

## Introduction

Buildings tell a story about the history of towns through the style of the buildings and the materials used. This trail will help you explore some of that history.

The old parts of Warwick and its historic castle are built on a ridge of Bromsgrove Sandstone known locally as Warwick Sandstone. This sandstone formed on semi-arid river floodplains around 230 - 240 million years ago when the Warwick area was located in the tropics. The first castle was built in the 10th century on this ridge where a cliff overlooks the river Avon. The great sandstone building we see today was started in the 14th century. The resulting expansion of the castle grounds led to the destruction of the southern part of the Anglo Saxon town.

This expansion resulted in the medieval town outside the castle wall being semi-circular in shape. Its main axis was along Jury Street and High Street. It was surrounded by a city wall linking Westgate, Northgate (now only a street name) and Eastgate. Early buildings were constructed using local materials. Woodland along the Avon valley provided timber for the many timber-framed buildings. In addition to the sandstone, clay (for bricks and tiles) came from the surrounding lower ground where mudstone, sand and gravel are found.

Many of these early buildings were destroyed in the great fire of 1694 and a period of rebuilding, repair and growth followed. This coincided with one of the great periods in English architecture and many of the new buildings are examples of the Queen Anne and Georgian styles.

In the nineteenth century canals, railways and roads improved transport links so materials from further afield such as Portland Stone, Bath Stone, slate, granite and many others could be imported and along with greater use of brick, this brought a much greater variety to the appearance of buildings.

Redevelopment still continues today with examples of modern styles and materials. See if you can spot where buildings have been modified with new fronts (or sides) being added to older buildings.

The Warwickshire Geological Conservation Group was established in 1990 by a few enthusiasts who wanted to raise awareness of and conserve the many rock exposures dotted around the county. The membership has since grown and includes many enthusiastic amateurs, students and teachers as well as professional geologists. The group retains its two main aims: to raise awareness of geology and landscape through education and to conserve and protect geological sites in the Warwickshire area.

For further information, including an outline of programmes and events, visit the WGCC website <http://www.wgcc.org>

or contact

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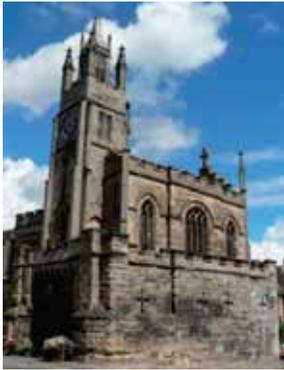


Conserving  
Warwickshire's  
Geological  
Heritage



# Warwick its geology and building materials

**1 Eastgate** (Jury Street/Smith Street)



Eastgate, built to control traffic into and out of the town, dates from the 12th century and St Peter's chapel above from the 15th century. Both are built from Warwick Sandstone. Many blocks are in a poor state of repair as can be clearly seen in the archway (formerly open

to traffic) which underpins the chapel above. The sandstone tends to weather and disintegrate over time and discolour as a result of industrial pollution. The more recent use of a stone veneer coupled with brick, sandstone and cement patching is obvious and will need further attention as pollution takes its toll.

In front of the arch is a public drinking bowl, dating from 1859 and made from pink Scottish Peterhead granite.

**2 Baptist Church** (Castle Hill)

The chapel dates from 1999 replacing a gothic brick structure from 1866. It is mostly faced with reconstituted stone as quarried stone is now both expensive and difficult to source. However some Victorian elements of the previous building remain such as the slate roof. The foundation stone is of limestone.



**3 Thomas Oken's House** (Castle Street)



This attractive 16th century timber-framed house (now a café) built by Thomas Oken, a benefactor to the town, escaped the great fire of 1694. It is representative of merchants' houses where stone was too expensive to use as a common building material.

Both this and the nearby timber frame houses have brick panels within the wooden frame replacing the original wattle and daub. The panels are now masked by plaster or stucco painted white.

**4 Information Centre** (Jury Street/Castle Street)



This former Court House building was begun in 1725 by Francis Smith, a local architect. It is one example of Warwick's high status public buildings from after the fire which used local Warwick Sandstone for the structure and to create external ornamentation. Note the King's arms, the Warwick Corporation arms and a fine statue of Blind Justice in the niche above the entrance.

**5 HSBC Bank** (High Street)



This building was formerly the Midland Bank. Banks often sought to convey the solid and wealthy nature of the institution and their importance and prestige through the quality of their buildings. Here it is achieved by effective and expensive use of imported Portland Stone on the ground floor frontage. But does the use of stucco on the upper floor hide the use of cheaper (and lighter) brick?

