TARRING TRAIL

Tarring High Street is the most historic street in Worthing, with buildings dating back to the late medieval period. Yet it is only by good fortune that this wonderful assemblage of buildings survived at all. In May 1801 a terrible fire engulfed Tarring village, with the result that nine cottages and three large barns were completely destroyed. The whole street could quite easily have been lost. In the late 1920s, when motor traffic was increasing and double-decker buses were trying to negotiate their way down the High Street, Worthing Town Council proposed demolishing one entire side of the street so that the highway could be widened. Fortunately good sense prevailed and the ancient habitations were spared – but it was a close run thing. There are places and buildings of interest in Tarring outside the High Street, but it is the street and its survival that makes Tarring so special. Tarring has also been lucky to have a fine village historian in Roger Davies, whose, *Tarring – a Walk Through its History*, is a learned and comprehensive guide to Tarring's old buildings.

Duration: 90 minutes, 1.5 miles (2.4 km)
Terrain: follows pavements – this trail should be suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

St Andrew's Church lych gate

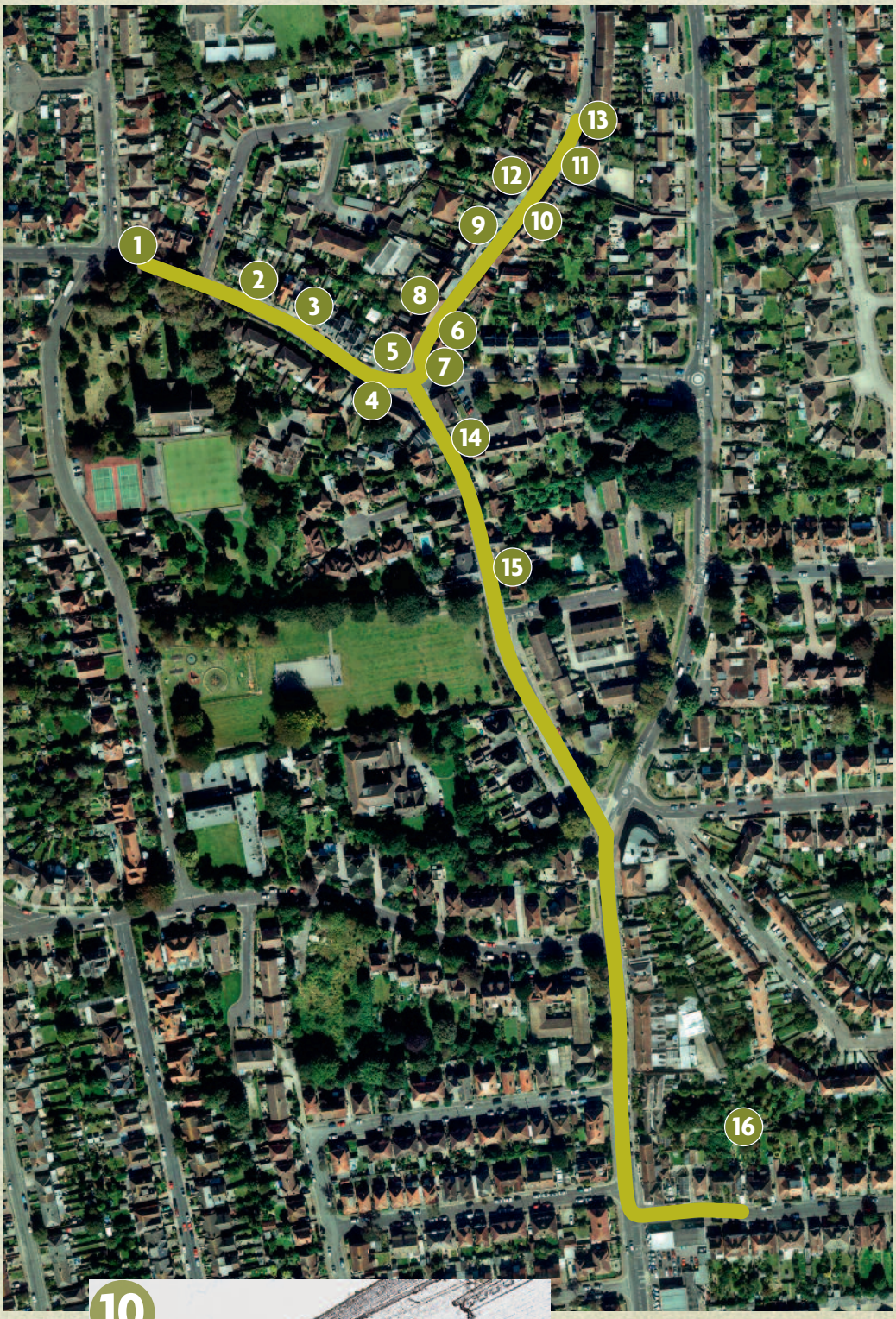
The grave of John Parsons

The Worthing Heritage Trail leaflets provide information and visual images relating to local history: those using the leaflets and the website should ensure that they take due care and attention when following the trails.
Please note that this trail may not always follow formal pedestrian routes and there may be some roads to cross.

Church Cottages formerly the The Black Lion

Cranbourne Villa formerly Whitehouse Sweet Factory

The Tarring Folly



The Market House

Bishops Garth

The George and Dragon

The Old Palace

Parsonage Row

The Hollies

The Old Castle

Chippers Cottage

Old Bakehouse and Glebe Road

The Vine

Forge and Becket Cottages

Banner House

1 St Andrew's Church. The nave is the oldest part of the church, dating back to the thirteenth century, with other parts, including the tower being added one hundred years later. The slightly twisted spire dates from the sixteenth century. But the spire was not as twisted as one of Tarring's sixteenth century vicars, John Tomson, who, accompanied by his servant, brutally murdered, Robert Burne, in a savage attack with a knife and dagger. A far more pious vicar was the Rev. Wood