

ST. EDITHA'S WAY

A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH MERCIA



ATHELSTAN
1100



POLESWORTH
AMINGTON
TAMWORTH
WIGGINTON
LICHFIELD
ST. EDITHA'S WAY

WWW.STEDITHASWAY.CO.UK

WELCOME TO THE ST. EDITHA'S WAY

The St. Editha's Way is a new pilgrimage route through the heart of England, celebrating the rich Christian heritage of the ancient Kingdom of Mercia.

Beginning in Polesworth, moving through Tamworth and finishing at Lichfield – the seat of St. Chad – the route connects places of deep religious and historical significance. Designed for walkers and cyclists of all faiths or none, the pilgrimage offers a chance to step away from the noise of modern life and rediscover the sacred in the landscape, history, and quiet of the journey.

Pilgrimages have long been a source of renewal, offering time for reflection and connection – both to the past and to the inner self. In walking the same paths as saints, kings, and countless pilgrims before us, we engage in a tradition that stretches across centuries and cultures. Whether seeking clarity, peace, or simply space to think, pilgrims often find the journey as meaningful as the destination.

Traditionally, St. Editha of Tamworth and St. Editha of Polesworth are held to be different princesses living in separate eras, but some suggest that they are the same person. St. Editha of Tamworth by tradition is the 10th century princess and sister of Athelstan, first King of all England, who married in Tamworth Church in 926 AD. After being abandoned by her husband, she led a life of saintly devotion until her death in 960; the town's church was later named in her honour. Another theory suggests that earlier relics of St. Editha of Polesworth could have been moved to Tamworth under Aethelflaed, and that this led to the dedication of Tamworth Church. We will never know for sure; what is certain is that the St. Editha's Way route takes you on a journey through Anglo-Saxon Mercia, with glimpses of the region's mediaeval past, and also celebrates some of the magnificent Victorian buildings of the area – all testimony to St. Editha's lasting legacy in our own time.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION THE ST. EDITHA'S WAY

We really hope that you have enjoyed this special pilgrimage route.

When you have finished the journey, please present this certificate at Lichfield Cathedral welcome desk for a special pilgrimage stamp, as proof that you have completed the St. Editha's Way.

NAME _____

FROM _____

COMPLETED THE ST. EDITHA'S WAY ON

Every year, we plan to hold a special celebration for everyone who holds a certificate of completion. For further information, please visit the pilgrimage website:

www.stedithasway.co.uk



STAMP
GOES
HERE

Produced by St. Editha's Church, Tamworth © 2025

A PILGRIM'S PRAYER

O Lord of Heaven and Earth,
guide my steps as I journey through this land of Mercia,
where saints have walked and holy lives were lived.
I lift my heart to you, O God,
with the spirit of a pilgrim- seeking not only places, but peace.
Teach me, like St. Editha, to set aside pride and vanity,
and to walk humbly with you in all things.
O Lord, as I walk this pilgrim way,
be my compass and my strength.
Through the prayers of St. Editha and all the Mercian saints,
draw me nearer to your heart.
In the name of Jesus Christ the King of all things.
Amen.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED



The full pilgrimage route between Polesworth and Lichfield is approximately 14 miles from start to finish, and should take about 5 hours at walking pace. If an easier route is preferred, the Polesworth to Wigginton section is approximately 7 miles and can be completed in about 2.5 hours. The full route via bicycle is about 1.5 hours. The public transport links between the sites are excellent, so you don't have to walk all the way back!

If you are seeking refreshment along the route, Tamworth is a good place to stop. The town centre has many delightful restaurants and coffee shops, not least in St. Editha's Church itself! At every point of interest on the map you can find a special St. Editha's Way marker at that location; feel free to snap a picture of yourself with the marker and upload it to social media to show everyone your progress on the route! To guide you on the journey, you can find interactive maps on the pilgrimage website www.stedithasway.co.uk



POLESWORTH ABBEY

The Parish and Abbey Church of St. Editha, nestled by the River Anker in the village of Polesworth in North Warwickshire, is a site of significant religious and historical importance, with its Christian origins dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period. By tradition, the abbey was founded in 827 AD by King Egbert of Wessex for his daughter with the help of the Irish nun St. Modwen, but this is open to debate. Some historians now believe the abbey was likely dedicated to an earlier 7th Century saint – another Editha – who lived in the vicinity, and that her relics may have been later translated to Tamworth Church, potentially leading to its dedication to the same Editha.

