

## Towcester Timeline...

- 4000BC Mesolithic settlement near River Tove
- c100 BC Iron Age settlement
- 45-50 Construction of Roman fort
- 917 Fortification by Edward the Elder
- 12th c Construction of Bury Mount
- 13th c Towcester Market known to exist
- 1430 Sponne Grammar School founded, the oldest in Northamptonshire
- 1448 Sponne Chantry endowed
- 1641 Puritans destroyed stained glass in the church
- 1643 Prince Rupert occupied Towcester
- 1665 Plague in Towcester
- 1676 Great Fire of Towcester
- 1684 Market formally granted by Charles II
- 1722 First Non-Conformist church in the town
- 1796 Whole town inoculated against smallpox
- 1800 Grand Junction Canal opened
- 1820 James Mason Hutchings, discoverer of Yosemite, born
- 1838 Town lit by gas
- 1854 Cholera epidemic, led to improved public health and better housing
- 1866 Railway arrived at Towcester
- 1876 First race at Towcester Racecourse
- 1901 Fire destroyed Phipps Brewery
- 1948 First race at Silverstone
- 1958 M1 motorway opened
- 1970's Town expansion commenced
- 2006 Clearance of Bury Mount

## Further Information

### Where to stay

- Saracens Head Inn Tel: 01327 358255
- The Travelodge on the A43 Tel: 01327 359105
- Rignells Farm Barns Tel: 01327 350766
- Numerous guest houses in nearby villages

### Access

Towcester is halfway between London and Birmingham and between Oxford and Cambridge. The nearest railway stations are at Northampton and Milton Keynes. Junction 15A on the M1 is just a few miles away.

### For more information please Contact

- Towcester Town Council Tel: 01327 350995
- Towcester Library Tel: 01327 350794
- Brackley Tourist Information Centre Tel: 01280 700111

Towcester Business Directory [www.towcester-business.org](http://www.towcester-business.org)



**Cask ales rotating include:**

- Eagle
- Bombardier
- Guest Ales


Cask Marque Accredited

**Families welcome**

- Table Service • Excellent food
- Sunday lunch

**Tel: 01327 350275**  
[www.the-folly-inn.co.uk](http://www.the-folly-inn.co.uk)

London Road, Towcester - on the A5 opposite the Racecourse entrance.



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# Towcester

*The Hidden Gem of  
Northamptonshire*



**Towcester -**

*embracing the future*

*enhancing the present*

*honouring the past*

# Events and Attractions

## Nearby Attractions

### Sulgrave Manor

The ancestral home of George Washington's family in England. Described as "a gentle stroll through three centuries of English history", this lovely 16th century manor house contains the largest collection of George Washington memorabilia in the country. **Tel: 01295 760205**

### Stoke Bruerne

A picturesque Northamptonshire Village on the Grand Union Canal. A flight of 7 locks, a canal museum (**Tel: 01604 862229**) and trips up the canal to the Blisworth Tunnel are available.

### Rookery Open Farm, Stoke Bruerne

This is a commercial sheep farm open to the public, with a pet's corner and many other child-centred activities. **Tel: 01604 864855**

### Old Dairy Farm, Stowe Nine Churches

This is a country shopping and craft centre, with many boutique type shops, and an excellent café. Some animals are on show, and in season there are lambing weekends, and a unique living manger prior to Christmas. **Tel: 01327 340525**

### Canons Ashby

Elizabethan Manor House, National Trust. Open afternoons. **Tel: 01327 860044**

### Billing Aquadrome, Northampton

Amusement Park. Open March - November **Tel: 07850 463500**

### Althorp House

Home of the Spencer family, and burial place of Princess Diana. Open July - August **Tel: 01604 770107**

## Towcester Events

### Midsummer Music

Held on the Saturday nearest to Midsummer Day, the town is alive with a wide range of music at various locations throughout the town.

