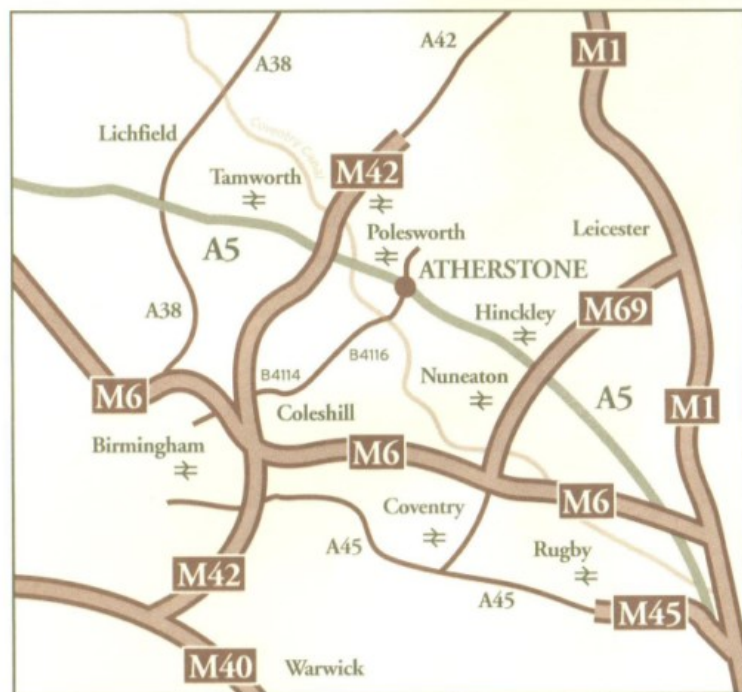


HOW TO GET HERE

Atherstone is situated on the A5 four miles from Junction 10 of the M42, with easy access to Birmingham and Leicester. The town is served by public transport, with bus services to neighbouring towns and rail services to Tamworth, Nuneaton and London.

For information on public transport in North Warwickshire contact Warwickshire County Council - www.warwickshire.gov.uk/publictransport t: 01926 412987 or Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk t: 0870 608 2608.

Atherstone can also be accessed by the Coventry Canal, which runs through the town. The Market Place is just a few minutes walk from the moorings at Bridge 41 or 43.



This leaflet has been produced by Atherstone Civic Society and Friends of Atherstone Heritage.

For more information on the history of Atherstone visit www.friendsofathersstone.org.uk

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North Warwickshire
Borough Council



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Whilst great care has been taken to ensure the information contained in this leaflet is correct, at the time of publication, responsibility cannot be accepted for inaccuracies or omissions.

ATHERSTONE

HISTORIC TOWN TRAIL



Beech House, Market Square

The Friends of Atherstone Heritage & Atherstone Civic Society



ATHERSTONE

Atherstone is a market town situated on the Roman Watling Street, between Tamworth and Nuneaton. The picturesque town centre dates from medieval times and is unspoiled by modern development. Until the late 20th century Atherstone's traditional industries were mining and felt hatmaking. Today the town is rediscovering its past through tourism and has also been designated a 'Booktown.' Second-hand bookshops can be found in the Market Square and Long Street, with friendly cafés and shops, making the town ideal for the browsing visitor. Markets are held on Tuesdays and Fridays, with a Farmers' Market on the third Saturday of the month.

The town trail will take about 40 minutes to walk and is suitable for wheelchairs. It begins in the Market Place.

Atherstone dates from Anglo-Saxon times. In the mid-13th century the Abbot of Bec marked out thirteen and a half burgage plots around the Market Place and along Watling Street, hoping to attract free tenants who would bring prosperity to the town. Charters were granted by the King for twice-weekly markets and an annual fair. Despite the Abbot's efforts, the town never achieved borough status, though its importance as a trading centre did increase. In 1724 Daniel Defoe described Atherstone as 'a town famous for a great cheese fair on 8th September.'

1 A 12th century chapel originally stood on the site of **St Mary's Church**. It was rebuilt in 1375 by Augustine friars, and until 1863 housed the grammar school in the chancel. At the rear of the church is a 12th century porch, re-sited when Baddesley Ensor Church was demolished in 1842. It was the private entrance from Atherstone Hall (demolished in the 1960s) for the Bracebridge family. To the left of the church is the **Angel Inn**, dating from medieval times. It was once the meeting place of the manor court, and is today host to the annual Shrove Tuesday Ball Game.



