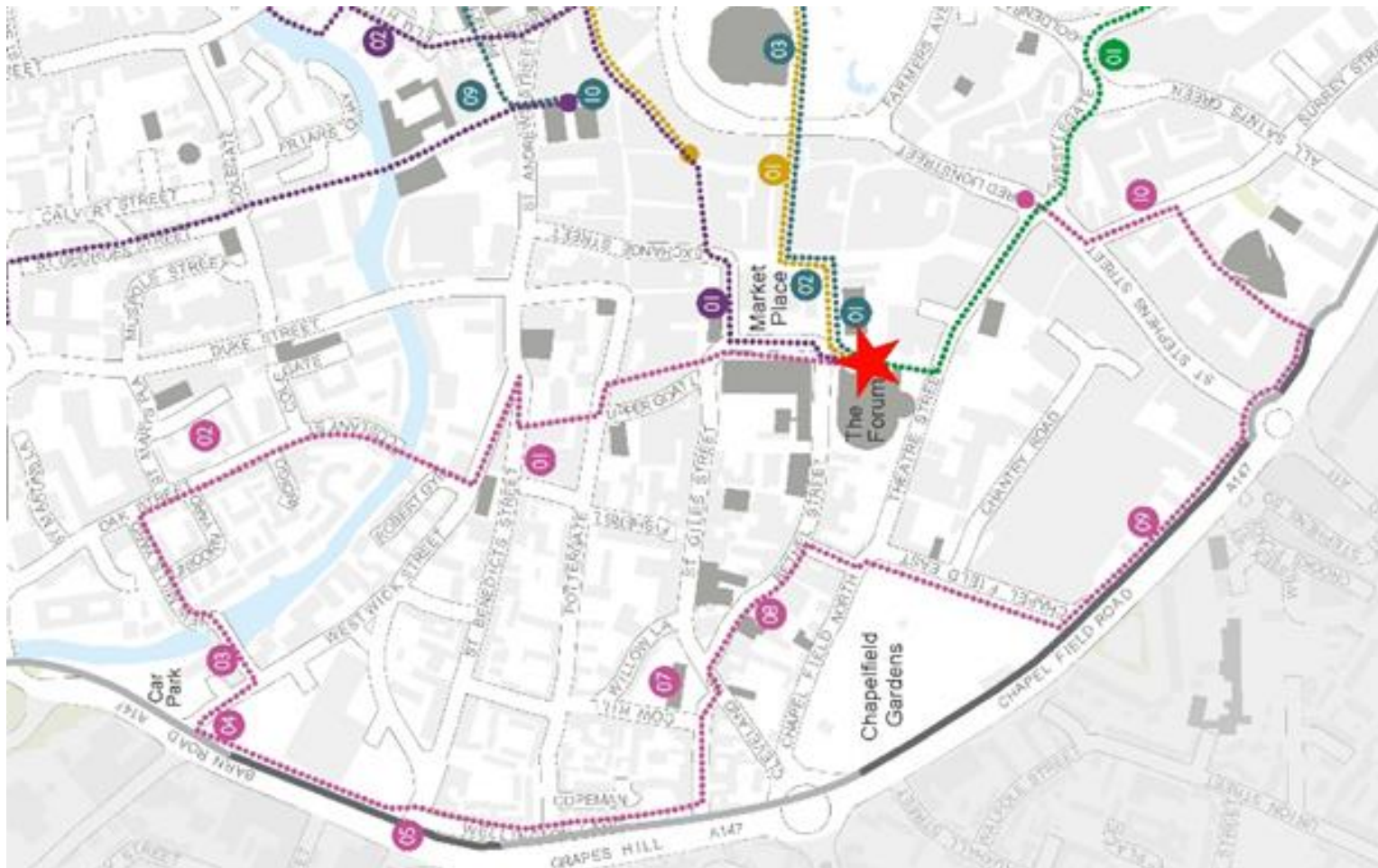


## Glimpses of Medieval Norwich – Industrial Norwich

This area of the city was known for industries: mills and dyers' yards, and river traffic transporting goods into and out of Norwich. You can see the medieval inheritance in later industrial buildings.

Walk: 1 ½ - 2 hours    Access: 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

**Start at the Forum. Turn left and pass in front of City Hall**

**Keep going straight ahead with the Guildhall on your right**

**Bear slightly left and go down Upper Goat Lane**

## Notable features along the way

The Forum was opened in 2001 and replaces the old Norwich Central Library and Record Office, which burned down in 1994.

