

HALESOWEN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE TRAIL

Introduction

Halesowen Town Centre can be traced back to the 1086 Domesday Survey although the manor and town of 'Halas' is thought to be Anglo-Saxon. 'Halesowen' is from the early Anglo-Saxon 'Halas' meaning nook/remote valley and the Medieval Welsh name 'Owen'. From the early C13th, it was a thriving market town due to Halesowen Abbey, becoming a local centre for woollen cloth weaving and as a regional market centre for corn.

In 1220 a market charter was obtained by the Abbey's Abbot, enabling a Wednesday market. King Henry III bestowed a Borough Charter in 1270 and in 1344 a further grant was obtained for a Monday market and a four-day fair in June at the Feast of St Barnabas. Following the dissolution of the Abbey, the 1539 Church Warden's accounts show replanning, including a new market hall and street layout. In 1609 the Lady of the Manor had the original 1344 grant reconfirmed resulting in the Monday market continuing until 1868 when market day was changed to Saturdays.

The town's position next to the River Stour provided access to waterpower for industry, commills and by the C17th metal forging. Nail making was the main post medieval industry and many of the mills were used for slitting and iron production. From the mid C19th, button production was also significant in the area. The town centre has not altered significantly in size since that time although a redevelopment scheme in the early 1960's saw a major programme of demolition and redevelopment throughout the town, resulting in the loss of many of Halesowen's older structures including a few examples of 'half-timbered' buildings. Despite this however the original street patterns were retained, which together with the remaining older buildings help to capture the unmistakably historic character of Halesowen which is designated as an 'archaeological priority area' due to its high potential for medieval and industrial archaeological remains.

1 Cornbow Centre

Up until the construction of 'The Precinct' in the 1960's (renamed the Cornbow Centre c.1980's), historic buildings fronted Hagley Street including Nos. 26-27, 32, 33 Hagley Street, which had at their rear with a large 'Garden Pool Orchard'. The trees and pool were clearly depicted on the town's first edition Ordnance survey map (1881-87).

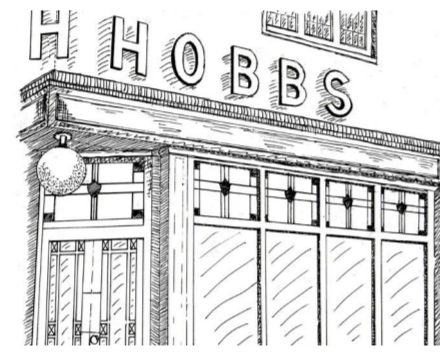
Exit Great Cornbow on Hagley Street, into the heart of the town. Immediately opposite, at trail point 1a, is a run of 1960s shops and banks (3-22 Hagley Street), where a chapel once stood.

2 Somers Square

On the right is 'Somers Square', named after Walter Somers (C19th forgemaster), once the site of a very tight junction between Great Cornbow and Hagley Street. Hagley Street was considerably narrower, the terrace of Great Cornbow extending into the square by an additional four buildings! 1930's remodelling resulted in 27 Great Cornbow/Hobbs becoming an end of terrace building instead of a mid-terrace building.

3 27 Great Cornbow/Hobbs (Locally Listed)

A glimpse into how Hagley Street used to look, this is an early C19th building, retaining its original first and second floor sliding sash windows, Art Deco style stained glass and green shield motif of the transom lights. Its side elevation and shopfront show how it became a corner plot.



15 The Lyttleton Arms and 87-89 High Street (all Locally Listed)

The tall gables of 87 and 89 High Street and the Lyttleton Arms public house form an impressive historic frontage to this junction. There has been a pub here since 1756, although the present building, with its attractive apsidal end dictated by its position, is mid-late C19th. Until the 1960's this was a major road junction.

Note also trail point 15a, this is where the Laconstoone stream flowed, continuing down the present-day Birmingham Road to join the River Stour at the bottom of the hill.

16 Former Methodist Church, Birmingham Street (Locally Listed)

Now in commercial use, this former primitive Methodist church (1868), then Ebenezer Chapel, is a three-bay front in redbrick with blue and white polychrome decoration. See the 1889 foundation stones at the front entrance laid by dignitaries.

17 Whitehall Gardens

Whitehall Gardens first appeared in the second edition of OS and has a commemorative tablet (1909) dedicated to their designer. The plaque indicates their creation during the 'depression of trade' to 'assist the unemployed and to beautify the approach to the town'.

