


The Town Trail

Situated on the western edge of the Fens and close to the cathedral city of Peterborough, Whittesey was once an island surrounded by marshes. The town centre is an interesting maze of streets with a variety of well preserved architecture spanning several centuries. There are examples of timber framed houses with thatched roofs, occasional stone buildings and a preponderance of mellow buff local brick. The market place in the town centre is dominated by the late 17th century Buttercross, a square open market house which is an enduring reminder of the town rich trading and agricultural history.

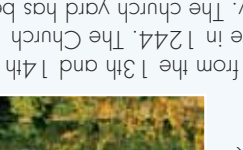
The town's prosperity is based upon the horticulture and agriculture of the area and the ability to produce large numbers of bricks from the blue oxford clay that underlies the gravel on which the town is built. The town trail leaflet provides the basis for two walks, of varying lengths, highlighting some of the older and more interesting buildings in Whittlesey and the stories behind them.

The Town Trail starts in the Market Place, the centre of the present town and its medieval predecessor. A hard landscaping scheme has recently been carried out to enhance the area reflecting the towns agricultural heritage. The 17th Century open Market House or Butter Cross dominates the Market Place. It has a Collyweston stone roof and columns in an unusual stone. Around the Market Place on all sides are buildings of great interest.




behind it.

8 To your right stands St. Mary's Church, which is justly famous for its glorious and lofty spire rising 173 feet from ground level, supported on elegant flying buttresses from the massive ashlar faced tower. This work was undertaken in the 15th century along with the extension to the Chancel. The rest of the church dates from the 13th and 14th centuries, being constructed after a fire in 1244. The Church originally belonged to Thorney Abbey. The church yard has been cleared of gravestones which are placed around the perimeter.



'The George' public house has a good near mid 19th century frontage but due to the widening of the Station Road exit from the Market Place has lost its arched coaching entrance and shop.



2 Built in 1753. No 4 High Causeway is a two and a half storied house in grey brickwork with stone quoins. It has a Venetian doorway and window above it with a semi-circular tripartite window above that, comparable with the rear elevation of Peckover House, Wisbech.

3 On the east side of the Market Place, No. 5 is an austere early/mid 19th century brick building. It once had an ornate porch but it was demolished several years ago.

4 No 6 & 7 date from the late 18th century and were once a branch of Gurney's Bank and a traditional chemist shop. The original shop front has been replaced.

5 Harrington House is built of stone with a Collyweston stone roof. It has an 18th century pedimented doorcase although the house is 17th century. The iron railings added in the 19th century escaped removal during the Second World War.

Places to visit

For more information www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org

Guildenburgh Water

The first UK Centre of Excellence for diving with depths from 1m to 22m. Courses are offered for all levels from beginners to professional. The lake is set within 30 acres of land. There is also a paintballing centre on site.
Tel: 01733 351 288



Whittlesey Museum

has a wide-ranging display including reconstructions of the local brick industry, drainage and agriculture.
Tel: 01733 840 968



Virtual golf

Based in Whittlesey, golf that can be played in any weather. It has state of the art golf bays with over 20 different courses to choose from.
Tel: 01733 202 604



Greenwheel

Keen on cycling. The Green Wheel covers 45 miles of continuous sustainable cycle routes in and around Peterborough. This route nicely links the city of Peterborough to the rural market town of Whittlesey.



Entertainment

For more information www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org

Straw Bear Festival

dates back to at least the 1800s when on the Tuesday following plough Monday a man dressed in a straw suit would walk around the town to entertain the town folk. Held in January, finest folk dancing - making Whittlesey colourful on a bleak winter's day.



Cambridgeshire Fens

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Cambridgeshire Fens

2 Continue down St. Mary's Street to the 'Falcon Hotel', which is probably 18th century in origin with later editions. It has an unusual plaster plaque of a bird, masquerading as a Falcon, over the door. The wheel with the letters CTC in old English capitals indicate the Cyclists Touring Club met here. To the right of the building is Paradise Lane, which lead to the site of one of the town cesspits in years gone by. We can only assume that Whittlesey folk had a rather odd sense of humour when naming this lane!

