



Tewkesbury

Here in Tewkesbury, you will see one of the best medieval black and white townscapes in England. With fine half timbered, elaborately carved doorways and charming narrow alleys where the eaves of crooked timber buildings nearly touch. The town is an ancient settlement at the confluence of the rivers Severn and Avon. The surrounding rivers and flood plain have prevented the old town from expanding so its long, thin profile has hardly altered since the Middle Ages. Most of the old town lies within the Tewkesbury Conservation Area and over 350 of the buildings are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest. These trails are generally flat and pick out a selection of the most interesting parts of the town.

Alleyways trail - Trail One

Alleyways began to appear towards the end of the 17th century due to the increased pressure for housing and restricted land supply. They were built at right angles to the street and as the original plots were very narrow, the lack of floor space was compensated for in height, often three or four storeys. Courts appeared where changes of ownership caused the alleys to turn back upon themselves forming a square.



The alleyways acted as drains and rubbish dumps and were the only source of light and air for many households. Cholera and diphtheria were rife in these unhealthy, filthy conditions.

As you walk along the alleys and courts, try to imagine the cramped and putrid conditions of life in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Tewkesbury is remarkable in the number of alleyways which lead from the main streets of the town. Originally there were about 90 alleyways, but today only 30 remain. As you will discover, many are named after the families who used to live in and owned the property.

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Tewkesbury Heritage and Visitor Centre
Visit Tourist Information on the ground floor of Tewkesbury Heritage Centre, 100 Church Street
Open: Easter to October, Mon-Sat 10am-4pm
November-March, Mon, Tues, Fri and Sat 10am-4pm
Local and national accommodation booking
Local attraction and event information
Tickets for local events and National Express
Maps, guides, gifts and souvenirs
Local transport information
Walking and cycling route information
Tel 01684 855040
tewkesburyt@tewkesbury.gov.uk
www.visittewkesbury.info

By road - the area is well served by the M5 to Birmingham, the North and the South West by the M4 to London and the M50 to South Wales. Nearby are the M40 and the M42.
By rail - there are stations at Ashchurch (Tewkesbury), Evesham, Cheltenham & Gloucester.



Location

Start from Tewkesbury Heritage and Visitor Centre

Turn right out of the centre and walk along Church Street before taking the first turning on your right into St Mary's Lane. Opposite the car park, turn left into

A. Turner Court. The court is named after Mr Turner, a stocking weaver. Records for him and his family can be seen on a tomb in the Old Baptist Chapel burial ground. The walls at the entrance into Church Street date from the 15th century.



B. Old Baptist Chapel Court. As you look through the narrow entrance, the full length of the court, some 57 metres, can be seen. The court houses what is probably the first baptist chapel to have existed in southern England.

At the end of the court is a burial ground. Notice the gravestones of the

Shakespeare family. Walk to the end of the burial ground and look out over the view of the Mill Avon and the Ham water meadow. As you walk back along the court, notice the possible pieces of gravestone amongst the paving. On the right, opposite the chapel, notice the raised floor level of the building which is the Old Malthouse. The raised floor denotes a space below in which the fires were burnt to heat the malt.

Come back out onto Church Street, cross at the pedestrian crossing onto the abbey side of the road. Head left, turning right into Gander Lane at the Crescent before turning left in Swilgate Road.



C. Lilley's Alley. This is one of the earliest alleys in the town. The alley contains many fine examples of half-timbered buildings, one of which is 'Claypipes', a delightful



Finish in Tewkesbury High Street.

K. Clarks Alley. Notice the raised stepping bricks in the paved floor - these would give purchase to people carrying heavy goods up the steep section. In the 19th century the Misses Clarke lived here and ran a small school for young ladies.

The lane leads down to the riverside.

J. Red Lane. Next to the Tudor House Hotel. Apply named due to the colour of the red sandstone, as your reach the bottom on the lane, bear left and look for the building on your right. This modest building was once the workshop belonging to Bill Shakespeare, famous boat builder and racer who tragically died in 1971 on Lake Windermere whilst practicing for the Grand Prix. (Turn left.)

I. Old Post Office Alley. As the name suggests the post office was located here until 1840. The alley also housed a substantial number of stocking frame workers and at the Oldbury Road end of the alley was a stocking shop. (Turn right back along High Street, crossing over the road at the pedestrian crossing).

house which has been made from two cottages. Clay pipes would have been made and hung out to dry on racks along the walls. (Head right into Barton Street.)



