

This is the second in a series of short Historic Walks around Yeovil. This walk features some of the finer Georgian residences. There is some overlap with Walk 1 and the two may be easily combined.

The walks are designed to be printed and carried with you on your walk. The various walks may be undertaken individually or grouped together. None are of any great distance and times will vary depending on the amount of time looking at each key point. [Walking directions are given in blue.](#)

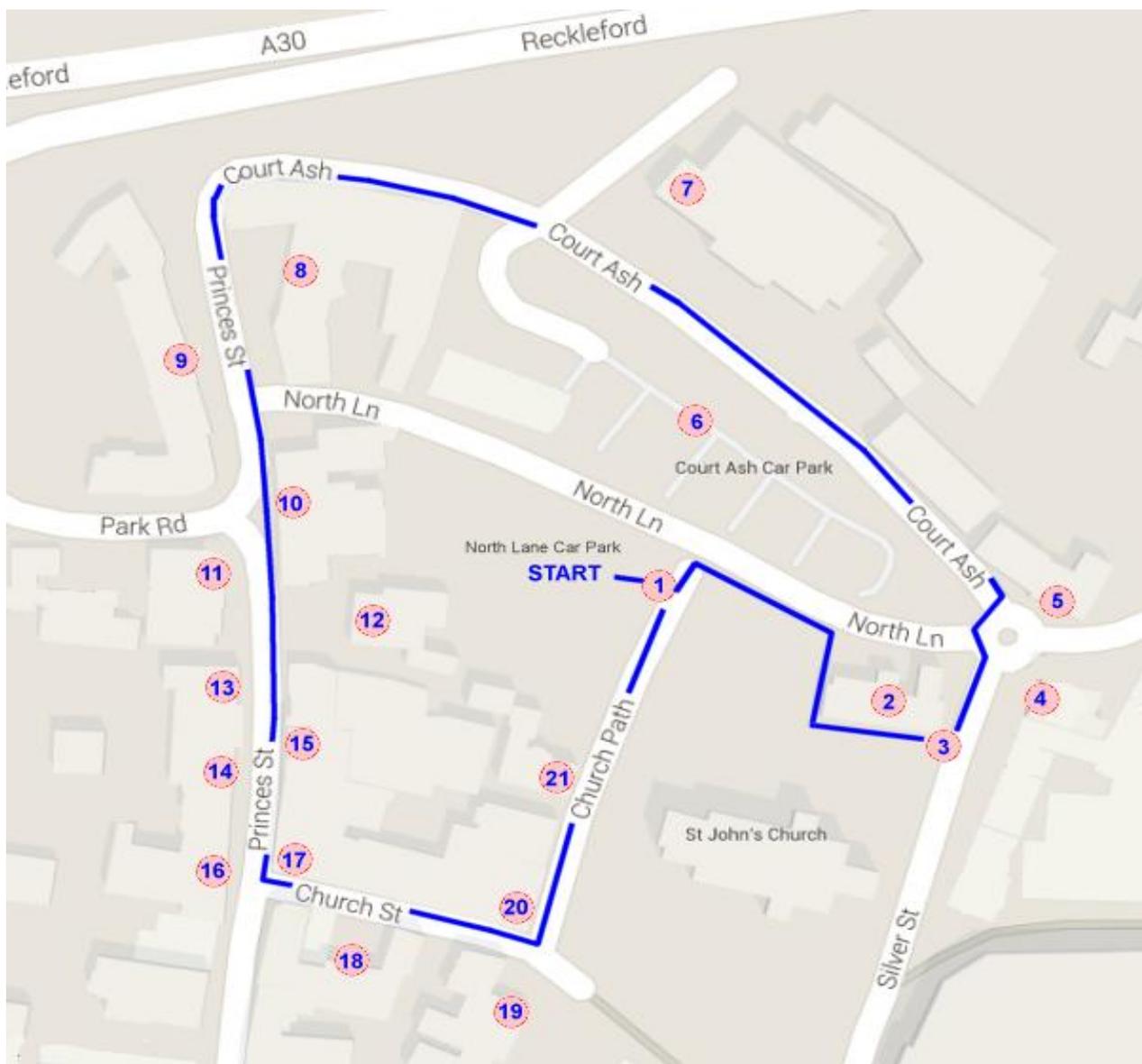
Key points on the walk are highlighted along the route and key facts are included. Most key points may be researched in greater depth on the A-to-Z of Yeovil's History website (www.yeovilhistory.info), either before or after your walk.

