



SITES AND BUILDINGS

Manorial sites and buildings

From 1199 there were two manors in Kirby Bellars,¹ and the moated sites of their manor houses remain today.

The northernmost of these is in a field called 'Brummells',² and was the capital messuage of John of Kirby in the late 13th century, which was then described as in 'Bromhull', immediately to the north of the church.³ The moat is complete only on the east and west sides, and partially on the north. There is a hollow way between the moated site and St Peter's church.⁴ This was probably not the location of the priory, as identified on certain maps and other sources,⁵ although this land formed part of the 1319 endowment to the collegiate chapel.⁶ It is however possible that the collegiate chapel may have used the former Bromhull manor house as an outpost, or for lodging, as it was only about 160 yards from the parish church, where masses were said daily by one of the priests.⁷

¹ TNA, CP 25/1/121/2-3: feet of fines, 1 John 1199. See 'Manors and other estates'

² ROLLR, FNS, Frisby and Kirby Women's Institute field-name survey 1974.

³ Lincolnshire Archives, Linc. reg. III, 1319, 345.

⁴ See Plan in R.F. Hartley, *The Medieval Earthworks of North-East Leicestershire* (Leicester, 1987), 32.

⁵ OS Map 1:25000, Explorer sheet 246 (2000 edn); Eng. Heritage, scheduled ancient monument no. 1009285; Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks of North-east Leicestershire*, front cover. The evidence is discussed under 'Manors and other estates'

⁶ See above, 'Religious History'; Lincolnshire Archives, Linc. Reg. III, 1319, 340-4.

⁷ Lincolnshire Archives, Linc. Reg. III, 1319, 340-4.

The second moated site is in the Kirby Park area, and this is almost certainly the capital message of the second manor. Documents confirm that the Kirby Park area was the location of the chantry and its successors, as well as the manor house of Roger Beler and his descendants.⁸ The moated site closely fits a description of Beler's house and its environs, on the death of the husband of Roger Beler(I)'s granddaughter, Robert Swillington, in 1391.⁹ The square moated site has two southward parallel extensions, which could have enclosed the many rooms, houses and offices that the inquisition states were within the moat. Outside the moat the inquisition states there were granges, cowsheds, sheepfolds, many other houses, a dove house and a windmill.¹⁰ Today there is evidence of a large area of former buildings outside the moat, all demolished in the 1630s to make way for a park around Erasmus de la Fontaine(II)'s mansion.¹¹ Two mounds outside may well have been the sites of windmills and the existing eighteenth-century dove house outside the moat could have replaced an earlier one. In 1420, on the death of Sir Robert de Swillington, the manor house and associated buildings consisted of a hall with 14 chambers, a gatehouse, a malthouse, three barns, a granary, a dove house and two gardens.¹²

Some accounts have suggested that the moated features were ornamental gardens of the Tudor period with prospect mounds to view the garden.¹³ The evidence however points to an earlier medieval origin, although it is possible that the moats and their surroundings were incorporated into later gardens.

The current Park Farm is 130 yards from the square moat. Park Farm mansion was built in the late 1620s or 1630s by Erasmus de la Fontaine (II), whose father obtained the ex-priory property

⁸ See 'Manors and other estates'

⁹ TNA, c136/73/8: inq. p. m. 1391.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks*, front cover.

¹² TNA, C 138/48/71: inq. p. m. 1420.

¹³ Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks*, 10.

in 1603.¹⁴ The nineteenth-century central dormer has the date 1629 carved in the stonework, which could have come from the original building. It is probably on the site of the former priory, as Nichols advised.¹⁵ It is likely that the materials of the priory were re-used in the construction of the mansion and the wall of the surrounding park. According to Nichols the old manor house itself was dismantled in 1756 and the material used in the construction of Baggrave Hall.¹⁶



Park Farm, rebuilt after the Civil War; dormers and porch are 19th-century additions

The 1630s mansion was largely destroyed by fire in 1645, so the existing building represents a post-1660 rebuild.¹⁷ The house was remodelled in the nineteenth century by Sir Francis Burdett

¹⁴ MS on de la Fontaine 1603 purchase of ex-priory land was in possession of Wm Herrick Esq. of Beaumanor in 1794 (J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (1795, reprinted 1971), II, 231); TNA: PRO CP25/2/313/1JASIMICH; TNA: PRO STAC 8/17/16, James I.

