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OUR BEAUTIFUL BOROUGH



A HISTORICAL STROLL ALONG
ECCLESHALL
HIGH STREET

Welcome to the captivating story of some of Eccleshall's historic buildings, sited on both sides of the town's beautiful High Street.

Originally produced by The Ecclain Society and **“dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of Eccleshall, a unique country town of historical interest”**, this digital guide has been recreated to provide 21st Century visitors with mobile-friendly insight into the origins of our most stunning architecture.





In addition to our stories of yesteryear, a traditional warm and friendly country welcome awaits you. Our independent shops, friendly boutiques and outstanding eateries are all in easy strolling distance.

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Shaftesbury House [01]

2 High Street, Grade II Listed

It is probable that Eccleshall's Moot Court met on this site from the **12th century to the end of the Middle Ages**. Moot is a Saxon word for a general meeting. In the Moot Court the lord of the manor decided issues of law and order. He dealt with those duties and services owed by villeins and peasants to the lord of the manor and to the community.

The Court Leet was held here, too. This Court had many powers. It oversaw the maintenance of water courses and ditches, roads and paths. It supervised the use of common land and prevented unlawful enclosures. It dealt with “every felony at common law”, punishing people for crimes ranging from minor assaults through arson, burglary, larceny, manslaughter and murder, to treason. **The Plea Rolls for 1473 tell us:**

“William Gunne sued Thomas Brasevelle of Eccleshall, girdeler, and William Grene of Eccleshall, tailour, for breaking into his close and houses in Eccleshall, taking his goods and chattels to the value of 40s, and abducting his servants Joan Walton and Katrine Stokton, so that he lost their services for a length of time. The defendants did not appear, and the Sheriff was ordered to arrest and produce them on the Octaves of St John the Baptist.”

Furthermore, the Court Leet dealt with such issues as the adulteration of food, checking weights and measures, and even people’s morals if they affected the community at large.

After Tudor times the Moot and Leet courts were gradually replaced by other courts and the building was eventually pulled down and replaced. In 1686, the earliest record shows that one Catherine Wilcox lived here. **The premises were occupied by Walter Blakeman's confectionery business from 1822 to 1842 and Turner's bakery and tea rooms from 1868 to 1931.** More recently Dora Jones, née Turner, ran a sweet shop and tobacconists in these premises for approximately thirty years.





6 High Street [02] Grade II Listed

Charles Barrett, timber merchant, builder and ironmonger, had his workshop and yard on this site **before 1871**. He built the first Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Stone Road. By right of a medieval royal charter, Eccleshall had a weekly market on Fridays. In the 19th century traders sold meat, butter, eggs, and poultry from under the arches of the Crown and Royal Oak Inns. The market prospered and **in 1884** this unusual timber fronted building jutting out over the pavement was built by public subscription at a cost of £700 as a market hall.

In the **1990s** when boxes of documents were being cleared from the ex-Congregational Church on Horsefair, where the post van was garaged, documents referring to an early **19th century reading club** were found. The club met in the market hall and its first honorary secretary was estate agent Mr T. H. Garlick.

The new fashion of Penny Readings caught hold of the popular fancy and, during winter months, people met publicly to read aloud and play instruments for entertainment. One Penny Reading, held at the Royal Oak rather than in the market hall, attracted an audience of over 350 people. The chairman and organiser on that occasion was the High Street wine merchant Samuel Yates.

[02]





17, 19 & 21 High Street [03] Grade II Listed

Before 1793 there were three separate cottages on this site. Early tenants included a seamstress, a shoemaker, a felt maker, Sir John Pershall's tithe man, John Eardley, a waggoner, a butcher and Robert Turner, who built his cottage for £100.

Number 17 was an ale house believed to have been called the Cock Inn. A trapdoor led down to the cellar where the stillages for the beer casks and the channels in the floor to take away accidental spillage are still in existence.

