**Vale of Belvoir - name derives from the Norman-French for *beautiful view*.**

**The Times Newspaper - Voted in the top places to live 2019**

*Canals, kestrels and castles: this unspoilt patch of farming country offers rural living at its unpretentious best*

A stretch of unspoilt English countryside at its patchwork green best, the Vale of Belvoir ranges east from Nottingham to Grantham and rolls north from Melton Mowbray to Newark. Farmhands on bicycles herd cattle along the lanes; buzzards and kestrels patrol skies that glitter with stars at night. Best of all, it is dotted with delightful red-roofed villages that are becoming popular with commuters to Nottingham or even London (via Grantham).

Yes, the area has undergone low-level “Cotswoldification”, with Farrow & Ball shades making their mark alongside shepherd’s-hut glamping and Belvoir Castle’s new faux-rustic Engine Yard retail development. Yet it retains the lack of pretension that is the Vale’s real appeal.

Good old-fashioned stilton and pork pies come from here, and if food is described as artisan, it will have been produced by hand to a generations-old recipe, not invented last week by a wide-eyed hipster. This is exemplified by Dickies, an unashamedly rustic cowshed in Plungar. Choose your steak from the counter (you pay by cut and weight) and they will cook it over an open fire: don’t forget to add a portion of triple-cooked chips or greens grown just outside the door.

Unsurprisingly, there are plenty of cosy pubs, notably the Wheel Inn at Branston (nothing to do with the pickle) and the Dirty Duck at Woolsthorpe, but the real joy of the Vale is being outdoors. You could get involved in the Belvoir Hunt – though not everyone’s a fan – or get on your mountain bike for the annual off-road Viking Challenge, in aid of Redmile School, and brave the Belvoir Castle Tough Mudder. Or just enjoy the scenery on an exhilarating hilltop walk through Belvoir Woods, or a gentler stroll along the Grantham Canal, now more fragrant than in its busy 19th-century heyday, when it was used to bring “night soil” from Nottingham to fertilise the fields. BTW It’s pronounced Beever, just so you know.

**Get connected** Transport links in the Vale are surprisingly good. Nottingham is a 35-minute drive from Belvoir Castle and East Midlands airport is 45 minutes away. It’s 18 minutes by train from Bingham to Nottingham and 20 to Grantham, from where a few people make the daily commute to London King’s Cross (1 hour 8 minutes, if you’re lucky).

**Insider view** “Coming here always feels like a holiday,” says Grace Ross, a veterinary nurse who lives in Plungar. “It’s a real haven.”

**Education** Several village primaries are rated outstanding by Ofsted; Toot Hill School, in Bingham, is an outstanding secondary. Also within easy reach are the Kesteven and Grantham Girls’ School and the King’s School (boys) in Grantham, and Rushcliffe School, in Nottingham, three of the best state secondaries in the East Midlands, according to The Sunday Times Parent Power guide.

**Air quality** No reported concerns.

**Why we love it** Delightfully down-to-earth English countryside.

**Scalford** is a village and civil parish in the Melton borough of Leicestershire, England. It lies 4 miles to the north of Melton Mowbray at the southern end of the Vale of Belvoir. In the 2011 census the parish (including Thorpe Arnold and Wycomb) had a population of 608.

The name of the village is derived from Old English and originally meant shallow ford. It has retained its current spelling for at least 440 years, being shown as 'Scalford' on the map of Warwickshire and Leicestershire.

**History of Scalford**

 “The Scaldmere was a sheet of water covering a considerable part of the position at present occupied by the town of Melton. It was supplied by a river called the ‘Skald’ running down the Scalford valley and from which it is said the name of this village in Old English, is derived, there having been a shallow ford near the spot where the place now stands” (Gill in his book on Methodism in the Melton Mowbray Circuit)

The Doomsday Book records the village name as Scaldeford. In 1066 it was ruled by 5 Saxon Thanes but by 1086, the date of Doomsday, the Lord of the Manor was one Robert de Bucy and the tenantin-chief was a Countess Judith. It was described as ‘quite large’ with 32 households and ‘very large’ for tax purposes, having a value of 14.3 gelds; of the households 5 were villagers, 13 smallholders and 11 freemen. There were 12 ploughlands with 1½ plough teams for the Lord of the Manor and 6 men’s plough teams, in addition there was 30 acres of meadow. Down the track, off the back road to Melton, to what is now Goldsmith Grange you can still find the very faint remains of the old medieval village of Ringlethorpe

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the writers of the various Leicestershire and Rutland Directories described Scalford as a pleasant and one of them even as a salubrious village and parish in the Hundreds of Framland situated about 3 miles from Melton Mowbray. White’s Directory of 1877 went further informing us that it is ‘picturesquely seated between two rivulets which flow from the hills on the south side of the Vale of Belvoir to the River Wreake. What today is known as Scalford Brook was originally called the River Scald and thus giving us the name Scalford because the river was forded at this point.