### Christmas Fair

Held on a Thursday night near Christmas, with carol singing in the Square, hot chestnuts, mulled wine, & mince pies.

### May Day Fair and Duck Race

May Day Bank Holiday, Towcester Recreation Ground.

### Farmers Market

Second Friday in the month, Richmond Road Car Park, 9am - 1pm.

Further information on events. Tel: 01327 350995.



This leaflet has been partially sponsored by Towcester Racecourse

## Nearby Attractions

### Towcester Centre for Leisure

Gym, and swimming pool with flume and waves. **Tel: 01327 322480**

### Towcester Race Course

This National Hunt Racecourse hosts 18 meetings a year. Racing takes place Oct - Jun, including Boxing Day and Easter Sunday. Free admission except Easter and Christmas. **Tel: 01327 353414**

### Wakefield Farm Shop and Country Courtyards

Farm shop, tea rooms, independent shopping. **Tel: 01327 811493**

### Stowe Gardens

Breathtakingly beautiful gardens forming the grounds of Stowe School. National Trust. **Tel: 01494 755568**

### Silverstone

The nearby village of Silverstone is home to the British Grand Prix every year. Formula 1 testing (free admittance) takes place several times a year, contact the circuit for dates. **Tel: General 08704 588 200, Testing 08704 588 249**

### Heart of the Shires Shopping Village

A5 north of Weedon. A wide selection of independent stores selling quality items from cookware to pet foods, the Heart of the Shires is a great place to visit. There is also a restaurant. **Tel: 01604 864624**

### Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes

Home of the WW2 codebreakers. Open all year. **Tel: 01908 640404**

### Milton Keynes Shopping Centre

Open all year round, 15 miles south on the A5.

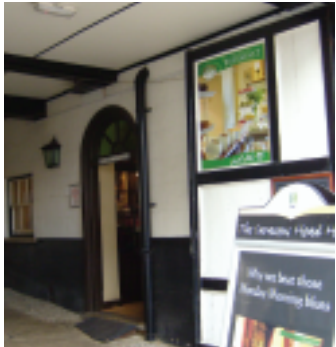
# About Towcester

## Welcome...

Welcome to Towcester, the hidden gem of Northamptonshire. Within this ancient market town on the edge of the Cotswolds there exists a story that reflects much that constitutes English history, making it well worth a visit.

Towcester is the oldest town in Northamptonshire, with evidence of Mesolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age settlements. It is mostly associated with the Romans, who built a station here on their Watling Street route to Chester and North Wales, called Lactodorum. Traces of Roman occupation can still be found around the edge of the old town. Watling Street later became the frontier between Dane and Saxon, making Towcester a frontier town.

Still associated with Watling Street, many people have passed through the town, not only in cars, but also in stage coaches. Charles



Dickens is associated with the Saracen's Head Inn; Queen Victoria is rumoured to have stayed at the White Horse as a Princess; [Prince Rupert](#) put cannon on the top of Bury Mount during the Civil War. John Wesley preached here; the writer Naomi Jacob spent time here as a child; and the discoverer of the Yosemite Valley

in California, James Mason Hutchins, was born here.

[Thomas Sheppard](#), who helped to found Harvard University, was also from Towcester. Born on 5th November 1605, his birth coincided with the intended terrorist attack on the Houses of Parliament by Guy Fawkes. A Puritan, he emigrated to Boston in 1635, and became the first minister of Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is due to his Biblical and powerful preaching that that town was chosen as the site for Harvard University.



Many of the houses fronting Watling Street were [Inns](#), to cater for the travellers passing through on Watling Street. The White Horse and Saracen's Head had competition from the Talbot Inn, now the Sponne

Shopping Arcade, for the large coaches, but there were other, smaller, establishments — the Wheatsheaf, Nelson's Arms, the Plough, the Dolphin, the Swan, the Horse and Jockey, the Peacock, the Sun, and the Bull Inn, to name but a few. Situated at the cross-roads of Watling Street, and the Northampton - Oxford road, and also being a market town, meant there were many customers for the inns. Before the railway arrived, more than 14 stage coaches ran through the town. By 1841, however, there were just two. The opening of the M1 similarly reduced the amount of traffic through the town.