The present abbey buildings date from c.1120, and notably contain a surviving effigy of an abbess, typical of the Benedictine Order, plus other fine monuments to Polesworth personalities. An important religious centre, endowed with lands and wealth, it provided employment for the market village that grew around it. The Dissolution of the Monasteries led to the abbey's closure but its church remained as the parish church for Polesworth. Much of the original complex was dismantled, but surviving parts include a Norman doorway to the cloister, round headed clerestory windows and a round-headed columned arched arcade in the chancel, hinting at the grandeur of the original buildings.

The present church continues as a place of Christian worship. The grounds include the impressive stone and timber Nunnery Gateway and remnants of the cloister and other buildings. Polesworth Abbey serves as a lasting reminder of the village's spiritual legacy and the enduring influence of its mediaeval past.

For details and opening times visit www.polesworthabbey.org.uk



ALONG THE ROUTE

There are other historic features to explore along the St. Editha's Way, which reflect the rich and storied history of Mercia.



Alvecote Priory is the atmospheric ruin of a 12th Century Benedictine priory. Founded around 1159 by William Burdett, after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, it fell into decay. Today, the picturesque ruins near the Coventry Canal, featuring the main doorway of the priory church, with other remnants, plus a dovecote, offer a glimpse into the area's mediaeval monastic past.



An ancient spring linked to the Mercian boy saint, **St. Rufin's Well** was once believed to have healing properties, particularly for eye ailments, and was a site of local pilgrimage in mediaeval times. Though its exact origins are uncertain, it likely dates back to the Anglo-Saxon period. A pool later installed on the well site was regrettably covered over in the 1980s, but a commemorative plaque in the sensory garden marks the spot.



The **Tamworth Millenary Memorial**, located in the Castle Grounds, was unveiled in 1913 to commemorate the 1,000th anniversary of the death of King Egbert in 839 and to honour Queen Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. The memorial features an inscribed stone cross and panels depicting scenes from Anglo-Saxon history.



St Chad's Well in Lichfield is associated with St Chad, the 7th Century Bishop of Mercia and patron saint of Lichfield. Located in the churchyard of St Chad's Church, for centuries the spring was revered for its spiritual and healing properties, attracting pilgrims throughout the mediaeval period.





