

Riverside walks	
Millfield Walk	1.5km (0.9m)
Higlins Piece Walk	2.2km (1.3m)
Bridge Meadow Walk	2.1km (1.3m)

Town walk

The Town Walk is approximately a mile and takes about 45 minutes. It starts in the Market Square where there is car-parking space.



Start Town Walk

The Square is a good place to park. If this is not possible, then there are plenty of alternative car parks. (See map inside)

Start Riverside Walk

Riverside walk

There are three Riverside Walks of varying lengths. They all start at the information panel next to Wesley's tree in Market Square.



This guide has been produced by the Stony Stratford Business Association
www.stonystratford.co.uk

Stony Stratford Town and Riverside Walk

Short strolls covering the history and development of this unique town.



Design/illustrations/Map: www.masonedwarddesign.co.uk

FREE



A MEDIEVAL TRAVELLER

Stony Stratford has a long and interesting history owing to its position at the crossing point of the River Great Ouse.

This was the first major river north of the Thames encountered first by pre-historic travellers and later by Roman engineers who created the first paved roads.

The name Stratford is Anglo Saxon in origin, it means a ford by which a Roman Road crosses a river. 'Stan-eg' (Stony) literally translates as a stone island, probably referring to all the stones that were dropped in the river at this point to make the crossing shallower.



The bridge in the 17th century

It is important to realise that this area would originally have been a wide marshy floodplain. The river was split into many tributaries, making it very difficult to cross.

ELEVATION.



The Bridge - completed in 1835

The higher ground north of the river, and the spit of gravel on the south side, gave firmer ground for a crossing.

Roman times through to the Middle Ages

Over the centuries a settlement grew up alongside the 'Watling Street' to serve travellers and this developed into a thriving Market Town.



To prove the Roman occupation in the area, a hoard of Roman religious artefacts were found in a local field in 1789. (These now can be seen in the British Museum, Roman silver section).

Edward IV, who married Elizabeth Woodville from nearby Grafton Regis, is one of the many royals who have paid numerous visits to the town. Their 'Boy King' son, Edward V, was kidnapped from The Rose and Crown in the High St. More royal stories are revealed as you continue the walk.

The street pattern of the old town was laid out in the Middle Ages, their frontages facing the main 'spine' of the High Street. The shops, inns and other properties here have long, narrow strips of land at the rear, known as 'Burgage Strips'. These extend to the 'back

lanes' of Vicarage Road in one direction and Silver Street in the other thereby allowing rear access.

The local building stone is Jurassic limestone from nearby quarries. The houses, originally thatched, were prone to fire damage. Later building favoured clay, tile or slate roofs.



BIRMINGHAM STAGE-COACH,

In Two Days and a half; begins May the 24th, 1731.

The Coaching Era

The 18th century ushered in a 'golden age' for Stony Stratford with the arrival of the horse and carriage as a means of long distance travel. An Act of Parliament in 1708 created the first turnpike in the country. This was situated on Watling St. between Stony Stratford and Hockliffe. Turnpikes were the first toll roads, a way to raise funds to maintain the highways.

Many Inns and Taverns received a boost in their economy with this increased traffic. Stony Stratford was

a convenient one day ride on the journey north of London.

Many travellers changing horses, or staying the night at one of these hostleries, would tell

tales; hence the saying 'a Cock and Bull story'. Try to identify the old inn signs on private houses as you continue your walk.

Stony Stratford has suffered two great fires; the biggest in 1742 destroyed 146 buildings. A report from 1st May stated 'the great fire even crossed the River Great Ouse burning houses in Old Stratford'. The culprit is reputed to have been a maid from the Bull Hotel. Most of the town's Medieval buildings were destroyed but the new prosperity, brought about by the coaching era, enabled much of the 'new' buildings you see in the High St. today. The construction of the London to Birmingham railway passed through nearby Wolverton, thus ensuring the demise of coaches as the national form of transport.



A newly completed boat in the High St

The 19th century - Era of Industry and Growth

The 19th century was a period of rapid expansion of the town, with the demand for homes, schools and services for the workers at the Wolverton Rail works. Stony also had its own leather works, lace making and even boat building from the 1860's at 'The Watling Works' London Road, owned and run by Mr Edward Hayes.



