

A brief history of Burford

Mentioned in the Domesday Book, Burford was granted one of England's earliest charters (1087). During the medieval period the town enjoyed considerable prosperity as evidenced by Burford's grand church.

In the early 1600s the town became embroiled in a series of bitter conflicts with Sir Lawrence Tanfield (new lord of the manor of Burford) over town administration and finances: indeed he and his wife are bywords for greed in Burford folklore. His overpowering tomb in Burford church is clearly meant to reflect his power and wealth.

After the turbulence of the Civil War, Burford enjoyed a resurgence following the Restoration. Charles II visited on several occasions - attracted particularly by the town's horse racing - and one of his illegitimate children with Nell Gwynn was given the title Earl of Burford. The Burford Races were considered second only to Newbury's in importance.

The end of the 17C and early years of the 18C saw a flourishing coaching trade coming through the town, which sat on one of the important Oxford to Gloucester routes. However the building of a bypass, where the A40 now runs, and the advent of the railways, which never came to Burford, saw a prolonged period of economic stagnation during the 19C and as a result Victorian buildings, common elsewhere, are almost entirely absent in the town.

In the 20C recreational tourism, by bike and then by car, came to Burford and its economic rescue. The quaint old buildings and shop fronts that had been preserved largely by poverty, survived to delight the modern visitor.

Discovering Burford

Burford has been welcoming visitors for a thousand years, a tradition of hospitality that endures. This leaflet will give you a brief glimpse of the history and buildings but the town also has a great range of independent specialist shops and a fantastic selection of places to eat and drink.

Listed below are a few suggestions for exploring Burford in more depth:

Burford Visitor Information Centre *i*

An excellent source for information on Burford and the surrounding area, they sell books and guides, as well as offering an accommodation booking service.

Open 7 days a week.

Visit: 33a High Street, Burford OX18 4QA

Tel: 01993 823558

Email: burford.vic@westoxon.gov.uk

The Tolsey Museum

A wide ranging collection illustrating Burford's social and working history.

Open April - October, Tuesday to Sunday afternoons.

Free admission, donations welcomed.

Tel: 01993 822178

St John the Baptist Church

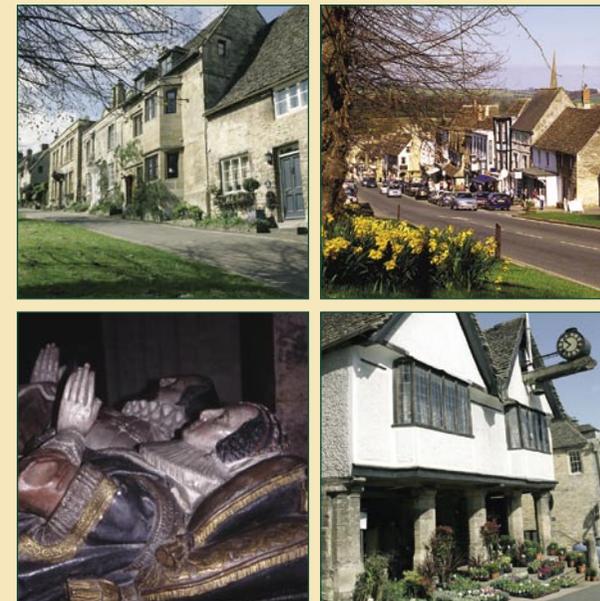
Burford's magnificent parish church was built from around 1160 and is full of wonderful monuments and artefacts.

Open to the public. Free admission, donations welcomed.

We are happy to provide this information in other formats. Please call 01993 861615 if this is required.

Burford

'Gateway to the Cotswolds'



An introductory guide to Burford and some of its historic buildings.



www.oxfordshirecotswolds.org
A service provided by West Oxfordshire District Council

Burford

① **Bear Court** By the 1640s this was the Bear Inn. In the early 19C the stables in the courtyard (now shops and showrooms) were converted into cottages.

