

# Ashby Town Guide

At the heart of the National Forest

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## INTRODUCTION

**Welcome to the historic market town of Ashby de la Zouch. Set in a pleasant rural corner of North West Leicestershire, it is an essential stop-over for anyone interested in exploring historic towns and local culture. This guide will take you on a tour of Ashby's fascinating history as well as providing information on facilities and services available.**

The town's rich history is set against a backdrop of people and events shaping this country over the last 1000 years. The name Ashby is said to be derived from the Danish 'Aski' (personal name) and 'bi' or 'by', a settlement. The unusual ending 'de la Zouch' was added after 1160 when a Norman nobleman, Alain de Parrhoet la Zouch inherited his position as Lord of the Manor by marriage. During Norman times Ashby was recorded in the Domesday Book as a settlement of about 100 people situated around the present site of St. Helen's Church (shown below).



St. Helen's Church and The Manor House School

In the 15th century, Edward IV granted Ashby Manor to his favourite counsellor, Lord Hastings. He converted the manor house into a castle and re-built nearby St Helen's Church. The town became the main seat of the Hastings family and there followed a long period of prosperity and growth. The Grammar School was founded in 1567 and skilled craftsmen such as silversmiths, gold beaters, pewterers, swordsmiths and clock makers began to move into the 'courts' at the rear of Market Street.

During the Civil War, a Royalist garrison occupied Ashby Castle under the command of Henry Hastings, who became Lord Loughborough. However, following a year-long siege of the castle by the Parliamentary Army, the Royalists surrendered in 1646.

After the war, the castle was partly destroyed and largely forgotten until the publication of Sir Walter Scott's classic historical romance 'Ivanhoe' in 1820. He used the Castle as a backdrop for the fictional tournament in which Ivanhoe was victorious on the field of combat and Robin Hood won the archery competition by splitting the shaft of his opponent's arrow with his own.

A model of the castle is on display at Ashby Museum.



Top & Bottom Left: Ashby Castle Bottom Right: Castle Grounds

## SHOPPING

**Shopping in Ashby de la Zouch is a delight. The town centre offers a range of specialist shops with a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.**

Market Street is in the centre of town and gives the visitor an eclectic mix of chain stores, independent shops and clothes boutiques.

The Town Hall Market provides covered shopping seven days a week in a renovated Victorian-style market hall. Traditional market stalls and a café also sit inside.

In addition, charming shopping courts can be found on either side of Market Street, which were traditionally the home of skilled craftspeople in the 16th century.



Top Left: Market Street Top Right: Mill Lane Mews Bottom Left: J. Owen Jones Clock Bottom Right: W. Taylor Butchers

In the 19th century, the town's fortunes prospered further as it became a Spa Town. Water with medicinal qualities had been discovered nearby at a coal mine in Moira and transported to Ashby. The magnificent Ivanhoe baths were built in 1822, along with the adjacent Hastings Hotel (now Royal Hotel). The opening of the railway through the town in 1849 and subsequent pioneering rail tours organised by Thomas Cook from Leicester, brought a further influx of visitors to the town. Unfortunately, after 40 years of prosperity, the Ivanhoe Baths began to decline and never regained their former glory.

A continuing bond with the past is Ashby's Statutes Fair, which has been held every September since it was started by Charter of Henry III in 1219.

Today, the town is a much sought-after residential area, having good transport links to Birmingham, Derby, Leicester and Nottingham. While Ashby has all the amenities and facilities expected of a modern town, it has lost none of its original character and charm.



Left to Right: The Courtyard Tearooms, North's and Zamani's

## PLACES TO EAT

**Ashby also has a wide selection of places to eat. Experience one of the many charming tea or coffee shops or, if you are looking for something more substantial, there is a fine selection of restaurants offering dishes from around the world.**

Or treat yourself to a 'take-away'. Whether you prefer Italian, Thai, Chinese, Indian or traditional fish and chips, there's something for every taste.

A comprehensive list of places to eat in the area can be found in the Tourist Information Centre in North Street.

## ATTRACTIONS IN THE AREA

Once you have explored the rich history and heritage of Ashby, a number of other places of interest in the area are well worth taking time to visit.

Ashby is situated in the heart of the National Forest. Conkers Discovery and Waterside Centres are just a few minutes' drive away in Moira. Also in Moira is the new Ashby Canal extension, Moira furnace (a 19th century blast furnace) and various craft workshops.

