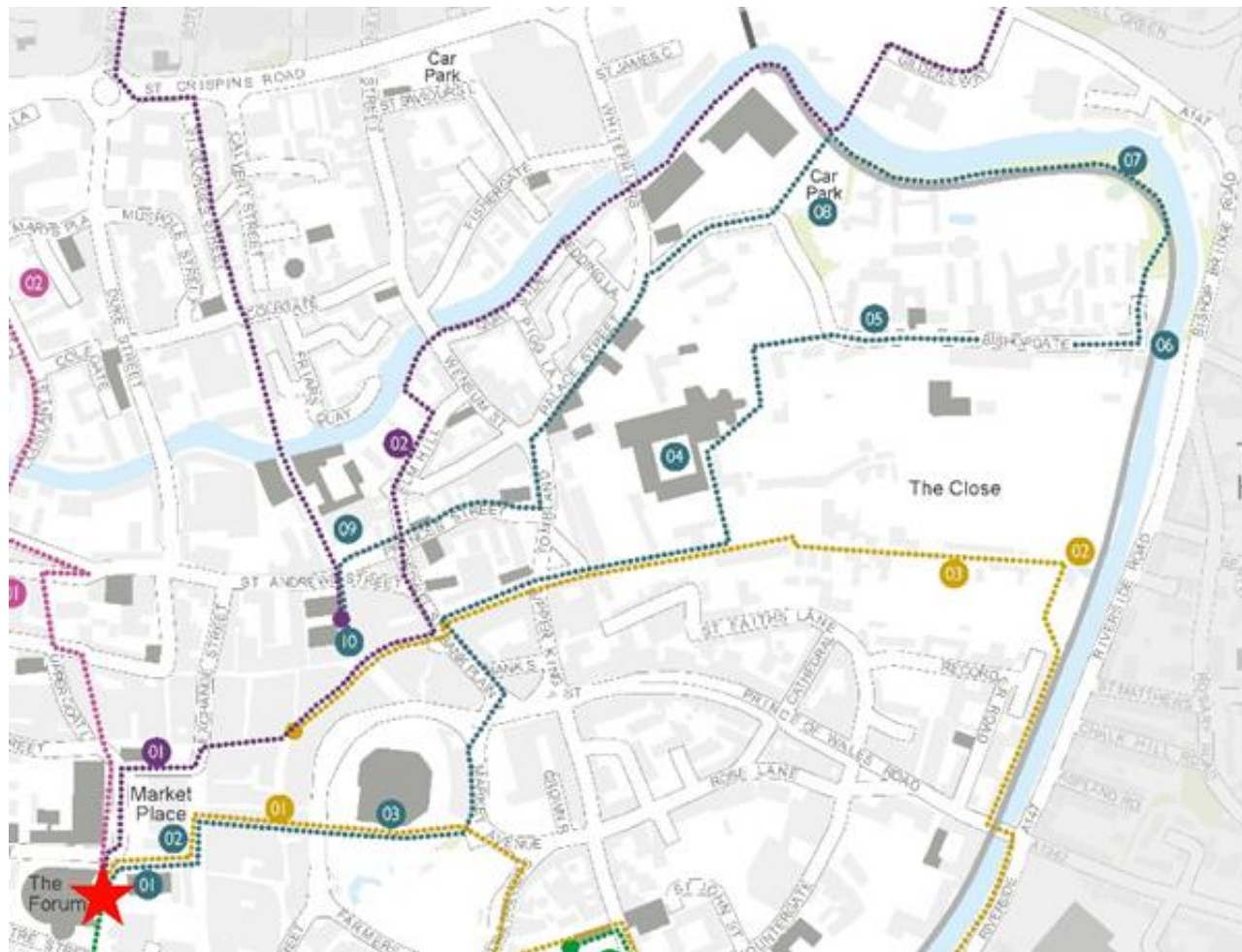


Glimpses of Medieval Norwich – Cathedral Precincts

This walk takes you through the historic Norwich Cathedral Close and along the river, which acted as part of Norwich's defences.

