

St Mary's.....the Parish Church of Selly Oak

**SEVERN BOUND FROM OMBERSLEY**

**SATURDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2004**

No canal or railway in sight on this Autumn Ramble. Just for a change, a lovely black-and-white village and a beautiful stretch of the River Severn are the key features.

We start in Ombersley, often whizzed through from east to west en route to far-flung destinations, but built on a north-south axis and meriting more leisurely viewing. It is a parish with ancient Saxon roots deeply embedded in fertile soil, having first appeared in recorded history in AD 706 when it was given by a Deed of Gift to the Abbey of Evesham by Ethelweard. In the Domesday Book of 1086 it appears as Ambreslege, the word "lege" meaning a clearing in woodland, suitable for cultivation or a military camp.

The village did not escape the ravages of the plague. On a little green in the centre is a large stone trough, a Plague Stone, which, in its original place on the old packhorse road, west of the Court, warned travellers to keep away and formed a receptacle for food for the beleaguered villagers to collect.

The once heavily wooded valley has yielded a rich heritage of half-timbered houses. The greatest concentration of Listed Buildings built between 1450 and 1750 lies within a few hundred yards of the roundabout, twenty-eight houses being so listed. Beside the roundabout, the leaves of a huge old chestnut turn an unusual fiery red in autumn. Look out for this. Nearby stands St Andrew's Church with its splendid spire, built in 1825 by Thomas Rickman to replace the 13<sup>th</sup> century one which had become unstable, but the old chancel remains detached as the private chapel of the Sandys family.

The Manor of Ombersley came into the possession of the Sandys family in 1560 when Edwin Sandys was appointed Bishop of Worcester by Elizabeth I. He went on to become Bishop of London and Archbishop of York. Notice the Crown and Sandys Inn, and nearby the King's Arms, one of the many reputed stopping-places of Charles II after the Battle of Worcester.

After walking the village street we turn into Ombersley Park and can soon see Ombersley Court away to the right, built for the first Lord Sandys in 1724. A Wellingtonia tree planted by the Duke of Wellington about 1849 is now about 120 feet high. We are now on part of the Wychavon Way, passing some fish ponds on our way to the Severn. Standing high on the far side of the river are Holt Castle and St Martin's Church, both buildings being part Norman in origin and at the centre of a village which has long since vanished. The path through riverside meadows soon takes us to the Old Coal Wharf Inn, to give it its original name, at Holt Fleet for refreshment.

We continue under Telford's road bridge, built in 1828, and past the attractive Holt Lock, following the river upstream on the Severn Way to the Lenchford Hotel on the far side. Here we leave the Severn, turning up the lane and across fields to the quiet hamlet of Uphampton, one of five in the area that end in "hampton", and thence shortly back to Ombersley.

## ST MARY'S RAMBLE

SATURDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2004

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- MEETING TIME:** 10.45 am for start at 11.00 am
- PLACE:** OMBERSLEY MEMORIAL HALL, SANDYS ROAD, OMBERSLEY (off A4133)(Grid Reference 844641).
- LENGTH OF RAMBLE:** 5.5 miles of parkland, riverside path, country lanes and field paths with one gradual uphill section.
- MAP:** O.S. Landranger Sheet 150
- HOW TO GET THERE:** Follow A38 to Lydiate Ash, then M5 Southbound, leaving at Junction 5, signposted "A38 Droitwich". At roundabout at end of exit slip road take 4<sup>th</sup> exit SP "A38 Droitwich".
- Then after passing Chateau Impney continue straight on at traffic lights and at first roundabout. Take next exit, SP "Ombersley A4133" and take 3<sup>rd</sup> exit at roundabout (A4133).
- Follow this road to Ombersley roundabout and take 3<sup>rd</sup> exit, SP (A449) Kidderminster. Turn left opposite bakery, SP "Memorial Hall", into Sandys Road, and the car park is the first entrance on the left.
- DISTANCE:** About 20 miles. Allow 40 minutes from Selly Oak.
- REFRESHMENTS:** Will be provided at the Wharf Inn, Holt Fleet (off the A4133, to the left before the bridge).
- A selection of sandwiches and ploughman's lunches is available to order. Please consult the list in the church porch or circulated to St Gabriel's and St Michael's; it gives details and prices. Please enter your order fully and clearly.
- The list will be taken down after Choral Evensong on SUNDAY, 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, but please **DO NOT** leave it until the last minute.
- Pam Chiswell (475 3128) must know by then how many are coming, what you all want to eat, and whether you need a lift there and back.