Christmas Lights in the High Street

Stony Stratford Today

In 1967 Stony Stratford became part of Milton Keynes and this had a profound effect on the town. The development of Coffridge Close and the substantial house building to the south injected modern architectural buildings. The town centre was designated a Conservation Area in 1975 to protect its character and appearance. Stony Stratford is bound on two sides by the River Great Ouse, and farmland with footpaths and cycle ways.

If you have more time, or perhaps wish to visit us again, why not take a stroll on one of the new **Riverside Walks** where you can read our **Heritage Boards**.



Stratford Arcade

Some further reading can be found in the local studies collection of the **Town Library**

'**Stony Stratford Past**' by R. Ayers and A. Lambert

'**History of Stony Stratford**' by F. E. Hyde and F. Markham

'**The Town on the Road**' by Dr. Oliver Brown

To extend the Town Walk, continue down the High Street to the river bridge (10 mins).

Eleanor Cross

The road widens near No 155 High Street, and in this area possibly stood one of the dozen crosses built by King Edward 1 in memory of his wife Queen Eleanor of Castile. When she died in 1290 at Harby, Nottinghamshire, her body was taken to Westminster Abbey for burial. At each resting place a cross was erected in her memory, originally simple wooden ones, later ornate stone structures. Built by master mason John of Battle the cross was destroyed by the Parliamentarians in 1646 during the Civil War. (See the plaque on No 157.)



185, High Street

Now a private residence this is thought to be the site of Grites Inn, first mentioned in 1317. Inns continued on this site (it was The Angel in 1677) until the pub closed, as The Barley Mow, in 1970. Early accounts refer to a leper isolation hospital and a Chapel of St John the Baptist at the rear of this building.

Great Ouse Bridge

This was constructed of Millstone Grit by Thomas Telford in 1835 following a coaching disaster. This bridge replaced numerous early bridges dating back to 1252.


Return to St Paul's Court

(Number 10 on the walk map)

1

The Market Square

Stony Stratford was first granted a market by Richard I in 1194. Charles II also granted four annual fairs in 1662. Hiring Fairs, corn and cattle markets were frequently held here. In 1986 scenes from the film 'Withnail and I' were filmed here.



MARKET SQUARE IN 1812

Preachers and Prisoners

A magnificent Elm Tree once stood in this square. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, preached beneath it in the 1770's.

The Old Court House

The large brick building in the square was once the Victorian police station - possibly erected on the site of an early lock-up. The Court with the Judge's chambers and even the original cells have now been converted into offices.



MARKET SQUARE, WITH OLD COURT HOUSE ON RIGHT

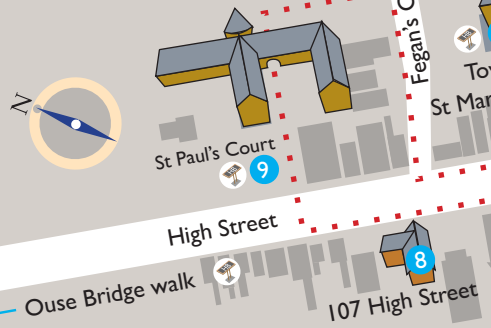
2

Church Street

This attractive row of houses formed the north side of the medieval market place. **No 40** (The Sundial House) is a former bakery. The Latin inscription on the sundial (dated 1739) translates as 'Time and Fire Destroy All Things'. **No 36** was, until the 1980's, part of the former leather works of Sharp & Woollard, established in 1815 by Samuel Sharpe.

The Library

This is a good source of historical background material. There are changing displays of local artefacts.




3

The Church of St Mary and St Giles

From the 15th century, Stony had two churches, in the east St Mary Magdalen, and the medieval church of St Giles here in the west, originally in the Parish of Calverton.

The tower which dates from 1487 is the only part of the medieval church to have survived the rebuilding of the church by Francis Hoirne of Warwick in 1776. Unusually the nave has wooden pillars supporting a gallery, designed in the Strawberry Hill Gothic style.

