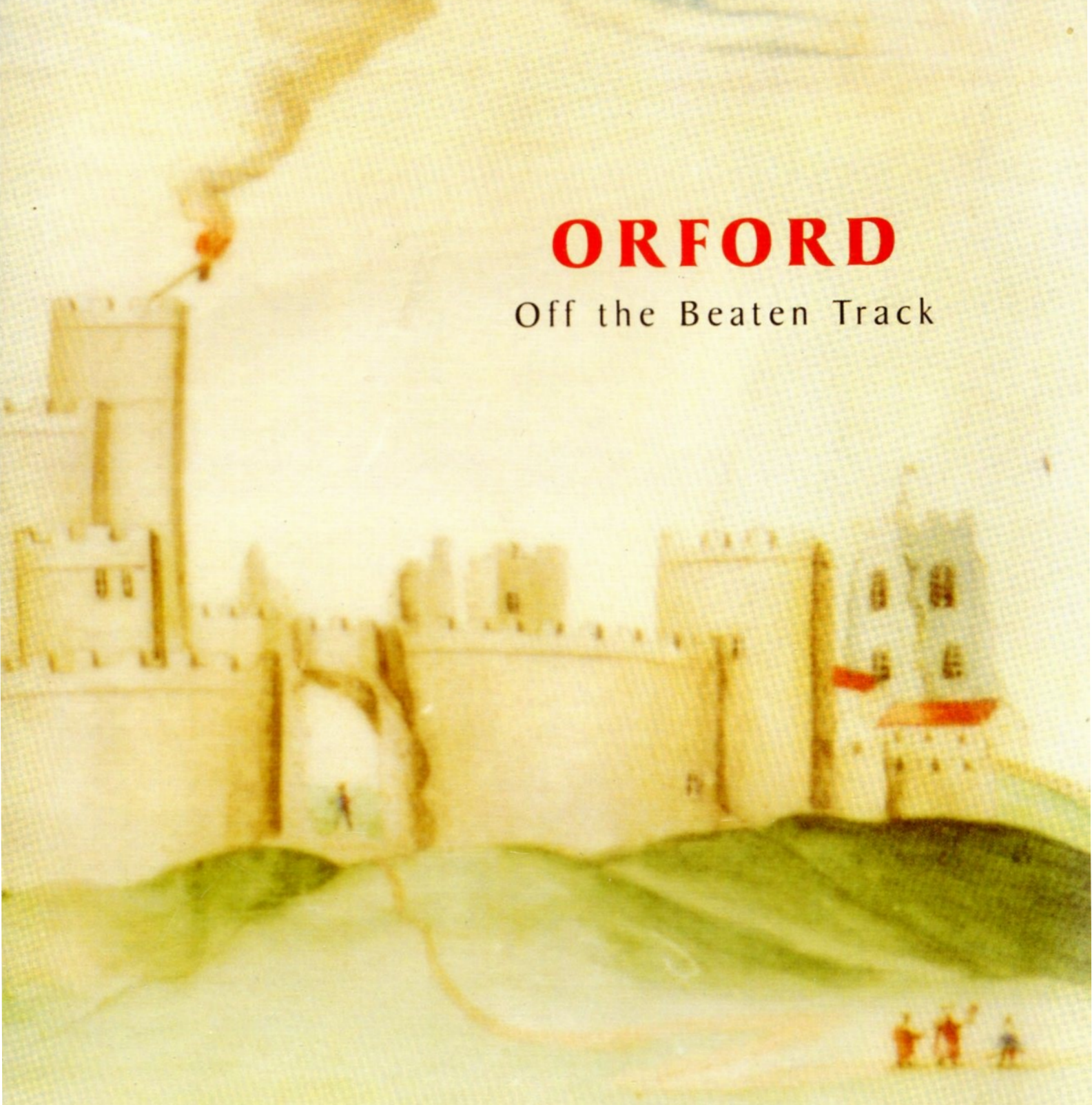


ORFORD

Off the Beaten Track

A walk through Orford based on an Elizabethan map providing a taste of the rich history of this attractive Suffolk village

ORDENSIS IN

History abounds in the attractive village of Orford. Roman and Anglo-Saxon remains have been discovered in the area. Orford Castle, dating from 1165 when building commenced, is acknowledged as the best preserved keep in England, and St Bartholomew's Church with its ruined chancel also dates back to the twelfth century.

