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## Walk 8 A walk to examine the building stones of Burton upon Trent

**Parking:** There are a number of car parks in the town centre; the Meadowside Centre car park off the High Street is the most convenient

*Distance:* about 6.6 km (about 4 miles). You can shorten the walk by missing out St Chad's Church [19]. It is possible to drive here and park in the surrounding streets for free

*Time:* about 2 hours

*This walk is suitable for the disabled.*

The town of Burton upon Trent is most famous for its long history as a centre of the brewing industry. Although Burton was settled by monks as far back as the 11th century, it was the later growth of the brewing industry which really created much of the town we see today. Its location at a strategic crossing point of the River Trent, a major commercial 'highway' since medieval times, was clearly an attraction prior to the arrival of the canal and railway networks in 1839. Burton is dominated by largely 18th and 19th century red-brick developments, but dig deeper and it is possible to find a small but interesting range of buildings constructed of stones of varying types. These building stones span much of the geological column, ranging from Precambrian to the Middle Jurassic in age. Sadly little remains today of the original abbey and its massive cathedral-like stone church.

The trail begins at the site of the 19th century bridge spanning the River Trent [1]. Walking here from the Meadowside car park, you can see some fine Georgian architecture at the junction of the High Street and Horninglow Street.

### Bridge Street

#### 1 Trent bridge [SK 25499 23293]

The present bridge which is 140 m (460 yards) in length was completed in 1864. It replaced an even more impressive medieval structure of 36 arches that was apparently constructed of local sandstones quarried nearby from the Triassic Bromsgrove Sandstone Formation, 'a mile downstream on the Derbyshire side of the Trent'. The present bridge is constructed of a different material, very large sandstone blocks from the Millstone Grit Group. These blocks are typically very coarse grained, cross-bedded (pp.8 and 10), quartz-rich sandstones and show a range of colours from greenish grey to buff and orange-brown. You can see small pebbles in some of the blocks. Despite the fact that a significant supply of the sandstone was required, the precise quarry source in Derbyshire has not been identified.

*Kerbstones.* Throughout the trail look carefully at the kerbing stones used on the bridge and indeed elsewhere along the High Street and on many of the surviving older thoroughfares. On the bridge and elsewhere, they consist of a distinctive dark red, coarse-grained, igneous rock known as a granodiorite, quarried at Mountsorrel on the eastern side of Charnwood Forest. This quarry is still active for crushed aggregate but in the 19th century, it was a major supplier of kerbing and stone setts across the Midlands and even as far afield as London. As you move along the High Street several other igneous rocks can be seen as kerbing stones, including dark green, pale grey and greenish grey varieties. All were sourced from a number of different igneous intrusions that were emplaced into the Earth's crust in the Carboniferous Period.

### High Street

#### 2 Congregational chapel (now the Riverside church). [SK 25217 23202]

This chapel was constructed in 1842 of local red bricks and buff-coloured Bromsgrove Sandstone. This sandstone is used only for the main building facade and shows a fine range of distinctive sedimentary structures. These include cross-

bedding (pp.8 and 10) and areas where the bedding was deformed when it was a wet sediment. Compare and contrast this sandstone with that seen in the bridge.

### **3 Worthington brewery office [SK 25154 23033]**

This predominantly red brick building has, like many similar 19th century buildings along the High Street, stone dressings of pale buff-coloured Carboniferous sandstone. The prominent sandstone porch shows a shield and dagger carved above the entrance — still the trade mark of Worthington Beer.

### **4 Constitutional Club [SK 25094 22921]**

The red brick and decoratively carved buff sandstone facade was clearly designed to impress potential members. The hard, fine- to medium-grained, quartz-rich sandstone is probably from the Millstone Grit.

### **5 NatWest Bank [SK 25054 22857]**

The construction of a classically designed lower facade to this building at street level was built in the 19th century and intentionally designed to emphasise the solidity and stability of the bank. Constructed of pale buff-coloured Triassic Bromsgrove Sandstone it is now showing some areas of decay. A range of features can be seen within the sandstone blocks.

