



Taunton Heritage Trail



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12. St James Church

This late medieval church with its fine 15th Century font and pulpit (1633) was originally built to serve inhabitants who lived outside the town's defences. The tower, in common with most medieval churches, was rebuilt in 1871-1875. A notable grave here is that of Joseph Whidbey, the explorer and engineer, who was in charge of building Plymouth Breakwater.

13. Somerset County Cricket Ground

SCCC was established in 1875 and their first match at this, their home ground was played in 1882. (For fixtures please telephone 0845 337 1875 or visit www.somersetcountyycc.co.uk)

14. Priory Barn (Somerset County Cricket Museum)

The building which dates from the late 15th Century is the only surviving building of the Augustinian priory which was dissolved in 1539. It now houses exhibits and displays relating to the history of Somerset County Cricket Club and also the England Women's Cricket team.

15. Taunton Minster, St Mary Magdalene Church

There has been a church on this site since the 12th Century. The magnificent 163 foot tower, was rebuilt to its original design in 1862. In order to raise the stone during construction, a pulley system was used, operated by a donkey walking down Hammet Street. When the work was complete, the donkey was hauled to the top of the tower to admire the view it had created! Taunton's first known fire engine was housed in the church tower (1734).

16. Grays Almshouses

These Almshouses were founded by Robert Gray in 1635 and still have the original chapel with painted ceiling. One former female occupant, went to sleep every night in a coffin, to avoid being handled after her death! (1814).

17. County Hotel (Waterstones/Marks and Spencer)

Until the mid 1990's, this building was occupied by the County Hotel, being the last in a series of Inns/Hotels operating from the site since 1529, when it was recorded as the Three Cups.

18. Vivary Park

The name derives from the area's historical use as a Vivarium - two fishponds, kept by the bishops of Winchester, since at least 1207. Manuscripts dating from the 1360's show that the Vivarium covered some 70 acres and provided fish for banquets. The current park was originally laid out in 1895 and restored with lottery funding in 2002. The ornate fountain was built as a memorial to Queen Victoria, was turned on by the Mayoress on 31 October 1907. The imposing red brick building is Jellalabad Barracks built in 1881 for the Somerset Light Infantry.



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Taunton Heritage Trail

In Taunton there are some beautiful, original heritage sites, many of which are marked on the Taunton Heritage Trail. Using this leaflet you can visit the historic sites and properties on a self-guided tour. Follow the red line route on the map starting at the Taunton Visitor Centre in the historic Market House and using the numbers on the map to learn more about Somerset's Historic County Town.

For more information on the area please contact the Visitor Centre on:

Tel: 01823 340470 Email: tauntonvisitorcentre@somerset.gov.uk

Web: www.visitsomerset.co.uk/taunton



1. The Market House

This imposing building was originally constructed in 1772 in what has traditionally been known as the centre of the town. Designed by Coplestone Warre Bampfylde (best known as the creator of the landscape gardens at Hestercombe) and laid out into different apartments for the purposes of justice, amusement and pleasure. On the ground floor was the Guildhall where magistrates would sit to hear cases every week and the first floor which contained the superb assembly room which included a music gallery, two elegant and large glass chandeliers, and a full-length portrait of George III.

From 1772 and for much of the 19th century the Market House provided one of the county's chief public meeting places. After the market moved in 1929 and the arcades were removed in 1934 and replaced by the wings which now house the Visitor Centre, the building's public role declined, it is hoped with recent improvements this building can once again become the heart of the town. In front of the Market House in the centre of the roundabout, you can see the Burma Memorial which is dedicated to the dead of Prince Albert's Somersetshire Light Infantry.

2. 15 Fore Street (Café Nero)

Due to the timber framing, this building was known for a long time as the Tudor Tavern. Re-fronted in 1578, it was at one time owned by the Trowbridge clothiers, whose initials appear on the façade. In 1685 it was occupied by wealthy grocer, Thomas Baker, father of two of the "Maids of Taunton", who welcomed the Duke of Monmouth to the town. It was subsequently occupied by one of the infamous, ill fated, Duke of Monmouth's Privy Council.

3. Bath Place

From the Middle Ages, Bath Place was the main thoroughfare to the west of the town until Corporation Street was cut in 1894. It is home to a series of small, specialist shops operating from a near complete set of 19th Century shop fronts, characterised by their octagonal fanlights.

4. Gaumont Theatre (Mecca Bingo)

This purpose built cinema was erected in 1931-2 to the Art Deco design of W.T. Beslyn. The sculpted panel depicting Love and Life Entangled in Film above the entrance is worthy of note. This was also the venue for two Beatles concerts in 1963.

5. Hunts Court (Cosy Club)

Purpose designed by Samson and Cottam, this 1905 Art School has the most imposing neo-classical façade in Taunton.

6. Cider Press Garden

The old stone cider press was a gift to Taunton and its people from Taunton Cider Company in their Golden Jubilee year in 1971.

7. The Old Library Building (Pitcher & Piano)

The town's public library was opened here in 1905, to the design of architect Alexander Little of London and part funded by the Carnegie Foundation. It remained the town's library until 1996 when its conversion to a public house raised some eyebrows, due to the covenant applied by the Carnegie Foundation, that alcohol must not be consumed on the premises!

8. Old Municipal Buildings (Registry Office)

The section to the right of the main door was built in 1522 to house the town's Grammar School. Founded by Richard Fox, then Bishop of Winchester, it cost £226 to build. Badly damaged in 1645 during the Civil War, it was restored and continued as a school until 1885. It then became offices of Taunton Corporation until its widespread offices were centralised in 1987.

9. Castle Bow

This is the last surviving remnant of the Castle's outer bailey, the keep having been destroyed on the orders of Charles II. Originally, this was the East Gate to the Castle and had a drawbridge – note the replica portcullis set into the original grooves.

10. Castle Hotel

Built in the late 18th Century as a private residence, the building was first converted to its current use in 1834 when it opened as Sweets Hotel. This prestigious hotel is well known today for its elegant accommodation and beautiful wisteria in the Spring.

11. Museum of Somerset (Taunton Castle)

The remains of the Castle and later buildings house the Museum of Somerset. Taunton was, from the early 10th Century, part of the vast estate held by the Bishop of Winchester and at this time the site occupied by the Castle was probably the location of the Bishop's Hall. The Castle was the scene of the "Bloody Assize" when Judge Jeffreys tried over 500 supporters of the failed Monmouth Rebellion in 1685. The building was also a prison and in 1707 the last trial in the south west of someone accused of witchcraft took place.