



Wootton Rivers

Approaching the village of Wootton Rivers from the east, the original Lock Keeper's House (now a private house) is on the left of the towpath. This cottage was built prior to the construction of the canal and was purchased by the canal company as a lodging for the lock keeper.

Wootton Rivers appears in Domesday Book but was then known simply as Wootton. At the end of the 13th century the lands of Wootton were acquired by the powerful de la Riviere family, and this connection resulted in the family's shortened name becoming part of the village's name.

Heading towards the centre of the village is St Andrew's Church. Its exact origin is not known, but it was built in the 14th century on the site of an earlier Saxon church, and a number of Saxon pieces of stonework form part of its construction. The church underwent a major renovation in the mid-19th century (1860-61), and this unfortunately destroyed much of the medieval stone and timber-work in the chancel.

Today the church is famous for what has become known as 'Jack Spratt's Clock'. In the run-up to the coronation of George V in 1911 the rector suggested that the village should commission a clock to commemorate the event. However, the estimates proved too high and the idea was rejected until John Kingstone (Jack) Spratt, a self-taught mechanic and watch and clock maker and repairer, offered to build the clock if the village would help and supply him with the metal to do so. A miscellany of scrap metal arrived on his doorstep, and from this he miraculously fashioned a three-face clock for the church's bell-tower, which kept excellent time. The south clock face uniquely has the words GLORY BE TO GOD in place of the usual numerals. Jack Spratt added a chiming device in 1912 that produced a different chime every hour and quarter hour during working hours. The clock was restored in the Millennium when an electric winding mechanism was introduced and it has again undergone another refurbishment in 2021.

