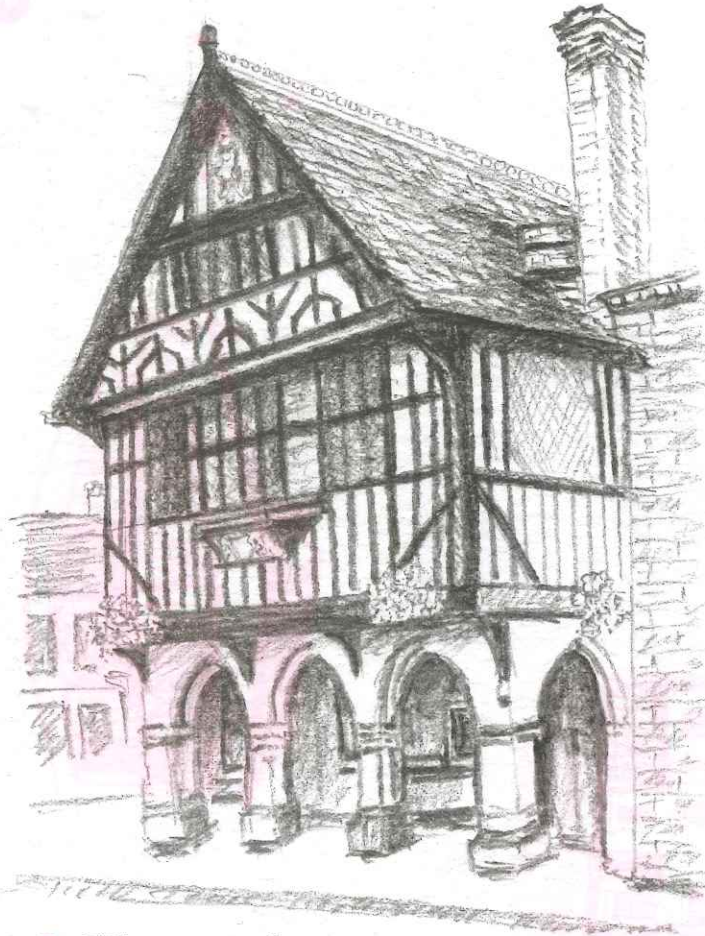


SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN TRAIL



- Illustrated map
- Guide to places of interest
- Short history of Saffron Walden

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A SHORT HISTORY OF SAFFRON WALDEN

For the four hundred years of the Roman era there was never more than a small settlement in what the later Saxon inhabitants called "weala-denu" ("Valley of the Britons") and we now call Saffron Walden. However, by the time the Doomsday Book was written in 1086, there was a village of about 120 households.

In the 1130s and 1140s the Norman Lord of the Manor Geoffrey de Mandeville 3rd Earl of Essex did three things that led to Walden becoming the economic and administrative centre of the area; he built the castle, moved the market from Newport and founded a Benedictine Priory. The castle keep ruins can be seen today and the market is still held on Tuesdays and Saturdays. The Priory became Walden Abbey in 1190; it was given to Sir Thomas Audley in 1538 during the dissolution of the monasteries, and he used it to create Audley End House.

In the 1230s the Earls of Essex, now de Bohuns, set out a new ambitious town plan including some earlier elements with a grid system of streets, a new market place and a new church. These elements can still be seen in the town centre today. By the late 1300s the area around Walden had begun to grow the saffron crocus and by the early 1500s was the centre of the saffron industry in this country. Such was its importance that the town adopted the name of Saffron Walden and its legacy is reflected in the wealth of timber-framed buildings of this time and the largest parish church in Essex, completed in 1525.

Saffron Walden has a major place in the evolution of democracy in this country. In the spring of 1647 with one civil war won, the New Model Army under Sir Thomas Fairfax split with Parliament and was ordered not to approach London. Fairfax settled on Saffron Walden as his headquarters and billeted his soldiers in the area. Debates were held in the parish church where for the first time ever ordinary soldiers elected representatives to speak for them. Eventually even Oliver Cromwell MP was persuaded to throw in his lot with the New Model Army.