Opened in 1938, City Hall boasts the longest balcony in England (at 111m / 365ft long). It replaced the adjacent Guildhall which had become too small and was rat infested.

The Guildhall (built 1407-24), is the largest and most elaborate city hall ever built outside London. Henry IV's charter of 1404 gave the City the right to elect a Mayor and two Sheriffs, effectively making Norwich an independent, self-governing entity. From 1412 until 1597 the common gaol of Norwich was in the cellars of the Guildhall. Norwich Castle was the county gaol and held the more important prisoners.

You are now in the Norwich Lanes, a series of alleyways and open communal spaces intermixed with a large number of medieval buildings. Today the lanes are home to a thriving independent retail area and a vast array of cafes, restaurants and bars.



**Cross over Pottergate down St Gregory's Alley on the left of the church to St Benedict Street.**

**When you get to St Benedict's Street turn right and walk for 50 metres to Strangers Hall.**

01

**Retrace your steps, cross the road at the level crossing and turn right then sharp left into Westwick Street.**

**On your right go through a narrow opening in the wall and down the steps to Gybson's Conduit.**

St Gregory's Church, Pottergate, was totally rebuilt in the C14th (apart from the tower). The nave and chancel together form one of the best medieval interior spaces in Norwich. Also the C15th wall paintings (St George and a text panel) have been recognised as some of the very best in England.



Strangers' Hall is one of Norwich's oldest buildings dating to 1320. Formerly the home of Sir Nicholas Sotherton, mayor of Norwich, who gave refuge to the "strangers" (cloth weavers from Holland and Belgium) in the C16th. It is now a museum with a lovely Elizabethan-style knot garden; if you haven't time to visit it now, keep it in mind for another day.



Westwick is an Anglo-Saxon name meaning west settlement.

This was a public water supply provided by Robert Gybson, mayor of Norwich, in about 1578, "for the ease of the common people".



**Come back up the steps and carry on down Westwick Street.**

**Turn right into Coslany Street to Coslany Square and across the bridge.**

**Once over the bridge look back at Bullards Brewery building.**

**Continue along Coslany Street which becomes Oak Street.**

02

On your left is St Lawrence's Church (entrance in St Benedict's St), dramatically sited on a steep incline down to the river. It bears a brass plaque to a curate's daughter, Sarah Glover, who developed the Norwich sol-fa method of singing in the mid C19<sup>th</sup>, later modified to form the tonic scale used today and immortalised in the song, *Doe a deer, a female deer*, in the musical **The Sound of Music**. However, the origins of the tonic sol fa go back to the C11th. Benedictine monk, Guido of Arezzo, took the first notes of each line of a Latin hymn, written around 770 A.D., which happen to be the first six notes of a major scale, and used the syllables of the Latin words that were sung on those notes to represent the notes of the scale.

In the Middle Ages, this area of the city was known for industries: mills and dyers' yards, and river traffic transporting goods into and out of Norwich.

Coslany (St Miles) Bridge is the site of two C13th bridges crossing islands in the centre of the river along the line of what had been a Roman road. The current iron bridge dates from 1804 and is the earliest iron bridge in the city.

Beer was the drink of the masses during the medieval period as the brewing process killed bacteria in the water. Norwich developed many local breweries and this is the site of Bullard & Sons Anchor Brewery. For over a hundred years Bullards was one of the major brewers in Norwich and supplied public houses across Norfolk. It was said that Norwich had a church for every week of the year and a pub for every day.



St Michael Coslany (St Miles) Church, Oak Street dates from the C13th but is much rebuilt. It is noted for its remarkable display of C15th flushwork on the south aisle. Flushwork is the decorative treatment of the surface of an outside wall with flints split to show their smooth black surface, combined with dressed stone to form patterns such as tracery or initials. The church is now a centre for circus skills.

This area was the location of St Marys Mill. When it closed in 1981 it brought to an end 700 years of silk weaving and textile manufacture in Norwich.



**It is worth making a slight detour to your right down St Mary's Plain to see St Mary's Church.**

It is one of only three round towered churches surviving in Norwich and pre dates the Norman Conquest.



**On the corner of St Mary's Plain on your right is St Mary's Works.**

Since the C13th, and probably well before, boots and shoes had been made in the city. This is the site of one of the 'big five' in the city 'Sexton Son and Everard', with 17% of the city's workforce in 1931 employed in the shoe trade.



