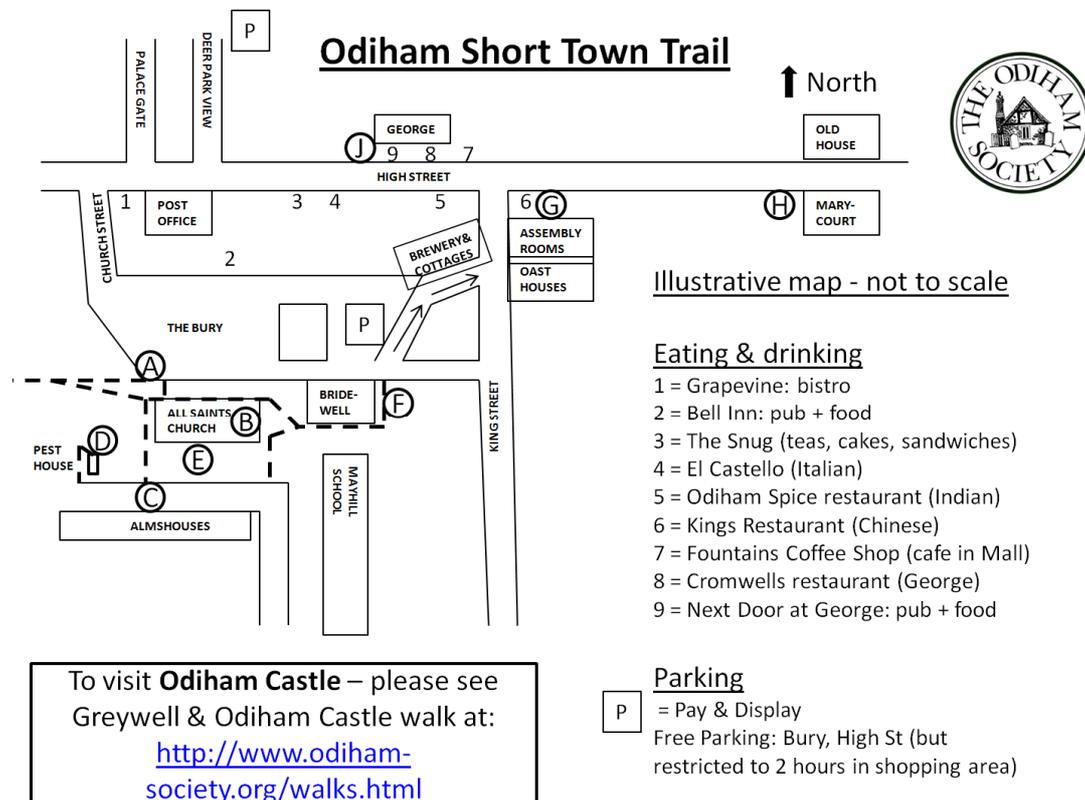


Distance/time: 1 mile, around 1 hour. **Difficulty:** easy walk, gentle gradients, mostly paved surfaces.

Description: a short tour of the historic town of Odiham, which has ancient royal connections and over 250 listed buildings (including 12 of the 35 oldest buildings in Hampshire), stopping to look at many points of historic and general interest.



Point A. The Bury and Odiham’s History. Our town trail starts in the Bury. The Bury, the village heart with church & pub facing, was the original area of settlement and fairs were held here from the 15c to 19c; it’s now used for many town events including farmers markets, carol singing, jazz and more. Please find the town map at the foot of the path leading up to All Saints Church. **The following brief history explains the origin of some of the features shown on this map:**

11c & 12c: Odiham was already a Royal Manor, held by Earl Harold, before the Norman Conquest. It is the first entry in the Hampshire section of the Domesday Book of 1087 because it had become William the Conqueror’s largest holding in Hampshire. A Deer Park - lying to the north of the High Street – was first mentioned in 1130 and its distinctive oval footprint with kinks to the north, south, east & west denoting former gates remains today, now as farmland.

13c: King John builds Odiham Castle 1207-1214 – Odiham was midway between castles at Windsor & Winchester - and it became one of the places he stayed most frequently, perhaps as a place for this unpopular king to enjoy hunting in relative peace and safety. The High St runs along a line of springs – notice the long ‘burgage plots’ that lie behind most of the properties on the north side of the street. The romantic ruins of Odiham Castle, with a rare octagonal keep, are on the map about 1 mile west of the town.

14c & 15c: Royal patronage of the castle continued to the late 14c and Odiham continued as a Royal

Manor to 1603.