② **96 High Street (Huffkins)** Built in 1578, this was the Rose and Crown from the late 18C to c1918 hence the rose and crown formed in nails on the front door.

③ **104 High Street (former George Inn & Yard)** From the Middle Ages to its closure (c1800) this was one of Burford's most important inns. The stone gatehouse was built to be noticed by travellers arriving from the east, formerly the main road into town. The front rooms were used for eating and drinking, with accommodation round the courtyard. After the inn's closure the yard, like many in Burford, was turned into cramped cottages for poorer workers.

④ **124 High Street (chemist)** From the outside there is little sign of the age of this building, dated to 1401. It was built as an inn but since 1734 it's been a chemist - the oldest in England. Inside are cabinets with fading labels such as Opium! After the end of the glass tax in 1845, other towns saw large plate glass windows replace smaller ones but Burford's economic stagnation in the 19C meant earlier examples, like these, survived.

⑤ **Sheep Street (Bay Tree Hotel)** The hotel's main part incorporates a house built c1649. As noted in a wall plaque, an earlier house here belonged to the Tanfields.

⑥ **Sheep Street (Lamb Inn)** Like the Bay Tree Hotel the Lamb Inn comprises an accumulation of several properties. The inn was remodelled in the 18C for the coaching trade with stables in the rear courtyard, now converted into accommodation, and a small snug with a fire in the front, a 'warming room' for coach passengers. A mounting block survives outside down Priory Lane.

⑦ **23 Sheep Street** In the early 1890s this was the Lenthall Temperance Hotel. In 1908-9 it was listed as a Cyclists' Touring Company house, reflecting the arrival in Burford of recreational tourism. Tourism by bicycle boomed briefly, there was even a cycle maker around the corner in the High Street, but was soon superseded by the car.

⑧ **High Street/Sheep Street corner (The Tolsey)** Tree-ring dating of its roof timbers shows it was built c1525. Overlooking the medieval market area, market tolls were collected here. The open ground floor area housed stalls selling products that needed shelter from the sun or rain (like butter or silk). At the back of the Tolsey was the town lock-up. The museum opened in 1960.

⑨ **115 High Street (Wysdom Hall)** Behind the 1720 Georgian façade is one of the most important medieval houses in Burford. Simon Wisdom lived here: in the 16C he was Burford's wealthiest man, dominating civic life and acquiring many properties.

