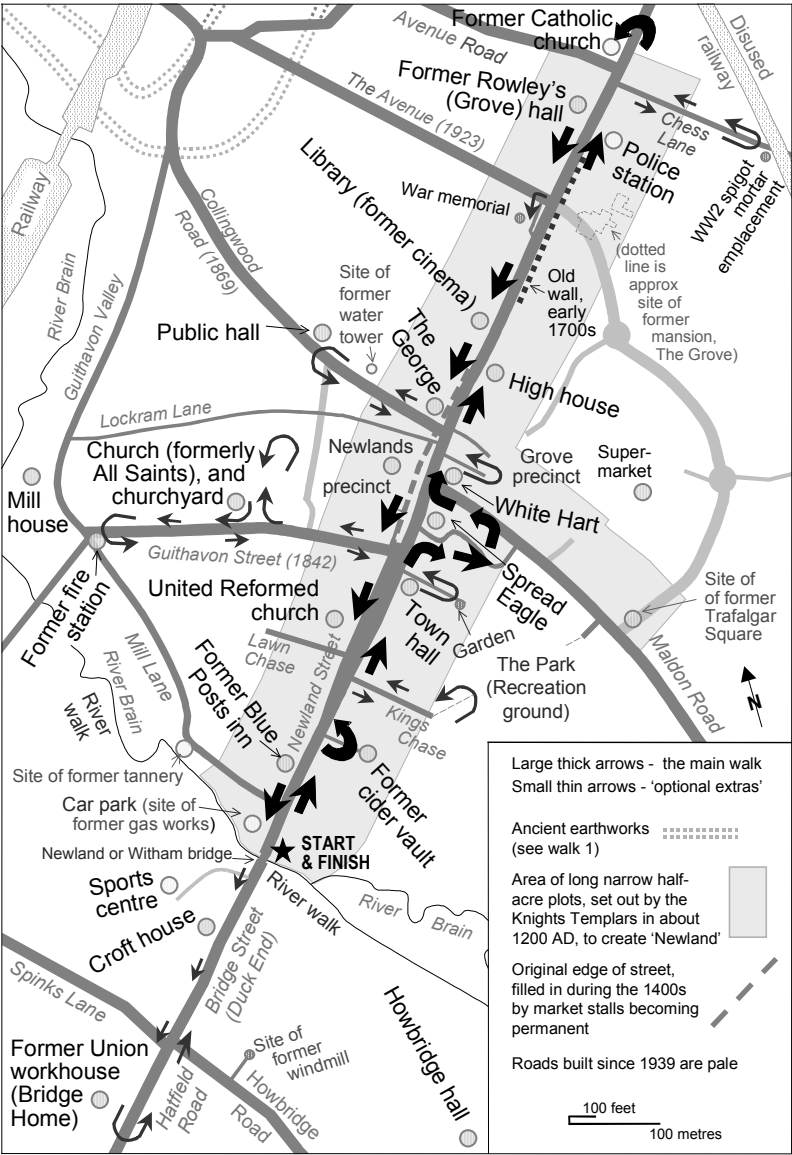


WALK 3

THE TOWN CENTRE



On the facing page is the route of walk 3. The long main street is Newland Street (also known as High Street). The Knights Templars set up their new town here in about 1200, with narrow half-acre plots. The oldest surviving buildings are medieval (i.e. before about 1500), but the highlight is the varied brickwork from more recent times – much of it known as ‘Georgian’ because it dates from the time of the four King Georges (1714-1830).

A little over a mile (1¾ km) just to see Newland Street. Optional extras would add about another mile. Street numbers are given in brackets in the text (but not marked on the map). Landmarks may of course change or even disappear as time goes by. Pages 16 to 20 of the colour section show examples of bricks, railings, street furniture etc.

The walk goes up Newland Street from the bottom, on the right hand side. Start on the river bridge, opposite Mill Lane car park.

River Brain, probably site of a small Saxon settlement called ‘Wulversford’. Later – industrial and hard-working end of street. River Walk now crosses town alongside it. **Bridge** built 1900 – nearly twice as wide as previous one – just in time for motor vehicles. **Tall building** (155-157), mostly built 1911 – decorated columns on top. Architect, Harry W Mann of Witham, killed First



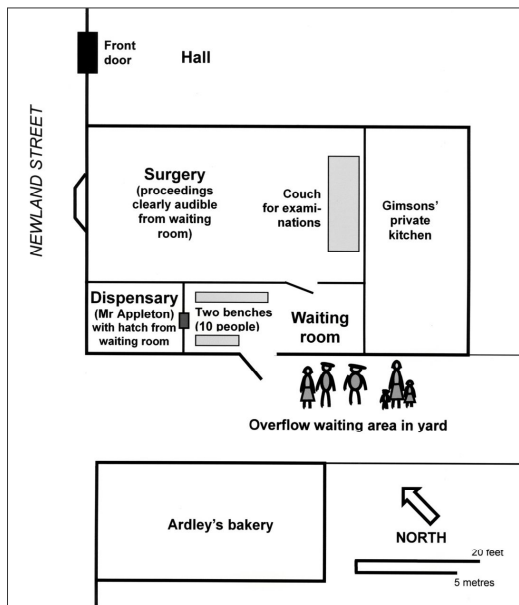
View up Newland Street in about 1905. The buildings to the right of the telegraph pole are now the site of Barnfield Place (143-47). At one of the old cottages, cows were kept in the back yard in 1850 – they had to walk through the building to get out. Another was home to the talented Poulter family in the early 1900s. An ‘Electric Theatre’ (i.e. a cinema) was proposed here in 1913, but never built.

World War. Initially Glovers' motor works. Later Ginetta made cult sports cars here (1962-88). The **Swan** (153), built about 1790. Right side has faint remains of words 'Home brewed beer' in black, just above the three iron crosses. Had Second World War pill box in front, guarding the bridge.

Telephone pole – successor of one into which Admiral Sir William Luard had his fatal fall in 1910. Old iron **water hydrant**. **Behind the Swan** was Witham's first waterworks (1869-1904) – its tanks were popular swimming pool in 1930s (see page 128). Afterwards Witham's third fire station (1940s to 1966). All now replaced by flats.

