

Discovering Local Spaces: Lutterworth

Park in the Chapel St 'Pay-and-Display' car park (see location on map and access from the one-way system). Leave by the car park exit to see the chapel on your right.

Chapel Lane was called Greyhound Lane in the 1820s and Factory Lane from the 1850s. Lutterworth's first recorded factory was built around 1800 for cotton-spinning, operating for about 20 years on this side of town.

1. Baptist Chapel: A 'neat square building', it was the work of Lutterworth builder, Richard Law (a deacon at the chapel as well as the builder to the Earl of Denbigh). When it opened in July 1839, Rev Coomb of Soho Chapel, London led 3 services and gave sermons, and packed congregations gave £100 1s 7½d in collections (over £10,000 today). Rev Richard de Fraine was the pastor for over 40 years until his death in 1882. Part of the service was held at the chapel, before burial in the C. of E. churchyard. As a dissenting minister, he was buried "without the service of the church"; the town shops closed and houses along the route had their blinds down as a mark of respect. During WW2 it was used by the War Dept and then as the rugby club's clubhouse (1954-1978) the baptism pool being used for the post-match bath. The building is currently occupied by the Chapel Street Christian Fellowship.

On the other side, opposite the Chapel:

2. Candlemas Cottage: This cottage has a 16th century timber frame, infilled with 19th century red brick. Some of the windows have horizontal sliding sashes, used when the low ceilings made the windows wide rather than tall. Two pieces of decorated Samian (Roman) pottery have been found in the garden of the cottage. Candlemas falls on Feb 2 each year and was one of the four quarter days when servants were taken on at hiring fairs held in the market place. The box frame with plaster infill can be seen at the west end of the cottage later in the walk.

Walk through the Greyhound archway (public right of way) to Market Street:



1. Baptist Chapel



2. Candlemas Cottage

3. The Greyhound: This is one of the 3 inns from Lutterworth's heyday as a stop on the main coaching routes of the 18th and early 19th century. The archway allowed the coaches to pull off the road and into the stables behind the inn. The present building was built in the 19th century. In 1829 it was described as an old-established inn, offering many services such as a place for coroners' inquests, political meetings, auctions, society dinners and celebration balls and dances. The Greyhound was well-placed for providing refreshments on market days. In the late 1930s, up to 200 spectators packed into the Greyhound Hotel gymnasium to watch boxing bouts which included local men such as Jack Griffen, Fred

Jones and Jack and Pat Orton. Today it still provides accommodation, with 33 bedrooms. An earlier street name for Market Street was Beastmarket, where livestock was sold.

On the opposite side of Market Street you can see:

4. Town Estates: 15th century gifts to a religious guild in Lutterworth were transferred to the town master for town improvements such as road maintenance. Later gifts in the 16th century, administered by the Town Estate, were used for work on bridges and pavements. The Town Estate trustees bought the market rights from the Earl of Denbigh in the 1920s. The new Lutterworth Museum is being built behind the Town Estates office, which is a sixteenth - century timber-framed building.

5. The Shambles: This building dates back to the early 16th century; it was restored and renamed in the 1980s. Evidence inside suggests that, at one time, it was used as a series of workshops. *Shambles* was the name for a slaughterhouse or meat market, which would be found near a beast market (the old name for this part of Market St). This pub was known as The Bell in the 19th century.

Turn left and walk towards the timber-framed former public house on the corner:

6. The Ram/Cavalier Inn; The first mention of this alehouse was in 1791 but the building dates from around 1600. The timbered façade was added around 1900. The end part of George Street was known as Ram Lane. From 1811 until 1939 it frequently hosted the annual show of the Lutterworth Gooseberry Society where prizes such as a copper kettle were awarded for the largest berry in each colour category (reds, yellows, greens and whites). In the 1850s and 1860s the annual dinner of Lutterworth Cricket Club was held at the Ram, as the landlord, Thomas Leader, owned the field containing the cricket ground, which was said to be the second-best ground in the county. In 1863 the landlord, Richard Sansome, had a brood of chickens hatched, one of which had four legs, 2 normal legs and 2 horizontal ones at the back.



