

## A walk around Shaftesbury's blue plaques.

This is a short walk on mainly paved areas but has a few steps at the beginning and end.

*\*Notes to convert this to an accessible version are at the end of the text.*

The photographs are intended to give some architectural context and help the explorer to locate them.

1. Start the trail at the Gold Hill Museum. This is at the top of Gold Hill, just below the Town Hall.

Although there is no blue plaque on Gold Hill, there is a display board on the museum gate.



2. Turn towards the top of the hill and head for the steps.

The next plaque is on the wall, to your right, on Sun and Moon cottage.

*A priest's house for St Peter's Church in the C16th. Then the Sun and Moon Inn was at the heart of Shaftesbury's market days for over 200 years.*



3. Continue up the steps with St. Peter's church on your right.

At the top of the steps, turn around and look at the front of the Town Hall to see the plaque above.

*Built on the market place in 1827 by Earl Grosvenor who owned most of Shaftesbury, it replaced the open-arched New Guild Hall.*

*Clock tower added in 1879.*



4. Turn right and walk along the High Street with the Mitre pub on your right, crossing over to enter Swan's Yard on the left.

Head into the yard, which was once the site of a coaching inn. The plaque is a little way into the yard tucked into a wider area on the right. Take the opportunity to browse the shops, café and gallery in this charming pedestrian area before retracing your steps back onto the High Street.

*This yard is named after a noted coaching inn and assembly rooms known as 'The Three Swans' which stood on this site until about 1794.*



5. Continue along the High Street until you see the Post Office in front of you.

There is a plaque on the Post Office at the corner of Angel Lane.

*Site of the Angel Inn, home of Shaftesbury's first postmaster c. 1667.*

*A later building housed coachbuilders, then a car repairers.*

*Present Post Office opened in 1946.*



6. Walk up Angel Lane, taking care as this narrow road has no pavements. At the top, turn left. You are now on Bell Street. The next plaque is a short distance along, on The Retreat, to the left.

*Site of William Lush's Blue Coat school which gave free education, clothes and apprenticeships to poor boys from c. 1757 until 1870*



7. Continuing along Bell Street you will see the Arts Centre and a plaque to the left of the main entrance.

*Opened on 1st November 1957 in the former Market Hall, which ran from Bell Street to the High Street and was in use for nearly a century.*



8. At this point you can take the opportunity to see another plaque. This is not from the historical society but it marks the location of an old school. With your back to the Arts Centre, cross the road and walk into the main car park, keeping to the right of the tourist information centre. There is an architect's office on the far right hand side of the car park and the plaque is on the left hand gate post. Now, simply retrace your steps to the Arts Centre and continue the main trail.

*1723-1884. Miss Dunn's School, 1884-1923. Shaftesbury High School for girls, 1925-1983. Architects' offices of Philip Proctor from 1986.*



9. Just a few steps further along Bell Street, on the same side of the road as it bends to the left, you will see another plaque on the brick wall of a letting agency.

*Site of the George coaching inn. The present building housed the Victorian horse-drawn fire engine manned by volunteers.*



10. Carry on to the end of Bell Street where the road leads to The Commons and the T-junction. Stay on the left for a few more steps to see the next, and newest, of the town's blue plaques on the wall of the HSBC bank.

*John Rutter, 1796-1851. Printer, publisher, author, political and social reformer, abolitionist, public servant, philanthropist and lawyer worked here.*



11. Directly opposite the bank you will see the Grosvenor Arms and a plaque in front of you. At this point you have almost returned to the start point but there are a few more plaques to see if you wish to continue.

*The medieval New Inn, later the Red Lion, was a posting inn on the Great West Road. Bought by Earl Grosvenor in 1820 and renamed the Grosvenor Arms.*



12. Turning away from the Grosvenor Arms, cross over to The Commons and follow the narrow pavement, just until you reach the wall by the car park.

Turn to face the junction of Bimport and you will see a plaque directly opposite on the corner property. It is advisable to observe this one from the safety of the pavement by the car park as there is nowhere to stand below the plaque itself and this is often a busy junction.



*Site of Lord Arundel's town house c.1590, later the Rose & Crown Inn. Present building c. 1835 may include parts of the old house.*

13. Now continue along Bimport, the road in front of you, staying on the right hand side. Pass Castle Hill House and look for a property with an outward facing gable end. There is a plaque on the front of the gable with a Thomas Hardy reference.

*Ox House (c.1600), later enlarged, probably belonging to John Grove, a Shaftesbury benefactor.*

*Featured as 'Old Grove Place' in Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure.*



14. The next plaque is further along Bimport although the pavement runs out after Langfords Lane so take great care as you walk along this section. You will see a long cottage with a plaque on the front. This is the oldest house in Shaftesbury.

*The centre part of the house predates the Dissolution of Shaftesbury Abbey in 1539 and is the oldest house in Shaftesbury.*



Carefully retrace your steps as far as Langfords Lane and then turn right into this lane, continuing to the end and turning left. There are a few steps down onto the Pine Walk or, alternatively, keep walking along Love Lane until you see a kissing gate on the right. Go through the gate and you will arrive on Park Walk with beautiful views of the Blackmore Vale and Melbury Hill in front of you. Turn left along Park Walk, pass the war memorial and you will see Shaftesbury Abbey on the left. The Abbey ruins date from Saxon times and there is a museum and gardens, which are free to visit.

15. When you have finished at the Abbey continue along Park Walk, taking the left hand path when you reach the wedge-shaped house in front of you. This will bring you back to the High Street and the Town Hall. The last plaque is a short distance down the slope, to the right of the Town Hall. If preferred, this plaque can be viewed from the level area in front on the Town Hall, without the need to descend the slope. There is a wooden bench on the right and the plaque is directly opposite this.



*Nearby stood the medieval Guild Hall, replaced in 1569 by the New Guild Hall, which stood in the middle of the High Street*

†To make this walk step-free (or gate free) simply omit the display board at the Gold Hill museum and plaque 2 and begin your circuit at the Town Hall (3).

When you return along Bimport, after seeing the oldest house in Shaftesbury, ignore the turning into Langfords Lane and continue until you reach Abbey Walk. Turn right and follow the road until you reach the war memorial and then turn right onto Park Walk where you will rejoin the trail.

For more information on the blue plaques and the history of Shaftesbury visit Gold Hill Museum at <https://goldhillmuseum.org.uk>