Walk 2: Georgian Yeovil (use your imagination to 'lose' modern shop fronts)

Distance: Half a mile

Time: 30 to 40 minutes at a slow amble, allowing time to read these notes.

Gradient: Mostly flat or slight gradient but there are steps at key point 3. To miss these it is suggested walking the route in reverse as far as key point 4, then continuing along North Lane to the car park (the start & finish of this walk).



Yeovil History Walk 2 - Georgian Yeovil

Architecturally, the Georgian period spans the years from 1714 to 1830, but often extended to 1837 to include the short reign of William IV. Within this timeframe, the Regency period (1811 to 1820) is a sub-period defined by the Regency of George IV as Prince of Wales during the illness of his father George III. During the Georgian period the road known as Cattle Market, became gradually 'gentrified' with the building of a number of grand residences, included in this brief walk. It was with this influx of the gentry that Cattle Market was renamed Princes Street to reflect this affluence.

START - North Lane Car Park Key Point 1 - North Lane House gateway

You are standing in what had been the garden (the whole of the car park) of North Lane House which was demolished in the 1970s. It was the home of the Raymond family and later the Vincent family.

Walk to the end of the car park, through the gateway in the wall into Church Path. Turn left to the end of Church Path then turn right and proceed to Church Terrace.



Key Point 2 - Church Terrace Now all offices and earlier known simply as Churchyard, Church Terrace is a short row of six attractive small Regency-style houses dating to the 1830s and originally intended for working class families (over 40 people lived here in the 1840s). By the end of the 19th century more affluent families lived here.

As you walk along the front of the terrace notice the fine obelisk tombstone of Mary Vining who died in childbirth. It was erected by her husband, solicitor James Tally Vining.

Walk down the steps to Silver Street.

Key Point 3 - Nun's Well To the immediate right of the steps was originally one of the town public wells, known as Nun's Well (Yeovil didn't have mains water until the middle of the 19th century) probably named for the nuns of the Convent of Syon, Middlesex, who were Lords of Yeovil from 1450 until the Dissolution in 1536.



Key Point 4 - The Pall Tavern A pall, or mortcloth, is a cloth which covers a coffin at funerals and for many years the sign of the Pall Tavern was based on an elaborate pall owned by the Woborn Almshouse that was hired out for such occasions. The original Woborn Almshouse, founded in 1477, was sited just behind the property that was to become the inn which has been trading since at least 1769 but was completely rebuilt in 1836.

Just outside the Pall Tavern, where Silver Street and Market Street meet, was a pond called the Horse Pool where the town's ducking stool had been sited. The Horse Pool was fed by a small stream called the Rackle - hence Rackleford or Reckleford, the ford across the Rackle. In fact Market Street, in a document dated 1355, is referred to as Ford Street although by the time

Pall Tavern was operating Market Street was called Reckleford (and colloquially known as Rotten Row), while the modern Reckleford was known as Reckleford Hill and Lower Reckleford. The Horse Pool was finally covered in during the early 1850's and the Rackle was piped underground.

Key Point 5 - Court Ash House The first of our Georgian residences on this walk, Court Ash House was built as a modest town house, probably in the late eighteenth century but was re-fronted around 1830. It is built of stone with a brick facade, now colour washed. A nice feature is the Regency-style door case and iron fret over. The house has for many years been used as offices.

Cross North Lane with care and proceed west along Court Ash.