Orford has been an important port, a prominent market town, an ancient borough and an intriguing centre of military activity during the First and Second World Wars.

The castle and church are among the interesting places to visit in this picturesque Suffolk village. These are not included in the scope of this walk, but good guide books are available at both places.

Lying hidden among the more prominent features of Orford are many lesser-known aspects of the town's history, some of which have been the subject of recent archaeological investigations.

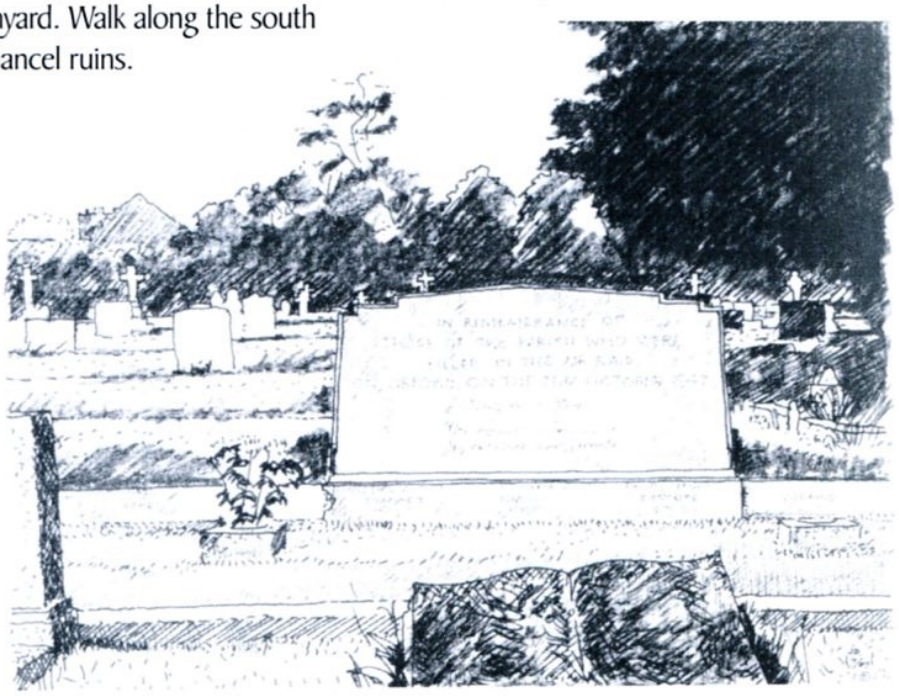
This walk uses a map of Orford made by John Norden (c1547-1625). He was commissioned by Sir Michael Stanhope, a courtier of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, to make a map of his estate, the Sudbourne Estate, which included Orford and the surrounding villages. The map, dating from about 1601, shows all the roads and buildings in Orford and the names of the owners or occupants of the land. We can see how some things have changed, but that many features remain the same.

A walk along this trail will provide a taste of the less obvious history of this Suffolk village.

AN ORFORD WALK

The walk starts just inside the church gate next to the King's Head public house.

