

DEFENSIVE SHREWSBURY



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 that are dated to the period when Shrewsbury was a significant strategic centre. The listing begins with the castle, then the town walls. Other features are then listed in alphabetical order. The user of this 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 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.

1a: Shrewsbury Castle

Shrewsbury Castle was first constructed in 1069, and more than fifty buildings were demolished to make way for it. The initial castle was built from wood, with the main keep on top of the mound where Laura's Tower can now be found. The current main castle building has occupied its present position since part of the mound collapsed c.1255. This building has been altered many times since, notably by Thomas Telford in the 18th century, who transformed it into a comfortable home.

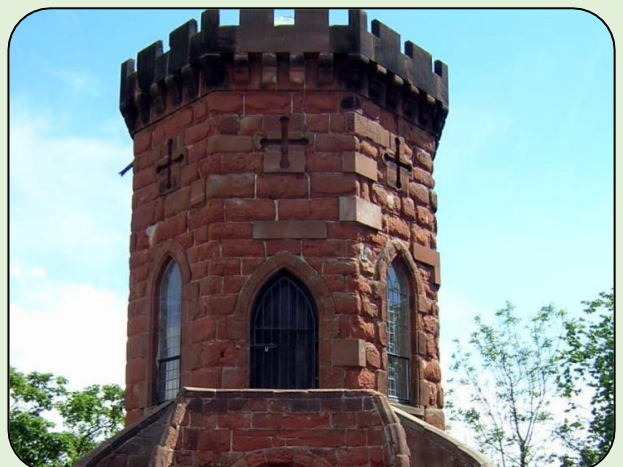


1b: Shrewsbury Castle: Inner Bailey

The Inner Bailey is the area, now landscaped, immediately outside the main castle building. Archaeological evidence suggests that the surviving parapet walls are built on medieval walls that were some two metres thick. The ground rises to the walls inside the castle grounds, implying that they once stood much higher than the current ground level. There is also evidence from royal accounts that a considerable sum was spent on castle defences during the reign of Henry II.

1c: Shrewsbury Castle: The Mound

The Mound (or motte) was once much bigger than now. Erosion caused a major part of it to fall into the river c.1255. The Mound would once have housed the main Norman keep (or tower), together with wooden palisades. The view from the Mound allows the castle defenders a view whereby they could control the town and surrounding areas. The present stone tower was built by Thomas Telford in 1787 for Laura, the daughter of Shrewsbury MP William Pulteney, for her birthday.





1d: Shrewsbury Castle: Gate/Outer Bailey

The gate into the castle dates back to the 12th century, though it was strengthened during the English Civil Wars. The outer wall once descended to the Upper Town Gate, which was narrow and demolished in 1786. Shrewsbury Castle was unusual in having a major road into the town pass through its outer bailey. The outer bailey rampart followed the curve of School Gardens and then back to the inner bailey. The outer bailey gate may have been removed in the 13th century, i.e. at the end of the Welsh Wars.

OTHER DEFENSIVE FEATURES OF NOTE

2a: Town Walls

This is the road with the most visible section of the medieval walls, which were built between 1220 and 1242. They were ordered by Henry III and were the result of the ongoing Welsh Wars, particularly following Llewelyn the Great's occupation of Shrewsbury in 1215. The wall is built into a hillside, with the floodplain of the river below them. It comprised small sandstone blocks and four levels of larger stones from Grinshill.



2b: Meadow Place

A section of the town walls was built across the 'neck' of the river, going from the castle to a tower by the river. These were outer defences, built outside of the main town walls, though the wall may have followed an earlier Anglo-Saxon earthwork defence. The tower close to the river is thought to have been named after Garewald, which is likely an Anglo-Saxon name. The surviving section of the Meadow Place wall is seen towards the bottom of the road.

