

STOCKPORT

HERITAGE TRAIL

pubs
churches
museums
bridges

Welcome to Stockport

Where it all began

To the people who live in, work or visit Stockport, it is a town of great character. Much of this derives from its links with the past, which are preserved in its medieval street patterns, its bustling market and its churches. Even its name meaning 'settlement at the marketplace' denotes these historic origins.

To wander around the town is to experience something of this history. Alongside modern architecture, there are fine examples of Victorian, Regency, Georgian and Tudor buildings and traces of activity dating back to the 14th century and earlier. Whilst other towns have experienced large-scale clearance and re-development, much of the historic fabric of Stockport's centre has survived. This Town Centre Heritage Trail spans 800 years of Stockport's history and gives the reader - whether a visitor, a historian, a resident or a schoolchild - a taste of some of the town's most interesting and unusual sites

What you'll see

The trail covers 36 sites of historic or social significance; including pubs, bridges, statues, museums and brows (a local term meaning a steep, sometimes cobbled hill). An additional 8 places of interest, beyond the town centre, (but within easy walking distance) are described and marked on a separate map.

Starting at the Tourist Information Centre in the Market Place, the Town Centre Heritage Trail takes approximately 90 minutes, covers some 4 kilometres (2 miles) and requires 3,720 footsteps! Some food for thought

In order to help you stay on the trail or to avoid needless road-crossing; viewing points are shown for those places (particularly some of the brows)

which are slightly off the main route. If you are particularly interested, you may of course, deviate from this.

Mind how you go

The trail follows a logical sequence with minimal road-crossing or 'doubling-back'. Please be mindful of traffic and cross at all the pedestrian crossings and junctions indicated. If you run out time, just come and visit Stockport town centre again!

Access for disabled visitors

As Stockport town centre is hilly, we suggest that people with mobility difficulties or who use a wheelchair undertake the trail in two separate parts; one on the Market Place level and the other on the Underbanks level. These can be linked by public lifts in the Courts Shopping Centre in Castle Yard if you wish.

Route 1 - Parking at Churchgate Car Park, (to the rear of St. Mary's Church) it is possible to visit the Tourist Information Centre, Staircase House, Stockport Story Museum (when open), view down Millgate and up to see St. Mary's Church, the Churchyard and the Pack Horse. Then to Castle Yard, the Produce Hall, the Market Hall, the Baker's Vaults, view down Bridge Street Brow, the Bank of Stockport, St. Petergate bridge and views below.

Route 2 - Parking at Shopmobility Stockport in Merseyway Car Park, use the lift to ground level onto Chestergate. The trail includes the Air Raid Shelters, Three Shires, White Lion, Underbank Hall, Queen's Head, St. Petersgate Bridge, Winter's, Royal Oak Yard, Mealhouse Brow, Rostron Brow, Cooper's Brow and Robinson's Brewery.

Town Centre Heritage Trail

Start of the Trail

1

Staircase House, 30 Market Place

Housed in this historic building, the Tourist Information Centre provides a range of services to visitors and residents. Once inside, there is a view of the excavated cobbled floor and an intriguing glimpse of a blocked doorway.

Stockport Story Museum is part of the newest heritage attraction in the town centre. It tells the story of Stockport from prehistoric times to the present day.



Located next door

2

Staircase House, 30 Market Place

This is a rare survival of a mediaeval merchant's town house, parts of which date back to 1460. The building also houses a 17th century cage newel design staircase, a medieval cruck framed hall and 17th and 18th century oak panelling.

The building suffered fire damage in 1995 and remained vacant until its restoration in 2004. Staircase House is Grade II* listed and serves as a visitor attraction complementing the adjacent Stockport Story Museum. A cafe is located here.

Call 0161 474 4444 for opening hours and group tours.