### **6 Old cinema [SK 25037 22831]**

By the end of the 19th Century, problems arising from industrial pollution affected Burton and many other urban centres. The soot-blackened facades of some buildings prompted substitution of the stone with glazed terracotta tiles. The remaining portion of the upper facade of this building shows why these pollution resistant 'tiles' were used.

### **7 Barclays Bank [SK 25032 22821]**

The modern lower facade of this bank is decorated at pavement level with polished slabs of a very distinctive coarsely crystalline igneous rock. It is called *Larvikite*, and is only available from a single quarry in Norway.

The upper facade of white Portland Stone was quarried from the Jurassic *limestones* of Portland Bill in Dorset.

### **8 HSBC and Lloyds banks [SK 25026 22806]**

Again the facade of these banks is designed to demonstrate solidity and stability. They are constructed of pinkish buff, coarse grained, Millstone Grit sandstone. Lloyds Bank additionally has columns of distinctive red coarse- grained Scottish granite at both entrances.

### **9 Market Hall (1883) [SK 25042 22699]**

Opened on the 24 October 1883, the Market Hall was designed and constructed by the Barnsley architects Dixon and Moxon for the princely sum of £12 000. Roddis of Birmingham used a buff-coloured Carboniferous Millstone Grit to carve the striking decorated mouldings, one with a large bull's head. The source of the sandstone has yet to be established but in view of the Barnsley base of the architects, a South Yorkshire rather than Derbyshire origin seems likely.

### **10 Church of St Modwen (1719) [SK 25075 22717]**

This massive early 18th Century church was designed and built by the Smith family from Warwickshire. It is constructed of red and 'white' (p.29) Triassic sandstones, similar in character to those still quarried at Hollington in north Staffordshire. On these blocks there are a variety of sedimentary features including cross- bedding (pp.8 and 10) and mudstone fragments (clasts), some of which have occasionally weathered out leaving a pock-marked surface. The sandstone paving stones on the north side of the church are of Yorkshire stone, probably from the famous Elland Flags

Formation near Halifax. The graveyard at the back of the church includes several headstones of purple Welsh slate from the Penrhyn Quarries in north Wales.

### **11 War memorial [SK 24972 22603]**

This elaborate memorial to victims of the Great War is built using Portland Stone, and the bronze was cast and carved by Henry Fehr. The white Portland Stone used, is one of England's most distinctive building stones and was quarried from the Jurassic limestones of Portland Bill. This is an ooidal limestone, a rock made from small spheres of carbonate, called ooids.

### **12 The Winery or 'Abbey' Inn [SK 25103 22597]**

Tucked away along the riverside behind the Market Hall is one of Burton upon Trent's surviving architectural gems. Standing on part of the site of the former Benedictine Burton Abbey and possibly part of the original infirmary, this picturesque timber-framed house was greatly altered in the Victorian period, but also contains older stone remnants believed to be part of the original abbey. The building is constructed from pale red to buff and greenish grey Triassic sandstone of probable local origin. Whether these stones were perhaps recycled from the original abbey fabric is open to debate. However, significant volumes of stone would have been available after the dissolution of the abbey, so it is possible that they were reused here. The best views of this building are achieved from the back, by the riverside.

## **New Street**

### **13 Corporation fire station [SK 24742 22710]**

Built in 1905 from Triassic sandstones. Take the next right (*Union Street*); at the second left turning (*Station Street*), immediately on your right is:

### **14 County Court [SK 24808 23016]**

This solid-looking stone building is constructed of large blocks of coarse Carboniferous sandstone. Back at the crossroads, just along to your right is:

### **15 Trinity Methodist church [SK 24745 23120]**

This impressive classically fronted Methodist church is constructed principally of red brick with elaborate sandstone dressings. The buff coloured stonework is composed of Carboniferous sandstone. This building was constructed on a very large scale and the sedimentary structures, such as the *cross-bedding* (pp.8 and 10), appear to have been arranged in decorative patterns.

Go back to the crossroads and turn right into Station Street, continuing past the station along Borough Road to the next locality in King Edward's Square.