Long building (149-151), built 1600s. Iron fittings of old shop awning, probably mid 20th century, inscribed 'J Dean, Maker, Putney' (see colour page 16). He had a Chelmsford agent.. Old slots for boarding up windows during rowdy events. **New houses** (143-147, Barnfield Place). **Dental surgery** (141), built 1913, replacing Carpenters Arms, previously the Fleece, a lodging house – visitors in mid-1800s included soldiers (one was a 'Polish officer'), two ordnance surveyors, travellers (some Irish), a grinder, an American 'printer compositor', drovers, hawkers (one of them Canadian), and a Suffolk 'hydrophonist'.

Two small shops – the second (137) formerly Ardleys' bakery (c 1820 to 1939), with ovens behind. Then the former **Ardley's yard** – inside to right, past the plastered building, a building from the early 1700s, with red and black 'chequered' brickwork (ruined at the time of writing). **Doctors' surgery** (129, probably built 1700s) – nice iron foot scrapers (see



A plan of the of the doctors' surgery (129) in the 1920s, from a sketch by Walter Peirce. Grander patients than the ones shown, would ring the bell at the front door and be ushered in by a maid 'in a black dress and white apron and cap'. You took your own bottle for your medicine if you had one.

colour page 16). The practice is over 300 years old, either here or nearby (see page 44). Dates of alterations on side wall (some probably estimates). **'The Gables'**, aptly named (125-127) – incorporated into surgery 1990s. Victorian porch, wooden 'barley sugar' columns. Horizontal timbers just visible above windows, where upper floor once projected. When first built (1600s) housed Richard True, prosperous cloth-maker – he died 1665 in the Plague.

Next, **'Gimson's yard'** – small cottage (123) over old **cider vault** built 1700s – steps down to it in front, top of arch visible near ground on left side (see page 43). On way back to main street, notice **backs** of the buildings. On corner **(121)** – gabled back from 1600s, brick front from 1800s. Next up the street, **tall pair** of buildings (117-119) (previously (1600s) site of tenterfield for stretching new-made cloth). Built c 1730s – brickwork at front and back is best and second-best styles of the time respectively. Cellars projecting in front – most of Newland Street has cellars, important for cool storage. The further building (119) was visited in 1816 by 15-year old artist Edwin Landseer (best known today for the bronze lions in Trafalgar Square in London). His host Dr Dixon found him to be an 'incessant talker', and no good at shooting. He sketched the doctor's gun dog for a future painting.

Next four buildings (103-115), either side of Kings Chase, all formerly part of Witham Co-op, who took the nearest one in 1896 (rebuilt 1930 with 'WCS' on parapet). Second one is Pelican House, incorporated 1914 (built 1840, has pelican on parapet, emblem of Patissons, then owners). Buildings past Kings Chase built 1930s – making the Co-op into a large department and food store. **Kings Chase** named after three generations of King family, grocers and drapers (here 1830s to 1904). At back made tallow candles – a smelly process using animal fats. 1920s manhole cover by Ham Baker, of Westminster, London, made at Langley near Birmingham (shown on colour page 16). Down the chase, **the Park** (or Recreation ground, see illustration on next page), made 1900 from earlier garden, worth a visit – some 200-year old trees. In early 1700s, the nearest end was a noisy cattle market.

Earlier **building** at 101 was Constitutional Club briefly (c 1899-1908). **Bank** (99), purpose-built 1910 by Joseph Smith for Capital and Counties Bank, classical style. Manager and family lived above. Became Lloyd's about 1920. **Yard** to its left (97 – buildings demolished 2004) – in early 1900s was Arthur Ralph Brown's (first 'carriage builder', then motor works promising 'aeroplanes and flying ships' to order) (see page 95), then after 1908, Cullen and Nichols' 'motor carriage & engineering works'. **Newer bank** (95), built



The Park (also known in the past as the Recreation ground), is accessible from both Kings Chase, off Newland Street, and Maldon Road. It was opened to the public in 1900 when many families lived nearby in the town centre, so children played there often. In addition it has always been a place for special events like the national 'Peace Day' in 1919, following the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, which concluded the negotiations after the First World War. This appears to be the 'Blindfold Race' for discharged soldiers, which according to the newspaper was won by 'R Griffiths and Miss B Cutmore'.

1960s – predecessor a café, like others it served many motorists before the by-pass of 1964. **Small buildings** with plaster fronts (89-93), from 1700s.

Two **red brick buildings** (85-87). First (**87**), built 1760s by bricklayer Samuel Humphreys – distinctive style – mansard roofs with windows in – similar ones by him across the road (64 and 66). Original black and white house number over the door, fixed by Council 1922 (not many left, but see 83, 55 and 5). Bright's solicitors came about 1930 from Collingwood Road. Railings not threatened in Second World War – needed for safety. **85** refronted about 1750, Witham's second Post Office 1853-1887 – in 1865 novelist Anthony Trollope, Post Office surveyor, visited – recommended increased salaries, and left his umbrella behind. From 1887-96, was the first shop of the new Witham Co-operative Society (see pages 90-91).

Shop with archway (83), birthplace in 1786 of Daniel Whittle Harvey, lawyer, politician and journalist (founded *Sunday Times* newspaper (1822), first Commissioner of new City of London Police (1839)). Afterwards was the Richard Wrights' clockmakers' business (1790s-1830s, see colour page 6 for one of his clocks). Later baker's shop 1900-89, ovens behind – closing of Gilbert's left sorrowful customers. **Grey-brick building** (67) and yard

(through archway) – site of Red Lion c 15th cent to 1700. Thomasin's brush shop and works in 1800s (see pages 66-67). Brush yard sometimes called Newland Place – in 1850 had '15 or 16 cottages ... manufactories of mops and brushes ... drainage and ventilation are exceedingly defective, and every inch of space is encumbered with the rubbish belonging to the trades'. Works closed 1871, most of cottages demolished 1930s as uninhabitable. Part of front was war-time British Restaurant 1941-45. Completely rebuilt 1960s and reduced from three storeys to two.

