

The trail commences from the 'Commons' car park where modern public toilets are located.

1) The open area surrounding the War Memorial is the Town Square. On this site the town's original livestock market was held until 1903 when it moved to its purpose built location (see 24 below). On the southern side is Welland House a handsome six bay building with dormer windows. A brick built property, it was subsequently refaced in stone, showing that the principal of 'stone-cladding' is not new. Constructed as a private dwelling it was refurbished by the Market Harborough Building Society and now serves as their Head Office.

2) Adjacent to the house are some very fine wrought-iron gates which serve as the entrance to the memorial gardens. These are from Gopsall Park, a spectacular mansion near Twycross, which was demolished in 1951.



Catherwood House (Lloyds Bank)

3) The tallest building on the Square is Catherwood House, now the premises of Lloyds Bank. It was built in 1876 by William Bragg, the local pharmacist. The design was much influenced by John Ruskin's researches in Venice and is an example of the then popular 'Neo-Gothic' style.

Something to brag about.

William Bragg, who lived in the town from 1851 until his death in 1906, made a considerable contribution to many aspects of local life. His nephew, Sir William Bragg together with his son (later Sir) Lawrence Bragg were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1915 for their work in creating the science of Crystallography, using X-rays.

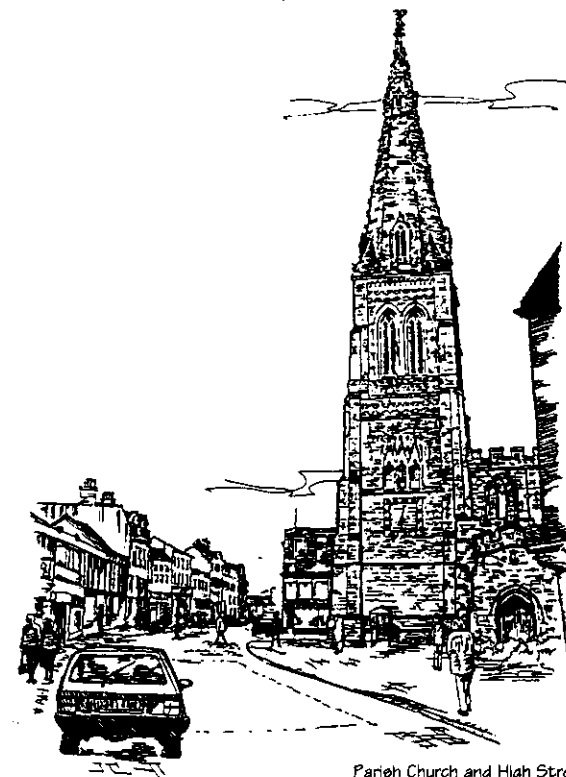
4) The Talbot, with its rounded archway, is still recognisable as a coaching inn, one of the four still remaining in the town. Although some of the extensive outbuildings have been demolished, a few of the original stables survive. With an undeniable character, the Talbot is one of the few pubs in Britain which still has sawdust on the floor!

5) The corner shop, now occupied by the T.S.B., has a frontage in a similar style to Catherwood House (see 3 above). The date of 1877, only one year later, shows that this was a period when the town prospered. However the building is considerably older - the eagle eyed will see the datestone of 1812 on the chimney stack.

6) In the shadow of the church, and giving character to Church Square, is the Old Grammar School. This timber framed building with an open ground floor was built in 1614 to serve as a market space for the weekly butter market and 'to keepe the market people drye in time of fowle weather'. The school, which was founded by Robert Smyth who made his fortune in Elizabethan London, moved from this unique building in 1892. Its ornamental bargeboards and pargetting are of note particularly the biblical quotations which were a requirement of the original Smyth bequest.

7) The Parish Church, unusually dedicated to St. Dionysius, dominates the town centre with its superb broach spire soaring above the High Street. The limestone spire dates from the 14th century whilst the rest was rebuilt in ironstone in the 15th century. The church is unusual in having no graveyard. This is because until the early 20th century St. Dionysius was a daughter church of

St. Mary in Arden in Great Bowden Road, with the official status of 'chapel'. Some chapel!



Parish Church and High Street

Hard Hitting Harborough

In front of the Old Grammar School is a seat in memory of Jack Gardner who was British Empire and European Heavyweight Champion between 1950 and 1952. Other local fighters were Reggie Meen of Great Bowden who was British Heavyweight Champion in 1931-2 and George Aldridge who was British Middleweight Champion in 1962-3. The latter afterwards kept the Cherry Tree public house in Little Bowden and the Talbot opposite.