Mr Tunnicliffe, a draper, purchased the three cottages in the last decade of the 18th century. **In 1793** he converted them into one building. This development can be dated fairly accurately thanks to the discovery of shop bills and messages bearing that date. The papers had been used by a plasterer to fill a gap at the foot of the stairs. Tunnicliffe fitted a Georgian façade with a round attic window. **Number 19 has a plain stuccoed surround, a cornice hood and a heavily battened oak door.** There was originally a horse and cart access to the backyard through an entry between numbers 19 and 21.

The arched passage-way was narrowed to form the present entrance to number 19 but the outline of the arch is still evident at the rear of the premises. In the back buildings are two large copper boilers by an open fireplace. It is thought that these were used for dying fabrics for the shop. **Number 21 was a draper's for over 150 years.**

In 1821 Emery and Tunncliffe had stock worth over £2000 at a time when a farm labourer might earn 14 shillings (70 pence) a week. Census returns show that Henry Garlick worked at the shop **from 1851 until at least 1891** and as proprietor for the last thirty years. Mr and Mrs Alfred Lees bought the shop and house in 1940. They retired at the end of World War 2. In the post-war years number 17 was used as a branch of The National Provincial Bank. The door was where the bay window is at present. Alfred's son, Kenneth and his wife Betty, carried on the business until 1985, although they sold numbers 17 and 19 as a single dwelling in 1976. **Since 1985 number 21 has had a variety of commercial uses.**



[03]



The Crown [04]

23 High Street, Grade II Listed

The Crown is one of the oldest buildings on the High Street **dating from the early 16th century**. This is a cruck frame house with three bays facing the street. The cruck frames are still evident in the upper rooms. Outside, the large sandstone foundation blocks can be seen. The cellars are extensive and have arched brick roofs.

Stables and cowsheds behind the building indicate that farming was one of the activities carried on here. In the **middle of the 17th century** James Paddy worked in metal and was also the innkeeper. It was an inn and public house from then until the end of the 20th century when it became a doctors' surgery. The building was carefully adapted and retains many of its original features.

In the **18th and 19th centuries** the cowsheds and stables catered for the needs of The Crown's customers. At this time Eccleshall was a major staging post on the coaching route from London to Wales and the North West. During the prosperous early 19th century the building was transformed. It was given a bay-windowed, brick-built front and its first floor was extended out over the pavement. The colonnade has four round-headed bays with moulded keystones. The alterations provided two public meeting rooms upstairs and the covered arcade for market traders.

The Crown became a local public house and in the mid 19th century its kitchens could cater on a grand scale. **From 1841 to 1880** the landlady was Mrs Elizabeth Walters. Lord Stafford annually used The Crown for his rent dinners. It was noted that in 1868 Mrs Walters and her four servants provided the harvest dinner for nearly two hundred farmers and their labourers.





The Royal Oak [05] 25 High Street, Grade II Listed

This is the oldest public house in Eccleshall. In 1640 it was called The Garland, but by 1670 it had become The Three Tuns. Its present name **commemorates the Civil War adventure of Charles II when, in 1651, he allegedly escaped capture by hiding in an oak tree** after the Battle of Worcester. The building is much older than the event it celebrates.

It is thought that the Lancastrian Queen Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, and her son Edward, the Prince of Wales, who were staying at the castle as guests of Bishop Halse, visited the inn to encourage their supporters before the battle of Blore Heath during the **Wars of the Roses in 1459**. The Yorkists won the battle and the Queen and the Prince fled.

During the **18th and 19th centuries** The Royal Oak was one of Eccleshall's several coaching inns. The Royal Mail Coach carried Irish mail the 280 miles from London via Eccleshall and Chester to Holyhead. This use of the inns was fairly short lived, however, because in **1812** the renowned engineer Thomas Telford improved the A5 route so much of Eccleshall was by-passed. The long-distance trade dwindled away and was replaced by shorter carriage links to railway stations in Norton Bridge, Stafford and Stone. Eccleshall's inns then declined and became public houses. The land on the south side of the Royal Oak car park was for many years a bowling green and the head quarters of the Eccleshall Bowling Club.

In 1860 a large first floor assembly hall was built adjoining the main building.