On leaving Staircase House, turn left and continue along Market Place, turning left in front of the church

3

Hillgate

In 1680, the largest corn mill in the manor operated near the River Goyt on Millgate. Originally the 'Milne Gate' was virtually opposite the Arden Arms. Its continuation, Newbridge Lane, was possibly a Roman road. The Anglo-Saxon word Gata means way, highway or road. The mill was demolished in 1822. A 1703 paving stone still exists on the corner of Market Place.



Continue to the roundabout

4

Arden Arms, 23 Millgate

This public house was built in 1815 by George Raffald, a seedsman; it probably has the best preserved Victorian interior in the vicinity, with an unusual, intimate snug bar accessed through the main bar, double cellars, with a bricked up tunnel entrance and old coaching stables outside at the rear. Still a public house today, the Arden Arms offers an excellent lunchtime menu and is a CAMRA award-winning pub. Elizabeth Raffald wrote a cookery book here before Mrs Beaton.



Cross to the other side of the road at the traffic island and return up Millgate

5

St. Mary's Church, Market Place

The church is a Grade I listed building. The Chancel originates from before 1334, with the Nave and 125 foot tower being rebuilt in 1814 after the original tower was severely cracked by bell ringing in celebration of Nelson's victory at the battle of Trafalgar. Judge John Bradshaw, who presided over the court that condemned Charles I to death, was also baptised in St. Mary's on December 10th 1602.

The churchyard is home to a number of interesting gravestones including that of John Wainwright born in 1723, the church organist who composed the tune 'Stockport' to which is sung the hymn 'Christians Awake'. Another gravestone worth noting has the inscription "In memory of James Thorneley of Stockport, died October 30th 1825, age one thousand one hundred and forty-five moons". The graveyard is a resting place of some 50,000 souls. The earliest gravestone dates back to 1630. If the church is open, it's well worth a look inside.



Across from the church entrance you can view the Pack Horse

6

Pack Horse, 2 Market Place

It is likely that the current building on this site dates from the 19th century. This was originally the site of the Rector's house before 1671. It was first mentioned as a pub in the 1790s, but it could be older. The pub's name is a reference to the time, especially to the pre 18th century and before, when long trains of packhorses carried goods across the English countryside.



On leaving the churchyard turn left into and continue along Churchgate

7

Old Rectory, 48 Churchgate

This building, the finest example of Georgian architecture in Stockport town centre, was erected by the Reverend Samuel Stead in 1744 replacing the original 16th century building. The rectory was home to rectors and bishops until 1965. During World War Two, it was used as an army billet. Inside is a blue plaque to mark the significance of the building. The Old Rectory now forms part of the Premier Lodge hotel complex. There is an Ice house in the grounds at the rear, where ice was collected from frozen ponds and stored in winter for summer table use.



Continue along Churchgate, crossing the road at the traffic signals

8

Thatched House, 74 Churchgate

It is likely that the current building on this site dates from the 19th century. The building was first mentioned in 1744 as surgeon Dr Briscall's practice, who gave free consultations. This building was effectively the forerunner to Stockport Infirmary.



Turn right and into Lavender's Brow

9

Lavender's Brow, off Churchgate

It is likely that the current building on this site dates from the 19th century. The building was first mentioned in 1744 as surgeon Dr. Briscall's practice, who gave free consultations. This building was effectively the forerunner to Stockport Infirmary.



From the brow, turn left and left again, continue along Wellington Street until you reach the crossroads and view the Liberal Reform Club.

10

Stockport Liberal Reform Club, Wellington Street

Located in the Hillgate Conservation Area and built in 1889, it was originally known as Cobden Place (after Richard Cobden, Stockport MP 1841-47). It is a significant imposing building of red brick in English Bond with gabled parapets, stone rosettes and copings; and a rare survival of this type of building.

As well as its former use as the Liberal Reform Club for Stockport (a kind of gentleman's club) it is more recently known as the location of Peaches and Cobden's nightclub.



