

Wolverhampton City Trail



An historical journey through the center of Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton City Trail



Button Gwinnett blue plaque



Timber framed building

Introduction

There has been a settlement on the site of Wolverhampton for over a thousand years and on this trail you will discover some of the important buildings and structures which have associations with famous people and events that have shaped the history of the city.

The conservation and enhancement of historic buildings and environments are important aspects of the council's work and this trail has been produced to provide an enjoyable and informative experience for those with an interest in the heritage of the city.

Take extra care on the route as traffic in the city centre is very busy and the trail crosses the entrances to several car parks.

The route of the trail forms a figure of '8' so it is possible to do it as two separate walks if you wish. Both loops start and finish at the statue of Prince Albert in Queen Square.

Queen Square

In 1866 Queen Victoria visited Wolverhampton to unveil the statue of Prince Albert on horseback you see before you. It was her first public engagement following the death of Prince Albert and in honour of the occasion the High Green was renamed Queen Square.

Carefully cross the road and stop where you can see above the door to the NatWest Bank.

This is a good example of the Edwardian Baroque style of architecture built in 1905 for the National Provincial Bank. Look at the railings at the side of the building and you will see plaques with the bank's name on. Before you move on, look up at the two figures sitting on the pediment above the door. One holds a sheaf of corn and the other a hammer symbolising agriculture and industry.

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St. Peter's Church



Lady Wulfrun Statue

Walk into Exchange Street

On the right-hand side, next to the coffee shop, you will see one of the few remaining 16th century timber framed buildings to survive in the city centre. The building has recently been converted into a public house called the Lich Gate Tavern. The entrance is off Lich Gates where this trail ends. Next door stands St. Peter's House which dates from the middle of the 19th century. On the wall you will see a circular blue plaque about Button Gwinnett. There are many blue plaques like this one on this trail – look out for them and find out more about famous people and places. Exchange Street is so named because at one time the Wolverhampton Corn Exchange building was located at the end of this street, where the War Memorials stand today. Built in the early 1850s the Corn Exchange was so poorly constructed that it had to be demolished less than 50 years later and gardens were created on the site.

Carry on until you reach the open square outside the Civic Centre.

The Civic Centre houses the main offices of the city council and was opened in 1979 by Jim Callaghan who was then the Prime Minister. To the right you can see the main Wolverhampton War Memorial which was erected in 1922. At the top are four figures – a soldier, a sailor, a pilot and St George (with a sword). Below is the Wolverhampton coat of arms. Look for the cross keys of St. Peter at the top. Below, in the four corners of the cross, you can see a pillar representing the Saxon Cross (seen later on this trail); a book representing learning (probably the grammar school); a woolpack (symbol of the source of the town's wealth in the middle ages); and a padlock (symbol of more recent industrial wealth). Also in the gardens is a silver birch tree planted as a memorial to those injured or killed in accidents at work.

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Harrison Learning and Resource Centre



Giffard House (Wadhams Fold)

After exploring the gardens go to the middle of the square and look towards the beautiful west front of St. Peter's Church.

There has been a church on this site since at least 994AD when Lady Wulfrun granted land to a monastery at Wolverhampton. There is a statue of her standing in front of the church, by local sculptor Charles Wheeler, erected to celebrate the centenary of the Express and Star Newspaper in 1974.

Lady Wulfrun is shown holding the charter, a scroll with a large seal attached, granting land to the monastery at 'Heantun' (meaning high place) and an extract from the charter is cut into the steps below which reads: "*I Wulfrun, do grant to the proper patron and high throned King of Kings, and (in honour of) the everlasting Virgin Mother of God, Mary, and of all the saints for the body of my husband and of my soul, ten hides of land, to that aforesaid monastery of the servants of God there*". After this generous gift the town took on the name of its benefactor and thereafter was known as 'Wulfrun Heantun'

which has evolved into the modern name Wolverhampton. Look out for the cream coloured interpretation panels if you want to find out more about Lady Wulfrun.

