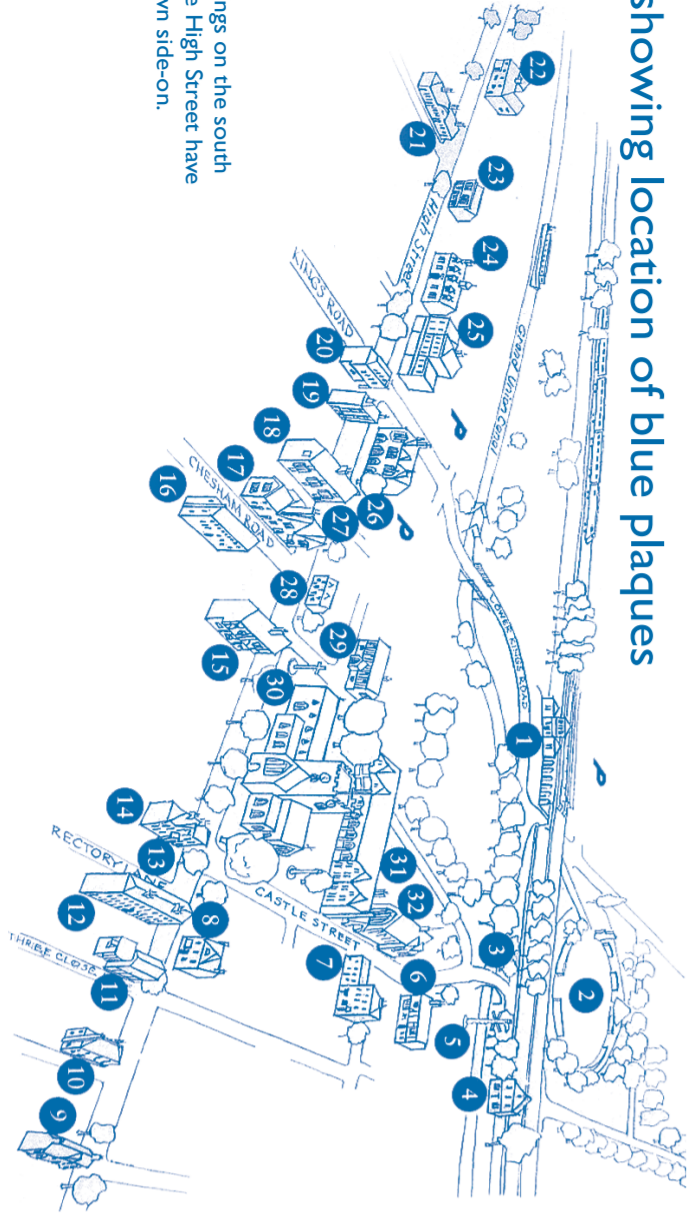


The buildings on the south side of the High Street have been shown side-on.

Map showing location of blue plaques



BERKHAMSTED HERITAGE WALK

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LEAFLETS

- The Graham Greene Trail
- St. Peter's Church Guide

Berkhamsted Town Council has its offices in the Civic Centre, and the Town Clerk would be happy to help if you have any queries.

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BERKHAMSTED HERITAGE WALK

Berkhamsted is a lively town set in a valley of the Chiltern Hills, with a history going back beyond Saxon times. Its claims to fame include strong royal, literary and teaching connections.

This short walk, which starts and ends at the railway station, takes you through the heart of the town.

Although it cannot cover all places worth visiting or describing, we hope it will provide a flavour of the town and spur you on to explore more of Berkhamsted, its historic waterway and its surrounding countryside.

Most of the buildings referred to have blue plaques with numbers that correspond with those against the entries in this leaflet. ▶ Nos 1-32

For further information about Berkhamsted please see back page.

BERKHAMSTED HERITAGE WALK

A GLIMPSE OF OUR HISTORY

A SHORT GUIDED TOUR OF BERKHAMSTED

NO. 1 THE LONDON AND BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY



The world's first inter-city railway was built through Berkhamsted in 1837. Its route closely follows the Grand Union Canal through the town and across the Chiltern Hills beyond. The engineer was Robert Stephenson, son of George Stephenson, the pioneer of railways. The present station was built in 1875 when more tracks were added, and the buildings have some fine polychrome brickwork.



NO. 2 BERKHAMSTED CASTLE

The Castle was built following the granting of the English crown to William the Conqueror by the Saxon chiefs here in Berkhamsted in 1066. Its walls and buildings were first made of wood, but later rebuilt in the local materials of flint and hard chalk.

Nearly all the walls and buildings have disappeared over the centuries, but the impressive earthworks – and the moats dug by hand out of the flinty soil – remain.

All kinds of historic events have taken place here. Famous people associated with the Castle include Geoffrey Chaucer, who was Clerk of Works, and Thomas Becket, the Constable of the Castle in the 12th century. It was the favourite home of the Black Prince, who honeymooned here with the Fair Maid of Kent. A visitor room is open during the summer months.



