



HISTORY TIMELINE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUNTINGDON

Huntingdon is situated on Ermine Street, a Roman road from London to York, where it crosses England's third longest river, the Great Ouse. Godmanchester, just south of the river, was the major settlement, with the Roman name of Durovigutum, while Huntingdon had a villa that overlooked Portholme meadow.

The name Huntingdon is derived from the Old English 'Huntedun', meaning Hunta's Hill. Edward the Elder, a Saxon king, captured Huntingdon from the Danish Vikings about AD 921, and it became the county town of Huntingdonshire.

By 1066 Huntingdon was a Royal Borough with a mint which issued its own coinage. A Royal Charter was granted in 1205.

By the 13th century the town was prosperous with about 15 churches, three monasteries and three hospitals. Following the Black Death of 1348-9 and the decline of trade on the river, the town's population decreased drastically.

Hinchingbrooke Priory closed in 1536, passed to the Cromwell family, then became Hinchingbrooke House, the home of the Earls of Sandwich.

Oliver Cromwell, 1599 to 1658, the Lord Protector was born and brought up in Huntingdon. During the Civil War, Huntingdon was held by Parliament and to the detriment of the town, King Charles briefly held Huntingdon in 1645.

Located on the Great North Road, Huntingdon became a major coaching centre in the 17th and 18th centuries, and until 1800 Huntingdon was a linear settlement. In the second half of the 19th century, after the arrival of the railway, the town gradually began to expand.

After 1960 Huntingdon grew substantially with the development of new estates which encouraged people and businesses to relocate from London. The town centre has seen many changes since 2000 and continues to evolve whilst preserving the best of the old Huntingdon.

You came to visit.



CONTACT DETAILS

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WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT IN BOTH
TIME AND GRANT FUNDING FROM

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

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W: huntingdowntown.gov.uk

THE CROMWELL MUSEUM

T: 01480 375830

W: cromwellmuseum.org

THE GOODLIFF FUND

W: huntslhs.org.uk

HUNTINGDON & GODMANCHESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

W: facebook.com/HandG.civicsociety/

PLUS INFO FROM A TEAM OF EXPERT
HISTORIANS INCLUDING THE LATE
DAVID HUFFORD, RE-WRITTEN BY
MAGS CLARK.

THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE ALSO
PROVIDES FURTHER INFORMATION
ABOUT HUNTINGDON

W: huntingdonfirst.co.uk



Huntingdon First

A BID Huntingdon brand

HUNTINGDON TOWN TRAIL

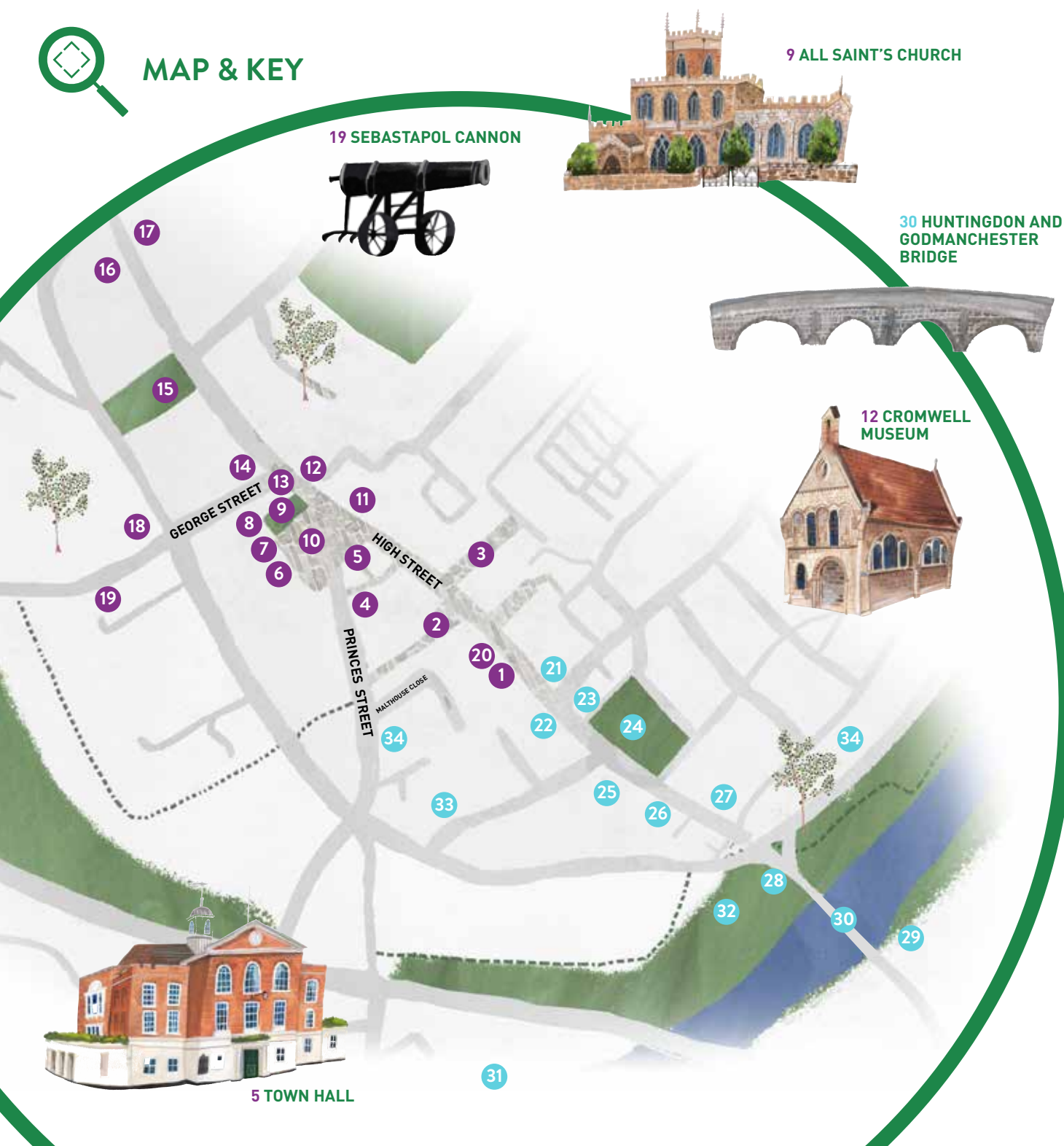


DISCOVER
HUNTINGDON
FOR YOURSELF





MAP & KEY



9 ALL SAINT'S CHURCH



19 SEBASTAPOL CANNON



30 HUNTINGDON AND GODMANCHESTER BRIDGE



12 CROMWELL MUSEUM



5 TOWN HALL



WELCOME TO HUNTINGDON

We hope you enjoy finding out a bit more about the town. This trail just covers the surface - feel free to take longer to look around any areas that are of particular interest to you or note them so you can return back to them! You can do the two town trails separately or they form a figure of 8 covering the whole town if you want to do both on the same day. There are plenty of places to stop for a sit down and a refreshment on the way.

NORTH

- 1 COMMEMORATION HALL
- 2 ST BENEDICT'S COURT
- 3 CHEQUER'S COURT
- 4 MARKET INN P.H.
- 5 TOWN HALL
- 6 FALCON INN PUBLIC HOUSE
- 7 WYKEHAM HOUSE
- 8 WALDEN HOUSE
- 9 ALL SAINT'S CHURCH
- 10 THE THINKING SOLDIER WAR MEMORIAL
- 11 FOUNTAIN HOTEL
- 12 CROMWELL MUSEUM
- 13 SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEMORIAL
- 14 THE GEORGE HOTEL
- 15 ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD
- 16 WHITWELL HOUSE
- 17 CROMWELL HOUSE
- 18 SANDFORD HOUSE
- 19 SEBASTAPOL CANNON
- 20 MURAL MUSEUM

SOUTH

- 21 THE THREE TUNS PUBLIC HOUSE
- 22 COWPER HOUSE
- 23 SAXON GATE
- 24 ST MARY'S CHURCH
- 25 CASTLE HILL HOUSE
- 26 HUNTINGDON METHODIST CHURCH
- 27 THE COUNTY & BOROUGH GAOL
- 28 THE OLD BRIDGE HOTEL
- 29 RIVERSIDE MILL
- 30 HUNTINGDON AND GODMANCHESTER BRIDGE
- 31 PORTHOLME MEADOW
- 32 CASTLE HILLS
- 33 CAMBS LOCK ANTIQUE CENTRE
- 34 THE ARCHDEACONERY LIBRARY AND HALL



HUNTINGDON TOWN TRAIL NORTH

APPROX 40 MINS WITHOUT STOPS

If you haven't completed Trail South, take a look at **THE COMMEMORATION HALL ①**. This impressive building was built in 1842 by Robert Fox (a Godmanchester benefactor) as the Huntingdon Literary & Scientific Institute. Go outside and look up and you will see Minerva, the Roman Goddess of wisdom and sponsor of the Arts carefully guiding the goings on in the building below. The Institute originally had public rooms, a library of over 2000 books, a museum and billiard room and even owned a bowling green in Grammar School Walk. It closed in 1954, was renovated by public subscription and re-opened in 1960 as the Commemoration Hall in honour of those who fell in World War 2. It was redeveloped by volunteers during COVID lockdown and reopened in July 2021 as an Arts Café and Theatre and is currently the home of Huntingdon Drama Company and Huntingdon Youth Theatre.



