



Lanes around Leomansley

A – Start at **Christ Church**, built in 1847 on land given by Richard Hinckley of Beacon Place with funds given by his wife Ellen Jane. Walk around to the rear of the church where you'll find the **Hinckley tombs** together with that of Hugh Woodhouse Acland, Ellen's son from her second marriage. Ellen Jane's first marriage was to Rev. William Robinson, and their daughters are the two Sleeping Children in Chantrey's marble sculpture at Lichfield Cathedral. Another former owner of Beacon Place is buried in a vault near to the Hinckley Tombs. Samuel Lipscomb Seckham was an architect from Oxford and for a period, the owner of Bletchley Park, which of course is best known for codebreaking operations during World War Two. He also contributed towards the enlargement of the church in 1887. The clock on the tower was donated in 1913 by Albert Octavius Worthington (one of the owners of the Worthington's Brewery in Burton on Trent), in memory of his wife Sarah. Mr Worthington owned much of Leomansley and lived at Maple Hayes (now a dyslexia school & research centre), which can be seen across the fields at various points on the walk. Walk back onto Christchurch Lane through the church's **Millenium Gates**, designed and forged in the year 2000 by David Tucker, a Master Blacksmith from Derbyshire.

B - Turn right out of the gates, and immediately you'll come to **The Cottage** at the edge of the churchyard. Apparently, this was built as a lodge for Beacon Place but from August 1875, was used as the residence of the schoolmaster or mistress of Christ Church school, who had to be 'competent, of good character & a member of the CofE'. Subsequent inhabitants included the sexton of Christ Church and students from Lichfield Theological College. Nowadays it's let privately, and often confuses people looking for the vicarage, which is further much down the lane.

C - The **Walsall Rd** once followed the route of what is now Christ Church Lane, and continued down the tree lined path next to the cottage, until it linked up with Sandford St. The road was realigned in 1832, and the path was turned into a **carriageway** from Beacon Place to Christ Church, where the Hinckleys had their own pew.

D - Walk around the bend in the lane, and on your right is **Martin Heath Hall**. Built in 1964 the hall was funded by and named after Edith Mary Heath (nee Martin) who lived at the now demolished house on the Walsall Rd known as Angorfa. It's the church hall and is also used for a variety of clubs and meetings, as a polling station, and for hire as a party venue. Within the last couple of years, there were plans to register the land at the back of the hall as a Village Green to prevent it being turned into allotments.

E - The Hinckleys also built a school room opposite the church. The playground was on the other side of the lane (where the two semi-detached 1920s houses now are). The original schoolrooms were condemned in 1908 and the new **Christ Church School** was built in its present position on the opposite side of the road. Mrs Sarah Worthington of Maple Hayes laid a foundation stone which said 'To the glory of God 1910' in April of that year. Apparently the old school room was converted into houses although I suspect these have now been demolished and replaced by the modern detached houses.

F - The **row of terraced houses** on the left was built in 1903 and I believe the outbuilding in the garden of the last house in the block could be an old stable. The cul-de-sac known as **The Dell** was once allotment gardens and tennis courts (belonging to the Friary Lawn Tennis Club founded 1937).

G – On the other side of the lane you'll see **The Rise**. This apartment block was built around 2002 and replaced **The Carpenter's Arms**, a pub that had kept the lane supplied with beer since around 1850. The name came from the trade of the original owner, James Page. Unfortunately, I can't see anything to remind people of the previous history of this site, other than possibly part of an old wall.

H - Keep walking down Christchurch Lane, and after crossing Leomansley Road you'll see **The Old Vicarage** (part of which is now known as **Easter Hill**) built in 1847 for the first vicar of Christ Church, T A Bangham. In 1947 it was divided into two separate houses, and the front section was further divided into flats. The new vicarage was built on the opposite side of the lane in 1957, on the former tennis courts of the Christ Church Lawn Tennis Club. One thing that's always puzzled me about the old vicarage is the bell on the outside. There's also an old post box in the wall.

I Just past the old vicarage there's a row of cottages that used to be known as **Old Leomansley**. I believe that they pre-date the church, school and vicarage, and were built around 1830. Initially they seem to have been mostly inhabited by workers at Leomansley Mill, and on its closure in 1861, several became derelict. In the 1880s, several of the residents were employed as railway workers. The last house in the row, April Cottage, sits at the edge of Leomansley Wood. This was previously two separate houses and water was provided by a pump near to where the garden shed is. It has been suggested that this was once a gamekeepers cottage, but no documentary evidence has been found to support this.

J Walk up the track (sometimes known as Pool Lane) with **Leomansley Wood** on your left. Old maps show that this path dates back to at least to the early 1800s. (For a longer walk you can veer left along another old track that once led to Maple Hayes and will take you through **Leomansley Wood** and into the later **Sloppy Wood**. Leomansley Wood is described as replanted ancient woodland which means that it is likely that the area has been continuously wooded since (at least) 1600, although the original broadleaf trees have been cut down and replaced at some point. As with all ancient woodland, it is incredibly important habitat for wildlife. In spring there are bluebells and wood anemones which make a walk here even more lovely than usual. Once on the track, keep an eye out for glimpses of the Cathedral's spires across the fields to your right.

K Take a left at **Leomansley Mill Farm**, and eventually you'll reach the driveway for **Leomansley Manor**. **Leomansley Brook** runs through the woods into the fishponds on your left. **Leomansley Mill** was built in 1791, on or near to where the new house is. This was the building that transformed Leomansley from a piece of waste land into a small community. and there are traces of what may have been the old millpool here too. The mill had a succession of owners (two of whom went bankrupt) before being sold in around 1860. All that seems to have been left was mill cottages that became accommodation for servants from Maple Hayes. From the 1950s to 1994, the old mill cottages were known as Leomansley House, home to local artist Eilidh Armour-Brown. The house burnt down, and was rebuilt and renamed Leomansley Manor in around 2006.

L Follow the public footpath alongside the drive and this will take you to a kissing gate marking the entrance to **Pipe Green**. Also known as the Moggs and originally bequeathed to the poor widows of Beacon St, the Green has been owned by a trust since 1793. The land has only been used for grazing (a tradition that continues with 12 to 18 cattle making the green their home between May and October each year!). As a result this is an important meadowland habitat supporting an incredible range of plants, birds and other wildlife. If you walk along the boundary wall of Leomansley Manor and head to the far corner you'll find a stone bench dedicated to Peter & Eilidh Armour Brown. From here you'll also be able to look across to Maple Hayes, where you can often see their deer in the park.

You can follow the course of Leomansley Brook or one of the other tracks across the Green. Once you reach the other side you need to pass through another kissing gate, and follow the line of trees to the football pitches located just off the A51. If you don't fancy a kick about, head for the small car park.

M Keep the **allotments** on your left as you follow the track back up to Christ Church Lane, but not before having a last peep at Leomansley Brook, before it disappears into a culvert under the A51 (reappearing in Beacon Park). This track has been here for at least 200 years. Based on the steep sides either side, particularly at the Christ Church Lane end, I think it could be a holloway and all along the way you can see where people have tried to make improvements to the sandy track with rubble. To the right, there are more allotments and the playground for the school (just behind where the original playground was!). At the end of this track, you'll find yourself back at Martin Heath Hall and Christ Church.