### **16 Town Hall [SK 24024 23408]**

This is a fine example of decorative Victorian architecture funded by the Bass brewing family. It was originally the St Paul's church institute, before becoming the Town Hall in 1894. The fabric is a combination of red brick with contrasting, elaborate pale-coloured limestone dressings. The very distinctive nature of this shelly ooidal limestone with its 'stripy' texture (sometimes termed streaky bacon) suggests it is from the Ancaster quarries (Jurassic Lincolnshire Limestone Formation), near Grantham in Lincolnshire.

### **17 Municipal buildings [SK 23961 23437]**

Designed by George Moncur and completed by 1939, this later addition shows a complete change of architectural style and materials. Brown brick dominates the main fabric but dressings of white and yellowed Portland Stone replace the Lincolnshire Limestone of the earlier buildings. In the same square, you can see:

### **18 St Paul's parish church [SK 23926 23449]**

Designed and constructed in 1874 by the architects J M Teale and E B Denison (Lord Grimethorpe), this very large church complements the architecture of the 'old' Town Hall but uses different building materials. The main wall stones in the church are brown medium- to coarse-grained, quartz-rich sandstones of Millstone Grit from Coxbench Quarry in Derbyshire. In contrast the elaborate decorative dressings are the same pale yellow Lincolnshire Limestone (Ancaster Stone) that was also used in the Town Hall.

An interesting point of note in this church is the juxtaposition of limestone with sandstone. It is common wisdom among many architects, and some building stone specialists that it is a mistake to place two mineralogically different stones together in a building, as it could potentially accelerate stone decay. In this 136-year-old building, however, there appears to have been no deleterious effect, most of the stonework looking as new.

For the shorter walk, head back past the station to the crossroads by the County Court. Turn left into Guild Street and at the junction with Horninglow Street, on the opposite side of the road are:

### **19 Magistrates Court [SK 24610 24483]**

Designed and constructed by the Burton architect Henry Beck, this striking, classically styled building with its leaded dome is constructed wholly of white Portland Stone. The stonework is of a high quality and shows well the ooidal fabric of the limestone, with concentrations of mollusc shells. The Portland Stone used here has probably been extensively cleaned up in recent decades, but it does emphasise the resistance of this stone to urban pollution and degradation. Turn left down Horninglow Road and you will return back to the High Street.

For the longer walk, return past the Town Hall and turn left into Wellington Street and continue into Waterloo Street and Victoria Crescent. At the junction with Horninglow Road, cross over into Hunter Street and just to the left you will come to:

### **20 St Chad's church [SK 24979 23427]**

Set amongst rows of red brick terraces, this striking red sandstone church, built of Bromsgrove Sandstone, was designed by the famous Victorian church architect George Fredrick Bodley. It was built between 1903 and 1910 for the Bass Brewing family. At first glance the strong red colour of the sandstone dominates, but higher in the structure a far more decorative element is evident around its elaborately carved windows and belfry openings. The almost detached bell tower is a unique feature. The dramatic red colouration of the stone used may not be typical Staffordshire Hollington Stone, which generally has a paler mottled coloration. Possibly, the sandstone used is the Triassic Runcorn Stone from Cheshire. This was a building stone that Bodley had used earlier in his design for a church at Clumber Park in Nottinghamshire, constructed for the Duke of Newcastle between 1886 and 1889.

## **Figures**

(Figure 98) Burton upon Trent from Tower Woods. Photograph © Christopher Beech courtesy of NFC.

(Figure 99) Walk 8 Route map. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database rights 2011.

(Figure 100) Contrasting sandstone building blocks: on the left, Millstone Grit in the wall of Trent Bridge, Burton. Note the clear parallel lamination and cross-bedding (pp.8 and 10) in the blocks. On the right, finer-grained Bromsgrove Sandstone, seen in several buildings.

(Figure 101) Lloyds Bank building in Burton High Street. This is constructed using Millstone Grit sandstone but note the distinctive columns made of Scottish granite.

(Figure 102) Market Hall in Burton with the distinctive carved bull's head. The stone frontage is built of Millstone Grit sandstone.

(Figure 103) The war memorial in Burton upon Trent, built of Portland Stone.

(Figure 104) The newer, yellowed Portland Stone facade of the 1938–39 municipal offices with the older Victorian (1878) Town Hall clock tower facade of pale Lincolnshire Limestone (Ancaster Stone) and red brick.

