



**heritage open days**



## **Food on Kett's Heights**

**Kett's Heights has many claims to fame. It has the remains of a medieval chapel, was Robert Kett's HQ in 1549 during Kett's Rebellion, and became a terraced garden during the 19th century when it was owned by the gas company.**

**The Heights has been and still is a surprisingly rich source of food. This trail takes you round the site to look for the signs of past cultivation, and points out the food that is still available.**

## Kett's Heights site plan & location.

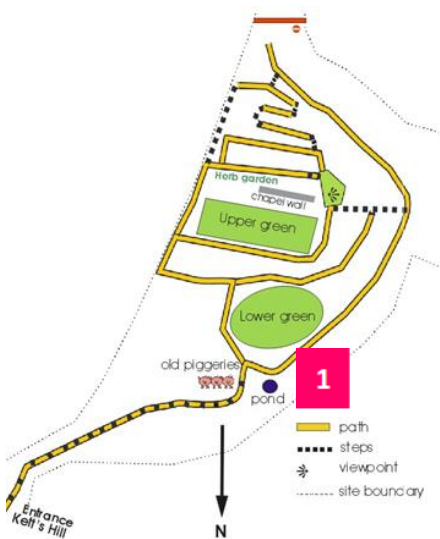


Entrance to Kett's Heights  
Postcode NR1 4EX  
Grid ref. TG 243091



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# World Wars 1 & 2 - Piggeries and pond



During the Second World War the need to produce food locally became critical. One way of supplementing meat rations was to join a "Pig Club".



For centuries, gardeners and smallholders kept poultry and the odd pig or two for their own use. During WW2 the government encouraged groups of people to form clubs, to buy, feed and look after pigs.

Each club member was required to contribute money and share in the care of the pigs. The pigs were fed mostly with scraps from homes, cafés, bakeries, and anything edible that came to hand. Clubs were also allowed to purchase small rations of feed or corn to supplement this meagre diet.

When the pigs were slaughtered half of the carcasses were sold to the Government, to help with rationing, and the remainder was divided between club members, as either pork or bacon.

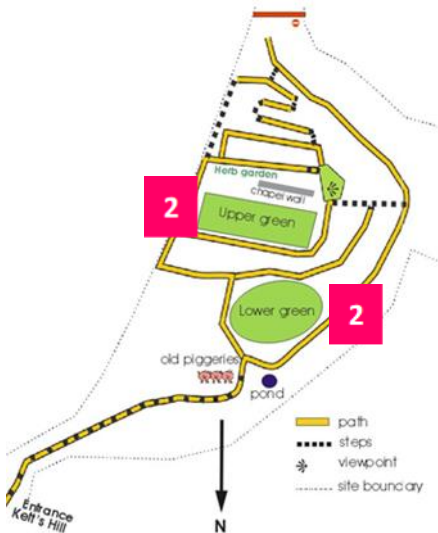


The site of an old stable block on Kett's Heights was converted into a piggery for a "Pig Club", while a concrete-lined pond (down the slope on the right) was used as a source of water for the livestock.



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## Gas Company - Lower and Upper Greens

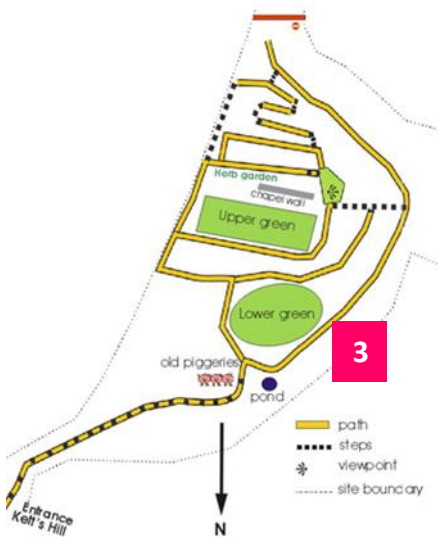




During the early 20th century, when Kett's Heights was owned by the Gas Works, the area was effectively the private kitchen garden of the manager of the Gas Works. The lower green grew asparagus and salad vegetables. The upper green was given as an allotment to a long-standing employee of the Gas Works in recognition of long service. His daughter, now an old lady in her 90s, remembers the fruit and vegetables that he grew.