3 Take the road to the left of the Falcon into Turners Lane, the last




Immediately South of the Church is the Manor House, built between the 15th and 17th centuries in stone, again with a Collingwood slated roof. The house has been extensively altered. Follow the path to the north side of the church into St. Mary's Street, originally Little London Street, directly opposite is the former vicarage built around 1825 for St. Mary's Church. The new rectory built on the front garden of this former vicarage is on your right. Turn left and carry on down St. Mary's Street to look at No's 15 and 17: look up at No. 17 to see a circular plaque. These were originally one house and the birthplace of Sir Harry Smith, 1st

14 Walk over the wooden footbridge, built in 1982 to replace the original brick and stone bridge, which crosses the canalised section of Whittlesey Dike, now part of the waterway link from the Nene to the Great Ouse. The area and towpath to your immediate left, with its pleasant group of cottages and tree lined riverside walk, was once called Darling's or Bunting's Bower, but is now simply known as The Bower.



15 Carry on until you meet Church Street with 'The Boat' public house on your left and turn right across the bridge, passing what used to be called the 'White Lion' but is now the 'Hero of Aliwal' named of course after Sir Harry Smith whose portrait is on the sign

16 St. Andrew's Church is on the left. In the 12th century it belonged to the Precentor of Ely for the purpose of increasing funds for writing and acquiring books. The Church is mainly 14th century with a 16th century tower, which like St. Mary's has a ring of eight bells. The Chancel, Chancel Chapels and Nave have original roofs. The raised churchyard, which allowed multiple burials, has had the gravestones removed and repositioned.



17 Almost opposite the church is London Street. Take a short detour down here to see the finest early 18th century brick house in Whittlesey, 'The Wilderness'. It is noted for its fine shell canopy over the door and well-proportioned frontage, (Land Army girls were billeted here during the Second World War). The road widens dramatically in front of The Wilderness, which may have been the site of a market under the jurisdiction of St. Andrew's. The Lane alongside the house was once called Cheap, or Market Lane.

18 Retrace your steps and continue along Church Street, No. 49 Park House on the right is an impressive late 18th century brick built house with 'tumbled' gables. Continue to Barr's Street where the former St. Andrew's vicarage stands on the corner. The date 1861 is on a stone plaque on the corner in Roman numerals. The site of the former vicarage is opposite and the position is commemorated in the keystone above the doorway in the ornate brick boundary wall.



19 Take a look at No. 48, the house on the corner of Park Lane. It is a typical 18th century brick and thatched farmhouse, the former stockyard and animal shelters stretched through to Horsegate at the rear.

The extended trail turns left at this point but the shorter trail, which we shall complete first, goes straight on. For the extended trail go to number 25.

20 Turn right off Church Street into the narrow Thorofare Lane emerging into Broad Street. Immediately on your right is the original Junior School, erected in 1877, complete with headmasters house. The rear extension was built in 1906. The infant's school was a separate building on the same premises but situated to the side/rear.

21 Turn right into Market Street. The Library and Learning Centre occupies the site of what was once the 'Queens Head' a 19th Century thatched public house which had ample accommodation for seasonal workers during harvest time.

22 Continue along the Market Street, until you face the 'Black Bull' public house. It was built of stone in the mid to late 17th century, with a Collyweston slate roof and stone mullioned windows. The stone frieze above the ground floor windows is typical of this period. The pub is reputed to be haunted. (pictured in 27)

23 The Town Hall is adjacent to the 'Black Bull'. It was built in 1825 at a cost of £315 to house the town's fire engines and to provide a meeting room above. The date 1857 in red faience tiles on the front reflects the extensive alterations carried out in that year under the supervision of Cambridgeshire architect Richard Renolds Rowe. The building belongs to the Whittlesey Charity and houses the Whittlesey Museum.



24 Continue back to the starting point at the Market Place. On the corner of Market Street and Queen's Street there is a fine example of a former Georgian town house which is now a bank. The extended trail turns left into Park Lane and right into Horsegate at this point.

25 Horsegate is one of the oldest streets in Whittlesey, No. 7 Horsegate House is another former farmhouse, its front garden originally extended as far as Church Street. It was built in the mid 18th Century and has a substantial stone portico of Doric columns and a neat leaded roof. In 1834 a horrendous fire broke out in the maltng building and stockyard to the rear. It took Whittlesey's four fire engines and over 800 local inhabitants to extinguish it.