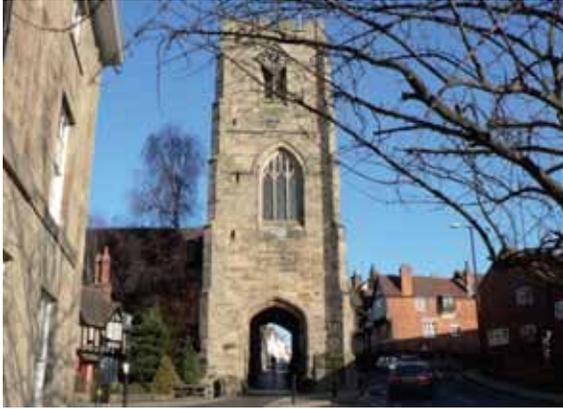
Across the road the Nat West building is mainly brick but tries to achieve distinction by the decorative use of Portland Stone quoins (corner stones) and ornamentation round the door

**6 Lord Leycester Hospital** (High Street)

This venerable building with its Guildhall dating from 1450 is also a survivor from the fire. Unlike Oken's House the brick and half-timbered structure is still clearly visible, although some of it dates from the early nineteenth century. It is built on the Warwick Sandstone outcrop as seen underneath the Westgate arch (7). Was the readily available sandstone used as an emergency repair on the corner of Brook Street?



### 7 Westgate (High Street/West Street)



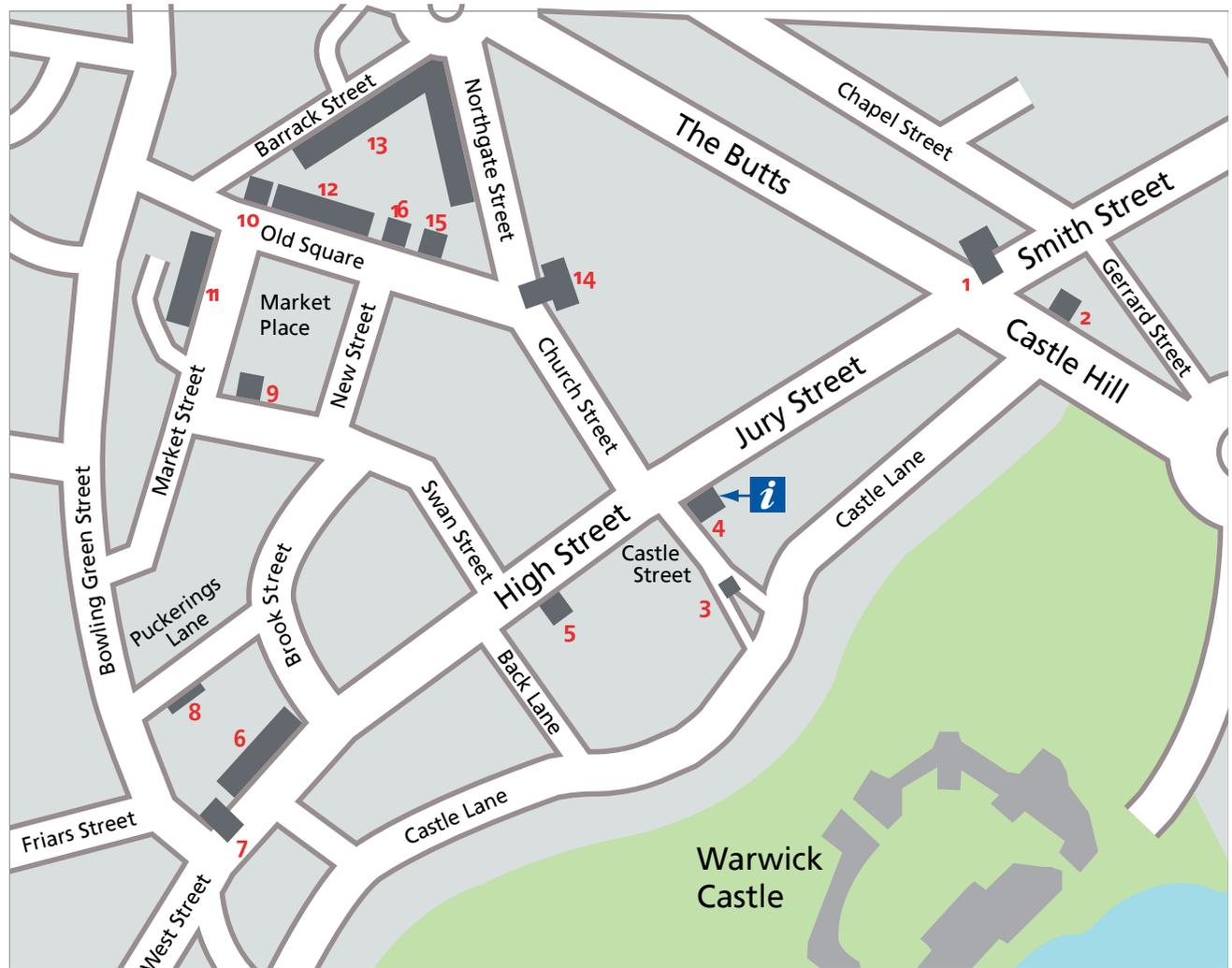
The much restored Westgate marks the western end of the medieval main street and dates back to at least the 12th century. Like Eastgate it is built from sandstone blocks and the arch under the tower rests directly on the Warwick Sandstone bedrock. Note how quickly the land drops down from the sandstone ridge.