Grey-brick house (65), built 1855, Bawtrees' solicitors for several decades. **Shops** (63 and 63A) – building of mixed age – nearest part (63A, low) is oldest, with roof timbers from the 1400s. Never an inn as sometimes suggested. Main shop (63) was a chemist's 1830s-1904 – his home-made wooden drawers with steel bases still survive. After him, Ortlewell's hardware business moved from across the road with manager Albert Mondy.



Albert Mondy at his house and hardware shop (63) in the 1930s. He was 'not impressed' with Witham when he first arrived, but in the end he bought the business and stayed for over fifty years. He sold it in 1951 aged 83 – his odd-job man Ted Chaplin was 91. The shop still attracts customers from faraway places for essential but mysterious objects.



The Bank (right, now Town Hall, 61). Taken before 1910. In that year the town clock was installed here (it or its predecessor was formerly on the old Constitutional Club which burnt down). Note the iron foot scrapers (still there) and the false windows at the top, where the medieval roof goes down behind the newer parapet. In the middle is no.59 (replaced 1939); on the left Witham House (57, formerly the Pattissons' family home).

Town Hall (61). Part of the George 1400s to c 1807 – largest and busiest Witham inn. In 1700s had ‘dining parlours of all sizes’, ‘elegant bed-chambers’, stables for 50-60 horses, inn sign with ‘elegant and much admired representation of St George slaying the dragon’. In 1807 became Witham’s first commercial bank, with new brick front – ‘false pointing’ to make the bricks look regular (see colour page 17). Restored 1994 as Town Hall for Witham Town Council, with Heritage Centre (look inside). Seat dedicated to Albert Poulter, ‘gentleman’ (1907-2002), local historian who often sat here. Behind Town Hall, ‘medieval garden’, founded 1996. Example of Knights Templars’ medieval ½ acre plots (here and no.59 together). When leaving garden, stone on wall on right reads ‘This wall belongs to Mills Bawtree and Co.’ (bankers 1826-1891, between two financial collapses).

‘New’ bank (59), built 1939. Before 1807, site part of the George. Briefly an iron foundry in 1870. Later called Horwood House. Montessori school 1917 onwards for eight small poor children from London. A helper wrote a book, *The Unrelated Family* (c 1920) – called it ‘an old-fashioned house in an old-

fashioned town'. **Witham House** (57) built c 1750 for first Jacob Pattisson. Family home till 1859 – saw many dramas and tragedies. On right, gateposts to carriage yard, and disturbed brickwork behind first-floor window where formerly was an enclosed footbridge to next door. Solid cast iron railings. **Two red-brick buildings** (53-55) built late 1700s to let by second Jacob Pattisson. **Spread Eagle** (47-51), mostly from 1500s – an inn ever since (see page 77 for photo). Early gables, later decorative barge-boards. Date '1300' on front is invented. One of Witham's five coaching inns in early 1800s.

Turn right under the Spread Eagle arch, go through the yard till you reach Maldon Road, to turn left up it. Note the following en route.

Yard – in 1820s the Royal Mail coach came daily – half-past midnight to Norwich, 2 a.m. to London. Foreign mail to Harwich twice a week. Also three other coaches a day each way. Stables for over seventy horses. Also in 1839 for few years, small silk factory. On right as you reach Maldon Road, **Freeland House** (20), designed 1862 by Frederic Chancellor, renowned Chelmsford architect and civic figure (started career with Witham's James Beadel). Coming out into the road and looking down (right) and across, a large Holm oak and a grey brick gatepost – marking former garden of **the Retreat**, a private 'lunatic asylum' (1812-c 1914), founded by Dr Thomas Tomkin (now bungalows). Walking left up Maldon Road, former **Baptist chapel** (1828-1975), now a care centre (see page 71). **Former house** (2), with '1889' on front (this style has the 9 in the middle), built for William Ward, 'noted for his cart horses'. Shop with **two gables** (2b), built as public toilets (1929-1960s) – a boon to motorists travelling the old A12. Visible across Maldon Road, brick house with blue-black panels from early 1700s, behind White Hart.

'Central Buildings 1927' (39-41) on corner. On site of the Angel (since c 1720, earlier the Greyhound) – in which market held indoors mid 1800s, after street market closed. The three first tenants after 1927 were London Central Meat Company (note initials in tiles in front of doorway, also decorative ironwork above shop window, and two original Crittall metal doors),



The new shop at 41 Newland Street about to open in January 1928. The rest of the new 'Central Buildings' was still empty.

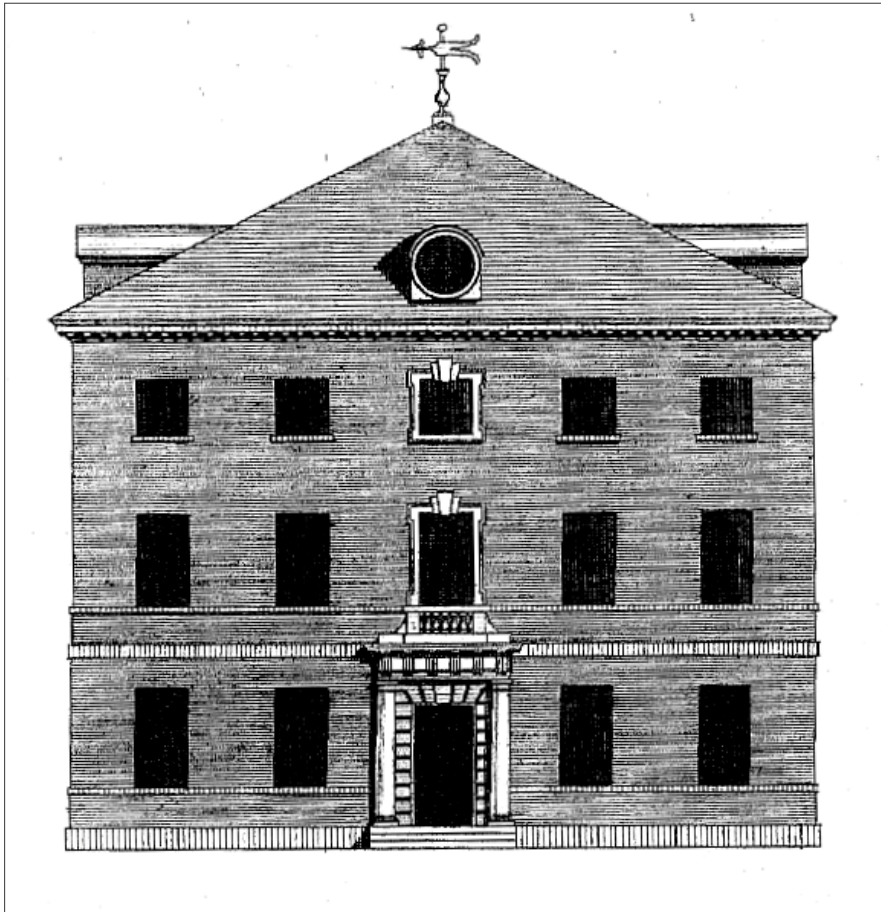
East Anglian Electric Supply Company (just arrived in town), and the Tax office (in 1931 the assistant tax inspector, Arthur R Thompson, wrote a fascinating book, *Nature by Night*).

