



LIVING HISTORY TRAIL

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE

Accessibility

A suggested circular route is outlined in the map, this will take you via dropped kerbs for the whole trail. For additional information go to www.accessable.co.uk

Download the trail app to access audio for each location.

The trail will take approximately 45 minutes to do in full, to shorten the trail break it down and do sections on different visits.

Credits

With special thanks to:

The families of those featured in this trail.
Leighton Buzzard Historical and Archaeological Society.
Bedfordshire Archive and Records Service.
Peter Hailes and the Leighton Buzzard Fire Station.
Leighton Buzzard Observer.
Ian and Arthur Summerfield.
Colin Holmes.

“Stories never really end. They can go on and on and on. It's just that sometimes, at a certain point, one stops telling them.”

Mary Norton, Author of The Borrowers



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MARY NORTON
Cedars House, Leighton Middle School, Church Square

Mary Norton, author of the internationally-famous Borrowers books, is thought to have drawn inspiration for the enchanting world created for her tiny protagonists from this very building. This part of Leighton Middle School, known as The Cedars, built in 1855, was home to Mary Norton during part of her childhood. Her books mention the town on a couple of occasions, one referring to a 'Mr Frith of Leighton Buzzard' who would fix the grandfather clock.



ALICE DUNLEAVY
Vimy Bomber propeller blade, Bridge Street

For years, Leighton Buzzard kept silent about a factory producing fighter aircraft for the First World War. But today, this Vimy Bomber propeller blade recognises the instrumental part played by Morgan's factory and the people who worked there. With thousands of men serving abroad, women took on many previously male-dominated jobs – including at the Morgan's factory. One of the workers was Alice Dunleavy, daughter of Leighton Buzzard's stationmaster. Alice stayed at Morgan's until the factory shut in the late 1920s / early 1930s.



ALEXANDER MUDDIMAN
Former offices of the Leighton Buzzard Observer, 5 High Street

Alexander Muddiman founded the Leighton Buzzard Observer from this location in 1861. Muddiman was born in Aylesbury about 1834 and came from a family of journalists. Originally called the Leighton Buzzard Observer and Linslade Gazette, the first edition contained a report of a man from Hemel Hempstead 'furiously riding a horse' through Leighton Buzzard, causing a boy to break his leg. The newspaper celebrated 150 years in 2011, even receiving a congratulatory letter from The Queen.



CAPTAIN GEORGE BAKER
Old Fire Station (with the clock tower), Market Square

Captain George Baker was Chief Fire Officer in the 1930s when this building was the town's fire station. Baker was in fact a butcher with premises in North Street. Originally, his firefighting would have been unpaid; instead there would have been occasional payouts when a building's insurance company decided to share the money. The building was originally the Town Hall, but from 1919 it became the fire station until a new station was built off Lake Street in 1963.



MARY BASSETT
Lecton House, Lake Street

Mary Bassett's groundbreaking work with Leighton Buzzard's disabled community once centred on this very building. Born in 1853, Mary was the daughter of local MP and banker Francis Bassett. In 1890, she began teaching people with disabilities useful trades. As the popularity of the classes grew, she moved them to the Temperance Hall – now Lecton House. Many useful and beautiful products were exported worldwide. In 1887, the school was commissioned to do leatherwork for HM Queen Victoria at her Diamond Jubilee. Mary's name is remembered by the town's Mary Bassett School.



BETTY HOLMES
17 Hookliffe Street

This building houses a youth centre today, but for 20 years until the 1980s it was 'Betty's Tops and Teens' clothing store, run by Betty Holmes. Betty moved from Derbyshire with husband Thomas and their two children in 1958. When the business folded three years later, they lost the house. A third child meant they also needed more income. This building allowed Betty to run a shop and they could live above. This is the oldest residential building in Leighton Buzzard and dates from 1550. Originally it was near fields, which meant it survived the devastating town fire of 1845.



