



Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

1960's Plum Blossom Tour in the Vale of Evesham

SOUVENIR 2' GUIDE

PLUM BLOSSOM TOUR IN THE VALE OF EVESHAM




Photo: "Evesham Journal"

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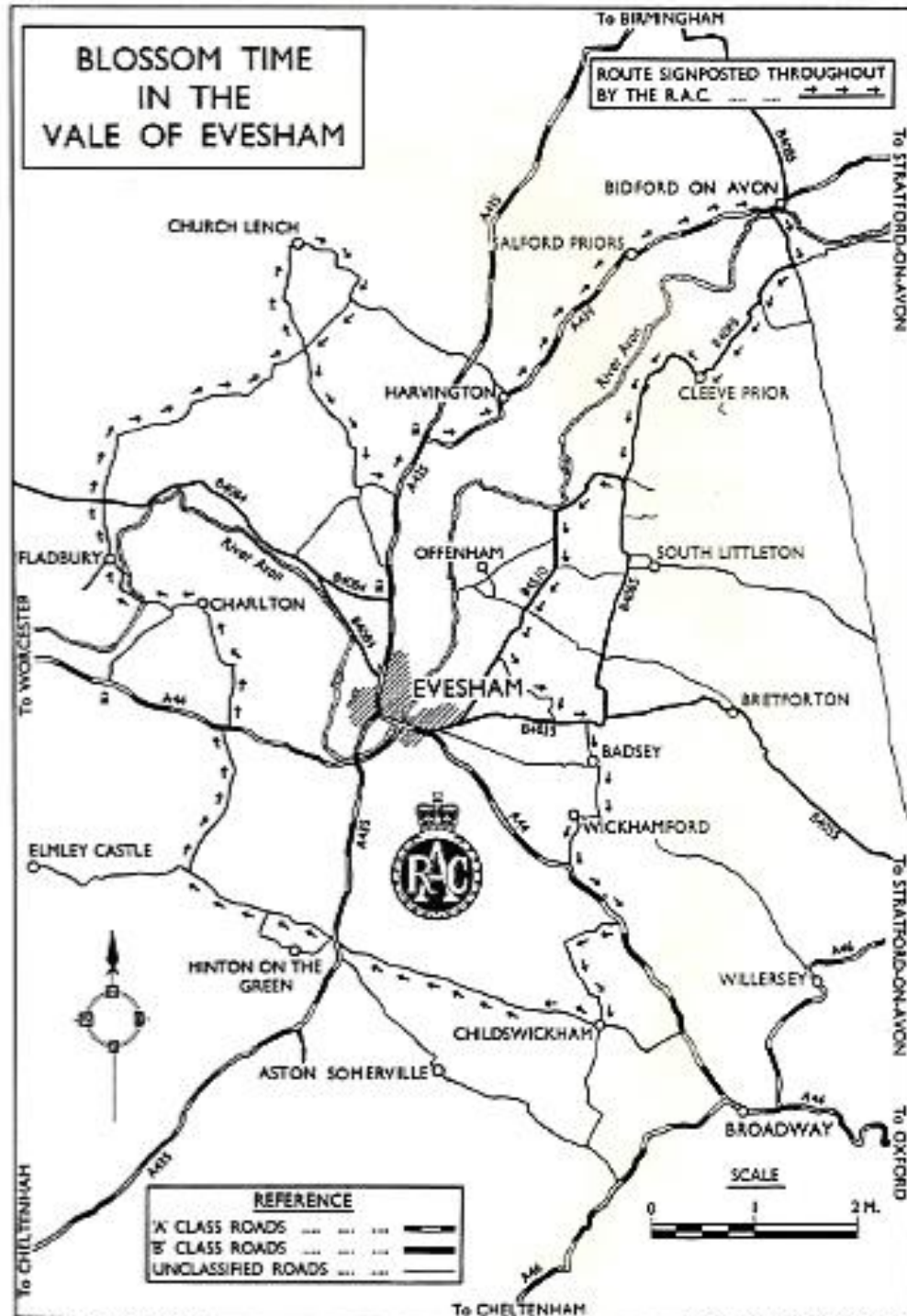
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Route Guide

It is assumed for the purpose of this itinerary that a car has joined the route at Norton $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Evesham on the A.435. If you commence off any other main road, please start at the appropriate place in the guide so marked.

Before turning from the A.435, note Norton Grange, at the junction of A.435 and A.439—an excellent place on the route for a meal. The first village is

HARVINGTON

There is a good pub, the Coach and Horses, well recommended by the local growers. Note also those beautiful black and white cottages.

SALFORD PRIORS

Look out for the handsome Tudor Hall, which was used as a nunnery after the French Revolution. A small company of nuns found shelter there after being expelled from their homeland.