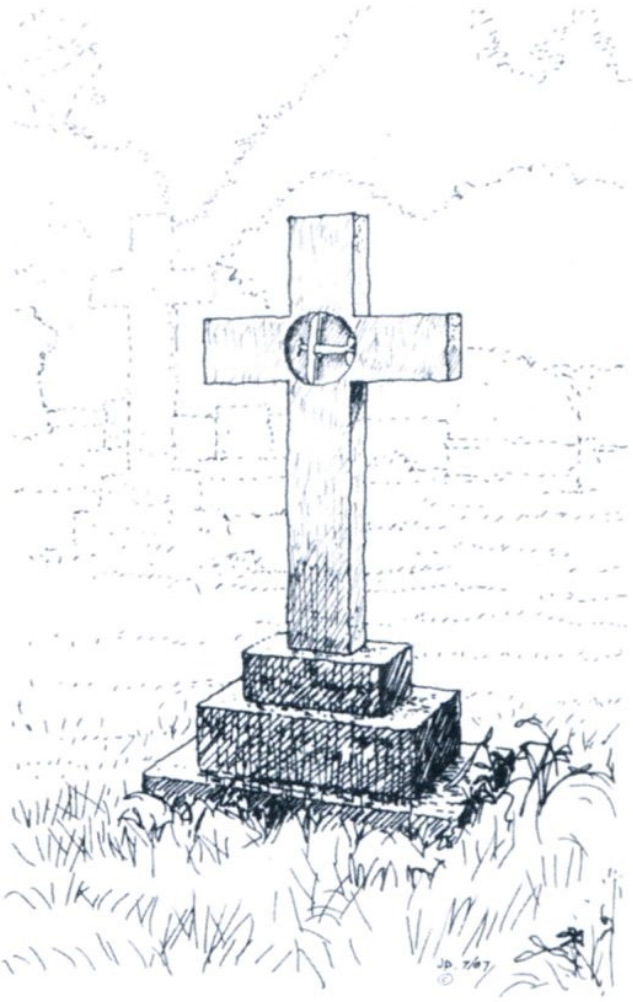
1. CHURCH HOUSE (on the right) may have been a guildhall. It is a fine timber framed building with windows (now blocked) overlooking the church and churchyard. Walk along the south side of the church to join the path through the chancel ruins. Head north (left).



2. GRAVE OF 13 PEOPLE (5 of them children) killed in an air raid on Thursday 22 October 1942.
At about 8am a lone aircraft on a hit-and-run raid dropped four bombs on Orford. One fell on the north side of the Market Square causing five deaths, one landed in a garden on Front Street causing damage to houses but no injuries and the next two fell on the council houses in Ferry Road. There eight people were killed and thirteen were seriously injured. Two of the casualties were servicemen, an airman and sailor, home on leave.

3. SCOTT FAMILY GRAVE

The tall stone cross in the plot enclosed by a low iron railing marks the grave of Sir John Murray Scott, secretary to Sir Richard Wallace. Wallace owned the Sudbourne estate from 1871 to 1884, but is best know for his collection of paintings, porcelain, furniture and other fine things in Manchester Square in London. Sir John Murray Scott helped to set up the Wallace Collection after the death of lady Wallace in 1897. His brother, Edward Maude Scott, was the rector of Orford with Sudbourne from 1877 to 1901 and was responsible for the restoration of St Bartholomew's church between 1894 and 1901. He is also buried in the grave plot. along with other members of the Scott family.



4. WORLD WAR I AIRMEN'S GRAVES

The Armament Experimental Flight of the Royal Flying Corps (which became the RAF) came to Orford Ness in 1915. The station HQ was in the Town Hall and the Crown & Castle hotel was the mess. Right from the beginning it was staffed by 'boffins'. The commander of the airfield was Capt Benedict Melville Jones who after the war became professor of Aeronautics at Cambridge University. The two graves are those of Lt Oliver Byerley Walters Wills age 26 'of the Acoustic Experimental Sub Station' and Lt Benedict Melville Jones ages 20 (a relative of the Commander). Orford Ness continued to be used as a weapons research establishment until the 1980s. Head east along the path by the Old Rectory wall.

5. Note PIECES OF DRESSED STONE from the ruined part of the church in the Old Rectory gate pillars and wall. Turn left along the path between the Old Rectory fence and gardens at the back of the old houses in High Street (probably called High Street because of its height above sea level). The footpath was a wide lane in Norden's time with one house on the left and three on the right (see map). Cross Rectory Road

6. Take the footpath (a lane or road in Norden's time) across the 'King's field' to Ferry Road. Note the row of cottages at right-angles to the road exactly as on the map. Turn left along Ferry Road.

