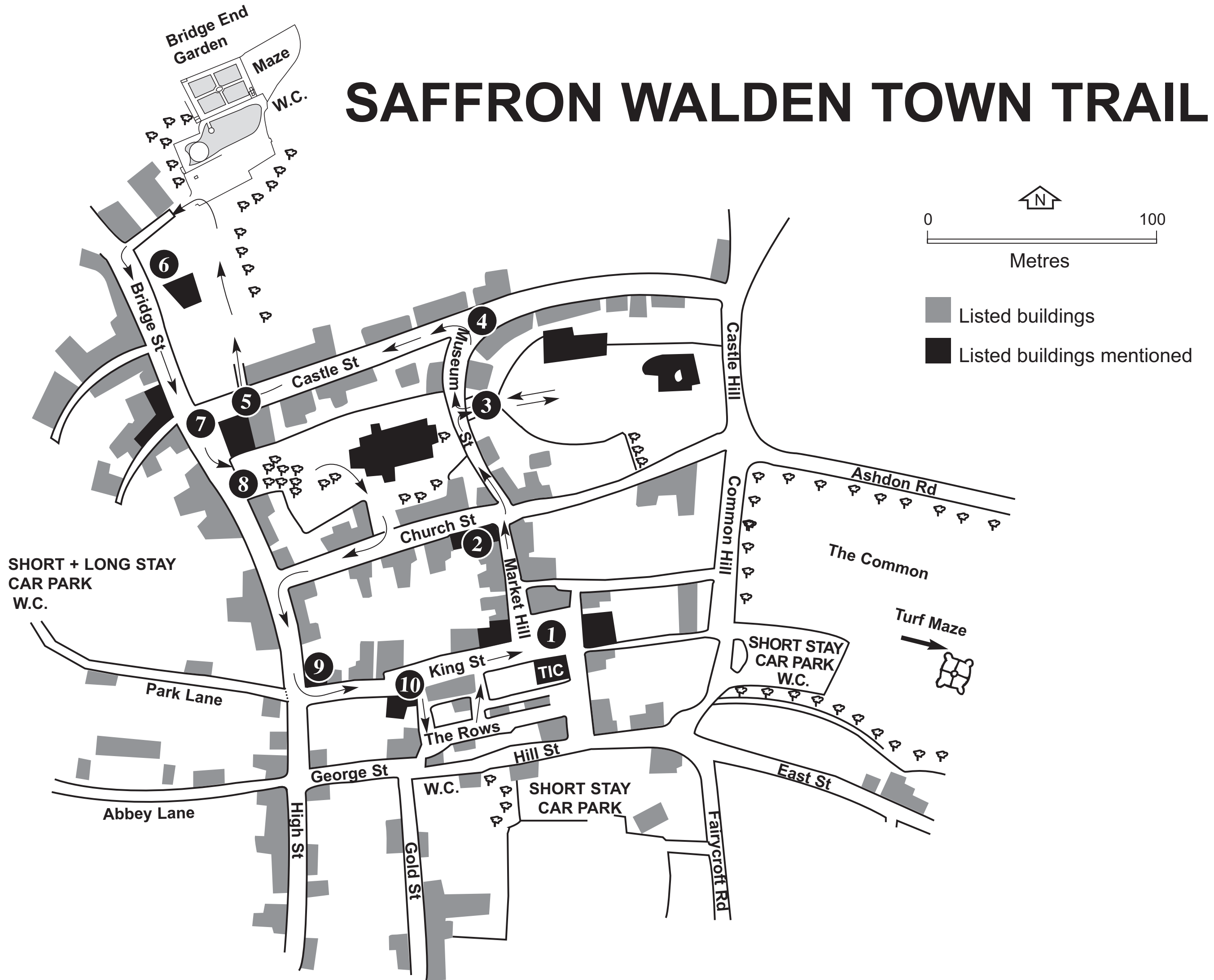


# SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN TRAIL



## **1. Market Place**

The market is still held here on Tuesdays and Saturdays as it has been since the thirteenth century. The Market Place is dominated by Victorian buildings. Barclays Bank was designed by Eden Nesfield as a bank for Gibson & Co. in 1874. The stone portico and timber framed additions to the Georgian Town Hall were designed by Edward Burgess and were a gift to the town from George Stacey Gibson in 1879. The Tourist Information Centre is housed here. The drinking fountain was also a gift to the town from the Gibson family in 1863 to commemorate the marriage of The Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. The Library, once The Corn Exchange, is of Italianate style designed by Richard Tress and completed in 1848.