Cross Maldon Road at traffic lights to continue along Newland Street.

Maldon Road has old blue and white name plate – probably from 1914 when Council first fixed them – few survive. **White Hart** (thought to be haunted) – oldest parts from 1500s but much altered. Rebecca Cook, innkeeper in the 1840s, mistakenly claimed explorer Captain Cook as an ancestor. In 1902, petrol sold here – in 1908 served Royal Automobile Club members ‘by appointment’ – also had billiards. Entrance to **Grove shopping centre** (completed 1988, now home of fortnightly ‘farmers’ market’). Optional trip into it to see converted **maltings** on left, built about 1700 (12, Superdrug in 2004) – chequered’ brickwork – at first, upper floors were nonconformist meeting-house. Back on the street, **Woolworth’s** (35), built 1934 – no upper floor, just bricks and false windows there – the company’s standard design for its ‘fifth grade’ shops. **Three small shops** (29-33) restored 1989 – medieval timbers visible inside.

Collins Lane – Edmund Collins built ‘little court’ of cottages here before 1700. At times also called Hubbards Lane, Alma Place or Cutts Yard. Next to smelly maltings mentioned above. In 1850, ‘state of terrible dilapidation’ – privies and rubbish overflowing – inhabitants ‘the picture of wretchedness’. **Three shops** (9-13), built 1600s – ‘timbers’ added to front 1920s. **Red Lion** (7), nearest part built late 1300s, rest 1600s. Called Black Boy in 1700s, with cock fights. Became Red Lion c 1790 (third place with this name).

Pair of shops (5A and 5B) inscribed ‘1934’, by local tax officer and part-time architect William John Redhead – he also ‘designed’ the church for Dorothy L Sayers’ novel ‘the Nine Tailors’. At the imposing **High House** (5) (see facing page), when Dr Payne moved out in 1924, his ‘surplus furniture’ included a sideboard and six chairs made by Chippendale. Three storeys till 1934, when top one removed. **Former Post Office** (1939, Witham’s fourth), with ‘GR’ for King George VI. Attractive narrow bricks like many 1930s Essex POs. 1980s extension on right. Closed 1990s (except sorting office). At earlier building here, William Perry made an experimental mail coach in 1770. **Statue** (1994), novelist, theologian and Witham resident Dorothy L Sayers (see colour page 14), by local sculptor John Doubleday.



The drawing from which High House (5 Newland Street) was built. It was published in a book in 1757 by Abraham Swan, a London architect. He said that he hoped to appeal to 'gentlemen of moderate fortunes'. The first owner was probably Thomas Crispe, who also had a share in a plantation, slaves in the West Indies, and several ships. His brother Nicholas was a well-known London porcelain maker (British Library, shelf-mark 61 h5). Page 7 of the colour section. shows the house in an engraving of 1832.

Freebournes (3), timbered, 1600s, restored 1989 – named after John Freeborne – Quaker clothmaker – died here 1675 (see page 26). After that a farmhouse with 300 acres (1675-1960s). Never dressed up in brick. 'Witham fires' started here in haystacks – 5 November 1828. Was said in 1869 that its 'farm yard and cattle open to the street ... amidst some of the best houses'.

Large **Office building** (1974, since extended), part of town expansion scheme – a major employer. **Brick wall** (mostly early 1700s) of former mansion **the Grove** (see pages 30 and 40). Originally 430 feet long (135 metres) – two-thirds remains. Full height visible from behind it. Nearest section best preserved – special curved bricks near top (shown on colour page 17). Land sold in plots 1920s onwards. Winston Churchill considered buying the mansion. Fixtures auctioned 1932 – e.g. marble fireplaces, chandeliers, electric motor. Remains demolished soon afterwards. Former stable block became a house – taken down 1966 after fire. **Victorian letter box**, small ‘C’ type, six inch aperture, c 1890s. Wall breached by **Grove road** (1970s) and **Police station** (1937), latter once ‘quite the most ornate building in Witham’. **Seat** given by German town of Waldbrohl to celebrate twinning with Witham and Jutrbog. Inward-sloping surfaces symbolise friendship. Two old cedar trees, relics of the Grove’s gardens.

Important junction – Avenue Road (opposite), was formerly the only road to Chipping Hill, whilst Chess Lane on your side led to thirty-acre Broad Mead since Domesday Book of 1086 and before (name perhaps from ‘chase’ (lane), not chestnuts). **Optional trip** down the lane and back, leads across Armiger Way, then at end is concrete **spigot mortar emplacement** from World War Two (shown on page 15 of the colour section) – on right near fence, just after wooden level-crossing gateposts for old railway to Maldon (closed 1960s, now the Blackwater trail).

Returning up Chess Lane to the main road, five **Grove cottages** – originally ‘furthest house on the south side of Newland Street’. Made 1830s into to seven cottages, later on two pairs were combined. **Striped post** – remnant of cast iron signpost (about 1920), inscription of Maldon Ironworks.

Cross Newland Street at the junction to turn back.

