

Glastonbury Millennium Walk

This is a walking trail, which will take you on a journey through the town of Glastonbury helping you to explore and learn about its fascinating history. Starting at the entrance to the famous Glastonbury Abbey, the route is marked by 20 numbered direction markers set in the pavement. To help you navigate and explore some optional detours, a pamphlet is available at the Tourist Information Centre. The places of interest at each pavement marker point are summarised below:

No 1: GLASTONBURY TOWN HALL



The Georgian Town Hall and entrance to the Glastonbury Abbey. The arches on the ground floor of the Town Hall were originally open for the market stalls. It was built in 1818 after the larger Market House that had almost filled the wide road in front of it since the late 1600s was pulled down. This had a much larger market area, a jail and a Court Room above. The Court was used as a school, the Town Hall and, for a while, as a silk factory. Glastonbury Abbey was the largest landowner in

Somerset with one of Europe's major church buildings until it was demolished soon after 1537. To the left of the Town Hall is one of its medieval gateways and the Porter's Lodge. The painting on the stone over the small arch shows that 100 years ago the Lodge and the blocked-up gateway were used as the Red Lion Inn.

No 2: St BENEDICT'S CHURCH



You will be within a few yards of St Benedict's Church. It was rebuilt about 1500 and then extended 125 years ago. The church was originally dedicated to St. Benignus or St. Bennings and retained this until the middle of the 17th century. Bishop Benignus was a great friend and disciple of St. Patrick and became his successor.

In 1091 the monks of Glastonbury took the relics of a holy man named Beon or Beonna from Meare to be added to the collection at Glastonbury Abbey; at his last resting place an oration was delivered and, after a liberal offering, a church was built on the site being consecrated around 1100. Unfortunately the monks confused Beon the hermit of Meare with Benignus the successor of St. Patrick, and the dedication was to St. Benignus rather than St. Beon.

The present church was thought to have been built on the same site around 1520 by Abbot Bere (1493 - 1524), a learned and cultured friend of Erasmus. You can see his monogram, RB, over the north porch, pictured right. By comparison with other Somerset churches, a date of 1473 is thought to be more likely. In the north porch can also be seen the little window used by lepers to receive the holy sacrament.

No 3: THE MARKET PLACE



You will be standing beside one of the old Glastonbury inns, the Crown, mentioned in 1535. After a bad fire 100 years ago little remains of the medieval original. The Market Place forms the focus of the town's life. Many buildings around it date from abbey times even though their fronts have been 'modernised' during the centuries. Look at their ceiling beams and fireplaces.

The present cross was built in 1845 by Benjamin Ferrey. It replaced a medieval water conduit and a cross with its surrounding Jacobean octagonal market shelter. The view left was painted 200 years ago, from where you now stand, looking up Magdalene Street. It shows the jail end of the 17th century Market House.

No 4: GEORGE & PILGRIMS



The George & Pilgrims Inn was built by Abbot Selwood about 1465 for visitors to the town and is one of the finest surviving medieval inns in the country. Through the courtyard across the road is the 'Bridget Chapel' within the remains of a medieval house built on the site of the Norman market area.

No 5: TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE



The Glastonbury Tourist Information Office (up the High Street on the left) is in The Tribunal. This 600-year-old merchant's house had a later front built onto it, salvaged from other buildings some 500 years ago. It houses some of the finest objects dug up from the famous Iron Age Glastonbury Lake Village. This was occupied 2,200 years ago a mile north of the town. Through the archway opposite the Tribunal is the Assembly Rooms, built in 1864 on the stables of the former White Hart Inn. The sign of this 1650s inn was used to hang some of the rebels who supported the Duke of Monmouth in 1685. The Inn was rebuilt in 1760 and became the largest Glastonbury

coaching inn until the railway came 100 years later.

No 6: THE MONARCH

'The Monarch' was another Georgian inn with a date of 1713. Its side entry leads to St John's Square. The salvaged platform canopy there is from the Somerset & Dorset Railway Company's Glastonbury station.



No 7: St JOHN'S CHURCH

St John's Tower was built in the late 1400s and is 134 1/2 feet high. Look for the bagpiper near the top. The Glastonbury Thorn in the churchyard flowers at Christmas and Easter. Blossom from this tree decorates the Christmas breakfast table of our Monarch each year. Inside the Church are features or furnishings from most of the past ten centuries. On the corner of Hanover Square across the High Street is the Vestry Hall, built in 1865. It replaced the medieval church house, which was used as a Guildhall, a brew-house for the Church Ales and the towns-people's meeting place.

The blocked ground floor opening at the front was provided to house the town's horse-drawn fire engine until the Fire Station was built in 1901. Beyond the Vestry Hall is a small gate on the site of an early abbey gateway. It gives a view of the abbey precinct. This land was farmed for 300 years until it was turned into parkland for the Abbey House in 1825.

