

1. From Discover Downham walk up Priory Road past the carrstone houses of Priory Tce on your left which are built from coursed carrstone with brick corners to protect the carrstone from wear. This is typical of local carrstone building work of previous centuries.

2. Continuing up Priory Road before the car park on the left are recently built flats. New properties are recognised by the carrstone which is cut, not rough, and lighter in colour than locally quarried carrstone. At the supermarket imagine the old carrstone Rectory which once stood there. A magnificent example of a carrstone building which was demolished in the mid twentieth century.



3. At the road junction is C17th Priory House which gives the road its name, although there is no evidence of a priory in Downham. One of the oldest houses in the town, it has distinctive cross-stepped gables, mullioned windows and octagonal chimney. The carrstone is laid randomly with some galleting.

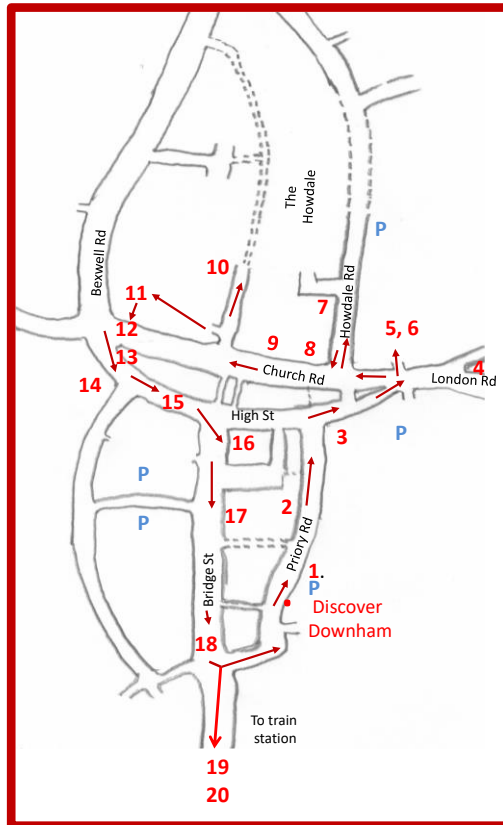
4. Turn right along London Road to the zebra crossing then continue to the mini-roundabout. Ahead, at the junction of London Rd and Ryston End, stands Salamanca House named after the race horse whose winnings provided the money for its construction from layered carrstone with decorative local white brickwork.

5. At the mini-roundabout turn into the short road, originally called Union Tce leading to Court Gardens. On your left are substantial carrstone town houses. The basement of one was reinforced during WW2 for use as a Home Guard command post. This road led to the Union Workhouse, another ornate carrstone building unfortunately

demolished in the 1970s All that remains are the two porters' lodges at either side of the road ahead. It is said that tramps waiting to be admitted for an overnight stay at the workhouse (see photo on right) would hide their money in crevices in the carrstone boundary walls of former Union Terrace.

6. To the left of the porters' lodges is the old National School built in 1841. It extends from Union Terrace through to Howdale Road and the main entrance. In World War One it was used as a military hospital.

7. Return to the mini-roundabout and turn right. At



the junction with Howdale Rd either walk straight on into Church Rd (go to 8) or make a short detour by turning into Howdale Rd where you will come to the main entrance of the National School on your right. On the opposite

side of road are Fairfield House and The Presbytery of the Catholic Church.



The church is set back from the road and was established by the conversion of the stables of The Towers which was struck by lightning and burned down in 1965. It was the former home of James Scott who donated the iconic town clock. Continue up the road until you come to the carrstone pillars, called beehives, on the last walls before the open space of the Howdale. They are a particular feature of Downham. Much of the carrstone used in the oldest buildings was quarried from the Howdale area. Return to London Rd and turn right into Church Rd

8. Behind the carrstone boundary wall at the corner with Howdale Road you can see the former Red Cross Headquarters with the garage for the Red Cross Ambulance which, for many years, took the sick and injured of the area to hospital.

