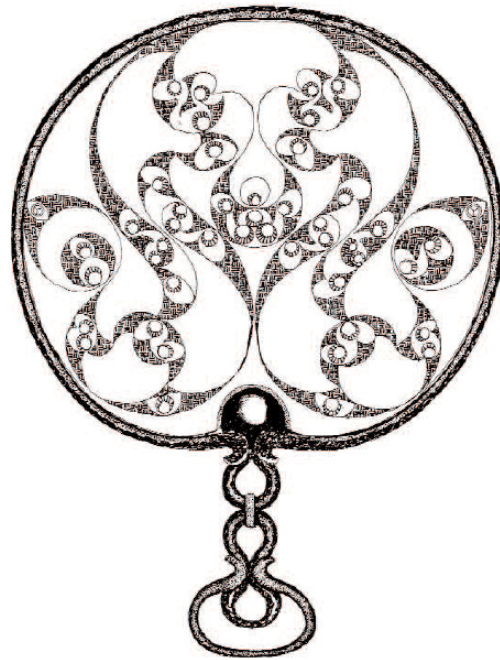


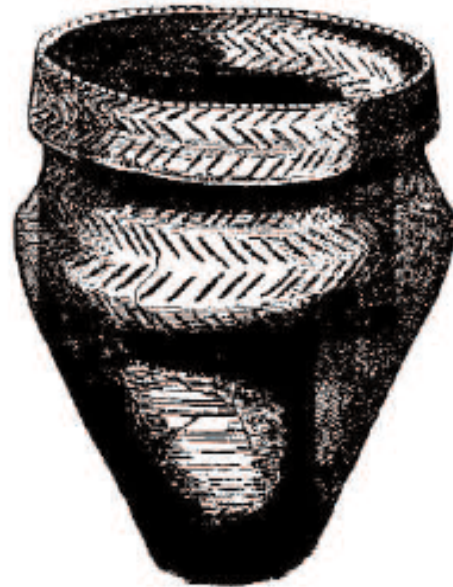
An Historical Guide to...



Desborough

Desborough has the appearance of being a relatively recent town but its history can be traced back to the Bronze Age four thousand years ago.

By the Iron Age, Desborough had become, it seems, the base of a locally important family or lineage. Items accompanying burials all point to prestige goods and the display of wealth. One such luxury item is the celebrated Desborough Mirror dating from the 1st Century BC. It is a masterpiece of Celtic artistry made in bronze and decorated in a style known as La Tene. Comprising of spirals, loops and swirls which interweave to form intricate patterns, it was surely a cherished possession of some great lady.



Bronze Age Urn Similar urns have been found in and around Desborough



The beautiful Desborough Mirror in an outstanding example of Celtic art. It is in the British Museum's collection (Drawing: Richard Watte)

Of equal beauty is the 7th Century AD Anglo-Saxon necklace found to the east of St Giles' Church in 1876. It consists of thirty-seven gold beads from which hangs a cross of gold set with a rich red garnet. It came from one of several graves discovered off Paddock Lane and accompanied a female burial. It could represent one of the earliest symbols of Christianity in the country and is kept at the British Museum.

The area produced other men willing to stand by their religious convictions such as Desborough's Non-Conformist vicar, Reverend Thomas Browning who, in 1662, was forced to leave his church and became Minister of Rothwell's Independent Church.