Continue around the right-hand side of the Civic Centre and take the steps or ramp up to Wulfruna Street, turn left, cross the entrance to the underground car park and stop.

From here you have a good view of the University of Wolverhampton campus buildings. The university had its origins as the Wolverhampton and South Staffordshire Technical College and the fine range of buildings to the right facing onto Wulfruna Street was open in 1933. The university campus has grown since then and one of the most recent additions, the Harrison Learning and Resource Centre, is the striking glass fronted building before you which houses a state of the art library. This building won the city council's Environmental Award in 2004.

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Church of St. Peter & St. Paul



Civic Hall, North Street

Now carefully cross the entrance to the Civic Centre ceremonial car park, bear left and take the ramp down to Wadhams Fold, bear to your left and stop at the bottom of the hill.

From here you can see two of the finest 18th century buildings in the city. Firstly look over the ring road where you will see the Molineux Hotel which today houses the City Archives and Local Studies. Originally built as a private house for wealthy ironmaster Benjamin Molineux in the 1720s the building was further extended in the mid eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A landmark clock tower was added in 1860 when the grounds opened as public pleasure grounds. Behind the building you can just see the bright yellow structure of the Wolverhampton Wanderer's Football Stadium. The football ground was established in the Hotels grounds in 1889.

The second building which can be seen from here is Giffard House, built between 1726-33 as a Priest's residence and Mass House. The architect was probably Francis

Smith who was born in nearby Tettenhall, but is known as 'Smith of Warwick' where he established his practice and became one of the most famous architects of his day. By 1804 Giffard House had become the headquarters for the Roman Catholic Church in the Midlands and Bishop John Milner lived here until his death in 1826.

Now walk around to the left side of Giffard House until you come to a set of gates on your right.

Inside the gates you can see the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul which joins onto the back of Giffard House. Look for statues of the two saints on top of the entrance porch. The original small chapel inside Giffard House was enlarged in 1765 and then extended in 1826 in the Greek Revival style by architect John Ireland. The church has an exceptionally fine interior and if you are lucky enough to be here when the church is open it is well worth a look. Bishop Milner is actually buried in the crypt.

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Old Town Hall, North Street



Darlington Street Methodist Church

Turn left and go along North Street keeping the Civic Centre on your left. (Take extra care crossing vehicle entrances to the civic Centre on this section of the trail).

The Wolverhampton Civic Hall, opposite the Civic Centre, designed by architects Lyons and Israel and opened in 1938, is one of the most popular live music venues in the Midlands, the design was influenced by that of Stockholm Concert Hall in Sweden. Recent improvements and extensions (see the two glass fronted side extensions at first floor level) to provide better facilities and disabled access received a Civic Trust Award in 2004. The interior retains many original period features.

A little further along North Street you will find the old Town Hall which was opened in 1871. The design of this building, by Ernest Bates, was influenced by the New Louvre in Paris which had been completed in 1857.

Turn right into Blossom's Fold, to the left of the Town Hall building.

Blossom's Fold is one of many place names in Wolverhampton that commemorate the wool trade which made Wolverhampton a wealthy town during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Turn left and continue to the end of Blossom's Fold then turn right down Darlington Street, cross the junction with Red Lion Street and stop when you reach the next busy crossroads.

Here are two important buildings. Over the junction on the right stands Clock Chambers, built in 1938/9 as a showroom and offices for the Wolverhampton Gas Company, this is an important example of the work of local modernist architect Richard Twentyman.

In complete contrast on the opposite corner stands the grand Baroque style Darlington Street Methodist Church with its green copper dome designed by the architect Arthur Marshall and opened in 1901. This

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Timber framed building (Victoria Street)



Rock Form by artist Barbara Hepworth

building replaced an earlier Methodist Church on the same site, parts of which were incorporated into the new building. The interior of the church is very fine and open for church services and occasional open days and concerts.

Now turn left, carefully crossing Darlington Street, and walk along School Street.