¹⁵ Nichols, *History*, II, 232.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ TNA, C3/453/16: Chancery Proceedings, Series ii, 1648; BL, Harl. MS., 911; Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, II, 232.

with the addition of dormers and a porch.¹⁸ The central dormer has a sundial with the date 1629. At one time the building was called Manor House, but in 1788 it was separated from the manorial property when it came into the ownership of the Burdett family, who used it seasonally as a hunting box.¹⁹ It was occupied by tenant farmers until 1974 when tenant Stanley Green bought the property.²⁰ Recently there has been a change in name again to ‘The Manor’, which is confusing as there is also ‘The Manor House’ in Main Street.

The grade II listed building in Main Street called Manor House dates from at least the early 17th century,²¹ although the first documentary evidence for this property being called the ‘Manor House’ comes from the Poor Rate book of 1844.²² When the manorial estate lost Park Farm in 1778, it had no manor house and it may have been at this point that the present building in Main Street was so designated. There is no doubt that the Main Street Manor House was a building of some importance. The oldest part faces the road and probably consisted of three bays originally, although only the middle and northern bays remain. The walls are of brick, in a period when few could afford them, on an ironstone rubble plinth, the whole rendered in the 1970s. An early 17th century date would suggest that it was built by Erasmus de la Fontaine (II), who acquired Kirby Manor in 1622, and built the Park House mansion in the 1630s.²³ According to the Hearth Tax records of 1666, De la Fontaine (II) paid tax on 30 hearths altogether, and no other property-holder had more than two.²⁴ The Manor House contains three 17th-century hearths.

A central chimney and the basal plinth of the Manor House are made of ironstone. The eastern slope of the roof has 20th-century tiles, whereas the western slope has re-used pantiles. The steep

¹⁸ Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, 192.

¹⁹ Nichols, *History*, II, 232; W. White, *Hist. Gaz. and Dir. Leicestershire and Rutland*, (Sheffield, 1863), 356.

²⁰ As told to this author by the late Stanley Green.

²¹ English Heritage, listed building 1360880.

²² ROLLR, DE 801/21.

²³ TNA, CP25/2/315/20JASITRIN: feet of fines 1622.

²⁴ TNA, E179/133/108 hearth tax Leics, Michaelmas 1670.

pitch of the roof suggests that it was originally thatched. An extension at the back of the house is dated 1732 in the brickwork, although now covered by rendering.²⁵ This slate-roofed addition has preserved within its roof space part of the old wattle and daub roof structure of the main building. The old roof timbers, which have probably been re-used, are smoke-blackened. Other features inside the house include exposed oak beams, including a plain chamfered span beam in one room and a span beam with egg and dart moulding in another. Connected to the ironstone chimney, there are two Tudor-arched ashlar fireplaces with cove and rebated moulding, and the more southerly one has traces of painting. The inglenook fireplace in the north gable has a bressumer beam, which appears to have come from an earlier half-timbered building. The first storey has plaster floors laid on a foundation of reeds. The two 1.75 metre high doorways leading from a transverse passage give some further evidence of antiquity. The southern bay of the original property was replaced by a more elegant Georgian-style attached building in the early nineteenth century. In 1900, there were further alterations at the back, enlarging the extension of 1732.²⁶

Religious sites and buildings

St Peter's church

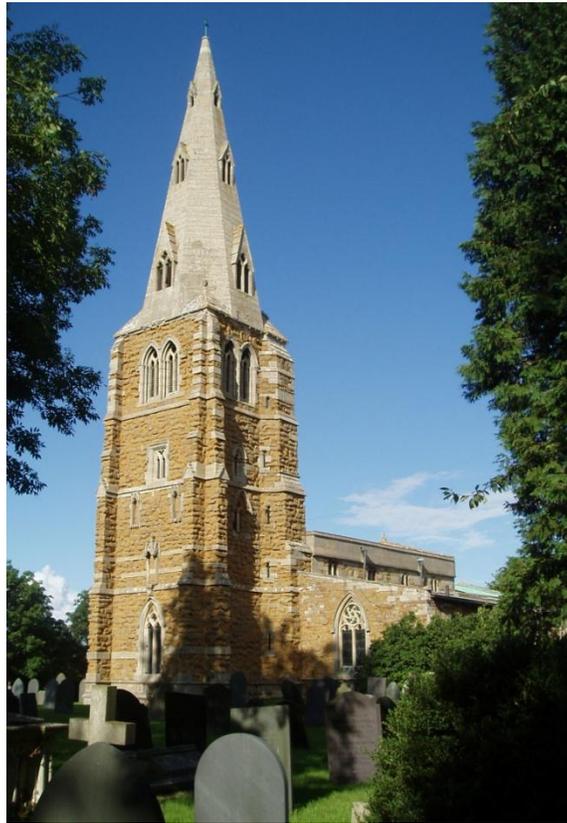
The present parish church is located slightly apart from the rest of the village at the northern end of the Main Street cul-de-sac. It is strikingly large, especially for a small village, and was even larger before the north aisle was demolished in 1690.²⁷ Its size hints at a place of some importance, a large population in medieval times and a degree of wealth within the village. Its churchyard is roughly lozenge-shaped. Like many of the medieval churches in the area, it is built

