

Pershore - Town Walk



Our tour begins in **Broad Street** at the hub of Pershore where the **High Street** and **Bridge Street** meet and is unusually wide because until 1836 there were some houses and a shambles in the centre. On one corner is the **Royal Arcade** converted into shops in the 1980s where a blue Civic Society plaque on the wall commemorates the fact that 'This Regency building was formerly the **The Royal Three Tuns Hotel** visited in 1830 by Princess (later Queen) Victoria and her mother the Duchess of Kent'. The building is circa 1830 and offset by the ornate ironwork of its balcony. Broad Street is surrounded by fine Georgian houses with some Venetian and Palladian style windows, all built by John Hunter, a prosperous merchant, about 1810.



Numbers 7 and 9 Broad Street are both perfect examples of Georgian domestic architecture, Number 9 also has well proportioned bay windows with a pediment at roof line emphasising the symmetry of the elevation.



Opposite is the **Baptist Chapel**, a Victorian building on the site of one of the earliest Baptist foundations in the country, thought to date from 1658. Inside its gallery fronts are panels reached by a graceful curving stairway. Two shops facing the entrance to Broad Street also have Regency balconies, flanked by an imposing group of Georgian houses built about 1810.



From there can be seen the Abbey Tower considered to be Pershore's treasure. **The Abbey** was founded in 689. Late in the 10th century it became a well organised Benedictine monastery, but almost at once it suffered heavy financial losses when many of its local estates, including much property in Pershore itself, were seized and made over to the newly founded Abbey of Westminster. It remained however, a monastery of considerable importance with a church of architectural distinction. The original Saxon church, traces of which were discovered during the recent restoration, was rebuilt in Norman Romanesque, seen in the tower arches and the south transept. In 1223 a fire ruined the Norman presbytery when the tower fell destroying the roof.

The blackened stones were cleared and the new, Early English eastern limb replaced them. The vaulting, with its wonderful carved bosses, is of the following century. In the 14th century the fallen Norman tower was replaced by the present one, designed probably by the same architect as Salisbury Cathedral. At the dissolution of the monasteries, Pershore went the way of other religious houses, and its domestic buildings are no more. An extensive Victorian restoration was carried out between 1862-64 by Sir Gilbert Scott followed in 1992-96 by another especially to the south transept and tower whilst inside a new floor was laid over underfloor heating when new lighting and acoustic systems were also installed. **St. Andrew's** opposite is another mediaeval church serving the tenants of the Abbot of Westminster; it has now been de-consecrated and is available for community use. Outside in St. Andrews Gardens is a two-sided modern sculpture **The Moon Goddess** by Peter Inchbald.



Passing through the open grounds of *Abbey Park* which was purchased after the war by a far-sighted local authority and formerly the monastic precincts, the bottom of *Newlands* is reached. The half timbered structure on the left has been faithfully and beautifully restored by the Worcestershire Historic Buildings Preservation Trust and is thought to be on the site of the **Almonry** where the monks housed their visitors and dispensed charity to the poor.



You can return to the *High Street* via either *Church Walk* past the town Library or through *St Andrews Gardens*, through a walk way bounded by a modern serpentine wall originally funded by Advantage West Midlands. You then reach 34 High Street the town's Post Office built in 1932, which now houses the **Town Council Offices** and *Visitor Information Centre*.



Whilst traversing the *High Street*, inspect the fine doorway of **No.37** High Street, formerly the home of the Wilson family who were tanners until 1835. The tannery works behind the house have been excavated and the plans are displayed at the Heritage Centre in the Town Hall just across the road. Proceeding south down the High Street you can find St. Michael's undercroft or crypt in No.21 giving a possible indication of a mediaeval manor. In The Courtyard to the rear of 19 High Street, can be seen one of the wool barns of the Ganderton family which has now been converted into a shop and workrooms. Wool stapling was an important trade in the town in the 19th century, and the family lived in a fine Georgian house on the front.

Number 8 Community Arts Centre in *High Street* (the building dates back to 1741) is a registered charity and was opened in December 2004 to the public and officially opened in 2006 by HRH Duke of Edinburgh. Funding for the Art Centre was raised by residents of Pershore over a period of 10 years and is operated by a few paid staff and over 200 volunteers helping run the cinema/theatre and coffee bar - not forgetting art exhibitions and meeting rooms for hire.



A few more steps will bring you to the elegant façade of the **Angel Inn** of Tudor origin, the lane at the side once called *Quay Street* leading to the river Avon. The architectural delights of *Bridge Street* (once known as *Mill Street*) are best enjoyed by strolling down towards the river bridges at the approach to the town. Apart from the collective streetscape there are individual houses of importance and innumerable details of great interest. **No.1** Bridge Street was another Ganderton home adjacent to which is a large town house previously occupied by Barclays Bank having a particularly interesting front door with a late 18th century fanlight of unusual design of interlocking circular ornaments.





After passing **Bedford House** with its decorative balcony we come to **Perrott House** built about 1770 by Judge Perrott. Retiring to Pershore, he restored the weirs and locks of the Avon navigation, thus laying the foundation of the town's prosperity in the late 18th century.



Beyond Perrott House you will come to the **Star Inn** formerly a posting house previously named the *Coach and Horses*. Next door is what was the **Brandy Cask** pub, formerly named the *Liquor Vaults* and originally a wool warehouse. It has recently been converted into residential apartments and renamed *The Cooperage*. Nos. 37-43 *Bridge Street* originated as the Maidenhead Inn and a landing place for the barge trade.



Further down and across the road is another distinguished residence, **Stanhope House**, built about 1790 by another George Perrott, nephew of the judge. At what was the **Manor House Hotel** (an early Victorian building now converted into apartments) the town finishes abruptly owing to the river meadows which often flood.



On the other side of the road is *Avon Mill*, a development created from the old Saxon Mill destroyed by fire in the 1970s. The old mill house a Georgian building occupying a site mentioned in the Domesday Book fronts *Bridge Street* and was once used as a Quaker Meeting House and is now part of the new development. On to the **old bridge** which is mediaeval, though often repaired and altered in later times. Note the different stone which was used to repair the centre arch, a reminder of its attempted destruction in 1644 by King Charles 1's army retreating to Worcester.



Returning towards the town, a **Victorian Toll House** can be seen on the left (bearing a *Civic Society* plaque) and just behind it a path follows a serpentine brick wall, one of a number of examples in Pershore of this unusual feature.