EXTRA

There is a postern gate at the castle, which has a room above it and a slit for a portcullis. It is possible that the current structure was built by the Royalists during the English Civil Wars, probably in the position of an earlier building and sally port. At one time it opened onto a path to the river, but the arrival of the railway destroyed that path.

2c: Murivance and the Watchtower

Murivance is the street that follows on from the line of the still extant Town Walls, though the wall is now below the pavement. There would have been several watchtowers along the wall, but only one now stands. This tower is built from Grinshill stone, implying that it was built after 1300. Another tower once stood where St Chad's Church now stands. There was a public protest when it had to be demolished for the new church, the aisle of which follows the line of the walls..



3: The Welsh Bridge

The current Welsh Bridge is not in the original location of what was known as St George's Bridge. The modern bridge was completed in 1795, whilst the former bridge entered the town at the bottom of Mardol. This older bridge was defended by a large gate tower on the town side and a smaller tower at the Frankwell end. The town wall led from the bridge towards higher ground (Pride Hill). Much of this wall was destroyed when the two shopping centres were built in the 1980s, though some sections can still be made out from Raven Meadows



4: Bull's Head Inn

Situated very close to the town's railway station, Shrewsbury's outer wall crossed the road that now leads from Castle Foregate. The pub may have been the location for one side of the former Lower Town Gate, which joined the castle by means of a wall, an arch of which can still be seen on the Dana walkway. It is thought that the one-time town ditch ran underneath the pub, which explains the subsidence on the right-hand side, seen noticeably in the windows.



EXTRA

Old maps show what is now the garden at the Dingle as a quarry. It is likely that some of the earliest sandstone used in the town's defences came from here. A second quarry is thought to have existed where the swimming pool now stands, and there is also some evidence of quarrying having occurred on the steep bluff that is on the opposite riverbank to the Quarry.



5: St Mary's Water Gate

St Mary's Water Lane was once a barbican, with a high crenelated wall on both sides. At the bottom of the lane is the only surviving town gate in Shrewsbury. It leads to a wharf that probably dated back to the Middle Ages. At the top of the lane was a second gate. Careful scrutiny will reveal a door jamb just above the entrance to a cellar. This was said to be the way into the town when parliamentary forces took Shrewsbury during the English Civil Wars.

6a: Outside the Walls – the Dominicans

By the tow path, just after St Mary's Water Gate, is an old wall and the remains of a gateway. This was the one-time precinct wall of the Dominican Friary, erected between 1232 and 1242. The town wall was much higher on the hillside and headed off towards Wyle Cop, where it dropped to meet a gatehouse on the Stone Bridge, which was replaced by the English Bridge by 1773.