Walk: 1½ - 2 hours, some steps

It is one of five trails to help you explore Norwich's medieval walls, and discover other medieval treasures along the way. Work started on the walls in 1294 and they were completed in the mid-14th century. When completed they formed the longest circuit of urban defences in Britain, eclipsing even those of London. Today only fragments remain but, using these walking trails you will discover that much of Norwich's medieval past.



Route directions

Starting at the Forum, take the path to the left of St Peter Mancroft and walk through the churchyard with Norwich Market on your left.

01

02

At the bottom of the slope turn left into Gentleman's Walk.

Immediately on the right is the Royal Arcade. Walk through the Arcade.

Continue up the slope of Arcade Place to Castle Meadow. You will see Norwich Castle immediately ahead.

03

Notable features along the way

St Peter Mancroft was built in 1430 on the site of an earlier church built by the Normans. It is one of the finest parish churches in the country and well worth a visit. It was the first place in the world to have rung a true peel of bells on 2nd May 1715.

The Great Market was established between 1071 and 1075 following the Norman Conquest. Norwich's market was originally in Tombland, which you will be visiting shortly.

Designed by notable local architect George Skipper the Royal Arcade was built in 1899 on the coaching yard of the old Royal Hotel, retaining the old Royal's frontage. This magnificent example of Art Nouveau architecture is still a popular shopping destination. It contains the unique Colman's Mustard shop and museum.

Norwich Castle Keep was built in 1120 on top of an earlier earth defensive mound. From the C14th to the C19th it was used as the county gaol. In 1894 it was converted into a museum by architect Edward Boardman. The exterior looks suspiciously well preserved because it was refaced in the 1830s largely following the original design.



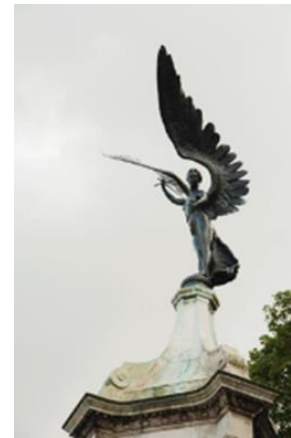
Cross over the pedestrian crossing and take the path immediately ahead through the Castle Gardens.

Continue through the gardens taking left hand fork (direction Shirehall/ Cathedral) to the exit gate and turn left into Market Avenue. The Shirehall on your left.

Cross the road by the war memorial, turn right and follow the road around to the left (Bank Plain).

You are now walking through the castle moat, which would originally have been twice as deep but has gradually filled in over the centuries. The present bridge to the castle is the oldest bridge in Norwich and one of the oldest in the country.

Shirehall dates from the 1800s and was the centre for jurisdiction and administration for the county. The original Shirehouse was built on the Castle mound in 1270. In 1821 William Wilkins won a competition to design a new Shirehall at the base of the mound, and also improve the gaol. The Gaol and Shirehall are linked to the Castle by a tunnel used to take prisoners through to the courts from the prison. In 1988 the courts moved to a new site near the Cathedral, and in 1999 the building became part of the Norfolk Museums Service.



Turn right at the pedestrian crossing down Queen Street.

Halfway down Queen Street on the left is Old Bank of England Court. On the left is the attractive office of architect Edward Boardman, responsible for a number of prominent buildings in the city including the conversion of the Castle from a prison to a museum.



Further down Queen Street on the left, squeezed in between two estate agents, is a glimpse of St Mary the Less, a medieval church closed at the Reformation but unusually not demolished. It was used for a period as a Strangers' cloth hall in the C16th.



Cross over the road at the pedestrian crossing, turn left then immediately right and stop. You are now in Tombland

The name Tombland comes from two Old English words meaning 'open ground', or an empty space. This area was used as the main market place for Norwich and was the centre of activity before the Normans arrived in England in 1066. The Normans built an imposing castle on a high mound to the south and moved the main market area adjacent to the castle so they could keep a close eye on what passed. Tombland was transformed by the building of the Cathedral and demolition of many surrounding buildings.



Continue straight on and enter the Cathedral Close through the Ethelbert Gate.

Walk through the Close with the Cathedral on the left.

04

Amongst the homes and offices in the Close is the Norwich School.