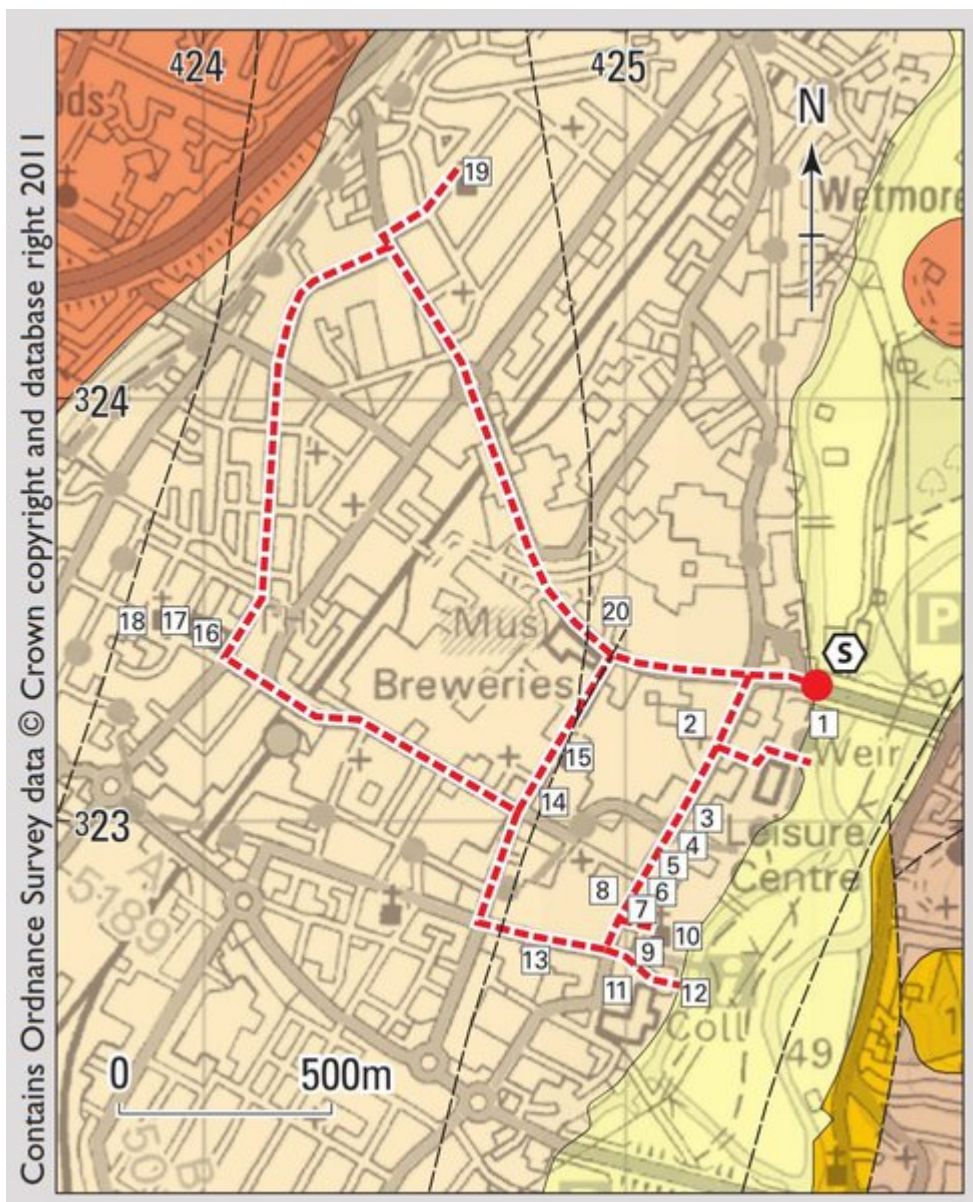
(Figure 105) The 'Abbey Inn' with its Triassic dressed sandstone stone blockwork. It contains part of the original Benedictine Burton Abbey Infirmary. It is on the river just south of the Market Hall.

(Figure 106) St Chad's church.



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