You have reached Lower Hillgate and need to turn left

11

Bishop Blaize, 63 Lower Hillgate

This building was first mentioned in 1805. It has also been known as the Gladstone. The pub is named after the patron saint of wool workers. The Catholic or Irish Riots started here in 1852, when a man was killed, 100 people were arrested and St. Peter's Church on St. Petersgate was badly damaged.



Continue uphill along Lower Hillgate and view on right

12

Crowther Street

Between 74 & 76 Lower Hillgate

This street was famously painted by L.S. Lowry in 1930. The painting can be seen at Stockport Art Gallery. The slang name for Crowther Street was "Bomber's Brow" literally Bailiff's Brow. It was notorious locally for "moonlight flits" and Lowry, as a rent collector, would no doubt have had to bear this in mind. The houses were demolished earlier in the century and were reconstructed in 2004.



Return down Lower Hillgate, cross Wellington Street at the pedestrian-crossing and continue

13

Robinson's Brewery, 33-39 Lower Hillgate

In 1838, William Robinson purchased the Unicorn Inn, Lower Hillgate and his son Frederic joined him in 1865 when he started to brew his own beer on this site. By 1878, a horse and dray had been purchased to allow deliveries to be made by themselves. The company now owns over 400 pubs. Old Tom, the renowned 'winter warmer' was supreme beer champion in 2005. Call 0161 480 6571 for details of brewery tours.



Continue along Lower Hillgate to view on left

14

Cooper's Brow, Between 16 & 18 Lower Hillgate

George Cooper was the Town Crier in 1835. Henry Heginbotham author of 'Stockport: Ancient and Modern' states that this was part of an ancient road leading to 'Top O' the Hill' (High Street), onto Bear Hole Brow, no longer there, then to Chestergate, ultimately leading to Chester.



Continue along Lower Hillgate to view on right

15

Rostron Brow, between 5-7 Lower Hillgate

This was originally called Rosen Bank after farmer Ralph Rosen. Rostron Brow is one of the through-routes between Lower Hillgate in the valley and the Market Place. Henry Heginbotham was born at the bottom of the brow. A beer house of ill repute known as the Dust Hole, also known as the Schofield Inn in 1851, was on the brow. The pub was closed in 1896.



Continue along Lower Hillgate and view on right

16

Mealhouse Brow, opposite 38 Little Underbank

This route was previously known as Wynn Hill (the winding or windy bank); the Mealhouse was a Market house; the dungeon was under the Old Court Leet building (top right). In 1860, seven people died here by trampling after 30,000 watched a firework display in Castle Yard. The right hand side of the brow is part of a major housing redevelopment.



Continue along Little Underbank and view on left

17

Royal Oak Yard, between 28 & 30 Little Underbank

There was a pub here called the Royal Oak in 1680. Tinsmiths used the caves, cut into the red sandstone cliffs. Wellington steps, now closed, gave access from High Street above.

Today, the yard is home to offices and some housing. The Tin Brook flows underneath. This is a popular location for film crews.



Continue along Little Underbank and Winter's is opposite

18

Winter's, Little Underbank

This is also known as The Clock House. Jacob Winter, (magistrate and councillor) was a clock and watchmaker, silversmith, optician and jeweller in 1859. Winter's is now a Joseph Holts public house.



Continue along Little Underbank and the bridge is above you

19

St Petersgate Bridge

This was also called the Angel Bridge (after the Angel Inn on Market Place). It consists of five arches, designed by Rawlinson and built by Peter Pierce. It opened on 24th February 1868, costing £10,500. The span above Little Underbank is 27 feet 3 inches long and the bridge bears the Borough's coat of arms.



Walk beneath the bridge and the Queen's Head is on the left

20

Queen's Head, 12 Little Underbank

This was formerly The Queen Anne and Turner's Vaults prior to the steps being built. The family of Turner took the building over in 1809. Interestingly, this pub has the smallest toilet in Europe and also a haunted windowless room upstairs. This is an excellent example of a Georgian pub.