More craft workshops, an art gallery and tearoom can be found at Staunton Harold's Ferrers Centre. The National Trust's Calke Abbey estate, with its 750 acres of beautiful parkland and Breedon Church provide superb views of the surrounding countryside. For the historians, local history museums are situated in Measham, Swannington, Whitwick, Kegworth and Castle Donington. The 13th century Manor House and Gardens at Donington le Heath should not be missed. Well-known attractions, Twycross Zoo and Bosworth Battlefield sit to the south of Ashby, while various country parks within the county offer free days out for all the family.



Top Left: Hicks Lodge Top Right: Moira Furnace Bottom Left: Staunton Harold Hall  
Bottom Right: Calke Abbey

[www.ashbydelazouch.info](http://www.ashbydelazouch.info)

## SPORT & LEISURE

A wide range of sports and leisure facilities await you at Hood Park Leisure Centre, North Street.

Set in a beautiful parkland location, the leisure centre offers a 4-court sports hall, fitness room, indoor pool, outdoor heated swimming pool (May to Sept), licenced bar and function room, suntower and all-weather pitches.

The Ashby de la Zouch open air swimming baths are unique and the only one of its kind in the area. Ashby's lido opened in 1929 after substantial donations for the development by Sir J Hood and Mr Musson. The lido remains a popular attraction today.

The park itself provides an ideal location for a picnic and also includes a state-of-the-art playground for all ages and abilities. Facilities for golf, tennis, football, rugby, cricket, skate parks, hockey and bowls are also available in the town.



Left to Right: Ashby Lido

## FARMERS' MARKET

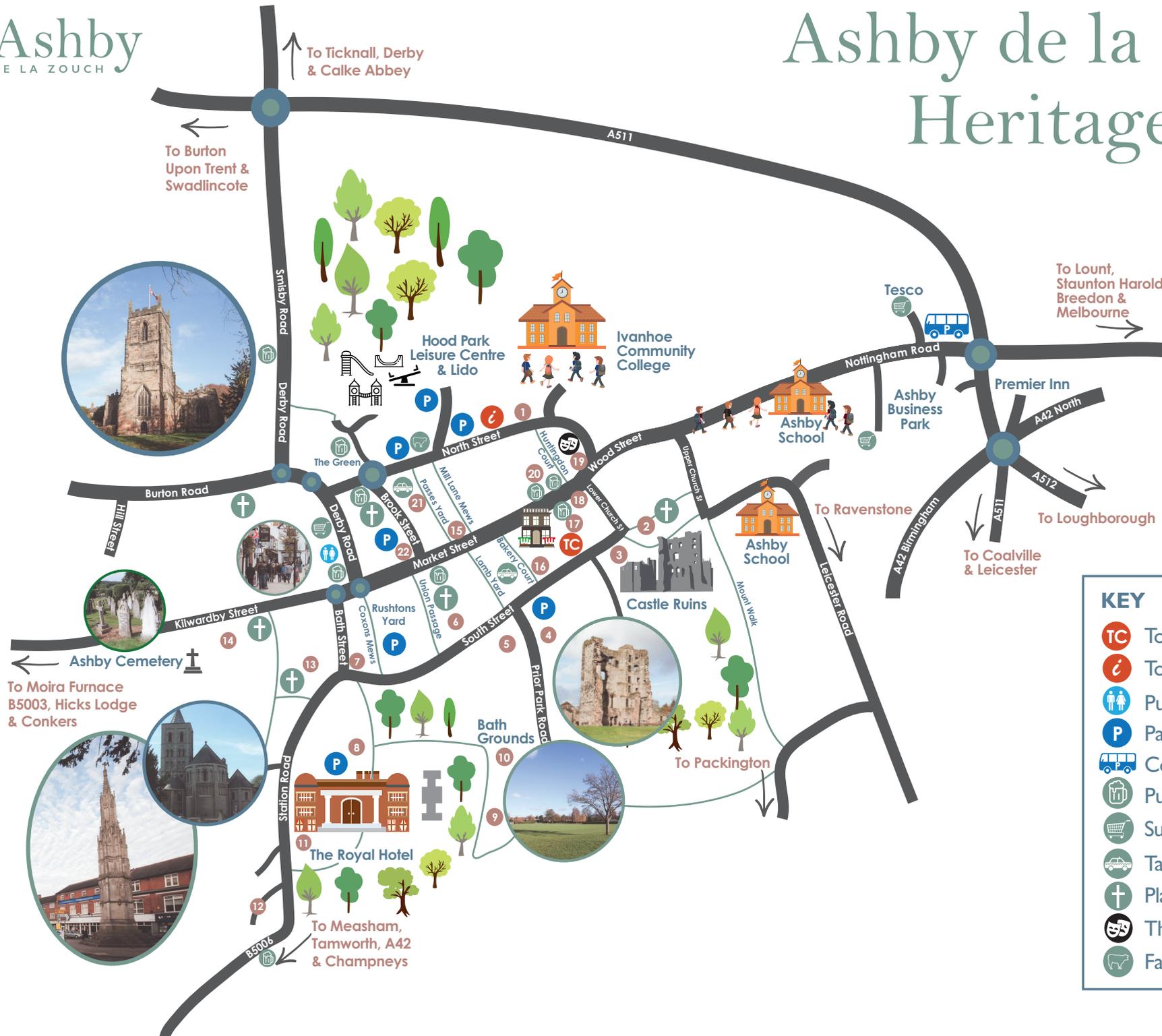
Ashby Farmers' Market brings the finest foods from the region.