For magnificent views of the town centre, follow Whitehall Garden's steps into Whitehall Drive (the steps that ascend to the junction of Whitehall Drive and Siviter Street), then turn around.

This area is the 'Tenterfields' area of Halesowen and refers to the use of the land in the medieval period onwards cloth preparation. Loosely woven cloth was washed and thickened by a "fuller" in the River Stour.

4 23 Hagley Street, formerly Lloyds Bank (Locally Listed)

An Edwardian purpose-built bank, it set the standard and blueprint for Lloyds Bank architecture.

The upper stories of pointed arches and terracotta panels remain.



5 Shop on the Corner of Summer Hill and Hagley Road, 1 Hagley Road

The start of a C19th terrace, still displaying its decorative window heads above the first-floor elevations and other original architectural features. Note the cast iron street plaque for Summer Hill on its side.

6 1 Summer Hill

This former bank appeared on the second edition OS (1903-12) and until the 1970s construction of the car park marked the junction between Summer Hill and Laurel Lane (originally Buck House Lane). Note the red brick section of the building (by back wall of the carpark) which was the prominent elevation of the building, onto Buck House Lane. The 1960's Queensway construction severed this building from the rest of Summer Hill and Laurel Lane.

To view the rest of Laurel lane, cross the Queensway using the level crossing, or use the subway.

7 The Nail Warehouse, corner of Laurel Lane and Powell Street (Locally Listed)

This well-preserved building (despite the edition of rendering), is the sole surviving former nail warehouse in Halesowen and serves as an important reminder of this significant past local industry. Occupied in 1901 by James Heague, iron nail and chain manufacturer, it is where 'foggers' (or 'go between's') issued iron rod to the nailers to create finished nails.



Marked on the 1884 OS map, it showed a large cart arch going beneath the warehouse (now gone), where 17 Laurel Lane now stands. The cart arch accommodated wagons for delivery of bundles of iron rods and dispatch of the finished nails.

8 13 to 14 and 15 to 16 Laurel Lane (Locally Listed)

A significant part of Halesowen's principal nail making suburb, Laurel Lane, created piecemeal from the 1850's until 1900. Speculative builders purchased plots of land and although using typical Victorian architectural forms, developed blocks of buildings. Note the plaque '1880 AJA' on 13 and 14; the use of polychromatic brickwork for the architectural door heads on 13 and 14, whilst 15 and 16 utilise stone for both door and window heads.

19 6 - 8 Church Lane, Whitefriars, Church Lane (Grade II Listed)

This C16th timber framed house, occupying a raised bank above the road, compliments the views of Church Lane and was part of a group of cottages. Threatened with demolition in the 1960s the owner saved it.



20 49-63 High Street, site of the Rectory

These 1960's shops were the site of the Church of St John the Baptist's (opposite) Rectory, a large detached building fronting onto the High Street.

21 65 High Street

Formerly 20 High Street, this former bank was built in the interwar period. Note the decorated stone urns at parapet level.

22 Nos. 75, 77 and 79 High Street (Grade II Listed)

These buildings, formerly 30, 31 and 32 High Street, represent the sort of buildings making up most of central Halesowen before 1960's development.

The late C18th front of 75 High Street hides a well-preserved C15th timber-framed Merchant's House with a fine roof structure. The timber frame is exposed at the rear, accessible via the service road at the back. 77 is a red bricked building with a hipped roof, moulded wood eaves and a late C19th shopfront.

Return to Queensway, past the 1970's apartment block on the site of the former Magistrates Court, originally the site of a large detached house, The Laurels. Continue along the Queensway, past the Police Station, then under the subway, returning to the town centre by trail point 9.

9 Cornbow Bridge (Locally Listed)

The Cornbow Bridge crosses over the River Stour and its associated sandstone walls are reminiscent of Halesowen's historic past. The bridge's name refers to the Corn Mill once in the area, first mentioned in a document of 1668/9 when it was reported as being in a bad state of repair. It was periodically bought up at Salop Quarter Session Courts throughout the C18th and C19th as needing repair. The present bridge shows signs of repairs completed over the past 200 years.