# Walnuts



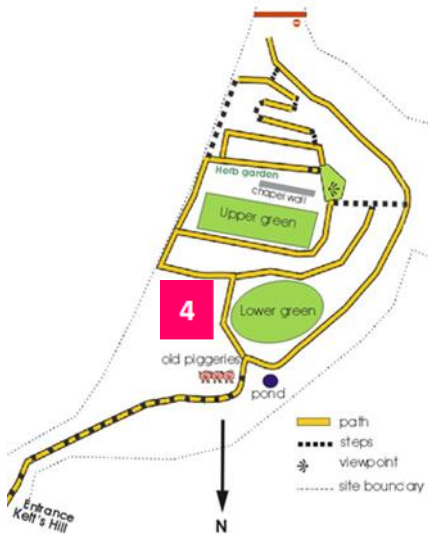
There is a fine **walnut** tree next to the Lower Green.



In most years the squirrels manage to collect all the nuts but in 2020 there was such a glut that there were enough for people, and one of our hedgehogs got a taste for them as well.



## Acorns



There are a number of **oak** trees on Kett's Heights.



**Acorns** served an important role in early human history and were a source of

food for many cultures around the world as they can be ground into flour. Acorns have frequently been used as a coffee substitute, particularly when coffee was unavailable or rationed, notably by the Confederates in the American Civil War and Germans during World War 2. Acorns were also a major source of food for pigs, which were housed on Kett's Heights.



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# St Michael's Chapel – Greenhouses





In the late 11th century Herbert Losinga, the first bishop of Norwich, embarked upon an ambitious building programme including the magnificent cathedral below. A Saxon church dedicated to St Michael was among the buildings demolished to make room for the cathedral. To make amends, Losinga built a small replacement chapel on what is now called Kett's Heights.

For several centuries the monks of nearby St Leonards Priory held daily



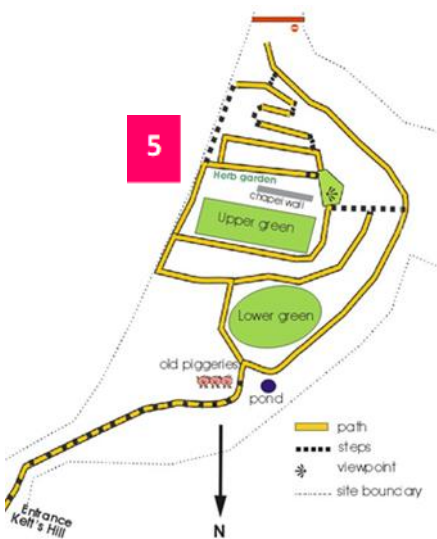
services. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-41), St Leonards Priory was given to the Dukes of Norfolk. The third Duke's son, the Earl of Surrey, built a fine house called Mount Surrey on the site while little St Michael's Chapel fell into disuse. It had a brief moment of fame in 1549 when it served as Robert Kett's headquarters during Kett's Rebellion.

In the 19th century the derelict chapel walls housed a series of greenhouses, probably like this, which grew exotic fruit heated with boilers fed by the Gas Works.



