

Young Time Travellers

1. Manor House

The part of the building that you can see from the High Street was built about 500 years ago. Try to work out what date that would be?

Yes, this part of the manor house was built about 1510 when Henry VIII was King.

The datestones are much newer than the house and have the dates of 1656 and 1652.

Look for these datestones?

One shows a tiler's hammer. It might tell us the trade of the owner of the house.

Turn and look at the datestone on the side of the building opposite. It is very worn.

What is the date on it?

Yes, it shows a date of 1560 or 1566 when Elizabeth I was Queen. It is probably the real date that the house was built.

2. Saracen's Head

This was once an old coaching inn.

Stop and close your eyes for a moment and imagine the big horse drawn coaches coming and going. Tired travellers getting off and going in for food and rest. The teams of horses being changed over.

The hollows either side of the main doorway were to allow passage for the wheel axles of the coaches as they drove through to the stables which were once at the back of the building.

Go and touch the curved hollows.

3. The King and Queen

This was also an old coaching inn. At the back of the King and Queen Inn there is a sundial set high up on the wall.

Look for the sundial. Can you see the hour lines and numbers?

A sundial shows the time by a shadow cast by the sun. It is at its highest in the sky in the middle of the day. Shadows point west in the morning and east in the afternoon. This information is used in making a sundial. A sundial set in a wall is a VERTICAL DIAL. A dial on a wall can only show the hours when the sun is shining on the wall. Sundials have a pointer called a gnomon or style and it's the shadow of the gnomon which shows the time.

4. 5. 6. Fire Insurance Badges

In the past there were no properly organised fire brigades for fighting fires. Fire insurance companies had their own firemen who would put out fires which happened on property insured by their company. Their metal plaques or badges were fixed on the front of a building.

Three houses in Highworth still have these badges. Nos 17 and 24 the High Street and No 5 Lechlade Road.

Look for the badges? Can you make out a Building, a Phoenix and a Sun?

Do you know what happened in London in 1666? Do you think the same could have happened in Highworth?

7. Westrop Cottage - Ice House and Blind House

Ice houses were underground, brick lined, rooms. They were used to cool and keep food in all year round. Ice was collected during the winter from nearby freshwater lakes. It was moved very quickly in horse drawn carts so that it didn't melt. Once in the icehouse the ice would stay frozen for many months.

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Can you imagine living in a house without a fridge?

The way in to this ice house is through a long brick lined tunnel. There are niches in the walls where old fashioned beehives, called skeps, would have been stored throughout the winter.

The Blind House was built as a simple village lock up or gaol. They were used to hold drunks and thieves. They would have been cold damp places with the only light coming from a small grill above head height. They would have had heavy nail studded wooden doors with a strong metal lock.

Look for the grill. What do you think it must have been like to have been locked up in a blind house?

Do you think we should have a blind house in Highworth now?

8. St Michael's Church

During the Civil War of 1642 - 1649, the Royalists had turned Highworth Church into a garrison, or central place where lots of soldiers were based.

Do you think the people liked having soldiers in their town?

On the 27th June 1645, the Parliamentarians marched through Highworth. One cannon was fired in the direction of the west door. Luckily it missed the door but hit the wall only a few inches away.

Can you see the hole in the wall where the cannonball hit?

Four soldiers were killed on this day and seventy prisoners taken.

9. The porch of St Michael's church

The porch has two of the oldest sorts of sundials to be found. These are called 'SCRATCH DIALS' or 'MASS DIALS'. They were very simple and just showed the times of the services so that the bell could be rung.

Look for the two scratch dials? Touch the hole and the lines.

Can you see how a stick pushed into the hole throws a shadow?

10. Sheep Street

Go to Sheep Street and stop in front of No 6. This was once an Inn called the Golden Ball and later the Red Lion until it closed in 1970.

Why do you think it was called Sheep Street? How would it smell on market day? Look under the windows. Can you see some small iron hoops jutting out?

These were used to fasten the sheep pens to on market days.

11. Bottom of Sheep Street

Near the bottom of Sheep Street is a lovely house now Nos 2 & 3. This too was once an old coaching inn and was called at first the White Hart and later the Swan Inn. The outline of a heart can be traced in the cobbles in front of the entrance arch.

Look for this heart?

If you were travelling which Inn would you have preferred to stay in?

12. Market Place

This was the heart of the town. Highworth was first known to have been granted permission to hold markets and fairs 800 years ago and it is probably about this time that the town began to grow.

Can you see the plaque which commemorates this event?