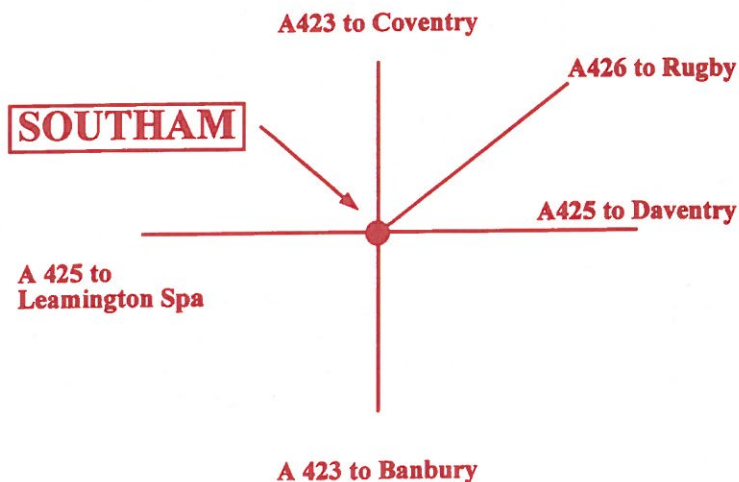




SOUTHAM HERITAGE TRAIL

*A gentle walk around Southam
to see places of
historical and modern interest*



Duration: Approx 2 hrs if all options are taken



Lilley Smith Memorial



For further information about the town
call at Southam Library in Park Lane
(open 9.30 am to 7.00 pm Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays,
and 9.30 am to 12.30 pm on Saturdays)

Books on sale at the Library include:
"Around Southam in Old Photographs" by Alan Griffin
"Seth Bond: A Warwickshire Hero" by Richard Stirling
"Looking Back at the Sisters' School" by Mary Rock



A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOUTHAM

Southam was first mentioned in a charter of King Ethelred in 998, but there was probably an Anglo-Saxon village here before this, and Roman coins found within the parish hint at an even earlier foundation. One possible origin of its name is that it was the settlement (ham) in a bend of the River Sowe (more currently known as the Stowe).

In the charter of 998 is the first mention of the Holy Well which is still a well preserved monument a short walk from the town. By the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, the population was about 170. The town then prospered as it was at the intersection of several roads including the Welsh Road which was used by cattle drovers travelling between Wales and London from medieval times until the end of the 19th century.

Southam was granted a charter to hold a market and annual fair in 1227. The market has been revived in recent years on Tuesdays, and the Mop Fair visits every year in October when the main street is closed off for the day.

The Battle of Southam on 23rd August 1642 was the first skirmish of the Civil War when the town was visited by both Parliamentary and Royalist troops.

In common with many other towns, Southam suffered disastrous fires in the 18th century and was rebuilt in the Georgian style best seen in the High Street. The town grew in the 19th century with straw plaiting, spinning, bonnet making and clock manufacturing listed among its industries, though it remained a small town as a result of being bypassed by the canals and then by the railways. In 1818, the Southam Infirmary for Curing diseases of the Eye and Ear was opened by Dr Henry Lilley Smith, a local surgeon, on the site of the present Stoneythorpe Hotel.

Recent years have now seen the building of industrial estates which have helped to provide local employment for the town and its surrounding villages and it has become a busy market town and business centre for a substantial rural area of Warwickshire. In 1974, as a result of local government reorganisation, Southam officially became a town with its own Mayor and Town Council, and has continued to expand to reach a population of approximately 6,500 in 2000.



1. Start the trail at Wood Street car park. From the car park entrance, look across Wood Street to see the Congregational Church, a Grade II listed building erected in 1839. Turn right towards the town centre. Turn left on to the main street. Walk to the junction with Daventry Street at Lloyds Bank.

2. On this corner you will see the local pharmacy, an old half-timbered building, formerly the manor house. Charles I stayed here in 1641. On his arrival in the town, the churchwardens refused to ring the church bells to welcome him. For this they were fined thirteen shillings and four pence. The bells remained silent again on His Majesty's departure, and so the churchwardens were again fined. It was from this same building in 1642, before the battle of Edgehill, that Charles issued a proclamation to his troops.

Follow the wall of the pharmacy into Daventry Street and round to the right into Bull Street past the Bull Inn public house. This is where the old cattle market was held. The town's abattoir still operated in a building towards the end of Bull Street until the 1960's.

Turn right up Chickabiddy Lane which was the site of the early poultry markets, coming back on to the main street where the road widens to form Market Hill. This is where at one time stood the market cross and from which public announcements were made. It was also where Southam's agricultural and produce market was held until the 1920s. (A retail market is now the only remaining market in the town held on Tuesdays in Wood Street).

3. The building to your left was, until the early 1990s, the Craven Arms Hotel, formerly the main coaching inn of the town. In 1830 it contained stabling for 80 horses, and stagecoaches departed regularly for London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leicester and Oxford.

Cross over the main street and go a little to your right before turning left into Park Lane where you will find the lychgate entrance to St James Church.

