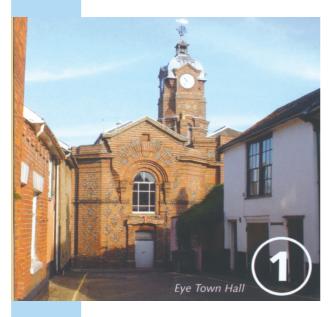


Start at the Town Hall



As a visitor to Eye once said "We've seen the Town Hall — now where is the town?". You may think of Eye as little more than a village, which hardly merits such a large civic building, but in fact from medieval times until 1974 it was a Borough (the smallest in the UK), and therefore definitely a town, with its own Mayor, corporation and local government.

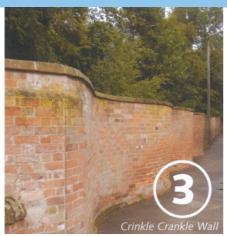
In 1857 the London architect E.B. Lamb was commissioned to design a new TOWN HALL. It is loosely Italianate style, but still uses local materials: soft red and white bricks and flints in diamond patterns. There are vastly differing opinions about the merits of this building — Pevsner the architectural historian describes it as "horrible", but even he would have had to admit

that it is a design which cleverly uses a difficult shaped site, and as a town hall should, it dominates the centre of Eye. This is especially true of the tower which contains a high level former lock-up for local criminals, and above that the restored town clock. Originally paid for by local brewer Charles Tacon at the time of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, its bell is thought to be the original Sanctus Bell from Eye Church.

Walk north along Lambseth Street and you will notice the mix of architectural styles and materials which makes Eye so attractive. On the left hand (west) side is the RED HOUSE, so named because of is 19th Century red brick front, but behind this façade is a much older timber house. An example of the common East Anglian practice of re-vamping of the street elevation when funds would not run to complete rebuilding. Both the Red House and the WHITE HOUSE belonged to the Tacon family, whose brewery stood on the site of today's Tacon Close.

In the front of Lambseth House is a wall built of decoratively shaped "Banham" bricks. These were made at nearby Hoxne, and you will see other examples in the town with slightly different shapes.

As we walk across Lambseth Bridge which spans a small tributary of the River Dove, we are reminded that the name Eye is derived from the Old English word for an Island, and that in early medieval times the town, with church and castle on higher land would have been surrounded by water and marsh.



The CRINKLE CRANKLE or serpentine wall is built to form a strong and durable wall which is only one brick thick, thus saving materials whilst producing a visually pleasing effect. Behind this wall, is Chandos Lodge, dating from 1811, but more well known as the home of the late Sir Frederick Ashton, once Director of the Royal Ballet.

Cross over to the BEDINGFIELD ALMSHOUSES. The present almshouses dated from 1850, when they replaced buildings which had been endowed by Nicholas Bedingfield in 1636. They exhibit many high Victorian details, such as "fish scale" tiles, neo-Tudor chimneys, red brick with blue brick diaper work (patterning), and stone canopies and window surrounds. The inscriptions read "Believe right; Doe Well; avoid III for Heaven, Amen; Povertie; Humilitie, Patience and Charitie".

LINDEN HOUSE retires behind a row of pollarded lime trees. This 17th Century house was given an impressive brick front in the then new classical style shortly after 1710. The doorcase with fine pilasters and pediment, and the blue burnt brick "headers" (bricks all laid end on to the street) are of special note. This

was the home of Margaret Thompson, a militant suffragette who campaigned with Emily Pankhurst between 1909 and 1912.

Back at the junction of Church Street and Broad Street on the corner is 5 BROAD STREET, (the chemist's shop). This is a timber framed building of several ages. The oldest part, fronting Church Street, dates from about 1460, and has a jettied upper floor. In the lower floor are remnants of late medieval doorways and shop windows, heavily restored in the 19th Century. The part facing the Town Hall dates from the 17th Century, but in the 18th Century it was drastically altered, an internal passage was cut through the large chimney stack, sash windows and a panelled front door were fitted. Then in the 19th Century one of the first plate glass shopfronts was installed. You will often notice large windows on the ground floor of small houses, especially in Castle Street. These were formerly shops, before the advent of the car, when Eye provided all of the inhabitants daily shopping needs.