D. Fletcher's Alley. Mr Fletcher, a whitesmith and gunsmith, lived on the front street. Stop at the entrance and look up to see the late Victorian arch which is the only one of its kind remaining in town. (Turn left).

E. Hughes Alley. Before being taken down in the 1960s, at the end of the alley stood a small building on the

side of Swilgate Brook which was the wash house for residents. As you walk along the alley notice the bend - this is designed specifically to prevent the tunneling of the wind. For a period, the alley was also known as Workhouse Alley. (Turn right).

F. Fish Alley. As you walk down the alley, you may notice a change in the brickwork height on your left - this denotes the original positions of an open space dying area. (Turn left then left again into Saffron Road).

G. Yarnells Alley. William and Richard Yarnell had a chair-making business in the mid-1800s. At the Barton Street entrance to the alley notice the original timbers, standing on raised blocks to prevent decay. (Turn left, cross over the road at the pedestrian crossing and head towards the Cross. Turn right into the High Street).



H. Walls Court. Although called a court it does have a thoroughway onto Oldbury Road. In 1890 the council offered to repair the paving if the owners would 'throw it open to the public and abandon their claim to keep it as a private court'. They agreed, it was paved with blue bricks and became a right of way. As the alleys dog legs

to the right, you can still see the old bakery and confectionery building which was owned by Cecil Crouch & Son. (Turn left).

HERITAGE TRAIL – TRAIL 2



Start at the Heritage Centre

1. Out of the Hat. This superbly restored listed building is home to Tewkesbury's Tourist Information Centre and innovative Heritage Centre on the two floors above. The best way to begin your exploration of this lovely market town is with a visit.

The façade and middle range of the building date to 1664, but much of the front range and jetty is dated 1465-95. From the outside you can see the Beadles hat, an example of an early 19th century trade sign, used in the times before most people were able to read. Look closely at the door of 100 Church Street, you can see the initials BKR and the date 1664 on the doorhead which refer to Bartholomew and Katherine Read. The date refers to when the building was refronted in the 17th century. Make sure you go inside and learn about the town before you start your heritage trail.



2. The Royal Hop Pole (Wetherspoons). This was one of Tewkesbury's coaching inns. The reception area was once a large double-gated coach driveway giving access to the yard and stables. The royal arms are shown on the top of the portico and Queen Mary stayed at the hotel in 1930. In another of Tewkesbury's literary associations, a plaque on the wall informs us that Mr Pickwick, (The Pickwick Papers by Charles Dickens) dined here and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.



3. No. 66 Church Street. An example of a recently restored timber-framed building which has been dated by analysis of tree rings to 1475. The outside has been redecorated in a traditional limewash whilst the interior retains the original ceiling decoration.



4. The Old Baptist Chapel. Originally a family dwelling, the building was adapted into a place of worship in the belief that religion should be centred on the family and home as opposed to the monumental churches and rather impersonal clergy. It is believed to be one of the first small Baptist chapels in southern England and was in use as

a chapel until 1805. In the 1970s, the building was restored by Tewkesbury Borough Council and in 2012 the management of the building was taken over by the John Moore Museum who have made further improvements thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.



5. Abbey Mill. The foundations of the mill are believed to date back to the late 12th century when the Avon was diverted into the town to power the corn mill of the Benedictine Monastery. The present building is late 18th century and was in use as a mill until 1933. It was Abel Fletcher's Mill in "John Halifax, Gentlemen". The timber framed cottages at the corner date from the 16th century and were once abbey property. At the other side of the Mill is the entrance to the peaceful Victoria Gardens.



6. The Bell Hotel. Built around 1696, it probably stands on the site of the monastic hostelry within the abbey precincts. In the novel "John Halifax, Gentlemen" by Mrs Craik, The Bell features as the house of the wealthy tanner Abel Fletcher.

7. Abbey Gatehouse. Just up from the wonderful abbey you will pass the Abbots House. It is one of the few Cotswold stone-built domestic buildings remaining in the town today. The Grade 1 listed building was constructed in stone ashlar around 1500 and has a single large room at first-floor level accessed by a narrow spiral stair. It survived the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540. In the 20th century the building had various parish uses and in 1986 a lease was negotiated with the Landmark Trust, who set about refurbishing and conserving it, and providing facilities to suit its current use as holiday accommodation.