7. The footpath on the right is shown as a wide road on map. THE TWO PAIRS OF HOUSES which were bombed in 1942 can be identified because they were rebuilt in brick. At the corner with Rectory Road see the driveway to the OLD RECTORY and compare the site with the 'rectorie' shown on Norden's map. Continue on Ferry Road to Front Street and turn right.

8. On the Norden map see that there was a long terrace of houses from the corner to where the garage is today. FRIEND'S GARAGE was used as the Motor Transport Deport of the RFC in World War I. Some of the mechanics were women. Cross the road to the village sign.

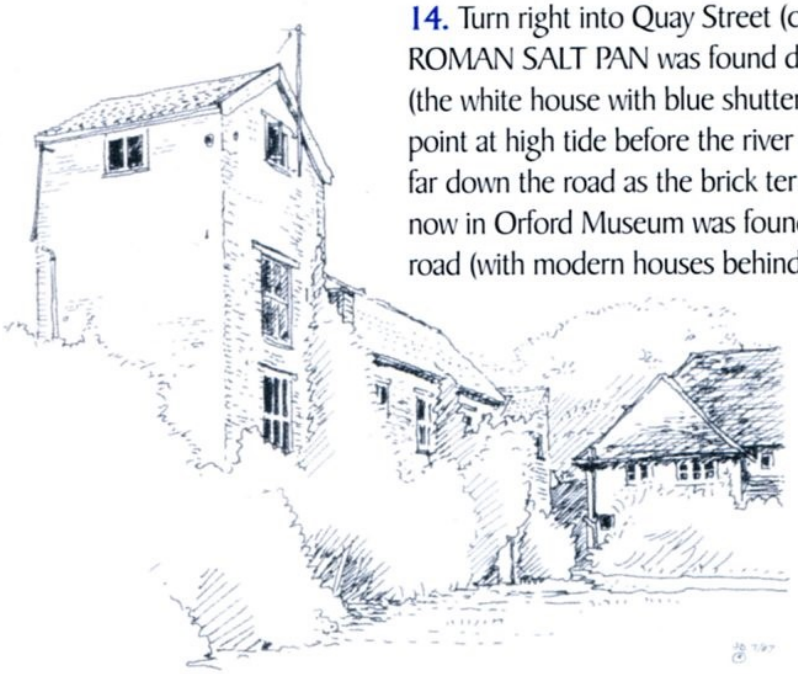
9. Note the pond behind the village sign. It probably marks the northern extremity of the Market Place which would have occupied the whole of the 'bottle-shaped' area between Mundays Lane and Front Street. The pound for straying or lost cattle, sheep etc used to be on the site of the school. The recreation ground was given to Orford by Sir Richard Wallace in 1883. Go along Mundays Lane.

10. Note the wide lane shown on Norden's map where the grassy track leads towards the castle. When Castle Close was being built in the late 1970s the Roman cremation urns now Orford Museum were found. All the buildings in Castle Lane, pump Street etc would be encroachments on the old Market (shown well on the Norden map). Turn right towards the castle.

11. Look at the eighteenth century view of the same scene on the first page of this booklet and compare it with the present. There was a shop on the corner of Mundays Lane. Cottages are shown on the Norden map and in the picture in what is now the garden of Castle House. Behind the Victorian exterior of the Crown & Castle hotel is a fine 16th century timber-framed building. Alongside the castle car park are some railings, but no gates, where an attempt by Kenneth Mackenzie Clark (father of Lord Clark) who bought the Sudbourne estate in 1903, to close off the public footpath across Castle Green was defeated by a popular outcry in 1906. The workhouse was on the site of Castle Terrace, the red brick houses on the left. The land on which the workhouse stood was originally given to the town in 1591 under the will of first mayor, James Coe, and almshouses were built there (marked 8 on the Norden map). Go down Castle Hill.

