

# REIGATE TOWN

## HISTORY TREASURE TRAIL



This Treasure Trail has been published as part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Royal Charter of 1863, which made Reigate into a Municipal Borough.



Before 1863, some residents still drew their water from wells, and there was no comprehensive street lighting. Within a few years, the new Borough Council, led by its first Mayor Thomas Dann and Town Clerk Clair Grece, was able to provide piped drinking water to their homes, build a proper sewerage system, and expand the network of gas street lighting. Clair Grece went on to serve the Borough for 40 years.

Though we have taken every care in the preparation of this trail, you undertake it entirely at your own risk.



# 1. START IN PRIORY PARK

START IN PRIORY PARK, FACING NORTH TO VIEW THE FRONT OF THE PRIORY BUILDING, WITH THE FOUNTAIN IN THE SUNKEN GARDENS BEHIND YOU.



William de Warrenne, sixth Earl of Surrey, built Reigate Priory in the 13th century for Augustinian Canons, but in 1536 it was dissolved by Henry VIII. For 5 years the Priory was owned by the Crown. In 1541 Henry VIII granted Reigate Priory to Lord William Howard of Effingham, who converted it into a comfortable Tudor mansion.

The Priory has had several owners, including the Somers family 1807 – 1921. The daughter of third Earl Somers, Lady Henry Somerset, refashioned the gardens in tribute to its religious origins. She built a “Monks Walk” west of the house, and planted sunken gardens to the south in the shape of a cross – with a fountain at their centre

In World War 2, like many large country houses, the Priory was used to relocate offices from London. After the war, the Priory became part of the Green

Belt, which protected it from redevelopment as housing. When Reigate Borough bought the estate in 1947, they opened the park to the public, while leasing the building to Surrey County Council for use as a school.

In 2007-8, the National Lottery helped fund the restoration of Lady Henry Somerset’s formal gardens, as well as the 18th century landscaping which gives them their spectacular setting.

# 2. PRIORY PARK WALLS

FACING THE PRIORY, TAKE THE PATH TO YOUR RIGHT AND WALK EAST TOWARDS THE PARK WALLS UNDER THE TREES.



Q1

What do you think the bricked-up opening might have been for?

Walk to your left through the trees to the Bell Street Car Park, then right towards the Tudor wall. At the right-hand end of the wall, there is a doorway with its arch shaped into an ogee (two S-shapes joined at the centre).

# 3. BELL STREET WALLS

USE THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO CROSS BELL STREET SAFELY THEN WALK BACK UNTIL YOU ARE OPPOSITE THE OGEE DOORWAY.

Look back across Bell Street to the ogee arch – on this side there are some beautiful markings around it. Another opening to the right is bricked up. This may have been the doorway and window of the lodge keeper’s cottage, which was located just behind the park wall in the Eighteenth Century

The main entrance to Priory Park, with eagles on top of its grand gateposts, used to stand just left of the

ogee doorway, roughly where the bus stop is now. Being a teetotaler, Lady Henry Somerset disliked the gates opening opposite the Castle Inn (now a wine bar). In 1893 she had the main entrance moved to Park Lane, and the eagle gates moved to the inner courtyard of Reigate Priory.

Ironically, much of her income derived from a family trust, which owned the freeholds of most of the properties in central Reigate, including the Castle Inn.

# 4. GEORGIAN COTTAGE

CONTINUE ALONG BELL STREET TO A WHITE COTTAGE, ALMOST OPPOSITE THE “WELCOME TO REIGATE TOWN” SIGN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROAD



Q2

What decoration is included on the 1815 date stone?

# 5. STONEMAN’S

CONTINUE ALONG BELL STREET TO STONEMAN’S, THE FUNERAL DIRECTORS, ALMOST OPPOSITE THE CAR PARK EXIT



Stoneman’s operates from a double-storey Tudor hall house – that’s a house with smaller rooms opening off a large central entrance hall, which rose to the full height of the building.

During a refit in 1990, when Mr Stoneman broke through a ceiling above the inglenook fireplace, he found a linen garment now known as the Reigate Doublet.

What makes the Reigate Doublet special is that these are working clothes. Most of what has survived from the past was treasured for its high status. Whereas, on the whole, everyday things rarely survived.

The doublet would have been placed above the inglenook to ward off evil spirits. Reputedly, it was worn by a boy when the building was used as an oatmill.

As Victualler to the Royal Navy (1677-1689), Sir John Parsons encouraged the growing and milling of oats

locally. A wealthy London brewer, he owned Reigate Priory from 1681 to 1717, and was Member of Parliament for Reigate during most of that time.