8. Tewkesbury Abbey. The building was founded in 1087 and was consecrated in 1121. Inside are massive Norman pillars and the central Norman tower is said to be one of the finest in the world. The Abbey has many splendid tombs and chantries of the medieval baronage, some of whom were great benefactors of the abbey. During the dissolution of the monasteries the town's people, to their eternal credit, purchased the abbey from Henry VIII for the sum of £453, the value of the lead on its roof and the metal of the bells.

To the south of the abbey are the fields which, in 1471, saw the penultimate and decisive battle between the houses of York and Lancaster. The Lancastrian army was routed and many drowned in their attempt to cross the river. Many survivors were executed at the site now occupied by the Cross in the centre of town.



9. Abbey Lawn Cottages and John Moore Museum. This row was built in the late 15th century for the Benedictine Monastery as a commercial venture and consisted of shops which were opened to the street by lowering their shutters to

act as counters. The John Moore Museum and the Merchant's House also form part of this row. John Moore was a local author of books on the area, ("Portrait of Elmbury") and a broadcaster, and within the museum there is a natural history collection which honours his work.



10. No 9 Church Street and Berkeley Arms. This is the earliest building tree ring-dated in Tewkesbury at 1331, although the façade is a later date. The Berkeley Arms dates from 1467. There are two drinking rooms next to Ancill's Court which leads to the medieval barn. The cellar walls still contain some very old stone, thought to be 11th century and there is evidence to suggest an ancient stone spiral staircase once existed.



11. Town Museum. Housed in a fine 17th century half-timbered building, the museum celebrates the cultural history of the Tewkesbury region from the Stone Age to present day. A spectacular model vividly illustrates the medieval battle of Tewkesbury, and the colourful fair models celebrate Tewkesbury as a centre for the manufacture of fairground attractions.



that specialised in building fairground equipment. The inn is now home to Cornell Books which specializes in rare, out-of-print, and second hand books.



13. The Olde Black Bear. The present building dates from the early 16th century, but there was probably a pub on the site hundreds of years before that with the earliest recorded date from 1308, making it Gloucestershire's oldest pub. William Shakespeare is said to have performed here with a travelling troupe.

14. Tudor House Hotel. Once called the Old House, recent dendrochronology tree-ring testing dates part of the building to 1454. However, most of the building dates from the 16th century and was re-fronted with bricks at the start of the 18th century. In 1897 the Victorians re-fronted the building with mock-timbering to keep with the fashion of the day. On the right of the building is a stone gateway leading to one of the few remaining English courtyards enclosed with a high wall mostly consisting of the original bricks. Also extremely noteworthy is the lead water-butt, dating back to 1747, standing next to the heavy oak side door with its battle axe scars made by Jacobite rioters on the Coronation of King George I in 1714.



A footbridge links the town with the Ham (a water meadow between the rivers). A walk around the Ham allows you to see the confluence of rivers and also affords glimpses of the jumbled rooftops of the old town. Adjacent to Healing's Mill, note the cast iron bridge of 1822. North of the mill are the Avon Lock and King John's Bridge, built in 1197.



15. Healing's Mill. A Victorian steam-powered roller corn mill built in 1869 by Samuel Healing. At one time, grain from America and Canada was transported from the docks at the Avonmouth or Sharpness canals by the firm's barges.

16. The Town Hall. Of classical proportions, this is one of the few buildings in the town built of stone. The town's corn market was held here in the late 18th century. The frontage onto the street dates from the mid-19th century when the market was also roofed over.



17. The House of the Nodding Gables. Also known as the house of the Golden Key, this used to be the ticket office for travellers on stagecoaches. It was an ironmonger's shop at one time, hence the key outside. The "nodding gables" caused by the broken ridge piece of the top storey lend the building a top-heavy appearance.



18. The Cross House. One of the finest houses in Tewkesbury. It has a magnificent entrance hall, Elizabethan panelled rooms and a fine staircase. It is believed to have been at one time the court house of the Lords of Tewkesbury. Notice the doorway carving.

The trail finishes here.

