

Royston

Take a closer look



ROYSTON TOWN TRAIL

Welcome to

Royston

We are proud of our attractive town on the South Cambridgeshire/North Hertfordshire border.

Here, you will find a mix of heritage, gardens and green open spaces, contemporary living and a thriving business and industrial community.



Steeped in history dating back to the 12th century, Royston offers a rich heritage, which includes the Augustinian Priory, the medieval Royston Cave and the Roisia Stone, from whence the town gets its name.

Enjoy the green open spaces of the award winning Priory Memorial Gardens and the nearby Heath, with its woodland footpaths, the rare pasque flower and chalk tracks.

The notes and maps will help guide you around the town centre streets, and enable you to discover the rich history highlighted in the Town Trail. Along the trail you will find numbered trail markers in the pavement as shown, and the bi-fold map will also help you to follow the route.

Take as long or as little time as you want to explore the streets of Royston.

Why not stop and relax in one of the many cafes or restaurants offering a diverse mix of food and drink to suit all palates.

Time taken to complete the trail: **90 mins**

Distance if walking the entire trail: **2.5 miles**

Explore. Discover. Experience.



Follow the numbered Trail Markers in the pavement as shown for an enjoyable walk around Royston Town Centre.

Begin outside the main door of the Parish Church of St. John the Baptist



A church guide is available inside

The present nave was the chancel of the medieval church that became ruinous after King Henry VIII's Dissolution of the monasteries. The high stone wall to the left of the path to the west gate of the churchyard contains a fragment of the original nave.

Turn right out of the main gate of the church and follow the flint churchyard wall to reach Melbourn Street



Turn left towards a main set of traffic lights



The road you are on forms part of the Icknield Way, a prehistoric track from East Anglia to Dunstable Downs along the slope of the chalk hills. It later became the boundary between the counties of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. (Royston was split between the shires until 1896).

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- No. 7 (with 2 bay windows) dates from the 18th Century.
- No. 3 was formerly the Rose & Crown pub (there were 48 pubs in Royston in 1900).
- No. 1 was the Post Office until 1936. It became a club for the armed forces during World War II, then a community centre, and finally a bank. (The blue plaque on the building draws attention to the grille in the pavement over the top of Royston Cave.)



04

Arrive at the junction

The Royse Stone at the cross-roads weighs two tonnes and dates back to the Ice Age. It is thought to have formed the base of a wayside cross set up here by Lady Roisia soon after 1066. The settlement, which grew up around the nearby Priory, became known as Crux Roheyes (Roisia's Cross), later Roisia's Town, from which the name Royston is derived.

Looking to your left and right notice the pairs of narrow streets in parallel, separated by a 'middle row' of buildings. This is typical of English mediaeval market towns and marks the original site of the market stalls set up and down the centre of the original street.

BUILDING OF INTEREST

Looking ahead, the pub on the corner of this area marks the site of the mediaeval monastic leper hospital. The current building was the main Post Office from 1936 to 1995.



Walk past the pub and you will pass Upton House, a Grade 2 Listed building, once the home of the brewer at the adjacent Phillips' Brewery. They brewed 'Royston Fine Ales' for 250 years until 1948.

05

Arrive at the junction

Carrying on to the end of the path you arrive at Princes Mews, named after Arctic Prince, winner of the Derby in 1951. The horse was trained in W. Stephenson's racing stables, for many years situated approximately at the far end of the current road. The horses trained on the Heath (half a mile directly ahead of you).

Cross over the street you have been walking along, turn right and head back towards the traffic lights

Look through the archway on your left as you pass Kiln House Yard which, as the name suggests, was the site of major brewing operations until 1948.

06

Carry on walking and arrive at Lower King Street

This street runs parallel to the High Street and formed the western side of the mediaeval market. Once known as Back Street and earlier still as Dead Street from the number of people living there who died of the plague.

Cross at the lights into Upper King Street and commence walking up the hill

The street appears little changed since the 19th century, although there are some examples of modern pargetting - the art of decorating external plaster work. Half way up on the left are some buildings with jettied upper storeys dating to Tudor times or earlier (King James I banned projecting upper storeys for fear of aiding the transit of fire across streets).

To your left you will see George Lane, where cobbles were laid to help horses get a grip, while stone slabs were laid for the cart wheels.



BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- Further up on the right hand side is Mulberry Court, winner of a North Herts. Civic Award for conservation work. The courtyard contains mulberry trees, planted when the native silk trade was receiving royal encouragement in the 17th Century (although generally the wrong kind of mulberry was planted!).
- The well-converted Old Barn used as a Day Centre was formerly owned by the racing stables and used for storage at another time. It was also the former Bushel & Strike pub.



The end of the road curves round to meet the High Street and London Road

Sun Hill House, to your right, was originally another public house named, you guessed it, The Sun!



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Cross the small green area. Walk up on the right hand side of London Road

BUILDING OF INTEREST

No.5, 'Whitehall' - a fragment of the house which once covered the sites of No.s 1, 3 & 5 and was the home of Lord Mounteagle who was warned not to attend the opening of Parliament in 1605. He passed this information to the King, and this led to the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot.



11

Continue walking up London Road

No. 33 and 35 is the only thatched building in Royston. It was once the Three Horseshoes public house.

Cross the main road with care and turn down the Warren

Rabbits were introduced to England by the Normans and were kept by the monks as an alternative to fish to eat on fast days. This area is still named after the use to which the land was put by the mediaeval priory.

12

In Victorian times the car park was covered with grass and used by local washerwomen for airing clothes. These women lived in a dense group of cottages located approximately under the bus station. One of the first optical glass factories in England was also situated in this block.

13

Turn left through the Bus Station and go over the pedestrian crossing, then turn left again

BUILDING OF INTEREST

The Chequers, an ancient inn, possibly named for the Royal House of Stuart black and white check on the Priory Coat of Arms.



Turn down the High Street

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BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- The Bull Inn claims to be the oldest inn in the town, dating back to the 15th century. From its brickwork it is possible to detect the shape of the archway into the inn yard where stage coaches changed horses (at one point there was stabling for over 100 horses) before resuming their journeys.
- In one of the cottages opposite, above eye level, there is a small square cupboard set in the wall. This is the place where the keys to the main gates were kept at night so that the guard on an incoming coach could reach over to retrieve them before leaping down to open the gates.



Proceed down the High Street

Angel Pavement to your right is named after the Angel pub which stood at the High Street end.

Proceed down the High Street, find George Lane on your right

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This street was named after the George Inn which formerly stood on the corner.

A few meters down the lane, on the right hand side, once stood the house of Henry Matthews, the mathematician and astronomer who first compiled 'Old Moore's Almanac'.

Carry on down the High Street and pause at the corner of John Street

16

The street to your right was named after John Phillips, who presented this site to the town to connect High Street to Market Hill after one of his public houses that stood there was destroyed by fire.



BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- Across the road note the listed frontage of Barclays bank, originally Fordham's Bank.
- Above the shop on the corner of the junction and on the curved wall of John Street are windows incorporating relatively rare curved panes of glass.



Carry on down the High Street and pause at the corner of Jepps Lane - a narrow walkway

Opposite Jepps Lane there are curious roof and window details above shops on the west side of High Street. The charity shop next to these stands on the site of the 'Hoops', reputed to have been a haunt of the highwayman Dick Turpin. He is said to have backed his horse down a well there to avoid capture by the law.

BUILDING OF INTEREST



18-20 High Street - This low, Tudor fronted building is believed to date from the 14th century. This makes it the oldest structure in the town after the church. Presumably it was erected after the great fire that burned down most of the town centre, three centuries before the Great Fire of London!

Retrace your steps and turn left into Jepps Lane

BUILDING OF INTEREST

On the left of Jepps Lane stands the Masonic Hall, built in the 1840s to be the Sunday School of the John Street Congregational Chapel, the back wall of which used to be opposite.



Emerge into Fish Hill Square, turn right up Market Hill (first right)

18

Once again we have a pair of narrow streets, Fish Hill and Market Hill, with a block of buildings between where market stalls originally stood. This was the new market place after it moved from its earlier site further to the west.

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- The old County Court building surmounted by the Royal Arms.
- No. 4 on the left is the former National School for children from Church of England families.



Carry on up Market Hill

19

George Lane, to your right, was the location of the Plough, Royston's smallest pub.

The passage to your left, between the doctors' surgery and the library, focuses on the American memorial in Priory gardens.

Between the buildings is the sculpture 'Unity', representing town twinning.

Further up the hill to your right, approx. at the end of Angel Pavement, once stood yet another pub (the Red Lion, if you're interested!)

Walk to the top of the hill and the junction with the main road

20

The market place to your right (nowadays a car park) hosts a weekly market that dates back to the monastic era.