Continue along Little Underbank to the open space in front of the White Lion

21

White Lion, 20 Great Underbank

The White Lion originates from the 15th century. In 1815, during the battle of Waterloo, the landlord fired a cannon to inform the town's people of the battle's victories. A 'Wife Sale' took place here in 1831 by William Clayton who sold his wife for five shillings to a J Booth; she was handed over to the purchaser with a halter round her neck. The building was rebuilt in 1904 in the Art Nouveau style.



Turn right in front of the White Lion into Great Underbank

22

Underbank Hall, Great Underbank

In the early 16th century, this was the town house of the Arden family whose seat was Arden Hall at Bredbury. Inside is a stained glass window displaying several important coats of arms as well as a large old fireplace moved from Utlington Hall in 1623. Christy, Lloyd and others opened a bank here called the Manchester & Liverpool District Bank Company in 1824. It is currently a National Westminster Bank.



Return along Great Underbank, crossing the open space

23

Three Shires, Great Underbank

This was originally the town house of the Legh family of Adlington; probably dating back to 1637. This house displays fine decorative timber framing. Adlington Walk nearby in Merseyway Shopping Centre is named after this family. The Three Shires now operates as a wine bar with a recommended lunch and dinner menu and excellent wine list.



Cross the road and continue along Great Underbank (becomes Chestergate)

24

Air Raid Shelters, 61 Chestergate

In war-torn Britain in the dark days of the Blitz in the 1940s, the Air Raid Shelters were one of the few air raid precaution tunnel-systems built specifically for civilians in Britain and often accommodated over 7,000 people nightly. Local wags called it the "Chestergate Hotel". Mancunians came on the tram to get away from the Manchester Blitz of December 1940. The network of tunnels is reported to be 1.5km long.

Across Chestergate, diagonally opposite the entrance to the Air Raid Shelters, in a raised flower bed on Adlington Walk is a brass plaque marking the site of Stockport Grammar School, which stood on the site from 1603 to 1830, then relocated to Mile End, about 2km from the town centre. It is one of the most ancient schools in Britain, founded in 1487 under the will of Sir Edmund Shaa, who was a prominent goldsmith, master of the Royal Mint and Lord Mayor of London in 1482-3.



Return along Chestergate and turn sharp right up Pickfords Brow. At the top of the brow turn left into St. Peter's Square and view Cobden's Statue straight ahead

25

Cobden's Statue, St Peter's Square

The bronze statue was unveiled in 1886. Richard Cobden was MP for Stockport in 1841-1847 and was a founder member of 'The Anti-Corn Law League'. He succeeded in repealing the hated Corn Laws, which kept the price of grain high, and consequently the cost of bread as a staple food was high. Many people in Stockport were probably hungry (the "hungry forties"). This was sculpted by G.G. Adams and is the only statue in Stockport Town Centre.



Continue along St. Peter's Square to view church on right

26

St. Peter's Church, St. Peter's Square

This was erected in 1768 and is the second oldest church in Stockport. It was damaged in the Stockport Riots in 1852. The tower has been designed in the manner of a classical tomb. It is a fine spacious, classical Georgian church - worth a look inside. There is a small café which is open at lunchtimes.



At the Co-operative Bank, turn left into St. Petersgate, almost immediately view St. Peter's Chambers on right

27

St. Peter's Chambers, St. Petersgate

This building, with its Oriel bay window corbelled out, was built in 1880. Its function remains the same today with offices on the upper floors and shops below. Look out for the sculpted head of St. Peter over the entrance. The nearby buildings that house the Blarney Stone Pub and adjacent bar are built on the site of the Imperial Theatre, photographs of which can be viewed in the Central Library. The Blarney Stone used to be called the Imperial.



Continue along St. Petersgate to Tatton Street and view church on right

28

St Joseph's RC Church, Tatton Street

The Bishop of Stockport, Dr. Turner laid the foundation stone for the church in 1861. In 1886, four nuns from Rock Ferry came to St. Joseph's and began teaching at the adjacent Primary School.