### 8 Old Town Wall (Puckerings Lane)



One of the few surviving, substantial remnants of the 14th century town wall can be followed from Westgate and round Lord Leycester Hospital to Puckerings Lane. It is built of blocks of Warwick Sandstone, probably quarried onsite, as we have already seen the rock is close to the surface here.

**Market Place** was planned and laid out as a major public space in the rebuilt Warwick and contains important buildings. Together they reflect the growing wealth and commercial power of a major market and county town.



### 11 The Line of Shops (Market Place)



It is easy to miss the terrace of 'classy' Georgian brick-built houses on the west side of the square because the ground floors are now converted to shop fronts. But the first and second floors still retain their original residential features (e.g. the windows). You should look out for other places where the converted ground floor hides the original age and use of the building.

### 14 St Mary's Church (Old Square/Church Street)



The church was severely damaged in the great fire of 1694 and rebuilt by Sir William Wilson. The walls of the church are of local sandstone which contains grains of mica which glint in the sun. In contrast at the base of the 174ft. tower Arden Sandstone blocks from Shrewley are used. These replaced the local sandstone to afford more strength in supporting the weight. In the graveyard there are weathered gravestones using Hornton Stone.

**9 Warwickshire Museum** (Market Place)



This is another example of a high status public building dating from 1670 and which survived the fire. It was formerly the Market Hall built of massive Warwick Sandstone blocks and originally had open arches. Later repairs have been carried out using a variety of sandstones. It illustrates well how pollution discolours the sandstone. On the ground floor of the museum are displays of local geology and fossil history which provide an important context for this walk.

**10 The Abbotsford** (Market Place)

This highly decorative and imposing building from 1714, shows Warwick Sandstone being used for a private house. It occupies a superior position overlooking the square, (built for a 'superior person') - Francis Smith's father-in-law – see 4)



**12 Shire Hall** (Market Place)



The part of Shire Hall now overlooking the square was built from 1957-1966 and represents modern building techniques using steel frames. But some traditional materials have been used. For example blocks of Hornton Stone (Marlstone Rock) from



quarries at Edgehill are used on the wall of the ramp and the steps to the main entrance. If you look carefully you can find fossil shells, evidence of marine life, in the Hornton Stone.

**13 Old Gaol and the County Court** (Barrack Street and Northgate Street)

The imposing wall of the old gaol (1779) along Barrack Street is of Warwick Sandstone. Around the corner in Northgate Street are the old parts of Shire Hall (1753-8) and the County Court which mixes the use of the more golden and rather weathered Hornton Stone in the lower wall with paler Warwick Stone for the pillars and the upper walls. The use of a contrasting Staffordshire sandstone for repairs and refacing adds to the mix – look through the archway.



**15 Old Post Office** (Old Square)



The old General Post Office building of brick and ashlar (cut stone blocks) was built in 1886. Now that Market Place existed Old Square was being rebuilt in the late Victorian period and brick was the main building material. However this was another high status building and the walls and many decorative

features use mainly imported/expensive Bath Stone while Dartmoor Granite from SW England was used for the corner blocks to protect the side entrance of the building (now a shop) from the hard wear inflicted by carts and trollies.

**16 Old Coffee Tavern** (Old Square)



The Coffee Tavern was built in 1880 entirely of brick with a slate roof when the temperance movement was at its height, working to tempt sinners away from the delights of alcohol. The brick is relieved by decorative terra cotta tiles and panels. Terra cotta is made from milled clay combined with water and vitrifying ingredients to ensure homogeneity before pressing into plaster moulds to form a shell before baking in a kiln. The clay is derived from Etruria Marl the nearest source of which is near Nuneaton which had an extensive brick and tile industry.

