

Samuel Pepys' Abingdon Walk

A Guided Walk through Abingdon

On the 9th of June 1668 Samuel Pepys stayed at the Antelope Inn in the Market Square on the night of the Custard Fair, the following day he walked down to the Thameside Christ Church Alms Houses.

Retrace his walk with this pictorial guide, designed to help you spot plaques, curios, historical houses and industrial history that the casual eye might otherwise miss.

Market Square-East St Helens-St Helens Church-Christ's Hospital-St Helens Wharf

Abingdon is reputedly England's oldest town and you will walk through its former Iron Age and Roman centre. You will follow in the steps of devout Saints and of Kings, of elegant townfolk and tough river wharf men and bargees. These streets are now peaceful yet they have seen the terror of marauding Danes, religious riots, bitter Civil War siege and skirmishes; but surely your only risk will be from the modern traffic (please take care)!

All that remains of the Queens Hotel which once dominated the **Market Square** built on the site of the Queens Arms
And the even earlier Antelope Inn
Cross the square to East St Helens behind the County Hall



Could be considered as No 1 Abingdon, but why is there a little sign Georgics V?
Follow the pavement to St Helen's East which begins level with the Punch Bowl public house.

Unusual Plaque (**Lombard Street**), how many streets must have been widened at this time, when towns lost their medieval character (**return to East St Helens**)



St Helen's East

Abingdon as Civil War Frontier Town. The vain and tragic King had several connections with Abingdon. He reputedly held a war council in the upper rooms of this public house. Later he saw his wife and children for the last time at nearby Barton Court

<p>The Tomkins family, who were maltsters, Baptists and builders and were responsible for several fine houses in Abingdon, notably Stratton House (1722), the Clock House (1728) and Twickenham House (1756).</p>	
	<p>William of Orange on his way to London Stayed her at the house of Thomas Medlycott Recorder of Abingdon 1675-88 M.P. for Abingdon 1688-89. Governor of Christs Hospital Abingdon 1675-1716.</p>
<p>St Ethelwold’s house in the heart of Medieval Abingdon, in what is now recognized as also having been the centre of a medium-sized Roman town, whose origins date back to the Early Iron Age. St Ethelwold was Abbot of Abingdon Abbey in 955 he restored the abbey after earlier Danish Raids.</p>	
	<p>Rare or even unique (?) in Abingdon a “Fire Insurance” Shield for the Imperial Company indicating that fireman will be paid for saving this house</p>
<p>RRE was another proud Abingdonian, but in the parallel street West Helens were the notorious “Inner Courts” allegedly equal to any Glasgow slum. A century ago, this was an industrialized area, with warehouses, tanneries, carpet and clothing factories</p>	



Acorn? Also to be seen at Caldecott House Lodge. The archway leads to Christs Hospital , St Helen’s Wharf, the Ock and the former Canal to Bristol, *please go through the Arch into St Helen’s and Christ’s Hospital.*

There are three blocks of Almshouses located near St Helen's Church. Long Abbey Almshouses erected 1446 by Fraternity of Holy Cross, Twitty's Almshouses erected 1708 and Brick Alley erected 1720.

Take the path forking left, down to the river






Near the church of St. Helen is another hospital, erected in 1707 by Charles TWITTY, for the maintenance of three men and three women; to which John BEDWELL in 1799, and Samuel CRIPPS in 1819, bequeathed L200 each; and in 1826 E. BEASLEY L600.

River Front St Helen’s Wharf
1668 Samuel Pepys visited the Almshouses of St Helens and donated half-a-crown. Abingdon once had a famous town cross which was used by Cromwell’s troops as target practice



The waters got to the top of the river front steps in the winter of 2002/3. The opposite bank of the Thames disappeared under a huge lake

<p>Christ's Hospital, on the west side of St. Helen's church, erected in 1446, on the site of the ancient nunnery, by Geoffry Barbone and Sir John de St. Helen, originally belonged to the brethren of the Holy Cross. and dome in the centre</p>	
	<p>No this is not the former canal just a bridge built to cross the River Ock (Salmon) to get to the canal, which is few dozen meters further</p>
<p>Here's where the canal met the Thames. The Wilts & Berks Canal allowed trade with Bristol and the Somerset coal fields. It closed in the early 1900's and is now much regretted. Walkers can still follow its trace most of the way to the Kennet.</p>	
<p>Now look back at Abingdon, for one of the famous postcard views of Abingdon. On a nice day you may care to eat your sandwiches here. The canal has come and gone since Samuel Pepys' walk, but he would surely recognize much of what still exists today.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Return by the same route</i></p>	
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