This was used by the Court of Petty Sessions as well as for private functions and public events like the Boxing Day Farmers' and Traders' Ball.

The long-standing market of local produce was held under the arches of The Royal Oak and The Crown until a market hall was built across the road in 1884. Influential local men like Henry Millward, maltster, and Samuel Yates, wine and spirits merchant, had been landlords. In recent times landlords have included Geoff Hurst, the England footballer, and Mr and Mrs Colin Rawlins.

[05]





London House [06] 28 High Street, Grade II Listed

Jeoffry (sic) Snelson, paid £50 to have this house **built in 1717**. At that time, to give some idea of relative values, it would have taken a farm labourer ten years to earn this amount. Snelson was a mercer, a dealer in textiles, particularly linen, and as was the common practice in **the 18th and 19th centuries** his house was his shop and workplace as well as his home.

He had it built of brick with extensive cellars and a clay tile roof, rather than thatch. It has been rendered but much of the joinery in the upper storeys is original. The name London House came from the proceeds of the family's pottery and clothing businesses in Lambeth, London.

In the **16th century** the Snelson family had lived three miles away at Greatwood. When the house was complete they moved away from Greatwood and Jeffry's son, Thomas, worked and lived in this house until 1760. The family had considerable wealth and commemorated itself in Holy Trinity Church with a plaque dedicated to Thomas by his son Jeffry. This is on the left wall beyond the choir stalls in the sanctuary, near the altar. This second Jeffry, 1749-1812, was a Church of England vicar, serving, among other places, at Hanbury near to Tutbury in Staffordshire. The descendants of the family live in Canada and they still visit their home town from time to time.

By the time of **the 1871 census** Elijah Thomas, a saddler, lived at The London House. Since then it has had a varied life being in turn an estate agent's, a grocer's, a general store and café and lately The London House Restaurant.



35 High Street [07]

Despite its present appearance, this is probably the location of the oldest building on the High Street. The first known building was **a 12th century lodge** to Usulwall Manor, which was then on the site of Usulwall Close. In **the 15th century** the lodge was rebuilt as a town house. It still has two Tudor fireplaces and chimney stacks.

The earliest deeds show that the property, a burgage, was held on a copyhold lease from the Manor of Eccleshall. Hints of its past have been found in modern times.

In the 1930s charcoal drawings were uncovered on a wall in an upstairs room. Consultations with the Victoria and Albert Museum dated them from the 15th century and confirmed the building's early date. In the 1950s, 18th century round-ended bottles and white wig powder were found in one of the ancient cupboards.

The **18th and 19th century** records link the building to the major Eccleshall occupations, farming and leather working. In 1781 the lease holder was butcher John Hawkins. Later occupiers were George Hubbard from Cheadle in 1823 and Edward Barlow from Stone in 1827. After him William Clinton, a currier who prepared tanned hides for use in the leather trader, held the property for a down payment of £12 and a yearly rent of 6d. Clinton died in 1836 and when his family died out in 1883 the Court of Chancery sold the lease to Charles Bennion, a butcher.

At that time the property had a slaughterhouse, stables and other outbuildings, yard and garden. Martin Hart, a butcher and Fire Captain, rented the property from Charles Bennion. His son Charles bought the lease in 1926. In 1952 Charles Hart sold the property to a butcher, Stanley Greaves. **In recent times the building's business use has changed frequently.**

[07]





The Old Fire Station [08]

Grade II Listed

In **August 1891** a public-spirited document was signed between neighbours John Hawkins and John Challinor. This was an agreement to resite the boundary between the Old Fire Station and number 35.

Hawkins had agreed to move his boundary line to give the extra space needed for an engine house and building.

This distinctive building was erected by a Mr Heywood in **the mid 19th century** specifically as a fire station. It had two horse-drawn “Merryweather” fire-fighting hand pumps. They were bought by public subscription. One, “Eagle”, is on display at the fire station on Newport Road, Eccleshall; the other, “Owl”, is in the County Museum at Shugborough.