Originally the Stour was traversed by a series of fords, before being exploited as a source of waterpower in the C17th - when this bridge was erected - improving access to forges, mills and a tannery, The River Stour played a huge role in the industrialisation of Halesowen, providing power for iron foundries and manufacture of edge tools, vices, anvils and gun barrels.

The bridge also acts as the starting point for extended walking routes to The Leasowes historic park and garden; or to Hawne Basin/Dudley No. 2 Canal walk, Old Hill Station and Coombeswood walks. See link map.

10 Helen House (formerly The Institute), 12 Great Cornbow (Locally Listed)

Built in 1877 as the Halesowen Institute incorporating a Reading Room and Library, like many other 'Mechanic Institutes' built in industrial towns by industrialists. Gifted to the people of Halesowen in 1925, it was sold by the trustees in 1938.

It continued as an institute until 1948, when Brady Brothers changed its use and it was renamed Helen House after Mr Brady's daughter.

The interior retains many of its original chemist shop fittings and display items. 79 is a late C18th/early C19th red brick building with sash windows with flat brick arches with a stone parapet masking a hipped tiled roof.

Walk back up High Street and cross the road to enter the churchyard.

23 Churchyard Walls, Gates (Grade II Listed) and Market Cross (Scheduled Monument)

The churchyard walls to the south and east are local red sandstone. The medieval market cross is a Scheduled Monument moved from the Cornbow after being blown down in a 1908 gale and saved by civic minded industrialist, Job Garrat.

It is a tall, cylindrical, stone shaft, much fractured and weathered, topped by a ball finial and small cross.

Walk through the churchyard viewing former headstones, edging the footpath - many are 300+ years old, with interesting carved details and inscriptions.

24 Church of St. John the Baptist (Grade I Listed)

This impressive church contains work from Norman to Victorian eras. The original tower collapsed in the C15th, destroying the east part of the nave. It was rebuilt differently, explaining why Norman work remains and yet the church is not Norman in character. The west and south doorways are Norman. The tower is perpendicular with a fine spire; the outer south aisle was added in 1883. Inside there is an excellent Romanesque font (1797), a monument to William Shenstone of The Leasowes and to John the Baptist. Tiles from Halesowen Abbey are display.



11 Meriden House, 6 Great Cornbow, Former Fox Inn

From the first OS map, until the late 1970's this was the Fox Inn public house, before becoming offices. It occupies what was a long triangular marketplace, extending from the bridge in the east, along Great Cornbow and Little Cornbow, up to Hagley Street in the west.

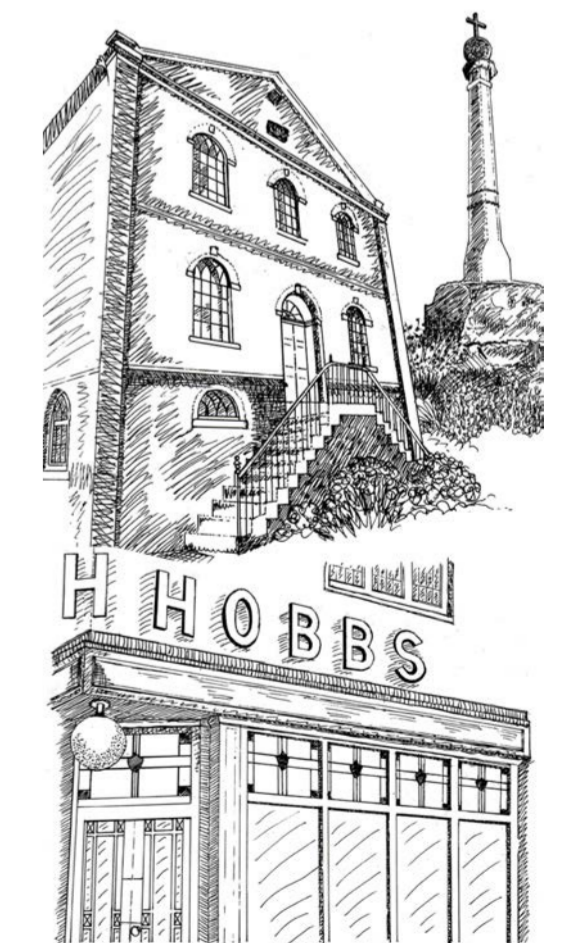
12 24 to 26 Great Cornbow (Grade II Listed)

These imposing early C19th buildings were Halesowen Borough Council offices. The canted bay window (left of the main entrance to 25 and 25a) bears the Halesowen Borough coat-of-arms marking the position of the former Mayor's Parlour. Numbers 25 and 25a include such features as a stuccoed Tuscan doorcase and crow-step gables.