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## Monastic past - Herb garden

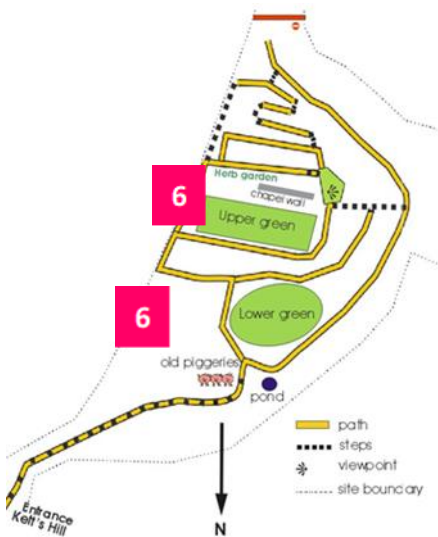




The Friends of Kett's Heights have created a herb garden in the ruins of St Michael's Chapel. It was felt that this would be a suitable tribute to the monks of old, who would have grown a wide variety of herbs for culinary and medicinal use.



# Fruit orchards





There are a number of fruit trees on the upper levels of Kett's Heights including **apples, pears, cherries** and **plums**. Fruit trees were probably introduced when the Gas Works manager was creating his gardens, although those that are here now are probably much younger. The trees had become very overgrown but recent work to remove ivy and brambles

has given the trees more air and light. The Norwich Fringe Project has helped by planting 20 new apple, plum and cheery trees around the site.

It is the aim of the Friends of Kett's Heights to manage these trees and create food for free.



The oldest **apple** tree is on the Lower Green and is very popular for climbing.



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# Japanese quince





This is a garden plant which has been introduced to Kett's Heights. The spring flowers are lovely and the resulting hard fruit can be made into jam or jelly.



# Hazelnuts



The Friends are developing a **hazel grove** on Kett's Heights next to the herb garden. Hazel trees have lovely catkins in the spring and the nuts are much loved by Squirrels.



## Rose hips



There are a number of wild **roses** growing on Kett's Heights, which are being encouraged by the Friends.



The **rose hips**, which appear in the autumn, are commonly used as a herbal tea, often blended with hibiscus, and an oil is also extracted from the seeds. They can also be used to make jam, jelly, marmalade, and rose hip wine. Rose hip soup, "nyponsoppa", is especially popular in Sweden. Beware, however, as the hairs on the hips are very itchy.



# Brambles

**Blackberries** grow everywhere on Kett's Heights and there are also some wild raspberries.



# Alexanders – a popular food from the past



Alexanders is rampant on Kett's Heights - a handsome but invasive plant. It is native to the Mediterranean but is able to thrive farther north and it loves Kett's Heights.

The plant was introduced to the UK by the Romans, who called it the 'pot herb of Alexandria.' Every part of the plant is



edible. Roman soldiers would carry the plant on long journeys, as they could eat the leaves, the stems, the roots, and the buds.

The flavour of Alexanders is a cross between celery and parsley, and was used in medieval cooking in place of celery. One 17th century text describes young shoots used in salads or a "vernal pottage" and an early 18th century recipe for Irish Lenten Potage includes alexanders, watercress and nettles.

Alexanders fell out of favour in the 18th century when celery was mass produced. Alexanders are not commonly eaten in the modern era, but have found some renewed use in exotic "foraged" food recipes and restaurants. You can find recipes on the Eden Project website <https://www.edenproject.com/learn/for-everyone/edible-wild-food-alexanders>

# Enjoy Kett's Heights with a picnic

Kett's Heights is a great place for a family picnic. Although there is much here that is edible, we would encourage you to bring your own food and have a great time.



**The Friends of Kett's Heights hope that you have enjoyed your visit.**



**We were set up in 2015 to help Kett's Heights become:**

- ✚ A welcoming space for the local community and visitors to Norwich**
- ✚ An attractive space with a wide diversity of plants and wildlife**
- ✚ An event space with activities to suit a wide audience**
- ✚ An educational space where its long and diverse history can be investigated and interpreted**

**Check out our website and Facebook page for our latest news.**

**[www.kettsheights.co.uk](http://www.kettsheights.co.uk)**

**[www.facebook.com/kettsheights](http://www.facebook.com/kettsheights)**

**If you would like to support our work do join the Friends. It is only £5 a year for your whole household.**