St Mary's Church



The Angel Inn

2 To the right of the Church is **Friars' Gate**, once the entrance into the town of the Augustine friars who occupied the site of Atherstone Hall before it was built in 1619. In 1798 Abraham Bracebridge created the **Swan Archway** by diverting the road through the yard of the Swan Inn so that it would not pass in front of his home. The garden wall of **Chapel House**, 1720, (today a hotel and restaurant) was built at this time to cut off the road. **St Mary's House** next door was the schoolmaster's house. The **Old Surgery** was the south bay of the Swan Inn. Inside the walls are timber framed, and the fireplace dates from Tudor times.



Swan Archway

Annette Young
1988

3 The **Market Tavern** is timber framed, and a trace of the overhanging upper storey can be found inside the entry. To the right, **Beech House**, (shown on the front cover) was re-built in 1708 by William Eyre, who spent so lavishly on it that he died a bankrupt in 1723 in the Fleet prison in London. It remains today Atherstone's only Grade II* listed house.

4 Further along **17 and 15 Market Street** were originally one house, note a pair of substantial brick back-to-back chimneys, probably 17th-century. **13 and 11 Market Street** were also one dwelling, and the most impressive building overlooking the Market Place, having been jettied at first and second floor levels on both elevations. Today only the rear jettying exists, though the upper part of a corner post can be seen behind the right-hand shop window.



Market Street



Chimneys - 17 & 15 Market Street



13 & 11 Market Street

Walk back across the Market Place

5 **16-20 Church Street** (to the left of the Angel Inn) are divided by the entry that gave access to **Phoenix Yard**. The buildings behind are a reminder of the shape of the former Atherstone yards, the last of which was condemned and demolished in the 1960s. **14 Church Street** was occupied by Baker Megginson who, by 1881, had opened an ironmonger's shop, which continued until the end of the 20th century. The 3-bay building at **12 Church Street**, is recorded in 1646 when it was a full burgage, owned by Henry and Marie Shepie, and had a croft behind it. **14 and 16** were also part of that burgage but split off in 1691.

6 Timber in the attic of **8 Church Street** has been dated to the late 15th century. More recently it was a dress shop opened in the 1940s by Jane Stafford. All of the unsold stock was kept so that when she died the building was a time capsule of fashion, hats and jewellery. **6 Church Street** is thought to have been the site of the public bakehouse, which gave this part of the street its name.



8 Church Street

7 The **New Swan** opposite was built at the end of the 18th century. The passage to the right is known as **Derby Lane**. On the corner with Long Street stood the **Coffee Tavern**, opened in 1878 for working men, where they could read the newspaper and have 'orderly conversations' away from the influence of the public house.

Now cross Long Street, and turn to your right

Long Street is part of Roman Watling Street that passes through Atherstone. This became a coaching route and in the late 18th century cramped 'yards' were built behind the houses to accommodate workers in the flourishing hatmaking trade.

8 Inside the passage (signposted to the bus station) the remains of a hatch marks the discrete access to the pawnbrokers. To the right **81 Long Street** was formerly the **Hand and Bottle** pub, behind which was a yard of 14 dwellings. Next door at **79 Long Street** was the **Nelson Inn**, with 10 back dwellings in 1845, plus a place for manure, a privy, a well and a pump. It was the first to be cleared away.

9 The **Arcade** was built in 1985 on the site of the **Kings Arms** pub, behind which was a yard of 20 dwellings in 1887. To the right, **69 Long Street** is Grade II listed and its traditional shop front is redolent of Atherstone in its Victorian heyday. Previously it was the **Druids Arms** inn with 12 back dwellings.

10 **63 Long Street** has an eye-catching Victorian Gothic façade, bearing the date 1875. It is one of only two examples of English bond brickwork in Long Street. To the right where the Co-op stands today, was **Willday's house and factory**. Founded at the end of the 18th century, by John Willday, it became Atherstone's largest and most innovative hat factory.



69 Long Street



63 Long Street

Cross the road

11 Looking down beside **50 Long Street** is an industrial building that was the former **Hatton's hat** factory. Hat making and coal mining were seasonal industries. Men worked in the mines in winter and swapped to hatting in the summer. This factory closed in the 1950s.



Hattons Hat Factory

12 Continue along this side of the street to the White Bear, where Joseph Abel, a dyer, and his wife, Alice, lived in the mid 17th century. Next-door **Ram's Yard, Laquo's Buildings, Windridge's Yard, Garden Row and Rumsey's Yard**, were all cleared to make way for the development of the Library and Memorial Hall in 1960.

13 The properties at this end of Long Street were once in the ownership of Merevale Abbey. Later Robert, Earl of Essex, Queen Elizabeth's favourite, inherited **4-6 Long Street and 21 Long Street**. The Innage Brook ran across Long Street at this end of the town, providing the water necessary for tanning and dyeing, and later hatmaking.

