



2. Just left of the gate is a signposted footpath. Follow this path as it descends diagonally through the woodland (Rowl Wood) to a stile at the bottom. At first it may be overgrown but soon clears. Ignore any paths off to the left. Continue to stile.

*Rowl Wood is an- 'Ancient Woodland' which is recorded as being continuously wooded since AD1600. It has never been cleared and dates back to a post glacial woodland 10-12,000 years ago. Admire the bluebells here in late spring.*

3. Go over the stile and continue straight ahead for a short distance to a bridleway. Turn left and follow the bridleway, going through a gate into a grassy field. Keep straight ahead maintaining height as the valley falls away on the right. The bridleway becomes indistinct here. Go through a second gate into another grassy field to a third gate.

4. Go through the gate into the wood where the bridleway becomes a well defined track. Continue down past the stream, which originates from the Rowl Spring (on the left), and further on to a former diesel pump house (on the left).

*Rowl Spring has both fine drinking water and calcifying properties which were considered to have religious importance in the past. The stream that arises from the Spring appears to have been diverted at sometime which has raised questions about the possibility that there was an early settlement near the present Church.*

Water from Rowl Spring supplied Levisham

and later Lockton from 1895 to 1962. This was provided by using a water wheel to pump the water up to a reservoir near the Horseshoe Inn. In about 1930 this was improved by putting in hydraulic rams. In the mid 1950's the Supply was further boosted by a diesel pump. In 1962 Rowl spring became redundant when a new reservoir was built at Levisham providing mains water. The remains of some of the pipes; the weir built to provide a good water supply for the water wheel, and the diesel hut can still be seen

5. Ignoring the bridleway on the left, turn right at the junction and follow track to visit St. Mary's church.

*The present church was rebuilt in 1802 - however there is evidence of a much earlier one. In 1977 the York Archaeological Trust dig found traces of 12th century foundations in the wall between the nave and chancel.*

*The chancel arch has traces of red medieval paint dated to the 12th century. All the rest is from the 19th century. In 1897 the tower was built to commemorate queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and about the same time the vestry was added.*

*There are other clues that there was an earlier church here. Two carved stones, from the 9th and 10th centuries have been found on the site suggesting there was an Anglo-Saxon Christian community here. Parts of at least two Cross shafts among them may have been preaching Crosses used even before a church was built. There are also two Norman lintels. In the chancel amongst the tombs and memorials of past rectors and parishioners there is a knight's tombstone of unknown date which has a large sword carved in the surface.*

*St Mary's Church was deconsecrated in the 1970's and the nave roof was removed in 1984. The chapel of ease in Levisham Village was built at some unknown date to help the elderly and infirm in winter and is now the parish church having been re-named St. John the Baptist. However a service is held at St Mary's once every summer.*

*The oldest grave stone in the churchyard is that of John Storry who died at the age of 19 in 1731.*

*Read about Lockton and Levisham heritage Group's investigation into the mystery of the church in the valley at the end of the leaflet.*

6. Retrace your footsteps to the junction and follow the main track up to the road.

7. Turn left and walk a short distance up the road until a bridlepath meets the road on the left and a footpath on the right, signposted tabular hills walk. Follow this steep path turning left at a T-junction. At the road just past the bench, bear right to go back into the village

#### **The Mystery of the Church in the Valley Project**

During 2004/2005 the Lockton & Levisham Heritage Group ran an investigation to find out why there was a church in the valley. As questioned earlier, was there an earlier settlement here? If so, what happened to it? Is the raised platform west of the present church the foundations of an early wooden one?

With the guidance of a community archaeologist the group examined old maps to look for changes in fields and other land marks and at documents for additional information. The church garth and the neighbouring field were inspected, carefully noting the flow of the stream and the raised platforms of earth. Two geophysical Surveys were run. Enough information was gathered to believe a small dig was justified and in the summer of 2005 two holes were excavated, one in the platform to the north of the church and the other to the west. In the former over 100 shards of pottery were found, all came from the 13th and 14th century suggesting they have remained there since that time. Soon after taking off the turf on the latter site a rough layer of cobbled stones was found, suggesting the possibility of a foundation of a building - a church?

The search goes on. There is more information about this project on our website.

[www.locktonlevisham.btck.co.uk](http://www.locktonlevisham.btck.co.uk)

This leaflet is one of a series covering Lockton and Levisham produced by the Lockton and Levisham Heritage Group funded by



LEVISHAM and the CHURCH IN THE VALLEY

A circular walk from St. John the Baptist Church in Levisham

DISTANCE- 3.5 km/2.2 miles

START - Grid reference SE 833906

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#### Notes on the Walk

(Please note that dogs will have to be carried over one of the stiles in this walk)

1. Leave the village by Little Field Lane, next to the Church with no through road sign. Follow this lane which curves past a small collection of houses, rounds a bend, and then straightens out until it turns sharply left. Ignore the footpath straight ahead and continue along the lane following it until it turns sharply to the right with a gate straight ahead.