8) Further up the High Street are two banks - Midland and Barclays. Both of the facades were constructed around 1900 in a style that speaks of strength and security. The Barclays site was the location of the Market Harborough Bank, which had failed in the 1840s.

9) The Three Swans Hotel, due to its appearance in literature is arguably the most famous of the town's inns. Originally known simply as 'The Swan', it was first mentioned in 1517. The two additional swans on its famous wrought iron sign made their appearance much later. It still has the atmosphere of a coaching inn even though the outbuildings at the rear have been extensively modernised.

Fawlty or Fothergill

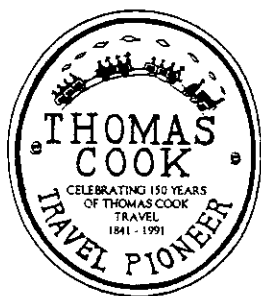
John Fothergill, a charismatic character who wore a cloak, top hat and buckled shoes as he walked about the town, was licensee of The Three Swans during and immediately after the Second World War. His experiences are recorded in his books, especially *Confessions of an Innkeeper*. His portrait hangs above the mantelpiece in the Fothergill Bar. Rumour has it that the T.V. character of Basil Fawlty was based upon him.



The Old Town Hall

10) All the buildings on the other side of the road are part of the infilling process which restricted the width of the extremely wide High Street. At the northern end and on an island site is the old Town Hall, donated to the town by the Earl of Harborough in 1788. His coat of arms adorns the pediment. As an established butcher's shambles was demolished to make way for the building, the vaulted ground floor area was incorporated into the design to replace this trading area.

22) The plaque on the wall above Quakers Yard commemorates the fact that Thomas Cook, the travel pioneer, once lived in premises at the rear.

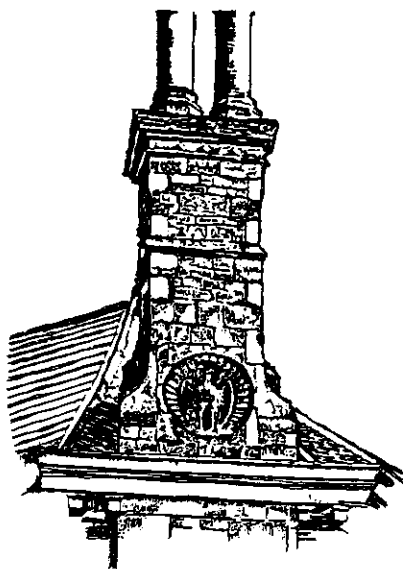


Cook's plaque

Thomas Cook

Born in Melbourne Derbyshire, Thomas Cook spent 10 years of his life in Market Harborough and indeed was married here. All his life he was a supporter of the Temperance Movement and it was whilst he was travelling to Leicester (by road) that he devised the concept of an outing using the then newly opened railway. The excursion was organised on 7th July 1841 and ran from Leicester to Loughborough. The fare of 1/- (5p) even included an afternoon tea! He subsequently moved to Leicester and is buried there in Welford Road Cemetery.

23) The stone building now called 'The Nutmeg Tree' was for many years 'The Peacock' and is the town's fourth remaining coaching inn. Look for the peacock sculpture incorporated into the chimney stack. The right hand side of the building is one of the few pre-Georgian houses in the town, being of 17th century origin - the left hand extension being built as late as 1872.



The Nutmeg Tree

11) Edinburgh House on the corner of Abbey Street occupies the site of the once important Corn Exchange. Built in 1968, it is the Head Office of Golden Wonder Crisps and is the only example of post-war building in the upper High Street.

12) The Manor House, rebuilt for Sir William Norwich in 1738, probably received its name after William Wartnaby, Steward of the Manor who came to live here in 1772. Though the ground floor was refaced in 1897, above this level the house still presents its original appearance. It is now prestigious office accommodation and the Head Office of Homepride.

13) The Angel Hotel is an imposing building dominating the upper High Street. It was one of the great coaching inns of the stage coach era with the then landlord claiming to have accommodation for ninety horses, more than any other place in the county. Such provision was essential as twenty six coaches plus innumerable wagons passed through the town daily.

14) The High Street terminates abruptly by No. 41 High Street which is set at right angles and so effectively reduces the width of the road to Leicester. This and its immediate neighbour are excellent examples of 18th century domestic architecture.

15) Looking down the High Street, the dimensions of the town become clear and the infilling becomes apparent. Attractively set back from the road, the Congregational Church was built in 1844. Classical in character, it features Ionic and Corinthian columns - quite unlike later Victorian architecture.

