

VICTORIAN SHREWSBURY

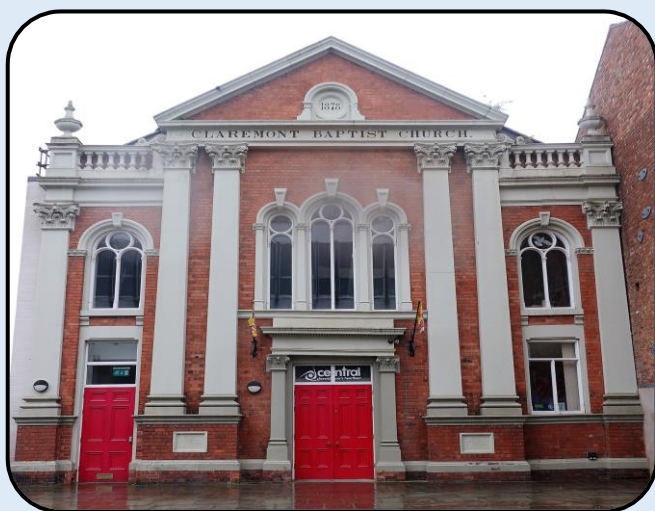


A Shrewsbury Civic Society Self-Guided Tour

This information document is intended to allow people in Shrewsbury, whether visitors or locals, to see and perhaps visit some of the many places in Shrewsbury, dated to the Victorian period, that are of historic interest. The list is in alphabetical order so that the user of the document can determine their own itinerary. Please note that this list is not intended to be definitive or exhaustive. Shrewsbury Civic Society also publishes more detailed information on Victorian Shrewsbury, which can be purchased at the Bear Steps Shop. We also have a printed self-guided tour which can also be bought at our shop.

1: Bandstand in the Quarry

This is an eight-sided bandstand which dates back to 1879. It was donated to the Quarry, Shrewsbury's park, by the Shropshire Horticultural Society. It is still very much in use, particularly during the Shrewsbury Flower Show. Apart from traditional bands, it is used in the modern age by fine artists, DJs and people sheltering from the rain or the sun.



2: Baptist Church, Claremont Street

Claremont Baptist Church dates from 1878, when it was built to replace an older chapel that had become dilapidated. The frontage is of a classical design and is made from Ruabon bricks, which gives a fierce red appearance. The columns are in the Corinthian style. The current building dates only from 2012, though the original frontage was retained. It now operates as a café, with a separate church for worship in Crowmoor.

3: Dingle in the Quarry

The Dingle was where stone was once quarried. It was then abandoned, and a pool formed in the lowest part, which was once used for as a waterhole for cattle. When the Quarry was landscaped in 1879, the area was redesigned with paths, shrubs and a formal area of flower beds. The pool became a water feature, with a statue of Sabrina, Goddess of the River Severn. The fountain in the middle of the flowerbeds was cast in Coalbrookdale.





4: Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital, Murivance

Opened in 1881, this building is an example of Victorian philanthropy, or crowd-funding. The architect was Ellison of Liverpool, who included buttresses, mullioned windows and flanking gryphons in the building, which was made from Ruabon red brick. There is also a polygonal tower with spire, and several mouldings in pressed terracotta. The building was converted into several apartments after 1998.

5: Former Police Station, Swan Hill

The building on Swan Hill between the Admiral Benbow and Coach & Horses pubs was erected in 1893 to house the police. A police force was made compulsory in 1856, though Shrewsbury had appointed thirteen constables well before that date. Next to the police station was the Weights & Measures Office, which was where attempts were made improve the accuracy and standards of retailing in the town.



6: Shrewsbury High School for Girls

This building was constructed in 1897/1898. It boasts an elaborate 'Jacobean' porch. It was, and is, a school independent of the state sector, and it was part of the Girls' Day School Trust, which was established in 1864. This was after a national enquiry that bemoaned the provision of secondary education for females. The aim of the school was to provide a high standard of moral and academic education for girls from all social classes.



EXTRA

There are several water pumps to be seen in the town, such as the one on Town Walls. These date from 1870, with an inscription that encourages people to be careful with their use of water. The basin at the bottom of the pumps was used to catch water, which could then be used for pets and other animals.