²⁵ Photograph of date in possession of this author.

²⁶ Nthts RO, FS 52, estate papers of William Seddon 1880-1914.

²⁷ 'Archaeology in Leicestershire and Rutland, 1963-66', *Trans. LAHS*, 41 (1965-6), 72, letter dated 22 Nov 1849 from manorial lord to curate re fragment of a schedule of deeds dated 1 May 1690, giving licence under the Episcopal Seal of Lincoln to take down the north aisle, letter in possession of vicar Rev. Frostick in 1963.

of brown ironstone, with some lighter and less-weathered Lincolnshire limestone, particularly in the quoins, architraves and spire.



Parish church of St Peter

The Decorated style of the 14th century predominates. It can be seen in the ballflower decoration of the string courses in the west tower and in the tracery of the windows on both the north and south sides of the nave. There is documentary evidence that the south aisle, which contained a chapel of St Mary and St John the Baptist, was constructed by Roger Beler before 1319.²⁸ Here there are two stone effigies in arched recesses, which appear to date from the late 14th century

²⁸ LA, Linc. Reg. III, 1319, 340-4; A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Chapel of St Peter at Kirby upon Wreake', *Trans. LAHS* 16 (1929-31), 51.

and are probably of Roger Beler, who was murdered in 1326, and his widow Alice, who took over the lordship.²⁹

This aisle may have replaced a narrower earlier version, as the arcade in the nave is in Early English style, with nailhead and dogtooth decoration.³⁰ The later fifteenth-century Perpendicular style is to be seen in the clerestory windows and the restored rood screen. Fragments of fifteenth-century glass have been placed in four of the windows of the nave. It is impossible to know when the remainder of the medieval glass was lost, but the church may have been affected by iconoclasm when Royalist supporter de la Fontaine's mansion was garrisoned by parliamentary forces during the civil war.

There have been restorations in the late eighteenth century and in 1820.³¹ The window at the west end of the south aisle is a memorial window of 1857 to Reverend Edward Manners and overlooks his ornate tomb in the churchyard.³² The stained glass of the main two lights, which featured St Peter, has been replaced by plain glass, but the Geometrical-style stone frame survives, as does the stained glass by William Wailes in the small upper lights. At the centre of one of the upper lights, the stained glass depicts a peacock, with tail feathers displayed, standing on an ermine-lined cap, which is the crest from the coat of arms of the Dukes of Rutland. The stained glass in the east window of the chancel is by Harry Harvey of York and dated 1980.³³

The nave walls and roof were restored and a parapet added in 1885.³⁴ The south aisle and porch were refurbished in 1889 and re-roofed in 1897. The old altar rails were removed in 1884 and

²⁹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.* VI, 443.

³⁰ Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, 191-2.

³¹ English Heritage. listed building description no. 126171-7.

³² *Trans. LAHS*, I, 156, 31 Aug 1857: design for window.

³³ Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, 192.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; Parish magazines of North Goscote Deanery and neighbourhood, in private hands.

replaced by new ones in 1894, when the whole chancel floor was levelled and retiled.³⁵ The spire was repaired in 2013.