 Heritage Board with more information sited here.

Follow the path round the back of the church and through the lychgate (1931) and on to the High Street.

4

The High Street

This is part of the Roman Watling Street, which ran from London to Chester. During the coaching era (mid 17th to early 19th century) up to 30 horse-drawn carriages a day carrying passengers and mail would stop at one of the many Inns in the town. An ideal 'service station' for both passengers and horses.

48 High Street, The Shell House

This striking house, with its iron railings and imposing shell canopy, dates from the 17th century. It was built by the Wilkinson family as the dower house for Old Wolverton.

5

The Cock Inn and The Bull Inn - two famous Inns

In 1520 the Cock Inn was bequeathed by Thomas Piggott of Beachampton to set up a 'Charitable Trust' in the town. Profits were to maintain the bridge and the causeway over the River Great Ouse. The Great Fire started at the Bull in 1742. Both Inns feature impressive facades (the Cock is 18th century and the Bull 19th) and ornate brackets which carry their decorative signs. The saying 'A Cock and Bull story' originates here.

6

Burgage Strips

The buildings fronting the High Street date from the medieval layout of the town. Each property (Burgage) had a frontage on the main street and a long narrow plot extending to a 'back access lane'.

Cross the road to see an example of this, **Stratford Arcade** (closed Sundays). This late 18th century former Chemist Shop still retains its original fitted drawers.

7

Signs of the Times

Many of the former Inns now have new uses, but retain marks of their original purpose, such as the large archways leading to stables at the rear.

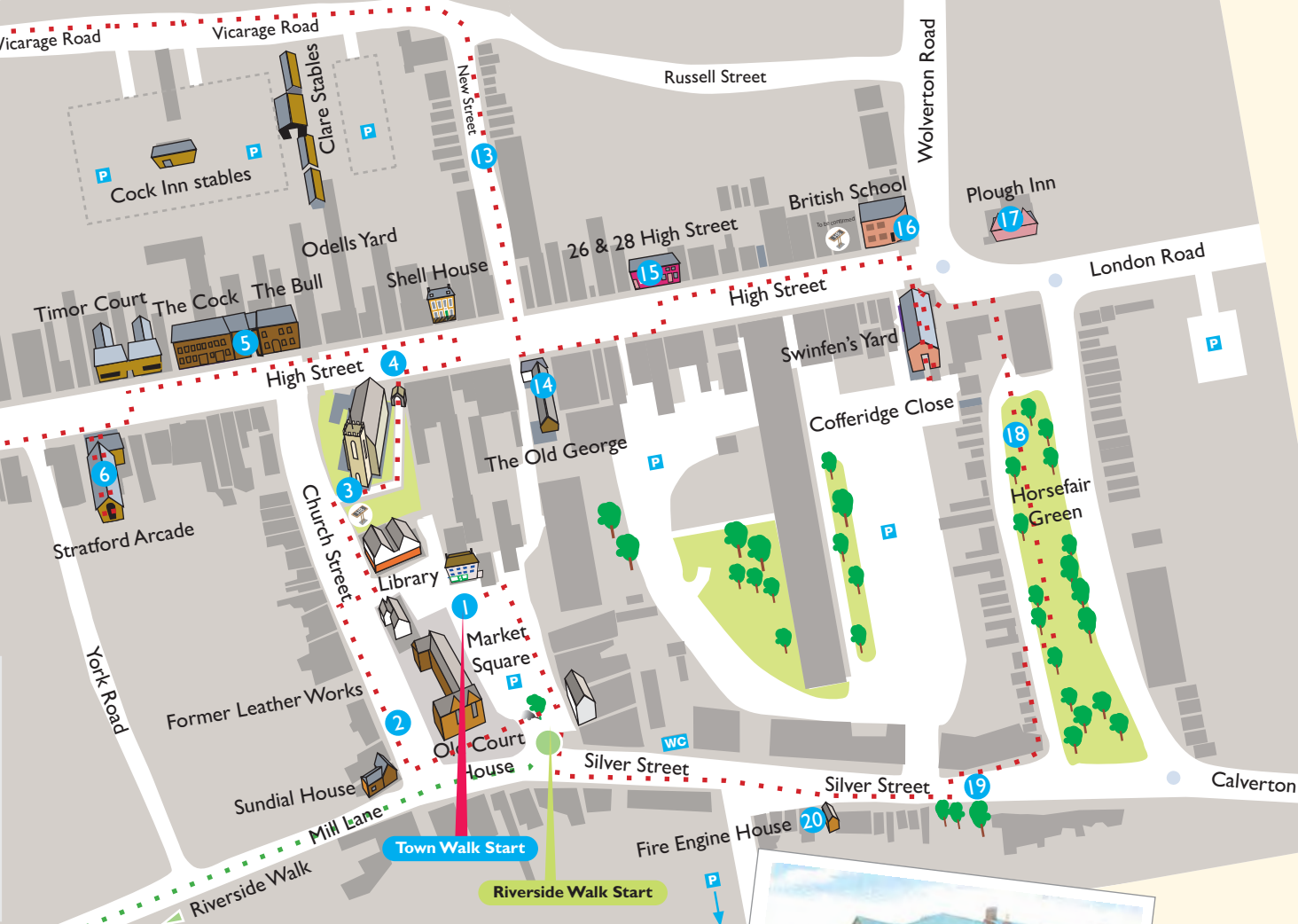
On the left, **97 High Street**, 'The Cross Keys' is one of the oldest surviving buildings in the town. It still bears its old sign, and medieval timber roof structure, circa 1480; retaining its original moulded archway. Once the town's 'Guild Hall', it later became the first Court Room. In 1697 the murderers of Grace Bennet, Lady of the Manor of Calverton, were tried here.