7: Kingsland Bridge

Kingsland Bridge was built to replace a ferry crossing, evidence for which can still be seen in the Quarry, where the old ferry post still stands. The bridge was opened in 1882, providing access to the suburb of Kingsland and the newly-occupied Shrewsbury School building. The bridge was once known as the Penny Bridge, because it was owned and operated privately, charging tolls to users. The ferry thus remained in place for some years as boys from the school used it to avoid the tolls.



8: The Obelisk, St Julian's Friars

The obelisk was in memory of Dr W J Clement, who was a surgeon in Shrewsbury. He was a philanthropist, a councillor and mayor of the town. He was also MP for Shrewsbury, with a particular dislike of rotten boroughs. He revelled in antagonising the Tories who dominated the Town Corporation, and, in return, he was refused a position at the hospital. The obelisk was erected in 1873 and was originally placed outside the railway station. It has been moved on more than one occasion since.



9: Catholic Cathedral, Town Walls

Shrewsbury's Catholic Cathedral was consecrated in 1856 and is one of the smallest cathedrals in the country. It was designed by Edward Pugin, the famous Victorian church architect. It is the only cathedral in the whole of Shropshire. Six of the windows were produced by the renowned stained-glass artist, Margaret Rope, who was born in Shrewsbury. Rope also designed the cathedral's war memorial..



EXTRA

The Pengwern Boathouse, which can be seen from the Quarry, has part timbering on its first floor, which was a feature popular with Victorian architects. The Boat Club that moved into this boathouse in 1881 was founded in 1871. This was a time when rowing was very popular. The club had racing boats in addition to its pleasure boats. Pevsner thought the boathouse itself was "a pretty little piece of Victorian sporting architecture".



10: Shrewsbury Flower Show

Said to date back to 1836, when it was a Carnation and Gooseberry Show, the Shrewsbury Flower Show was officially born in 1875. Held annually every August in the town's park, the Quarry, the event is said to be the world's longest running horticultural show held in the same location. It only failed to take place during the two world wars of the 20th century and during the Covid lockdowns in the early 2020s.

11: Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery

Once the Music Hall, this building was built 1838-40. It was constructed around a shut that led to a yard where fire engines were once kept. The Music Hall could cater for some 800 people, and was also used for balls, lectures and bazaars. A newsroom once occupied the room on the first floor, overlooking the Square. The Music Hall was later repurposed as a museum and art gallery, which opened to the public in 2014.



12: Shrewsbury Railway Station

The only remaining railway station in Shrewsbury, this was completed in 1848 to serve the first line into Shrewsbury (from Chester). Designed by Thomas Mainwaring Penson, it is of a mock Tudor style, which was done to match the Tudor style of Shrewsbury School (now the town library), which is almost directly opposite the station on Castle Gates. Unusually, the building was extended 1899-1903 by a new floor that was built underneath the original station.



EXTRA

The current popular indoor market on Shoplatch replaced a Victorian Market Hall in the 1960s. The Victorian Market Hall was opened in 1869 after it was realised that the Old Market Hall in the Square was simply too small to cater for the trading demands of the 19th century.

13: The Square

The Square is the centre of Shrewsbury. The statue is of Robert Clive of India, and it was erected by the Victorians in 1860, even though his influence had been felt more in Georgian times. Clive was Mayor of Shrewsbury in 1762 and MP for the town three times. The modern-day Halifax Bank was once the location for the two fire services in the town and their shared fire engine. The Old Market Hall was finished in 1597, placing it firmly in Tudor times. It was superseded by a Victorian Market Hall on Shoplatch in 1869.



14: St John's Hill Chapel

By the second half of the 19th century Shrewsbury was home to a variety of religious congregations, some of which had come into being as a result of schisms. The chapel on St John's Hill is one of the non-conformist buildings, and it was built for the Methodists in 1879. The façade is red brick, but there are more decorations moulded from Grinshill stone. The chapel was decommissioned in 2006 and turned into modern apartments.



15: Victorian Post Box

For map location, use 13

There is a hexagonal Victorian post-box in the Square, which is cast iron. This an example of a Penfold Box, named after its designer. Pre-charged mail was first introduced at the beginning of Victoria's reign. Costs were based on the weight of the mail. By 1900 simpler pillar boxes were used, though there were different sizes to cater for different types of mail.

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