There was little development or expansion of the town in the 17th and 18th centuries due to the decline of the saffron industry. However, there was some refacing of old houses, and the Georgian Town Hall was built in the 1760s.

Prosperity returned in the nineteenth century with the growth of the malting and brewing industries and with farming still at the centre of the area's economy. The Gibsons, who were bankers and brewers, were one of the wealthiest families in the town. They were Quakers and great philanthropists and were involved in the founding of the museum, the library, the hospital, the transfer of the Friends' School to the town from Croydon, digging wells and eventually bringing the branch line of the railway in 1865. The Victorian prosperity is reflected in buildings around the Market Square and to the south of the town.

Changes in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have included the demise of the branch line of the railway in 1964, the stopping of the regular livestock markets, large modern housing developments on the outskirts and latterly infill developments in the town centre. Saffron Walden has a growing population of 15,000 people and is widely recognised as a safe, healthy place to live within easy reach of London and Cambridge.

A Saffron Walden Initiative Project

Funded by



TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

Market Place, CB10 1HR Tel: 01799 524002

Opening Times:

Mon – Sat 9.30am – 5.00pm

Bank Holidays 10.30am – 1.00pm

(Easter to August Only)

BUSES

The main bus stops are on the High Street. For timetables contact the Tourist Information Centre or consult www.essexbus.info

RAIL TRAVEL

The nearest railway station is at Audley End Station, about 2 miles (3.2 km) from the centre of Saffron Walden.

Rail Enquiries – Tel: 03457 484950

www.greateranglia.co.uk

CAR PARKING

Fairycroft Road – short stay & cycle racks

The Common – short stay & cycle racks

Rose and Crown – short stay

Swan Meadow – short and long stay & coach parking

TOILETS

Hill Street, 8am – 5pm

Bridge End Garden, restricted opening times

POLICE

Tel: 101

LIBRARY

2 King Street, CB10 1ES Tel: 0345 603 7628

MARKETS

Held in the Market Place on Tues & Sat.

Winner of Best Small Outdoor Market in the 2018 Great British Market Awards.