## **2. The Old Sun Inn**

The crossroads at which the Old Sun Inn stands has timber framed buildings on all four corners. The Old Sun Inn is a range of Grade I listed homes and shops dating from the fourteenth century with many different types of decorative plaster work called 'pargetting'. These include incised repeat patterns, some freehand designs and later bas-relief of birds and fruit, possibly dating to 1676. The end gable shows two figures and opinion is divided as to whether they are Tom Hickathrift and The Wisbech Giant or Gog and Magog.

## **3. Museum and Castle Ruins**

The museum collections are housed in one of the oldest purpose built museum buildings in the country, completed in 1835. Its ethnographic collection is of national importance. It has everything from mammoth tusks to mummies, from an early Tudor bed to a natural history museum gallery. The Castle was built by Geoffrey de Mandeville 3rd Earl of Essex in the 1130s or 40s. The keep tower ruins of flint and mortar are all that remains, but the line of the inner and outer bailey helped create the shape of the town centre today. The ruins are Grade 1 listed.

## **4. Castle Street**

This street was part of the new town plan of the 1230s but most of the timber framed hall houses now date from around 1500. Some of the houses are Grade II\* listed properties with many examples of ancient and modern pargetting. There are a number of unusual Wealden houses, the easiest to identify is at No 49/51. This style of hall house under a single roof is normally associated with Kent. The house also has sliding sash windows which are commonly found in Saffron Walden houses. By the 1800s this was the poorer section of town with many of the houses divided into small cottages. Clear breaks in the roof lines give clues as to the extent of the original houses.

## **5. Fry Art Gallery and Bridge End Garden**

The path to Bridge End Garden passes the Fry Art Gallery which was built in 1856 by Francis Gibson to hold his personal art collection. It was then inherited by his daughter Elizabeth Fry. Since 1987 it has housed a collection of the works of a Great Bardfield group of artists who settled in the Essex countryside in the 1930s. Started by his father, it was Francis Gibson who expanded Bridge End Garden introducing a Dutch garden, rose garden, kitchen garden, wilderness area, the Maze and a lovely south facing lawn with a Summerhouse. The garden has now been restored with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## **6. The Eight Bells**

The Eight Bells is one of the 27 Grade II\* listed buildings in Saffron Walden and is an amalgam of different elements. The range at right angles to the road is fifteenth century while the street frontage is a late sixteenth century addition which features a continuous first floor jetty or oversailing developed to create bigger rooms on this floor. It has a fine carved bressumer beam which is the exposed horizontal beam that supports the upper floor. The building is one of the few buildings in the town with both first and ground floor windows in their original positions. The memorial on the bridge over the Madgate Slade to Chief Constable Campling commemorates his murder after he left the Eight Bells pub one night - his alleged assailant was found not guilty at trial.

## **7. Youth Hostel and The Close**

The Youth Hostel is Grade I listed and is one of the finest medieval buildings in the town. It was built as a combined shop, home and warehouse in the 1490s. There is a fine doorway into Bridge Street and a carved dragon post on the corner. The sack hoist in the roof was added in the early nineteenth century when part of the building was converted to a malting. Diagonally across the road from the Youth Hostel stands The Close, a fine late fifteenth century timber framed house with later additions including an unusual seventeenth century 'Spider' window.

## **8. Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin**

The earliest features of the largest parish church in Essex date from 1250 but the majority of the church was rebuilt in the Perpendicular Style between 1470 and 1525. The church size reflects the wealth of the town at the height of the saffron trade. With the addition of the spire in 1832 the tower is 193 feet (59m) high. The interior of the church has a wonderful organ with spectacular Trompeta Real pipes, nine mediaeval brasses and some fine stained glass windows. Among the monuments are Lord Audley's Belgian slate tomb in the south chapel and R.A.Butler's memorial plaque, his grave being at the east end of the churchyard.

## **9. The Cross Keys**

The Cross Keys is a fifteenth century timber framed former house and shop with later additions. The roof was raised in the early nineteenth century and new windows added on the ground and first floors of the King Street frontage. The plaster on the entire timber framed section was taken off in the early twentieth century and some first floor windows reinstated. At the corner of King Street and High Street on the ground floor are two of the original fifteenth century shop windows.

## **10. The Rows**

At the start of the Rows, on the corner of King Street and Cross Street stands a large late fifteenth century hall house. The house shows clearly how large houses were divided into three different elements with the open hall section having its roof raised in the eighteenth century. The Rows were the town's shopping centre from medieval times onwards, with 33 of the 46 shops in the town sited there in 1630. The shops started as market stalls and progressed to become permanent home and business premises combined. On Cross Street are some of the best preserved Tudor shop windows which had shutters that opened to provide a counter and a canopy over the goods.