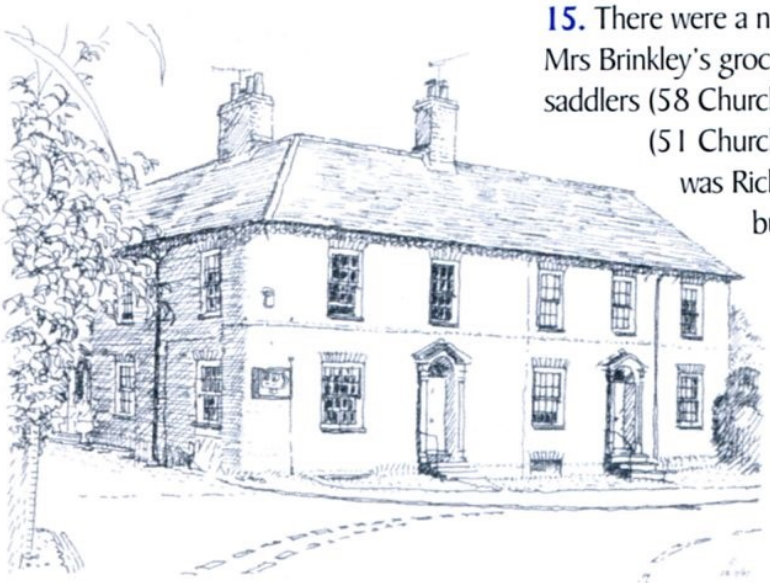
12. On CHANTRY FARMHOUSE see the Wallace crest and 1880 date plaque, an example of Sir Richard Wallace's programme of estate improvements in the village. Part of the farmhouse is much older. Turn left along Broad Street.

13. On the left see Homestede, THE HOUSE OF JOHN CUTTING, Orford's first town clerk, left to him in 1591 by James Coe, the first mayor. On the right note the wall (behind the oil tank and magnolia tree at White Cottage) made of a local stone, coralline crag, part of the FRIARY PERIMETER WALL, shown clearly on Norden's map. The Augustinian Friars (a preaching order) came to Orford in 1295. Notice the stone gables incorporated into THE OLD FRIARY and adjacent houses. The large windows in No 71 are former tailor's and sailmaker's workshop.



14. Turn right into Quay Street (called Bridge Street on the Norden map). On the left a ROMAN SALT PAN was found during archaeological investigations behind No 3 & 4 (the white house with blue shutters), so salty water must have come up to at least that point at high tide before the river walls were built. On the right the Friary wall extended as far down the road as the brick terrace. Some 13th century carved stone window tracery now in Orford Museum was found in a garden there. The wall on the left hand side of the road (with modern houses behind) probably uses some material from the Friary wall.

Stop at Rose Cottage, the house on the left. See how high the road, built on an ANCIENT CAUSEWAY, is above the land on the left and note that on the Norden Map the creek, inlet or wharf seems to extend to this point. The brick buildings in the grounds of Old Brewery House opposite, were ROPE'S BREWERY until 1911 (the Rope family owned and supplied three local public houses, and ran a coastal trading business from Orford Quay). The brewery building became the ORFORD ELECTRIC LIGHT & POWER CO which supplied the village with DC power (note the cable conduits and boxes on 59 Quay Street and several other houses). The company ceased generating electricity c1928 when AC distribution network started. Much of rural Suffolk had no electricity until after World War II, so Orford was very advanced in this respect. Return up Quay Street/Church Street.



15. There were a number of SHOPS here until early twentieth century - Mrs Brinkley's grocery, sweet and paraffin shop (Bell House), Woolnough's saddlers (58 Church Street), Draper's newsagents and greengrocers (51 Church Street) and on the Church Street/High Street corner was Richold's. a draper's and grocer's shop. There were many businesses in Orford up to World War II: four butchers, three grocers (including Pryke & Elliott on the site of the present village shop), a baker, two blacksmiths, two tailors, two coal merchants and three garages.

Published by Orford Museum
Orford Museum located within Orford Castle, displays many exhibits illustrating the long history of the village including documents, artefacts and finds.

