

ASHBURTON WALKS



The Bullring, Ashburton

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WELCOME TO ASHBURTON!

The Ashburton Information Centre is supported by the Town Council, and staffed entirely by volunteers. This booklet has been written to provide ready answers to the two questions we are asked most frequently: firstly variations on the theme of "Now that we have got here, what can we see and do?" and - way out in front in first place - "Where are the toilets?"

The text has been compiled by our current Mayor, Philip Vogel, drawing on an excellent guide to the town called *Discover Ashburton*. This is produced by an organisation of the same name, with the support of the local business community.

All of the walks we describe can be undertaken in ordinary clothing with reasonably sensible footwear;

however the Terrace Walk can get muddy in wet weather; it crosses sloping ground, and will have to be shared with livestock. Children and dogs will need to be persuaded to give any cattle they encounter a wide berth.

THE TERRACE

★ Leave the Information Centre, turn left, cross the bridge and follow the road around past the Town Hall. Walk up **North Street**, passing the **Bay Horse** on your right and the **Victoria Inn** on your left. Cross to the left hand side of the road when you run out of pavement, then, at **Crockaton Cottages**, you will see an opening

in the high stone wall on the opposite side of the road (see photograph on page 2).

* cross over the road, go up the steps, through the kissing gate and into a large, steep field.

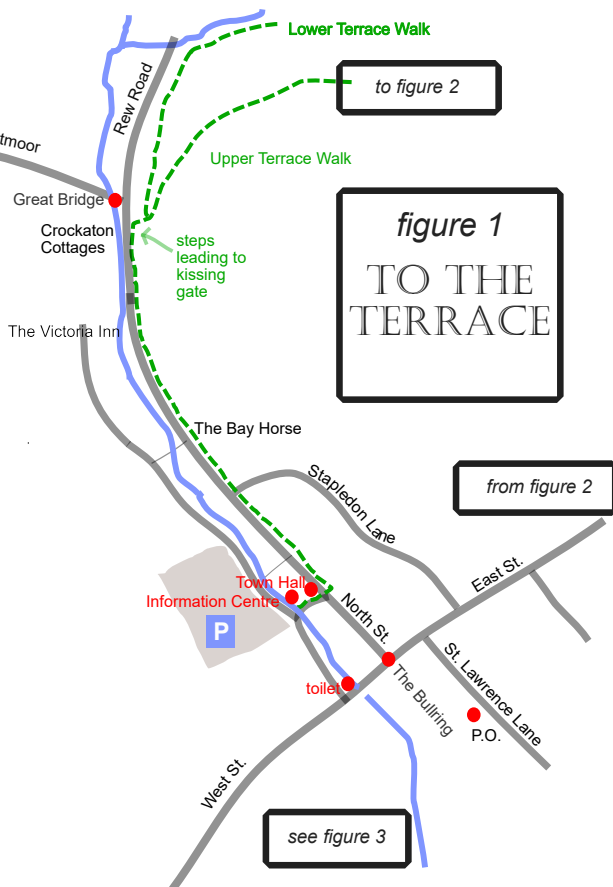
This is known locally as **The Terrace**; it was laid out by Lord Clinton for the people of the town early in the 19th century.

* There are two well-trodden paths; take the higher one that leads up along the contours of the field, parallel with the many other smaller cattle walks formed over the centuries by the hooves of livestock.

* Take advantage of the seats to view the splendidly wooded valley stretching up to the Dartmoor foothills. At the far top corner of the field, go through another kissing gate into a tree-lined path which leads down to a road, (see Figure 2 on page 4).

* This is **Roborough Lane**, where you can turn either left or right. We will explore where the left turn leads later in this booklet; for the moment we are choosing the shorter walk back to the town centre.

* Turn right and walk downhill until you reach **East Street**. Turn right at the bottom of the hill, pausing to admire the **water conduit** on the corner. This private supply was built in 1791, and was fed by a spring



further up the hill.