Former **Catholic church** (1851), now a house. Earlier was site of Witham’s first fire station (of four), built 1807 (15 feet by 14 feet, 4½ by 4¼ metres). Earlier still, a small field called Gallowscroft – site of medieval gallows.

Garage – art deco vase and gatepost on corner – others similar have gone (see colour page 16). **Former Rowley’s hall** next door now sells car parts.

Royal British Legion Hall (1957) also accommodates Baptist services.

Garage, 1930s stepped fascia – Glover’s, founded at far end of street over a hundred years ago. A mansion once stood where **The Avenue** joins



The former Rowley's Hall or Rooms (late 1920s), afterwards the Grove Hall (1932 onwards). There were weekly dances with a band (and late night buses home), also dinners and whist drives. For the 1935 Jubilee, 800 children had tea in two sessions. The front verandah where teas and coffees were served is now the shop window. Taken in 2003.

Newland Street, replaced mid-1700s by avenue of eighty magnificent lime trees, part of the Grove estate. Fields used by First World War soldiers. House building began 1923 – trees felled. Gardens with **War memorial** – includes many ordinary Witham families not often commemorated.

In 1762, this area was called 'an open, airy, part of the town' – fashionable. Red brick **Newbury House** (2) – Frederick Shelley moved here in 1936 and set up a bookmaker's business – named the house after the racecourse. Previously Congregational church's manse (1875-1936) – in 1916, Reverend David Picton and Scots soldier accidentally killed here by hand grenade. Cast iron railings, integral foot scrapers, here and at larger **Avenue House** (4), (see pages 30-31, and page 7 of the colour section) whose history is complex – some medieval inside, chequered bricks from early 1700s on left wall, and 1757 red brick frontage (necessitating rainwater outlet – left side – high up – date and initials of gentleman William Wright and his wife Mary – see pages 30-31). In mid 1800s occupants the Misses Du Cane had five servants.

The **next fourteen buildings** fronting the street – early to mid 1800s – all white or grey brick frontages, so distinctive. Include **6-12** (Grove Terrace, c 1840, replacing cottages). Not for servants as sometimes suggested (they had humbler existences) – but retired tradesmen and widows, most with their own servant. **14, set back**, the odd one out, built 1891 for the groom at Avenue House. Large **Roslyn House** (16) (see colour pages 17 and 18) – four stages visible. First, near side (and back), timber frame with 'carpenters' marks' (Roman numerals scratched on wood). Second, far side, 'chequered'

brick (c 1715 when ‘great workhouses’ were built, perhaps for weaving). Third, white brick everywhere else, from conversion to ‘capital mansion house’ in 1813. Note many diagonal pressure marks on white bricks (more commonly used in the 1700s). Fourth, Victorian conservatory in front, and cast iron railings. **Whitehall** (18, library since 1981). Mostly built early 1830s, home of Blood family – prosperous solicitors – had six servants in 1851 – claimed relationship to both Captain Blood (tried to steal Crown jewels 1671), and General Sir Bindon Blood (Boer War) – (connection in both cases either mythical or very distant). Later was the cinema (1928-64, see colour page 14). Inside, poster for first performance, and original notice board – also, visible through left-hand doors, a board painted ‘TO CYCLE HOUSE’. Upstairs windows give views of surprising backs of neighbouring buildings.

Tiptree Villa (20), built 1876, initials of Edward Harvey and wife Amelia Charlotte (of Tiptree). Inherited the site from Edward’s distant relative Miss Charlotte King (of 24) – heiress who ‘lived a long life in extreme penury, scarcely allowing herself common necessities’. She also left him the **next three houses** (22-26) and he put up fine cast iron railings and gates in front of all four, inscribed ‘Davey, Paxman and Co, Colchester’ (two Davey brothers from Witham helped James Paxman start famous engineering works at Colchester in 1865, one of them left in 1871 - see also pages 176 and 182, and page 16 of the colour section) . The three houses are medieval inside – each has a different frontage from the 1800s – all ‘stock’ bricks – with bits in, rather cheap, perhaps chosen by Miss King ? Known colloquially as ‘Dorothy Sayers’ Cottages’ after the novelist – she lived at 22-24 c 1930 to 1957. They fell into disrepair for a time – were restored in 1975 thanks to Essex County Council. Row of **four shops** (28-34), formerly houses, built in 1800s – 34 was once Witham’s main photographic studio (c 1891-1939). The **George** public house (36) (so called since early 1800s after previous George (61) was closed). Public library started in the back room here in 1932.

For an optional extra, go part-way into Collingwood Road, up the right hand side, back on the other.

Collingwood Road (built 1869) – now the main road north. Named after Admiral Lord Collingwood (battle of Trafalgar, 1805). Accommodated new red-brick water tower, 80 feet (24 metres) high – on right – (see pages 84-85) demolished carefully 1935 – contractors wanted to ‘throw’ it instead (i.e.

push it over). Mostly high hedges for several decades – in 1890, sheep were damaging the path. Gradually built up from early 1900s.

Behind the George, **Ben Sainty Court** – named after one of three signalmen who prevented worse carnage at the rail disaster of 1905 (see page 94 and colour page 11). **Large block** for various health organisations. Former **office** of Witham Urban District Council with initials (1934, when it was enlarged to include Rivenhall and Silver End). **Public Hall** (1894), classical, home to multitude of events. Late Victorian **letter box**, medium 'B' size, larger than Witham's others. **Constitutional Club** (1910), replacing the one burnt down in Newland Street. Next **house** (16) built for the Miss Pattissons 1904 (see page 122). Returning on the other side – tiny **telephone exchange** (1939 inscribed on bricks), newer one behind (1975). Newland Drive goes to car park, where **wall** backing onto churchyard has anti-'poll-tax' graffiti (1990) and stone with 'E C SMITH' (1880s). He was first occupant of imposing red brick **Collingwood House** (c. 1880) (15, now Noel Pelly House), good moulded bricks. Next, site of Saturday **market** (since c 1970).

