## TRING TOWN TRAIL

Tring is an old market town in the Hertfordshire Chilterns. Situated in a valley where the prehistoric lcknield Way crosses the Roman Akeman Street, it is surrounded by magnificent countryside and has much to interest the visitor. Its character has been influenced by the Rothschild family who lived at Tring Park from 1872 until the 1940s. This tour describes some of the some of the principal features of the central part of the town and takes about one hour, with some sections including steps, narrow pavements and grass areas.

The tour starts at the WALTER ROTHSCHILD ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM (1), built for Lord Rothschild's brilliant but eccentric son and opened in 1892. Filled with an astonishing variety of specimens from fleas to gorillas, it should on no account be missed, and is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays). The original part is the cottage on the corner, built for Mr Minall, who encouraged Walter Rothschild's interest in natural history and prepared the earliest exhibits. On its creator's death in 1937 it became part of the British Museum (Natural History). Turn right into AKEMAN STREET, which has some of the oldest surviving buildings in the town. BROWNS Maltings later RODWELLS soft drinks factory, testifys to an old brewing tradition. The tall white building opposite was once the Gaiety, one of three cinemas in Tring. No 15 is GRACE'S MALTINGS (3), built in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, which was operated as a maltings and corn mill by one of Tring's oldest families until the 1970s. The fine BAPTIST CHAPEL (4) of 1808 is one of three which survive, testimony to an influential nonconformist tradition. The VICTORIA HALL (5) was a speculative playhouse which failed soon after opening and was converted into a pickle factory! Many years later it was presented to the town by Victor, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Rothschild. The HIGH STREET is an attractive, winding street notable for the many picturesque buildings designed by the local architect William Huckvale (1848-1936). On the crossroads you will see the MARKET HOUSE (6), built by public subscription in 1900 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and one of Huckvale's most characteristic buildings in the Old English style. Originally open at street level for market trade, mainly in straw and plait, it was later converted into a Fire Station. The Town Council chamber occupies the first floor. Opposite is the former GEORGE HOTEL, built in 1897 to the design of another prominent Tring architect Arthur Macdonald Brown. Up the hill is G.GRACE & SON, a traditional ironmonger, one of the oldest businesses in the town.

Cross into FROGMORE STREET and glance up PARSONAGE PLACE to see the 16<sup>th</sup> century TITHE BARN (7) of Parsonage Farm. Further along Frogmore Street used to stand the house where LAWRENCE WASHINGTON and his family (antecedents of George Washington) lived from 1630 to 1650. Return to the High Street and turn left, noting the archway and cobbled courtyard of TRING BREWERY (8), run by John Brown and his family between1826 and 1898. They supplied most of the town's pubs, many of which they built in the prosperous 1830s. The fine house at No 23 was for many years the doctor's surgery. The BELL INN is a fine 17<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed building with a traditional entrance yard.

CHURCH SQUARE (9) is the focal point of the town. In 1680 a MARKET HOUSE was built here under a charter granted to Henry Guy, who acquired the Manor of Great Tring from the Crown. In 1901 the building was demolished and the site given to the town by Nathaniel, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Rothschild, as open space with a fine prospect of the Parish Church. The Square was remodelled in 1991 as part of an Improvement Scheme for the High Street, and features an ingenious PAVEMENT MAZE in the form of a zebra's head to honour the work of Walter Rothschild. The PILLARBOX is a reproduction of the Victorian "Penfold" design. The WAR MEMORIAL was unveiled in November 1918 and testifies to Tring's severe losses in the Great War. The mainly 15<sup>th</sup> century PARISH CHURCH of St Peter and St Paul (10) can be visited each morning. Built of local flint and Totternhoe stone, it contains some fine medieval carvings and 18th century memorials. Leaving by the south door, turn right and follow the cobbled path behind the church. Note SUTTON COURT (11), formerly the Vicarage, built in Tudor style in 1825. Shortly after the ornate gatehouse, turn left down a footpath (signed to the Red Cross Hall) and enter the open space known as POND CLOSE (12). This forms part of a grand vista from the MANSION in Tring Park. From the top of the grass slope the house is clearly visible; designed by Sir Christopher Wren but much altered in the 1870s, it makes a splendid sight with the wooded park as a backdrop.