Bedingfield Almshouses





As you walk eastward along CHURCH STREET, the frontages you pass have a distinctly Victorian character. If you were able to peer behind these façades, you will see many surprises - for example 2 and 4 (opposite Dove Lane) are built around a medieval hall house. started in about 1350. Further along on this side is the archway through which cars leave Buckshorn Lane car park (take care). This structure aroused many comments. It was built in 1997 to detract the eye from an unsightly parking area. The architect describes it as a piece of "theatre" built in the spirit of the castle folly (which you will see later) and the town hall. It is deliberately one sided. What do you think of it? - even its critics have to accept that it has now almost become a tourist attraction.

Across the street, walk down the small lane which leads to the **VINE CHURCH**. This Baptist Chapel was built in 1868 with a white brick façade (favoured for impressive fronts where stone was not available).

It has grape vine details on either side of the central window. Though discoloured by the years, this brick — as with Suffolk reds is best left uncleaned, as it is so soft that the process can cause permanent damage.

Turn back towards the Arch, on your right, 13 and 15 are timber framed and date partly from 1600, the non-conformist character of Eye is again evident in that this was once a Quaker meeting house.

As you continue along Church Street you will notice a subtle curve in the street, which eventually reveals the CHURCH. This curve is a reminder of the size of the outer bailey, or earthworks which enclosed the inner bailey and motte (mound) on which the castle stood.

Eye grew up around the castle, after the Norman conquest. 28 Church

Street would have been part of this medieval growth. In

the 13th Century it was an open hall house, which meant that the centre of the house was a large space, two storeys high, with no chimney, the smoke drifted out through a hole in the roof. It therefore looked nothing like it does today, which is a result of an early

would have been one of the first houses in Eye to have sash windows. They survive on the upper floor, with their very thick glazing bars. Before this time most houses in the town would have had oak mullioned windows with leaded lights. The new softwood sashes were the equivalent of today's plastic windows (but will they also last for 250 years?).

18th Century rebuild, when it



Discover the HEART OF SUFFOLK



The Guildhall

Sash windows possibly originated in Holland. At 53 CHURCH STREET, there is a further reminder of links with the Low Countries which were important trading partners with East Anglia in the brick gable ends which are bell shaped, in the Dutch manner.

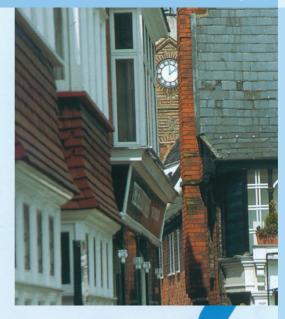
The PRIMARY SCHOOL has a long and colourful history. The present buildings date from 1911 but they carry the town's old coat of arms on the entablature at the front. At that time it was still a Grammar School, which had been founded in 1495 to teach the seven sciences: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. Originally lessons were given in the Guild Hall and separate school rooms were not built until 1875. The grammar school closed in 1965.

The **GUILDHALL** dates from the late 15th Century, and was possibly bequeathed by John Upson "for the good of his soul". As a building of some prestige the studs (upright timbers) are close together and did not have exposed beams until 1875. The upper floor is jettied on two sides although much of the frame and all of the infill panels were renewed in 1875 by the architect James Colling, the work being paid for by Lady Caroline Kerrison. The Victorians loved to "restore" old buildings, often adding embellishments of their own. Fortunately the corner or "dragon" post still has its medieval carved figure of Archangel Gabriel, and two arched window heads also have original carving. External timber was often colour washed, but in East Anglia it was never black, again this is a Victorian concept.