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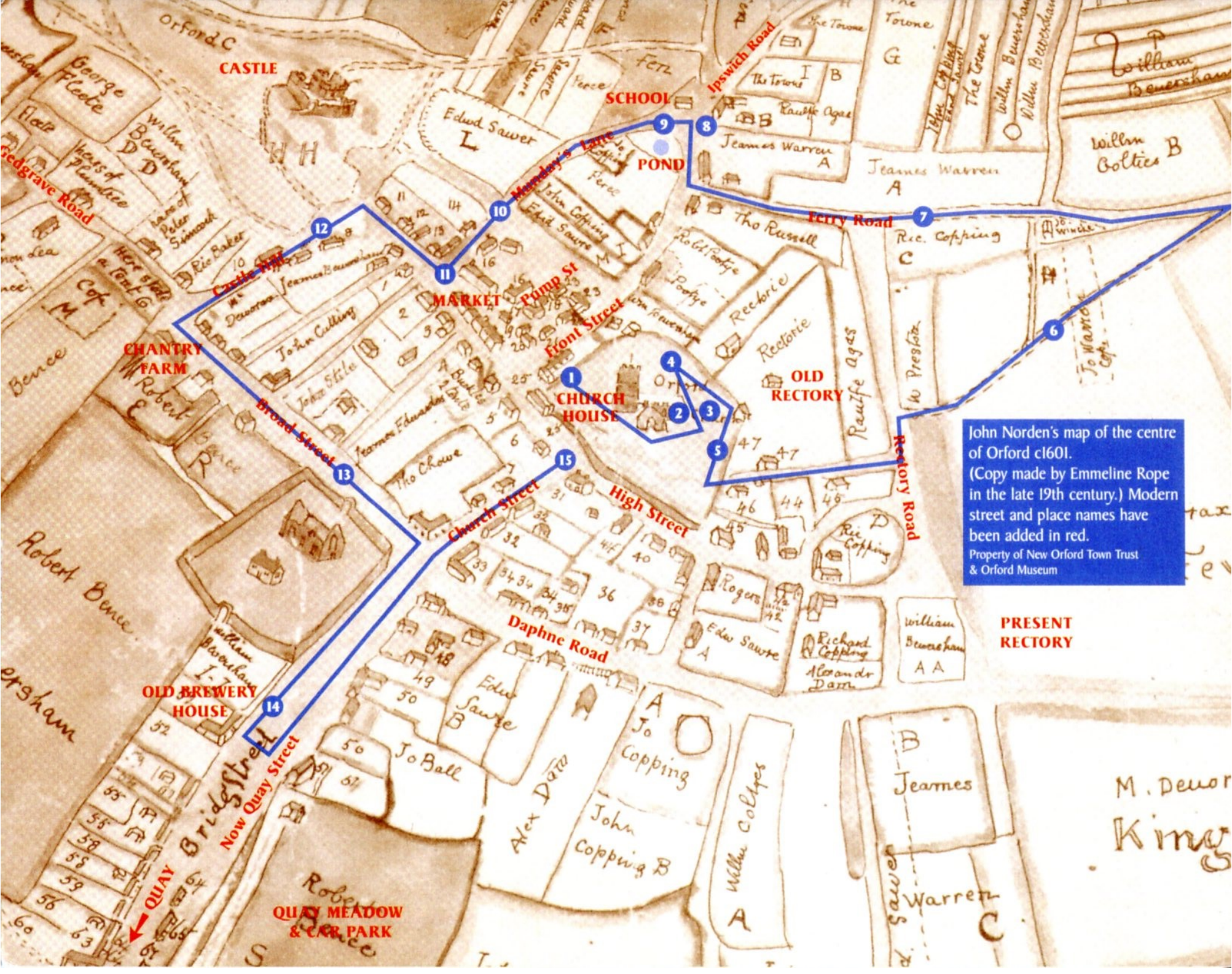
Text by Jane Allen. Sketches by John Donnelly. ©2008



John Norden's map of the centre of Orford c1601.
(Copy made by Emmeline Rope in the late 19th century.) Modern street and place names have been added in red.

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