4 & 5. Town Estates office and The Shambles



6. The Ram/The Cavalier

Cross George Street and walk past the petrol station to view the Victorian police station:

7. Police Station: This was built in 1842 for £375, by the local builder, appropriately named Law. It was among the first purpose-built police stations in the county. The first superintendent, Joseph Frie, worked and lived in the building. There were 2 whitewashed 'roomy' cells, an improvement on the dilapidated lock-ups in most county towns and villages. By the 1860s the station needed extending as there was no room for the weights' and measures' checking and the small kitchen was partly occupied by horse harness and forage. In 1872 John Deakins retired after

26 years as the superintendent of the Lutterworth division with a pension of £100 a year. In 1873 the Lutterworth division covered 6000 acres and was policed by 10 constables. Thefts, drunkenness and motor offences formed the bulk of the cases, but there was an unfortunate case in 1891 when a servant girl strangled herself in one of the cells. She had been accused of theft by her employer, Percy Rodwell, a farmer of Walton by Kimcote.

Return to George Street and turn right past the library to reach the Wycliffe Rooms:

8. Wycliffe Rooms: This building was originally a purpose-built cinema, the Ritz, completed in 1938. There had been earlier cinemas in Lutterworth, such as the Empire, which had operated in a former factory in Market Street, the films being stored in a stone-lined basement. This earlier cinema was gutted by fire in 1930, shortly after being rewired to show 'talkies'. The Ritz opening in 1938 was performed by Lord and Lady Cromwell of Misterton; it could hold 104 in the balcony and 264 on the ground floor. During the war a series of shows featuring London and provincial artistes was staged at the cinema to raise money for the cottage hospital. In 1957 proposed Sunday night film showings were debated at a public meeting at the Town Hall. Two petitions were presented; 309 against and 800 in favour, so permission was granted. However, competition from television was affecting audiences and in 1960 the manager was living in a caravan behind the cinema. In 1961 the Ritz, Lutterworth's only cinema, closed. It was briefly a bingo club and then a snooker club but was then bought by the Masons for £8000; the projection and winding rooms were converted into a kitchen and the balcony became the Lodge Room. The ground floor provides an exhibition and performance venue, opened by Lady Gretton, Lord Lieutenant of the county in 2016. An enlarged entrance foyer containing a café has recently been completed (2021).



7. Police Station



8. Wycliffe Rooms

9. United Reform Church (Congregational Chapel): This Grade II building was built in the early 1800s. The congregation began in 1689, split in two in the 1740s and then recombined in 1777, when a new chapel was built in George Street, then known as Worship Street. It is thought that the datestone of 1777 was saved and reinstalled in the present building. Today there is still the original gallery on three sides and the hexagonal pulpit. In 1857 Rev W A Lewis, the pastor, was one of 16 ministers who went from England to Australia; Australian congregations had sent £2400 to pay their passage and clothing costs. For most of its history, congregations numbering in the

hundreds attended here. It became the *United Reform Church* in 1972 when the Congregational churches united with the Presbyterians. The building is presently for sale. The house next door, The Manse, was built about 1850 and was the house of the Congregational minister.

Passing the car park entrance, you can glimpse the gable end box frame of Candlemas Cottage on the right.

10. Western House: This late 18th century house is grade II listed and since 1975 has been the national headquarters of Gideons International, which provides Gideon bibles in hotel bedrooms across the world. The front is faced with pale bricks (mimicking a stone façade) but the sides and rear are built of red bricks. In the 19th century it was occupied by prosperous families who required a double coach house and stabling for 3 horses and visited Skegness, 'that fashionable watering-place' in the summer months. After WW2 it was the home of George Haswell, who had been the organist and choirmaster at St Mary's for 37 years.

Cross the road and walk down George Street towards the town centre. Across the car park on your right, Sherrier School, built in 1874, can be seen. At the end of George Street, you are facing the Unicorn Inn:

11. The Unicorn: Another early (pre-1800) pub, well-placed between the church and the market place, it was rebuilt in its current style in 1917. In 1873 a runaway horse, still carrying its rider, galloped from the Bitteswell Turnpike Gate and did not stop until it had run inside the pub. Unsurprisingly, it took some trouble to get the animal out again. In the 1880s the landlord operated a service between Lutterworth and Ullesthorpe railway station four times every weekday and twice on Sundays before Lutterworth had its own railway station.

