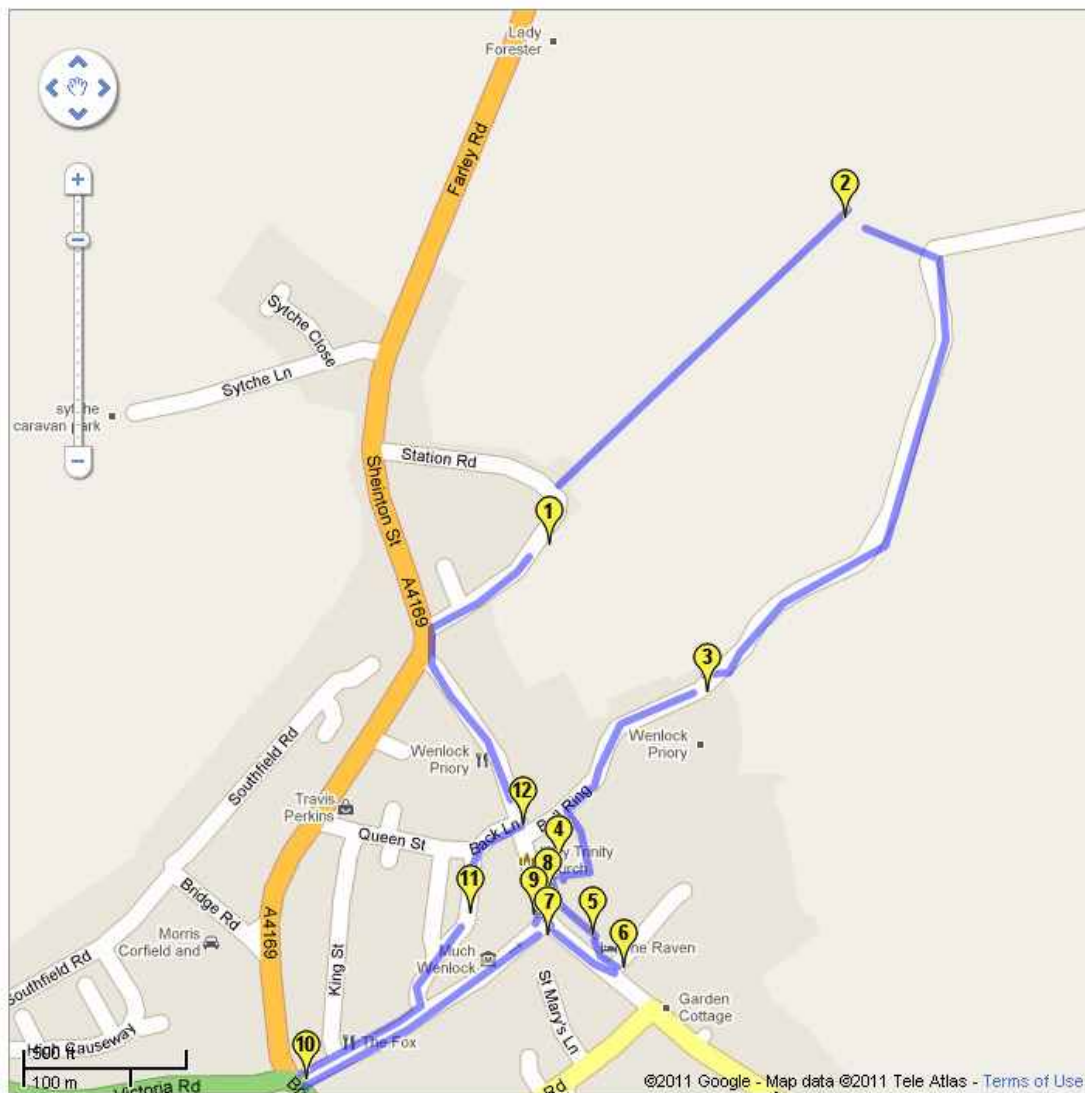


The Wenlock Walk

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What better way to understand our history and to see a few of our hidden treasures than to enjoy a stroll through this beautiful town. The whole walk will take you at least an hour and you should allow more time if you intend to visit attractions on the way.



View this map online at

<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=207592046818809423103.0004a1d9a97d670efa5b9&source=embed&ll=52.598994,-2.557089&spn=0.006595,0.021973&z=16>

1. Station Road

The walk starts on Station Road near to the coach park. Stand and look at the old railway station (now disused and converted into a private dwelling).

Can you imagine the sound of the steam engines waiting to leave for Buildwas or Craven Arms?

The railway was started in 1850 by Dr. William Penny Brookes, town father, entrepreneur and founder of the modern day Olympic Games.



It was originally constructed to transport our local quarried limestone and was built in linking stages (in the end composing 5 different lines).