Key Point 6 - The Fair Ground Now a car park, this area was known as The Kennels in Medieval times and was the town's archery butts and was also used for badger-baiting, cock fighting and dog fighting. More recently it was used as the sheep market. In the early part of the 19th century a rope walk had run from the very top, behind the Mansion House, to the very bottom, opposite the Pall Tavern. During the late 19th century a timber shed stood at its junction with Silver Street which housed the town's fire engine. The area was set up as an official market by the Corporation in 1892 with market buildings at the top end and sheep pens at the bottom end. This market ended in 1979.

[Walk to the entrance of the car park, then look to your right.](#)

Key Point 7 - The Odeon Cinema Opening in 1937 the eponymous 'Odeon Style' design of Yeovil's Odeon Cinema was supervised, like the majority of Odeon Cinemas, by Birmingham architect Harry Weedon, using signature cream faience tiles and brickwork to create a towering Deco-based edifice.

The Odeon chain of cinemas was owned by Oscar Deutsch and an important element in his success was the 'Odeon Style' featured here in Yeovil, which broke away from that of the traditional theatre that had previously influenced cinema design. In addition to the distinctive lettering of the logo, Odeons embraced the modern movement and Art Deco. Foyers, auditoriums and every aspect of these cinemas were integrated into the design. Contrasting strong vertical and horizontal lines, curved corners, buff-coloured glazed tile on the facades, the use of neon lights, and contemporary interior decor made Deutsch's houses stand out from their rivals.



[Continue walking west along Court Ash, rounding the corner by Batten's offices into Princes Street.](#)



Key Point 8 - The Mansion House The second of our Georgian residences on this walk, The Mansion House, is a town house built in the late 18th century by banker John Hutchings. The main house is of cut and squared local stone with Ham stone dressings under a Welsh slated roof behind a low parapet. It has a two-storey facade of three-bays, the entrance being in the right-hand bay. The door surround, seen at left, has attached Roman Doric unfluted columns supporting a plain entablature, which flanks a keyed semi-circular arched doorway. The extension to the south, Magnolia House, is late 19th century while the extension to the north is 20th century.

By 1830 it was home to George Rossiter's "Gentleman's Boarding Academy" and by 1840 James Morse ran a boarding and day school he called a "Classical, Mathematics, English, French and Commercial School" in Mansion House. By the 1870s it was the offices of solicitors Henry Shortland and Sidney Watts (who donated Sidney Gardens to the town). The Mansion House had housed various legal firms ever since.

[Turn around.](#)

Key Point 9 - The 'New' Shopping Centre of 1930 Contrasting with the Georgian theme of this walk, this run of shops wrapping around the corner into Park Road was heralded as the latest in modern shopping when opened in 1930. The central building of the new Parade in Princes Street featured a domed parapet but later Art Deco style corner building, although attractive, was simply an infill building.





Walk a few yards further south along Princes Street.

Key Point 10 - Four small Georgian houses For many years converted into a terrace of shops, these were originally all modest Georgian residences. At left, now divided into two shops, was originally a late 18th century residence.

Next, and again now split into two shop premises, was a town house built around 1750 and is the second-oldest building in the area.

Next along again is the oldest building in this area, originally a small 17th century town house built in Yeovil brick under a plain clay tiled roof, which almost certainly would have originally been thatched. The surviving original features of the elevation are the two first floor windows which are mullioned two-light windows in a transitional style between Tudor chamfered and Georgian. From about 1832 it was the home and law practice of Edwin Tomkins until his death in 1861.

Finally, presently occupied by the Mad Hatter joke shop, was originally a small eighteenth century town house still discernible behind the modern ground floor shop fronts and garish signage. In earlier times its red Yeovil brick frontage with golden Ham stone dressings would have given it the appearance of a fine residence, albeit somewhat less grand than its neighbours on the opposite side of the street.