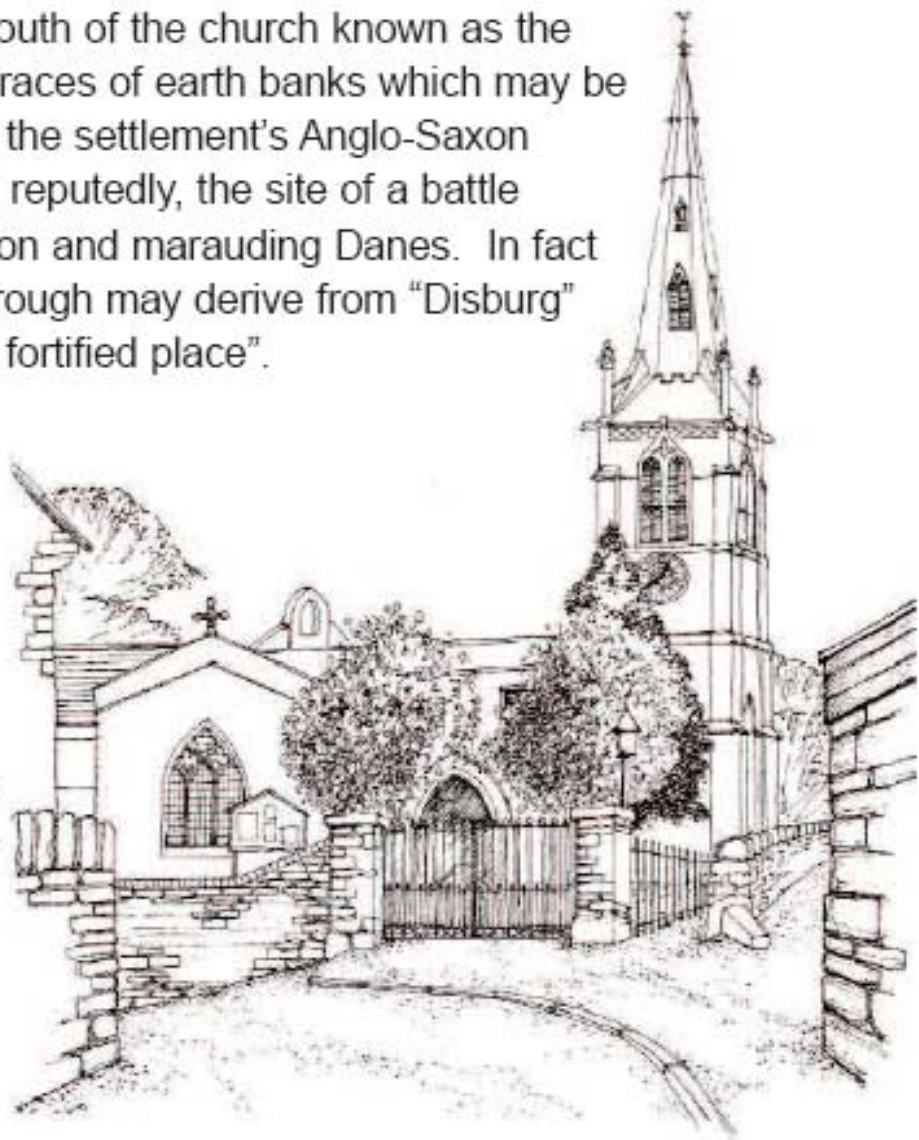
It was at this time that the town became a centre for spinning and weaving woollen and linen fabrics. Local wool was used to produce fine cloth and flax for linen was grown beside Ise Brook. The industry suffered when Banbury became a major weaving centre with the loss of many jobs in the mid-19th Century. To counter this, silk weaving was introduced and the first factory opened in Paddock Lane in 1832. This in turn was shortly to be replaced by footwear manufacture which became one of two major employers in the town, the other being the Desborough Co-operative Society.

The Society was founded in 1863 by the local men including John and Ruben Coe, Charles Allen, John Leago, Samuel Ginns, William Fenton and Robert Marlow, to counter exploitation of weavers by their agents who found them work but insisted that they brought their groceries from shops that the agents' owned. Many weavers found themselves in debt as a consequence. The Co-operators answer was to open their own shops and give loans to pay off existing debts. The enterprise took off and the Society soon opened other shops. Two years after its foundation in 1863, the Desborough Co-operative Society became affiliated to the national Co-operative Wholesale Society and opened a large local factory producing corsets and lingerie.