The War Memorial in front of the Church was designed by Bligh Bond. He used the design of a Saxon Cross that he discovered when excavating in the abbey. His work in the ruins started soon after the abbey was bought for the Church in 1908. He was sacked by the Church authorities after revealing that his research was based upon the Spirit writing of a medieval monk.

No 8: St GEORGE'S HALL

Further up the High Street, past the Church is St George's Hall, built in the 1720s. Its ornate staircase was sold to the Victoria and Albert Museum in the 1920s. Next to it is another early

Georgian lawyer's house. Most of the High Street looked like this 200 years ago - long before plate glass shop windows were introduced. Archers Way leads to the butts area where local medieval bowmen trained. Further on is the 1930s 'Tudor' Post Office.

No 9: TOP OF HIGH STREET

For 250 years Becketts Inn was the home and office of many Glastonbury surgeons. There's another fine Georgian house next door. Across the road and higher up the High Street is the United Reformed Church, re-built in 1814 with a 1898 portico. This is on the site of the Ship Inn, where Glastonbury's dissenters settled after leaving the parish church when Charles II was restored to the throne. The adjacent large houses replaced the town's largest medieval town house in the 1830s.

No 10: BOVE TOWN

The Health Centre, built on the site of the Glastonbury Arms, won a Civic Trust award in 1978. You can divert up Bove Town for 200 yards to Jacoby Cottage on the left. It still shows traces of its origin as a medieval Pilgrimage Chapel. By 1791 it was the meeting place of the early Methodists. Until that time Bove Town was the main medieval road to Wells. Many of its houses have internal features that are up to 500 years old. The thatched cottage near the top is dated 1637. You can continue right through Wick Hollow to a route to Tor Hill.

The Methodist Chapel opposite the top of the High Street was built in 1861. In front of it is a Victorian water fountain with a small reservoir behind it. This was built when the Victorian Borough authorities were compelled to replace the town's inadequate water supply. Parts of it had been installed up to 400 years earlier. In Lambrook Street the Victorian terrace houses on the left show some of the products of the high quality eighteenth and nineteenth century Glastonbury Brick and Pottery kilns. One house has Art Nouveau door and window details. These houses were built upon a field that was the traditional site of the abbey bell foundry.

No 11: THE OLD VICARAGE

Behind the high wall is the Vicarage, built for GBP 900 in 1819 with help from Queen Anne's Bounty. This fund was used because the Glastonbury Vicars had a very low income -- after the Abbey had appropriated their endowment. Across the road is the pretty 18th century Georgian house, Kylemore. Alongside it is the first purpose built Methodist Chapel in Glastonbury. Silver Street was originally inside the abbey precinct. The original northern wall surrounding the abbey was nearer to the High Street. However, the high walk along Chilkwel Street follows the original eastern boundary of the precinct. It may be that the bottom stones are from the time of the re-building of the abbey after the disastrous fire of 1184 - or even that of the earlier Norman church. Opposite the wall, on the site of a row of medieval cottages, are more spacious Georgian and Victorian houses.

No 12: CHALICE HILL HOUSE

Off Dod Lane is one of the grandest Glastonbury houses - Chalice Hill House, built about 1830 by Richard Periam Prat. Prat was Town Clerk, practically running Glastonbury, and was a key instigator of the Glastonbury Canal. This opened to Highbridge in 1833. By 1840 it was clear that the canal was a financial disaster and Prat and his brother absconded with some of the Borough's money, eventually settling in Canada. Further along Chilkwel Street, on the edge of the house's original extensive grounds, is Prat's lawyer's office. It still houses the drainage authority and the business started by Stephen Holman, who stepped into Prat's shoes. The canal was bought and closed by the Somerset Central Railway Co.

The archway in the wall opposite Dod Lane was made in 1825 to give access to Abbey House. This was designed in the Tudor style by John Buckler, the well known antiquarian illustrator. It was built for Fry Reeves, the town's prominent banker. He bought most of the abbey precinct farmland and turned it into "parkland with interesting ruins". The carvings were salvaged from the lodgings built by

Abbot Bere and used soon after by Henry VII. Further along Chilkwell Street are more Georgian and Regency houses. Blenheim House was built for Periam Prat in the early 1800s.

No 13: CHILKWELL STREET

Richmond Villas, facing down Bere Lane, are from the Victorian era. Look for the early post box set in the wall. From 1750 to 1850 gates barred free access into the town via both Chilkwell Street and Bere Lane.

