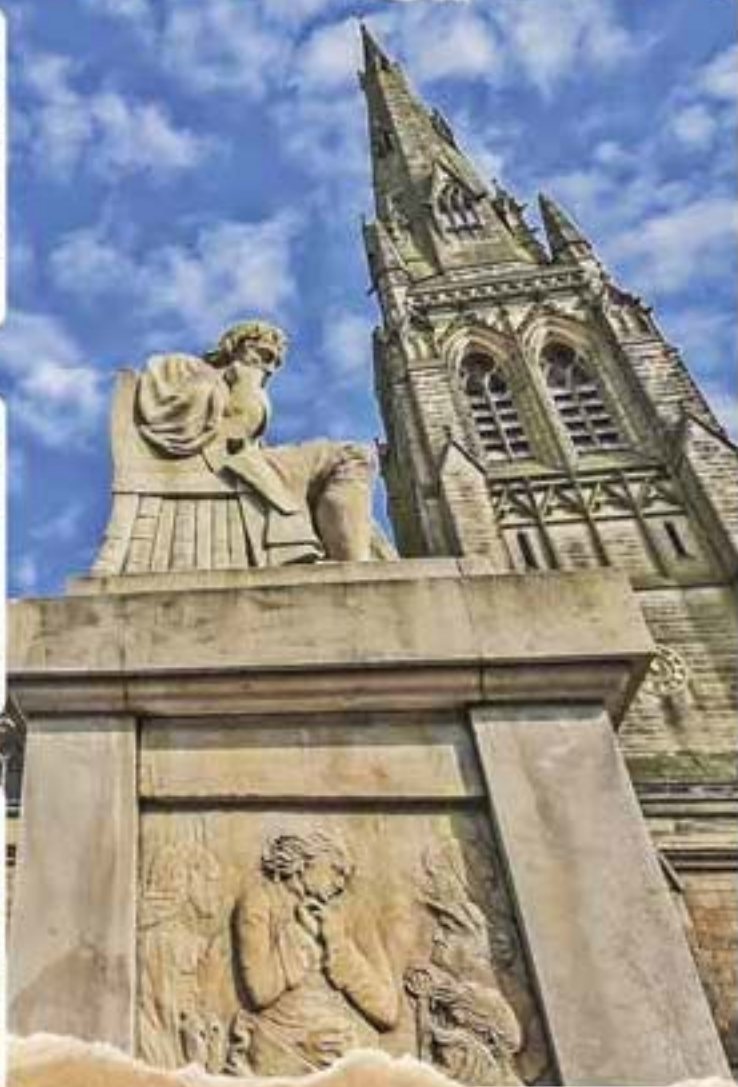


Lichfield Heritage Trail



VISITLICHFIELD.CO.UK



Welcome to Lichfield

Although one of the smallest cathedral cities in England, Lichfield has a rich and varied past. This self-guided tour will help you to discover some of the city's heritage through the stories of its people and buildings. If you want to know more, why not book onto one of our city tours? Find out more at Visitor Information in St Mary's or visit www.visitlichfield.co.uk.



The early days

Lichfield developed as a settlement in the Anglo-Saxon period and was made the seat of the Mercian diocese by Bishop Chad in 669. The first church probably stood on the site of the present cathedral, and Lichfield quickly grew as the ecclesiastical centre of the Kingdom of Mercia.

Further development of the city took place in the 12th century under Bishop Clinton, who fortified The Close and expanded the town with the ladder-shaped street pattern that survives to this day.

However, in 1291 a fire laid waste to churches, the Friary and a large part of the city. Rebuilding took time, but eventually Lichfield gained its status as a thriving market town and important trading centre.

Destruction and then development

In 1538, during the Reformation, the Franciscan Friary was dissolved and St Chad's shrine was destroyed. A century later even greater destruction occurred during the Civil War of the 1640s. Lichfield was a Royalist stronghold and three sieges caused enormous damage to the cathedral and The Close.

The polite society

In the 18th century the city developed as a leading intellectual and cultural centre of the Midlands and prospered from its central location on the busy coaching routes. Lichfield was home to many famous people, including Erasmus Darwin, David Garrick, Anna Seward and Samuel Johnson.

The population increased steadily throughout the 19th century, but the coming of the railway age meant the city lost much of the vitality it had enjoyed as a coaching centre. However, as an ecclesiastical centre, and the home of interesting figures, such as the artist and architectural writer John Louis Petit, Lichfield continued to thrive.



