



## Self guided walk to the history of Daventry Town Centre

Welcome to Daventry. This walk has been produced by the museum service at Daventry Town Council. You can find more information and look at the latest exhibition at the Museum in the Town Council Offices on New Street.

The walk starts from the steps of Holy Cross Church on Church Walk. As well as directions given in this guide there is a street map attached. If you have a suitable device or app on your phone you can download a GPX file of the walk. The walk will take about an hour but there are cafes on the route where you can stop, rest and have a drink. Please be careful crossing the roads if not in the pedestrian areas. Stop on the Church steps and look around.

There is evidence of Roman and Saxon settlement in this area with pottery and mosaic floor pieces having been found but not enough to say what the settlement was.

With your back to the Church go down the steps and turn left on to Church Walk. Go to the end of the wall and turn left and take the footpath until you reach the brick building. Retrace to the first path on your right and go along it then left along the far side of the Church.

Church Walk was once much narrower and you are walking over the original graveyard, covered when the road was widened in the 1960s. Church Walk used to lead to a footpath that went to the Priory fishponds. On your right is Church Walk House built in the early 1700s. On the right of the footpath in the

graveyard is the old Rectory (built mid 1800s) which became Council offices and refuse collection depot until the 1980s. This path used to be an entry to the station/railway goods yard which opened in 1888. The site is now covered by the garage, McDonald's and the trading estate. There is a model of the station in the Museum. As you return to the Church you will see the extent of the graveyard which used to be the Priory grounds. The Priory was set up in 1107 when 4 Canons moved from the Cluniac priory in Preston Capes and combined the Priory with an existing church. It was closed by Henry VIII in 1525. The Priory buildings were on the left side of the church. The existing stone building on part of the site is not original and was built in 1828. There may have been several churches on or near to this site over the years but the present church was built between 1752/58. It is open to visitors on Tuesdays if you want to see inside and learn more of its history.

You should now be walking back to Church Walk where you need to turn right and walk slowly towards the market place and pause outside the last shop on your right.

As you exit on to the Market Place you walk over the site of the now demolished Pump House where water was piped from Borough Hill and distributed to the town.

The oldest houses in the Market Place are to your left. They are partly wood framed and one has been given a stone facing, possibly Georgian. Originally they were one house dating to the late 1500s, the time of Elizabeth I. This may have been the site of the house of the Steward, Hugh of Leicester in the 1100s. The Market Place is part of a planned





redevelopment of the town sometime before 1150 (most probably shortly after the Priory arrived in town). This laid out the Market Place as we see it now and also the burgrave plots on the High Street which are also still there. The original street plan, which may have been Saxon, was removed by the 1150 redevelopment, though Church Walk and New Street may be remnants of it.

Cross the road (New Street) at the pedestrian lights.

You are standing outside the old Peacock Hotel which stretches back along New Street. This used to be the main hotel serving the railway station. Next to it (the photo shop) is the oldest building in Daventry dating to the 1400s, possibly the time of Henry VII.

Now cross the High Street

On your right is the Burton Memorial dating to 1908 and named after a Clerk to the Daventry Borough Council – Lt. Colonel Edmund Burton



who used to live in “The Lodge”, where the Abbey Retail Park now is. It was erected as a memorial after he died in 1907 by a group of friends and business associates after the trustees of the Recreation Ground refused to rename that in his honour. Feelings ran high and a local GP was jailed for a time for his contribution to the arguments.

You are now standing on the site of the original Moot Hall probably built sometime around 1150. It is why the building line is stepped back here to let people pass. Around this Moot Hall was the “shambles” or slaughterhouse and butchery area. To the left is St John’s Square now a car park but once a mix of houses, the fire station and stables, pub and chapel and before that it was the pig (hog) market. When the Moot Hall was demolished in 1806 its clock was moved to the new Moot Hall. Later an electrically wound clock replaced it. The original 1600s clock mechanism and hand are in the museum.



The new Moot Hall across the road was converted in 1806 from a private house built in 1769. As well as being the Moot Hall it has in the past been the town cells, home of the Daventry Borough Council, Charter Trustees meeting place, museum, indian restaurant, antique centre and offices. Jessons Pump (Well) stood outside the front of the Hall.

Now walk west down the High Street

There are a lot of old buildings on the High Street. Many of these have been listed and some of their history is known but there are too many for each to be mentioned in this guide. Fridays Pub was once the Lion and Lamb pub and is dated from the 1600s.

Carry on and cross the side road

This side road is now North Street but was once Dog lane.

As you walk along you can see the burgrave plots first laid out from 1150. Look carefully and you will see that they are all of similar widths (or several plots of the same width joined together). These would originally have been very long plots on both sides of the street where livestock was kept and vegetable crops grown. Some would have been used for “industrial” purposes as well, such as slaughter house, blacksmith etc. There would have



been back lanes probably in the area towards the edge of the car park on the north side (now Primrose Hill) and up to the existing New Street in the south. Most of these divisions can still be seen behind the frontages.

Many of the older buildings became grand Georgian town houses sometimes built on the old plots but often with fancy fronts put on them. On the left number 11 was the home of Felicia Hemans an author and poet who lived there in 1812-14. Her famous work "Casabianca" was published 12 years after she left Daventry. The house isn't listed but must have been built at least in the late 1700s and you can see the commemorative plaque. Further along number 36 was built earlier, around about 1700.

On your left Foundry Place has a relatively new opening leading to an area of combined burgage plots that were used in the 1800s for metalworking. Opposite was the Bear Inn (the original had three dormers, replicated in the modern building).