Discover the HEART OF SUFFOLK





CHURCH OF ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL. It is not possible in this trail booklet to give the parish church the full attention it deserves. You are advised to allow at least half an hour if you want to explore the building properly and inside the church you can purchase an excellent guide which will tell you more about the many individual details which together make up this impressive town church. If you do not have the time for anything more than a glimpse of the interior you must see the 15th Century wooden rood screen, with its intricate carving, and painted kings, saints and bishops. The lofty interior with its king post timber roof is partly painted, and though restored, along with many other parts of the church in 1869, one can get an idea of what the interior would have been like in the middle ages when brilliant colours covered most surfaces. The clerestory windows would have lit the rood loft, which unusually here have been reinstated above the screen, and with its side chapels, arcades and two storey south porch this is a church serving a prosperous town. Most of the church was built in early 14th Century, but there was a church here in the 13th Century, a doorway from which survives in the south aisle. It can be viewed properly only from inside the South Porch (where the church shop is housed). Before you have even reached the Guild Hall, you will have been impressed by the church tower. It is over 30 metres high, and is rightly described by Pevsner as "One of the wonders of Suffolk". Finished in 1470 after 25 years work (medieval builders rarely worked in the winter) this is a marvellous example of East Anglian flush work, a combination of cut local flint, and imported limestone, which covers other parts of the church, although brick replaces the flint in places. The pinnacles and crenellations on the tower, and the widespread use of the



perpendicular (mainly 15th Century) windows with mullions reaching the window heads emphasise the strong vertical character of the building. It is big, but the scale is human, is this perhaps because all of these elements are broken down into small subdivisions, such as flint panels to which we can still relate?

The churchyard is semi circular in shape, suggesting an early Christian burial ground. It is a pleasant space in which to stop. You can view the old Vicarage, which has a blind or dummy window. These were used sometimes to avoid paying window tax (enforced between 1697 and 1851), and also when an older building was refronted to overcome the problem that the original interior did not fit the new arrangement of the applied classical façade. This house is from the early 19th Century when blue Welsh slates were already ousting local red and black pantiles.

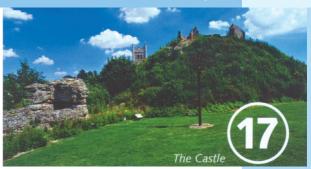
STAYER HOUSE. Turn right into Castle Street, Stayer House appears to be from the 18th Century, with a porch supported by pairs of Ionic columns, but behind it all is another medieval hall house with 16th and 17th Century additions. In the early 19th Century a banking hall for a private bank was added to the left hand side. The house has a fine interior, and is a perfect example of a continually evolving house.

31 AND 33 CASTLE STREET.
This building started life as three houses in about 1590, in the 19th Century it became two and received its present windows, although on a rear wall an unglazed mullion window survives. One of the few thatched houses still in Eye, the thatch is long straw, with a Suffolk "wrap round" verge or edge. It is now a single dwelling. The wall around the garden is Banham brick.



31 and 33 Castle Street

CASTLE MOUND. Note the splendid Victorian wrought iron gates at the entrance of the castle site, erected in 1994 (by Mid Suffolk District Council). The Beacon was erected in 1988 to commemorate the strings of beacons lit 400 years earlier when the Spanish armada threatened to invade England.



The **CASTLE** was built after 1066 when William Malet initiated an artificial mound and other defences. His son Robert, who also founded Eye Priory, continued its development. The town also flourished as it was the centre of his "Honour" or holdings. High Bigod, Earl of Norfolk attacked the castle in 1173, but it was soon rebuilt. However following the Barons War in 1265, during which the Castle was again sacked, little restoration took place except to secure the prison. This was used from about 1215 until the early 17th Century. By the 18th Century the only stone remaining was on the north west side of the motte (or mound) where a tower once stood, with some of the inner bailey or curtain wall. These are visible today. Although the site still belonged to the King most of its stone was taken by locals wanting free building materials. In 1706 one Nicholas Todd was killed as he was helping himself. In The Castle Museum, Norwich is a painting by John Sell Cotman of the windmill which stood on the mound from 1562 until 1844 when it was dismantled by Sir Edward Kerrison. He constructed the false keep (the ruins of which we see today) partly as a folly, and as a house for his batman who had saved his life at Waterloo. The house and part of the "castle" wall suffered severe storm damage in 1965. Today this is a splendid viewing area for taking in the whole of Eye, and the surrounding countryside stretching northward into Norfolk.



