

MIDSOMER MURDERS

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Thame

"England's greatest one-day agricultural show"

Thame is a traditional English market town at its best and the "Midsomer Murders" Production team love it. I have enjoyed the town for so long. When I first went there, the wide upper High Street, where the market is held, was cobbled. It had a railway station with a superb Brunel train shed and a steam train service between Princes Risborough and Oxford. It now shares a modern railway station, Haddenham and Thame parkway, in the village of Haddenham some three miles away.

The right to hold the weekly street market was granted by Royal Charter in the 12th century and the large general market is still held every Tuesday. There is also a regular livestock market on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and farmer's markets on the second Tuesday and the fifth Saturday in a month.

Originally the only building in the centre of the town was its oldest inn, the Bird Cage, reputedly haunted. Over the years, buildings, such as the Town Hall, have been erected around it. Despite this and with the centre being a dedicated conservation area, there is, almost, a complete absence of modern buildings. An architectural historians delight, going back to the 13th century.

A visit to the Information Centre in the Town Hall for copies of three circular walks around the town will be very beneficial before you set out and discover the historic hidden gems of Thame for yourself.





Thame

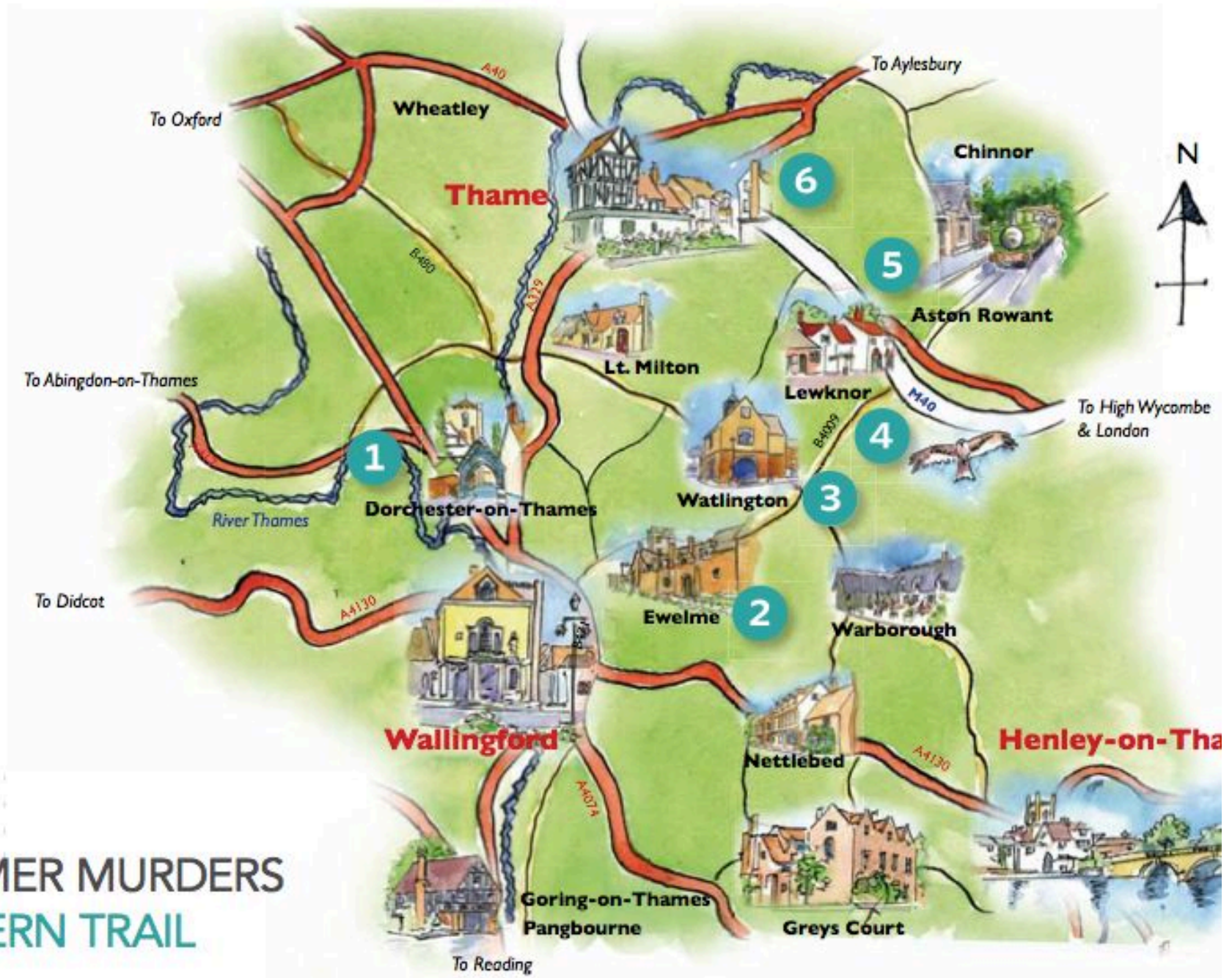
"England's greatest one-day agricultural show"