Number 24 is built in Regency style with a stuccoed Ionic doorcase and a fanlike segmental tympanum (the decorated space above the lintel). Notice the date and initials set into the brickwork on either side of the front door.

Opposite number 24 (at trail point 23a), where Great Cornbow meets with the Bull Ring, is where the Market Cross originally stood and the town's market took place. In 1908, the Market cross was re-erected in the Churchyard.

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13 11 Peckingham Street (Locally Listed)

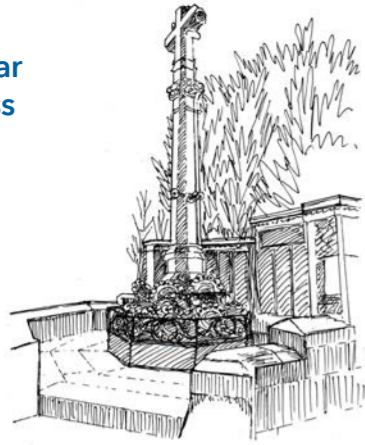
There are several Victorian features on this building, including an intricate terracotta detail below the eaves.

14 The Queen's Head, Birmingham Street (Locally Listed)

Queen's Head was in Peckingham Street as early as 1675. The present pub (now Birmingham Street), may be a C17th building despite its Victorian trimmings.

25 Churchyard War Memorial Cross
(Grade II Listed)

This 1921 memorial is a sandstone cross with octagonal shaft with a base and stepped plinth. The platform is bounded by a low octagonal wall bearing the names of the fallen from both World Wars.



26 Church House, 32 High Street
(Locally Listed)

This 1897 ancillary building to the church, provides a church hall and Sexton's House. It is brick built with steep pitched roof and plain clay tiles, and a west window comprising four paired lancets. It is surmounted by a steep gable with timber bargeboards and timber frame detail to the apex in an Art and Crafts style - both features mirrored in the small gable over the first-floor window to the small dwelling to the right.

27 Ivy House, 23 High Street (Grade II Listed)

Ivy House is an early C19th three story house, with an attractive doorway, original forecourt railings, a Tuscan cornice hood and shell pediment.

28 The George Inn, 16 High Street
(Grade II Listed)

The C18th George Inn was built in a prominent position, showing off its quoins (cornerstones), its redbrick and upstairs sash windows. From here (known locally as 'Townsend') you can see the impressive C17th Earls High School, formerly Halesowen Grammar School.

29 Former Zion Methodist Chapel, Stourbridge Road
(Grade II Listed)

A typical Methodist Chapel (1843), with a gabled façade and semi-circular headed windows and doorway.

There is a dated tablet in its gable inscribed Zion Chapel. Dignified simplicity, it is now offices.



31 Church of St. John the Baptist Mortuary Chapel
(Locally Listed)

A Non-conformists Mortuary Chapel was built in the churchyard of local red sandstone with slate roof in early English Gothic Revival Style. The storey pent-roofed extension to the north may have been a vestry.



30 Waggon and Horses Public House, 21 Stourbridge Road

This C19th pub served the 'Islington' nail making quarter, appearing on the first OS map (1883) and the Tithes Map (1845). It is a celebration of late Victorian architecture, with regular spaced semi-circular arched windows with polychromatic effect. Stone door cases are inscribed with "Ales" "Wines" and "Spirits".



