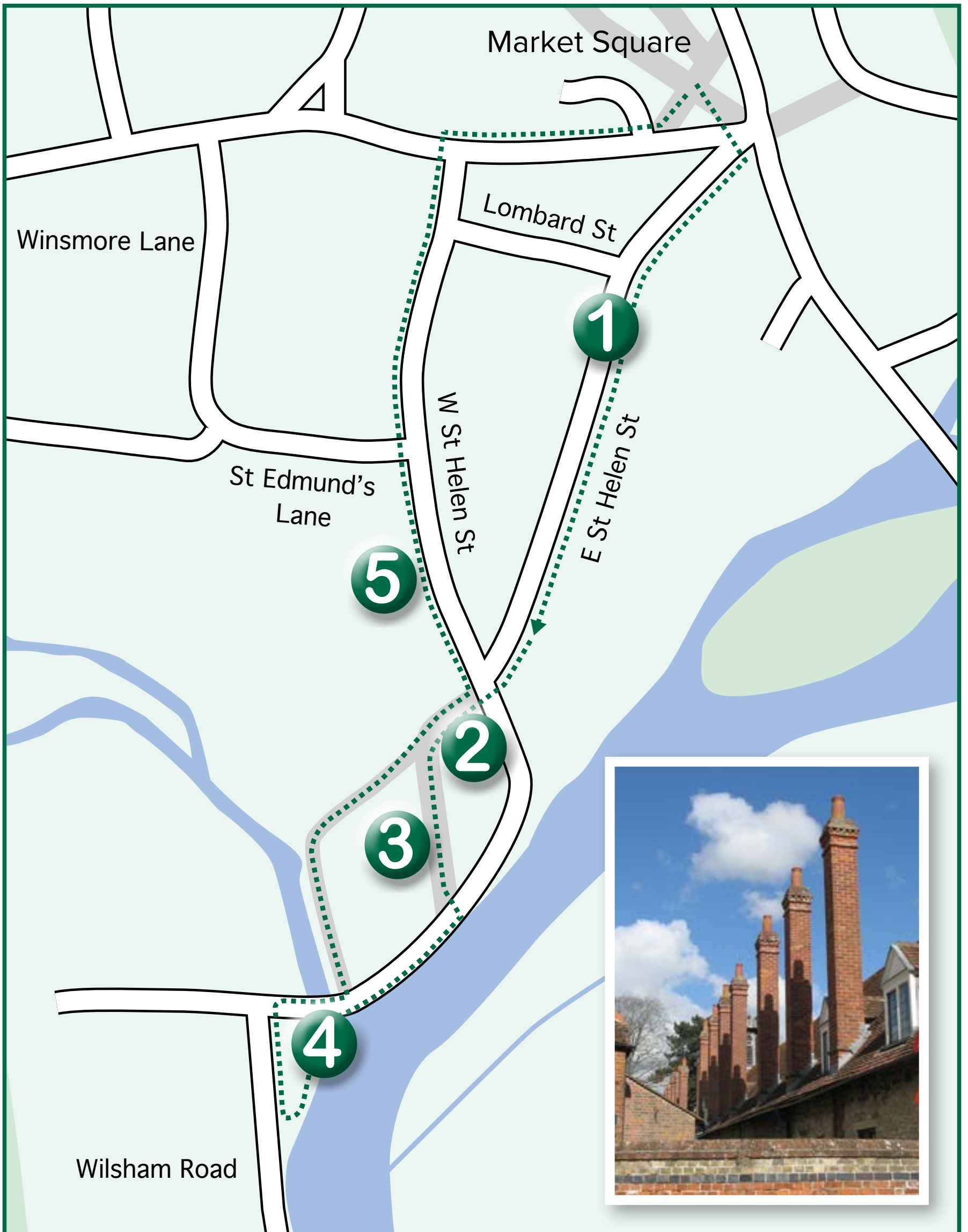




HEART OF

Abingdon Heritage WALK



The tour takes about 1 hour to complete and is accompanied by 5 interpretation boards.

An audio tour created by the Abingdon Area Archaeological Society and Friends of Abingdon featuring this route in greater detail is available to download for free from:

www.abingdon.gov.uk/things-to-do/heritage-walks/heart-abingdon-trail



1: East Saint Helen Street



The best preserved street in Abingdon and one of the oldest dating back to Roman times. Number 20, also known as Twickenham House, dates from 1756. It is one of the three grand houses built in Abingdon by the Tomkins family, wealthy maltsters and prominent local Baptists. Number 26 was built in 1431 and is the most complete surviving medieval house in Abingdon.

2: St Helen's Church

St Helen's has always been one of Abingdon's principal churches. It is remarkable for its shape, being much wider than it is long, and even more so for the ceiling paintings in its Lady Chapel. In 1391 the Guild of Our Lady commissioned a magnificent painted ceiling for the Lady Chapel, helped by a papal indulgence which promised subscribers a 4 year reduction in their post-mortem stay in purgatory. The ceiling paintings show Old Testament kings and prophets and a rare depiction of Christ on a lily.



3: Almshouses & Mill

There are 3 sets of almshouses in this area: Twitty's, Brick Alley and the oldest called the Long Alley almshouses. It was in 1441 that the Fraternity of the Holy Cross, based in St Helen's Church, gained a Royal Charter. The Charter gave them the right to set up an almshouse for thirteen 'poor sick and impotent men and women' and the Long Alley almshouses were built. The paintings in the porch and on the outside walls of these almshouses are from

1605. They include scenes of biblical charity and moralising quotations. On the south wall, facing the river, is a depiction of the old Abingdon Market Cross, demolished by the Puritans in 1644.





4: Thames Canal and Wharf

The former St Helen's Wharf is now a beautiful spot overlooking the Thames. It was once a source of wealth and importance for the town. The merchants of the St Helen's quarter owned many of the attractive town houses which line East St Helen Street today. This area, including the wharf which once thronged with boats unloading and loading, was the focal point for those who made their living by trade.





5: West Saint Helen Street

This is also one of the oldest streets in Abingdon but number 48 is one of the few surviving early houses in the street dating from the 1600's. At one time houses and businesses ran up to the church. A famous one was Clarke's Clothing Factory. The factory was built in 1852 and was one of the largest producers of ready made clothes in the country. In the Victorian era, to accommodate the rising population, many small cottages were built in the grounds of the large houses and buildings. These became slums and were demolished in the 1930's.



We hope you have enjoyed this walk. Return to the Market Square for some well-earned refreshment