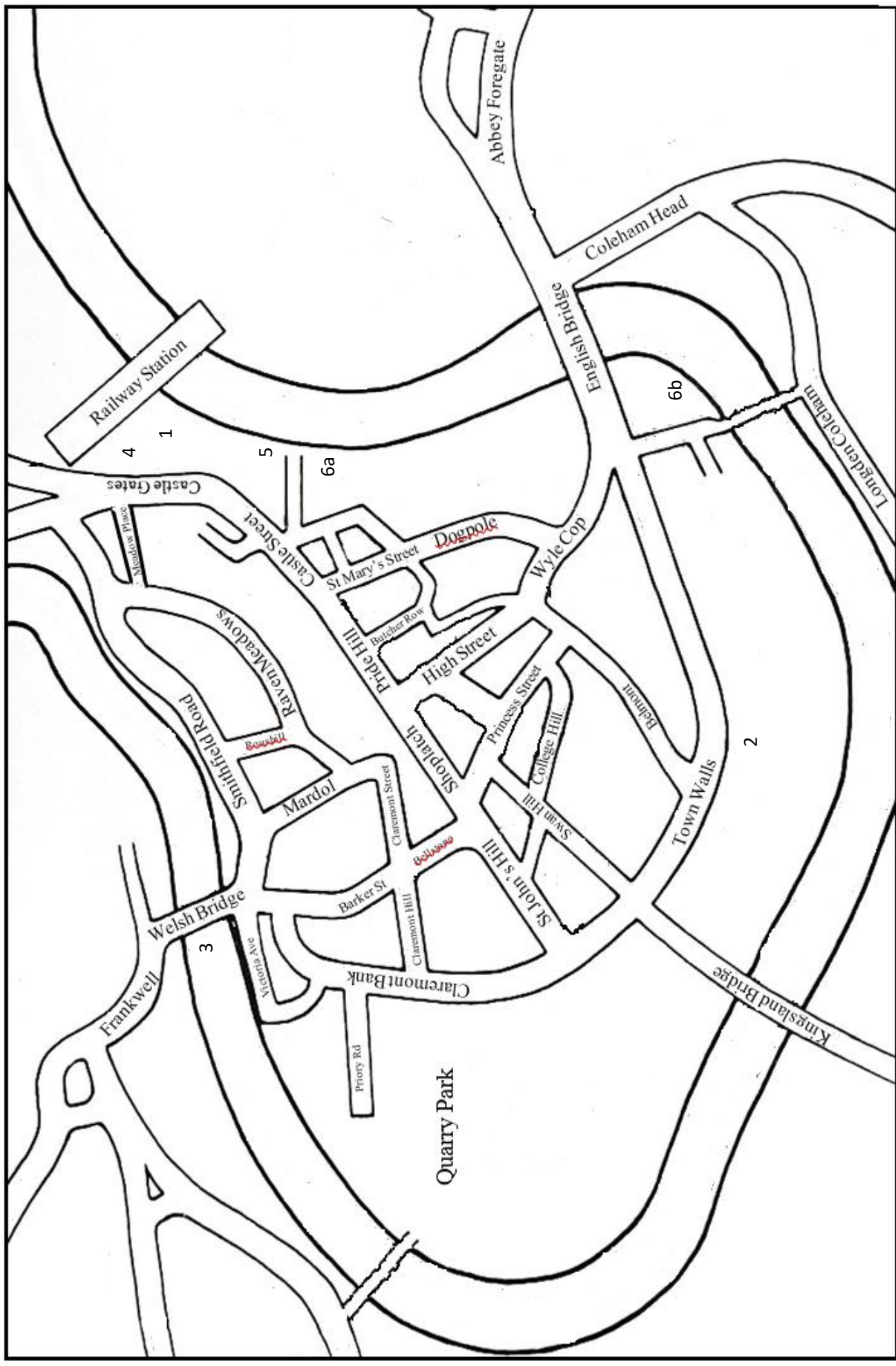
6b: Outside the Walls – the Franciscans

The standing remains of the one-time Franciscan Friary probably date back to the 16th century. Like the Dominican Friary, this building was erected outside the town walls in 1245. However, the town wall did form the back wall of the Franciscan precinct after Henry III in 1246 allowed the Grey Friars to increase the height of their wall and insert a postern gate (for better access to the town).



EXTRA

The third friary, belonging to the Augustinians, was located between Victoria Avenue and the Welsh Bridge site of Shrewsbury Colleges Group. In 1337 the wall was granted to the Augustinians on the proviso that they built what was called an 'embattled house' and permitted it to be garrisoned in wartime.



Railway Station

Abbey Foregate

Coleham Head

English Bridge

6b

London Coleham

Castle Gates

4

1

5

6a

Meadow Place

Castle Street

St. Mary's Street

Butcher Row

Pride Hill

High Street

Raven Meadows

Shoplatch

Princess Street

College Hill

Belmont

2

Town Walls

Smithfield Road

Mardol

Claremont Street

St. John's Hill

Swan Hill

Welsh Bridge

Frankwell

3

Kroon Ave

Barker St

Claremont Hill

Claremont Bank

Kingsland Bridge

Quarry Park

Prory Rd

Dogpole

Mardol

Barker St

Claremont Hill

Beech