Specialist stores offer an excellent range of produce including beef, pork, lamb, local fruit, vegetables, speciality artisan cheeses, jams, honey, preserves, cakes, ice cream, pies, wine, beer, chocolates, soaps, plants and other luxury items.

The market is held every third Sunday of the month from 9.00am - 2.00pm, in North Street car park, next to the Tourist Information Centre.

[www.ashbydelazouch.info](http://www.ashbydelazouch.info)

# Ashby de la Zouch Heritage Trail



| KEY   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
|   | Town Council Offices |
|  | Tourist Information  |
|  | Public Toilets       |
|  | Parking              |
|  | Coach Parking        |
|  | Pubs                 |
|  | Supermarkets         |
|  | Taxi                 |
|  | Places of Worship    |
|  | Theatre              |
|  | Farmer's Market      |

## ASHBY HERITAGE TRAIL - MAP KEY

### 1. Ashby de la Zouch Museum

The museum is situated on North Street next to the Tourist Information Centre and Library. See [www.ashbymuseum.org.uk](http://www.ashbymuseum.org.uk) for opening times or tel: 01530 560090.

### 2. St Helen's Church

St Helen's Parish Church was rebuilt in the 15th century by Lord Hastings on the site of an earlier 11th century church. Explore the Heritage Centre to find out more. See [www.sthelensashby.net](http://www.sthelensashby.net).

### 3. Ashby Castle (English Heritage)

Explore the impressive medieval castle set in peaceful and pleasant surroundings with its self-contained fortress, converted by Lord Hastings in the 15th century. See [www.english-heritage.org.uk/ashbydelazouch](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/ashbydelazouch) or tel: 01530 413343.

### 4. The Priest's House

This unusual early-19th century building formed part of the Marquis of Hastings Prior Park Estate.

### 5. Former Cottage Hospital (23 South Street)

Opposite the Priest's House, this end of terrace building built circa 1830 was used as the Cottage Hospital between 1894 and 1897. Look out for the carriageway arch.

### 6. The Spa Town: Ivanhoe Terrace (10-15 South Street)

This impressive early-19th century Georgian terrace was designed by Robert Chaplin as part of a project to promote Ashby as a Spa Town. The terrace gave visitors a place to stay when visiting the Ivanhoe Baths.

### 7. Loudoun Monument (Designed by Architect Gilbert Scott)

A memorial to Lady Maud Hastings, Countess of Loudoun, is built on the site of 'Gawby's Hole' – a place to collect water and gossip.

### 8. The Spa Town: Rawdon Terrace

These elegant dwellings were also used as a place for people to stay when visiting the Ivanhoe Baths.

### 9. & 10. The Spa Town: Bath Grounds Heritage Trail

Please see pages 12-17 to discover more.

### 11. The Spa Town: The Royal Hotel

This elegant and imposing building was completed in 1828 to complement the Ivanhoe Baths. Originally known as the Hastings Hotel, it was renamed in 1836. See [www.royalhotelashby.com](http://www.royalhotelashby.com).