32 Shenstone's Grave (Grade II Listed)

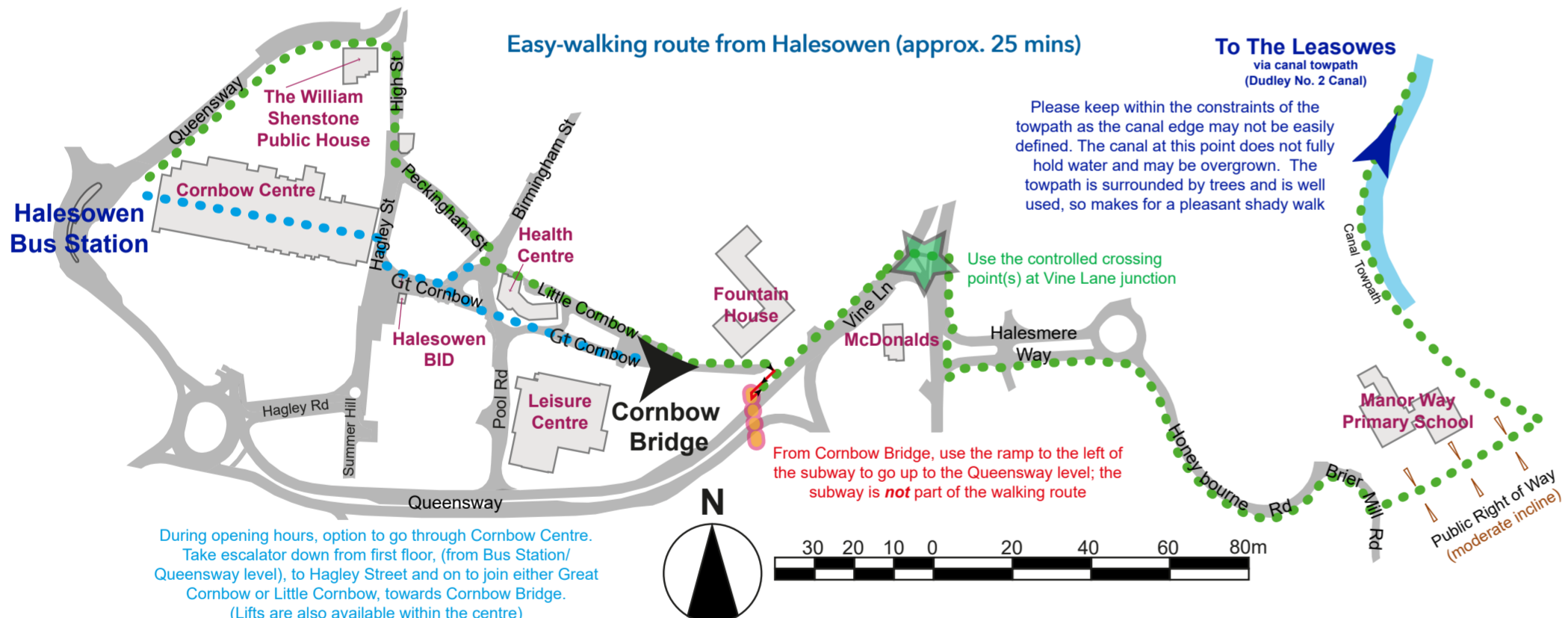
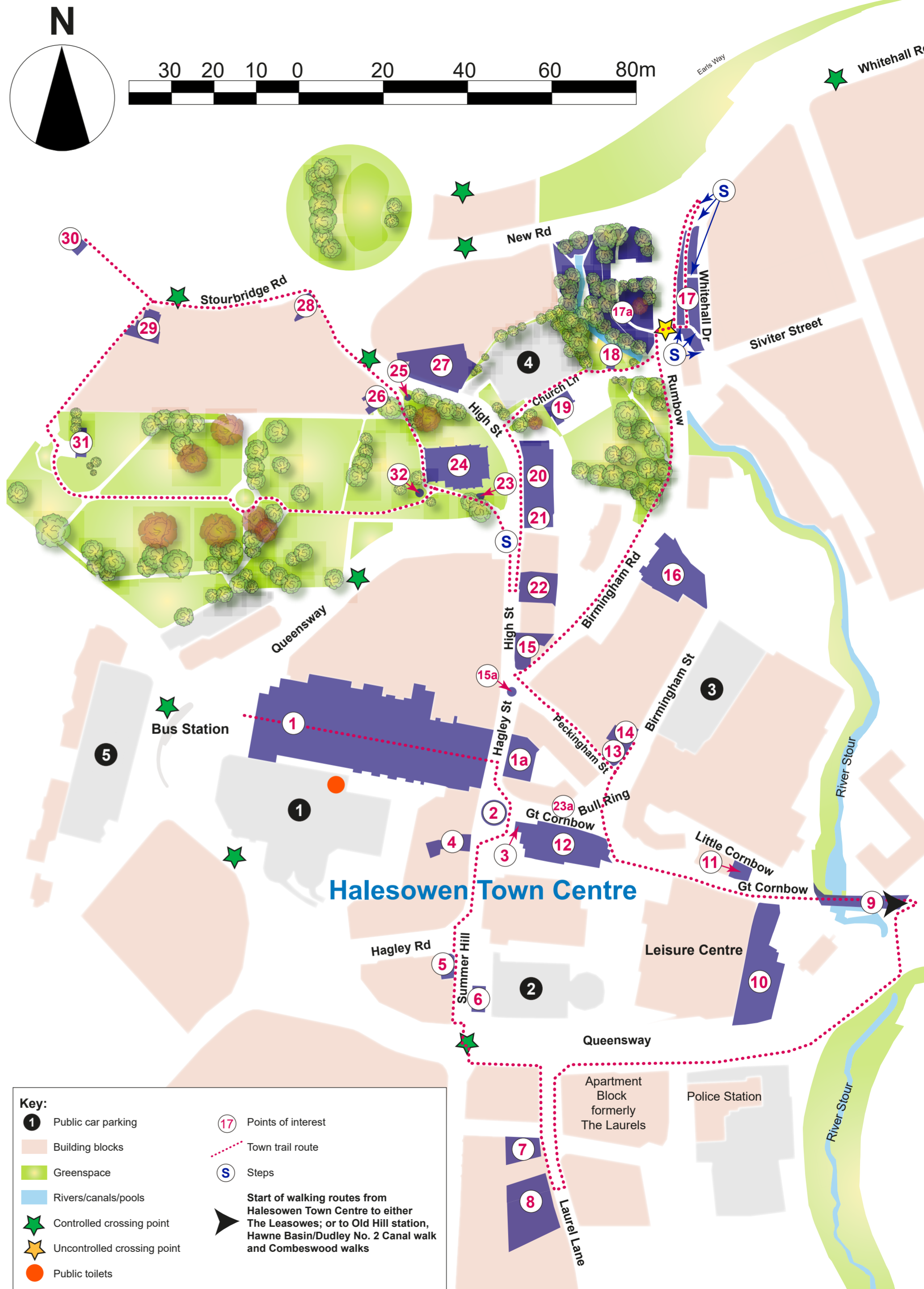
Located 12m south-west of the church is a simple, inscribed, rectangular stone chest tomb with chamfered topped headstone.