The Ethelbert Gate was built in about 1316. The monks needed strong walls and gates to protect themselves against citizens during various disagreements. In the uprising of 1272 aggrieved citizens even set fire to the Close and destroyed the previous Ethelbert Gate. Architecturally the Ethelbert Gate is of great importance. Its sides are decorated in flushwork, a decorative technique developed in Norfolk, which uses hard-to-come-by freestone to edge panels of the more readily available knapped flint.



Norwich Cathedral was founded in 1096 by the first Bishop of Norwich, Bishop Herbert de Losinga. In order to create the new cathedral, priory and precinct, several existing churches and many homes were destroyed. The cathedral precinct or 'Close' is the largest to survive in England and also has the largest number of residential houses within it. These houses range from C18th townhouses to homes converted from what remained of the C14th and C15th monastic buildings.



The Close is also the home to the prestigious Norwich School. Bishop de Losinga founded the school soon after the commencement of the building of Norwich Cathedral as part of the Benedictine Priory in 1096. Horatio Nelson was a pupil for a short time. Originally for boys only, the school is now co-educational.



Walk past the herb garden on your left and then turn left leaving the lower green on your right. You are now facing the Cathedral's south door with Prior's Hall on your right.

On your left is a smallish doorway called the Dark Entry (see sign board). If the door is open you can take a detour here to the Cathedral Cloisters.

Having looked at the Cloisters there is a doorway in the group of three arches on your right, just before the door into the Cathedral, that takes you back outside.

Follow the road around to the left. On your left is the tomb of local heroine, Nurse Edith Cavell.

Priors Hall was built by 1284. The Hall was adapted in the early C16th to create more residential space, possible to accommodate Queen Catherine of Aragon and Cardinal Wolsey on their visit in 1520.



Norwich Cathedral cloisters are reputedly the largest surviving monastic cloisters in England. A cloister (from Latin claustrum, "enclosure") is a covered walk, open gallery, or open arcade running along the walls of buildings and forming a quadrangle or garth. The attachment of a cloister to a cathedral or church, commonly against a warm southern flank, usually indicates that it was part of a monastic foundation, where the monks could lead separate lives from the serfs and workmen operating outside.



While working as a matron in a hospital in Brussels during WWI, Edith Cavell was arrested and executed by firing squad in 1915 for helping hundreds of allied soldiers to escape.

Near the tomb of Nurse Cavell are some ruins which are possibly from St Ethelbert's Church destroyed in the 1272 riots.



Continue following the road through the Close until you get to the gate onto Bishopgate. Go straight ahead down Bishopgate.

05

On your left is the Great Hospital founded in 1249 by Bishop Walter de Suffield to provide care for poor aged priests, poor scholars, and sick and hungry paupers. With this help, bright but poor boys were given the chance to train as choristers or even to enter the priesthood. Thirty beds were earmarked in the west end of the church for the sick poor, and thirteen paupers were to be fed at the hospital gates each day. Over the centuries the Great Hospital has expanded into a large sheltered housing complex.



On your right is a C15th flint and timber-framed house with C17th and C19th additions. No.54 The Hermitage was at one time the rectory of St Mary in the Marsh Church, closed in 1564 but much of the building remains within No.s 10-12 Lower Close.



At the end of Bishopgate is Bishop Bridge and the River Wensum.

06

Norwich does not have a complete circle of defensive walls. Along this stretch citizens relied on the river and occasional towers for defence. Bishop Bridge is one element of the city medieval defences that maintains its original purpose, still providing pedestrian access to the centre of the city. The surviving stone bridge is said to date from about 1340 replacing an earlier stone and timber structure.



Bishop Bridge originally had a fortified gatehouse which formed part of the walled city's defences and known as Bishops Gate. The gate was one of the earliest demolished in 1791, when it was found to be damaging the structure of the bridge. At the city end of the bridge some of the gate's stonework can still be seen on the right side of the bridge.



Opposite Bishop Bridge is the Lollards Pit pub.

The building began life as a house, built in the C15th, although it has had extensive remodelling. It is built adjacent to a medieval execution site after which it is now named. Lollards believed that the Bible should be available for all to read in English and, in consequence, were persecuted by the established church. Many Lollards were burned to death in the C15th and C16th.



Look across the river to the left to the rising ground behind the riverside buildings.