### 12. The Spa Town: The Railway Station Building

Opened in 1849 and closed to passenger traffic in the 1960's, this impressive station building linked Leicester to Burton on Trent. The station was carefully restored in the 1980s. Look out for the remains of the tramway track which linked Ashby to Burton on Trent.

### 13. & 14. Our Lady of Lourdes and Holy Trinity Churches

Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church was completed in 1920 along the lines of a traditional Norman church. Take a stroll to The Holy Trinity Church, consecrated in 1840.

### 15. 51 Market Street

Number 51 Market Street is a picturesque example of a 16th century timber-framed building with additional early 19th century timber and brickwork, with a courtyard to the rear.

### 16. Town Hall and Market

This impressive building was built in 1856 and includes a fully renovated Victorian-style covered market.

### 17. The White Hart Public House (Late 18th century)

The White Hart is known as the 'bawdiest public house in the Midlands' and also the last place in Ashby to stage bear-baiting. It is rumoured that at one time a bear was kept on the premises to evict unwelcome customers. The bear pit can still be seen today inside the pub. It is also renowned for the 'fact' that the highwayman, Dick Turpin, used to drink here.

### 18. 108 Market Street

This residence at the corner of Market Street and Lower Church Street is a fine example of a Georgian brick and tile building with sash front and bow windows.

### 19. St Helens House (19th century)

Formerly the Ashby Girls Grammar School between 1889 and 1902, the school relocated to South Street in 1902 due to rapidly increasing numbers.

### 20. The Bulls Head Public House

This pub is reputed to be the oldest house in Ashby with parts of the building dating back as early as the 14th century. During the Civil War it was said to have been a popular drinking place for the Parliamentarian Army.

### 21. Mill Lane Mews

Leading the visitor from Market Street to North Street, Mill Lane Mews has been carefully restored and now contains a delightful row of period shops. The designers of the Mews won the coveted Europa Nostra Award for this development.

### 22. War Memorial

The memorial contains the roll of honour for the fallen of WW1 and commemorates the dead of WW11.

# ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH BATH GROUNDS HERITAGE TRAIL

Ashby's historic Bath Grounds is an area of parkland close to the town centre. Situated between the Grade 2 listed Royal Hotel and Ashby Castle, they are an ideal spot for a stroll or a picnic.

The Bath Grounds heritage trail with its interpretation boards, way-markers and mosaics provides an insight into the Bath Ground's fascinating history.

## HISTORY

Formally laid out for the benefit of visitors to the Ivanhoe Baths between the Royal Hotel and Rawdon Terrace, the Bath Grounds have been enjoyed by both residents and visitors alike for more than 200 years. They included a carriage drive and footpaths for 'sedate and genteel recreation'.

## CASTLE FISH PONDS

The Gilwiskaw Brook (now culverted), which provided fresh water to the settlement of Ashby and its castle, ran through the Bath Grounds.

It was also the source of water to the castle fish ponds within the grounds. The ponds were used to breed fish as a sustainable medieval food supply.

## THE IVANHOE BATHS

Between 1800 - 1817 following the discovery of a saline spring at Moira's 'Bath Pit' a couple of miles from Ashby, the Rawdon Hastings family established a small scale baths in Moira.

In 1818 - 1819, the lack of inns and lodgings in Moira together with the proximity of mine shafts led to the decision to transfer the brine waters to Ashby de la Zouch.

In 1822 funding by the town and Francis Rawdon Hastings Esq allowed the building of the Ivanhoe Baths. The Baths designed by the Architect Robert Chaplin were built for the princely sum of £16,000.

Originally transported by canal and later by rail to the new Ivanhoe Baths, the mineral water was stored in an underground brick reservoir capable of filling 2000 baths.

In Ashby you could 'take the waters' as a medicinal drink or 'be totally immersed in water or sponged in the problem area.'

Application of the water was either 'as a flow, in the stream bath, through a tube directing it to a particular spot on the bather's person' or 'as rain, in the shower bath, where its activity is thrilling and diffusive over the head and shoulders.'



3. Ivanhoe Baths, 1822 : Robert Chaplin

Ivanhoe Baths

Ashby failed to gain the fashionable status needed to succeed as a spa town and the baths closed in the 1870s due to lack of patronage. The end came in 1962 when this beautiful neoclassical building was finally demolished.