In the 19th century there was a drill for coping with fires. Whoever spotted a fire ran to the house of the nearest voluntary fireman shouting, **“Fire! Fire! Fire!”** The fireman, having ensured that it was not a false alarm, ran and rang the alarm bell which was on the station roof, to summon his colleagues to the emergency. These local workmen dropped whatever they were doing and raced to the station. They commandeered horses to pull the pumps to the fire. The owner of the horses was paid later. Local lads were paid to man the pumps.

At the end of the 19th century Martin Hart, a butcher and tenant of number 35, was appointed to be the first Fire Captain. He led a team of retained volunteers and kept the horses stabled behind his shop, very close to the station ready for use in a crisis. This also meant he was usually first to respond and therefore ensured his payment. Fire fighting continued in this way throughout two world wars. **During the Second World War** an air raid siren was mounted on the station roof and the key kept on a hook in the Police Station.

After 1945 the fire station continued in use under the control of the County Fire Service. Telephones and new equipment were introduced. The dedicated volunteers continued, and still continue, at the business end of the operation. In 1984 a new fire station was built on Newport Road. The old station closed and although the building has since been put to a variety of new commercial uses, its appearance has changed very little.





Peel House [09]

45 High Street, Grade II Listed

The first record of a building on this site shows that **in 1696** a house here belonged to Sir Thomas Pershall. He leased it to a widow, Ann Griffiths, and she sub-let it to Robert Baggaley a shoemaker who rented a workshop and stable from the widow. He had an apprentice and servants working for him.

The present imposing Georgian style building dates from the **early 19th century**. Built by a lawyer, its size and self importance is embellished by its bold Doric-columned doorway.

By the 1870s it had come down in the world and was again one of Eccleshall's several shoe making establishments owned by Charles Ankers. Subsequently Ankers sold the property to John Henry Glover, a shoe dealer.

During the 20th century trade gave way to authority. **Between 1851 and 1892** the town's police station and lock-up had been in Stafford Street, next to the Kings Arms. In 1892 it was moved, initially to 49 High Street. In the early Edwardian years of the 20th century a magistrates' court and cells were built behind number 45. **In 1911** Staffordshire County Council bought the house for use as the police station. Initially the establishment comprised a sergeant and two constables but later increased to two sergeants and five constables. The building served as the area police station for most of the century. It was sold in 1998, the police having moved to their modern office on Stone Road. The police station and the court room were then refurbished as a house and apartments, the main residence being appropriately named "Peel House."



46 & 48 High Street [10]

Numbers 46 and 48 were originally a single house. Bishop Lloyd's records show that it was **built before 1696** for John Harrison. The outbuildings included barns, stables, a malthouse and cart house plus a back house, a garden and an orchard. The main house was built on both sides of Perle Brook so that there was water for livestock. The culverted brook still runs beneath the passageway dividing the two properties and is visible to the rear of number 48, The Mercer's House.

A later John Harrison sold the property to Thomas Harrison and **until 1740 it was a bakery**. By the end of the 18th century it had been divided into two. Thomas Harrison had the “upper” part, 48 (i.e. nearer to the Church), along with the barns, stables, and the back part of the property, but not the back house. Yet another John Harrison had the “lower” house, 46, along with the back house, malt house, cart house together with the garden and orchard. The building was treated to a make over in the **late 18th century**, giving it an up-to-date Georgian style frontage in Flemish Bond brickwork. The hooded door case and bay windows are 19th century additions.

Both houses continued as residential and business properties in the 19th century. **In 1831** Samuel Yates set up his wine and spirits business at 46 and 44. This was subsequently sold at the end of the century to Henry Millward, the landlord of the Royal Oak. **The 1851 census** records that James Nance, surgeon, lived and had his practice at number 48. He was followed by other surgeons and physicians who practised here well into the 20th century.



Church Lodge [11] 70-72 High Street

The deeds of the house and information from censuses show that **until 1876 there were three dwellings** described as “freehold messuages or tenements” on this site, possibly with another small dwelling house behind them. A messuage is a house, its outbuildings and the site on which they were built.