Priory

As discussed in the chapter on manors and other estates, the documentary evidence is clear that the original foundation, the 1316 chantry, was located on the south side of the village close to the Leicester Road.³⁶ There is no proof that the larger collegiate chapel was on a new site, nor that when the house became a priory in 1359 its geographical location was altered.³⁷

A description of the buildings in 1536 reveals that the priory church had a choir area and three chapels called St. Andrew's Chapel, Our Lady Chapel and the Chapel of St. Thomas.³⁸ There was also a hall, a chamber next to the hall (dormitory), frater (refectory), a little house, buttery, brewhouse, dey house (dairy), bailiff's store house, cattle shed and 'fyshe chamber'. The rectangular hollows which can be seen in Kirby Park are probably the priory's fish ponds.³⁹

Congregational chapel

The chapel was built in 1865 as a subsidiary of the Melton Mowbray chapel and restored or rebuilt in 1892 with 100 sittings.⁴⁰ There is a date stone with 1902 on the south wall. It closed in 1978 and was converted into a private house. There is little to identify the former use of this building, which played such an important part in the religious and social life of the village.

Domestic buildings

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Lincolnshire Archives, Linc. Reg. III, 1316, 211-13; *Cal. Pat.* 1317-21, 321. See also 'Manors and other estates'

³⁷ Lincolnshire Archives, Linc. Reg. IX, 1359, 372d-373d.

³⁸ *VCH Leics.*, II, 26 citing *L&P Hen. VIII*, X, 496.

³⁹ Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks*, front cover.

⁴⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1912), 115

The church is the only existing medieval building in the parish. Of approximately 60 houses in Main Street only about 20 predate 1960.⁴¹ Apart from the Main Street 'Manor House', already discussed, and Park Farm, the latter largely a 17th century reconstruction after damage in February 1645,⁴² most of the older houses are of late eighteenth and nineteenth century construction. The former Yew Tree Farm, half way along Main Street on the eastern side, has a date plaque with 1778 on it. On Main Road the previous Flying Childers Inn, next to Kirby Hall, has the date 1714 in the eastern gable end.⁴³ Peacock Farm, on the western side of Main Street, has 1838 etched into the brick at the front.

The main building material in the parish is brick. The roofs of older houses are usually Welsh slate but former Yew Tree Farm, on Main Street, has some Swithland slate. The church and Park Farm are built entirely of stone. In Main Street there are also stone basal plinths at Yew Tree Farm (no. 28), Peacock Farm (no. 27), part of Church Cottage (no. 56) and the garden walls of Yew Tree Farm, Porters Lodge (no. 50) and Chestnut House (No. 4). The material is chiefly brown ironstone (marlstone), but there is some grey Lincolnshire limestone. Some of the stone is in the form of ashlar blocks.

Kirby Hall, built c1840, was of major importance in the fox hunting scene. In the mid-nineteenth century the owner was George Killick who, in 1845, had married the elder daughter of the lord of the manor, Stephen John Charlesworth.⁴⁴ By 1871 Kirby Hall was the main seat of Francis James King-King (1838-1906) and his diary indicates that he was continually associated with it until 1895.⁴⁵ He spent much of his time fox hunting in Leicestershire during the winter season. There was a considerable number of servants, including grooms, to cater for all the visitors. The fox

⁴¹ OS maps 1:10560, Leics XIX NE and SE (1889 edn).

⁴² TNA, C3/453/16: Chancery Proceedings, Series ii, 1648; BL, Harl. MS., 911; Nichols, *History*, II, 232.

⁴³ Oral testimony from David Wheeler, *Melton Times*, 14 Jun 1985.

⁴⁴ *Morning Post*, 9 September 1845; TNA, HO 107/209, 62.

⁴⁵ Melton Mowbray Carnegie Museum, diary of Francis James King-King of Kirby Hall.

hunting tradition continued until World War Two (see Economic History).⁴⁶ In 1960 the Hall was converted to flats.⁴⁷

Adjacent to the Hall on the western side is the former Flying Childers Inn, which was replaced by the present building of that name further west in 1905.⁴⁸ The brick-built former inn has a date 1714 in the eastern gable end. In 1905 the building was taken over by the owner of the Hall as accommodation for some of the servants.⁴⁹ Today it consists of three cottages.

On the other side of the road from the Hall was a gentleman's house of the 19th century with 20th century additions. It was called The Cottage and the owners were also involved with the hunting scene. Since the Second World War it became successively a hotel, the Painted Lady nightclub and Kirby Grange restaurant before being demolished in 1995 to provide the site for a cul-de-sac of ten houses called Priory View.⁵⁰ The site of the nearby petrol station and lorry park at the junction of Main Street and Main Road was also converted to a group of eight houses in 2010.