In School Street, to the rear of the church, you can see the old school which gives this street its name. It dates from the mid 19th century and now houses the church office.

Turn left into Skinner Street

On the right is a classic example of 1930s cinema architecture designed by the Harry Weedon architectural practice for the Odeon chain. It is faced with black and cream coloured faience tiles and has a streamlined landmark tower. The auditorium once held almost 2000 people. This building is one of the most complete surviving inter-war cinemas in England. It was converted into a

banqueting suite in 2008 but the interior decoration is still largely intact.

Go to the end of Skinner Street and when you reach Victoria Street, cross the road at the pelican crossing just to your left.

Here you can see another of the rare surviving timber framed buildings in the city centre. In 1590 there was a great fire in Wolverhampton which destroyed 104 houses in this part of the town. This building most likely dates from the period of rebuilding following the fire and was known as The Hand Inn throughout the 17th century. The date 1300 on the front is wrong! The square panels on the side and close studding (upright timbers set close together) on the street frontage are typical of the West Midlands where timber framed construction was the most common method of building before bricks became more readily available in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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Beatties - Elephant head motifs



Lloyds TSB Bank, Queen Square

You may now choose to make a short diversion into the Mander Centre (if it is open). If not just carry on up the hill until you reach the clock tower at the top of Victoria Street.

The Mander Centre is built on the site of the original Mander Brothers' paint and varnish works which had been established in the centre of the town in 1773. This was an important industry in Wolverhampton and the Mander family became very wealthy. They built themselves a fine new house in Wightwick at the end of the 19th century, which is today owned by the National Trust and is open to the public.
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wightwick-manor

The shopping centre was opened in 1968 and has been modernised many times since, most recently in 2002/4. Inside (near the central escalators) you will find a bronze sculpture by the artist Barbara Hepworth entitled Rock Form.

Continue through the Mander Centre keeping to the lower level and turn left to exit the centre at the top of Victoria Street near the clock tower.

On the opposite side of the road stands Beatties department store opened in 1929. James Beattie opened his first drapery shop in Victoria Street in 1877 and the venture was so successful that by the time the street was widened in the late 1920s the company was able to build a large brand new store.

Turn right and go to the top of Victoria Street.

The corner plot of what is now Beatties was originally taken by Burton's the gents' outfitters and if you look up at this remarkable Art Deco frontage you will see the distinctive elephant head motifs which appeared on many of their buildings from this period.

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Lloyds TSB Bank, Detail of farmers



King Street - general view

Turn right at the top of the hill and you will find yourself back in Queen Square.

The second half of the trail starts here.

Continue past the statue of Prince Albert and stop in front of Lloyds TSB bank.

This building was designed in the Italianate Style by J A Chatwin in 1878. The top floor was probably a later addition. Look for the bands of relief sculpture showing coal miners on the left, farmers in the middle and metal workers on the right.

Turn right into Dudley Street and then first left into King Street.

The buildings on the left of this street form an almost complete Georgian terrace. It was virtually completely derelict in the 1980s but has now been fully restored. The Old Still Inn at the far end has been a public house since 1836 and the daughter of one of the

landlords, Maggie Teyte (1886-1976), became an internationally famous opera singer.

Turn right into Princess Street then turn left into Queen Street, crossing the road at the traffic lights.

Queen Street has been described as the best street in Wolverhampton and does contain a number of interesting buildings. The first of these to look for is the 1930s Express and Star building. Under an arch at high level you will see a sculpture of Mercury by Robert Jackson Emerson who was a personal friend of the proprietor of the newspaper at the time. Mercury was the messenger of the Gods in Roman Mythology and is shown against a five pointed star. He also appears above the clock.

The next building to note is No. 50, now an Australian theme bar. This was built in 1813 as the first subscription library in Wolverhampton and was used by the wealthier residents of the town. The upper storey, with the coat of arms, was added in

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50 Queen Street

1829 by the architect Lewis Vulliamy for use as assembly rooms. It was here that the first meeting of the town council was held in May 1848 and for many years it was also used as the County Court.