With your back to the Commemoration Hall turn left up the High Street until you reach a crossroads. **ST. BENEDICT'S COURT ②** on the left is a paved area which was once a churchyard. St Benedict's foundations lie under an adjacent shop; its tower was pulled down in 1804. Now only its name remains as a reminder that it was ever there.

Opposite is **CHEQUERS COURT ③** built on the site of the town's largest brewery, which ceased trading in 1954, then the area was totally refurbished in the 2010's. This shopping area brings national High Street names to Huntingdon as well as some independent stores.

Keep going straight on towards the Market Square, at Barclays Bank turn left and up towards the **MARKET INN PUBLIC HOUSE ④** situated in one of the many passages. It has recently been renovated but the attractive jettied upper storey on the timber frontage remains and is one of the only buildings of this style left in town. Continue walking up and right, round to the front of the Town Hall. You will find yourself on the Market Square, Standing with the Church to your left, on your right is...

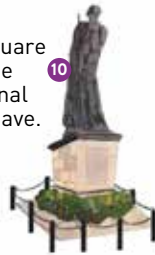
TOWN HALL ⑤ which was built in 1745 and has been modified many times since. The interior has two early 19th Century law courts, a council chamber and a ballroom containing many fine portraits. The Town Hall dominates the South side of Market Hill.



On the West side of the Square is the 16th century **FALCON INN PUBLIC HOUSE ⑥** Oliver Cromwell used the Falcon as his Headquarters during the English Civil War and recruited his first troop of cavalry there.

Next door to The Falcon is **WYKEHAM HOUSE ⑦** the first home of the London and County Bank (which became Westminster Bank, now Natwest). Set back by the Church is the 17th century **WALDEN HOUSE ⑧**, home of Sir Lionel Walden founder of the local Green Coat Charity school. In World War 1 the house became a hospital for soldiers.

ALL SAINT'S CHURCH ⑨ is on the North side of the Square and is one of the two surviving Medieval churches in the town. Building started in the 13th Century and an original arch can still be seen in the north west corner of the Nave. During the 14th Century the Church fell into disrepair, being rebuilt in the 15th Century to maintain a place of worship for the girls of the Parish. It contains a font, from St John's Church, believed to be that in which Oliver Cromwell was baptised. Members of the Cromwell family are buried in the Church. Behind you continue away from the centre of town, noting as you pass the Church a memorial to Thomas Jetherell, a bankrupt maltster, which is worth a read.



At the centre of the square is the **THINKING SOLDIER WAR MEMORIAL ⑩** sculpted by Kathleen Scott, the widow of Scott of the Antarctic. After the Great War, the W.I. raised funds for a memorial to Huntingdon's lost. It was unveiled in 1923 by Lord Sandwich and rededicated in 1946 to those lost in the Second World War.

The memorial faces the façade of the former **FOUNTAIN HOTEL ⑪** dated 1727. Now sadly dilapidated, the central Venetian style window once lit the 18th century ballroom. It is hard to believe that in the coaching era this inn competed with its main rival the George Hotel (see number 14)

THE CROMWELL MUSEUM ⑫ is in the town's oldest building, a medieval hospital that became a school where in the 1600s Oliver Cromwell and Samuel Pepys were educated. It houses the world's best collection of artefacts relating to the life and times of Cromwell and a vibrant programme of changing exhibits and events.



Leaving the market place behind you continue away from the centre of town, noting as you pass the Church a memorial to Thomas Jetherell, a bankrupt maltster, which is worth a read.

On the corner of George Street stands a rare outdoor **SOUTH AFRICAN WAR MEMORIAL ⑬** unveiled in 1903.

Opposite you will see the **GEORGE HOTEL ⑭** once owned by Oliver Cromwell's grandfather. Built originally in the 15th Century, it has an original 17th century courtyard which avoided a fire in 1865. The Courtyard houses a fine gallery, staircase and clock which was used to time the coaches. During the 1820's six stagecoaches a day left Huntingdon for London, while others travelled to York, Cambridge and Scotland. Being a popular Coaching stop, it is said Dick Turpin stayed here! Charles Dickens is also said to have performed at the George. Every year the courtyard is the venue for open air Shakespeare (look up Shakespeare at the George).