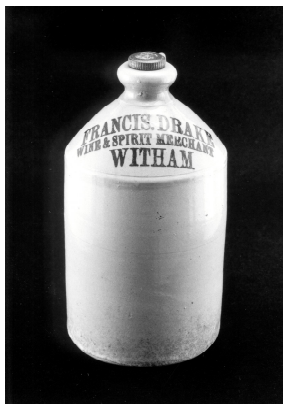
Back in Newland Street, compare position of **38** (Wimpy, on former site of Glover's) between Lockram Lane and Collingwood Road, on original building line of c 1200 AD, with that of projecting **40** (Lisa Marie since the 1960s), further forward because built on site of medieval market stalls.



The centre of Newland Street in 1961. The brick upper part of 'Modes' (36, far right) is on the original road line of c 1200, as is Glovers (38, now Wimpy), behind the George's hanging sign. But Bibbys (40, now Lisa Marie) and the buildings behind it project about 30 feet (9 metres) forward (i.e. leftwards). Their sites were once medieval market stalls, made more permanent from the 1400s onwards. The shops beyond Bibbys were redeveloped in 1967, and the new buildings (some of which front the Newlands precinct) were set back.

Lockram Lane – here centuries before Collingwood Road – started early 1400s as gateway from house into field behind. ‘Lockram’ was once a type of cloth but in 19th century meant ‘rubbish’ – lane then temporarily renamed Queen Street – government inspector wrote in 1850 ‘Why so dignified it would be impossible to discover, as nothing can well be imagined more filthy and disgusting ...’. Blue street name plate from 1914 (see colour page 20).

Newer shops (42-54) (built 1967) – nearest one replaced Spurge’s drapery shop, once one of the wonders of Witham. Entrance to **Newlands precinct** – c.1967 – rather outdated now – but has always had some splendid shops – and who knows, concrete might be fashionable again one day! After another new shop, **older building** on pavement line (56) was in the shoe trade from the 1850s till 2004 – refronted 1886, date in moulded bricks. Two **two-storey shops painted white** above (58 and 58a) – together a butcher c 1820-1970 – earliest ones, Barwells, enjoyed being confused with rich Barwell family of the Grove. Early timbers and fireplace inside 58a. Two



A flagon from Drake’s wine shop. Francis Drake moved to 66 Newland Street (from 74-76) in the early 1900s. He blended whisky and sold it in London – one variety was called ‘Cardiac’. The business continued here till the 1930s under the supervision of four of his children, Edward, Ethel, Winifred and Ada.

three-storey red brick buildings (60-62) built mid 1700s for the Patissons to rent out. **Last one** of row (64), painted above, formerly ‘Corner House’, built 1760s, housed chemist’s 1840s-1960s – formerly steps to corner door. One chemist, Robert Poynter Green, was also a dentist, serving ‘Nobility, Clergy, Gentry’ and others. His son Hubert, returning 1916 from twenty years of world travel, ‘found Witham very much changed’.

Wide area is **former market place** and fair ground – original street width of 1200 AD again – was centre for most outdoor gatherings till precincts were built. **Coach House Way** – along old medieval line of street (name quite new). Across it, **imposing red brick** building, five windows wide (66), built 1780s by Samuel Humphreys in his own style (mansard roof etc., like his 87 opposite, and his 64 that you’ve just passed) – Drake’s wine shop for over a century (1850s to 1970s). Adjoining **smaller brick building** on corner of Guithavon Street (68) – is copy (dated 2000) of its predecessor, built 1700s for Jacob Patisson – second of three Red Lion

inns till c 1800 – also dealt with the post. Then c 1800-53 became Witham's first separate Post office. Had a clock and known as 'Clock House' – notice of local meetings gave their times as 'by the Town Clock'.

For another optional extra, turn into Guithavon Street, go up the right hand side, back on the other.

'Guithavon' is pronounced 'Guthayvun' – worthies who built and named it (1841) wrongly thought it was ancient form of 'Witham'. Once a quiet and genteel street. **Tall white building** (2-4) – probably built as cloth warehouse by Armond family – 1500s or 1600s. In 1700s was 'spacious and elegant assembly room' of Red Lion. **Seat** with two old plaques moved here for safe keeping – one from wall in Lockram Lane belonging to tanner James Matthews (1817), other from 46 Newland Street (1881). **Car park** (1960s), former site of National Schools (see page 61 and 74). **All Saints church**, completed 1842 for Anglicans, restored 1989 for Catholics (see pages 73-75).



Guithavon Street in the early 1900s, with gas lamp and telephone pole. The two houses have the National Schools beyond, with a flagpole. There was a slaughterhouse behind them. All now replaced by the car park. The church remains – formerly All Saints (C of E), it is now Holy Family and All Saints (Catholic).

1950s Ordnance Survey bench mark right of door. Explore peaceful interesting churchyard (nightingales used to sing here) – old cedar tree – original cast iron railings at front, and some others at back (along Lockram Lane) inscribed ‘Davey, Paxman and Davey’ from churchyard extension in 1867 (the older version of the firm’s name, see pages 172 and 182 and colour page 16 – they cost nearly £90, equivalent of £4,000 today).

‘**Parsonage**’ (14) built 1849 for curate – interesting latch on iron gate. ‘**Woodhams**’ (16) built 1850s, called ‘a charming country retreat’. First named ‘Woodbine Villa’, changed about 1900 after Woodbines became the ‘poor man’s cigarettes’. Sheltered housing at Rex Mott Court (built 1975) and Podsbrook (1973). Stop at **crossroads**, look over to **chapel** opened 1932 for the Peculiars (now Evangelicals). Previously site of steam and gas flour mills (1879-1925) – miller’s brick house to right in the trees (water mill behind demolished 1948). **Green space** left of the chapel – Second World War Home Guard practised here. Further left was Territorial Army headquarters.