16c to 18c: most buildings in today's High St were built over these centuries and their quality shows that Odiham was clearly a prosperous town. Georgian frontages were added to many earlier properties and jettying was hidden. The High St boasted many Inns in the heyday of coaching and the Basingstoke canal opened in 1794 with a wharf at Odiham – see map.

19c & 20c: the canal was not a success, the railways missed Odiham and the main A30 road to London passed several miles to the north. Odiham missed the explosive growth seen by so many towns in these centuries, leaving the pleasant small market town we find today with its history so well preserved.

Just take a few steps to the left from the map to see the town Stocks. From 1376 every town or village had to have stocks 'to encourage virtue & discourage evil doers'. They were used up to the early 19c to punish misdeeds such as blasphemy, drunkenness and breaking the Sabbath. Notice the iron grips on the Whipping Post come in 3 handy wrist sizes to guarantee all comers a snug fit.

Point B. All Saints Church. Now go up the path and into the church which is normally open until 5pm. A good illustrated leaflet with more detailed information is available for purchase inside the church. Let's look at some of the main features & episodes which trace its gradual evolution:

Saxon?: piscine (for washing chalice) to right of altar. (Possibly Saxon, at latest 12c)

Norman: columns in choir.

Early 13c: base of tower

15c: font believed 1500 or earlier, carved from solid block of chalk (rear of church)

15c: columns on north side of nave

15c: brass on wall above lectern of William Goode, Rector of Dogmersfield, who died in 1498

1588: 'Armada' Bell – calling bell, still rung weekly

1614: peal of 6 bells

Pre 1625: the Royal Arms, high on the screen wall over the aisle & dated 1660, carry the motto 'Beatti Pacifici' of James 1st who died in 1625. Almost certainly hidden during civil war & updated!

1634: Jacobean oak pulpit (important enough to be hidden in Wookey Hole caves during WW2)

1656: upper part of tower rebuilt in brick, after collapse of earlier tower in 1647

1662 Parish Chest with 4 locks & 4 keys (1 each for vicar & 3 churchwardens) (rear of church)

17c: columns on south side of nave

19c: hudd – looking like a sentry box, its canvas protected the priest from rain during funerals

19c: box pews date from 1840

20c: main east window above altar by Patrick Reyntiens, known for his work in Coventry cathedral

20c: RAF 'window' on south wall, donated by RAF Odiham in 1989

21c: new organ & organ loft installed in 2011

The church could at one time hold 1200 people and is still well-attended. But it has not always been so peaceful – during the civil war Odiham lay between Royalist Basing House and Parliamentary Farnham and a contemporary account recorded: "The good people of Odiham were sadly disturbed whilst in church on 11th Feb 1644. Some of the garrison of Farnham Castle rode into church during service and presented their pistols at Master Holmes the Minister, saying with a loud impudence: "Sir, you must come down for we do not allow such kind of preaching". One trooper fired his pistol in the church and a number of women fainted and one, Bushell's wife, fell down dead".

Exit from the church and walk a few paces along the path to your right. On the right you'll find the

graves of two French officers from the Napoleonic Wars. A number of officers, who were Prisoners of War, were billeted in Odiham and Frenchman's Oak can still be found on the road to Hartley Witney – a mile from the centre of Odiham, it marked the limit to which officers could walk under the terms of their Parole – the 'gentleman's agreement' under which they promised not to escape.

On the other side of the path you'll find the tomb of Robert May, a successful businessman & philanthropist who, in his 1694 will, bequeathed £600 for a 'Free School in town of Odiham for educating 20 boys'. Odiham's comprehensive school retains the name 'Robert May's' and, each year, the schoolchildren lay a wreath on this grave on the anniversary of his death.

Now retrace your steps back past the church door and turn left up the path which passes the church tower. At the top of this path is an arched gateway with wrought iron gate. Here are **Odiham's Almshouses, Point C on map**. In front of you is Old Court, the earliest part of the almshouses, endowed in 1623 by Sir Edward More who leased the Manor & Hundred of Odiham from the Crown. The almshouses today are under the stewardship of Odiham Consolidated Charities who carry on the good works of the original benefactors.

Now turn to your right & notice the small brick building directly ahead – this is Odiham's '**Pest House**', **Point D on map**. The Pest House is open from 10am-4pm on Saturdays and Sundays or, to visit at other times, the key is available from the Post Office (see map).

Please MIND YOUR HEADS as you enter. 'Pest' was the old word for Plague and Odiham's Pest House, built in 1622 as a dwelling house for the poor, was subsequently used as an isolation hospital for residents or travellers with plague, smallpox or other infectious diseases. It is 1 of only 5 surviving examples in England. If the victims recovered, the church was nearby to give thanks -and, if not, the churchyard was even nearer.... After 1781, the building reverted to a dwelling house for the poor and its last resident died in 1930. Please MIND YOUR HEADS as you exit.