On the corner of Princes Street and Park Road, opposite -

Key Point 11 - Old Sarum House Today it is in Princes Street but, when it was built, Old Sarum House was the last house in Hendford. The western side of today's Princes Street, from Westminster Street all the way to Park Road, had once been in the Manor of Hendford and consequently this section of the western side of the road was considered to be Hendford until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Old Sarum House is a fine, large three-storey house built in poor local limestone which has worn badly with Ham stone dressings. It was built about 1730 by Samuel Dampier (d1744), a wealthy clothier. Glove manufacturer John Ryall owned the house from 1778 until 1815. John Ryall Mayo became occupier of the house on his marriage in 1815 but inherited the house outright in 1818. He became Yeovil's first mayor in 1854. The house was one of the properties attacked and damaged by the mob of hundreds of protesters in the Yeovil Reform Riot of 1831.

In the 1940s part of the ground floor became 'The Jolly Farmer' coffee bar, later Pam's Pantry and later still it was the Chessman coffee bar of the 1960s. In 1961 the first and second floors were leased to accountants Harvey Preen, followed in the early 1980s by accountants Baker Rooke. Today it is an outlet of the Prezzo Italian restaurant chain.



Old Sarum House, seen in the 1920s.

Turn around

Key Point 12 - Glenthorne House This is a fine example of a Regency house, It was built as a villa around 1820 probably by Samuel Watts the Younger (1774-1843) a prominent Yeovil solicitor and banker. Certainly his son, Henry Marsh Watts, was living there in 1831 when the house was attacked and damaged by the mob of hundreds of protesters in the Yeovil Reform Riot of 1831. The house is, unfortunately, today ruined by the removal of the glazing bars in the windows facing Princes Street, the removal of the porch over the original entrance to the side and, worst of all, the addition of an unsightly and completely unsympathetic 1980s entrance simply tacked on to the Princes Street elevation. It retains a good parapet but its remaining chief feature of interest is the Regency lantern fanlight at the side entrance - unique in Yeovil and shown here.



Turn around again.



Key Point 13 - Bryndene Bryndene is a fine Grade II town house dating to about 1730. It is of 3 stories with 3 bays and has a ham stone ashlar facade under a shallow pitched Welsh slated roof behind a parapet. The fine doorway has stone fluted Tuscan pilasters, triglyphs and paterae [architect-speak for vertically channelled tablets of the Doric frieze and circular, dish-like ornaments] to the entablature and a broken segmental pediment. The ground floor has modern shop fronts to either side of the entrance but the 1st floor windows are of 12 pane sashes sets in stone architraves, with a band course dividing similar 9-paned windows above.

The building was the home of the Fooks family, glove manufacturers of Yeovil, certainly from about 1806. The 1846 Tithe Apportionment noted that Bryndene was owned and occupied by Henry Marsh Watts. Since at least 1935 the building has been a dental surgery.

Walk a short distance south along Princes Street.

Key Point 14 - Wyndham House Originally a town house, Wyndham House is now shops with offices over. It was built around 1820 as the Wyndham family's town house. By the 1851 it had become the residence of solicitor John Glyde and by 1911 it was the home of local draper John Gliddon.

It is three-storey, three-bays of Ham stone ashlar under a Welsh slate roof behind a low parapet. The bays are irregular, the right hand being narrower than the other two, with each end being defined by rusticated pilasters. The first floor has three windows each of 12 panes set in stone architraves (glazing bars to the lower casements now sadly removed and completely spoiling their appearance, not helped by the ghastly demi-awnings over) above which, separated by a string course, are matching second-floor windows, fortunately unadulterated. All the windows are set in stone architraves and feature 'marginal lights' - a typically Regency feature.

Unusually, set in the pavement in front of the building is a brass strip indicating the former boundary of the property when it was a private residence.

Turn around again.



Key Point 15 - The Assembly Rooms This grand building in Princes Street was home to the Princes Street Constitutional Club. The Assembly Rooms were built in 1888 (note the carved date above a 'Green Man' and the matching 'Green Beast' to the right) and opened the following year. The large Assembly Room itself, measuring 40 feet (12.2m) across by 65 feet (19.8m) deep, could accommodate a thousand people. Additionally, for the use of members, there was a billiards room, a cards room and a reading room.