The official opening of the Wenlock to Buildwas line was February 1862. It was possible with this section of line to connect to the Severn Valley line and Shrewsbury.

In 1864 the line was extended to Presthope (initially for goods only) and in the opposite direction Buildwas was linked to Coalbrookdale, thus making a continuous link to Wellington.

By 1867 Presthope was linked to Craven Arms for both passengers and goods and thus, passenger traffic was available for the public from Wellington to Craven Arms.

The route of the line still remains in places along Wenlock Edge and various station buildings and halts can still be found if you wanted to explore further afield.

The railway was used by many to get to and from work and shopping and it was a hard blow when the last locomotive (No. 4178) left Wenlock on 21st of July 1962.

2. Linden Field & The Windmill

To your left of the old railway station you will see some gates, pass through them and you will be on Linden Field.

A signboard on your left tells the story of how the field played a part in the foundation of the modern Olympic Games.

A short distance away you will see the new 'photo opportunity' art installation celebrating William Penny Brookes contribution to the International Olympic Movement.

Further on is a children's play area, should the young ones need to burn off some energy!



As you look ahead and a little to the left you will see on a hill the remains of a windmill built circa 1600.

Though damaged by lightening some 200 years later the Much Wenlock Windmill Preservation Trust is now working to restore it to its former glory.

It was on this hill that spectators would sit to watch the early Wenlock Olympian Games. Founded by Dr William Penny Brookes in 1858 the concept was adopted and developed by various groups throughout the world and ultimately resulted in the first International Olympic Games in 1896. The local version of the games continue to this day, taking place every year in July.



Today on Windmill Hill one can get a wonderful view of the roof tops of Wenlock - a great place to stop for a picnic on your walk!

Continuing along the impressive tree lined path at the edge of the field you will see a small building encircled by a clipped hedge - it is now the bowling green. It was once the shelter that sat on the station platform. Inside the greens, by one of the lights, is one of the Olympian Memorial Trees mentioned on the information board.

Follow the path straight on to the kissing gate, pass through the gate, go straight until you come to some steps, go down the steps, you are now standing on what was the original railway line.

The Olympic Connection

Much Wenlock is considered by many to be the birthplace of the modern Olympic Games as a result of the inspired work undertaken by Dr William Penny Brookes in the late 19th century.

Today the Wenlock Olympian Society is the guardian of this remarkable heritage, maintaining an extensive historical archive and actively preserving the traditions by organising regular events, including the annual Wenlock Olympian Games.

[Click here to visit the Wenlock Olympian Society web site](#) for for more information about Much Wenlock and the Olympian Connection.

3. Wenlock Priory

Cross the line and walk up the steps opposite, go down the path until you reach the tarmac lane and turn right.

As you walk along the lane, look off to your left over the fields to the hills, no matter what time of year, the patchwork effect is always different depending on the farmer's schedule of ploughing, harvesting or rotating animals for grazing.

The monks from The Priory walked these fields in contemplation and sourced water from 3 ponds in the fields. One can usually see a selection of bird life, including birds of prey and rabbits and badger paths.



As the lane winds downhill a bit, you will get your first glimpse of the dramatic remains of Wenlock Priory (English Heritage). The Priory's turbulent history is related on an audio tour, should you stop for a visit.

It went through several re-buildings and extensions. In the 11th century Lady Godiva commissioned some work on the church. The Priory fell into disuse when Henry VIII went through the Dissolution of 1540.

Wenlock Priory

These spectacular ruins are the 12th & 13th century remains of a church and cloistral buildings belonging to the Cluniac Priory, now under the management of English Heritage.

It is said to be the final resting place of St Milburga, the first Abbess, whose bones were found during rebuilding in 1101.

The Priory Audio Tour takes approximately 35 minutes and is included in the admission price.



4. Holy Trinity Church

As you walk alongside The Priory, you will approach a stone tower which was once part of the complex.

Inside the walls is now the Priory Hall, now available for public use, but was once Wenlock National School 1848-1952.

Walk past the tower and turn left into the Priory Hall car park.

On your right is John's cottage (1400's) a fine timber frame cottage with a cobbled front pavement which gives you a feel of what the town was like. A brook ran down the road and was aptly called "shit" brook because it was effectively the town's open sewer! Later it was culverted and covered over, thus making the lane.

Walk straight towards the willow tree and you will find a few steps to walk up and a gate. You are now on the church green of Holy Trinity Church.

Walk straight ahead to the graves that are enclosed with blue painted cast iron edging.

These belong to the Brookes Family, as you read them you will learn of all their accomplishments and benefits to the townspeople. Inside the church there is another memorial to Dr. William Penny Brookes.



There are many links to Brookes and the rebirth of the Modern Olympics throughout the town, how many can you find? In addition to this walk you can also follow the Official Olympian Trail - pick up a leaflet at the Visitor Information Centre.