Continue down the High Street, some way down on the left you will see

ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD ⑮ Was the site of St John's Church, damaged in the 17th Century Civil War and demolished about 1660. This Church, was where Oliver Cromwell and his children were baptised.

Continue down the High Street, the road splits and facing you down the High Street you will see one of Huntingdon's finest Georgian townhouses, **WHITWELL HOUSE ⑯** built 1727 with a splendid gate and railings of wrought iron.

On the other side of the High Street is **CROMWELL HOUSE ⑰** built about 1830 on the site of an earlier house where Oliver Cromwell was born in 1599; note the plaque and Cromwell family coat of arms.

Take the left hand road of the split until you reach the main road and, without crossing it turn left and walk. After approx. 400m you will see on the opposite side the little Gothic House, a white house with black arched windows.



Continue walking until you meet the George Hotel car park on your left and opposite **SANDFORD HOUSE ⑱**. Use the crossing to cross over to Sandford House, now a Wetherspoons. This was originally two buildings that were connected by a new building when Wetherspoons took over. It is well worth a look inside with the history being on the walls of the restaurant. For the ladies reading this – the ladies' toilets are the finest ever seen and worth a visit!

After The Wetherspoons, continue up Brampton Road and on the right you will see Almshouses built in 1843 on behalf of St John's Almshouses. Cross the road to the **SEBASTAPOL CANNON ⑲**. The original cannon captured in the Crimean War by the Huntingdonshire Regiment was melted down in WWII for the Spitfire Fund and has been replaced with a replica



Walk back towards the ring road but take a sharp right with houses on your left and common ground on your right. Follow this pleasant pathway around and to the left down The Walks North back towards the Bus Station. Cross the ring road using the crossing, walk through the bus station and over Princes Street down Malthouse Close. You will on the brick wall the **MURAL MUSEUM ⑳**. This showcases 6 authors with links to the area, impressive graffiti art covers the whole wall with portraits and quotes. Walk back down literary Walk to the High Street and turn right back to the Visitor's Centre in the Commemoration Hall.



HUNTINGDON TOWN TRAIL SOUTH

APPROX 30 MINS WITHOUT STOPS

If you haven't completed Trail North, take a look at **THE COMMEMORATION HALL ①** This impressive building was built in 1842 by Robert Fox (a Godmanchester benefactor) as the Huntingdon Literary & Scientific Institute. Once outside and look up and you will see Minerva, the Roman Goddess of wisdom and sponsor of the Arts carefully guiding the goings on in the building below. The Institute originally had public rooms, a library of over 2000 books, a museum and billiard room and even owned a bowling green in Grammar School Walk. It closed in 1954, was renovated by public subscription and re-opened in 1960 as the Commemoration Hall in honour of those who fell in World War 2. It was redeveloped by volunteers during COVID lockdown and reopened in July 2021 as an Arts Café and Theatre and is currently the home of Huntingdon Drama Club and Huntingdon Youth Theatre.

With your back to the Commemoration Hall turn right until you reach **THE THREE TUNS PUBLIC HOUSE ②** which was once one of 27 public houses in Huntingdon in 1901.

Diagonally opposite the Three Tuns is **COWPER HOUSE, 29-30 HIGH STREET ②** an impressive early 18th century front hides a 16th Century timber frame interior. A plaque between 28 - 29 records the poet William Cowper lived here 1765-7. His poem "Light Shining out of Darkness" gave the English phrase "God moves in a mysterious way/ his wonders to perform". He was a well know abolitionist, writing many anti slavery poems.

Cross over using the zebra crossing and on the corner you will find **SAXONGATE CENTRE ③** where in 2005 archaeologists discovered the foundations of a late Saxon gateway which probably marked the extent of the town before the Norman Conquest.



On the same side of the road as Saxongate, but heading out of town, you will find on the left **ST MARY'S CHURCH ④** It is a Saxon foundation with some Norman work but was mainly rebuilt in the 13th Century. Part of the late 14th Century west tower fell in 1608 destroying the North aisle and damaging the nave and south aisle which were re-built 1608-20 in a rare neo-Gothic style.

Walking down with the Church on your left, on the opposite side of the road is **CASTLE HILL HOUSE ⑤** built in 1787. It was the home of the Banking family the Veasey's from 1837-1916, with, until 1918 a large garden that included Castle Hills. The garden is now occupied by the local District Offices, Pathfinder House which derives its name from the RAF Pathfinder Force Group HQ who were based in the old house and garden from 43 - 45. Locally based Pathfinder Squadrons led the RAF bomber attacks on Europe. There is a blue plaque to the left of the front door detailing this.