MUSEUM

Saffron Walden Museum, Museum Street, CB10 1JL Tel: 01799 510333

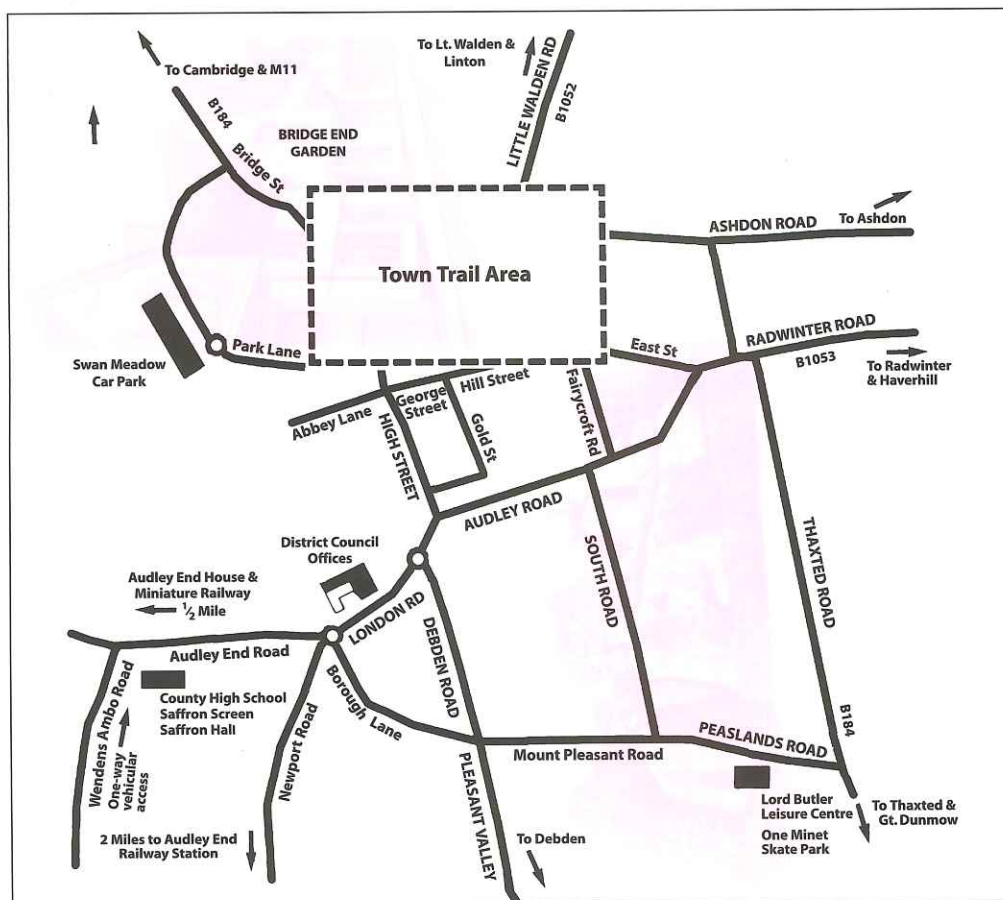
www.saffronwaldenmuseum.org

FRY ART GALLERY

Off Castle Street, CB10 1BD

Tel: 01799 513779 for opening times

www.fryartgallery.org



OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST IN SAFFRON WALDEN

ALMSHOUSES

Park Lane and Abbey Lane

The earliest almshouse was built in 1400 by a charity founded by John and Elizabeth Butler. The building was in the form of two courtyards each with ten dwellings. After 1633 the building fell into disrepair and those now grouped in Park Lane and Abbey Lane were built in 1834 and are the replacements and extensions of the original.

AUDLEY END HOUSE & GARDENS

Audley End, CB11 4JF Tel: 01799 522842

www.english-heritage.org.uk/audley

Built by Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, Lord Treasurer to King James I. Audley End is one of England's most magnificent stately homes with over 30 lavishly decorated rooms, interiors by paintings and furnishings. Explore the Capability Brown parkland, 19th century parterre and the organic walled kitchen garden, stables and service wing.

AUDLEY END MINIATURE RAILWAY

The Audley End Miniature Railway is an exciting 1.5 mile train ride through the Essex countryside perfect for a day out with all the family! Spot the many Teddies in their Teddy Bear Houses around the track or try and find the Fairies and Elves through the Enchanted Woods! www.audley-end-railway.co.uk

BAPTIST CHURCH High Street

In 1774 the Baptists split with their fellow Nonconformists who worshipped in Abbey Lane Independent Church. They bought an orchard on the present site and built the first Baptist church there. The present church was built in 1878-9. Its latest addition is the glass door with a saffron crocus design. In front of the church is the town's war memorial.

THE COMMON & TURF MAZE

The oldest of Saffron Walden's open spaces, the Common, is a meadow on which the local people had grazing rights and it was also used for such events as tournaments. On the eastern side is the largest turf labyrinth still surviving in Europe. The 'path' winds for about one mile through the turf within a circle 100 feet (30.5 mtrs) in diameter.

FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE High Street

The Quakers still gather at this meeting place in the High Street where they first met in 1676. The Meeting House was altered many times over the years and was rebuilt in the 1870s by the Gibsons.

BATTLE DITCHES

The medieval earthwork popularly known as the Battle Ditches is the surviving SW corner (visible today linking Gibson Gardens to Abbey Lane) of a large, rectangular circuit enclosing the medieval town area. The course of the ditch, now mostly buried, has been traced round much of the town through archaeological excavations over the years. It is perhaps best referred to as the Town Ditch, as it was essentially a Norman and medieval boundary marker.