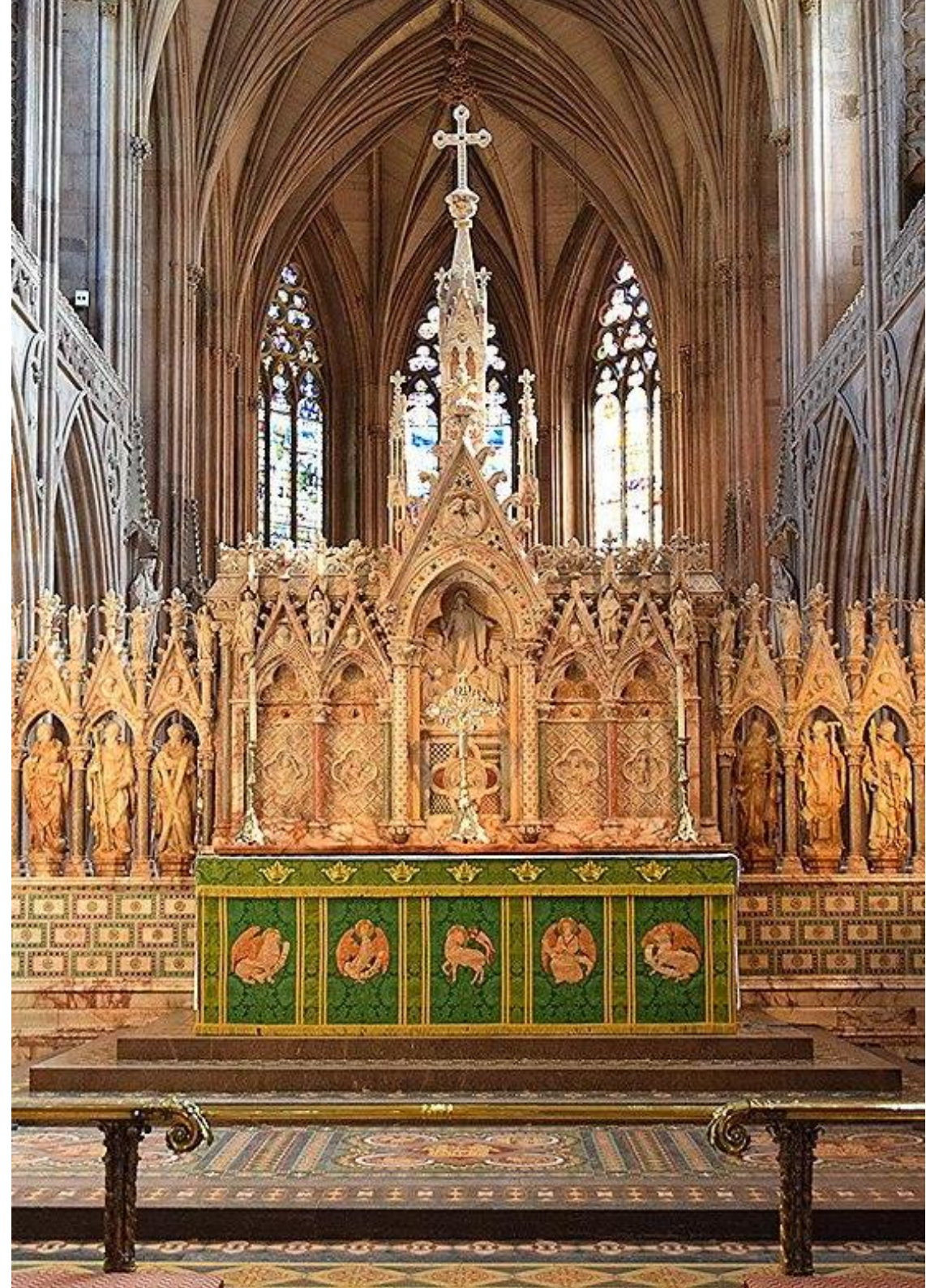
ST. EDITHA'S CHURCH, AMINGTON

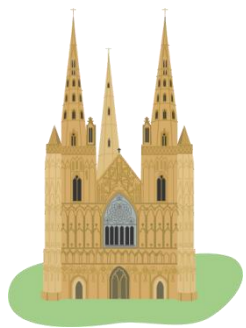
This Victorian church, consecrated in 1864, was built to the design of George Edmund Street. It replaced a decayed mediaeval chapel of ease to the mother church of St. Editha, Tamworth. Charles Henry Wyndham A'Court Repington of Amington Hall paid for the rebuilding, and also the building of new village schools. As the home village of the Lay Deans of Tamworth and patrons of the living of Tamworth, the new church was also dedicated to St. Editha of Tamworth. The new, larger building served a growing population in Amington due to the establishment of local collieries during the 19th century. Churches like this one reflect the transformation and expansion of rural communities during the Industrial Revolution, and the Church of England's response to the spiritual needs of an expanding population.

The church contains a beautiful Arts and Crafts reredos, and has two stained glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones for the William Morris Company. The central window of the three chancel windows is the Crucifixion depicting Christ attended by lamenting angels, the two above holding Sun and Moon inscribed 'SOL' and 'LUNA'. The church also contains a fine organ by George Maydwell Holdich (who also built the organ in Lichfield Cathedral), lancet windows and a wooden beamed roof that contribute to the building's traditional character.

In the Twentieth Century, the church was given its own parish, and was also transferred from the Diocese of Lichfield to that of Birmingham. Today, it remains an active and welcoming church, cherished not only for its historical and architectural value, but also for its enduring role in the spiritual and social life of a much larger Amington. The small and peaceful churchyard offers a tranquil place for quiet reflection.

For details and opening times visit www.amington.church





LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL

Lichfield Cathedral, located in the heart of Staffordshire, is one of the most magnificent and historically significant cathedrals in England. It is the only mediaeval cathedral with three spires in the UK. Dedicated to St. Chad, it has been a centre of Christian worship for over 1,300 years.

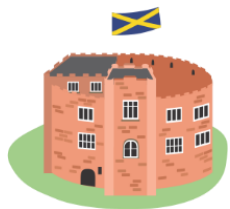
The origins of Lichfield Cathedral date back to 669 AD, when St. Chad established his episcopal seat in Lichfield after being appointed Bishop of the Mercians. A simple wooden church was built to serve as his cathedral. Following Chad's death in 672, his tomb became a revered pilgrimage site, drawing visitors from across the region and prompting the development of a larger stone church.

The present cathedral was largely constructed between the 12th and 14th centuries, showcasing Gothic architecture with stunning details. Notable features include the richly decorated west front, adorned with over 100 carved figures, and the Chapter House, which houses the Lichfield Gospels – an 8th century illuminated manuscript. The interior is equally impressive, with soaring vaulted ceilings, intricate stonework, and beautiful mediaeval and Victorian stained glass.

Today, Lichfield Cathedral remains a vibrant place of worship and a major heritage site. It hosts regular services, concerts, and community events, while also welcoming thousands of tourists and pilgrims each year. Its enduring spiritual presence, remarkable architecture, and deep historical roots make it one of the jewels of England's ecclesiastical heritage and a symbol of faith and resilience through the centuries.