Eastward of The Cottage, 400 metres further on the right, stands a large Victorian house called Kirby Gate.⁵¹ It was located close to the first tollgate out of Melton Mowbray on the turnpike road to Leicester, at the junction of Main Road and the Thorpe Satchville Road, and there was a toll house here.⁵²

Further west along Main Road from the Main Street junction, York Cottage (no. 36) once stood on the right.⁵³ A few years ago it was demolished and replaced by a new building. Further west

⁴⁶ M. Dawes (Mrs M. Forshaw), in A. Fox & J. Luke (eds), *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, privately printed (1999), 62.

⁴⁷ Register of Electors, Parish of Frisby, Kirby Bellars Ward 1961.

⁴⁸ Oral testimony from David Wheeler, *Melton Times*, 14 Jun 1985.

⁴⁹ Fox and Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 60-1.

⁵⁰ Oral testimony of older residents in 1990s.

⁵¹ OS maps 1:10560, Leics XIX NE and SE (1889 edn).

⁵² *London Illustrated News*, October 1863.

⁵³ OS maps 1:10560, Leics XIX NE and SE (1889 edn).

still there were two farms near the western boundary of the parish: Kirby Hall Farm, built after 1883 and Ashtree Farm, built between 1777 and 1816.⁵⁴ Today they are both private residences, but Ashtree Farm also has the Event Hire business based there and Kirby Hall Farm has a cattery and kennels.

In the 1930s four new houses were built between the sites of the old and new Flying Childers. In 2010 the building of eight houses around the junction of Main Road and Main Street completely altered the appearance of this area which had been a petrol station and a lorry park of Ritchie Transport. The construction of the adjacent Priory View cul-de-sac (mentioned above) has contributed to this transformation. Saxon Cottage (no. 14), Belmere (no. 3) and the bungalow (no. 65) next to the Flying Childers are also of the twentieth century.

There is a third moated site near Ashby Pastures Farm.⁵⁵ This distant building helped to avoid time-consuming travel between the village and the southern lands of the parish. Today, in those parts of the parish away from the village there is a scattering of isolated buildings, which are mainly farmhouses or former ones of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Many of them were called lodges.⁵⁶ The enclosure of the open fields had already occurred up to two centuries previously, but the expense of rebuilding and uneasiness about living in isolated locations probably held up the move to place farmsteads within their associated lands. As with houses in the village, there have been considerable modifications to many of the farm houses and their outbuildings. In some cases there has been a complete rebuilding of the house, as at Hillcrest Farm on Gaddesby Lane and Kirby Lodge Farm, now called Windmill Farm, on Thorpe Satchville Road.

⁵⁴ Ibid. ; Welding, *Leicestershire in 1777*, 26; British Library, Melton Mowbray area, two-inch to one mile surveyors' map, 1816.

⁵⁵ Hartley, *Medieval Earthworks of North-east Leicestershire*, 34, 65.

⁵⁶ TNA, HO 107/587.

Practically all the walls of the older farm buildings were built in brick although there is a stone-walled structure at Kirby Lodge Farm, off Great Dalby Road and Poplars Farm has stone walls in the cellar, possibly from an earlier building.⁵⁷ Today the material of the double-pitched roofs in all the farmhouses is either Welsh slate or more modern tiles. There are usually two chimneys, one at either gable end of the building. Some farmhouses have off-shuts creating L or T-shapes, as at Brockleys, Sanham Farm and Kirby Lodge Farm, Great Dalby Road. Another feature of several farmhouses is the attached or nearby detached buildings, some along the same axis as the main house. Examples at Brockleys, Windyridge Farm and Sanham House may have been dairies or bakehouses. More modern outbuildings of prefabricated materials dominate some of the farmsteads. Poplars Farm was left empty from 1960 to 2010 and before a proposed renovation an archaeological survey was completed.⁵⁸ It was noted that there had been a separate bakehouse, whereas the dairy had been part of the farmhouse. The outbuildings arranged around a square crew yard included loose boxes from the mid-nineteenth century, pigsties and groom's quarters.