Next to the former County Court is a terrace of 3 typical Georgian town houses with classical doorcases and fanlights and sliding sash windows. Middle class people would have lived in houses like these but poorer working class people lived in cramped and often unsanitary conditions where diseases like cholera and smallpox could spread quickly. In 1821 a dispensary was opened at No. 46 Queen Street to provide medical care for the poor. This was extended in 1826 to provide more hospital beds but even this was not big enough to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population and it was eventually closed in 1849 when a new hospital was built.

A little further along at No. 43 stands the former Mechanics' Institute (now the Army Careers Centre) which opened in 1836.



Former Dispensary, 46 Queen Street

Here working class people could attend lectures, see exhibitions and use a free library. The library was moved to a site in Garrick Street in 1872 after the passing of the Public Libraries Acts enabled local authorities to provide free libraries.

Stop at the junction with Piper's Row.

The imposing buff brick building on the other side of the road, known as the Queens building, was restored in the late 1990s as part of the new Wolverhampton Interchange. Designed by Edward Banks it was built as the carriage entrance to the old High Level Station and also contained the boardroom for the Shrewsbury and Birmingham Railway Company.

Turn left along Piper's Row and when you get to the junction with Lichfield Street carefully cross the entrance to the bus station and walk a little way down Fryer Street.

Looking to your right, you can see the

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Chubb Building, Fryer Street



Grand Theatre, Lichfield Street

former Chubb & Sons Lock and Safe Works – look for the white lettering at the top of the building – an important monument to the town’s industrial history. Lock making had been established in Wolverhampton since the 18th century and Chubbs, one of the most successful companies, had expanded to such an extent that they commissioned London based architect C H M Mileham to design this grand new works which was opened in 1898. At its height 350 locksmiths were employed here. Today the building has been converted into a media centre and contains a cinema, bar, café and offices.

Carry on down Fryer Street and on the corner of the car park on the left-hand side stands the former Wolverhampton Synagogue. There has been a synagogue on this site since 1858 but it was largely rebuilt after a fire in 1902. Look up at the front of the building on the corner with Long Street and note the date stone. Here you see the date 1903 and above it 5663, the same date according to the Jewish calendar.

From here you can cross the road, but be careful it is busy, and have a look inside the Chubb building atrium if you wish.

Retrace your footsteps back to Lichfield Street and turn right.

On your left is the Grand Theatre which was opened in 1894 and many famous stars have performed here including Charlie Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich and Sean Connery. It was also here that Lloyd George made his famous 1918 election speech pledging ‘to make Britain a fit country for heroes to live in’ after the First World War. The theatre is considered to be one of the finest designed by theatre architect Charles Phipps and has a beautiful auditorium. It was refurbished at a cost of £8 million in 1998.

Carry on along the road until you reach a major traffic junction known as Princes Square. It was here that the first mechanically operated traffic lights in the country were tested in November 1927.

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Art Gallery, Lichfield Street



St. Peter's Church, Gardens and Fountain

Cross the junction and continue along Lichfield Street until you reach the Art Gallery.

The Art Gallery (architect J A Chatwin) was opened in 1884 by Lord Wrottesley using a golden key made by the Chubb Company. Look up at the carved panels on the front of the building. The classical figures represent the arts: sculpture on the right and painting and drawing on the left; and around the corner the figures represent the sciences and local industries like metal working.

Inside, the Art Gallery has a good collection of Victorian and Georgian paintings and a Pop Art Gallery with regular changing exhibitions. There is also an excellent tea room and shop! (Disabled access is possible off St. Peter's Close).

After exploring the Art Gallery make your way into the gardens that surround St. Peter's Church.

Lichfield Street was widened in the late 1800s following slum clearance to create an impressive route to the new railway station

from the town centre. When the buildings were cleared everyone agreed that the view to St. Peter's Church was so special that gardens should be laid out on this site. In the gardens there are several interesting structures to look out for including the fountain dedicated to Philip Horseman, a memorial to Able Seaman Harris and a war memorial in the form of a crucifix. There are also interpretation panels throughout the gardens.