SAFFRON SCREEN

Saffron Walden's Independent, not for profit cinema, open every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, with additional screenings in school holidays. The cinema shows a range of mainstream, independent, art-house and children's films, as well as a wide range of live special events. Opened in 2006, it has a comfortable 200 seat auditorium with a wide screen and full surround sound, refreshments and free parking. www.saffronscreen.com

SAFFRON HALL

Saffron Hall is an award winning, 740 seat performance space within the grounds of Saffron Walden County High School. Saffron Hall hosts an annual season of concerts and events featuring local, national and international artists. Opened in November 2013, the £10 million hall has a much-praised flexible acoustic and state-of-the-art facilities that surpass those of more established venues. www.saffronhall.com

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH Abbey Lane

The place of worship for another of the Nonconformist groups, the United Reformed Church was built in 1811 as a Congregational Chapel. With an Ionic four-column portico, it replaced the original church of 1694, which in turn was built on the site of the barn where the congregation first worshipped.

For details of opening times and any other information contact
Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre on: 01799 524002

1. Market Place

The market is still held here on Tuesdays and Saturdays as it has been since the thirteenth century. The Market Place is dominated by Victorian buildings. Barclays Bank was designed by Eden Nesfield as a bank for Gibson & Co. in 1874. The stone portico and timber framed additions to the Georgian Town Hall were designed by Edward Burgess and were a gift to the town from George Stacey Gibson in 1879. The Tourist Information Centre is housed here. The drinking fountain (pictured) was also a gift to the town from the Gibson family in memorate the marriage of The Prince of Wales to Alexandra of Denmark. The Library, once The Corn of Italianate style designed by Richard Tress and 1848.



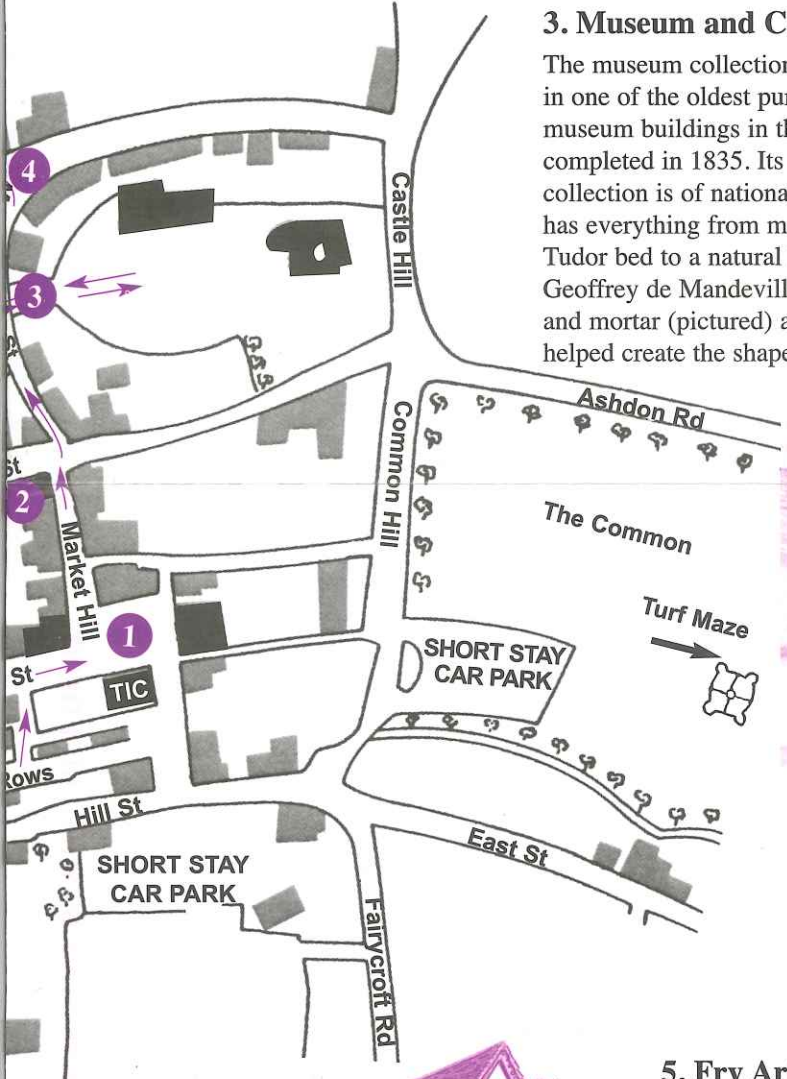
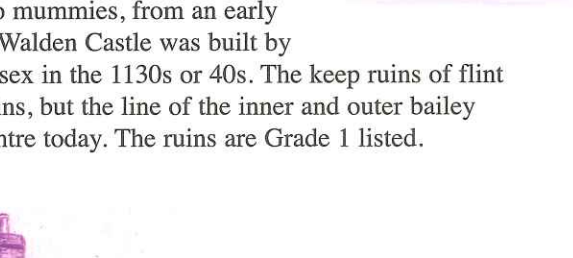
2. The Old Sun Inn