9. After passing more Victorian carrstone houses and the carrstone retaining wall of the elevated brick-built houses, you come to Breckland House. This originated as the town's Police Station, later converted into an Old People's Home, and more recently extended to create a modern complex of flats. The original Police Station, built in the 1850s, provided accommodation for the inspector and his family and for at least one constable. Cells for the male prisoners were on the ground floor and female upstairs. The darker, local carrstone distinguishes it from modern extensions.

10. Turn into King's Walk and make your way to the old cemeteries. In the right-hand cemetery are two carrstone Chapels of Rest and the Sextons house.

11. Go back down King's Walk and turn up the Church drive. St Edmund's Church dates back to the 13th century and probably replaced an earlier Anglo-Saxon building. It is built of random carrstone with stone quoins. Take the opportunity offered by this vantage point to look across the rooftops of the town centre to the Fens beyond.

12. Go down the steps into Church Road and note the concrete retaining wall with panels of flints and question why flint, which is traditional in some parts of Norfolk, was used and not carrstone which is the traditional stone in Downham Market.

13. Cross the road into Cannon Square. Early 18th century Cannon House, named after an ancient cannon which once stood here, is constructed from brown brick and random carrstone with some galleting.

14. At the junction with Paradise Rd stands the former Castle Hotel. Once an important coaching inn the striking frontage is partly covered in stucco.

15. As you walk along the High St. and through the town centre you will notice that most properties have, in the past, been updated and the carrstone fronts replaced by brickwork or covered in stucco. In some cases you can see the original carrstone on the side walls down alleys and entrances.

16. The old market place is dominated by the Town Hall, built by public subscription to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Constructed of yellow brick and carrstone, it cost £1,730 and was officially opened by the local MP, William Tyssen-Amherst, in 1887. It was a corn exchange, assembly room, library and reading room.

17. Continue past the Town Hall down Bridge Street to Reeds Homestore. The main entrance extends out from Nelson House, once a school run by Thomas Noakes and, according to local legend, attended by the young Horatio Nelson. Although this is likely to be a fabrication of George Manby, inventor of a ship to shore lifesaving apparatus. The

original carrstone, which has been covered with a brick facing at the front, can be seen as you walk down the side of the shop towards the café.

18. As you continue down Bridge St there are a number of carrstone properties and an interesting mixture of architecture. A particularly interesting group is seen at number 82 to the corner where the Lighthouse occupies the former Queens Head Inn whose image is above the door. William Lawrie, stone-mason, who lived here was probably responsible for the carved stone additions. On the opposite side of Bridge St. is the former librarian's house and Quaker meeting house. The side wall in Priory Rd shows a good example of galleting. The Quaker cemetery is hidden amongst the trees and bushes behind the house, as you round the corner on your way up



Priory Road and back to Discover Downham.

19. As a detour, when in Bridge St. continue straight down Railway Rd to see Dial House with its interesting sundial originally painted in memory of a long-forgotten resident. Next door, the Garden Centre is housed in old maltings buildings.

20. At the end of Railway Rd is the Railway Station built of local carrstone in 1846. The coming of the railway resulted in rapid expansion of local industry as seen in the former Bennett & Sons property which overlooks the carpark.



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*Discover
Downham*

GINGERBREAD TOWN



When approached from the flat western Fens, Downham Market stands on the first high ground. The escarpment of sand and carrstone rises to a height of 36 metres. Further into Norfolk it is covered by chalk and flint and can still be seen at the base of Hunstanton cliffs.

Carrstone is a sedimentary sandstone formed in the Cretaceous period. It varies in colour from light to dark rusty ginger depending on the amount of iron oxide present. It was the local building stone which gave Downham Market the name Gingerbread Town. Carrstone can be laid down as random or coursed carrstone, with or without, galleting (small pieces embedded in the mortar). The stones may be rough or cut and both are used in between supporting brickwork quoins.