# Ashby Bath Grounds Heritage Trail

## Key to Heritage Boards

- 1 Welcome Board and Map
- 2 Ivanhoe Baths
- 3 Fayres, Shows and Carnivals
- 4 Ashby Castle Fishponds
- 5 Sporting Heritage

### The Loudon Memorial

This Grade 2\* listed memorial to Edith, Lady Maud Hastings, tenth Countess of Loudon (1833- 1874) with the inscription by Benjamin Disraeli, was one of the last designs by the eminent architect Gilbert Scott. Completed in 1879, it stands on the site of Gawbey's Hole, a water pump where much gossiping was 'wont to take place.'

**The Ivanhoe Baths:** an elegant Neo-Grecian building constructed in 1822 and featured a 150ft colonnaded front with 32 Doric columns and a classical dome.

**The Baths** were designed by the architect-surveyor Robert Chaplin who, by 1827 had also completed the nearby Grade 2\* listed Rawdon House and Terrace, the Royal Hotel and Ivanhoe Terrace, followed in 1849 by Ashby's Grade 2\* listed Midland Railway Station.

**Rawdon Terrace and Ivanhoe Terrace:** these beautiful Georgian buildings accommodated important visitors to the Baths before the Royal Hotel was built. At that time, both terraces had open views and access onto the Bath Grounds.

**The Royal Hotel:** originally known as the Hastings Hotel, the Royal was opened in 1828 to accommodate a rapid increase in visitors to the town. It boasts an inspiring central stairway and entrance portico.

**The Midland Station:** built in 1849 in a similar style to the Ivanhoe Baths, the station played a big part in bringing visitors from far and wide to the Ashby Spa. Ashby's rail link became a victim of the Beeching axe with the last train stopping here in 1964.



**Ashby Castle:** built as a manor house in the 12th century, it became a castle in the 15th century and was the seat of Edward IV's Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hastings. Damaged during the Civil War the picturesque castle ruins and

grounds were a major attraction for visitors to Ashby Spa. Managed by English Heritage, the castle and its grounds continue to be a major attraction to visitors hosting numerous medieval themed events throughout the year.

## Key to Heritage Waymarkers

- A Gilwiskaw Culvert**  
The Gilwiskaw Brook through Ashby was culverted from 1855 onwards. It now flows beneath the Bath Grounds and under the railway line.
- B Railway Arch**  
The new railway arrived in 1849 and Ashby became Thomas Cook's first 'pic-nic party' destination from Leicester.
- C Memorial Clock Site**  
The Webster Commemorative Clock stood here for many years. Erected in 1957, it marked the outstanding cricketing achievements of Paul Mead Webster, including 10 wickets for 26 runs in 1932. The clock can be seen in the 1994 hockey match photo on Board 5.
- D Ivanhoe Baths Fountain Site**  
An ornamental spring water fountain once stood here, close to the steps of the Ivanhoe Baths.

## Community Mosaics

The mosaics were designed by local artist Di Lorriman and realised by local mosaic artist Llynda Baugh.

- M1 Ivanhoe Baths**  
Llynda made this magnificent mosaic in her Thringstone studio. It represents the Ivanhoe Baths in their heyday with the many sporting and community activities that took place there. It includes a shooting star tribute to Ashby's much-loved Lorna Titley who passed away whilst it was being constructed. It was unveiled by Ashby's Mayor, Mike Ball, on Sunday 29th May 2016.

- M2 Fish**  
Produced during community mosaic workshops in the spring and summer of 2016, this beautiful mosaic recalls Ashby Castle's ancient fishponds which were located nearby.

## FAYRES, SHOWS AND CARNIVALS

Following the decline of the Ivanhoe Baths, the Grounds became the focus for many community activities including Grand Bazaars, Whitsuntide Gala Fetes, the town's annual Flower Show and the annual Ashby and District Agricultural Show. The Bath Grounds still host many community events including the Fake Festival music event, Jim's Tractor Run and the Food Gusto Fair.

## DOLLY SHEPHERD

A 'rather daring and impetuous girl' Dolly was the Edwardian Parachute Queen who drew large crowds to the Bath Grounds when balloonists were very popular entertainers.

Following her first solo parachute descent from a balloon onto the Bath Grounds in 1904, she made two more jumps in Ashby in 1908. Unfortunately, during one of these jumps a gust of wind blew her into a barbed wire fence; ripping her knickerbockers from waist to knee. She was rescued by a local 'Sir Galahad.'