[Bury Mount](#), behind the High Street on the evocatively named Moat Lane, was, until recently, an undiscovered gem. A 12th century motte and bailey castle, it is thought to be an "adulterine" castle erected without the usual licence to crenelate, during the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, and is now a scheduled Ancient Monument. Recent clearance of the undergrowth has revealed an impressive structure, as tall as the surrounding three-storey buildings.



The town of Towcester is the same shape as many seaside towns, owing to the [Easton Neston](#) Estate on the eastern edge of town, which extends to the Mill Leat alongside Bury Mount.

Owned for centuries by the Fermor-Hesketh family, the house and park are not in general open to the public. Bury Mount was planted with Scots Pine to provide a feature in a vista from the house, which was erected around 1700 by the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor, who was a student of Sir Christopher Wren, for the 1st Baron Lempster, William Fermor. The nearby church of St Mary is still a parish church, actively used for services, and is the burial place of the Fermor-Hesketh family, with many ancient tombs. There is also an early wall painting and box pews. The church is currently only open for services, first Saturday of the month at 6pm, but is well worth a visit.



More up-to-date pursuits are available at the spectacular setting of Towcester Racecourse, and the

Silverstone Motor Racing Circuit. Silverstone is world-famous for staging the British Grand Prix, and hosted the first ever Formula 1 World Championship race on 13 May 1950. A new Tourist Information and Visitor Centre at the entrance to the circuit now welcomes people all year round.

# Places of Interest in Towcester

## Architectural Features

The **High Street** hides its great age behind the mostly Georgian fronts of the houses. Once inside, however, many reveal their true antiquity with stone walls and exposed beams. The oldest is the **Chantry House**, in the Market Square, which is 15th Century. Many others date from 1676, when a fire ravaged Towcester, reducing at least 85 houses to rubble.



The Italianate-styled **Town Hall** is mid-Victorian, adding an instantly recognisable building to the Towcester skyline, and **St Lawrence's Church** nearby dates from the 12th century, although a church has stood here since Saxon times. Earlier still, a Roman public building stood on the site, remains of which have been found in several places.



The **tomb** of Archdeacon Sponne (died 1448) inside is worth a visit, revealing a depiction of his corpse beneath the elaborate table-top tomb. The churchyard, with the mill stream running across the end, is a quiet oasis in our busy world.

Several buildings show signs of the town's coaching past. The **Saracens Head** Inn was built in the 16th century, and the arch through which the coaches passed is still the main entrance to the hotel. Charles Dickens stayed here, and mentioned the inn in the *Pickwick Papers*.

## Shopping

Towcester's shops provide for day-to-day needs, as well as specialist shopping. The shop now occupied by Elliott's on the Market Square has been a butcher's shop, serving Towcester for at least 200 years. The smallest shop in Towcester is located on the junction of the Market Square with Park Street. Many of the shops are independently owned.

There are several places available to enjoy **meals**, ranging from cups of tea to a full three course dinner, including Indian, Chinese, and

Italian cuisine. In addition to the restaurants, several of the town's plentiful supply of pubs serve food, for example the Saracen's Head, the Plough, the Brave Old Oak, and outside the town opposite the racecourse, the Folly.

A landscaped footpath links the town centre with the **Leisure Centre**, passing a small **Adventure Playground**

along the way. The Local History Society has produced a **Town Trail** leaflet, available from St Lawrence Church. A skateboard ramp and a further **play area** are located at the Recreation Ground across the Silverstone Brook.



## Parking

The whole town is encompassed within walking distance. There is free parking in Richmond Road car park behind Waitrose supermarket, and on the Northampton Road. Coach parking is available (for patrons of the inn) at the Bull, on Brackley Road, or in Waitrose car park.