You can go further along Chilkwell street past cottages, many of which are medieval. 300 yards along on the left is a turn to Chalice Well Gardens. The well shaft and its cover is a later opening through the roof of a 12th century well house. This was built to protect a fast flowing spring that was piped from here into the abbey precinct. After the abbey was closed it was almost buried as the coombe silted up. Medieval and later legends link this site to the burial of the grail or of a chalice brought here by Joseph of Arimathea. In 1752 Chalice well water was claimed to have healing properties and for a short period many thousands came here. Wellhouse Lane, beyond the Chalice wells gardens, provides another route to the Tor Hill.

No 14: SOMERSET RURAL LIFE MUSEUM



Set in the wall opposite is a watering place that gave access to water diverted to the Abbey from the Chalice Well spring. The Somerset Rural Life Museum is housed in the ornate barn built about 1340 to store some of the produce of the abbey estates. The farm buildings and the house were mostly added in Victorian times. Until recently meadows came up to the barn from the River Brue, so the 1790 cottages on the right of Bere Lane were called 'Prospect Buildings'. The southern wall of the abbey precinct boundary is incorporated in

the rear wall of some of these houses.

No 15: SOUTHFIELD HOUSE

Southfield House opposite is on the site of the earlier farm that worked the land called Actis, from here down to the River Brue. The Old Butleigh Road was the turnpike road across the moors and gives a view of the memorial on the Polden Hills to Admiral Hood of Butleigh.

No 16: BUTLEIGH ROAD

The new Butleigh Road opposite was made in the early 1800s. It led to the discovery of a number of burials. These were possibly suicides which were traditionally buried in un-consecrated ground by cross-roads outside towns.

No 17: VIEWS OF ABBEY CHURCH

The large chestnut trees are on the site of a former farm. The land it farmed was the precinct of the derelict abbey. Beyond the Play Area was the home of the Glastonbury Football Club. From here is one of the finest views of the full extent of the ruins of the abbey church - the longest in northern Europe when it was destroyed. Also here is a view to the Tor Hill, which is not visible from the abbey, being hidden behind Chalice Hill.

Across the road are houses built from the local blue lias stone. One was the town's first nursing home. It was built to celebrate the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. From here you can divert to Wirral Hill. This was the legendary place where Joseph of Arimathea landed and planted his staff, from which the Glastonbury Thorn sprouted.

No 18: FISHERS HILL

Go straight down the hill towards the Market Place. On the right of Magdalene Street is the site of the Chaingate that secured the town from the south. Next to it is the Abbey Grange, set back and with an overflow of water from the abbey precinct emerging from its wall. This was the house (since altered) that was built in 1713 out of the materials of the abbot's lodgings which was then being demolished. The medieval carvings, later used on the Abbey House and its gateway, were originally built into this house.

No 19: St MARGARET'S CHAPEL

On your left is St Margaret's Chapel and Almshouses. This medieval hospital was moved here from St John's churchyard 700 years ago. There were two rows of almshouses for twelve men built along each side of the original hall - one row was demolished in the 1960s. Continue along Magdalene Street towards the Town Hall. First is the Pump House. This was hurriedly built out of some outbuildings in 1752 when the healing properties of the Chalice Well water were discovered and tens of thousands of visitors came to the town.

In the late 1800s the Copper Beech next door was the home of J G L Bulleid. He was the most eminent of the town's Victorians. His father had been fellow churchwarden with Periam Prat when the canal failed. He was so disturbed by the events that he threw himself from St John's Church tower. It was J G L Bulleid's son Arthur who discovered the Lake Village. St Mary's Church was built in 1939 and houses the restored shrine of Our Lady of G1astonbury. Around her image is a large tapestry showing some of the saints of Glastonbury.

Next to the Church was the Convent of St Louis for most of the 20th century. Beyond it and set back from the road is Somerset House. This was built as the Somerset County Constabulary headquarters at a time when Glastonbury was near to the geographical centre of Somerset. Through the railings across the road is a view of the kitchen built to serve the abbot's palace. This is one of the few buildings to survive the dissolution of the abbey - but it has since lost four corner chimneys. One of the many uses of the kitchen was to house the Glastonbury Quakers.

Beyond the car park are the remains of St Mary's Chapel. It was first to be re-built after a disastrous fire in 1184 that destroyed the abbey that was venerated as the earliest in the land and the burial place of the first kings of all England. The entrance to the Glastonbury Abbey ruins is next to the Town Hall.

No 20: AUSTIN ALMHOUSES

Turn left and go through the archway to the Austin Almshouses. They were built in 1887 by Stanley Austin, the owner of the Abbey House and the ruins. He had emigrated to Australia and then returned a wealthy man. Past the almshouses and to the right is a route to St Benedict's Church. In the town's earliest medieval house deeds this is called 'Gropecuntlene' - an area of doubtful morality in early Glastonbury.