Crossing Guithavon Street to return – Witham’s second **fire station** on corner (1850s to 1940s), 1950s Ordnance Survey bench mark lower right. Victorian **letter-box** – smallest size, fixed 1894 by builder Charles Richards (work cost 16s 6d (82½ p)) (see colour page 16). **Grassed triangle** in front – formerly Second World War air raid shelter for firemen. New telephone pole (2004 – colour page 20 shows it being put up). **Crown**, built 1860 – publican 1897-99 was Joseph A Kuner, Witham’s first electrical engineer. **Mill Vale Lodge**, built 1886 – previous building was police station (1849-1937), report centre Second World War, afterwards clinic (toilets in old cells). Attractive brick **church hall** – originally was Methodist church, opened 1864 (see page 71) – architect Charles Pertwee of Chelmsford. School room added behind 1934, along whose right wall are foundation stones and names of benefactors (including Yorkshire flour miller Joseph Rank – helped Methodists world-wide, father of J Arthur Rank the film mogul – rare to find his name displayed like this, he was usually too modest to allow it).

‘New’ **Methodist church**, built 1961 – on site of ‘Paradise Row’, nonconformist almshouses. **Red brick terrace** (21-37) completed 1861. By 37, unusual fibre glass telephone pole (experiment of 1970s and 1980s – there’s another further on). **Gate** and hidden path between 19 and 21 – short cut to Lawn Chase. **Colne House** (19), built 1850 as Savings Bank (founded 1818 in Newland Street, primarily for the poor). Church’s role shown by cross in wall. Called a ‘very pretty building’ in 1869. Gothic style unusual for

bank buildings then – more usually classical. **Terrace** (3-15) built 1843 for the Patissons to rent out. Red bricks unusual then – perhaps chosen to match their ‘Witham House’ in Newland Street, proudly visible ahead of you (deceived compiler of 1970 official historic buildings list, who thought they were from 1700s). Original railings and coal-hole covers (see colour page 16).

When you reach Newland Street again, turn right into it.

1920s Ordnance Survey **bench mark** on corner behind the left leg of the road name (pictured on colour page 20). **Corner building** (70) – occupied c 1860-2001 by stationer and Richard Sutton Cheek (see the illustration below). **Three attractive red brick buildings** (72-78) from 1700s. The first (72) is earliest (c 1726) – typical blue-black brick panels – alleged spy lodged here 1756. Later (1782-1843), Norton family of coopers (barrel makers) had large timber yard. In 1802 Thomas Norton wanted son John to build over the left-hand gateway – he didn’t – finally done 1980s (72a). **74-76** (about 1770) (now the post office), arched first-floor window – in early 1900s it was Mr Spurge’s (less ‘classy’ than no. 42), called ‘London House’ At **78** (also 1770s), now with bow windows, some of Mr Spurge’s shop girls lodged, with



A 19th century engraving of the wide part of Newland Street, published by Richard Sutton Cheek. His own ‘printing office’, and bookseller’s and stationer’s premises can be seen left of centre (now 70 Newland Street). He produced a scurrilous local newspaper here called *The Tomtit* from March 1869 to May 1870. Then it had to be closed after a libel action.



The town sign, designed by Roy Belsham to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Queen and the 50th anniversary of Witham Rotary Club. It was unveiled in February 2003 by Alan Hurst, MP, and dedicated by the rector, the Reverend John Suddards. The photo was taken soon after the unveiling, hence the flags (see also the front cover)

a housekeeper. Town sign, designed by Roy Belsham, and unveiled in 2003 by Alan Hurst MP to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Queen, and the 50th anniversary of Witham Rotary Club

Set well back, three tall **Medina Villas** (80-84, see the facing page) – with name and date (1883). Bricks from earlier Georgian building, Medina House, visible in right hand end wall. The Villas were too novel and imposing for Witham – only 80 succeeded just as a house, others needed single-storey **shops in front**. The first from about 1950s, others 1880s. The furthest (84) was new Post Office built 1887, when called ‘more useful than ornamental’. First telephone exchange here in 1905 – twelve subscribers. In 1906, telegram about election results stuck in chute – found eleven years later. Post Office moved away 1939. Cooper’s versatile drapery and haberdashery shop here 1963-99. **Telephone pole** – from markings and fittings, is over 40 years old – larger predecessor

served the Post Office. Good place to view the **panorama** of lovely old buildings on the other side of the road.

Nice iron gate. **Shop** (86) – two storeys – Sammy Page’s c.1910-1940s – wealth of second-hand goods. **Shop** (88) – three storeys with white edges – ironmonger’s c.1830-1930s – in 1861 Carrington Wilson employed ‘7 men, viz. 1 coppersmith, 1 tinman, 1 bellhanger, 1 whitesmith, 1 shopman, 1 porter, 1 carman’ (a carter). Now Holts’ quality butchers, run by the family, here since 1952 (after a few years at 143).

United Reformed Church, formerly Congregational, built 1840 – architect



Set back are the three Medina Villas (80-84 Newland Street). When built in 1883 they were twice as tall as any other Witham houses of the time, with moulded cornices and chandeliers inside. Each had two indoor WCs and also the first plumbed-in baths in Witham. The town was not ready for such luxury and builder Joseph Smith had no offers at the first auction in 1884. Taken in 1990.

probably James Fenton (built many similar in Essex) (see page 71). Earlier small timber church built 1714 – by 1800s it was ‘dear old patched up Meeting house’. Memorial right side, shown on colour page 20 – Jacob (the first) and Elizabeth Pattisson (died 1754 and 1750). Base of obelisk near front steps – Thomasin family, brushmakers. **Space** in front – formerly Witham Literary Institution building, changed briefly to Constitutional Club c 1908 – had town clock which was previously in Guithavon Street – all burnt down 1910. Two **tall red brick buildings** now joined (90-92), Original features from 1500s inside; some accidentally revealed by burst pipe in 1979. Frontages from late 1700s. Now Byfords – quality furnishing and gifts – (92 since 1955, 90 incorporated 1966) – third generation of the family.