*Southam
Pharmacy*





4. The parish church is dedicated to St James the Apostle. The present building dates mainly to the 14th century and stands on the site of an earlier church known to have been here in 1220. The list of Rectors for the Church dates back to 1296. The broach spire rises to 126 feet above the ground and contains a fine peal of 8 bells the oldest of which dates from 1552.

The interior of the church is spacious and light, the nave being 53ft high and 53ft long. Four “green men” with their foliage-decked faces can be seen high up in each of the four corners of the nave, and in the south aisle, known as the Lattey Memorial Chapel, is a corbel of St Catherine. Above the south door are the royal arms of King Charles I.

A local man, Seth Bond, a troop Sergeant Major in the 11th Hussars, took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade and is buried in the churchyard. His memorial is at present in safe keeping shortly to be placed inside the church.

On leaving the Church, follow the footpath to your left around the belltower and past the South door of the Church, to find the steps down into Warwick Street opposite the Black Dog public house (named after the derogatory name given to Guy, Earl of Warwick, by Edward II).

5. Turn right and continue along Warwick Street crossing over the River Stowe until you reach the Stoneythorpe Hotel where you will find the Lilley Smith Memorial.

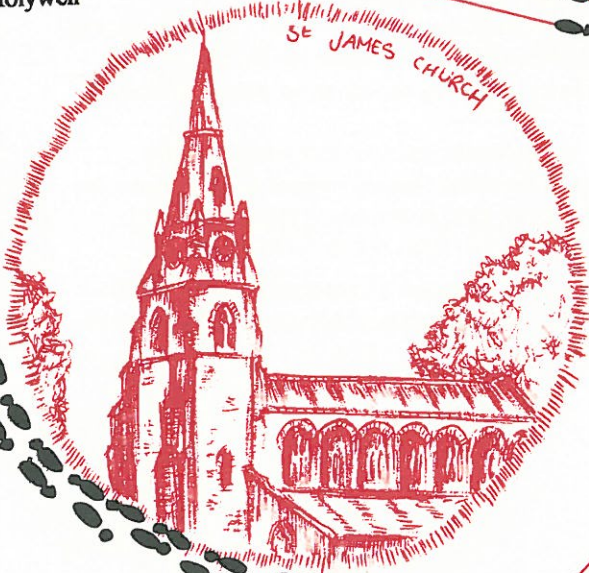


St James Church

Southam Heritage Trail



7. Holywell



11. Windmill

Welsh Road West

12. Primary School

8. Library

4. Church

6. Lilley Smith Memorial

5. Stoneys Hotel

Warwick Rd.

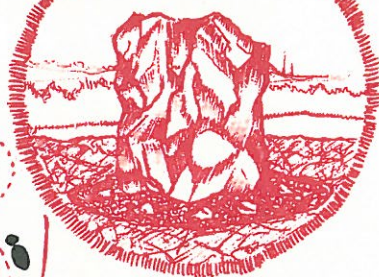


THE GRANGE



Coventry St.

THE MERESTONE



14. The Merestone

13. Grange
Peace Garden

The Furrows

10. Bowling Green

9. Olde Mint

15. Catholic Church

L. Wood Street Car Park

By Pass



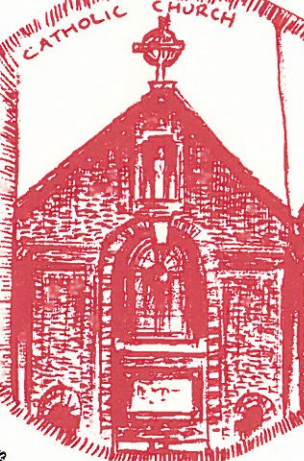
Chemist

THE OLDE MINT

Craven Arms



CATHOLIC CHURCH



By Pass



6. Henry Lilley Smith established the first provident dispensary in the United Kingdom on the site of the Stoneythorpe Hotel in 1823 supported by public subscription and donations. Inhabitants of Southam and the surrounding villages paid a small sum of money weekly which entitled them to medical treatment. Dr Lilley Smith was a philanthropist and in addition to the dispensary, provided an infirmary for eye diseases, allotments and a library for the boys of the town.

Beyond the memorial you might like to take an optional stroll further along Warwick Road to notice certain houses indicating the many phases of Southam's history from Tudor times through to the 19th century in their styles of architecture. Beech Hurst is early 19th century, Whitehall has Tudor origins, and No 24 is one of the oldest houses in the town with roof timbers officially confirmed as dating from 1418.

But return to the memorial to continue the route of the trail. Turn into the footpath called Wattons Lane, which leads to a footbridge across the River Stowe. Wattons Lane was originally a coach road into the town and the footbridge replaces the original ford. To your right is the town's Recreation Ground. Before entering it, it is worth taking an optional walk to the Holy Well.

7. Turn left into the lane running between the factory car park and the Priory Plant buildings. You will pass the former sewage works for the town, now replaced by a new plant a mile or so down river. Go through the kissing gate to the end of the lane, and then follow the footpath across the fields with the river on your left (sturdy footwear recommended if wet).