On crossing St. Petersgate Bridge, note the views of Little Underbank below on both sides of the bridge.



Continue along St. Petersgate, cross over the bridge and the building is on the right

29

(former) Bank of Stockport, St Petersgate

This was built in the late 19th century. The coat of arms above the entrance dated 1836 probably denotes when Stockport became a municipal corporation in 1835. Now a wine bar, this building has a beautiful interior which features marble pillars and a moulded ceiling and would originally have been the banking hall or 'the Counting House'.



At the corner of the building turn right along Market Place

30

Bull's Head, 13 Market Place

The Bull's Head is first mentioned in the 1730s. This building was erected in the 19th century. Before the Market Hall was built in 1861, orators, such as Richard Cobden M.P. for Stockport in 1841, spoke from the first floor window to crowds below in the Market Place.



Return along Market Place and turn diagonally right

31

Produce Hall, Market Place

This was built in 1852 of Yorkshire stone on the site of Stockport's first Post Office. The Produce Hall, also known as the Hen Market or Cheese Hall, has large classical Corinthian columns, which cost £4,200. There was a library upstairs opened in 1875 and a dungeon beneath. From the balcony, George V and Edward VII were pronounced as Kings. As its name suggests, the hall houses purveyors of fresh produce and is open Tuesdays to Saturdays. See also the adjoining Georgian style Merchant's House.



To the right of the Produce Hall entrance

32

Bridge Street Brow

This was also known as Kelso Banke and Brierly Brow and was the favoured access route to the Market Place prior to the building of St. Petersgate Bridge in 1868. A pub then called the Hole l'th' Wall was mentioned in the 1820s (after a large hole in the castle wall, which was being used as a tap room). It was also previously called Castlewood, the King's Arms and Brierly's - presumably after Thomas Brierly who was Mayor of Stockport in 1744.



At the top of Bridge Street Brow

33

Baker's Vaults, Market Place

The Baker family owned and ran the George & Dragon from 1824. In 1861, the inn was rebuilt to make room for the new market hall and renamed the Baker's Vaults, a vault being an underground cellar for wine storage. Charles Baker was twice mayor of Stockport, in 1839-40 and in 1852.

There is a suggestion that in AD80, this site may have been the location of a half acre camp housing a garrison of 120 Roman legionaries. What is more certain is that a castle, Stopford Fort, survived here until the Norman Conquest on Castle Hill, first mentioned in 1335.



To the right of the Baker's Vaults entrance

34

Castle Yard, Market Place

The Castle Yard was the "Motte" of a Norman castle, and the castle "Bailey" the area of the Market Place. The first reference to the Castle is in 1173. There may have been a small Roman settlement on the site, but there is sadly no proof (apart from a coin of the Emperor Honorius). A Mr. Green made the first balloon ascent in the town in 1827 from Castle Yard. Today, Castle Yard forms the link between the outdoor market area and the Courts shopping development, which has been created from the conversion of the adjacent former Magistrates Courts building.



Across from Castle Yard entrance

35

Boar's Head, Market Place

This is an early 19th century three storey building; its Market Place elevation was refronted in the late 19th century. Vernon Street, which runs alongside the building, used to be known as Pig Market Brow from where pigs were sold. To avoid theft, patrons sometimes used to tie their pigs to a post at the bar, inside the inn.



Across Market Place from the Boar's Head

36

Market Hall, Market Place

Stockport was granted its market charter in 1260 and has operated on this site for almost 750 years. Stockport Market Hall was built in 1861 and this splendid glass and iron Victorian structure dominates the market place. The sides of the market hall were originally open and it was known as the glass umbrella - these were infilled with timber in the late 1890s. One stallholder in the 1890s, Ephraim Marks's brother, became one half of Marks & Spencer. One bay of the market hall was removed in 1912 to allow trolley buses to pass from St Peter's Square to Offerton. The blue plaque can be found at the corner of Millgate and Market Place.



This is the end of the Town Centre Heritage Trail