Away to your left, behind the flint wall, is the millpond which serves the SILK MILL. Built in 1824, it once employed over 600 people, including the Chartist poet Gerald Massey (prototype of "Felix Holt" in George Eliot's novel) who was sent to work here at the age of eight. When the silk trade collapsed in the 1890s, Lord Rothschild ran the mill at a loss to protect the employees; he then reduced the height of the building and converted it into a generating station. It is now in multiple use but the waterwheel is still in place. Retrace you steps to the play area and turn left into the footpath which leads between modern houses into MILL GARDENS and out into BROOK STREET. (*The mill is about 100yards to the left along a narrow pavement, should you wish to take a closer look.*)

From Mill Gardens turn right along Brook Street to the former CATTLE MARKET(14) Continue along to the ROBIN HOOD pub and cross the High Street. Note the TURNPIKE MARKER recalling the days when the Watford to Aylesbury road was maintained by the Sparrows Herne Trust. Opposite is the UNITY HALL of 1880, built by the town's co-operative movement. You may wish to stroll around the MEMORIAL GARDEN (15) on your left, formerly the lily ponds of the Mansion. The hamlet of LOWER DUNSLEY which stood here was cleared away in its entirety for the purpose! It now commemorates the victims of World War II, and contains a magnificent Wellingtonia.

Leaving the garden, note the fine brick wall, dating from 1711, which screens the road from the vista from the Mansion. It was built when the Lord of the Manor, William Gore, diverted the main road to run through the town rather than past his windows. (The car park opposite contains public conveniences and the Friday market)

Continuing along the High Street, the fine house at No 8 was designed by Huckvale for the Estate. Nos 9 and 10 were estate offices remodelled from earlier buildings and designed to flank the MANSION DRIVE, once adorned with magnificent iron gates. In the fine group opposite, note No. 50, once the PLOUGH HOTEL and latterly the antique shop of JOHN BLY whose family has traded in Tring for several generations. The ROSE AND CROWN INN (16) was built in 1905, again by Huckvale for Lord Rothschild. It replaced an old coaching inn and was one of the first to be managed by the Hertfordshire Public House Trust, forerunners of Trust Houses and pioneers of the "reformed" inn.

On reaching the NATIONAL WESTMINSTER BANK (built in the 1830s as the Tring Bank) and the HSBC BANK (formerly the MIDLAND and one of several based on a design by Edwin Lutyens) turn left into the narrow passage between them known as BANK ALLEY (17). Tall people can catch interesting glimpses of the old brewery and maltings in this very old quarter.

The path takes a turn left and then right. The large modern building on the right houses the NATIONAL BIRD COLLECTION of the Natural History Museum, brought here in 1972. On the left is the ALICIA MARKOVA THEATRE, used by the pupils of the ARTS EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL of ballet, music and drama which occupies the Mansion. PARK STREET is all that remains of the old road across the Park. Notice Huckvale's intriguing LODGE HOUSE (18) and some of his most attractive houses beyond it. (From this point you can extend your walk by following the footpath which leads to TRING PARK via a footbridge).

At Park Street Lodge turn right, noting the delightful Queen Anne town house No 4 and the typical estate cottages next to it. You have now returned to the MUSEUM. On the corner of Park Street with Hastoe Lane there once stood a Quaker MEETING HOUSE. The burial ground is still there. Beyond the Museum in Park Road are LOUISA COTTAGES. Designed by Huckvale as almshouses for Rothschild estate pensioners, they were built in 1893 and 1901. (From this point you can extend your walk by exploring the "TRIANGLE", bounded by Park Road, Western Road/High Street and Akeman Street. This is an area of 19<sup>th</sup> century development, and contains three pubs. There is a café at the Museum.

Tring can be reached via the A41 Watford to Aylesbury road or the B488 from Dunstable. The station, on the Euston to Birmingham line, is situated about 1.5 miles to the north-east of the town. For information about public transport contact the Tring Information Centre 01442 823347 or see the website <a href="https://www.tring.gov.uk">www.tring.gov.uk</a>

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