Take the steps or ramp (to the rear of Barclays Bank) to the higher gardens.

This is the site of the former graveyard. The headstones were cleared in the 1930s when this part of the gardens was laid out. In the corner you will find the Saxon Cross, surrounded by railings. The cross is about 1,000 years old and would have been erected to commemorate a special event or to mark a preaching place. There probably would have been a small Saxon church nearby. Look at the interpretation panel near

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St. Peter's Gardens



Queen Square

the cross and see if you can make out the sculptures of plants and animals.

Walk back towards the Art Gallery along the path beside the railings and look out for the Bargain Stone inside the railings. It is said that business deals were sealed by a handshake through the hole in olden times.

From here retrace your route back to the rear of the bank and turn right until you come to a gateway leading to the porch of St. Peter's.

The church to which Lady Wulfrun gave extensive estates in 994AD probably stood on this site. It would have been built of timber, as the local building stone is very poor, and would have been quite small in size. The church you see today dates mainly from the 13th and 15th centuries and was also partly rebuilt and restored by the Victorians. It is a fine church which many visitors mistake for a cathedral because it is so impressive. It is normally open between 10am and 4pm and is well worth a visit.

There is a guide book for sale inside. (Note: the West door is normally open if access via the porch is closed).

When you leave the church continue down Lich Gates until you once again find yourself in Queen Square.

Note about Blue Plaques

The Wolverhampton Civic & Historical Society is responsible for putting up blue plaques in Wolverhampton

If you would like more information visit their website:

www.cityofwolverhampton.com/blueplaques.html

Wolverhampton City Trail

Walking is an excellent form of gentle exercise. It not only improves your fitness but also your sense of wellbeing. The following details will help you work out how many steps you have taken and how much energy you have used:

1 mile = 1760 - 2640 steps

(depending on the length of your stride)

(1 mile = 1.6 kilometres)

10,000 steps = the recommended daily number of steps to keep healthy.

Walking 1 mile burns approximately 100 calories.

By walking this trail you will have:

Walked 1.7 miles (2.7 km), taken approximately 3,400 steps and burnt 170 calories.

City Information Point

Wolverhampton Art Gallery
Lichfield Street
Wolverhampton
WV1 1DU

Telephone: 01902 552055

- 1 Nat West Bank
- 2 Timber framed building
- 3 St. Peter's House
- 4 Civic Centre
- 5 War Memorial
- 6 Lady Wulfrun
- 7 St. Peter's Church
- 8 University buildings
- 9 Harrison Learning Centre
- 10 Molineux Hotel
- 11 Giffard House
- 12 St. Peter's & St. Paul's Church
- 13 Civic Hall
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- 21 Lloyds TSB Bank
- 22 King Street
- 23 The Old Still Inn
- 24 Express & Star building
- 25 50 Queen Street
- 26 Georgian Houses
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- 29 Queen's building
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Discover more in Wolverhampton!

For all those that enjoy arts & culture, for sports fans everywhere, for families that enjoy a picnic in the park, for the loyal theatre goer and for the party animal who enjoys a night out on the town - there is always something on offer in Wolverhampton to entertain a range of interests and age groups.

Find out more information from the city's information point located in one of the city's most popular attractions, Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Staff here will be happy to provide information about what there is to see and do whilst on your visit to Wolverhampton.

Contact:

City Information Point, Wolverhampton Art Gallery,
Lichfield Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1DU

Tel: 01902 552055

Opening Hours:

Monday – Saturday, 10am until 5pm.

Websites:

Tourism: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/visit

City Council: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk

City Life: www.wolverhamptoncity.co.uk

 [www.twitter.com/eventsinvolves](https://twitter.com/eventsinvolves)

 www.facebook.com/eventsinvolves



**Gold Award Winner in the
Heart of England in Bloom
Awards 2008, 2010, 2011**

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