

High Wycombe Family Activity Trail.

A circular trail of approx 1½ miles taking 1-1½ hours.



←When you see this, there will be a clock to find from where you are standing.

Start at ① on the map and follow the route.

① Parish Church - All Saints.

Legend has it that Wulfstan stayed overnight in a High Wycombe inn when travelling to London. The inn started swaying and Wulfstan only left once the people had gone back inside to rescue the animals. The inn then collapsed. 'A miracle' people cried and a church was built here - on a previous holy site. St. Wulfstan consecrated it in 1087. It was rebuilt in 1275 with other additions in 1509 and 1755. You might like to go inside another time to find historical stained glass windows, statues and more stories.

Next, find the War Memorial near the main door and perhaps poppy wreaths. Read the engraved words.

- In the stone, find the **swan** coat of arms.

On this trail, you will find several images of the swan. The Wycombe Swan became the Borough's Coat of Arms in medieval times. Tick this sheet whenever you see one. What's strange about it?

- Look around you to find **flints** used. Flints are very hard and can be found in the soil locally so it was a useful building material - and handy!



- Stand back and look up at the **tower**.

• Turn on the path so the church is behind you and look for the shops on the other side of the road (Church Street). Look at the very **old buildings** above the shops. Find:

- the different window shapes
- ten gables
- the Tudor style building (wooden beams)
- a date at the top of one of the buildings

→ Now go round to the side church **door** (nearer the High Street). Find:

- The **statues** over the door. They have wire netting to protect them from pigeons pooping on them!
- Behind you is the **church gate**. It is made of iron and is over 200 years old.

On the right side of the entrance on the ground there is a **foot scraper**. Over 100 years ago, the streets had horse and carts instead of cars. Cows were led up the High Street to the dairies after grazing on the Rye so the streets would have been very dirty. Foot scrapers were used to get the dirt off shoes and boots before entering church and other buildings. Can you find another foot scraper close by of a different shape? Where is it likely to be?

- Look for church walls made almost entirely of flints. These are old walls, others were added later.

→ Walk up the side path by this door through the churchyard and cross Castle Street carefully to:

② Castle Place

Walk up Castle Place. The cottages on the left are Victorian. Notice the different **front doors, gates and door knockers**. Walk over the bridge across the railway line and turn right into Priory Avenue. The Castle museum, on your left, explores local history. It has children's activities, a big garden to explore and a cafe; an activity for another day perhaps.

→ At the end of Priory Avenue (an avenue is a road in a town lined by trees), turn right down Amersham Hill and past the flint building. Cross at the crossing just below the station entrance and walk up to:



③ The Brunel Shed

This building is the original 1854 Wycombe train terminus designed by **Brunel**, the famous Victorian engineer. Read more about it on the plaque and find the **steam train** in the big picture facing you. The 1906 train fare to London was 2/6 (or 12½p today).

Beyond this point down the hill towards the High Street, is Crendon Street. At one time, **Crendon** was a hamlet on the edge of Wycombe.

→ Now cross the one-way station exit road and turn immediately left by the traffic lights and walk along the path (Birdcage Walk) for approx. 300 metres by the station and station car park which is on your left. Beyond the end of the path at the top end of another car park, you will find **The Peace Garden**.

④ The Peace Garden

This was originally a Quaker burial ground dating back to 1665, now a **peace garden**, re-landscaped in 2015. The red and white roses represent red poppies for remembrance and white poppies for peace.

From here, look across to the hill opposite. In the **valley** in between is the **River Wye**. It is approx. 10.5 miles long, starts in West Wycombe, runs through High Wycombe and reaches the Thames at Bourne End. The hills are **chalk** which is made from the remains of sea creatures, from millions of years ago. The ground you are standing on now was at that time covered by sea! Then the rocks were compressed and pushed up by earth movements to make the **Chiltern Hills**. Stone Age people came to live along this valley because of the pure water, trees, good soil, flints and a good climate. The wood from **beech** trees growing on the hills has been used for over two hundred years to make chairs and furniture for which Wycombe is famous.

→ Walk carefully round the edge of the car park to the exit on London Road. Cross at the crossing to:

⑤ Gardens (by the road towards your left)

- Find the memorial and read the writing on it.
- Make your name on the ground with fallen leaves and twigs but please don't pick from trees or plants.
- Find different patterns on the bark of the trees - cherry (horizontal lines), sycamore (vertical lines) and, near the road in the mill garden, ash (diamond).

→ To the right of the wide path over the river, find:

⑥ Pann Mill

200 years ago there were 32 mills along 11 miles of the Wye. They were used for grinding flour and for cloth and paper making. A mill existing on this site was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. The workings of the mill have been restored and it is now maintained by the High Wycombe Society. Open on 3 days a year, the wheel turns and grinds flour again.

- Find the mill house and the mill wheel.
- You can go through the gate and walk through the garden but take great care near the water.

→ Walk across the path to **The Rye**.

⑦ The Rye

Fragments of **pottery** have been found on the Rye dating back 3,000 years and **bones** of woolly rhinoceros and mammoths have been discovered. The remains of a 2nd century **Roman villa** were found across the Rye at Holywell Mead. **Cattle** grazed on the Rye until 1927. Two playgrounds and a vast grassy running space are available here! Please do not feed the waterfowl (see the notice board).