Continuing down the High Street, is **HUNTINGDON METHODIST CHURCH ⑥** built in 1878 The first Methodist chapel was in a barn in Castle Hill Lane where John Wesley preached in 1776. Electric lights were installed in 1928 as part of the 50th Anniversary celebrations. Note the ancient milestone on the outer car park wall "To London 59 miles".

Continue walking from the Methodist Church away from the town centre, the houses on the left side are mainly timber framed, note the plaque on number 147. As you approach the main road note the houses 154, 155 then turn left under a low archway leading into Orchard Lane. As you go in, the offices on the left side were formerly used to house **THE COUNTY AND BOROUGH GAOL ⑦** for felons and debtors. One of the iron grated openings at ground level was the condemned cell. The iron bars at 156 on the right hand side were to stop prisoners escaping from the prison yard.

Turn around and return to the main High Street and cross the ring road to the traffic island the Georgian House on the corner is the oldest part of **THE OLD BRIDGE HOTEL ⑧**. The hotel bar in the centre was the banking chamber of the private banker F.D. Veasey whose family lived in there. From the traffic island cross to the Old Bridge and go towards the bridge. Walk down and take the pedestrian bridge, built 1965-66 to the right hand side of the traffic bridge.



Cross to the middle of the walking bridge and look ahead/left to view the **RIVERSIDE MILL ⑨**, built in the mid 19th century by Charles Veasey for use as an Oil Cakes Factory. It was then used in World War 1 as a military clothing depot, then became a hosiery Mill from 1924 - 1972 and is now modern apartments.



HUNTINGDON & GODMANCHESTER BRIDGE ⑩ completed about 1332 is a unique monument to the rivalry between the

"twin towns" who built it with six arches, each slightly different. The central portion of the bridge is wider than its approaches, because the builders failed to agree on correct alignment. The most obvious differences are the pillars; Huntingdon's are V-shaped and Godmanchester's semi-hexagonal. Also the pillars on the Huntingdon side are patterned whereas the Godmanchester half are not. Apparently Godmanchester were not prepared to pay the additional cost!

From the footbridge facing Godmanchester, look right across the river and **PORTHOLME MEADOW ⑪** may be seen. The meadow, said to be the largest flood plain meadow in England, is bounded by the Alconbury Brook as it joins the River Great Ouse. Leisure boats are available to fully enjoy the waterway.

As you return to the Old Bridge Hotel, note the date of Huntingdon's charter 1205 - very proudly on all of Huntingdon's town signs as it is earlier than Godmanchester's charter - 1213, yet another example of the towns' subtle rivalry. Once back at the main road walk left until you see a 5 bar gate which indicates the entrance to **CASTLE HILLS ⑫** once the site of Huntingdon Castle. Walk onto the common land to view the great earthworks which were built over part of the Saxon Town by order of William the Conqueror in 1068. The castle had a stormy career, and after the siege of 1174, King Henry II had the timber walls burned to the ground. Archeologists later found a layer of ash almost a metre thick - that was some fire! It wasn't until the 17th century Civil Wars that the castle was remodelled as an artillery fortification by Oliver Cromwell. By the 19th century it was part of a garden, through which a railway link from Godmanchester was cut in 1851. The railway closed to passengers in 1959. This site is home to the town's beacon most recently lit on occasion of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee.

Walk back to the ring road and go clockwise up to the crossing. Turn right at the crossing into St Mary's Street, and you will find **CAMBS' LOCK ANTIQUE CENTRE ⑬** which was once a maltings and in 1912 became the town's Territorial Army Depot. It is now a warren of small shops of antiques/bric-a-brac and new start-ups, plus a tea room!

Go back the way you came to the Walks East and walk up with the bus station on your left. You will see Huntingdon Town Council's latest floral display. Continue on up and you will come to a mock Tudor building **THE ARCHDEACONRY LIBRARY & HALL ⑭** built in 1890, now used for a variety of Community events.

Continue down the Walks East until you come to Malthouse Close. Turn right and ahead you will see the back of the Commemoration Hall with a large mural created by our 4 Twin Towns and opposite on the brick wall the **MURAL MUSEUM ⑮**. This showcases 6 authors with links to the area, impressive graffiti art covers the whole wall with portraits and quotes. Walk back down literary Walk to the High Street and turn right back to the Visitor's Centre in the Commemoration Hall.