8

107 High Street

Designed and built in 1892 in his highly individual style by local architect Edward Swinfen Harris for his own use. The inscription over the door NISI DOMINUS is from the first words of Psalm 127 - 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that buildeth it....'

At this point there is an option of taking a few minutes to walk down to the Ouse Bridge and back - (see description overleaf). Alternatively cross the road at 115 High Street and go into St Paul's Court.



9

St Paul's Court

This Victorian building was lavishly constructed, by the Rev W. T. Sankey in 1863 between 'The Mallets' and 'Pudding Bag Lane. It was a private school and chapel then for a short time the building was a cigar factory after closing in 1895. It was then purchased by Mr Fegan from London to be used as a boy's orphanage. For over 60 years Fegan's 'Boys' went to school there until it closed in 1962. One of these 'Boys' was Tom McClean. His record-breaking feats appear on the Heritage Board. The school chapel is now a restaurant.

10

Tower of St Mary Magdalene

This church, built in 1450, was largely destroyed by the Great Fire in 1742. However the tower was saved and restored by Browne Willis, a local historian. See Heritage board here.

11

'Anceall Trust' Sports Ground.

On your left is the town's own Sports Ground, the land was purchased with funds left by Frederick Anceall in 1919.

12

Vicarage Road

This was the 'back lane' on the eastern edge of the medieval town. Opposite **No 16**, look to the right to see the old bus garage and Clare stables at the rear of **The Bull Inn**. The Victorian vicarage, built in 1861, used to stand opposite the junction with New Street.

13

New Street

In 1862-3 the Rev W.T. Sankey re-developed this road to create "Ram Alley", Stony's equivalent to the Shambles in York, to connect his new Vicarage with the High Street and St Giles Church. The date can be seen on the rainwater heads, and in the brickwork of **No 2**.

14

The Old George

This is one of the oldest surviving inns in the town. A former Posting House, it dates back to 1609, and has 18th century two storey bay windows. Note the floor level showing how the road has been built up over time.

15

26 & 28 High Street. A Royal Kidnap in 1483

Formally the Rose and Crown Inn, it was here the 'Boy King', Edward V, was kidnapped by Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later King Richard III). He was taken to the Tower of London, where it is believed he and his 10 year old brother Richard were murdered. In 1674 the remains of two children were found when the White Tower was being renovated. Charles II decreed their remains should be buried in Westminster Abbey.