King Richard I, 'The Lionheart', granted the charter for the annual fair held on the first Wednesday after 11th October. Auction yards and pens for sheep, pigs and cattle used to occupy much of the area in and around the market. During the Civil War there was a confrontation here between the Parliament troops and townspeople supporting the King, during which the troops taunted Roystonians and called them 'crows' (a symbol adopted by the town and still used in the present day).

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- The Corn Exchange to your left, was constructed using Hitch's patent interlocking bricks. Former corn merchants' offices have been converted into boutiques, earning a Civic Award.
- The largest shop in the market place is one of the few in Hertfordshire with a double-pitched roof. Outside is where traditionally public proclamations were made.



Ahead of you is the Green Man, where mid-day lunches were served in Victorian times (in the single storey part of the pub). At 1pm the landlady would ring her handbell to summon farmers to lunch.

The 'Greenlawns' next door was once part of the pub. Its name reflects that the lawn there was once the town's bowling green.

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Turn left along the main road and left again down Fish Hill

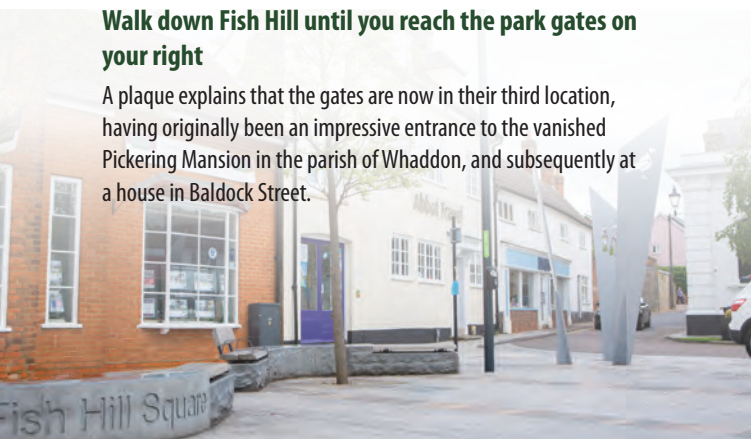
BUILDING OF INTEREST

At the junction stands the Market Hill Rooms, recently restored internally by the Town Council, which was formerly the British School for the children of Nonconformist families.



Walk down Fish Hill until you reach the park gates on your right

A plaque explains that the gates are now in their third location, having originally been an impressive entrance to the vanished Pickering Mansion in the parish of Whaddon, and subsequently at a house in Baldock Street.



Enter the park

Priory Memorial Gardens, dedicated in memory of Roystonians who fell in World War II. Apart from the Fish Hill entrance, other gates were presented by the Royal British Legion, the R.A.F.A. / R.N.A., the Home Guard and the Offord family.



Pause before turning left at the first intersection and look to the centre of the park

The red marble pillar is dedicated to the dead of the 91st Bombardment Group (Heavy) of the U.S. Army Air Force, who flew B17 Flying Fortresses from the Bassingbourn and Nuthampstead air bases between 1942 and 1945. This Group was the home of the famous Memphis Belle - it also, unfortunately, suffered the heaviest casualties of any bomber group in WWII.



Follow the path behind the church, bending round to the right through the park. Arrive at plaque 25 and look to your left across the road to the Town Hall



BUILDING OF INTEREST

The Town Hall was built in 1855 on the site of the turnpike tollgate cottage. It served first as the Royston Institute, containing an assembly room and small rooms for the education of 'mechanics', i.e. workmen, before the universal education acts. The newly formed Royston Urban District Council bought it in 1900 for £600 to be

the Town Hall. Extended and improved, it remains the seat of local government in Royston and contains two public halls. The upper hall is named after the Earl of Hardwicke, then owner of Wimpole Hall, under whose patronage the Institute was built. There is a small bust of him on the façade, as well as the Royston Coat of Arms. After an extensive internal refurbishment, the halls now combine to form the Royston Picture Palace - the town's state-of-the-art digital community cinema.



Turn back along Melbourn Street towards the town centre

BUILDING OF INTEREST

On your left is a War Memorial, that is now a listed monument, and was erected in 1922 to the memory of the servicemen of the town who were killed in the First World War. On either side of the memorial are the names of those servicemen from the town who were killed during the First and Second World Wars.