Continue straight ahead

14 **Grendon House** stands just beyond the old **Parish Boundary** between Grendon and Mancetter, which is marked by a worn stone on the pavement. Across the road is **Station House**. Built in 1847, it is one of the last surviving railway buildings in J.W. Livock's unified Jacobean style. It was saved from demolition by local campaigners in 1980.



Station House

Turn around, retrace your steps and walk around the bend into Station Street

15 **Station Street** is the 'south back way' that once followed the swan-neck curve of the Innage Brook. The street was occupied on both sides by the premises of Vero & Everitt, hatters. The factory

closed in 1987 but the stone tablet from the chimney has been incorporated into the boundary wall of the Co-op supermarket.

16 The **Aldi supermarket** is built on the site of **Boss's Yard, Avin's Yard, Vero's Terrace, Wheatshaf Yard, Cordingley's Yard, Bingham's Row and Swan with Two Necks Yard**. Bingham's Row, behind 37-39 Long Street, was the most crowded. In 1910 its 22 one-bedroomed dwellings accommodated a total of 123 people, who shared two wash-houses, privies and ashpits. The adjoining three-storey mill building shows how closely work and living were connected. This mill and adjoining premises were formerly part of Willday's hatting factory. More recently they were occupied by **J.L. Vero's slipper factory**, above which can be seen the town's last remaining factory chimney, built by Vero in the 1930s.



Avin's Yard



Former hat factory chimney

17 Until the early 1960s the car park on the right-hand side of Station Street was the old **Cattle Market**. Beyond it, the public house was known as the **Square and Compass**. On the opposite side, the bus station was another area of dense industrial housing, including **Druids Arms**, **Kings Arms**, **Nelson** and **Hand and Bottle** yards.

Continue around the mini-roundabout

18 Passing around the roundabout note the former **Bull's Head** on your left, which dates from the 1830s when Richard Winters was landlord and the **Tudor Centre** on your right, which was once a chapel built in 1852 after a dispute between two rival ministers.

19 The wall to the **Bank House** garden (just after the supermarket car park), is one of the few surviving rear boundary burgage walls. All properties on Long Street, whether they were yards or single dwellings had an access to the backway so that carts and animals could be brought into the rear of the premises from the open fields on either side of the town. Beyond the garden, the red brick office block was built in 1980 to accommodate the newly-formed **North Warwickshire Borough Council**.

Continue along South Street towards the hill

20 On your left was F.J. Elliot, the **Tannery** hat factory. It was supplied by a brook that ran parallel with Grove Road on the right. The houses in this street were built by Richard Stafford who had a hat factory in Coleshill Road (see *Atherstone Country Trail*). On the left-hand side of South Street **Atherstone Boys School** is now converted to housing.



Old Swan

21 **Knob Hall** on the right of the bend, is Atherstone's only surviving ribbon weaver's house. Further along South Street, the town's successful businessmen built large houses with parkland gardens on the ridge looking to the south. Those that remain are **Arden Hill**, **Mancetter Cottage**, **The Orchard**, and also **The Vicarage**.

Turn around and retrace your steps back towards the town

22 Turn right into **Welcome Street** (opposite Stafford Street), which was paid for by local landowner, Charles Holte Bracebridge to commemorate his return from the Crimea, where he and his wife had accompanied Florence Nightingale.

23 Arriving back on Long Street the **Old Swan** on the right contains the only known fragment of a cruck-framed building left in the town. Although much altered on the inside it is Atherstone's best surviving example of a timber-framed house. Up the hill on the right, where **Regal Court** is today, stood Atherstone's **Workhouse**.

24 Retrace your steps down Long Street towards the town. The lowest part was known as '**The Hollow**' and was where the Grove Road brook crossed the road. The Conservative Club, on the left was formerly known as **Atherstone House**, a merchant's house built in the late 17th century. Cross Woolpack Way to what is now a car park but which used to be the site of the **Woolpack Inn** and **Bond's**, **Allen's** and **Coach and Horses** yards. On the right hand side of Long Street, opposite the car park, is **Denham House** the former premises of **Denham and Hargrave** hat factory.



The Conservative Club (formerly Atherstone House)



Denham House

25 The **Albert Hall**, on the right hand-side of Long Street, was built by public subscription in 1876 as a mission hall that could accommodate 500 people. To the left is **110 Long Street**, built in 1837 to a design by J A Hansom, who also designed Birmingham Town Hall, and invented the Hansom cab.



Albert Hall



110 Long Street

26 The date of 1711 on the **Old Bank House** opposite is misleading for there was a house on this site from early times. The walled garden behind, which measures half a burgage, is one of a few which remain undeveloped and is open to the public during weekdays. The **town stocks**, dated 1809, are now sited there.



