

THE ROSS-ON-WYE THOMAS BLAKE TRAIL



Thomas Blake was a special citizen of Ross-on-Wye. He was a self-made man who, through hard work and a desire to help others, went on to become a Member of Parliament, Justice of the Peace and lifelong benefactor to the town. His efforts and generosity continue to benefit those who live in and visit Ross-on-Wye.

He was a dedicated Baptist (and lay preacher, travelling all over the country), who sat on numerous Boards and financially contributed to many different local charities, organisations, associations and public institutions.

1. Thomas was born on 4th December 1825 above his father's shop (William Blake, brazier and tinman) at 35 Brookend Street.

2. He purchased no. 20 Broad Street and created a Free Library there in 1873. The grounds behind were also made available so the townspeople could enjoy games and recreation. He also paid for the purchase of books and set up a regular annual subscription towards the maintenance of the building and to supply the reading room with four daily newspapers.

3. Thomas made a significant financial contribution towards the building of the Baptist Church on Broad Street in the 1880's.

4. He was a studious child who valued his education. After each school day he helped his father in the shop and, in the evenings, took his books to bed and read by candlelight. He attended school from 3 – 10 years upstairs in the Market House on the High Street

5. ... and the Walter Scott Blue Coat School on Old Gloucester Road from 10 – 13 years.

6. Can you find the metal grate with the Blake initials on it opposite John Kyrle's home?

7. From the age of 18, Thomas worked as a clerk at the Old Post Office (1839 – 1853) on St. Mary's Street where he also set himself up as an Estate Agent, Accountant and Newspaper and Advertising Agent. Working all hours, he went on to establish himself as a very successful businessman and amassed a huge fortune, which enabled him to retire in his mid -forties.

8. Can you see his initials that are carved on a step (on route up to St. Mary's Church from the Phoenix Theatre)?

9. Around 1870, and following a riot by the town's people about the enclosure of part of The Prospect by the Royal Hotel, he purchased The Prospect and gave the freehold to the town. This was to ensure it could never be built on and instead enjoyed by generations to follow.

10. Thomas Blake died on 31st March 1901 aged 75 years. He is buried near the John Kyrle gate in the cemetery.

11. The Blake Memorial Gardens, which opened in 1907, were created by the people of the town to commemorate and show their appreciation of one of its greatest benefactors.

Other sites to visit outside of the town centre:

12. Thomas bought Alton Court in 1886 and took responsibility for the water supply from the Water Commissioner in 1888. The engines and pumps saved from Alton Court Water Treatment Works can be seen at the Waterworks Museum in Hereford.

13. 'Green Heys' (formerly known as 'Lebanon') was his home on Walford Road.