Warter, who was incumbent during Victorian times. He tried to prevent his parishioners from engaging in old customs and traditions, which, he feared, had licentious undertones. On arriving in his new parish, Wood Warter had been appalled to find 'drunks reeling around the streets.' A generation earlier, Thomas Henty of Church House and a local magistrate, had courted controversy when he refused to grant warrants for coastguards to search the George and Dragon, where fugitive smugglers had sought refuge. Henty and his family later emigrated to Australia, taking with them 150 merino sheep and the ancient font from the church. The grave of John Parsons, who died in 1633 is the oldest surviving tomb or grave stone to be found in Worthing.

2 The Black Lion. Today three cottages stand on the site of the former inn known as the Black Lion. Not only did the inn lose its licence in 1839, it was demolished and the current cottages built from the rubble. Following the Swing Riots of the early 1830s, a Royal Commission identified certain pubs and beer houses as being dens of sedition where radical newspapers were read aloud. Given Tarring's close association with smuggling, it seems possible that the Black Lion was such an establishment.

3 Whitehouse Sweet Factory. 79 Church Road – Cranbourne Villa - dates from the late nineteenth century. It was once a sweet factory and very popular with local children!

4 The Market House. It was back in 1314 that King Edward II granted the right to West Tarring to hold a village market. A market house had been built by 1658, where business transactions could be concluded. The current Market House – now shops – was built in about 1778.

5 The George and Dragon. This is likely to be the oldest continuously operating inn or public house in Worthing. By 1610 Moses Brian was the landlord of the White Horse, which changed its name in 1781 to the George and then in 1855 to the George and Dragon. A pencil drawing of the pub in 1869 shows it much as it is today, except for two changes: the window shutters have gone, and the inn sign, which used to swing loose, is now welded into an upright position. This latter change is significant and took place in 1927 and was due to the frequency with which double-decker buses kept hitting the sign as they mounted the pavement to avoid other traffic. A few years later the Rectory Road 'by-pass' was built and the buses re-routed, although the inn sign remained in its curiously elevated position.