Old Bank House

27 **Warwick House** on the corner of Ratcliffe Road and Long Street stands on the site of the town **lock-up** and the **Corn Exchange**. All that remains of the Corn Exchange is part of a classical column. This can be seen adjacent to **108 Long Street**, which was occupied by Jenkins Bakery for most of the 20th century.

28 The **White Horse** opposite was built in the mid 18th century, when it was known as the Kings Arms. The three buildings after the supermarket have the finest shop fronts in the town.

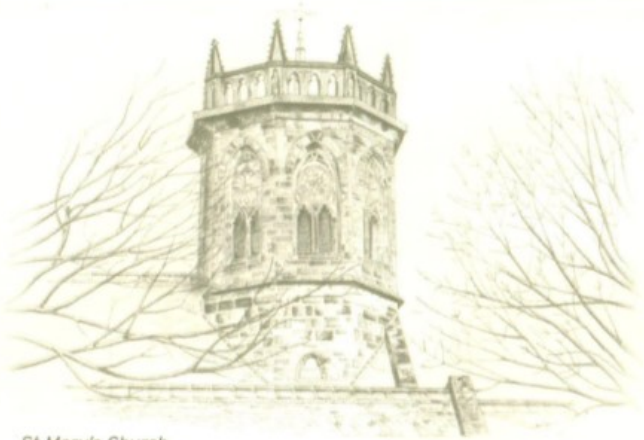
29 Across the road again, **102 Long Street**, is an elegant 18th century house, occupied in 1768 by John Allen, a cooper. It is now the town-centre office of TNT, who have their UK headquarters on Holly Lane. Next door, **104 Long Street** served as the town's post office from Edwardian times until 2002.

30 Although extensively modernised, the **Red Lion** on the left hand-side of the street, still retains the coach entrance and yard of a coaching inn. Outside is an 18th century **milestone**, indicating that London is just 100 miles away. Next door, **97 Long Street** dates from the mid-18th century. The Tuscan Doric doorway and balustraded parapet is one of the best façades left in Atherstone. Local tradition said that Henry Tudor slept at **The Three Tuns** on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. However, recent research suggests that he spent the night at Merevale Abbey instead.

31 Cross the road and enter **Market Street**, once known as Butcher Row. Since medieval times it was the location of the town's butchers or 'Shambles,' where livestock were slaughtered. The tradition of butchery continues in Butcher Row with one existing shop at **6 Market Street**, which in 1717 was recorded as a butcher's shop in the ownership of Joseph Grew.

The trail ends here, where it started. If you have enjoyed this walk, you may like to try the Atherstone Country Trail, which gives a taste of the local countryside and offers the chance to view the town from the hills of the Outwoods.

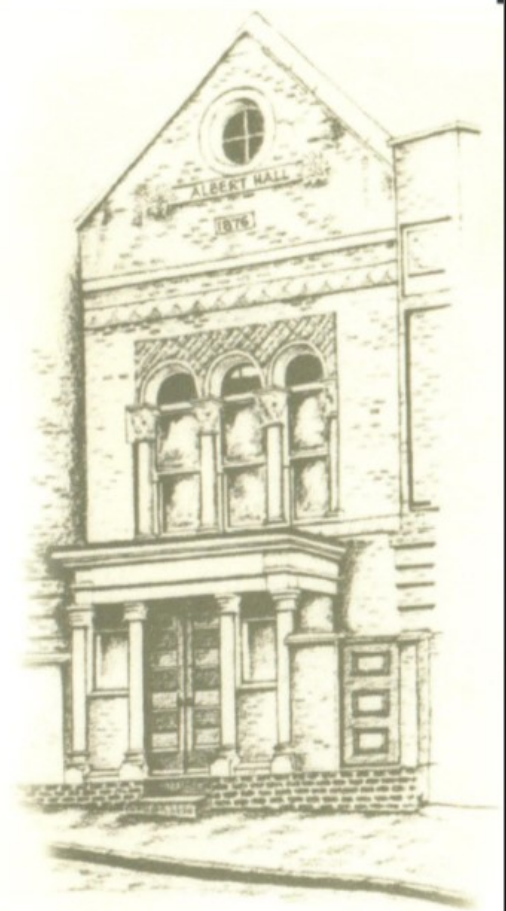
You might also like to look out for the North Arden Trail, a 25-mile circular route which links into other circular walks in North Warwickshire and interprets local heritage through a chain of unique features and oral history soundboxes. The trail can be accessed from the Coleshill Road entrance to the Coventry Canal as shown on the map. Find more info on www.northwarks.gov.uk/ardentrail



St Mary's Church



A. Ficker
Station House



Albert Hall



Old Swan



Old Bank House

