house which was enlarged by Sir John Mosley in the 18th century for his third son (also John) who was Rector at that time. There were several of the family named John during this century so perhaps some explanation is necessary. At the end of the 17th century, the title became extinct as Sir Edward Mosley died without an heir. Oswald Mosley, Esq., a descendant of the second branch of the family afterwards possessed the estate and manor and was created a baronet by George I. He had a son (also Oswald) who died unmarried in 1757, when the title and estate passed to his brother, the Rev. Sir John Mosley, Bart. This Sir John was somewhat of a philanthropic eccentric. Amongst other things he had bricks produced and transported to the Hall grounds where he arranged for them to be moved from one area to another, without ever using them, in order to give employment to the villagers. This was despite the fact that the Hall was in a state of disrepair at the time. When he died in 1777 the estate was inherited by John Parker Mosley of a branch of the family from near Manchester. The baronetage was re-created in him and it was he who enlarged the house opposite the Spread for his third son and at the same time rebuilt the Hall which was in a sad state of repair.

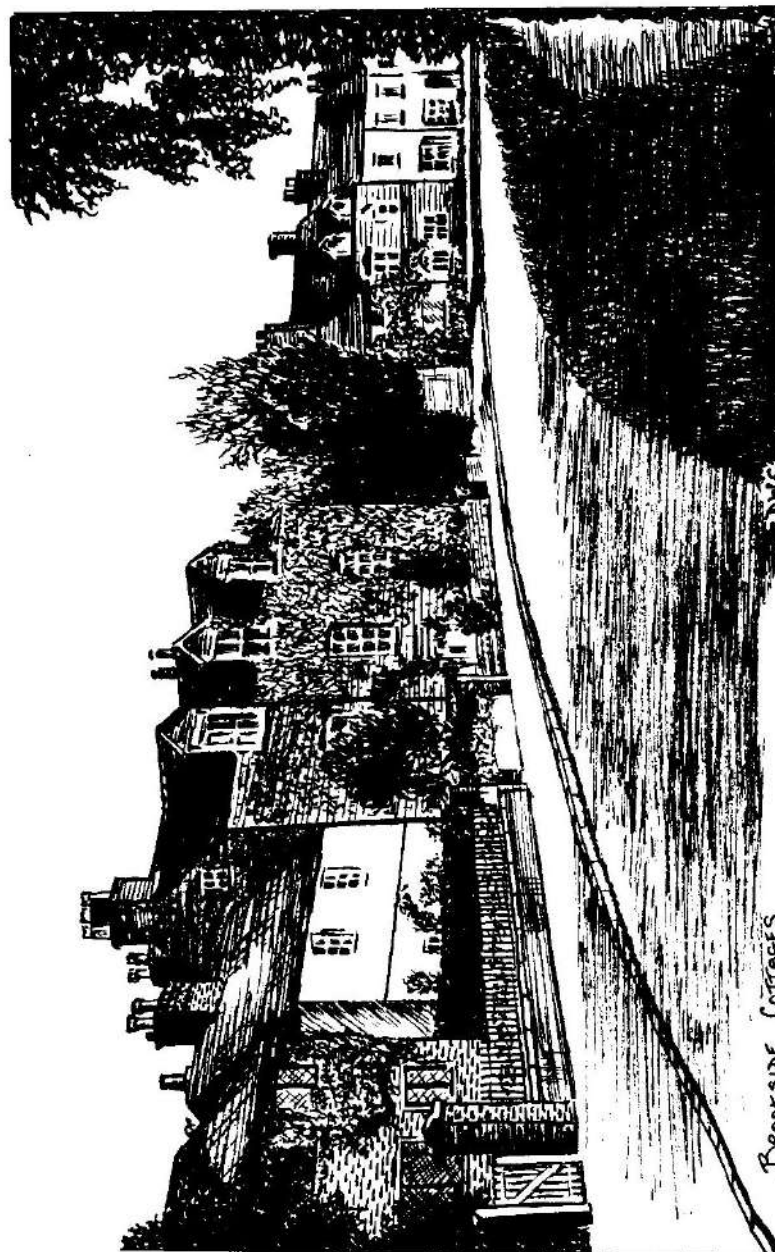
We now turn down the lane bordering the brook past the Dower House. Now a private nursing home, this house belonged to the Mosley family. Many years ago the mistress of the house gave instructions to her staff that no paper was to be

burnt on the stove. This instruction was ignored with the consequence that the chimney emitted clouds of black embers which settled on the cinder drive. Villagers had a great morning of entertainment watching the maids on their hands and knees and dressed in their pristine white aprons picking up every particle of paper from amongst the cinders whilst supervised by the mistress from an upstairs window.

This lane, which is one of the oldest ways in the village, is called Brookside and leads to a large Georgian house (now an hotel) which is on the site of the homestead of one of the earliest freeholders. There are two footbridges over the brook plus a ford. One of the bridges has replaced another ford since the second world war. These fords gave access from the centre of the village to the footpaths which are still signposted in Brookside and lead to the old common meadows and glebe lands in Marston Lane. One footpath leads on to the path to the cornmill at Tutbury.

We now cross the footbridge at the side of the ford and turn left until we reach School Lane on the right. A hundred yards towards Stretton was the gas house, once the gas works which supplied the village during Victorian times. Turning into School Lane we pass the school which was built to replace the old one at the side of the Spread Eagle which had become too small.

Beyond the school we come to the junction with Chapel Lane, the right leading back to Station Road and the left to the old common lands of Craythorne Field (now a thriving golf centre and farm hotel). At this junction is one of the few remaining thatched cottages in the area, still mainly in its original state and at its side a cottage bearing the date 1707 in the brickwork. The builders obviously knew that their workmanship was going to last!



In Chapel Lane are many of the farms and cottages which are in the region of 200 to 300 years old and this is the oldest remaining part of the village. It is noticeable that the cottages are clustered around the roads which were not too far from the stream and fords and which lead to the glebe and common fields and the lands of the freeholders up to the Needwood Forest.

The butcher's shop which is converted from old farm buildings I am told once produced what was probably the first ice cream in the village. Past the Victorian Chapel built in 1897 we come to some fine old terraced cottages. The door on the cottage "Linden Lea" fascinates some but is unnoticed by many. It would be difficult to put a precise date on its manufacture but the immense lock and keyhole are unlikely to have been made in this century. The farmhouse opposite (the out-buildings of which are now a fruit, flower and vegetable shop) used to farm the osier beds at Flax Hollow between the confluence of the Dove and the Fleam which supplied most of the area's needs for willows for basket making and woven fencing etc. in the last century and traces of which still remain. Flax Hollow is a reminder of the ill-fated legislation under Henry VIII which forced each parish to grow its own flax.

And so we return to the Spread Eagle to sample the beers which have been brewed locally in Burton since the time of the Monks of Burton Abbey and as we gaze out of the window at Brookside and Burnside we can perhaps visualise all those who have trodden these roads before us and realise the importance of our heritage. Take good care of it so that those who follow can obtain as much pleasure as we have from our stroll through the history of this village known as Rolleston-on-Dove.