6 Parsonage Row. Although it does not now appear to be the case, the shop (a hairdressers at the time of writing) and the restaurant are in fact part of the same building. Known as Parsonage Row, the original building stretched out into what is now Glebe Road. Dating from around 1480, or possibly earlier, only the restaurant retains the original features, including the timber framing and fine carved gable. The Horsham Slate roof is very old, although the original roof may have been thatch. In the eighteenth century the row was owned by a woman called Love Haines. When Glebe Road was built the well-preserved, southern section of the building was lost, including a butcher's shop – believed at the time to have been one of only two medieval butcher's shops left in the country

7 Old Bakehouse and Glebe Road. The little building with the corrugated roof to the south of Parsonage Row, and situated in Glebe Road, was originally a slaughter house. After the butcher's closed, it became the village bakehouse, where residents would come to bake their pies for Sunday lunch and roast their Christmas dinners. The terrace cottages in Glebe Road were built in 1895.

8 Banner House. Like many of the houses in the High Street, Banner House may appear to be of Georgian appearance, but the timber beams exposed on its northern elevation suggests it is much older – probably seventeenth century. Much 'refronting' took place in Tarring in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as householders sought to modernise their properties with brick and stucco. Banner House was once a shop and remained so until the 1960s.

9 Chippers Cottage. The Chipper family have an unrivalled association with Tarring. Jervius Chipper is recorded as living in the parish in 1630. The family lived at this cottage, which still bears their name, from 1839 until 1958.

10 The Old Castle. Once an inn, the house known as the Old Castle still retains a blue lantern above the porch on which the word 'inn' is clearly visible. For 150 years the Castle served the local community and closed in 1911 when the licence was transferred to the newly built Thomas a Becket, at the northern end of Rectory Road. However the house had an earlier history and was probably enlarged from an existing cottage in 1660. At that time there was an orchard attached to the property. There are still some very ancient looking apple trees in the gardens of the Old Castle. Every Twelfth Night the Sompting Village Morris 'wassail' these apple trees in a custom even older than the Old Castle itself. Amidst song and the firing of an old musket, hundreds of revellers salute the end of the festive season and the coming of the New Year, which, it is hoped will bring forth a good 'howling crop' of apples.

11 Forge and Becket Cottages. These two old cottages were built in the middle years of the seventeenth century - they were probably once a single property – and one of some distinction too. From 1698 until the 1850s, it was the home of the Tribe family. Like the Hentys, the Tribes were an influential presence in the locality. In 1851, old Mary Tribe lived here with her two unmarried daughters, a cook, a housemaid, and two nurses. She also owned 53 acres of land and employed eight men and two boys to work it. The reference to Becket is just a romance, although a forge did operate close by, it was not sited within the cottage. The small building that fronts the Vine car-park was famous locally from 1950 – 1988 as Berry's Gentleman's Hairdresser. It was run by a father and son. When the son retired in 1988, the charge for a haircut was 55p for adults and 50p for pensioners and children! Bill was well-known locally as a cricket umpire.

12 The Vine. From the street, the Vine appears to be a typical Victorian building; however internal features suggest something older. In common with many of the houses in the High Street, the Vine was probably 'refronted' to make it appear modern, but much of the older building at the back was left undisturbed. Roger Davies found evidence of a 'tenement' here in 1647. What is certain though is that the Vine only became a public house in comparatively recent times. In 1811 it was a school known as the 'West Tarring Academy,' although it does not appear to have flourished. By 1843 it had become Parsons Brewery, but not a pub. Indeed as recently as 1953, the occupier of the Vine was described as a 'beer retailer' rather than a publican. Sitting in the back garden of the Vine it is still possible to see the old brewing tank. It is believed that the brewing of beer at the Vine ceased just before the Second World War.