* Across the road you will spot the famous **Golden Lion**, although the lion itself is currently under wraps for its own protection. This was originally Ashburton's premier coaching inn, but more recently it saw even greater fame as the national headquarters of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party. The landlord, Alan Hope ("Howling Laud Hope"), led the party alongside Screaming Lord Sutch, and was then the longest-serving political leader in the UK. He lived here until 1999, during which time he served with

distinction as Ashburton's Mayor.

* On the opposite side of the road, nearer the town centre, is a private house called the **Old Library** (49 East Street); this was indeed a private lending library in Victorian times. Look up, and you will see a mural depicting Frederick Foot, a local artist born in 1830 and an ancestor of the late Michael Foot. He is shown painting his famous image of Ashburton's old market house, which he produced in 1849.

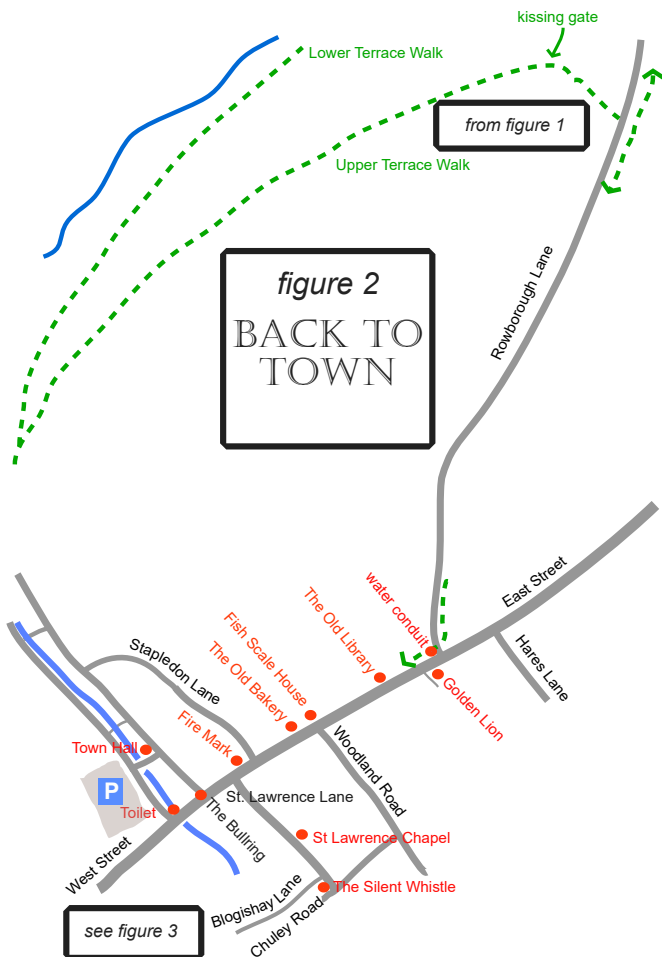
* As you walk down East Street look out for the aptly named **fish-scale house** on your right, at 31 East St. It is unusual even by Ashburton standards, in that it is covered with finely carved silver slates which are both unique and very beautiful.

* A little further down East Street on the right is a second elevated **mural**, this time depicting a baker, and once again commemorating a previous life of this building.

* **Number 9 East St** (currently a greengrocer's) has a **fire insurance mark** on the front of the building. These were placed at a height that was easy to see but

out of the reach of thieves. This one was issued by the Royal Insurance Company which was formed in 1845. Early insurance companies also operated fire brigades that would put out fires, but only if the building was insured with the appropriate company.

* Continue for a few more yards and you will find yourself back at the **Bulling**.



the Rec, with its impressive skate park and children's play areas.

THE TOWN CENTRE

Our second offering is not so much a set route as a series of attractions and points of interest which we encourage you to explore on an à la carte basis, with the help of these notes and Figure 3 on page 6.