This is the site of Kett's Rebellion where Robert Kett set up his headquarters in 1549. Kett's rebellion began in July 1549 in the small market town of Wymondham as a protest against the enclosure of common land. The rebels moved on to Norwich and set up camp on Mousehold Heath, where they had a vantage point overlooking Norwich. Kett set up his headquarters in St Michael's Chapel in what is now known as Kett's Heights. The rebels were eventually routed and about 3,000 are thought to have been killed at Dussindale. Kett was captured, tried for treason and hanged from the walls of Norwich Castle on 7 December 1549.

For more information on Kett's Heights and to download a self-guided tour go to www.kettsheights.co.uk

Turn left with the Red Lion pub on your right and walk along the riverside path until you get to the Cow Tower.

07

Continue along the path and you will pass the Swan Pit in the grounds of the Great Hospital.

Continue along the river until you get to the modern Jarrold Bridge.

Cow Tower was built originally as a toll house and prison by the prior of the cathedral some time after 1249. It was given to the city authorities in 1378 and was then reconstructed and refaced in brick as a free standing artillery tower c.1398/9.



In medieval times swans were reserved for the table of the king and a handful of privileged nobles and clerics. The Great Hospital's cygnets were kept in a purpose-built confined area, the swan pit, which was in existence as early as 1489. The current pit was built in 1793. The pit was in use until WWII when it was forced to close due to the grain shortage. By this time the hospital had been supplying oven-ready swans for the tables of the rich all over the country.



Built in 2011, the Jarrold Bridge, at just over 80m in length, is a dynamic and unique bridge that appears to float over the site with little visible means of support.



Walk through the gates for a few yards.

Just beyond the bridge on the opposite bank you can see fragments of the city wall and the mural tower on the riverbank where these defences took over from the river.



Turn back and go through the car park and stop by the Adam and Eve pub.

08

It is widely claimed to be the oldest pub in the city. A reference in 1249 tells of a brewhouse owned by Benedictine monks at the nearby Great Hospital and used by workmen building the nearby cathedral. The pub seen today is a C17th building constructed from brick and flint with later additions such as Dutch gables.



Continue past the pub and go straight on (bearing right) down Bishopgate towards the large church and the Wig and Pen Pub and turn left into Palace Street.

You will circle part of the walls which once encompassed the cathedral precincts just as the city walls enclosed the old city, first passing the gate to the Bishop's palace, the other two gates being the Ethelbert and Erpingham Gates.



At the end of the road, on your right, is the Maids Head Hotel.

The Hotel dates from the C13th and is amalgamation of at least six buildings. The Maids Head Bar features Jacobean Oak panelling and has been reputedly frequented by guest such as Queen Elizabeth I, Horatio Nelson and Nurse Edith Cavell.



Cross the road by the Erpingham Gate (the second of the Cathedral's main gates). Cross the road and pass Tombland Alley on your right.

The crazy leaning half-timbered house was built for Augustine Steward, three times mayor of Norwich between 1540 and 1556. It was the headquarters to the royal forces that crushed Kett's Rebellion in 1549.



Turn right into Princes Street. Go past St Peter Hungate on your right.

St Peter Hungate was completely rebuilt in the mid C15th. It is now used for occasional exhibitions.



At the top of Elm Hill continue straight on passing St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls on your right.

09

Immediately opposite is Cinema City.

Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing, bear right then turn left up Bridewell Alley. You will pass the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell.

10

At the top turn right and follow the signs back to the Forum.

If you want to find out more about Norwich's medieval past visit Norwich's premier museums - the Castle, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Strangers Hall.

St Andrews and Blackfriars Halls are the most complete medieval friary complex to survive in England. Built between 1307 and 1470. The crypt, the oldest part, was built around 1258 probably as the friars' dormitory, and the brick vaulted ceiling is one of the earliest in the country.



Originally a C15th medieval merchant house. After a chequered history the suite of buildings was converted into a thriving arts cinema. The cinema's café is housed in the medieval great hall and is well worth a visit, especially as you are nearing the end of your walk and probably need some refreshment.



The Museum of Norwich is housed in an early merchant's house built in 1370. It has had a varied history as a Bridewell, or prison for women and beggars, from the C16th to C19th until the new city gaol was built, and then a shoe factory. It is now a fascinating museum and well worth a visit.