"Lacons" Brewery Sign - 18 Castle Street

Before you return to Castle Street, take a look at the modern houses on CASTLE HILL. Their striking design with the gables appearing almost as defensive buttresses won awards shortly after their construction in 1980. The site was originally the inner bailey (enclosed inner area) of the castle, which in 1794 became the site of a new workhouse, where up to 350 of the poor and homeless could be accommodated. In 1924 the east façade was converted to dwellings, which were replaced eventually by today's houses.

stanley House is a 16th Century timber framed house with a "crosswing" at right angles to the road. As often happens, it has had many changes and alterations. For a long time it was a private school, but it has retained two strings of original mullioned windows, now blocked on the lower ground floor elevation. These were once common in East Anglia, and were made weathertight by internal wooden shutters, or if you were wealthy by inserting leaded glass lights. (The owner often took these with him if he moved house). Cavendish Morton, the painter lived here until 1978.

18 CASTLE STREET. This was once the "Horse Shoes" public house. It has an 18th Century timber frame faced in the 19th Century with brick, including a crenellated parapet to its eaves. Spot the small ceramic plaque with the "Lacons" brewery sign. Unfortunately Eye now has only one public house — The Queen's Head. In 1850 there were fourteen, and five beer houses. Until the early 20th Century there were two breweries, one in Lambseth Street, and one in Wellington Road, plus the maltings found in most Suffolk towns.

HARWEN HOUSE. A notable house, in red brick, but with soft limestone details, which are suffering from weathering. It dates from the late 19th Century when the Jacobean revival style was popular. A charity distributed rents from this property to the "poor widows and maidens of Eye" at Christmas. Later it housed a large dressmaking and millinery business.

Near the junction with MAGDALEN STREET are two impressive bank buildings. The former HSBC building on the corner of Magdalen Street and Broad Street has a façade in imported sandstone. Magdalen Street is named after a medieval leper hospital which stood in the vicinity. It also leads to the site of the old railway station (now demolished) which closed to passengers in 1931. Eye was unlucky in that the main line from Ipswich to Norwich was routed through Diss, and therefore missed out on much of the industrial revolution. The former police station is on the other corner of Magdalen Street. It is sadly disfigured by a 20th Century modernisation and is now the Volunteer Centre.



A Saturday market was established around The Cross shortly after 1066. It prospered, and covered a large area which has since been encroached upon by buildings including the Town Hall. Some started out as stalls or "Shambles". By 1673 the competition from Diss market was being felt, but the cattle market was held here until 1867, when it moved to the area near the new railway station. A cross and pillory were sited here. Both had gone by 1838.

The cross was in fact a covered structure, similar perhaps to the one which survives in Bungay.

The MEMORIAL is dedicated to Sir Edward Kerrison, M.P. for EYE from 1853-66, and was designed in the Gothic style by James Colling in 1888. Built of granite, Ketton stone and marble it shows coats of arms of the Kerrisons, Eye Borough, and the Suffolk regiment. Not only was Kerrison an important benefactor in the town, but he was an important landowner, whose estates at one time included two thirds of the borough of Eye. The market place was repaved in 1998.

The White Lion was a coaching inn and posting establishment during the 18th Century and up to the mid 1900s. It has a 15th Century timber frame, part of which can still be seen jettied at first floor level. It remained an inn until it was closed in 1986. After conversion into four houses it became WHITE LION HOUSE. Other dwellings were made from the stables and a small group of houses was built on the former garden in a simple but traditional form. Through the archway is the Adam-style Assembly Room built in the courtyard in about 1735. It was the centre of fashionable life in Eye. Balls, concerts and banquets were held here. Between 1988 and 2005 it was used as a theatre, firstly as the Somershey and then from 1991 as the Eye Theatre.

Finish





Eye is an ideal base for exploring North Suffolk. You are never far from quaint villages, countryside amenities and many places of interest. Explore the rich architectural history of Eye by following this town trail walk.

We hope that this information will help you enjoy your stay in the Eye area, and hope that you will return again.

For further information on the area, including accommodation and attractions, please visit our website at www.eyesuffolk.org

How to find Eye











This leaflet has been updated by Eye 'Walkers are Welcome' but was originally produced by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council. To the best of our knowledge all information and details are correct at the time of print. However, we accept no responsibility for inaccuracies or omissions.

The route was researched and written by Michael Munt, with assistance from Jan Perry.

Clive Paine's 'History of Eye' was used as a reference.