Kirby Lodge Farm off Great Dalby Road is one of only two farmsteads shown and named on the 1777 Prior map.⁵⁹ It was one of the two farms owned by the lord of the manor and was occupied by a tenant farmer in the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ The other farmstead shown on the 1777 map is Cream Gorse Farm close to the south-west corner of the parish. The 1816 surveyor's map for the Ordnance Survey indicates that the following farmsteads had been constructed since 1777, although most have since been renovated, even rebuilt:- Brockleys, Poplars Farm, Windmill Farm on Thorpe Satchville Lane, Ashby Pastures Farm, Hillcrest Farm, Ashtree Farm on Main Road and The Hollies off Station Lane.⁶¹ Sanham Farm built at the same time, was as 'gentleman's

⁵⁷ S. Clarke and N. Finn, Poplars Farm Kirby Bellars, unpublished historic building study report, No. 2010-096, University of Leicester Archaeological Services.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ROLLR DG 9/Ma/LI [DG 9/2727]; Welding, *Leicestershire in 1777*, 26.

⁶⁰ ROLLR, Kirby Bellars tithe award 1848, DE 682/3/2; ROLLR, Sale particulars of Kirby manor 1918, DE 3177/102.

⁶¹ British Library, Melton Mowbray area, two-inch to one mile surveyors' map, 1816.

house' and part of the fox hunting scene.⁶² In 1881 the stud groom and his family lived on the site (see section on Economic History).⁶³ Since 1816 the following farmsteads were constructed:

Kirby Hall Farm after 1884, Windyridge Farm, Highfields Farm (owned by the lord of the manor) and Kirby Gate Farm, the last three all on the Thorpe Satchville Road.⁶⁴

Apart from the farmsteads, there are very few buildings away from the village. In the nineteenth century most of the farmers had employees living at the farmstead, either in the farmhouse itself or in an adjacent building on site. In 1881 there were three servants at Cream Gorse Farm, eight at Sanham Farm, four at Kirby Lodge Farm off Great Dalby Road, three at Highfields Farm and two at Ashby Pastures Farm.⁶⁵ Near Cream Gorse Farm two semi-detached houses were built for agricultural labourers after 1870 and two similar ones were constructed near Windmill Farm on the Thorpe Satchville Road. The date of Red Lodge on the Great Dalby Road is after 1884.⁶⁶

Otherwise, there are a few 20th-century houses particularly on Gaddesby Lane, including Drumwalt built in the 1930s.

Industrial and Commercial Sites

There was no water mill mentioned in Domesday Book, but the River Wreake was certainly used for milling at a later date.⁶⁷ The circular lake near the railway in Kirby Park may be a remnant of this industrial activity. Windmills were also an important development in the medieval period. The sites of two post mills can be seen on aerial photographs.⁶⁸ They were located at the top of the slope between Thorpe Thatchville Road and Gaddesby Lane. There was a road called

⁶² TNA, RG 13/3012, 109 Census 1901.

⁶³ TNA, RG 11/3181/94, 10 Census 1881.

⁶⁴ OS maps 1:10560, Leics XIX NE and SE (1889 edn).

⁶⁵ TNA, RG 11/3181/94, 10 Census 1881.

⁶⁶ OS maps 1:10560, Leics XIX NE and SE (1889 edn).

⁶⁷ A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 643, 644; *Cal. Pat.* 1548, 277.

⁶⁸ Cambridge University Collection of Air Photographs, ANW 24.

Windmill Gate connecting the mills to Main Road. A windmill was also mentioned as being held by the late lord of the manor, Robert de Swillington, in 1391.⁶⁹ It was described as being located outside the moat and may have been on one of the mounds in Kirby Park.

The first annual meet of the Quorn Hunt was always at Kirby Gate and in 1991 the headquarters of the Quorn were moved to the parish on Gaddesby Lane.⁷⁰ The stabling and rearing of horses are important activities that have an impact on the built landscape of the parish. For example, the nineteenth-century Kirby Gate Farm on Thorpe Satchville Road is called Largesse Stud and the enlarged 1930s Loseby House on Main Road (no. 61) is an Equine Emporium.

An important component of the commercial life of the parish is the tree Nursery, established in 1978.⁷¹ The buildings on site include two modern sheds, but one of the Manor House outbuildings was still in use until it was demolished in 2014.

⁶⁹ TNA, C136/73/8 Inq. p.m.

⁷⁰ *Quorn Hunt: to Commemorate the Opening of the New Kennels at Kirby Bellars* (1991) (copy at Melton Mowbray Library, 799.259).

⁷¹ Information from present owner.