The crossroads at which the Old Sun Inn stands has timber framed buildings on all four corners. The Old Sun Inn is a range of Grade I listed homes and shops dating from the fourteenth century with many different types of decorative plaster work called 'pargetting'. These include incised repeat patterns, some freehand designs and later bas-relief of birds and fruit, possibly dating to 1676. The end gable (pictured) shows two figures and opinion is divided as to whether they are Tom Hickathrift and The Wisbech Giant or Gog and Magog.



3. Museum and Castle Ruins

The museum collections are housed in one of the oldest purpose built museum buildings in the country, completed in 1835. Its ethnographic collection is of national importance. It has everything from mammoth tusks to mummies, from an early Tudor bed to a natural history gallery. Walden Castle was built by Geoffrey de Mandeville 3rd Earl of Essex in the 1130s or 40s. The keep ruins of flint and mortar (pictured) are all that remains, but the line of the inner and outer bailey helped create the shape of the town centre today. The ruins are Grade 1 listed.



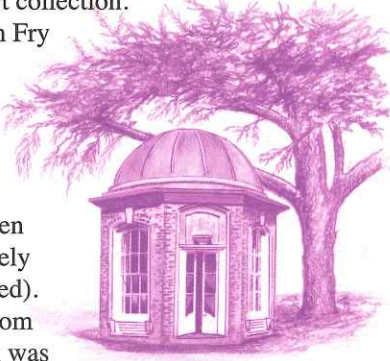
4. Castle Street



This street was part of the new town plan of the 1140s but most of the timber framed hall houses now date from around 1500. Some of the houses are Grade II* listed properties with many examples of ancient and modern pargetting. There are a number of unusual Wealden houses, the easiest to identify is at No 49/51 (pictured). This style of hall house under a single roof is normally associated with Kent. The house also has sliding sash windows which are commonly found in Saffron Walden houses. By the 1800s this was the poorer section of town with many of the houses divided into small cottages. Clear breaks in the roof lines give clues as to the extent of the original houses.

5. Fry Art Gallery and Bridge End Garden

The path to Bridge End Garden passes the Fry Art Gallery which was built in 1856 by Francis Gibson to hold his personal art collection. It was then inherited by his daughter Elizabeth Fry. Since 1987 it has housed a collection of the works of the Great Bardfield group of artists who settled in the Essex countryside in the 1930s. Started by his father, it was Francis Gibson who expanded Bridge End Garden introducing a Dutch garden, rose garden, kitchen garden, wilderness area, hedge maze and a lovely south facing lawn with a summerhouse (pictured). The garden has now been restored with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Bridge End Garden was commended in the 2018 UK Heritage Awards as a "Hidden Gem". www.fryartgallery.org



listed gam of s to the ntage is a es a continuous create bigger rooms on am which is the exposed horizontal beam that supports few buildings in the town with both first and ground he memorial on the bridge over the Madgate Slade to his murder after he left the Eight Bells pub one night - t trial.