Oatmills – or oatmeal mills – produced oatmeal for making ships’ biscuits. An oatmeal mill was turned by hand or by an animal such as an ass. In Tudor times, there was an oatmill here, another around the corner in Church Street and one just west of town up Nutley Lane.

Humphrey Parsons inherited Reigate Priory from his father Sir John. During their ownership, from 1681 to 1766, father and son landscaped the grounds in the style then fashionable, planted tree-lined avenues, and installed some grand entrance gates.

# 6. INNS AND ALE HOUSES

AT THE CROSS-ROADS, USE THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO CROSS BANCROFT ROAD, THEN CONTINUE NORTH ALONG THE EAST SIDE OF BELL STREET



Q3

Where is the bell in Bell Street? What was the name of the Inn on the opposite side of the road?

In the Nineteenth Century, Reigate was a most important staging post with 50 coaches arriving per day. There were many coaching inns and beer houses, where horses were changed and travellers refreshed. Some of the inns would have brewed their own beer. Two inns are still trading on either side of Bell Street.

One gives the street its name, the other is now part of Knights stores, which began trading in 1883, and expanded to take over the Grapes Inn next door in 1911.

## 7. TUNNEL ROAD

AT THE T-JUNCTION, USE THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING TO CROSS CHURCH STREET THEN CONTINUE NORTH UP TUNNEL ROAD.



John, first Earl Somers, bought the Priory in 1807, though his main family home was Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire. He had already inherited the Manor of Reigate from the lawyer Sir John Somers, who was granted the manorial rights when he was made Lord Chancellor of England in 1697.

The turnpike road from Brighton to London came up Bell Lane and curved west around the Castle Grounds. In 1823, as his gift to the town, Earl Somers commissioned the building of a 50-yard tunnel under the Castle as a shortcut, said to be the first road tunnel in England. Pedestrians went through free, horse-drawn vehicles paid a toll. It was pedestrianised in the 1960s



Either side of Tunnel Road are two systems of caves, originally excavated as sand mines in the white sandstone beneath the Castle Mound. This sand had many uses, including glass-making, to soak up inkblots when writing, and to soak up beer spillages in bars. Locally-brewed beer was matured in some of the caves.

These caves were used to store wine and beer, then to store explosives and ammunition during World War I. In World War II they were used as air raid shelters for up to 200 people.

Volunteers lead regular tours of the cave systems under the Castle Grounds each summer: see [www.wcms.org.uk](http://www.wcms.org.uk) Mining sand under the town continued until a series of cave collapses endangered property, and the Borough prohibited further mining within the central area.

## 8. OLD TOWN HALL

WALK BACK TO THE HIGH STREET, AND TURN RIGHT TO THE OLD TOWN HALL.

The original Town Hall (1728-9) was built in the Queen Anne style. There was a courtroom upstairs, which was also used for meetings, and a market in what was then an open space at ground level (now a coffee bar).



When a nearby town lock up was demolished in 1810, its clock tower was added to the Town Hall. As you walk past, look back to see a drinking fountain underneath a ground-floor window – this is a later version of a popular Victorian design with doves.

Q4

What is the inscription above the water bowl?

## 9. THE CAGE

WALK TO THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AND CROSS THE ROAD. GO DOWN THE STEPS JUST RIGHT OF THE CROSSING.



Across the courtyard, on the right behind the statue, stands "The Cage". This was the town lock-up, built to hold prisoners sentenced in the Town Hall courtroom. The Cage was later moved away from the High Street to its current position. Now it is part of a wine bar.

Q5

When was the Cage built?

## 10. TUDOR TIMBER-FRAME (HIGH STREET)

GO BACK TO THE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, CROSS BACK OVER THE ROAD AND GO UP THE STEPS JUST LEFT OF THE CROSSING.

The shop on the right of the steps is a wonderful example of a timber-framed building.



Q6

Can you see which is the Tudor window, and which is Victorian?

Built in Tudor times, this building still has its old back yard. Men like solicitors and doctors had premises on the High Street alongside tradesmen and shopkeepers. They all kept animals in the yard behind their premises – stables for a horse if they were well-off, otherwise chickens and pigs to feed their family

## 11. THE DRY (INNER) MOAT

WALK TO THE TOP OF THE STEPS, THEN TAKE THE SECOND PATH TO THE LEFT. YOU ARE NOW WALKING IN THE DRY MOAT BENEATH THE CASTLE MOUND.