Following her last jump in 1912 Dolly recorded her exploits in her autobiography 'WHEN THE CHUTE WENT UP'



Dolly's Parachute Descent

## FRIENDS OF ASHBY BATH GROUNDS

The Friends of Ashby Bath Grounds is a community group whose aims are to protect and enhance the Bath Grounds for the benefit of the whole of the local community. The Friends are actively involved in projects around the Grounds and always welcome new members. Find out more [www.bathgroundsfriends.com](http://www.bathgroundsfriends.com).

[www.bathgroundsfriends.com](http://www.bathgroundsfriends.com)

## SPORTS ON THE BATH GROUNDS

The Bath Grounds have quite a sporting history and in the past have hosted shooting, tennis, archery, croquet, hockey and football. County cricket matches were held on the Bath Grounds until 1964 and the Grounds are still home to both Ashby Hastings Cricket Club and Ashby Bowls Club.



Ashby Ladies Croquet Club. Early 1900s

## FINDING THE BATH GROUNDS

Located just a short stroll from the town centre, the main entrance is on the corner of South Street and Bath Street opposite the Loudon Memorial. You can also access the Bath Grounds from Prior Park Road and from Station Road just beyond the Royal Hotel.



Left to Right: Ashby Bath Grounds

[www.bathgroundsfriends.com](http://www.bathgroundsfriends.com)

# ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH DIGITAL HERITAGE TRAILS

## WHAT'S IN THE DIGITAL TRAIL

Enjoy a digital tour of our historic market town as you walk around, or from the comfort of your own armchair.

A series of trails for you to enjoy have been created by local community heritage group Pudding Bag Productions and Ashby de la Zouch Museum.

They feature the main historical sites of the town, including buildings in Market Street, the churches, inns and pubs, and some buildings and features, which no longer exist.

These tours have been created using Historypin, a free website application. Please note that any faults with the application should be reported directly to Historypin.

Typos, errors or omissions in the text describing each site are our responsibility and should be reported to us.

Ashby de la Zouch Museum has supplied the old photographs and given permission for them to be used in these trails. For more information about the museum visit <http://www.ashbymuseum.org.uk/>

# historypin

## A GUIDE TO USING HISTORY PIN

Follow these simple instructions on how to use the trails.

### Step 1

To start, scan this QR code with your mobile device, visit [www.puddingbagproductions.co.uk](http://www.puddingbagproductions.co.uk) or search online for Pudding Bag Town Trails or Ashby Town Trails.



### Step 2

Select Town Trails, then choose your trail by clicking an image.



### Step 3

Start the tour with this button.



Take the tour

### Step 4

Use these arrows to move forwards and back through the trail.



### Step 5

Read about the site using this button.



### Step 6

Each point on a trail consists of three steps:

- A picture of how the site looks today
- An old photograph of the site – some photos are more than 100 years old
- A sketch map showing where you are and where to go next.

# historypin

All tours have been  
created using Historypin,  
a free website application.



Tour 1: Historic Inns and Pubs



Tour 2: Ashby Town Trail



Tour 3: Ashby The Spa Town



Tour 4: St. Helen's Church



Tour 5: Historic Market Street



Tour 6: Vanished Ashby



Tour 7: Churches of Ashby

## TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Information Centre,  
North Street, Ashby de la Zouch, Leics LE65 1HU.

Call in to find out more about:

- Exciting ideas for places to visit locally and further afield
- All the latest information on local events
  - Information on leisure and cultural activities including walking and cycling
  - Information on where to eat including country pubs, restaurants and tea rooms
- A ticket agency for local theatres, coach trips, coach holidays, events and festivals
  - Accommodation booking service
    - Free visitor guides
- Ideas for short breaks and holidays

**Tel: 01530 411767**

**Email: [ashby.tic@nwleicestershire.gov.uk](mailto:ashby.tic@nwleicestershire.gov.uk)  
[www.somewherenicetogo.co.uk](http://www.somewherenicetogo.co.uk)**

**Opening times: [www.nwleics.gov.uk/tourist\\_information](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/tourist_information)  
Local What's on: [www.nwleics.gov.uk/whats\\_on](http://www.nwleics.gov.uk/whats_on)**



this is nwleics



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