10. The Rows

At the start of the Rows, on the corner of King Street and Cross Street stands a large late fifteenth century hall house (pictured). The house shows clearly how large houses were divided into three different elements with the open hall section having its roof raised in the eighteenth century. The Rows were the town's shopping centre from medieval times onwards, with 33 of the 46 shops in the town sited there in 1630. The shops started as

market stalls and progressed to become permanent home and business premises combined. On Cross Street are some of the best preserved Tudor shop windows which had shutters that opened to provide a counter and a canopy over the goods.

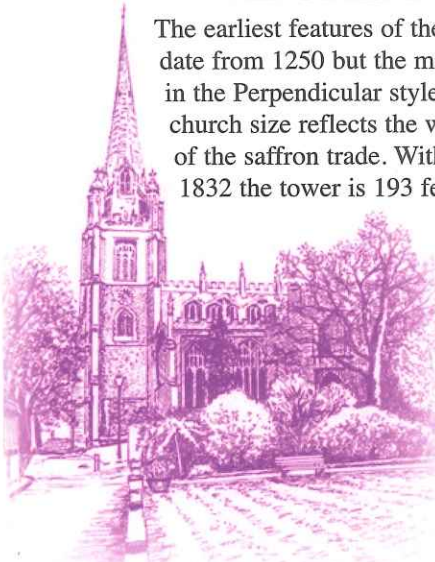
9. The Old Cross Keys

The Cross Keys is a fifteenth century timber framed former house and shop with later additions. The roof was raised in the early nineteenth century and new windows added on the ground and first floors of the King Street frontage. The plaster on the entire timber framed section was taken off in the early twentieth century and some first floor windows reinstated. At the corner of King Street and High Street on the ground floor are two of the original fifteenth century shop windows.



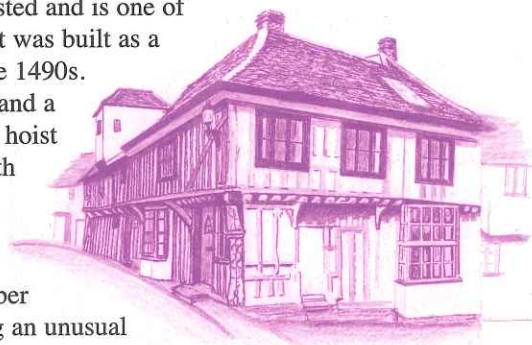
8. Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin

The earliest features of the largest parish church in Essex date from 1250 but the majority of the church was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style between 1470 and 1525. The church size reflects the wealth of the town at the height of the saffron trade. With the addition of the spire in 1832 the tower is 193 feet (59m) high. The interior of the church has a wonderful organ with spectacular Trompeta Real pipes, nine medieval brasses and some fine stained glass windows. Among the monuments are Lord Audley's Belgian slate tomb in the south chapel and R.A. Butler's memorial plaque, his grave being at the east end of the churchyard. www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org



7. 1, Myddylton Place and The Close

1, Myddylton Place (pictured) is Grade I listed and is one of the finest medieval buildings in the town. It was built as a combined shop, home and warehouse in the 1490s. There is a fine doorway into Bridge Street and a carved dragon post on the corner. The sack hoist in the roof was added in the early nineteenth century when part of the building was converted to a malting. Diagonally across the road from Myddylton Place stands The Close, a fine late fifteenth century timber framed house with later additions including an unusual seventeenth century 'Spider' window.



6. The Eight Bells

The Eight Bells is one of the 27 Grade II* buildings in Saffron Walden and is an amazing building with different elements. The range at right angles to the main road is fifteenth century while the street frontage is a late sixteenth century addition which features a fine first floor jetty or oversailing developed to provide a counter for this floor. It has a fine carved bressumer between the upper floor. The building is one of the best preserved in the town. The floor windows in their original positions. The building commemorates Chief Constable Campling commemorates his alleged assailant was found not guilty



1863 to complete the Princess Alice Memorial Exchange, is a building completed in