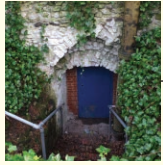
The Castle was built by the second Earl of Surrey, William de Warrene, probably about 1090, after the Warrennes were given lands by William the Conqueror. In 1347, Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, took ownership, and from 1397 the Castle was owned by whoever was Lord of the Manor of Reigate, which later included members of the Howard family.

The Castle was one of several defending the route along the North Downs, but it rarely saw much fighting. In 1216, the French Dauphin, Louis, occupied the castle for a while on his march from Kent to Winchester. And in 1648, during the Civil War, a Royalist garrison briefly held out against Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarians.

## 12. THE BARONS' CAVE

WALK ALONG TO THE FIRST CORNER, WHERE THE MOAT BENDS TO THE RIGHT.

Below to the right, some iron railings guard the entrance to the "Baron's Cave". Legend has it, this was where the Barons met up in 1215, before going on to Runnymede where they forced King John to sign Magna Carta.



Whatever the truth of that legend, this cave system was dug out with far greater care than just another sand mine, though no one now knows when or why.

Volunteers lead regular tours of the cave systems under the Castle Grounds in summer: see [www.wcms.org.uk](http://www.wcms.org.uk)

## 13. THE WET (OUTER) MOAT

CONTINUE AROUND THE DRY MOAT. AS THE PATH CLIMBS OUT OF THE DRY MOAT, TAKE THE PATH LEFT TOWARDS A BRIDGE OVER THE WET MOAT.

Originally, on the central Castle Mound, or Inner Bailey, there were timber buildings behind defensive walls surrounded by the dry moat. Sometime in the next 200 years, the timber buildings were rebuilt in stone, and an

Outer Bailey was added to north and east, defended by a section of wet moat. The wet moat is now a haven for wildlife, and you may see mallards, moorhens and herons.



## 14. "CASTLE KEEP"

FOLLOW THE PATH ALONGSIDE THE WET MOAT, THEN TURN RIGHT AT ITS END AND UP SOME STEPS TO THE GRASSY AREA OF THE CASTLE GROUNDS.

The last inhabitants of the Castle were members of the Howard family in the 16th century. After that, the Castle fell into disrepair. None of the original castle buildings have survived.

The large white building to your right, "Castle Keep", was built much later in the late 19th century.



## 15. CASTLE BAILEY

TAKE THE PATH TO THE RIGHT, UP THROUGH THE STONE ARCH AND INTO THE CASTLE BAILEY.

In the 18th century, the Castle Grounds were landscaped, and the remains of the Castle buildings used to create a picturesque setting. A barrister called Richard Barnes built the gatehouse as a folly in 1777. The gatehouse is below the arch you came through. Other stones had already been taken for local buildings.



Within the Bailey, the stone pyramid marks another entrance to the Barons' cave below.

Q7

Can you see the clock tower on top of the Town Hall to the south?

## 16. CASTLE COTTAGES

WALK BACK THROUGH THE ARCH, AND TAKE THE PATH STRAIGHT AHEAD.



On your right, there is a medieval cottage with a cat slide roof.

Further on, there is a Victorian cottage, built above the Tunnel Road.

## 17. NEW TOWN HALL (1901)

CONTINUE ALONG THE PATH, OUT OF THE CASTLE GROUNDS AND ACROSS THE COUNCIL CAR PARK.

Mind out for cars moving in and out.



Walk around to the front of the New Town Hall in Castlefield Road. The competition for its design was won by two young architects, Hugh Mackintosh and Reginald Newnham, who adapted the fashionable Arts and Crafts

style for these municipal offices. Look at the lettering and decorations over and around the main doors. These offices contain the Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria to create the Municipal Borough in 1863.

## 18. DONKEY STEPS

WALK BACK ALONG THE FOOTPATH AT THE BACK OF THE VICTORIAN COTTAGE.

The path dips down to go over the entrance to Tunnel Road -- look back down Bell Street, which you came along from Priory Park. The Tunnel Vaults are below you.



A bit farther along, a cobbled alley, sometimes known as donkey steps, descends to the High Street just by the Old Town Hall. They are also known as Crown Steps, after the Crown Inn (1665) which stood on the site now occupied by Lloyds Bank on the High Street below. The Crown Steps were probably used as a short cut by pedestrians and pack animals before the Tunnel was built.

## 19. THIS TRAIL ENDS

GO CAREFULLY DOWN TO THE HIGH STREET BY THE OLD TOWN HALL, DOWN EITHER DONKEY STEPS OR (FURTHER ALONG) THE STEPS YOU CAME UP EARLIER.