For details and opening times visit www.lichfield-cathedral.org





TAMWORTH CASTLE

Perched above the confluence of the rivers Anker and Tame, Tamworth Castle is one of the best preserved Norman motte-and-bailey castles in England. With a history spanning over 900 years, it has served as a symbol of power, defence, and local pride for generations. The site has ancient origins; the original fortifications were built in the 9th Century by King Offa, and rebuilt in 913 AD by Alfred the Great's daughter, Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, as she drove the Viking invaders out of Mercia.

The current castle was constructed by the Normans in the late 11th Century, shortly after the Norman Conquest. Originally it was of wooden construction with a large motte (earth mound) - second only in size to that of Windsor Castle. The buildings were reconstructed in stone in the 12th Century. Over time the buildings within the shell keep were modified with Tudor, Jacobean, Georgian and Victorian architectural styles, whilst the outer bailey fortifications fell into ruin and were replaced by pleasure gardens. A rare herring-bone masonry curtain wall survives, and the remains of a 13th Century gatehouse and bridge were uncovered in the 1970s.

Today, the Castle is a Grade I listed building and Scheduled Monument set within the beautiful Castle Grounds, with far-reaching views over the surrounding area. It provides a thriving museum and heritage attraction; visitors can explore richly furnished rooms of all periods, the renowned 15th Century great hall, the massive Norman tower, and varied displays revealing the story of the castle, the town and surrounding area from prehistoric times to the present day.

Tamworth Castle remains the proud symbol of Tamworth, providing a unique window into English history, and is an enduring testament to the town's strategic significance and political importance through the ages.

For details and opening times visit www.tamworthcastle.co.uk





THE SPITAL CHAPEL, WIGGINTON

Located behind houses in the fork of land between the junction of Wigginton and Ashby Roads, the Spital Chapel is a rare and fascinating remnant of mediaeval religious and charitable life. It was originally endowed as a chantry chapel in 1274 by Philip Marmion of Tamworth Castle, and is believed to have been part of a larger 'hospital' site - hence the designation of "Spital" - where a religious community, in accordance with Christian teaching, provided spiritual and practical care for the poor and sick, and hospitality for pilgrims and other travellers.

The chapel is all that has survived from any larger complex, and is one of the very oldest buildings in Tamworth. It is a small, simple stone building of chancel and nave, typical of its time. The chapel was in secular use after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, variously as a cottage and barn, eventually falling into decay. In the early 1900s the chapel was threatened with demolition for housing as Tamworth expanded. A campaign by the Vicars of Wigginton and Tamworth, with local historians and benefactors, saw it purchased and saved. Restoration into a working chapel by renowned local mason H.C. Mitchell was completed in August 1914. Originally within the Parish of Tamworth, the chapel has been administered by St. Leonard's, Wigginton since that daughter church was given its own parish.

Today, the Spital Chapel stands as a Grade II listed building, recognised for its historical and architectural significance. Once more in use for regular worship, and with an active and caring Friends group, it provides an evocative link to the area's mediaeval past. Its quiet presence near the roadside reminds us of the role of faith, charity, and community care throughout the history of England.

For details and opening times visit www.wigginton-stleonard-stjames.org.uk





ST. EDITHA'S CHURCH, TAMWORTH

Standing proudly in the very heart of Tamworth, St Editha's Church is a magnificent example of mediaeval ecclesiastical architecture and a cornerstone of the town's spiritual and cultural heritage. The church has stood as a symbol of faith and community for over a thousand years.

Although there is evidence of, and parts remain of, earlier churches on the site, the current structure largely dates from the 14th and 15th centuries. After the Great Fire of Tamworth in 1345, the church was extensively rebuilt, and the massive west tower and tall nave with clerestory windows reflects the prosperity and importance of mediaeval Tamworth. The interior is equally impressive, featuring finely carved misericords in the choir stalls, a beautiful stone font by George Gilbert Scott, fine monuments, and many beautiful stained glass windows depicting biblical scenes and local history, designed by Edward Burne-Jones and Ford Madox Brown, among others. The church also has an atmospheric crypt and boasts a peal of ten bells. From the churchyard can be seen the Ancient Monument remains of the mediaeval Deanery.

St Editha's has witnessed and withstood centuries of change, from the pillaging of the Vikings to the turbulence of the Reformation and Civil War, and industrial expansion of the 19th century. Despite these changes, it has remained a centre of worship and a symbol of continuity for the local community. Today, St Editha's is a Grade I listed building, recognised for its architectural and historical significance. It continues to serve as an active parish church whilst welcoming visitors from around the world to admire its beauty, explore its rich heritage, and experience the serenity of this sacred space. As the largest parish church in Staffordshire, it provides a proud landmark in Tamworth's historic landscape.

For details and opening times visit www.stedithatamworth.co.uk