In the early days of the nineteenth century it was also important to establish relationship with church and state and so these directory writers were at pains to say that not only was Scalford part of the Framland Hundred, which was part of the Northern Division of the County of Leicester, as far as County District Courts were concerned but that it was part of the Framland Deanery, in the archdeaconry of Leicester in the diocese of Peterborough. Leicester was not to become a cathedral city again, until 1926. At that time the parish of Chadwell with Wycomb was amalgamated with Scalford

However, as we have seen, Scalford is much older than this, in ancient times there was a feast held on the first Sunday after Michaelmas and later a market and a fair. In 1303 William Revell had a grant of a fair, market and a free warren. The church of St. Egelwin the Martyr, dates back to the 13th century but the Nave and Chancel could be 1150 with possible elements from as far back as Saxon or Norman times and it is claimed that there was a Roman settlement where the village now stands. As far as I am aware this is the only parish church in England to bear such a name. Egelwin/Ethelwin/Ailwin was a monk and a hermit the brother of Kenwalch (King of the West Saxons 643-674 AD), and that he was a very pious man who suffered bad health but was a miraculous healer, hence the beatification.

In the churchyard there are the steps, base and portion of the shaft of an ancient cross, possibly the remains of the original market cross repositioned there after the market finished. The parish registers date from 1558; the originals are on parchment and are still in fair condition. The village suffered from the plague, in 1610, there being 49 burials during the months of April, May, June and July, the previous and following years there were only 8 and 6 burials respectively.

The Church originally had a spire, the fourth highest in Leicestershire, but it fell on the 19th January 1636 taking part of the vicarage with it. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the tower, without its spire, was rebuilt in 1639. There were 3 bells in the tower dated 1595 and inscribed ‘God save the Queen’, 1615 ‘Celorum Christe plateat Tibi rex sonus iste’ (To Christ the King of Heaven and may the sound ring out), 1616 ‘God save the Church’. Apparently, they had been cast in the churchyard. They were taken down in 1939 when the tower was deemed unsafe by virtue of death watch beetle and one of the bells was cracked. They were recast and tuned by Taylors of Loughborough and put back and rededicated on 1st October 1939 just in time for the War. In 1845 the chancel was rebuilt at the expense of the Duke of Rutland who was the Lord of the Manor. In 1859 the church was restored, and a new organ erected at a cost of £150, thus giving a seating capacity of 320. The parish was enclosed in 1765.

There were at least three mills during the village’s history. A water mill existed long before 1766 and was situated in the field below the Dairy with the mill pond fed by the brook. Near the ‘horse pool’ was a ford known as Mill Ford. There had been an earlier mill, but it had disappeared by the 18th century but old maps refer to an ‘Old Mill Field’

A windmill was constructed near Thorpe Road in about 1766 by Thomas Morris and was still shown on the 1918 OS map. Another windmill was built not far from Scalford Hall. In 1870 the land where the mill once stood was owned by Thomas Roberts who was described in 1863 and the 1871 census as a miller and baker.

The acreage of the parish seemed to be between 2415 and 2522 during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the population varying between 517 in the 1841 census, reaching a maximum of 684 in 1881 and then falling back to 600 in 1886, rising a little to 631 in 1901 and 633 in 1905 then falling again to 581 in 1921. The writers of the directories are all of the opinion that the parish spring water is ‘very clear … and provides a constant and plentiful supply’ which was on land owned by the Kirk family for which the Melton Mowbray Urban District Council paid £15 pa in 1941 and which was pumped down to the town from a pump house by the bridge.

On a parish visit in 1832 the Archdeacon commented that “there ought to be a resident Clergyman in this large and neat village”. Daniel Wagstaff was curate at the time and John Morgan the Vicar who was living in Bristol. The services each Sunday were alternate between Scalford and Chadwell, but the records tell us that there were only four communion services in the year at Scalford which leads us to believe that David Wagstaff may have been looking after another parish.

Henry Twells Mogeridge who served the village from 1891 to his death in November 1921 also exerted a positive influence in death as in life. After his death and the church yard being closed in 1926, his widow Fanny, who had been deaf since the age of 38, gave finance for land on Station Road, to the Parish, to be used as a cemetery. It is most interesting to note how many of the clergy, their wives and or their children were buried at Scalford.

A new vicarage was built in 1832 on the foundations of the existing building which by then was in very poor condition, as too were the outbuildings. Little wonder if the clergy were not in residence for any great period of time. It is recorded that in 1793 the original property was thatched, it had five rooms on the ground and first floors with a large attic.

Today there are several buildings and structures which have graded status in line with the history and relevance of a pretty ironstone village of north Leicestershire.