**Turn left into New Mills Yard and the New Mills Sewage Pumping Station**

03

Before the Norman Conquest this was the site of a mill used for grinding corn and fulling (cleaning cloth). Later it was used to pump drinking water from the river to Market Cross. The sewage pumping station was built in 1897. Inadequate management of sewage contributed to the spread of disease in medieval England. It was not until the industrial age of the C19<sup>th</sup> that a proper solution was found. This pumping station was operated by water turbines driving pumping engines that compressed air in order to force sewage in low-lying areas to the treatment works. It is believed to be one of only two surviving examples of this machinery (the other being in the Houses of Parliament).



**At the end, as you approach the river, turn left, then right and cross over the bridge until you get to Westwick Street again and turn right. Continue down Westwick Street until you reach Barn Road, a 4-lane busy traffic thoroughfare.**

04

**Turn left onto Barn Road. You are now following the line of the medieval walls.**

At the junction of Westwick Street and Barn Road stood Helgate/Heigham Gate. Various origins of the name “Helgate” have been suggested: the land was low-lying and marshy, and probably not very healthy, the mills and dyers’ yards would have polluted the river, and it may not have been a very safe place, particularly at night. It was also not used very much, as it was small and had a narrow archway, difficult for carts to get through; the river provided a better means of transporting goods. The archway was eventually widened before the gate was finally demolished just before 1800.



As the path turns away from the road you will find several small stretches of city wall. The last three bays have been consolidated and restored. Please note that the paving is somewhat uneven so keep an eye out for trip hazards.



**Just beyond is the junction with St Benedict's Street where Barn Road turns into Grapes Hill.**

05

St Benedict's Street was the main road from market towns to and from the west, and a major Roman road. St Benedict's Gate was situated at the junction of the modern traffic lights and pedestrian crossing. It is marked with two plaques on the ground and the whole footprint is marked out in dark cobbles. The gate was recorded in 1118, rebuilt in the early C14th, and demolished in 1793. The gate was unique in that it had a turret built against the west side to provide access to the roof. This was known as "Heaven's Gate", possibly to distinguish it from "Helgate". More likely it was because it was a gathering place for pilgrims *en route* to Walsingham. There was a lazar (leper) house just outside the walls to which passers-by would donate goods or money, and the road was an annual processional route for local clergy to a holy cross outside the city walls. It was also a royal road used by Henry VI, Edward IV's queen Elizabeth Woodville, and Queen Elizabeth I.



**Cross over the road and continue up Wellington Lane which runs parallel to Grapes Hill.**

You will see a 40m stretch of wall, then the line of the wall is marked in cobbles.



**At the top of Grapes Hill walk up the first part of the ramp of the pedestrian bridge and pause. On the right you can see the Roman Catholic Cathedral of St John the Baptist.**

06

Although this looks medieval it was, in fact, built in the early 1900s. It was a gift to the City by Henry Fitzalan Howard, 15th Duke of Norfolk. As his architect, the Duke chose a convert to Catholicism, George Gilbert Scott, the son of Sir George Gilbert Scott, father of the Victorian Gothic revival and architect of St Pancras Station. Norwich had a wealth of medieval architecture but the Duke felt it had no surviving worthy example of Early English (C13th). Even though six hundred years had passed, it was not too late to fill the gap. The site had previously been occupied by the C19th city gaol, as opposed to the county gaol which was housed in Norwich Castle.



**Continue straight on the ramp and turn right down the ramp and left into Upper St Giles Street.**

**Walk along Upper St Giles Street for c.100m.**

07

**Cross over Cleveland Road into Bethel Street. Around 70m along on your right you will find the Coach and Horses public house.**

08

This is the site of St Giles' Gate. First recorded in 1288, rebuilt in the C14th and demolished in 1792. The house sign over No.84 on the right bears the image of St Giles Gate as it was, the exterior on one side and the interior on the other.



On your left is St Giles Church with one of the tallest towers in Norwich at 120ft. Once the city walls had been built the medieval city operated a curfew system. St Giles' Church, built in the C14th at the highest point within the walls, housed a curfew bell. Curfew bells were also rung at St Peter Mancroft and St Lawrence. The tolling of the bells marked the beginning or end of daily activity. As the bells rang, the main gates of the City were opened or closed. The curfew bell at St Giles was rung at least until the 1960s.