★ From the **Bullring**, turn down **St Lawrence Lane**, passing the **Post Office and Library** on your right. Carry on until you see steps on the left leading up to **St Lawrence Chapel**, one of Ashburton's oldest and most interesting buildings, dating back to 1300. It's open to the public from May until the end of September. Leave the Chapel and head for the **Silent Whistle** pub, which commemorates the closing of the Ashburton branch railway line.

★ Above the windows of the Silent Whistle are a set of heads; some maintain that they represent General Garibaldi, though they also look very similar to the sculpture of William Wills who crossed Australia on foot with Robert Burke in 1861 and who carved his name in his seat in St Lawrence Chapel when it formed part of Ashburton Grammar School.

★ Turn into **Blogishay Lane**, which leads you over a perfect **Poo Sticks Bridge** and past a kissing gate which opens out into

★ You can either cut across the Rec, or stay on the path and follow it round, until you reach **Church Path** which skirts the grounds of the 12th century **St Andrew's Church**, with its magnificent 92 ft. tower.

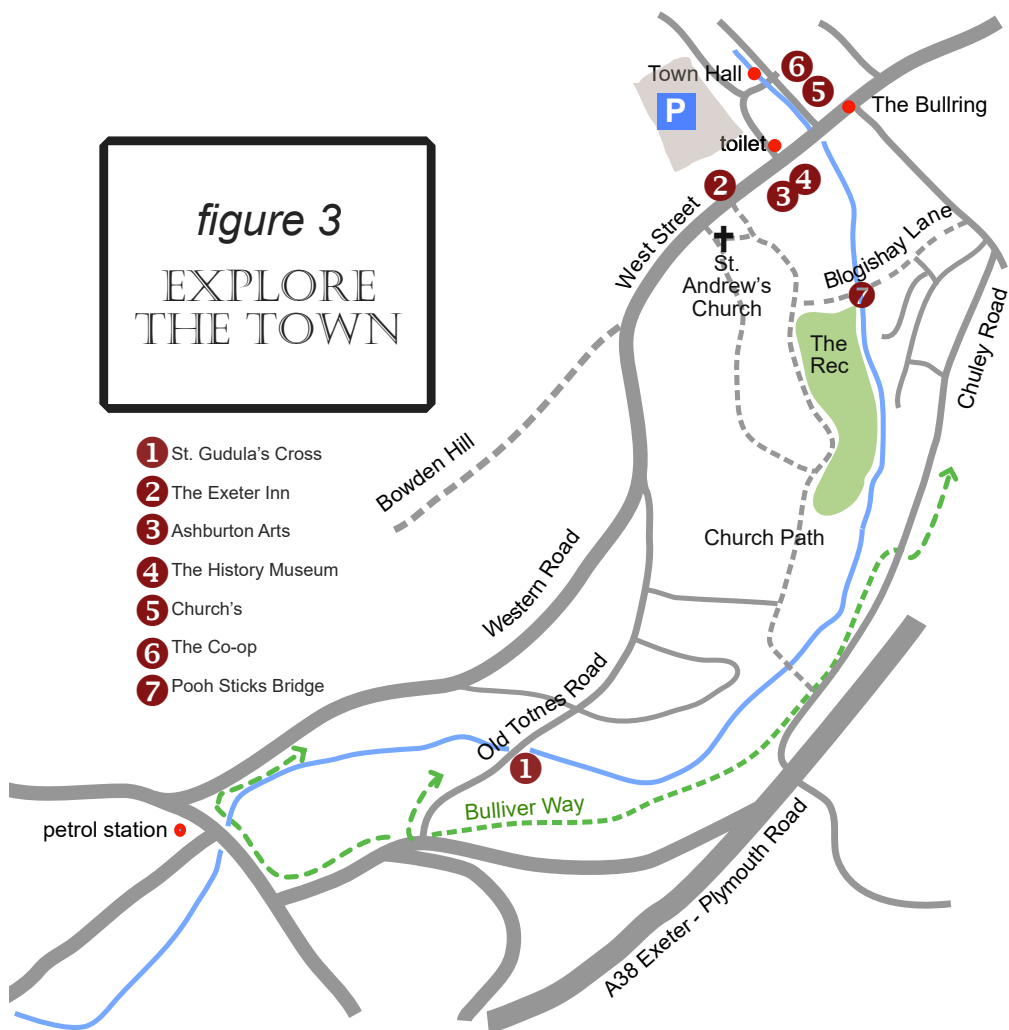
★ Stay on Church Path and you will eventually emerge onto the tree-lined **Bulliver's Way**, which follows the line of the old railway track. You can turn left and walk past the former station buildings and then back to the centre, or alternatively, stay on the path and at the end turn sharp right into **Old Totnes Road**.