Pass through another gateway and then the Holy Well is to the right of the footpath about half a mile from the town. Look for the spinney and green railings around the stonework. It is registered with English Heritage as an ancient monument and is constantly supplied with a flow of natural water from a nearby spring. Reputedly although the water is always cold it has never been known to freeze, and was said to have healing properties, especially for diseases of the eyes. Note the ancient gargoyle faces through which the water flows from the upper to the lower levels. The well was considered to be of such importance to the people of the town that it was excluded from the Inclosure Act of 1761.

After seeing the Holy Well, retrace your steps to the Recreation Ground and cross it diagonally to reach Park Lane again.



The Recreation Ground was known, and still is by some local people, as the Bury Orchard. It is likely that this was the site of the Prior's centre of administration during the time that the manor belonged to the monks of Coventry. Evidence of a building of some size was found during the 19th century when foundations were discovered, together with several skeletons. Unfortunately nothing is known of the details of these excavations or of the present whereabouts of the finds.

8. Return along Park Lane to the church lychgate and turn left into the Library grounds. In front of the Library door take a break in the garden set up to commemorate the Millennium.

Take the path out of the Library and on to the High Street turning left to walk along the pavement beside the main road.

9. Looking across the road you will see the Olde Mint public house. This is reputed to have been built in the fifteenth century and was known until 1937 as the Horse and Jockey. Local trading tokens were minted here, a few of which still survive in private collections. You will note that the road widens here. It was widened in about 1400 by the Prior of Coventry with the intention of developing the market, but due mainly to competition from other local markets this plan did not come to fruition.

Next to the Olde Mint is 50 Coventry Street. This building dates back to 1640 but it was completely rendered with cement in the 19th century by the then owner who wished to prove the durability of the new locally produced material.

10. Further along is the Bowling Green public house. Here in the early 19th century, both Joseph Arch and Joseph Ashby, leading figures in the Agricultural Workers movement, addressed local people, on one occasion with an audience of as many as three hundred.



The Olde Mint



It was from the Bowling Green also that Southam's annual Godiva Carnival started off, a tradition that died out in the 1880's, although Southam still has an annual carnival procession around the town every Spring Bank Holiday.

Continue along the main road until you reach a left hand turning called the Welsh Road West. This road follows the route used by Welsh sheep and cattle drovers taking their animals to London for sale.

For another optional detour, turn left into Welsh Road West and cross to the right hand side. Walk along to the entrance to Southam School which is the main secondary school for the town and its surrounding villages.

11. Just beyond the school car park is a cottage on the roadside called the Mill House. In the cottage garden you will see the remains of one of Southam's several windmills. This was the last which operated until the early 1950s. Now only a few feet of the base remain.

Beyond this cottage is the modern swimming pool and leisure centre, a popular venue for all age groups in the town.

12. Retrace your steps to the main Coventry Road. It might be of interest to note in passing, Southam Primary School on your right. This was built on the site of the town's 19th century workhouse, not closed until 1922.

13. Turn left on to the Coventry Road and about 50 yards along on the left, enter the access road into The Grange and the Grange Hall. The Grange itself was formerly a private house but is now a Grade II listed building used as the local Council offices. It acted as a convalescent home for soldiers during the First World War. The grounds are open to the public where there is a quiet, amphitheatre area known as the Peace Garden which was dedicated in 1995 to celebrate fifty years of peace since the end of the Second World War. An interdenominational church service is held here annually during the summer.

The Grange





Return to the Coventry Road and cross over, continuing leftwards to find Toll Gate Road on the right. Turn into this road and walk straight on for about 200m as far as the bollards. Turn left on to the closely fenced public footpath. This will take you towards the bypass. When you reach the wooden gate to the bypass you will see a new path on your left into a public open space known as Merestone Park which will open in the year 2000.

14. It is well worthwhile taking this footpath which leads up to the highest point marked by The Merestone. This is a huge stone named after one recorded in 998 which was thought to have marked the parish boundary. From this stone on a clear day there are magnificent views to be seen towards Ladbroke and Napton.

After enjoying the view from the open space, return to where the public footpath entered the park by the bypass. Don't go through the wooden gate but instead, keep the bypass on your left and follow another short footpath straight ahead next to the houses. This leads you to the new residential roads of The Furrows and St Wulstan Way. Follow the pavement all the way until you meet the main Daventry Road at a T-junction. Turn right and pass St Marys RC Primary School. Then turn right again into Wood Street.

15. On the corner of Wood Street is the Roman Catholic Church complex. The Olde House Retreat was built in the 17th Century and now forms part of the convent buildings of the Sisters of Poor Child Jesus established here in 1876. The convent still houses members of the sisterhood and, until the 1970s the buildings also contained a children's refuge. Just behind the retreat is the Roman Catholic Church which is dedicated to Our Lady and St Wulstan. St Wulstan was born at Long Itchington (4 miles North of Southam) in 1009.

If you now keep going to your right you will find you are back at your starting point in Wood Street Car Park.



*RC Church of
Our Lady and
St Wulstan*



Southam Heritage Trail

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*Useful information about Southam:
Carnival - Spring Bank Holiday Monday
Mop Fair - Second Monday in October
Retail market - Every Tuesday
Public Toilets - Wood Street Car Park*

The town centre also offers a variety of public houses and takeaways