THOMAS TUCKER
Alley off Lake Street (exact location unknown)

Thomas Tucker was a teenage thief who sparked a manhunt in Victorian times - leading him to be arrested in an alley off this very street. The chimney sweep, 16 at the time, was sentenced to 10 years 'transportation' for stealing a silver watch and a sum of money from the home of John and Jane Shepherd in Mill Road in 1839. Transportation involved relocating the criminal to faraway colonies - mostly Australia. Tucker was taken to Woolwich and placed aboard the Warrior Hulk, a floating prison ship. Few prisoners ever made it back home.



HILDA & EDITH DICKINSON
Former Corn Exchange Building, Lake Street

This 1970s building is on the site of the former Corn Exchange, which during the First World War was a temporary hospital. Sisters Hilda and Edith Dickinson were Red Cross volunteers like the many who volunteered here. Although they were not qualified nurses, they learnt how to feed and tend the sick. Hilda was decorated for bravery in Belgium and was also awarded the Croix de Guerre – a French honour for heroic acts. Edith was given the Order of St Sava.



HUBERT (BERT) GRIFFIN
War Memorial, Church Square

This War Memorial is made from the largest block of granite ever mined in Britain and was unveiled on Armistice Day 1920. Hubert Griffin's name is not on it, but he played an important part in raising morale during the Second World War. Too old to enlist, he joined the YMCA's 'Snapshots from Home' scheme where volunteer photographers would take pictures of servicemen's families to send to men fighting abroad. One of the many letters of thanks Bert received said: "As I have never seen my baby daughter, you can imagine how I look forward to any photos of her."



KITTY TOWERS
The Swan Hotel, 50 High Street

Catherine 'Kitty' Towers inherited the grand Swan Hotel from her husband William after his unexpected death in 1893. Her fierce ambition saw her create a hotel frequented by the rich, the royals and the landed gentry - all while raising her three children. Kitty had to be tough, talented and tactful. The service often extended to being highly discreet about the activities of 'gentlemen' away from their wives for a weekend. The Swan Hotel was also used by visiting theatre acts performing at the nearby Corn Exchange Theatre.



ALFRED WATERHOUSE
The Bank Building, 2 Market Square

This building's statement design made national headlines when it was unveiled by young architect Alfred Waterhouse in 1866 – who later designed the Natural History Museum. Waterhouse was commissioned by the Bassetts, a prominent Quaker banking family, who wanted an impressive building to match their ambitions. Waterhouse delivered an eye-catching design reinforced with steel and fitted with fine mahogany and ebony wood.



LEIGHTON-LINSLADE
TOWN COUNCIL



LIVING HISTORY TRAIL

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE

Stories of people from our town's past.



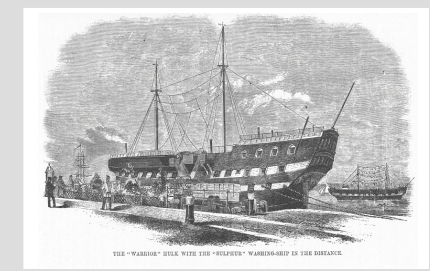
The Top Bell Hotel on fire (location 6).



Former offices of the Leighton Buzzard Observer (location 12).



Corn Exchange on Lake Street (location 3).



The 'Warrior' Hulk, where Thomas Tucker was destined (location 5).

Leighton-Linslade
Town Council



Welcome

Welcome to the Living History Trail where you can discover who walked down these streets before you. The trail captures a glimpse into the lives of ordinary townsfolk and shares the impact they left on the Town's history. What mark will you leave?

This trail leaflet gives a hint of what the trail is all about. For a full interactive experience, please download the app via your app store to span the decades as you take each step into the history of people's lives.



How did you get on? Did you take a selfie?

Why not visit us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter and share your photo #livinghistorytrail

You can find us at Leighton-Linslade Town Council or @LLTCNews

A public trail of 22 artworks celebrating children's stories for little people, with big imaginations, to explore.

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE
CHILDREN'S TRAIL
EST. 2012

FREE
FAMILY
ACTIVITY



Find out more:

f thechildrenstrail @ childrenstrail #ChildrensTrail

KEY

→ → → Trail Route	Public Toilets	Outdoor Cafe
1 Points of Interest	Doctors Surgery	Playground
⬇ Dropped Kerb	Defibrillator	Public Library
P Car Park	Splash 'n' Play	Shops