16) Nos. 42-44 High Street make an attractive group; No. 42 in particular, with its wrought iron balcony, is especially charming. The oldest of the group is No. 44 which has timber framing, whilst No. 43 is late Georgian, being built as a law office.

17) Take time to explore Three Crowns Yard, one of the few surviving courtyards. Close by, Nos. 51-56 High Street are an interesting group with a mixture of shop fronts and decorative bay windows being added to existing structures.

18) Going down Church Street to the left of the old Town Hall (see 10 above) it is worth remembering that all the buildings to the right are infills. Only by looking down the narrow alleyway - Little Street - can the original width of the High Street be appreciated.

19) Facing the Church, two traditional shops are worth noticing. Bates the Butchers has a fine 18th century frontage whilst Martin Hobb's fishmongers shop is a delight, complete with marble slab and shining white tiles. In cool weather the display is wonderful.

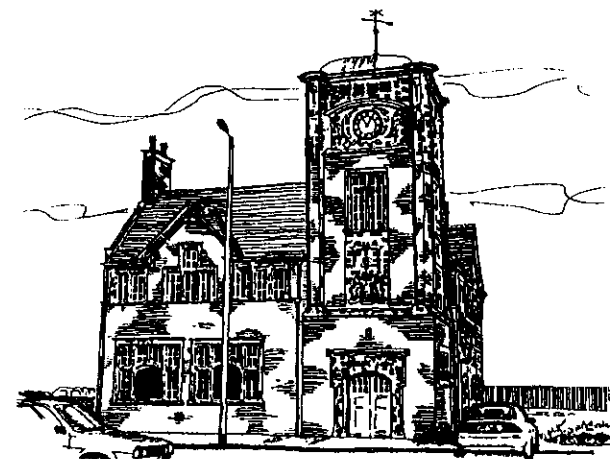


Hobb's fishmongers

20) The Harborough Theatre is an attractive stone faced building dating from 1935. Rather surprisingly it was once a storeroom and cycle shed for Symingtons.

21) The dominant building in the quaintly named Adam and Eve Street was the last factory to be constructed for R. W. and H. Symington. The firm developed from a cottage industry of staymakers into the economic force within the town. The reason for the rapid change of fortune is based on ladies' fashions in the Victorian era with their emphasis on narrow waists. The building now houses the Harborough Museum, Library, Tourist Information Centre and the offices of Harborough District Council.

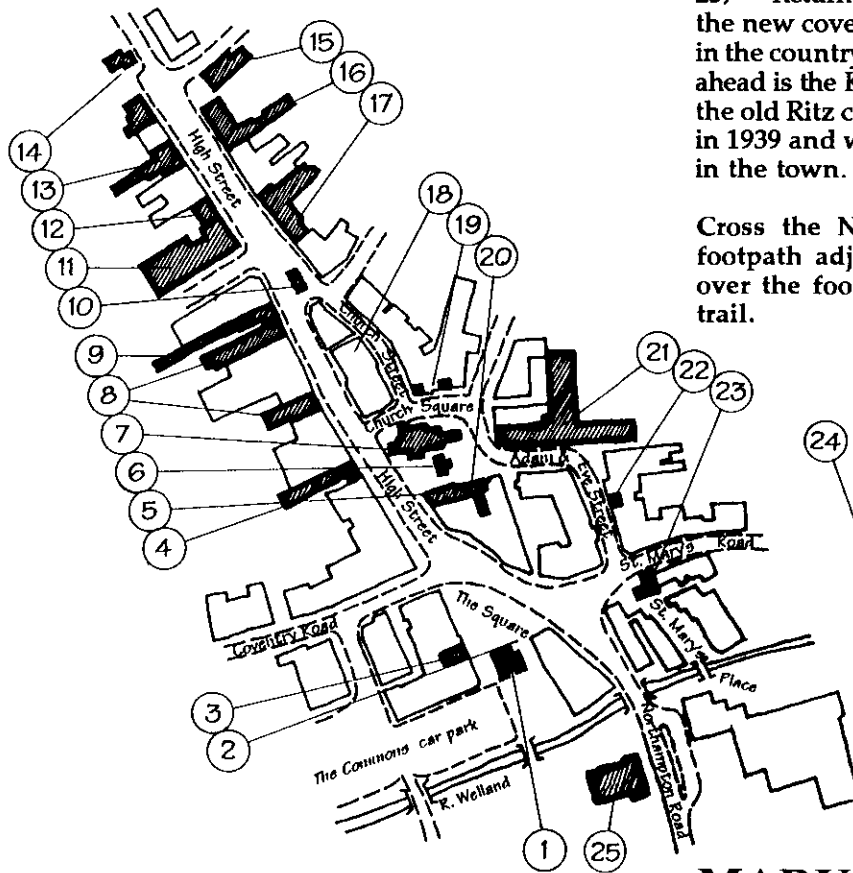
The St. Mary's Place shopping development incorporates the site of the town's second livestock market. The creative brick mural on the side of Sainsbury's depicts the site's former use. Beyond the shops and in the middle of the car park are the 1902 Settling Rooms - the building that farmers once used to settle their bills after dealing at the market.