Turn right into Church Gate and walk to the timbered building on the left:



9-10 United Reform Church, Manse and Western House



12-14 Former Coach and Horses, Mechanics Institute and Church

12. The Coach and Horses: This building was originally a private house and the first mention of this pub was in 1815 when John Williams, 'a travelling African on his way to London' died there. The building itself is late 16th century and various carpenters' marks can be seen on the timbers. The frames were built in the work

yard, the joints marked with pairs of symbols before the frame was taken apart and reassembled where it was wanted. The jettied first floor was a way of making more accommodation space on the first floor. Despite its name it was not a coaching inn. In the 1880s, when William Holyoak was landlord, it was the clubhouse of Lutterworth Football Club, a rugby football side that played on the cricket field. Continuing the sporting connection, Thomas Wells, Lutterworth's oldest landlord in 1939, founded the Wycliffe Foundry Football Club and gave the Wells Charity Challenge Cup.

13. Mechanics Institute/Churchgate Centre: (opposite 12). This Reading Room was built in 1876 and provided a home for the 600 books of the Mechanics Institute, founded in 1841. It was open each evening and on market days. The Institute held meetings, concerts and lectures in the Town Hall but was considered too expensive for working men, which led to the setting up of the Reading Room. The building has had various uses in the 20th century, as a museum, and Citizens Advice Bureau and, more recently, food bank.

14. Church and churchyard: The church was built in the 13th century and altered in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was given a Victorian makeover by George Gilbert Scott in 1866-69. The spire fell during a storm in 1701 (not 1703 as often stated) and was replaced by the four huge pinnacles. Inside there is a late 14th century wall painting of 3 figures, thought to be the allegory of the 3 living and the 3 dead. There is also a Doom painting on the chancel arch, showing the dead rising from their graves and Christ surrounded by angels. John Wycliffe, the church reformer who translated the Bible into English, was rector here between 1374 and 1384. In 1883 30 ft scaffolding was erected on the top of the tower, (which was 120 ft off the ground) for the purposes of the Government's Ordnance Survey. The oldest person buried in the churchyard (although without a headstone) may well be Mary Coaton of Woodmarket who died aged 105 in

1813, her birth being registered in 1708. The burial register also showed that, in 1796, 450 people were inoculated for smallpox and not one died, although four who had not been protected by inoculation had died. Like many Leicestershire churchyards there is a large number of slate headstones, both from Swithland and Wales, which are still clearly legible. One records the victim of a murder, William Banbury who died in 1876 as he walked back to Lutterworth from Over Heath near Rugby. The tomb chest by the path down to Baker Street is that of William Mash, landlord of the Denbigh Arms.

Turn left at the Mash tomb and walk down the path to exit to Baker Street.

15. Baker Street formerly Bakehouse Lane: This street has been busy for hundreds of years. In 1509 there was a horse-powered malt mill belonging to the lord of the manor attracting customers and wagons of grain. It stood until the 1760s. In the 17th century the baker went round the town and was allowed to whistle or call so the townsfolk could let him know if they had dough for baking the next day. Next morning a horse and cart were despatched to collect the dough. As the town grew the bakehouse could not keep up with demand, and people built ovens in their houses, resulting in court cases to reassert the baker's rights. In 1835 there were several shops in Bakehouse Lane; four general dealers, a butcher, a fishmonger and a blacksmith. No. 43 was the bakehouse. At the end of Baker Street, the street name, Woodmarket, recalls a chartered market of earlier times.

Turn left and walk into Regent Street, down to the junction; The Springs is opposite.



16. The Springs

16. The Springs: This house has an early (probably 16th century) core with some 18th and 19th century additions. Its name comes from the springs in the garden, which are one example of several springs in the local area (eg Spring Close and at Cotesbach). Many have petrifying (turning to stone) properties due to the lime rock that the water has passed through. A layer of lime was deposited on objects placed in the springs, so that they were thought to have been turned to stone. On the front of the house, facing the A426, is a decorative lamp containing glass from the Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester. There is also an insurance plaque which indicated to the fire brigade that the owner had fire insurance cover, in the days when call-outs had to be paid for. In 1855 John Parsons Cook, who lived here, was poisoned at Rugeley by Dr William Palmer. Dr Palmer was hanged for the murder of Cook and the earlier murder of Mrs Palmer after a dramatic and controversial trial.

