

# Breedon Heritage Trail Project

**Breedon on the Hill is one of the most significant archaeological and historical sites in Leicestershire. It pre-dates to the Roman occupation of Leicester by several hundred years. A monastery was founded within the Bulwarks in 675AD and the western fortifications are still visible today. Unfortunately, successive generations of councils have placed scant emphasis on this Leicestershire jewel in the crown.**

The aim of the local community with its various groups together with the Parish Council, is to change this to give the Parish the recognition it richly deserves.

The intention is to provide information boards with detailed maps of the area showing four footpaths, each will have a different coloured footpath marker showing the routes around the three villages, information boards will point out significant features and places to visit to facilitate exploration of the local history.

Elections in May 2015 saw four new councillors appointed to the Parish Council to represent the parishioners of Breedon, Tonge and Wilson. This is a pro-active council that wishes to go above and beyond what is required of a Parish Council to bring together the community and make the area a great place to live, work and visit.

This new initiative will 'put Breedon, Tonge and Wilson on the map' making it a place to visit, become a tourist destination, bring the community together, improve the local environment and conserve the heritage of the grade 1 listed Church, the Bulwarks and the SSSI. Breedon Heritage Project will highlight places of interest, detailing the history and convey a sense of pride in our significant history.

The provision of signage information boards around the villages will include maps of the area and local footpaths, together with places to visit and local village history and that pertain to the individual features.

Centrally on the village green in Breedon will be the master information board, including a leaflet dispenser detailing local walks, with places to visit highlighted; creating a 'meeting point.' There will be five other smaller signs, to be placed within the bus shelters around the three villages; each sign will include a different paragraph of text relevant to its specific location. There will be two panoramic sign at Breedon Priory Church; pointing out places of interest, with good quality pictures within the direction you are looking. There will be a footpath sign along the 'Cloud Trail' and way markers – the way markers are going to be supplied in four different colours along the walking routes, each relating to an individually marked walk.

Breedon traces its history back to the c7 political and religious upheavals. A monastery was founded here in AD676; the church stands within the precincts of an Iron-Age fort. The Vikings rampaged through this area and caused the monastery to decline. After the Norman Conquest Breedon Priory was founded here in 1122. A new chancel was built in c13 and this is largely the church we see today. Iron Age remains have been found there and in 300 BC a hill fort was constructed and remained in use until 1st Century AD. Part of these earthworks known as The Bulwarks can still be seen on the west side of the Church. The Iron Age fort has produced many skeletons and ancient artefacts, including a Neolithic axe head currently displayed in Leicester Museum.

**Breedon Priory** is a functioning Church and of particular interest to the Parish Council and its parishioners; it is a grade I listed building, a heritage asset and visited by people from across the world.

**Breedon Lock-up** was built of local stone in the C18, this was used as a place of detention for local rogues. In the C18 and C19 it was common in the countryside for people to be assaulted, watchmen obstructed, shooting outrages to occur and sheep to be stolen! Sheep stealing remained a capital offence until 1872. There is a pinfold attached to the side of the Lock-up; this is where stray stock would be held until claimed by the owner.

**The Old School**, now a grade 2 listed building was built in 1874 for Charles Abney Hastings, as a memorial to his wife The Countess of Loudon. It was a well-designed and finely-detailed village school made in local stone with some elaborate carving. It remains little altered.

**The War Memorial** was designed and built by a Mr Salt of Belton. The stone was donated by Mr J G Shields, owner of Breedon Quarry and the cost of other materials and labour was raised by public collection - £150! The unveiling of the war memorial, situated on The Green in Breedon took place on Sunday 28th November 1926; a crowd of over 500 attended, including over 50 ex-soldiers of the parish!

In creating this project, the community wishes to highlight the heritage of its villages and make people want to explore ALL the area has to offer.

The Parish Council is keen to get in touch with local people and business' and bring the community together; especially those more vulnerable. Providing local walks, led by members of the Parish Council and local groups, will hopefully encourage people to come out together, meet new people and in turn generate a healthier lifestyle and a more engaged community. There are four walks all of which are relatively easy circular walks from The Green, and will bring people back to the village green; the walks are simple walks aimed at the majority and indeed the Cloud trail is surfaced and fully wheelchair accessible following the route of the old railway line from Derby to Ashby de la Zouch.

The Parish Council has many statutory and ever-changing responsibilities that such a project as this is beyond its remit. This project would, however, enrich and enhance its local community. The Parish Council has some reserved funds towards this project but, as its total annual precept is only £21k, it does not have adequate reserves to complete the project.

**Update:** *So far, the Parish Council has been fortunate to receive sponsorship from the following local business': DG Light Haulage, Breedon Quarry, Plantool Hire Centres, East Midlands Airport, Staunton Harold Charities and Motors Coalville LTD. Sponsorship will be recognised in the form of a plaque, placed on the information board on The Green, Breedon, along with a QR code which will directly link to each sponsors website. Every business/individual sponsor will be acknowledged regardless of amount. We are roughly half way to our goal of £10k and would welcome additional contributions.*

*If you would like to further assist us achieve this interesting and worthwhile community project or have any feedback please contact the Clerk on [clerk@breedonparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:clerk@breedonparishcouncil.org.uk).*