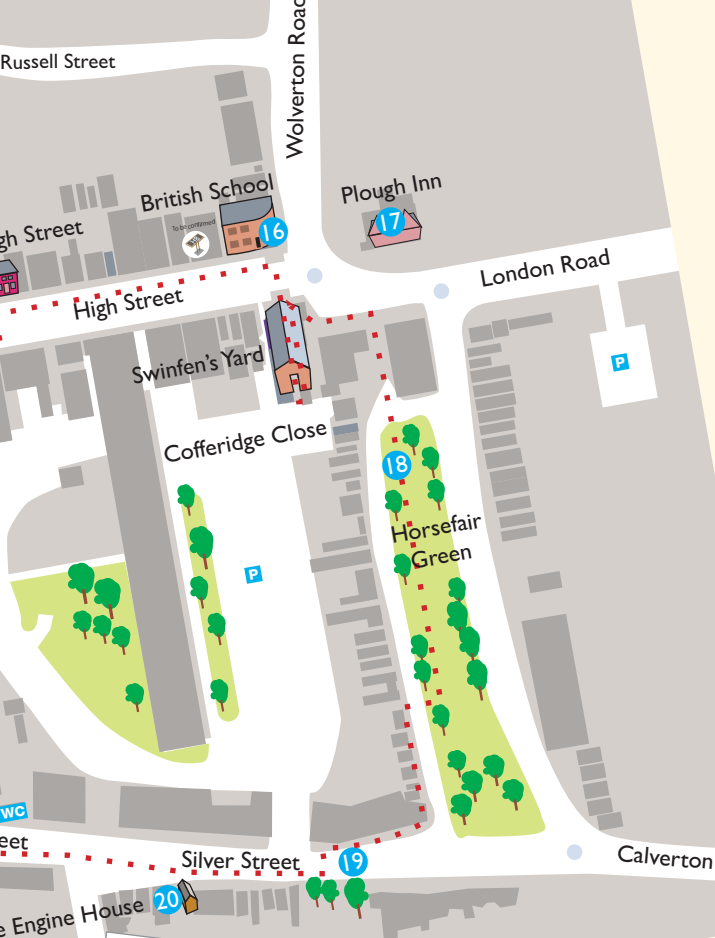


16

British School and famous Stream Tram

In 1844 the British School opened here for both girls and boys who were not permitted to enter the Church of England schools! It closed in 1907, was the Public Hall of the town for a number of years, and is now a Dance Studio.

In this building was the ticket office for the famous steam tram. It operated from 1887 until the General Strike in 1926 brought its closure. They were the largest tramcars in the world, each carried 100 passengers to the railway Works at Wolverton. One has now been restored to its former glory and can be seen at The Milton Keynes Museum in Stacey Bushes.



17

Plough Inn

In 1867 the Radcliffe Trust donated this land, 36 perches (size), to build Wolverton End School and School House. This church school for the poor was financed by Mrs Russell of Beachampton and designed by local architect E Swinfen Harris. Over 280 pupils attended in the early 1890's. It became The Plough Inn in 1937.

18

Horsefair Green

This pleasant green space edged with lime trees, was originally used from 1480's for weekly horse fairs, hence its name. **The Baptist Chapel**, now the 'Community Church', was built in 1657. The older houses (late 17th century) are those on the north side, formerly the edge of the town. The white building **No 35 & Dene Cottage** were once a 'Cottage Hospital'. **No's 8 & 9** were former Maltings. The 'Green' is still used for events, notably 'Folk on the Green' in June, and the 'Town Fayre' in August.

19

Silver Street

Formerly 'Cow Lane', it was re-named in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee. This was the medieval 'back lane' along the western edge of the old town. Here, until WWI, you could see women and children making lace, an important cottage industry in the town. Stony even had its own pattern, named 'Butterfly Lace'.

20

Fire Engine House

This intriguing little building, (**14 Silver Street**) was built in 1864 to house Stony Stratford's fire engine. The horses to pull it were kept in a paddock in Horn Lane. It was staffed by volunteer firemen from the town until 1958.

Walk along to the Market Square to complete the walk.