It is the oldest Coach House in Norwich and the second oldest pub after the Adam and Eve at Bishop Gate. Parts of the building are believed to date back as far as 1200. A parish marker on the outside dated 1710 states the pub is between the parishes of St Peter Mancroft and St Giles and was the site of the Ascension tradition of 'beating the bounds', where choirboys were 'bumped and dusked' at their parish boundaries.





**Just beyond Little Bethel Street on your right is the old Bethel Hospital.**

**Turn right down Little Bethel Street. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and enter Chapelfield Gardens. Take the path to the left and walk to the end of the gardens exiting by the iron gates.**

09

**Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing.**

This was opened in 1713 and was the first purpose-built asylum in the country. In the medieval period, the burden of keeping vulnerable individuals rested almost entirely on their families. 'Mad' people who could not be kept at home wandered free, begging for food and shelter. The causes of madness was often deemed to be demonic possession, witchcraft or sorcery. In Europe a few small Christian institutions dedicated to sheltering the insane emerged in the early Middle Ages. London's Bedlam was the most famous.

Throughout the medieval period much land inside the walls seems to have been open space or gardens. In 1406 Chapel in the Field extended for 4½ acres, much larger than the present Chapelfield. Chapelfield is bordered on the south side by a long fragment of wall, which is unfortunately is hidden by an earth bank and various buildings. A good exterior view can only be had from the very busy road.

You will immediately see a fragment of all ahead of you – the continuation of the section that borders Chapelfield.



Walk along this section via the pleasant access road, parallel to the busy Chapelfield Road, between the walls and modern flats.

Continue until you get to St Stephen's roundabout. Cross the road either by the rather grotty underpass or by the pedestrian crossing to your left and return to the roundabout.

You are now on the site of St Stephen's gate. Look diagonally across the roundabout at the Coachmaker's Arms public house.

Continue along the main road, which has now changed from Chapelfield Road to Queen's Road. Walk along the inside of the walls to avoid the traffic, and notice the plaque to Richard Spynk, a rich merchant of Norwich.

This section of walls has some reasonably well preserved fragments including a square tower restored rather unsympathetically with brick.



On the wall is a 1937 bas-relief of St Stephen's Gate by John Moray-Smith, taken from a drawing by John Ninham 1754-1817. He produced 'Views of the Gates of Norwich' in 1792-3 though it was not published until 1861.

The gate was built about 1319. Then, as now, this was a main entrance to the city from London, and on ceremonial occasions, such as the visit of Queen Elizabeth I in 1578, it was lavishly decorated with flowers and banners, and a masque was performed in her honour.



The Gate was not always so festive: it was more likely to have been decorated with a gallows, the heads of criminals on spikes, or the quartered bodies of traitors. It was demolished in 1793 to provide an easier route for traffic into the city.

Richard Spynk paid for the completion and armament of the city gates from 1337-1343, and in return a grateful city exempted him and his heirs from civic duty and paying taxes.



**About 100m from the roundabout is a pedestrian entrance to Norwich Bus Station (just before the bathstore shop).**

**Pause here.**

**Turn into Norwich Bus Station, walk through to Surrey Street and turn left. About 50m on your right is Surrey House, HQ for Norwich Union Life Insurance Society, now Aviva.**

10

**At the bottom of the road turn right into St Stephen's Street. At the junction with Theatre Street (M&S is on the corner) you can turn left and return to The Forum, or reward yourself with some refreshment in one of Norwich's many cafes.**

**If you want to find out more about Norwich's medieval past visit Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Strangers' Hall.**

Just beyond this point is the site of the Brazen Gate or doors, built like a miniature fortress as part of the walls in the late C13th. It had various names: Swine Gate (because of the street's swine market), Iron Door (the door was reinforced with iron bars), then, after 1500, Brazen Gate, as the gate was remodelled and bronze-edged side-gates installed. It was demolished in 1792.



This was the site of the Duke of Surrey's mansion in the C16th – hence the street name. The house was demolished, and the HQ built by George Skipper, a celebrated Norwich architect, beginning in 1900. The interior is a sumptuous homage to the English Renaissance. You can visit on weekdays and gaze in wonder at the Marble Hall, fashioned from 15 kinds of marble which were destined for Westminster Cathedral. The cost proved too much for the Cathedral authorities, but Skipper persuaded NU to buy the entire consignment and he used it to stunning effect.