669

Chad, Bishop of Mercia, establishes his seat at Lichfield. His legacy thrives as visitors from around the world continue to be welcomed to the beautiful gothic, three spired cathedral.

1135

Bishop Roger De Clinton founds a new town at Lichfield, along with the Hospital of St John the Baptist.

1230s

Franciscan friars build a friary and settle in Lichfield.

1291

Lichfield is badly damaged by a fire but is rebuilt. Lichfield is a small town with a population of about 1,500.

1538

Henry VIII orders the closure of the friary.

1553

City and county status is bestowed by Queen Mary I.

1612

Edward Wightman is burnt at the stake in Lichfield, the last burning for heresy in England.

1643-46

The Civil War brings three sieges of the fortified Cathedral Close leaving the cathedral badly damaged.

1660s

The cathedral and the city are restored under Charles II.

1755

Samuel Johnson publishes A Dictionary of The English Language.

2003

A medieval sculpture, the Lichfield Angel, is discovered during works in Lichfield Cathedral.

2009

The Staffordshire Hoard is discovered near Lichfield, the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon gold yet found.

A brief history of Lichfield

You can start this walking trail at any point as it takes you around the interpretation boards in the city. Our route suggests starting in Market Street.

1 City of philosophers

Samuel Johnson was born in Lichfield in 1709. After an unsuccessful attempt to run a school near Lichfield, Johnson left for London with his pupil, **David Garrick**, in 1737. Doctor Johnson lived and worked in London but he continued to hold great affection for 'his native place' and returned many times to Lichfield. Discover more about his life and works inside the Birthplace Museum.

Erasmus Darwin, Charles Darwin's grandfather, lived at Darwin House (open to the public) near Cathedral Close. Erasmus Darwin brought great energy and enthusiasm to his wide range of interests and intellectual pursuits. He was a leading light of the Lunar Society, which was a major intellectual influence on the Industrial Revolution in England.

Anna Seward, known as the Swan of Lichfield, was born in Eyam in the Peak District of Derbyshire, where her father was the rector. The family moved to Lichfield in 1749 when her father was appointed as canon of Lichfield Cathedral. Anna was home-schooled, living at Bishop's Palace, and encouraged by her father in her talent for writing poems. After the death of a family friend, the family took in one of her daughters, Honora Sneyd, who became like a sister to Anna, and to whom she dedicated many of her poems.

Cross the Market Square to its junction with Dam Street.



2 Markets and martyrs

The market has traditionally been held on this site, with the original market place taking up the whole area around St Mary's Church. The church is the fifth on this site since its medieval foundation, with the present building dating from 1868. Today it houses Lichfield Library, Lichfield Visitor Information as well as the Hub at St Mary's, a multi-use arts and heritage centre.

Continue down Dam Street towards the cathedral to the corner of Minster Pool.

3 A close encounter

Look for the plaque on Brooke House in Dam Street. The building is named after Lord Brooke, who led the parliamentary forces against the Royalist troops during the first siege of the Civil War in March 1643. The plaque marks the spot where Brooke, who was preparing to mount his assault on The Close, was killed by John Dyott, who fired down from the top of the cathedral's central spire. The accuracy of his fatal shot was thought to be a sign of good fortune as the date was 2 March - St Chad's Day!

Walk along the path, known as Pool Walk, along the edge of Minster Pool.

4 Moses and the moggs

In the early 1800s Minster Pool had a bad reputation for sewage, encouraging disease and sickness in the city. After various improvement schemes the problem was finally addressed by South Staffordshire Waterworks Company, formed in 1853, which took over responsibility for the pool and turned it into a reservoir. Minster Pool is now maintained by Lichfield District Council.



At the end of the Pool Walk, turn left into Bird Street (Beacon Park is opposite). Why not take a walk in Museum Gardens?

Heritage Trail route

The trail takes approximately one hour to complete.





5 Promenades and pleasure gardens

Beacon Park was chosen as the site of one of the earliest free libraries, which opened in 1859. The library is now located at St Mary's in the Market Square, and the original building houses the registry office. Further along Beacon Street is Dr Milley's Hospital, one of the oldest existing buildings in the city, originally an almshouse for women founded in 1424.

Walk past The Swan on your right and continue along Bird Street.



6 Inns and outs

The Swan is recorded as an inn as early as 1362, and became one of the principal coaching inns in the city along with The George. The Swan was rebuilt during the late 18th century to cope with the increase in the coaching trade. Visitors to the city were attracted by a lively social scene and both inns were popular meeting places.