Turn left and walk up the hill past the 4 horses galloping in the grass since 2012, which commemorate Lutterworth's coaching past, to Denbigh Court on your left:

17. Denbigh Court: This is another early 19th century coaching inn with a coaching yard behind. The site belonged to the Feildings, later the Earls of Denbigh, since at least the 16th century when a manor house stood here. The inn provided entertainment as well as refreshment and accommodation. In the 17th century it had a bowling green and later there were monthly assemblies (dance evenings). The Lutterworth Horticultural Society held its annual shows here in the 1820s, exhibiting and awarding prizes for ranunculus (Persian buttercups) and carnations. For a long period around 1800 the licensee was William Mash, whose table tomb can be seen by the main path in the churchyard. He was also the town post-master and one of the proprietors of a coach service for passengers and goods between London and Manchester. When the coaching trade ended, the focus switched to hunting; in 1883 the Denbigh Arms had stalls

for 60 horses. It has been converted to apartments and town houses. The motto on the coat of arms can be translated as '*honour is the reward of virtue*'.



17-19 Denbigh Court, The Hind and Town Hall

18. The Hind: The present building dates in part to around 1700 with 19th century additions. This is the third main coaching inn and could provide large rooms when required for auctions, public meetings and balls. In the 1820s a London-to-Liverpool coach service stopped at the Hind. As the coach trade declined, the Hind also adapted to servicing the hunting activities of the wealthy, with stabling and also supplying hunters for hire.

19. Town Hall: This was built in 1836 as a market hall for butter, eggs, poultry and meat. The land had been offered by the Earl of Denbigh for a market place and town hall and was bought for £420 by subscription. It was designed by Joseph Hansom, who was also responsible for Birmingham Town Hall and the Hansom cab. The ground floor was originally open and contained a corn exchange as well as the market stalls. The upper floor contained a large hall and a smaller committee room, which were used for public meetings, fortnightly petty sessions and a monthly county court (which is why the Royal Arms were put up on the wall). In 1907 the building was refurbished and the lower floor was enclosed.

The Market place, the triangular area near the Town Hall also serves as a car park.

20. Market Place: The charter for a Thursday market was granted to the lord of the manor in 1214 and confirmed in 1414. Fairs also took place which added to the commercial importance of the town. The old name of Beastmarket reflects the trade in cattle and horses, which brought customers to the shopkeepers and publicans. Market tolls on goods brought into town were a useful source of income. In the 1920s the market rights were sold to the Town Estate by the Earl of Denbigh. Markets still take place on Thursdays.

Turn left into Church Street:

Church St: This street connects the church to the main through route and is lined with shops. Behind some of the frontages are the timbers of earlier buildings. It gradually became the main retail centre in the 19th century, overtaking the High St, as the ground floors of houses were converted into shops. In 1911 you could shop in Church Street for newspapers, fish, bread, groceries, boots, shoes, sports equipment, stationery, china and glass, tobacco, bicycles, baskets and ironware. You could have paused at the Refreshment Rooms or had a rest at The Angel or Unicorn public houses or called on the clerk to the County Court registrar, who also made and sold basketware.

At the end of Church Street are the Memorial Gardens:

21. The Memorial Gardens: In 1919 a committee was set up to create a war memorial. The site was bought with public donations and ownership transferred to the parish council. The work on the memorials and gardens was completed in May 1921 when the gardens were opened by the Earl of Denbigh. In 1955 two new bronze plaques with 52 WW1 names and 25 WW2 names were installed and the cross was made taller. (There are five Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstones for WW1 and WW2 servicemen in St Mary's churchyard). On the east side of the gardens is the commemorative bust of Sir



20 Market Place

Frank Whittle, inventor of the jet engine. This was installed in 1987, to celebrate 50 years since the first test run of a gas turbine engine in Rugby and its subsequent development at the Ladywood Works in Lutterworth. A replica of the Gloster airplane, its engine produced in Lutterworth, stands on the roundabout to the south of the town.



21. Memorial Gardens



Whittle roundabout

Written and produced by Lutterworth Fieldwalking and Archaeological Group (2021)