In 1895 a permanent stage was built, complete with a proscenium arch and three dressing rooms, reducing the overall capacity of the venue to about 700. The Assembly Rooms was the first venue in Yeovil to show films - black and white one-reelers - from 1896 when Yeovil's first film license was granted. This was also the year that the very first public screening of a film in the UK took place in London.

The Princes Street Constitutional Club went into liquidation in 1939 and became known as the Princes Theatre and amateur productions were a frequent attraction until the 1970s. The Assembly Rooms are now converted to shops on the ground floor and offices above.



The Assembly Rooms in 1897

[Walk a short distance south along Princes Street.](#)



Key Point 16 - John Old's House The building known as John Old's House is a 17th century residence 'modernised' in the year 1714 by Yeovil mercer John Old the Younger - his initials "IO" and the date 1714 are on a lead rainwater head on the side of the house. Above it is a blocked 17th century window with a hood moulding in the gable end. John Old the Elder (d 1710) was a Yeovil mercer and was churchwarden in 1676. His son, John Old the younger, also a Yeovil mercer, was Custos and later Warden of Woborn Almshouse. His 'modernising' of the house included replacing the thatched roof with tiles and casement windows with sash windows. The house was later occupied by the Goodford family (John's daughter Mary married Samuel Goodford).

The house was acquired by Thomas Cave, who had established a brewery behind the house by 1825. He acquired the neighbouring property and owned at least one public house. Cave later went into partnership with Joseph Brutton and the brewery continued on both sides of Clarence Street until the 1970's.

[Turn around.](#)

Key Point 17 - Old Post Office The building (now an estate agent's) in Princes Street on the corner with Church Street, was Yeovil's General Post Office after it transferred from Silver Street in 1876.

In 1901 Henry Cobb was listed as being in charge of the 'Stamp Office'. It ceased to be a Post Office in 1902 when the new purpose-built Post Office opened in Middle Street (now the WH Smith building).

[Walk into Church Street.](#)



Key Point 18 - 4 Church Street Built in the Georgian style, No 4 Church Street was actually built during the late 1840s as a town house - it doesn't appear on Day's map of 1831 or Bidder's map of 1843 but is shown on the 1858 map of Yeovil. At the time of the 1842 Tithe Map the house had yet to be built on the site and the 1846 Tithe Apportionment noted that the plot was the Mermaid Garden and stretched all the way from Church Street as far as the northern side of the Princes Street entrance to the Mermaid Hotel's rear yard.



Of two storeys and five bays, it is built in cut and squared local stone, the same as St John's church (although probably not from the same quarry which was just north of the church), with Ham stone door and window surrounds, string course and cornice, under a Welsh slate roof.

[Walk a short distance east along Church Street just beyond Church Path.](#)



Key Point 19 - Church House Church House, facing St John's church, dates to about 1770 and is the finest remaining Georgian town house in Yeovil. It is built of stone with a frontage in Yeovil red bricks and Ham stone dressings, cornice and parapet.

It was probably built by the Batten family of solicitors and the house has played a prominent part in the town's legal affairs, being the home of the Battens from the 18th century. The house lost a wing during a Second World War bombing raid.

[Turn around.](#)

Key Point 20- St John's Schoolrooms On the corner of Church Path and Church Street, St John's Schoolrooms were built in 1854 and completely rebuilt in 1897 (see the date stone over the entrance in Church Path). During the whole of the Second World War the building was used as a canteen for servicemen as well as accommodation for fire watchers. In 1984 the ground floor was converted into shop premises, the first floor retained as church rooms at a peppercorn rent.



[Continue north along Church Path.](#)



Key Point 21 - The Chantry This building is probably early 14th century and was most likely associated with an earlier church. It was known as the 'Chantry Chapel of St Mary the Virgin without the Church' and was next to St John's church tower.

It was used as a schoolhouse from 1573 as the Charity Grammar School for boys. In 1854 it was moved to its present site and ceased to be used as a school in 1888.

[Continue north along Church Path, returning to the North Lane car park.](#)

I hope you enjoyed this walk and don't forget that full details and photographs of all the Key Points mentioned may be seen on the A-to-Z of Yeovil's History website - www.yeovilhistory.info