★ Here you will find **St Gudula's Cross and Well**. For centuries this was a place of pilgrimage, its waters being said to be good for weak eyes. The cross itself probably dates from the 14th century.

★ Carry on up Old Totnes Road, into **West Street**, and soon you will find yourself at the entrance to **St Andrew's Church**, which is set back from the road. Step inside and admire the impressive stained-glass windows and carved reredos. Above the church gates is the **Ashburton town crest**, which incorporates a representation of the church itself, and a St Andrew's Cross, plus a teasel, the sun and the moon to represent the town's former wool, copper, and tin industries. The **Church Green and graveyard** are the largest 'Green Lung' areas in the Town, and have won a CPRE award.

figure 3

EXPLORE THE TOWN



★ Leaving the church, turn right into West Street, passing the **Exeter Inn** on your left. This is said to be the oldest pub in Ashburton, having been built in 1130 to house the builders of St Andrew's Church and having continued as an inn ever since. Behind the bar in what was the old fireplace can be seen some large original millstones. It is said that Sir Francis Drake was a regular drinker at the inn (then known as

the Church House Inn), as was Sir Walter Raleigh, who was arrested in Ashburton in 1603. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London, having been accused of plotting against the king. On the side of the gable you can see a mural of Francis Drake on the wall of the house next to the Exeter Inn, and a further mural was recently added to the front of the building.

★ On your right, as you continue towards the Bullring, you will find a former Methodist church building which now houses **Ashburton Arts**, home to the town's growing arts scene, and offering a rich and varied range of performances and activities.

★ Further on is the **Ashburton History Museum** which is open from May to September. In addition to items of local interest, the museum houses a large collection of indigenous North American artefacts.

★ Turn left back into **North Street**, and look out for the plaque at **Church's Ironmongers** on the right. Whilst pursuing royalist troops after their defeat at Bovey Tracey, General Fairfax stayed the night here in what was then the Mermaid Inn.

★ Carry on up towards the **Co-operative Supermarket** on the right. Look carefully at the slates hanging on the walls of this small store and you should be able to pick out the suits of a pack of cards. The building was originally an old gambling den and later became the 'Card House Cafe'.

FURTHER AFIELD

Finally, a chance to see something of the beautiful countryside within which our town is set. Rather than prescribe a route, we offer a number of options; many of these make use of narrow roads, but these are safe for walkers who

exercise proper care.

★ Go up East Street and turn into Roborough Lane, and carry on until you pass a new development incorporating affordable housing called **The Mead**. Take the turning to the left into **Rew Road**.

★ Continue until you see some steps leading to a stone stile on your left; from here you can take the **Lower Terrace Walk** which runs alongside the **River Ashburn** (see Figure 1 on page 3).

★ If you would like a longer walk you can cross the road and go up some stone steps opposite the stile. Go through the kissing gate, and follow the footpath through several gates into **Bluebell Woods**. This brings you eventually to a ford and clapper bridge at **Waterleat**; from here you can either retrace your steps, or go back into town along the roads.



the path to Waterleat