13 The Hollies. The flint cobbled façade of the Hollies dates back to 1774, but as with so many other Tarring houses, its true age is much older. John Evans, the Welsh Vicar of Tarring was living here in 1601, and following his death in about 1610, the house passed to his widow and remained in the family for several generations. By 1774 Richard and Mariah Hedgecock were living at the Hollies and it is they who enlarged and modernised it. However the cost seems to have been too great and four years later they sold the house to John Oliver, famous as the 'eccentric miller' of Highdown Hill. Oliver however allowed the couple to continue living at the house. When he died, aged 85 in 1793, Olliver left the house to Mariah's son, John Oliver Hedgecock. Clearly there was some family link between the miller and the boy, and presumably Mariah as well.

You now need to retrace your steps back down the High Street to continue following the trail....

14 The Old Palace. There are only two grade 1 listed buildings in Worthing Borough, one is Castle Goring and the other is the Old Palace. Despite the persistence of local legend it cannot be true that Thomas à Becket stayed here, for old as the Palace is, dating back to 1230, Becket was martyred in 1170. It seems likely that many of the stories associated with Becket originated with another saintly bishop, Richard de Wych, Bishop of Chichester, 1244 – 1253. Being very pious and robust in his faith, he fell out with King Henry III as a consequence. For three years the king refused to recognise Richard as bishop and he was forced to seek sanctuary in the Archbishop's 'peculiar' or personal manor, at Tarring. It was said Richard performed many miracles. He was certainly a lover of nature and a keen gardener; so perhaps it was he, not Becket, who planted the first fig trees at Tarring.

15 Bishops Garth. This house, or rather its grounds, once swarmed with tourists. Early guide books to Worthing recommended a visit to the Miller's Tomb at Highdown and the Fig Gardens at Tarring. These gardens were very popular with the Victorians, who came in their hundreds to drink tea and eat a bowl of figs. Controversially, Worthing planners in the 1980s gave permission for most of these trees to be felled to make way for a housing development known as Bishops Close. Those trees that survived can still be visited on the first Saturday in July, when the garden is open to the public. Edward Lear, the painter, (but best remembered as the writer of limericks) stayed here one summer in the 1850s, painting the fig trees which reminded him of those he had seen in the Holy Land. There has been a house on this site since at least 1631.

16 The Tarring Folly. 100 South Street Tarring is, at the time of writing, in a poor state of repair. It was once quite an imposing house. In 1893 it was the home of Mr W Osborne Boyes, a solicitor, who built at the bottom of his long garden a tower, known locally as the Tarring Folly. Here he would sit working, away from all noise and distraction. It was said that he loved to watch the sun rise over the fields that led down to the sea – a view, that in those days was uninterrupted by houses or traffic. The folly is on private property and can only be seen through gaps in the houses in Westland Avenue. It is a grade 2 listed building, although like number 100, it is sadly neglected.

Old cottage in South Street

The Worthing Heritage Trails are created by the Worthing Heritage Alliance (**www.worthingheritagealliance.org.uk**) and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Project Manager: Chris Hare – sussexhistory.hare@gmail.com

Text by Chris Hare.

Special thanks go to the following for information they have supplied for these trail leaflets and for proof reading: Barbara Shaw, Debra Hillman, Dot Watson, Janet Clarke, Jean White, Martin Snow, Pete Stafford, and Rosemary Pearson.
Thanks to Nigel Bird for developing *iwalks*. For details of local train and bus timetables and routes see **www.www.westsussex.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/travel-and-public-transport**

More information about Worthing can be found at
www.visitworthing.co.uk
www.worthingarch.co.uk
www.worthingsociety.org.uk

LOTTERY FUNDED

© 2015 Worthing Heritage Alliance • Design: Blacker Design • Maps: Getmapping plc.

WORTHING HERITAGE TRAILS 7

TARRING TRAIL

West Tarring – saints and sinners

Find out more about Tarring at –
www.worthingheritagetrails.org.uk

Scan to open the guided walk on your smartphone

powered by iwalk