THE CASTLE IS OPEN EVERY DAY EXCEPT CHRISTMAS DAY AND NEW YEAR'S DAY ADMISSION IS FREE.

NO. 3 THE GRAND JUNCTION CANAL

Now called the Grand Union Canal, it was opened through Berkhamsted in 1798. It soon became the main route for goods between the manufacturing towns of the West Midlands and London, and a principal transport artery of the Industrial Revolution.

The canal system of England was inspired by the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, the 'Father of Inland Navigation', who lived in nearby Ashridge. During the 20th century wide boats were built here and launched sideways into the canal. Berkhamsted is still a gateway to 2,000 miles of inland waterway.

The canal climbs steeply through the town and there are six locks in Berkhamsted.



NO. 4 THE CRYSTAL PALACE

There are three canalside pubs in Berkhamsted, of which the Crystal Palace is one. Originally it had a glazed front, inspired by Joseph Paxton's Great Exhibition building of 1851. Paxton's nephew William was Lord Brownlow's agent and lived nearby. The pub's gable has fine original carved bargeboards.



NO. 5 THE BERKHAMSTED TOTEM POLE

A genuine Canadian totem pole – a gift to John Alford when he owned the timber yard that stood on this site. It has four faces and the carving is full of symbolism.



NO. 6 THE BOOTE

The Boote bears the date 1605 and is a typical oak framed building of its time. It was one of at least six pubs which existed in Castle Street at one time.

Historically Castle Street was the second most important thoroughfare in the town. Before the railway came it linked the High Street directly to the Castle.



NO. 7 THE GARDENER'S ARMS

One of a pair of mid-19th century houses originally built as ale houses but first used as shops. Henry Nash, a local historian and benefactor lived here.

Nash had a strong interest in education and helped establish Berkhamsted School for Girls as well as Berkhamsted Mechanics' Institute, early meetings of which were held in this house.

Between Chapel Street and the High Street is an attractive row of old cottages, many of which are listed.

At the top of Castle Street is Berkhamsted's long, straight High Street. It was a Roman road – Akeman Street – and before that probably a Belgic track, so it has been used for at least 2,000 years.



NO. 8 THE DOWER HOUSE

A listed house of the early 1800s with a lovely porch and doorcase, characteristic of the architectural elegance of the pre-Victorian age. Berkhamsted expanded greatly in the 19th century. Between Manor Street and Ravens Lane is a handsome terrace of Victorian cottages designed as an architectural entity, with interesting brickwork details and terracotta features on the roof all intact. The walk crosses the road and returns on the other side.



NO. 9 THE POPLARS

One of a number of substantial 19th century middle-class houses along the High Street, only a few of which have remained as residences. It takes its name from tall Lombardy poplar trees, which used to line this part of the High Street. The actor Sir Michael Hordern was born here in 1911.



NO. 10 THE GOAT

A 19th century pub on the site of an old thatched inn. Here drovers used to stay while their cattle were pounded in the three 'closes' that gave their name to the lane by the side of the Rex.



NO. 11 THE REX CINEMA

Although built as recently as 1938, this cinema is listed because of its fine period Art Deco interior features by the architect David Nye. It has been beautifully restored, with the foyer area now being an elegant restaurant and bar. An Elizabethan mansion was demolished to make way for the cinema. James Barrie often stayed there, and the Llewellyn Davies boys who lived in the house were the inspiration for Peter Pan.

NO. 12 CHILDHOOD HOME OF CLEMENTINE CHURCHILL



A well-restored stylish terraced house from the early 19th century. Clementine Hozier, later the wife of Sir Winston Churchill, lived here.

NO. 13 RECTORY LANE

William Cowper, the poet and writer of hymns and letters, was born in 1731 in the Rectory which stood on the site of the present one, 150 metres up the lane. It became a place of pilgrimage when Cowper's popularity was at its height.

Although Cowper moved from Berkhamsted when still a boy, his memories of the town remained warm and strong. There are many references to Berkhamsted in his poems and letters.



NO. 14 THE RED HOUSE

Another fine pre-Victorian house, with a Venetian window and impressive porch and doorway. Nearly all the houses facing St. Peter's Church are old, although some have new fronts.

A prominent local citizen and benefactor, John Tawell, lived in the Red House. Later, in 1845, he was publicly hanged for murder.

NO. 15 DEAN INCENT'S HOUSE

This striking timber-framed house with projecting first floor dates from 1500. It was the home of John Incent, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral (1540-1545) and founder of Berkhamsted School.



NO. 16 GRAHAM GREENE'S BIRTHPLACE

200 metres up Chesham Road is St. John's, a boarding house of Berkhamsted School. The writer Graham Greene was born here in 1904 when his father was housemaster. Greene made many references to Berkhamsted in his writing.



NO. 17 THE SWAN

A 16th century inn, one of three old coaching inns which stand side by side in the centre of the town, each with a way through to a yard behind. The Swan is now 'dry' and provides a meeting place and sheltered accommodation for young people.