Thame hosts England's greatest one-day agricultural show, The Oxfordshire County and Thame Show, dating back over 130 years. It is a traditional show featuring livestock and horse classes, a dog show, show jumping, vintage vehicles, trade stands, craft tents and a large food marquee. Originally held in September, it now takes place on the last Saturday in July. A great family day out that I have regularly enjoyed.

Until its date change, the show took place at the same time as the ancient Thame hiring fair. A hiring fair in medieval times was, as the name indicates, the local employment exchange where workers and employers met to arrange next year's annual employment agreement. The fair nowadays is an enormous fun fair that closes the centre of the town. A smaller fun fair, often referred to as the firing fair, probably for obvious reasons, is held around Michaelmas Day at the beginning of October.

One of those delightful historical English folk stories, which no one can prove or disprove, relates that William Shakespeare visited Thame High Street during his time as a strolling player. There is, however, one story we do know is true. Henry VIII and Catherine Howard came to Thame during their honeymoon, staying at the residence of Lord Williams of Thame, Rycote Palace.





MIDSOMER MURDERS
NORTHERN TRAIL



**South Oxfordshire
District Council**

Listening Learning Leading

MIDSOMER MURDERS NORTHERN TRAIL

**Dorchester-on-Thames / Wallingford / Ewelme /
Watlington / Lewknor / Aston Rowant /
Chinnor / Thame / the Miltons and the Haseleys /
Dorchester-on-Thames**

(total drive time approximately 3.5 hours)

1 The trail begins in **Dorchester-on-Thames**, one of the prettiest Midsomer county villages. Become truly immersed in the Midsomer Murders experience by staying overnight. Your choices are a 15th century or two 16th century coaching inns, and make sure you visit the post office; all are film locations. Dorchester Abbey is a 'free' must-see in South Oxfordshire, the Abbey is open all year round. Remember Joyce Barnaby's visit to 'Midsomer Newton Museum'? That's the Abbey's museum. (Museum and tea room seasonal opening)

2 Next stop is the delightful and tiny village of **Ewelme**, overlooked by many but not the Midsomer Murders film crew. It's worth a stop to take a walk around Ewelme Watercress Beds and nature reserve and to watch the video of watercress being farmed in the 70's.

3 + 4 Move onwards to the market town of **Watlington**, where you can see buildings spanning the period from 15th century to modern day. The library featured as Causton library in 'Orchis Fatalis' and it is worth taking time to see the church, pubs and shops before setting off towards **Lewknor**, a pretty brick and flint village complete with pub and village school.

5 Driving towards Thame, you enter the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and there are a couple of options depending on your interests. The **Aston Rowant** nature reserve or the train station used in 'Death in a Chocolate Box' at the **Chinnor** and Princes Risborough railway (steam and diesel trains run on event days).

6 On arrival in **Thame** several locations are immediately recognisable from the series, particularly the Spread Eagle Hotel, 16th century on the outside with cosmopolitan comfort on the inside. Thame's independent shops and tea rooms have traditional frontages, there's a spectacular 13th century church, a museum, walking trails and a 700 year old pub. It is likely you will arrive on market day, with weekly markets, annual food fayres, festivals, fetes, cattle markets and the Thame Show. Time it right and play a championship golf course at The Oxfordshire Golf Resort, dine at one of the world's finest restaurants, Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons or stroll through nearby Waterperry Gardens to learn its remarkable story.

Head in the direction of **Warborough**, passing the Midsomer countryside of **the Haseleys and the Miltons** where a number of scenes were located. But make sure you arrive in Warborough in time for a 'swift half' at the Six Bells on the Green; a thatched 16th century pub which features in so many episodes of Midsomer Murders, regulars will recognise it at once!

1 Returning to **Dorchester-on-Thames** there will be time over dinner to decide tomorrow's agenda. If it's more Midsomer (or Morse) you're after, then Oxford is very close. Sticking to the countryside your local options include Wittenham Clumps, a walk along the Thames Path, or the Oxford University's arboretum at Nuneham Courtenay.

Find out more about this lovely area at
www.southernoxfordshire.com