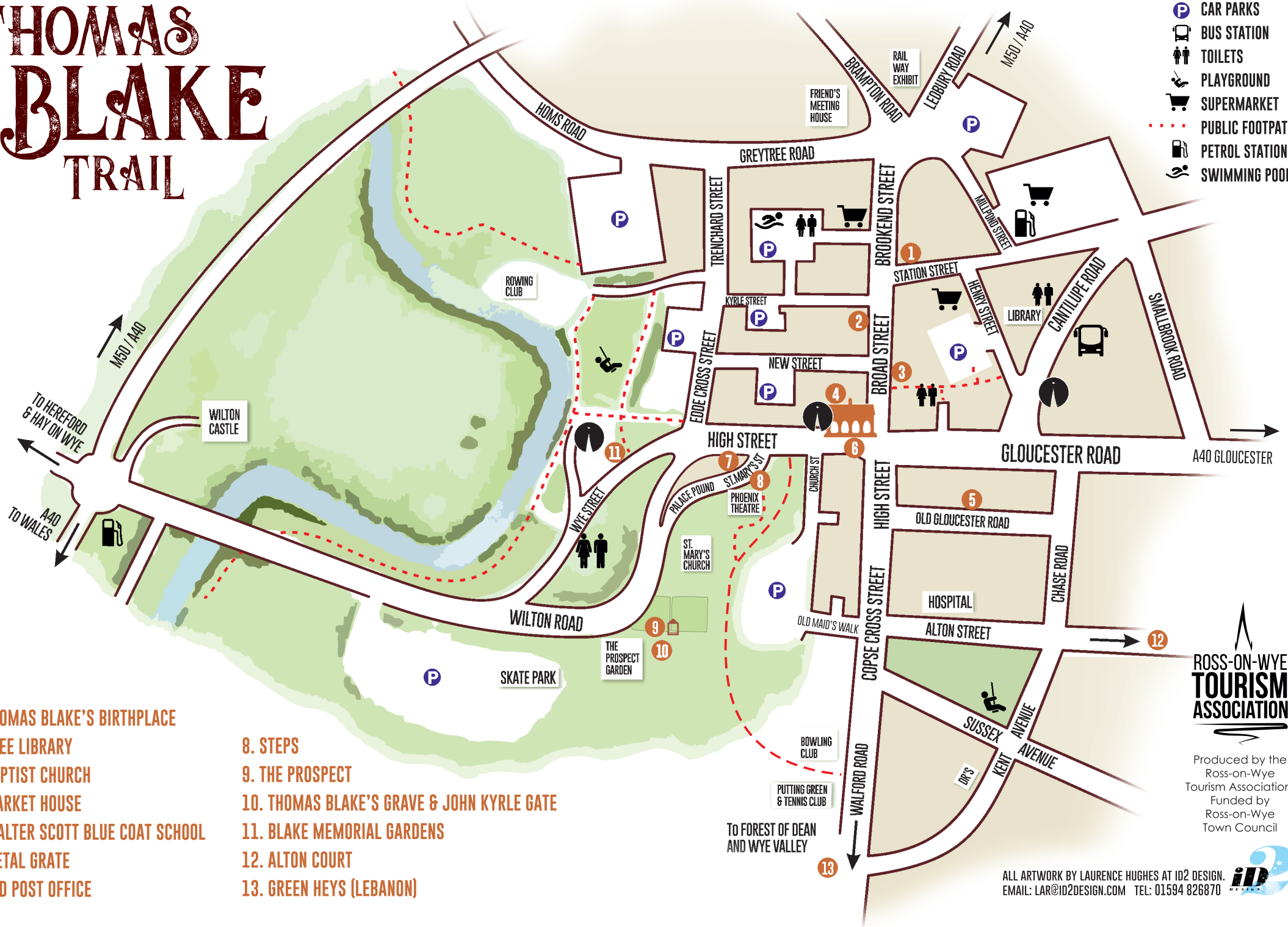
Information obtained from:

Ross-on-Wye and District Civic Society publication:
'Thomas Blake, 1825 - 1901, the pious benefactor of Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire' written by J. Hurley, 1996
www.waterworksmuseum.org.uk
www.ross-on-wye.com

THE ROSS-ON-WYE

THOMAS BLAKE TRAIL

- TOURIST INFO
- CAR PARKS
- BUS STATION
- TOILETS
- PLAYGROUND
- SUPERMARKET
- PUBLIC FOOTPATH
- PETROL STATION
- SWIMMING POOL



1. THOMAS BLAKE'S BIRTHPLACE

2. FREE LIBRARY

3. BAPTIST CHURCH

4. MARKET HOUSE

5. WALTER SCOTT BLUE COAT SCHOOL

6. METAL GRATE

7. OLD POST OFFICE

8. STEPS

9. THE PROSPECT

10. THOMAS BLAKE'S GRAVE & JOHN KYRLE GATE

11. BLAKE MEMORIAL GARDENS

12. ALTON COURT

13. GREEN HEYS (LEBANON)

ROSS-ON-WYE
TOURISM
ASSOCIATION

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