→ With Pann Mill on your right and the Rye on your left, walk along the wide path back towards the town. Cross the dual carriageway at the crossing to:

⑧ The Garden behind the Council Offices. Find:

- The **riddle** engraved in the paving by the river.
- Stones depicting **night, morning, dawn**.
- The plaque to Jack Scruton founder of HW Society. The garden is known informally as 'Jack's Garden'.

→ At the end of the garden, turn right into:



⑨ **Queen Victoria Road.** This road used to be the main grand entrance route up to Loakes Manor (now Wycombe Abbey) with gates at the High Street end. Find: • The Police Station • The Council Offices • The Old Town Hall, archway and old library.

→ At the traffic lights turn left into:

⑩ The High Street

- Walk along the left hand side of the High Street, noticing the old buildings above the shops.
- Find more **foot scrapers** and different **door knockers** at this end of the street.
- Find the flints used on some of the buildings.
- Between numbers 27 and 28 High Street, find the **coaching arch**, originally built so that a coach and horses can get to the back of the buildings.
- Find the room built over the archway.
- When you reach the pathway on the left leading to the Wycombe Swan theatre, look across the High Street to the **Red Lion**. Prime Ministers Benjamin Disraeli and Winston Churchill made speeches to the public from that platform. There used to be a door to the balcony from what was the Red Lion Hotel, which at one time stabled 42 horses at the back. The original red lion is in the Wycombe museum.

- Further down this side of the street, find the **spikes** on the ledges over some of the shop doors. They are to stop pigeons sitting there and pooping on your head as you go in or out!

- Imagine a herd of cows walking up the High Street after grazing on The Rye!

- Look opposite to find old buildings over the shops.

→ In front of you, there is:

⑪ The Guild Hall (built 1757).

Outside the Guildhall every year, the mayor was 'weighed in', an ancient tradition unique to High Wycombe. If the mayor weighed more than the previous year, suggesting he had been over-indulging during office, the crowd would boo. Recently, the 'weighing-in' ceremony takes place in Frogmoor.

- How many **pillars** can you see?
- Find the **weather vane** on top of the Guild Hall. Which way is it pointing? It has a centaur from the Earl of Shelburne's crest. He financed the building.
- Find the **arched window** facing the High Street.
- Find stone **carvings** and another **swan**.

→ Cross the High Street carefully to:



⑫ The Little Market House.

This octagonal building is where local traders sold their corn and other products.

- Also known locally as **The Pepper Pot**. Why?
- The present building was rebuilt in 1761.
- How many arches can you find in it?
- Find how many miles it is from here to London and to Oxford? (Clue: look on the outside.) The town was prosperous because of the number of travellers stopping over between Oxford and London.
- Can you find a price list for stall holders?

→ If you walk through the **church gate** to the church, you will have returned to ①

You have now completed this trail. Well done.

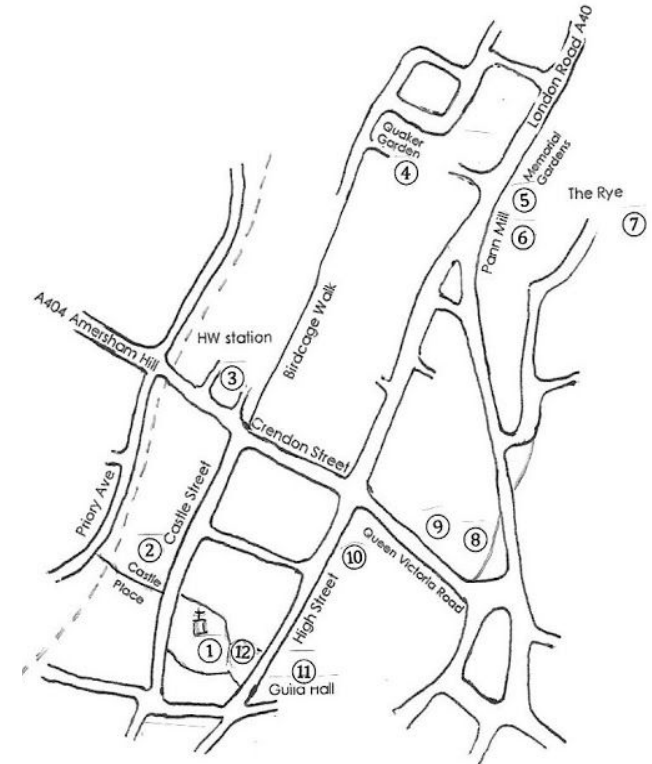
- How many swan Coat of Arms did you find?
- How many foot scrapers and clocks?

High Wycombe has more history of interest to discover in the church and museum or at www.highwycombesociety.org.uk Treasure your local area and remember to take your litter home.

High Wycombe

Family Activity Trail

For adults to read - and children to do!



Scale: |← approx 0.1m →|

The numbers on the map refer to the numbers in the text. Take a pencil. You could also take some paper for drawing.

Whilst care has been taken in the voluntary work in preparing and publishing this trail, sole responsibility for the safety of children taking part in the trail rests solely with their responsible adult. The author accepts no liability for anything untoward occurring to children or adults whilst participating in this activity but hopes that you enjoy it. If you have a comment or find something that needs to be changed, please email me at jeannie12i@gmail.com