The Settling Rooms

25) Return through the shopping centre, passing the new covered market, one of the most modern in the country. After following the River Welland, ahead is the Kwiksave supermarket which occupies the old Ritz cinema building. The cinema opened in 1939 and was at one time one of three cinemas in the town. It closed in 1978.

Cross the Northampton Road and follow the footpath adjacent to the Welland. Turn right over the footbridge to the starting point of the trail.



MARKET HARBOROUGH
NOT TO SCALE

MARKET HARBOROUGH

Lying halfway between Leicester and Northampton is the town of Market Harborough. Located at a crossing point of the River Welland, the town was created in the mid 12th century as a planned market town within the existing parish of Great Bowden. As such, it could be described as a 'medieval new town'. The market place, which was extensive, tapered northwards towards Leicester. Gradually over the centuries the middle of this large area was infilled by market booths which became permanent and were subsequently replaced by buildings. Over the years these were replaced or altered. Another feature of the town were the numerous courts which led off the High Street through archways. Some of these are still in existence.

In 1645 Charles I made Market Harborough his headquarters and held a hurried Council of War before the decisive Battle of Naseby. Afterwards Cromwell occupied the town and from here wrote to Parliament, whilst the church was turned into a temporary prisoner-of-war camp.

The town prospered in the 18th century with the advent of turnpike roads. Coaching inns were established and many remain in the wide High Street. The 19th century brought national communication links - the canal in 1809 and the railway in 1850. Manufacturing industry became established, the most notable company being the corset manufacturers R.W. & H. Symington, creators of the 'Liberty Bodice'.

Today the livestock market has moved from the town centre, although a new covered market sells foodstuffs and general produce. The town has expanded throughout the 20th century and now has a population of around 17,000. In spite of this the central town plan is still based on that laid out over 800 years ago.

The town centre, which is a conservation area, was refurbished in 1994 with new road and pavement surfaces. All public car parks are free and are signed on all the major approach roads.

This leaflet has been prepared by Market Harborough Civic Society and Harborough District Council. Support has been received from the Countryside Commission and Lloyds Bank.

Accommodation

Both the 'Angel' and the 'Three Swans' offer town centre accommodation. A list covering the wider area is available from the Tourist Information Centre.

Refreshments

A wide range of meals and snacks are available, with numerous pubs, hotels and teashops located throughout the town.

Harborough Museum

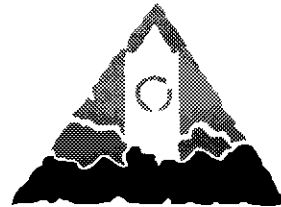
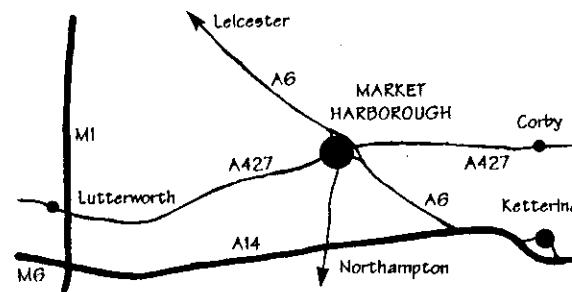
Dedicated to the history of the town and the surrounding area, a visit is a must. Open Monday to Saturday, 10am - 4.30pm; Sunday, 2pm - 5pm. Admission is free.

Tourist Information Centre

Located in the library in Adam and Eve Street. A range of information on the surrounding area is available. Open Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, 9.30am - 7pm; Wed, 9.30am - 5pm; Sat, 9.30am - 4pm. Tel. 01858 468106.

Further Information

Further information on the Civic Society can be obtained from Mr. G. M. Chamberlain, Tel. 01858 432116.



DISTRICT OF
HARBOROUGH
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Supported by the
COUNTRYSIDE
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MARKET HARBOROUGH

The Welland Valley

Historic Town Trail



The Old Grammar School

Harborough Tourism