NO. 18 THE KING'S ARMS

For two centuries the King's Arms was the principal inn of the town. Coaches from London to Aylesbury and the north would stop here to change horses. The exiled King Louis XVIII of France, a frequent caller, became especially fond of the landlord's daughter, Polly Page. James Snook, a highwayman, was an ostler here. He was hanged for his crimes on Boxmoor in 1802 where a memorial stone can still be found. The arms on the sign are not in fact those of any king but of Queen Anne.



173 HIGH STREET contains parts of what is thought to be the earliest known jettied urban building in the country. Its oldest timbers date from the 13th century. At first thought to have been a shop, it is now believed to be a three-bay cross wing to an aisled hall.

NO. 19 179 HIGH STREET

This building dates from the 1920s and includes fine Art Nouveau wood carving. An early and daring example of a shop with large plate glass windows.



NO. 20 THE BRIDEWELL

Berkhamsted's Police Station has stood on this site since 1764. Originally known as the Bridewell, the first building had a 'dungeon' with nine steps down: a most dreadful hole without air.

NO. 21 THE SAYER ALMSHOUSES

John Sayer, King Charles II's cook and a prominent Berkhamsted citizen, had these almshouses built in 1684 for poor widows. They have been used for the same purpose ever since. Sayer's grand tomb chest with Latin inscription can be seen in the Parish Church. The walk crosses the road and returns on the other side.



NO. 22 THE MONKS HOUSE (CAFÉ ROUGE)

An historic building dating from the 16th century. Until some 50 years ago the famous Lane's Nurseries extended along the High Street on both sides of this building. Lane's grew vines, which were exported – to France and Germany!

The world famous 'Lane's Prince Albert' apple was produced from the original tree, which stood behind 250 High Street.



NO. 23 EARLY VICTORIAN BAKERY

An early Victorian baker's shop, with fine ornamental brickwork and matching ironwork.

NO. 24 THE BOURNE SCHOOL (222 HIGH STREET – BRITANNIA BUILDING SOCIETY)

In 1737 the first school to be built in the town for nearly 200 years was opened here – paid for by Thomas Bourne, a rich London merchant. The school was rebuilt in 1854 by General John Finch, another local benefactor. The three coats of arms on the front door are those of Berkhamsted Town, Thomas Bourne and John Finch.

This was the first building occupied by Berkhamsted School for Girls when it was founded in 1888. Clementine Hozier, later Lady Churchill, was a pupil here.



NO. 25 WILLIAM COWPER'S SCHOOL

All along the High Street the original façades of the old houses can be seen above the modern shop fronts. Here a single shop has been made from three houses, the middle one of which dates from the early 18th century – William Cowper went to school here.

NO. 26 THE TOWN HALL

This building was designed in the Gothic style by the eccentric Victorian architect Edward Buckton Lamb. His initials and the date of the building are on the front. The Town Hall housed the corn market (the medieval market hall having been destroyed in a fire), with a large assembly hall as well as rooms for the Mechanics' Institute above.



NO. 27 THE MARKET SQUARE

The ancient trading centre of the historic town of Berkhamsted was the Market House. It stood in the road near this spot for some 250 years before being burnt down in 1854.



NO. 28 'GRAB-ALL ROW'

The attractive row of shops along this part of the High Street was built in the old market square and acquired the name of Grab-All Row. The vine is ancient, dating from early in the 19th century. At the time Berkhamsted had a flourishing trade in the cultivation of vines, and vine-growing in Berkhamsted was mentioned in the Domesday Book.

NO. 29 THE COURT HOUSE

In this Elizabethan hall the town's corporation met after Berkhamsted was granted its last charter in 1618. It has been restored and is now the parish hall, available for letting to the public.



NO. 30 ST. PETER'S CHURCH

One of the largest churches in Hertfordshire, the parish church of Berkhamsted dates from 1220. It has medieval features in the early English, decorated and perpendicular styles, as well as many monuments, brasses and stained glass windows. For over 600 years nearly everyone who died in Berkhamsted was buried in St. Peter's churchyard, so it contains thousands of graves. No one knows how old the great yew tree is on the corner of Castle Street.



NO. 31 BERKHAMSTED SCHOOL

Founded in 1541 and much extended in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, the original building is still in use. The old school hall, with its early Tudor brickwork and windows, faces the churchyard, and is unspoilt. In 1994, Berkhamsted School first admitted girls, and it is now co-educational. Many literary figures have been pupils at the School, including Graham Greene, Claud Cockburn, Peter Quennell and Richard Mabey.



NO. 32 BERKHAMSTED SCHOOL CHAPEL

This Victorian chapel has a fine interior, based on the Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli in Venice, with the altar raised dramatically at the top of a broad flight of steps. (The Chapel is not normally open to the public.)



BERKHAMSTED HERITAGE WALK

We hope you have enjoyed this short tour of Berkhamsted and that you will be able to find time to explore more of the town and its surroundings.