Walk across the churchyard to the south wall of the church and find the 4th pillar from the western (tower) end at **Point E on map**. Look up and you'll see two pre-reformation 'scratch dials', the top one now with a restored gnomon. These sundials would once have been the local clocks, used to determine the times of church services. It's interesting to note that the lower dial is about an hour slow – perhaps the priest was fond of a lie-in?

Now walk to the East end of the church and leave the churchyard at its eastern exit, walking past the white building on your left and turning immediately left to face it. You are now at **Odiham's Bridewell, Point F on map**, today providing Odiham's library and other services. The Bridewell or House of Correction was built in 1743 and had a small exercise yard and separate male & female accommodation. It was one of the first in Hampshire. The Bridewell briefly reached national fame when it held 'James the Painter' (James Aitken) who attempted arson in Portsmouth Dockyard during the American War of Independence – and who was later hanged.

The next part of the walk is on roads without pavements – so please do take care. Perhaps read these next notes first before setting out down the small (unnamed) road opposite the Bridewell and heading down to Point G on the High St. You'll pass some lovely old cottages, which housed Brewery workers when Odiham Brewery was established in 1770. Then, when you reach King Street you'll see the old Oast Houses opposite, now part of the Oast Garage, and on your left the long low building (now King St Dental Practice) where hops and malting barley were processed into beer. The brewery

had 37 acres of hops in the local fields to the south of Odiham – where the former oast houses still overlook the valley.

Now, walking towards the High St, on your right is a row of ‘townhouses’ – converted from a Market Room & Assembly Rooms (which formed the centre of Odiham’s social scene from 1860 to 1938).

Kings Restaurant, Point G on map. When you reach the High St, turn right and stop outside Kings Restaurant to survey the streetscene. Almost every building in this attractive High St is a listed building. If you’re interested in the history of these buildings, then ‘Odiham High Street – an Itinerary’ is available from the Post Office with a picture and description of every property from 1 to 131 on the South Side and back from 140 to 2 on the North Side. This trail will look at a few of the most interesting properties. Notice how wide the High St is – on a 1739 map a shambles (meat market) and Market House were shown standing in the middle of this wide street, then known as Market St. Many buildings appear to be Georgian, but this is deceptive as many of these Georgian facades have been added to earlier 14c, 15c, 16c & 17c buildings.

Walk East along the High St to number 43, **Marycourt, Point H on map.** Marycourt is Grade II* listed and a very fine example of late 17c building with dark red brickwork in Flemish bond, rubbed brick arches, stone cills and an elaborate framed doorcase with carved shell hood. Now look to the opposite side of the street to see adjacent red brick buildings 46 Queen Anne House and 48 The Old House. Despite the Georgian appearance these two houses were originally a wealthy merchant’s jettied house of about 1500, with the massive Tudor chimney remaining at no.48. The 18c facade was probably added when the house was divided to form 2 dwellings. No.48 is Grade II* listed with stone cills, rubbed brick arches above Venetian windows and a fine doorcase.

Cross the High Street and walk back to the **George Hotel, Point J on map.** The George is the largest half-timbered building in Odiham, is Grade II* listed and dates from the 15c, 16c and 18c. Originally built – probably as a high status house – in 1473, it was first granted a licence as an Inn in 1585. The Georgian frame conceals the original jettied front along the entire front. Inside can be found some magnificent beams, a fine oak fireplace and panelling (in the restaurant). The Odiham Society of Agriculture and Industry met here from 1783 to 1796 and led to the subsequent foundation of the Royal Veterinary Society. Beyond Next Door at the George is an arched carriage entrance, partly in wattle & daub, which once served the Red Lion (now Martins). Two doors west along the High St was the Tuns Inn (now Peregrine Travel) with another arched coach entrance. Opposite (no 113) was another inn, The Old White Hart (now from Opticians up to Post Office) and at nos 99/101 was the Star Inn and at nos 83-97 was the Crown Inn. Imagine the busy street scene here in the heyday of coaching!

Hidden among these former inns at no 111 (next to flower shop) is Monks Cottage, dated (by roof timber dendrochronology) to 1300 and the second oldest inhabited building in Hampshire.

Odiham can no longer boast the number of licensed premises it once had – by the end of 19c the parish had 22 licensed premises, 1 for every 125 inhabitants (including children)! But it can still boast a wide choice of places to eat & drink – as shown on map – why not end your tour at one of these? Or return via medieval Stoney Alley (between nos 81 & 83) to reach your start point in the Bury.