Further along on the right is the King's Head, home of the Staffordshire Regiment. Call in to see an interesting military collection and then continue to The George Hotel.

Continue along Bird Street to its junction with The Friary and turn right.



7 The Franciscan Friary

The Friary was founded in the 1230s. It was destroyed on the orders of Henry VIII in 1538 and little remains today of the monastery buildings. The classical portico does not originate from the site. It was set up by the city council in 1937 to frame the entrance to the excavated ruins of the Franciscan Friary.

In the late 1800s a clock tower inspired by Big Ben in London was constructed at the end of Bore Street. The tower stood here until 1927 when The Friary road was constructed and the clock was seen as an obstruction. The clock tower was rebuilt opposite Friary Gardens, where it remains to this day.

Return to The Friary/Bird Street junction - continue along Bore Street.

8 Design of the times

The Tudor building to the right is called Lichfield House, and is home to the Tudor of Lichfield. It was used as a prison during the Civil War with prisoners chained in the cellars.

Donegal House was built for the local merchant James Robinson in 1730. His great granddaughters are immortalised in a marble sculpture at Lichfield Cathedral, known as The Sleeping Children (1817).

To the left of Donegal House is the Guildhall. The 19th century stained glass window was originally installed at Lichfield Cathedral before it was moved to the Guildhall in 1893.



Turn to your right and go through the passageway beside The Tudor of Lichfield known as Tudor Row. Turn left when you reach the end.



9 Theatres and thespians

David Garrick 1717 to 1779

David Garrick was educated at Lichfield Grammar School, which is now home to Lichfield District Council. He started acting at a young age, playing the part of Sergeant Kite in the George Farquhar play, *The Recruiting Officer*. He went on to become famous for his Shakespearean performances, particularly *Richard III*.

Lichfield Garrick

The Lichfield Garrick, named after David Garrick, is a modern purpose-built theatre that first opened in 2003. Today the theatre has expanded its cultural offering and includes a studio, cinema and the Green Room Café.

The building combines modern design with an eco-friendly natural ventilation system - hence the unusual 'chimneys' that you can see on Wade Street.



Continue through the arcade, turn right and follow Three Spires shopping centre up the hill, turn left at the top.

10 An eventful past

Lichfield has a varied past, celebrating a selection of events, ceremonies and festivals that date back centuries.

Traditional events include the Sheriff's Ride, where the sheriff was commanded to 'perambulate the city' annually and the Shrovetide Fair, where stores of foods was sold before lent.

St George's Court, is an ancient manorial court that takes place in Lichfield's Guildhall and there's also Lichfield Greenhill Bower, where all men between the ages of 15 and 60 would be inspected with a view to join the King's men.

Traditions like these evolved and have been celebrated in Lichfield for hundreds of years.



Continue to the end of Three Spires shopping centre and across the road to Redcourt car park.

11 Redcourt

Redcourt House was a fine Georgian residence, built for Lucy Porter, Samuel Johnson's stepdaughter, in the mid-1760s. Johnson often stayed at Redcourt during his visits to Lichfield, and also brought his friends here to meet Lucy.

After Lucy's death in 1786, the house passed through a series of owners. In 1823 it was purchased by the Petit family, whose most distinguished member was the Reverend John Louis Petit (1801-68), an acclaimed 19th century writer on church architecture and a renowned watercolourist. John Petit was a remarkable Lichfieldian, whose art has only recently come to light. He is buried in St Michael's churchyard.

Redcourt itself was sadly demolished in 1929.



From this point turn left along Tamworth Street and back to the city centre.

Lichfield city centre conservation area

The city centre conservation area was designated in 1970. It extends from The Friary in the south west to include Stowe Pool in the north east.

This area of special architectural and historical interest is subject to stricter planning controls. It is the largest conservation area in the district with over 200 listed buildings and a further 100 of historical interest. Its core is the grid-square pattern of streets forming the medieval city, and Cathedral Close.

It is characterised by densely packed two and three-storey buildings, many still occupying 12th century burgage plots. Lichfield Civic Society supports the work of Lichfield District Council in ensuring the city centre's unique character is preserved and enhanced.



With thanks Lichfield Civic Society contribution:





If you have enjoyed
our self-guide
heritage trail why
not book onto one
of our guided tours?



VISITLICHFIELD.CO.UK/TOURS

For more information
call 01543 308924 or email info@visitlichfield.com