Desborough continues to grow and develop with a population today of some 8,100. A major employer is Rigid Containers with other diverse companies on the small industrial estate on Pipwell Road. The main shopping area along the High Street and Station Road has a good range of shops, two public houses, The Oak Tree (7), The George Hotel (8) and a Public Library (9). Other facilities include a leisure centre (10) offering a range of sporting activities and a park (11) with a bowling green, football pitch and play area.

In a field to the south of the church known as the Damms (1), are traces of earth banks which may be all that remain of the settlement's Anglo-Saxon fortifications and, reputedly, the site of a battle between the Saxon and marauding Danes. In fact the name Desborough may derive from "Disburg" meaning "sacred fortified place".

St Giles' church dates from 1223 AD but probably stands on the site of an earlier Saxon one. The tower and broach spire were added some time around 1460 AD.

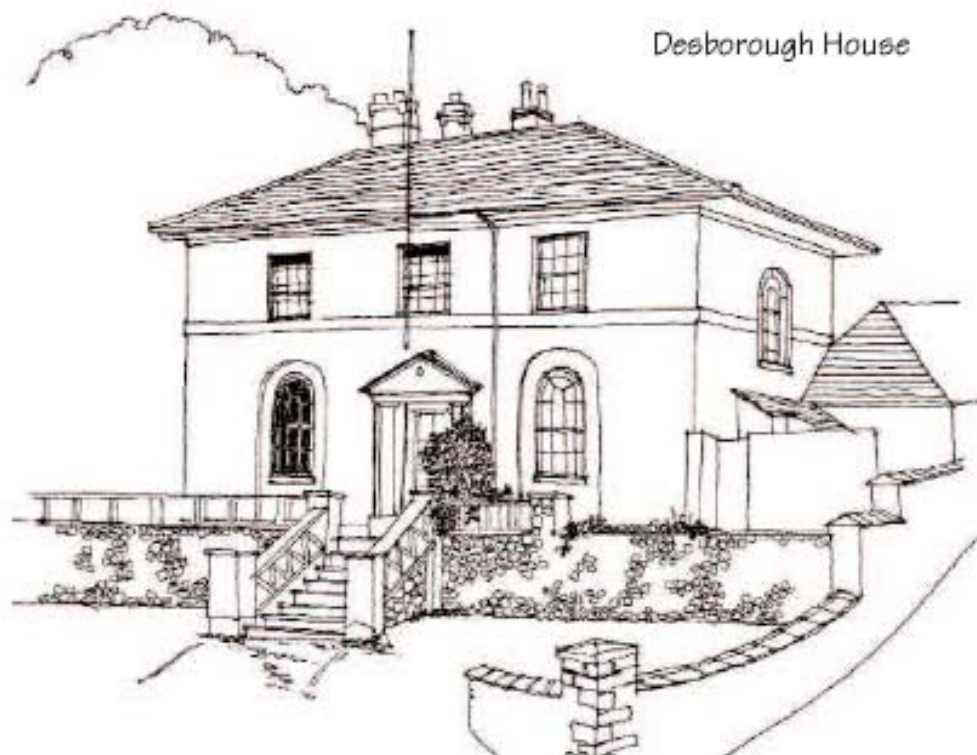


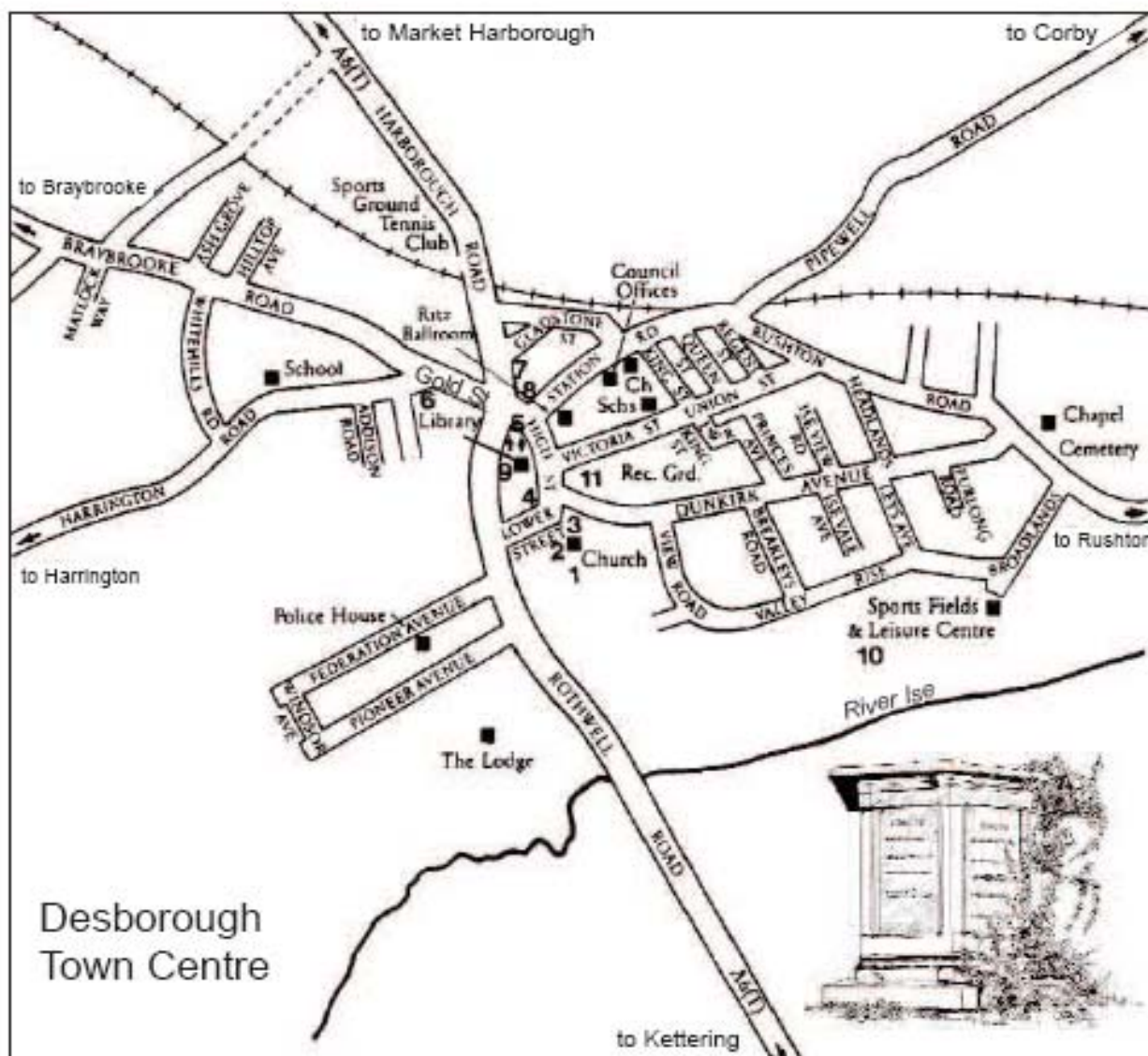
In the Domesday Book of 1086, it is variously referred to as "Dereburg", Desburgh" and "Deisburg" meaning "place of judgement". Either way, it seems that Desborough was a locally important power base.

The oldest remaining building in the town is undoubtedly St Giles' Church (2), built around 1225 AD most likely on the site of an earlier Saxon one. The church is light and airy and contains interesting sculptures, in particular the decorated Tudor canopy above the Rood

screen staircase displaying Tudor roses and the “Stafford Knot”, the emblem of the powerful Stafford family who owned much of the land around Desborough.

The town has other buildings of architectural merit. Two are close by the church: eighteenth century Church House (3) and Desborough House (4), an elegant early 19th Century stuccoed building (now the Services Club) with a classical facade featuring graceful Doric pillars.





Crown Copyright reserved

Grateful thanks to Paul Ansell for line drawings.

These details are believed to be correct at the time of going to press. The entries must not be reproduced for commercial purposes without the written permission of Kettering Borough Council