As you stand between the graves, look to your right to the church wall, can you see some vertical grooves in the wall under the windows? Do you know what made these? They were made by men sharpening their arrows as they awaited their masters who were attending service.

Follow the path to the front entry of the church. The church is open daily for visitors.

It was here that St. Milburga (Wenlock's female saint and abbess of Wenlock Priory) was buried and later moved. Actually her remains are said to have been moved a number of times. She is reputed to have started the church for the women town folk and her nuns to attend services.

It became the church of the parish around 1100 and the Cluniac monks from The Priory were said to be responsible for much of the stonework.



The church encompasses many time periods as it went through restorations. During one phase the remains of 3 unidentified people were discovered. It is said that they can sometimes be seen as ghostly shadows with their heads hung down around in the church yard.

As you leave the church, stand in the archway and look at the lovely selection of trees on the grounds.

5. Church Walk

Look to your right and you will see an Optician's office and to the right a brick house with a brass plaque on it.

This is 4 Wilmore Street and was the birthplace and home of the Olympian Games founder Dr William Penny Brookes (now a private home).



The Guildhall is the stone and timber-frame building on your right. The stone part closest to you was the old jail. In the corner is a memorial stone (under the yew clipped windows) to author Mary Webb who resided at The Grange in Wenlock.

Mary Webb's book GONE TO EARTH was made into a film. In 1949 the glitter and excitement of a big film production crew arrived in Wenlock to shoot some of the scenes. Produced by Powell & Pressburger, the film starred Jennifer Jones, David Farrar, Cyril Cusak, George Cole and many locals as extras. Locations in Wenlock included the Square, the Guildhall, the Talbot Inn and after-hour drinks at the George & Dragon Pub!

From the church archway follow the path straight ahead to the Church Walk sign. On your right is the back of the Guildhall and to view it from the churchyard with its clipped yews encircling the windows reminds one of a chocolate box picture. Sometimes these black & white buildings were called "magpie buildings" and this one was constructed in 2 days on September 23, 24, 1577 and stands on solid oak pillars.



As you approach the Church Walk sign look to your right through the archway and you will see the High Street, the Town Square and the Memorial Clock. Have a look, but continue ahead for now!

Continue walking along Church Walk, the buildings on your right were once open market spaces, then semi-enclosed markets and finally made into individual units. Note their different building materials and widths.

Along the walk on your left is a lovely border garden, at the end a memorial garden and then you arrive at Church House, another black and white house with cobbles in the front, this was also part of the market area.

6. St Milburga's Well

Bear left down the lane in front of you and after a few paces you will see on your right St Milburga's well.

This well is thought to have been one of Wenlock's earliest water supplies.

Some folk say it was reputed to have healing benefits and others say that if a young woman wanted to find a husband she would go to the well on a special date in the year and dab the waters on herself.

It is too long ago now to find anyone who can verify the success of such a trial!



Return to the main road and look to the left. You will see The Raven Hotel, an old and lovingly restored hostelry which was the site of a few scenes from another film shot in Wenlock - CLOCKWISE starring John Cleese (1980).

This included the scene where Cleese vandalised the phone boxes, both of which are now long-gone!

7. The Square

After looking at the interesting cottages across the street and the Georgian style houses on your left, cross the street and walk to the right towards the centre of town.

The town is dominated by limestone cottages, built from locally quarried stone. However limestone burns when exposed to extended heat, so if you will notice most of the cottages have replaced their original limestone chimneys with brick. Some of the cottages had brick linings put into the chimneys and so the outside remained faced with lime, but have a look as you walk along the streets.



Just past Wenlock Flowers you will see a cobbled pathway called The Mutton Shut. Shuts were like shortcuts to other areas and usually named after nearby inns or pubs. The Mutton Shut actually meets up with The George and Dragon Shut which one usually accesses from the High Street just to the right of the George and Dragon Pub, both lead to the car park and public toilets.

Passing Mutton Shut you have now reached The Square, a relatively new addition to the town - constructed in 1988. Nowadays it is a great gathering spot for the locals and a good vantage point for the visitors to enjoy the sun and watch the town's activities.

Prior to The Square's construction, the area was rough ground with some shops and served as a car park for the former cinema - now the Memorial Hall, museum & Tourist Information.

The small clock tower was erected by Mayor Thomas Cooke to commemorate The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria on 20 June 1897.

Mr. Cooke owned the grocery across the street (now the Spar Shop) and it said that he positioned the memorial there so that there would never be a building obscuring his view or other's view of his shop!

8. The Guildhall

You now have come full circle and have a front view of The Guildhall (16th century). The lower section is still used as a market.

Look at the oak upright to the left of the gates and you will find hand irons which were used as a whipping post!

If you go inside the market you will see some of the original borough signs which extended over 17 parishes.