Crossover the pedestrian crossing and see the Police Station, opened in 1991 by HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- Thurnall's: a Grade 1 Listed building remarkable for its panelling, carved fireplaces and painted ceilings. It is a 16th century merchant's house but was re-fronted in the 18th century. Look very closely and you will see above the black door the intertwined initials JAB refer to J A Beldam, who was prominent in the 19th century battle against the slave trade.
- Carrying on walking and you will see the Banyers Hotel, 18th century home of the Revd. Edward Banyer DD, Vicar of Royston 1739-1752.



Continue along Melbourn Street until you stand opposite Church Lane

BUILDING OF INTEREST

The Lanterns, a modern office block. At the front but through the arch you can see the restored stables that once served the Banyers next door. They were used in the early 20th century for a string of racehorses which were trained on the Heath.

BUILDING OF INTEREST

The Manor House, now a bar/restaurant, was formerly the home of one branch of the Phillips brewing family. Behind it, through the car park on the former lawn, is private access to Dog Kennel lane, which may have been the northern extension of Church Lane. Dog Kennel Lane was where the hunting dogs of King James I were kept.



Keep progressing along Melbourn Street

Beneath the archway leading to Katherine's Yard is the doorway to Royston Cave, a man-made bell shaped chamber decorated with unique medieval style carvings. Normal opening hours are Sat / Sun afternoons from Easter to the end of September and on Wednesday afternoons in August. It is open at other times by arrangement. Email info@roystoncave.co.uk for details or call 01763 245484. The Royston Cave is understood to be one of only two subterranean Grade 1 Listed buildings in England!

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BUILDING OF INTEREST

The barn in Katherine's Yard bears on its gable end a reproduction from the Cave of St.Katherine, holding her spiked wheel.



Proceed to the junction with Kneesworth Street

The bank on the corner is on the site of the house occupied by Charles Prince of Wales, later to be the ill-fated Charles I, when his father's court was at Royston.

Across the street the island site was where the Crown pub stood until removed for road widening in 1929.

In this area there was also Crown & Dolphin pub – a corruption of Crown & Dauphin, referring to King James I and his eldest son Charles.

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30

Turn right along Kneesworth Street

Most of the buildings in the narrow part of Kneesworth Street date back to the reign of King James I, 1603 – 1627, whose Court spent much time here so that the King could indulge his favourite sport of hunting across the extensive tracts of nearby heath.

Most of the houses down this road were domestic quarters of the King's hunting lodge.

BUILDINGS OF INTEREST

- The Conservative Club across the street was then the headquarters of the King's equerries.
- The fish and chip shop was the King's buttery for his kitchens.
- King James' Palace - The two large half-chimneys projecting into the footpath mark the centre of the Old Palace, hunting lodge of the King. It has an elegant garden not visible from the street. It is a Grade I Listed building containing the writing flap at which the King is reputed to have signed the death warrant of Sir Walter Raleigh. The western half of the building was demolished in the 18th century.



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Directly opposite the Palace look across the road to see the Royston museum


The building that houses the Royston and District Museum was erected a century ago as the Sunday School for the Congregational Church that stood 100 metres further along the street. The Museum contains over 40,000 artefacts ranging from the some of the contents from the Neolithic barrows on the nearby Heath to the Royston Tapestry which is a work in progress.

We hope you enjoyed your wander through Royston's history and we invite you to relax in the pleasant surroundings of our historic market town.



Further information about the town is available from the museum or from the Royston Information Centre located within the Library on Market Hill.



 Follow the numbered Trail Markers in the pavement for an enjoyable walk around Royston Town Centre.

Find out more...

www.roystontown.uk

Our town website is full of information about Royston. Check out our videos showing you where to eat, shop, visit and stay. Find all the maps and information about travel that you may need during your visit to Royston.



Royston Cinema

Royston "Picture Palace" cinema is a Community Cinema run by the people of Royston and surrounding villages, based in the Town Hall. Although staffed by volunteers, the audience will experience state-of-the-art digital projection onto a 7m screen supported by a 17 speaker digital sound system.



Places to stay

Pick up a copy of our handy accommodation guide from the Information Centre, to make it easy to plan your visit and arrange your stay here in Royston. You will find a variety of accommodation on offer, from hotels, pubs and B&Bs, all offering a good standard of facilities.

DISCLAIMER: All the information in this guide is published in good faith and for general information purpose only. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the details are correct, we do not make any warranties about the completeness, reliability and accuracy of this information. We cannot be held responsible for the service, standards and conditions of the establishments on offer.



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