Shenstone died in 1763 and was buried in the ancient churchyard in the shadow of the spire, featured in several of his famous views.

He was a major figure in English landscape gardening and a minor poet. He began work on The Leasowes in 1743, turning it from a grazing farm into a model of romantic landscape design or a Ferme Ornee, visited by many famous contemporaries and considered a source of inspiration.

He devised a circuit walk around the farm, setting up monuments, urns, statues, seats and follies to encourage visitors to appreciate many different views.

Today, the Leasowes is a Grade I listed Registered Park and Garden and Conservation Area; it is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and also forms part of the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark.



Car parking
There is ample parking throughout Halesowen Town Centre, including:
1. Cornbow Multi-storey B63 4RG
2. Pool Road B63 4AF
3. Birmingham Street B63 3HN
4. High Street B63 3BG
5. Andrew Road B63 4TT
6. The Leasowes car park B62 8DH

Refreshment and toilet facilities
There are toilet facilities in the Cornbow Shopping Centre and plenty of premises offering refreshment facilities in Halesowen town centre.

Visitor information
Halesowen BID
27 Great Cornbow, Halesowen B63 3AE
Telephone: 0121 794 2253
Email: info@halesowenbid.co.uk
or visit: www.halesowenbid.co.uk

Disclaimer
Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of information included in this leaflet.
Dudley Council and the Halesowen BID Project and the locations featured cannot guarantee the accuracy of the details included and therefore accept no responsibility.
Should you have any comments about this leaflet please email: tourism@dudley.gov.uk

Historic Dudley and other trails
For more information about historic Dudley and other borough town and architectural trails visit www.dudley.gov.uk/town-and-architectural-trails

Key:

- 1 Public car parking
- Building blocks
- Greenspace
- Rivers/canals/pools
- Controlled crossing point
- Uncontrolled crossing point
- Public toilets
- 17 Points of interest
- Town trail route
- S Steps
- Start of walking routes from Halesowen Town Centre to either The Leasowes; or to Old Hill station, Hawne Basin/Dudley No. 2 Canal walk and Combeswood walks