At this end of the street there would originally have been either a market cross or a chapel of ease. Also the pump that used to stand here was called the Chapel Pump. This was the standard design of these planned, 1100s, towns.

On this corner with Brook Street are the Saracens Head Pub and Dun Cow, both coaching inns. It was the coaches and the trade that they brought with them that paid for those Georgian houses. The Saracens had stabling for 50 horses. Go round the back to what is now the smoking area and you will see a very ornate window and statues at the first floor level. This part of the building doubled as the Georgian Assembly Rooms holding dances, auctions, plays, cock fighting etc. The interior is also well preserved –admire it and have a drink. Brook Street is so called as it led to the North Brook that still runs in a culvert under the playing fields. Tavern Lane alongside the Saracens Head used to be much narrower and a range of buildings running along the side of the pub have been demolished to widen it. On the corner of Tavern Lane opposite the Saracens is a 1600s private house though the castellated decoration is later, probably done when the house in Tavern Lane was incorporated in it sometime in the 1800s. It later became the BBC Club.

Now turn left and walk up Sheaf Street

Sheaf Street is another planned street probably laid out 50 to 100 years after High Street. It may have been built in response

to the road being used more as it led to Coventry which became an increasingly important town in the 1100s. Previously the main road missed Daventry instead travelling from Weedon to Staverton and Leamington. Eventually London Road, Sheaf Street and Brook Street became the main route to Coventry probably with pack horse trains taking goods and people between London and Coventry. Later in the 1650s coaches travelling at 5mph replaced the pack horse trains. Then after Thomas Telford's construction of the road to Holyhead in the early 1800s the coaches speeded up to 12 mph. All this stopped suddenly in the late 1830s when long distance travel was taken over by the railways.

On your left the shop front goes back to Victorian times as a wet fish shop. Look up at the shell mouldings on either side of the window and the various hooks etc. to hang poultry.

The arch opposite belonged to another coaching inn, the Crown.



Continue to walk up Sheaf Street but look at the buildings either side as you go.

There are examples of Victorian as well as 1950/60s shopfronts.

On both sides of the street there were public houses existing from the 1700s through into the first half of the twentieth century. No. 7 (hairdressers) was the Crown & Hart which existed in 1571 although it was to have a number of names such as the Lion & Hart and The Lion & Lamb before closing at the end of the 1800s. The Wagon & Horses was at No. 16 and the World's End at No. 17.



Today, doors and gates conceal the entrances to former courtyards on both sides of the street. Between Nos. 18 and 16 is the entrance of passageway to the Wagon Court. On the opposite side the gate between Nos. 19 and 17 led to the former World's End Court. Note the door between Nos. 26 and 24. The stonework and outer frame around the vertical window on the right hand side of No. 22 suggests it was perhaps once an entrance way to a Court.



These courts contained houses and tenement buildings and the narrowness of the alley today gives an indication of the squalor and poor living conditions that probably existed in the courtyard behind. On the land behind the right side of the street was the St James Church which was demolished in 1960, 120 years after opening.

Nos. 20/22, as we go up, used to be the town house of the Knightley's of Fawsley Hall and is a high status house from before the coaching era. Built originally in Elizabethan times the building you can see is slightly newer and linked by internal design with the old house on Market Square.

You should now be at the Gazebo/Post Office, continue straight on.

On your left is the Doddridge Academy where Joseph Priestley (the discoverer of Oxygen) was a student for 2

years. The Academy trained and sent out 300 dissenting ministers across the country from the mid 1700s.

On your right the site of the Wheatsheaf dates back at least to 1570 though the existing building is later being of the early 1600s. Once the biggest coaching inn in the town it is now a residential home. From June 7<sup>th</sup> 1645 in the Civil War Charles I lodged here for 6 days before having to retreat when the parliamentary forces came too close for comfort. He moved to the Three Swans at Market Harborough for a night before the Battle of Naseby on the 14<sup>th</sup> – which he lost. His officers had stayed at various inns in the town and the troops ended up camped on the top of Borough Hill. In 1914 the cattle market was moved to behind the inn.



At the traffic island turn left down New Street.

Just before the entrance to Bowen Square we pass the site of the 1800s Assembly Hall later to become a cinema and finally built over by an extension to the square with shops and a new cinema which is now a night club. This area was originally part of the High Street burgage plots then part of the Co-op shop on the High Street as well as Foundry Court. On the right where the Police station and now closed Magistrates' Courts are there were some larger Victorian houses and grounds. On the left was a row of buildings including houses and the library down to the Peacock Hotel.

Cross over New Street at the pedestrian lights and carry on towards the Market Square.

On your right the large building just past the Tesco car park entrance was the Methodist Church built in 1824. Beyond this is the site of the Stead and Simpson shoe factory now demolished and replaced by Tesco's. Another early building is the Grammar

School built in 1600. It is Elizabethan with the Master's house next to it built about 80 years later. This stayed as a school until it became the Roman Catholic Church. It later became a hotel and restaurant and is now a private house.

You can finish here and if you want to go back to the Church you can nip down Dead Lane (although it has been renamed Little Lane).

**Or** the next building is a Georgian Town House with chequerboard brickwork dating to the 1700s. This is the Town Council and Museum. Please call in and see us when we are open. We have two more leaflets on the history of the town and buildings with even more information. There is also a self guided walk to the history of Borough Hill and a cycle/rambling tour of the history of the outer areas of the town.

The Town Council Offices  
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### **Daventry Museum Opening times.**

Open Tuesday–Friday 09:30–13:30

1st Saturday of the month 10:00-16:00

### **Free Entry**

<http://daventrymuseum.org.uk/>