Lawn Cottage (94), just before the chase – pointed gable, cheerful Gothic style, built 1865 for James Wright (shows date and initials) – indoor WC was served with rainwater from lean-to glass roofs (Witham had no mains till

1869). **Lawn Chase** was drive to **Lawn House** (c 1830-1970). Was imposing white brick building – whilst occupants (Luard family) away in July 1868, gardens opened to the public – nearly a thousand came. Almshouses in drive moved to Guithavon Street to ‘improve’ surroundings. **‘Christmas House’** (96-98), 1960s, replaced older building of same name. **Batsfords** (100) – vast early red brick frontage, possibly pre-1700, judging from ‘rolled’ brick edges to windows (see page 45 and colour page 17). In early 1920s gifted broadcaster Peter Eckersley lived here – director, announcer and engineer of 2MT, Britain’s first regular radio station. Known in Witham for cheerful life-style and parties. Building became hotel c 1980, restaurant and bar 2003. **Flats and shops** (102-116) built 1987 on site of Parion’s caravan sales park. Earlier, small, crowded houses here, including Notts yard, named after Joseph Nott – sold clothes and groceries c 1820-1850.

Small plastered **shop** (118), part of structure is from late 1300s, one of oldest in Newland Street. Lead-glazed windows installed by builder Fred Gaymer 1930s. Highway Bookshop since 1988. **Tall gabled building** (124) – part is rest of medieval house – behind brick front from 1880s with moulded bricks. Mann’s private boarding school for boys, with attic bedrooms and outside toilets, 1840s-1907.

Two attractive **red brick buildings** (126-128), **Blue Posts inn** c 1700-1845 (see pages 41-42). Innkeeper William Harlee in c 1700 ‘new fronted with brick’ the medieval building on right (128), and also built new one on left (126). Busy coaching inn later – stabling for forty-five horses, pig sty, and skittle yard. After the railway, Smyths’ seed-drill factory (1840s-1894), with blacksmiths, wheelwrights etc. from Suffolk. Later Coates’ electrical shop (c 1930-1994), starting as ‘wireless and cycle engineer’. **Public house** (130), founded c 1840, called **‘the Crotchet’** from c 1890-2000, so named by publican (who was a music teacher). Single storey part on left was formerly blacksmith’s forge. **Shop, corner of Mill Lane**, formerly **Globe** (c 1845-1917). Parish ‘cage’ was in yard, probably for centuries, for petty offenders – became store 1849, demolished 1920s. **Takeaway** originally built 1921 as Lawrence’s fried fish shop, demolished 2005, replaced by new building. Look up **Mill Lane** - past row of houses on left was a large tannery till the 1960s.

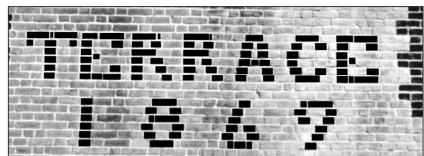
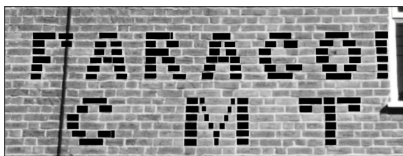
Cross Mill Lane to the car park. For an optional extra, continue straight on up the right hand side of Bridge Street (formerly known as Duck End), back on the other – only selected places are mentioned.

Car park – site formerly gas works (1834-1960s) – had manager's house on corner (see pages 66, 115-16 and colour page 14). **Bramston Sports Centre** and swimming pools (named after former vicar, opened 1974, part of town expansion scheme). **Croft House** (10), Newmans' dairy 1899-1945. **Elmy House**, site of former Elmy's yard (or 'Buffalo Row', after escaped buffalo was cornered there). **Bridge House** (28), built 1700 – refuge for unmarried mothers 1888-93. **Bridge Street Motorcycles** (30) – here since 1959, founded 1953. **Grass** on corner, former site of almshouses (1712-1967). Cross **Spinks Lane**, to **Hatfield Road**. Vet and horse-dealer William Spink lived at red brick **Poplar Hall** on corner in mid-1800s. One-time house name – Cambridge Villa (c 1874-1906) sometimes visible on end wall. 'Cottage home' for poor children from workhouse c 1908-1915. Former **Union workhouse**, forbidding, built 1837-39 (see pages 58-61). Architects Scott and Moffatt (Sir George Gilbert Scott later famous – designed St Pancras Station). Closed 1880. Since known as 'the Bridge' – various uses for housing disadvantaged people. Closed 2003, converted into flats (a purpose considered, but rejected, in 1922). Many new houses on its land behind – potentially a very valuable archaeological site, on Roman road and not far from Roman Temple at Ivy Chimneys – not sure whether anyone looked.



Approaching Bridge Street from Hatfield Road (c 1910). All the features in the foreground have now gone. On the left, the hedge in front of Poplar Hall and the Bridge Street almshouses (brick). On the right, the corner of Howbridge Road, where the RAFA club now stands. Standing there is Robert Fleuty, the fourth Fleuty to be a master wheelwright in Witham; his yard was off the edge of the photo to the right.

Faragon Terrace (59-67 Bridge Street). Shown below are enhanced photos of the inscription, which is in darker brick on the upper part of the building. 'GMT' stands for George and Mary Thomasin, original owners, and 1869 is the date. Below the main picture is the inscription on the front railings, 'Davey, Paxman and Davey, Colchester'. The two Daveys were Witham men and helped to start the firm in 1865. One of them left in 1871 so this is the oldest version of the firm's name. Contrast the post-1871 version shown on colour page 16, and also see pages 172 and 176.



Crossing over Hatfield Road to return, over **Howbridge Road**, along which once stood a windmill (mid 1830s-1850, now site of Tudor Close). **RAFA club** (opened 1959). **Faragon Terrace** (59-67), illustrated above. The name (origin unknown) and 'GMT 1869' are picked out in black brick on the upper part of the building. GMT were George and Mary Thomasin, owners of the brushworks (see pages 66-67), for whom the terrace was built. In front are rare original cast iron railings inscribed 'Davey, Paxman and Davey, Colchester'. Offices in **former George and Dragon** (29), rebuilt 1889 after fire, date on back. **Three half-timbered houses** (23-27), built 1500s, sculpted timbers on 27 (see page 22). Narrow **bottleneck** here on main road to London (A12) before 1964 by-pass. Former **Morning Star** (13), now a house, set back – built as pub 1950s to replace one of same name on roadside. **Alfred Cottages** (3-9), with name and date (1891, see colour page 20), built by Edward Sayer, named after his Baptist father Alfred, bootmaker at no 1 for over fifty years. Over the bridge you are now back at the start.