From A.439 Stratford-upon-Avon Road — BIDFORD-ON-AVON

William Shakespeare called this "Drunken Bidford." It is said that once the strong drinking men of Bidford, so proud of their ability, issued a challenge to all and sundry to meet them. The men of Stratford-upon-Avon, including the redoubtable Shakespeare, took up the challenge one Saturday. Tankard after tankard was filled and emptied, until at last only the Bidford men sat on their seats, whilst the Stratford men lay under the tables. They had their noses pointed towards Stratford but only managed half a mile before falling asleep under a crab-apple tree. They didn't wake up until the early hours of Monday morning. So Shakespeare made his reference to "drunken Bidford." He often visited Bidford and sat on the old narrow bridge which you cross. It was repaired in the 1540s from the stones of the dissolved Leicester Abbey.

About $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles further on is

CLEEVE PRIOR

The large farm on the right as you enter the village is Manor Farm, owned by Mr. A. E. Wiley of

Anells Brewery. He has made this into a very well run modern farm. In the churchyard there is a yew tree over 600 years old. It spreads in front of the church, much of which was built in Norman times.

In the old houses on the left just past the very old King's Arms there is an excellent tea house (Mill House), where an excellent tea can be obtained. At the other end of the village there is an old house in ruins, to which a mystery is attached. About 100 years ago the family who lived there suddenly disappeared, leaving their goods and chattels just as they were. It is rumoured that they were all murdered and buried under the house. Since then no one has ever lived there and the house has fallen into the ruin you see. No one seems to know who owns it.

As you leave Cleeve Prior you have a wonderful view of the whole sweep of the North Cotswolds. The route next turns right to go over the Fish and Anchor hill. From here there is an excellent view of the hills opposite, through which the route later runs. The road brushes the Avon at the bottom of the hill. The ford can be crossed at normal water; the road across it goes to Harvington and comes out by the Coach and Horses. The route skirts the village of

OFFENHAM

with its very intensive salad and glass holdings. This village contains the fastest-growing glass acreage in the country—a sign of the changing times in the horticultural industry. As soon as you pass over the railway bridge (main line to London) turn left and pass through the hamlet of

ALDINGTON

with its old mill. This hamlet is administered by

BADSEY

This village has the largest population ground Evesham—over 1,200. Look out for the fine old timbered house on the right in the centre of the village. It was built by the Holy family on the site of a building which was used by the monks from the great Abbey at Evesham as a retreat and



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Route Guide—continued

hospital. Babsey, like all the villages in the district, has very strong connections with this great Abbey, dissolved in 1539.

WICKHAMFORD

Here an aunt of George Washington lies buried, with the Washington coat of arms (later being the foundation of the "Stars and Stripes") on the tomb. The timbered Manor House is the old home of the Sandys family. Sir Samuel Sandys bought it in Elizabethan times. The public house on the corner as you come into the London road is named after this very old family.

You are now on the A.44. At the top of the rise on the left excellent fresh eggs and poultry are obtainable from Mr. Bond.

A.44 from BROADWAY

As soon as you leave the main road you get a wonderful view of Breton Hill (500ft.). This hill dominates the whole of the Vale of Evesham.

About 1½ miles further on you skirt

CHILDSWICKHAM

In the churchyard Mary Lane was buried. She lived to be 131!! She was a marvel in her day. The route does not go through this very interesting village, but turns right and goes through some beautiful farmland to cross the

A.435 from CHELTENHAM

The next turn right brings you into Haselor Lane. Over to the right there are the plums which are grown in the parish of Hampton, now part of Evesham.

A.44 from WORCESTER

Enter Boston Lane, which leads into

CHARLTON

It was in this village that the family of Dingley lived for 400 years until their tragic end in the 18th century, when one brother murdered the other and was subsequently hanged. They had previously quarrelled as to who should be the Mayor of Evesham. The statue of Francis Dingley, who died in 1620, is in the church, together with

his wife and 19 children. On leaving Charlton the route crosses the Jubilee Bridge, a modern work, and enters

FLADBURY

This village is steeped in English history. Under the church tower, with a pointed arch, is a traceried tomb with a brass portrait of John Throckmorton. This knight was Under-Treasurer of England and went to Normandy in the wars of Henry V.

There is also a marble monument to William Lloyd, who is buried here. He was one of the seven bishops who stood up to James II over the Declaration of Indulgence. He with six others were imprisoned in the Tower of London, tried and were acquitted. There was tremendous rejoicing in the City of London without parallel in our legal history. Within a few hours political leaders of the day had sent for William of Orange to become King of England.

The route now crosses the old Worcester road,

B.4084

and comes upon the most attractive part of the tour, for more plums are grown in

THE LENCHES

than anywhere in the country.

The road goes over Badgers Hill and through Hill Furze and Sheriffs Lench. It turns left at Handgate corner to Church Lench, round by Arch Lench, where there is a wonderful view of the Vale on the left. Then back to Hipton Hill, where one again looks over the Vale across to Cleeve Prior and Offenham. Back down in the Vale we pass through Lenchwick and join the

A.435

at Twyford corner, a good stop for petrol and fruit. The last village is

NORTON

with its picturesque black and white cottages and blacksmith's shop.



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