The cottages faced the street and had long, narrow plots known as burgages, stretching north towards the meadow.

During alterations to the house in the 1980's evidence of the old cottages was found.

In 1876 Fredrick GreatRex, a solicitor living and practising in Stafford, bought the properties and redeveloped the site. His father, Christopher GreatRex, was a General Practitioner in Eccleshall for sixty years and lived in Lonsdale House, now Lonsdale Court. He died in 1880 and is buried in Holy Trinity churchyard. Fredrick Greatex demolished the old buildings and erected “two new brick and tile dwellings.” Church Lodge was the larger part of the building. This included the door on the left and the bay windows. Church Lodge Cottage was the smaller house next to the entry.

Church Lodge was let successively to William Garlick, draper's assistant, Elizabeth Kinnersley, Joseph Wright, an elementary schoolmaster and **from 1927 to 1949** to Mr Arthur Ibbs. He acted as registrar of births and deaths, school attendance and relieving officer. In later years the owners included the local veterinary surgeons, a retired engineer and a retired vicar.

Church Lodge Cottage was occupied initially by the Seabridge family. Peter Seabridge was the postman and Parish Clerk. He died in the belfry of Holy Trinity Church and a plaque to his memory is on the wall just inside the church. **From the time of the First World War until 1982 members of the Tildesley family lived here.**

In 1982 the two houses were combined into one property known as Church Lodge and the frontage of the house was changed by the creation of a garage.

[11]





Holly House [12]

80-82 High Street, Grade II Listed

Holly House stands next to the lych-gate of Holy Trinity Church. Behind it there is an extensive building. The deeds show that this was originally a malt house. It has a blue brick ground floor constructed three or four feet below the level of the churchyard. This was to provide a humid atmosphere for the germination of the barley. The two floors above have external doors that were originally for the receipt of the barley and the discharge of the malt.

In living memory there was a manual hoist on the second floor, part of which was still covered with gypsum plaster over wooden slats and straw, a surface commonly used in malt houses during the 18th and 19th centuries. A two storey coach house and stables with an external staircase were demolished in the 1960s.

In the 1870s Holly House was used as a Gentlemen's boarding school for thirteen boys aged from ten to fifteen. Joseph Bernard, born in Gnosall, was the headmaster and his mother acted as housekeeper. A teacher's assistant, a governess and two domestic servants also lived there.

From 1881 to 1891 the school was based in Claremonte House on Stone Road. By 1901, in the days before old age pensions or occupational pensions, Mr Bernard had been admitted to Stone workhouse.

The census of 1891 shows that Holly House was the home of Mr Matthew Plant, his wife Jane and their eight children. Mr Plant was an "ale and porter merchant and bottler." He probably used the back buildings for his work and two of his sons became "merchant's assistants". He died in 1908.

At the turn of the 19th century, Charles Myatt lived here. He was a builder and erected some of the houses on Stafford Road. The house was bought in 1913 by Thomas Weston, who used the outbuildings as workshops for his carpentry business.

Despite the many changes of occupant and the variety of domestic and commercial uses to which the associated buildings have been put, **the appearance of the house has changed little since the 19th century.** The building behind Holly House was converted into a separate dwelling between 1976 and 1982 and is called The Malthouse today.

[12]



STAFFORD BOROUGH TIME TO EXPLORE

Stafford Borough boasts **three beautiful towns**, each offering unique experiences, and a patchwork of **charming villages** set in idyllic rural locations.

A traditional, warm and friendly country welcome awaits you in **Eccleshall** with its independent shops, friendly boutiques and outstanding eateries.

The County Town of **Stafford** offers big-brand retail therapy, great food, exciting nightlife, exceptional accommodation and historical attractions steeped in tradition.

As a canal town, **Stone** enjoys relaxing waterside walks, fantastic shops, friendly restaurants and welcoming pubs. Regular artisan markets capture a true community spirit.

Our choice of charming **villages** includes Hixon, Haughton, Weston, Gnosall, Hilderstone, Barlaston, Swynnerton and Woodseaves to name but a few – all ready to be explored!

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