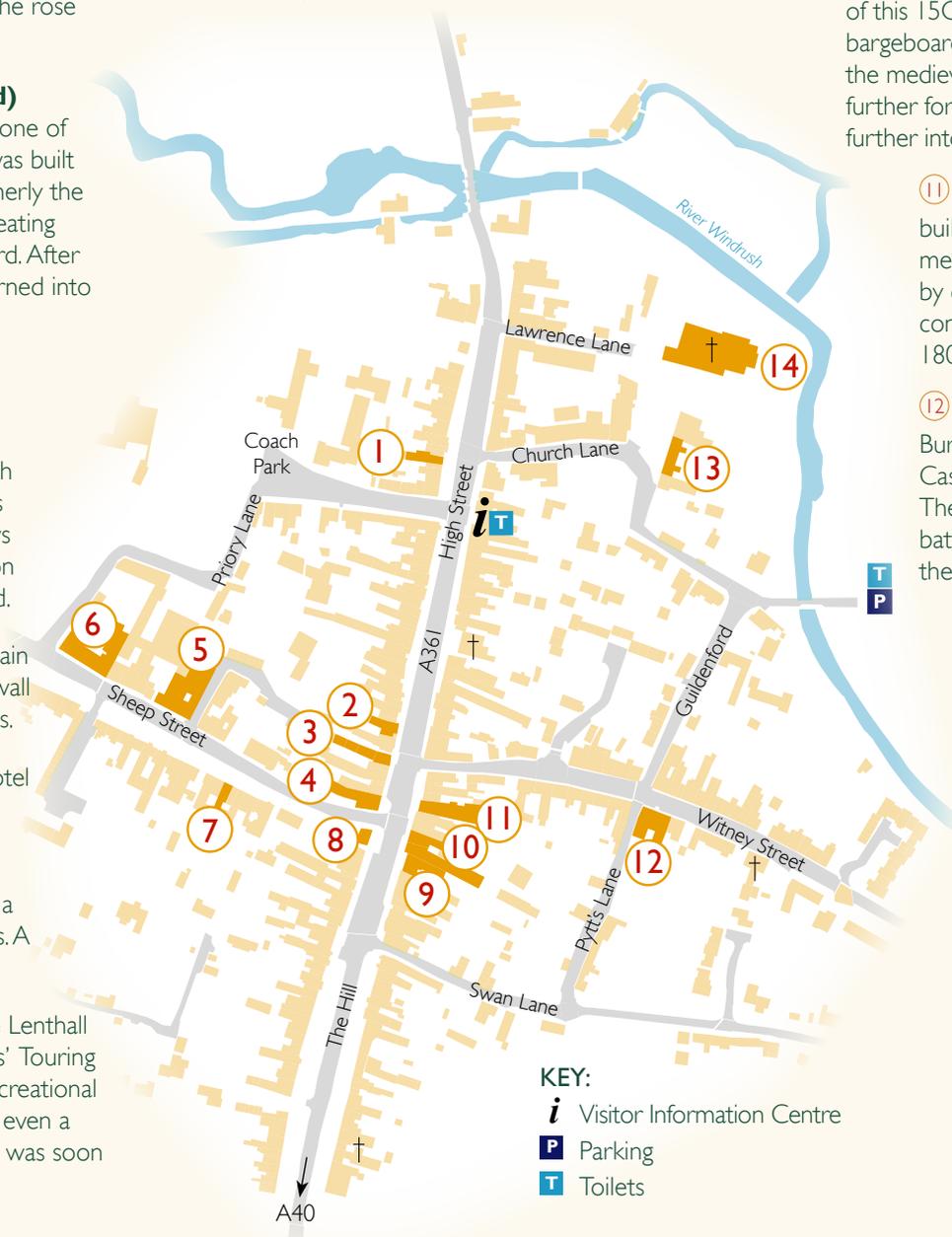
⑩ **111 High Street (WJ Castle)** Look up at the front of this 15C timber-framed building and you'll find fine carved bargeboards. It was built as a shop and inside traces survive of the medieval timber shop front. The modern front is several feet further forward, typical of the way shop fronts have encroached further into the street since the Middle Ages.

⑪ **105 High Street (Bull Inn)** The Bull's brick front, built c1715, is the only one in Burford. No doubt it was meant to make the inn stand out as visitors arrived by coach, at a time when there were plenty of places competing for their trade. Lord Nelson stayed here in 1802.

⑫ **30 Witney Street (The Great House)** One of Burford's grandest houses, it was built (c1700) for John Castle, a wealthy physician, prominent in town affairs. The top floor forms a single long open gallery. The battlemented chimneys and parapet are a visual pun on the family name of Castle.

⑬ **Warwick Almshouses** Founded in 1457 by Burford wool merchant Henry Bishop, acting for the earl of Warwick, then lord of Burford.

⑭ **St John the Baptist Church** The church reflects the wealth and civic pride of Burford's medieval merchants. Its predominantly 15C appearance masks work of many periods: the great west doorway, with its zigzag mouldings, is one of the few visible Norman remains. The church has many interesting monuments including, on the font, the scratched name of Anthony Sedley and the date 1649. He was one of the Leveller mutineers from Cromwell's army who were captured and held in the church. The ringleaders were shot against the churchyard wall, as the remaining prisoners watched from the church roof.



KEY:
i Visitor Information Centre
P Parking
T Toilets