26 Further along on the left is an 18th Century rendered brick cottage with an interesting roof of coloured corrugated clay pantiles probably made from locally dug clay.

27 Continue to the junction with Horsegate Lane passing on the left two restored rendered and thatched cottages. A third identical cottage was lost sometime ago. Turn right into Horsegate Lane, which is on the course of an ancient trackway which ran from Peterborough to Whittlesey.



28 Turn left out of the lane into Church Street, right into Whitmore Street and cross the road into Windmill Street. On the right is the pink colour washed Art Studio built in the mid 18th Century with timber framing and a thatched roof. It was formerly the 'Letter A' public house, (you will have passed the 'Letter B' in Church Street). It was said that there were so many public houses in Whittlesey that they ran out of names for them and had to resort to using the alphabet!

29 Continue along Windmill Street, passing Gracious Street and take the Lane on the right before the bungalows. Halfway down the street, known as Crab End, it houses a picturesque group of cottages before it enters Claygate. This street is one of the few to retain some of its original 17th and 18th Century character and layout.

30 No 9 Claygate is a late 17th Century timber framed mud walled cottage with hipped thatched roof and central chimneystack. It was beautifully restored by the Cambridgeshire Preservation Trust in 1987. Across the street No. 8 is a mid 18th Century thatched and rendered cottage but it has little left of its original timber framed structure. No 10 is again 18th Century whilst opposite is an early 19th Century grey brick house linked with an 18th Century thatched and rendered cottage complete with the original casement window in the dormer. At the end of Claygate turn left into Orchard Street and right into Delph Street, continuing to the end. On the right hand side is a short length of mud wall with thatched capping.

31 The large Victorian house on the left was once the home of Charles Smith Sir Harry's brother and was lately occupied by Dr Popplewell who held his surgery there.



32 Turn left into Arnolds Lane. In front if you is a pair of well-maintained 18th Century brick and thatched cottages complete with early 19th Century sash and casement windows.

33 A few steps further on past the Elms, is a neat 18th Century brick and thatched cottage with one gable set at an angle to follow the line of the lane. Note the tumbled brickwork to the gables a feature of so many houses in Whittlesey.

34 Retrace your steps to the junction of Arnolds Lane with Delph Street and proceed into High Causeway. On your left is a very imposing early 19th Century brick house with a portico with circular columns, another former doctors house and surgery. Continue past the Town Bowls Club, with its splendid pavilion erected in 2000 until you reach Gracious Street.



35 On the left are two early 18th Century buildings, which complement each other. The 'New Crown' public house is built of brick and thatch. Adjacent is what may be a timber framed and brick house but it has been rendered over and lined out to resemble ashlar stonework. Look at the precarious leaning of the chimneystack to the public house!

36 Turn right into Gracious Street. Immediately on the right is a mid 18th Century rendered brick house with its original 19th Century ornamental casement windows, thatched roof and interesting small brick outbuildings.

37 Further on is a large brick house built in 1730 with a plain pedimented Regency doorcase. It has recently undergone an extensive refurbishment programme and is now called Norbury House.

38 Continue along to the now closed 'Old Crown' public house which is, confusingly, not as old as the 'New Crown'(dated 1838), which you have just passed! The thatched former 18th Century 'Kings Head' public house opposite is now converted into a cottage typical of the layout and style to be found in this area. A splendid view of St. Mary's Spire can be enjoyed as you continue southwards along the public path known as Old Crown Lane, passing a stretch of mud boundary wall with timber boarded capping, before going under the houses into Syer's Lane.



39 Walk across the main road into Queen Street, formerly Old Whittlesea. It is said to have changed its name in 1877 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Queen Victoria's accession to the Throne. The building on the right displays a plaque with the initials 'J.L.'. It was here that John LeFevre, one of the many Huguenot/Walloon inhabitants of the town had a saddlers and harness makers shop.



Continue to the point where you arrive at the Market Place by the War Memorial, surmounted by Sir George with one foot on the dragon. This marks the end of the trail.