On the opposite wall is an interesting order from September 1850 regarding Monday market day restrictions and fines.



Behind that sign is the old medieval stone jail built in the 14th century. The last offender to be sentenced by the courts was a Thomas Lloyd in 1852.

Upstairs are the council chambers which are still in regular use and the old court. Above the judge's chair you will see The Coat of Arms of Queen Elizabeth I (1589).

There is an English lion on the left, a Welsh dragon on the right, a sword of justice hanging dead centre and a Latin inscription-translated below.

*“This place abhors inequity
Loves peace
Punishes wrong doings
Upholds the law
Honours upright men”*

Note that the carver made a mistake with the Latin word spelling NEQUITIAM and had to insert the U above rather than spend, one would imagine, a long time re-carving the whole thing.



You will also find the scales of justice, the Borough of Wenlock Seal, lists of bailiffs and mayors and stocks on wheels to roll people around publicly to embarrass them.

The building is open to the public seasonally.

9. Much Wenlock Museum

Directly across the street from the Guildhall is the museum which displays local memorabilia, geological history and selected artifacts from Wenlock Olympian Society.

The Tourist Information Office is in the same building. Just outside their door is a map showing details of another Wenlock walk - the Olympian Trail which will guide you past points of interest relating to the origins of the modern Olympic games.

You can follow the trail using the bronze plaques mounted in the pavement throughout the town and a leaflet is available from tourist information.



Across the street, The George & Dragon brewed beer & cider into the 1950's. People say that they used to keep a large black dog in the cellar to guard the beer but he was somewhat neglected by the owner.

It is said that his image can be sometimes be seen wandering around the pub looking for attention or if you put you hand out, you might just just feel the warmth of his breath as he gently brushes past you.

10. High Street

As you walk up the street look above the shops and look in the windows. The town once did a study on the use of all the shops in town and made a time line plaque for each shop. Some can still be found in the shop windows.

Wenlock Pharmacy is one example and you can see it has been trading as a chemist since 1856. prior to which it was on land across the street, now occupied by the The Corn Exchange. Constructed in 1851, the building became an Agricultural Library shortly afterwards and is still used as the local public library.

Above the market area you can read a plaque in memory to William Penny Brookes, placed on the building in 1897 in the 60th year of Queen Victoria's reign on the throne.

Just along from the Corn Exchange there is a plain timber frame Elizabethan building, Raynald's Mansion, constructed 1682. Notice the 2 doors and 2 porches above. Between the doors there is a post and bar which enabled workers to lift heavy loads onto their backs.

Late at night some say they see Victorian ghost children playing on the balconies.

The Talbot Inn across the road has been a lodging since 1361. The courtyard has a malt house in the back.



Straight ahead is a stunning black and white building with the word 'Bank' on the side. Constructed in the 17th century, the building was an inn until the 1920's and until recently Barclays Bank. It now a shop..

Carry on straight along the High Street, approaching Ashfield Hall on the right. Stand in front of the hall and look up at the chimneys and just above the door, do you see a window that isn't there? A black and white window is painted above the door, as many places did to help avoid some of the window taxes.

The building was originally called St John's Hospital, but in fact it was a hostel for "lost and naked beggars". The plaque on the building states Charles I slept here 1642 - some beggar!!

At the end of the High Street do not cross the road but bear right and you will come upon a tiny cottage called The Squatter's Cottage. You will note that the cottage is very small and has a chimney with a huge base to it.

Squatter's cottages had to be constructed within one day and always started with a chimney from which they could then build the remainder of the house. The rule was that smoke had to be coming out of the chimneys by the end of the day!

11. Back Lane & 12. The Bull Ring

Turn and retrace your steps along the High Street and turn left into Back Lane.

Part-way down on your left you will see a fine example of a cruck-frame house - St Owen's Well House and in the wall on the outside of the house is St Owen's well itself. Cruck frame means 2 matching curved beams that meet at the gabled end, this could be one of Wenlock's oldest buildings.



If you were to refer to our page Wenlock Name you would learn that St. Owen, a French monk, visited Much Wenlock in the 6th century and this well may have been the reason for establishing the Priory.

At the T-junction, you are in what they call The Bullring, where they did indeed bait bulls at one time.

Directly across the street on the corner is the Old Bank building (1829), now a private house. Next door is the Old Police Station (1864). It is made of special blue bricks, believed to have been made in Broseley.

Two doors up from the Old Police Station is a half-timbered building called Bastard Hall. You can see the name on the side wall by the drive. The BBC Time Team televised the history of building a number of years ago.

A little further on the left you will see the entrance to Wenlock Pottery, well worth a stop for some shopping!

Arriving at the T-junction, you will see some stone bridge abutments on the right which were part of the rail line. Take a right here and you will be back on Station Road where your walk started.