



The honourable James Templer's Guide to the Heritage Trail; being a circular walk of some four miles in the vicinity of the Stover Estate.

Good Morrow. Allow me to introduce myself and the Heritage Trail. I am James Templer the first and I will endeavour to guide and

inform you on your perambulations. The route is some four miles, well marked with Templer Way signs and quite level throughout. As it is of a circular nature it may be travelled in either direction. On your way you should see the work of myself and my descendants as well as some interesting flora and fauna.

I shall begin by describing my family. You see here a totally self made man. Around 1739 I ran away to sea, eventually landing in India. With good fortune and hard work I returned to England a very rich man, indeed a veritable nabob. Part of my fortune was made through the building of the Madras docks.

What was destined to become the Stover Estate was derelict in 1765 when I purchased the land. My estate ran to some eighty thousand acres including much ill drained land in the Bovey Basin, and also the rocks at Haytor. The existing building, Stoford Lodge was wholly unsuited to a man of my standing and so I had it demolished. In its place I commissioned the present Stover House. Granite from Haytor was used in the construction, although it was a costly business moving all the stone by cart.

Unfortunately your route will not enable you to obtain a good view of the house, which is now a girls school.

In order to complement the fine house I proceeded to have the grounds landscaped. This included creating a large ornamental lake and planting around 200,000 trees, many of them

exotic species. Much of what was once my garden has now become Stover Country Park, and my lake home for all manner of waterfowl and dragonflies. Indeed, it is so rich that it is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (whatever one of those is; we didn't need such things 200 years ago). Mind you, it is still possible to see some of my tree planting even after all this time.

The main entrance to the gardens was through the iron gates that stand on the modern A38. This gave a magnificent 1½ mile carriage drive through the grounds and up to the house, most imposing; part of your walk follows the main driveway.

Unfortunately I passed away in 1782, a decade short of my allotted three score and ten. James my eldest son succeeded and continued my work. I had already planned a canal to assist the passage of the local clay from the pits, James II had it constructed from Newton Abbot to Ventiford, not as far as originally intended, and it commenced trading in 1790. At Locks Bridge you will cross the canal and you can see remains of the 110' long lock and some canal buildings.

James had risked over £1000 on the venture. However it soon proved to be a sound investment. Ten barges operated on the canal and my son owned eight of them. Trade increased from only 400 boat-loads of clay per year before the canal to 1000 boat-loads by 1854. Not only that, but coal, fertiliser and such like could be brought inland. We didn't benefit only from the trade, for the canal drained some of the rank pasture through which it passed. This



land trebled in value. With the Grace of the Lord, and good foresight the whole enterprise proved to be highly successful.

My family, James, George and John, were all good dutiful sons. They built the present Teigngrace Church in 1787, and erected a very thoughtful memorial to their mother and myself above the entrance. The church, of which John was the Rector, had a very fine spire, unfortunately it came down in a gale in the late 1800s. Another John Templer followed as the rector after my son. Most gratifying to see the family doing something worthwhile with my fortune.

George Templer, my grandson took over the estate in 1813. I have to say that for all his virtues he was not an excellent business man. His main talents seem to have been in the sporting and artistic field. George was the master of the first regular pack of hounds in South Devon, and later he introduced cricket to the area. In his time Stover became well known for music and poetry, in fact he was a bit of a poet himself.



Before I get carried away with George's squandering I will admit that the tramway was an excellent idea. When I'd built the house, and James the canal, all the stone was moved from Haytor by horse and cart, and a very slow and costly operation too. George built a tramway, using granite rails to bring the stone to the top of the canal. From there it was a simple matter of transferring the granite to the barges and off to Teignmouth to be shipped out. Magnificent achievement, should have thought of it myself.

You can still see the rails up on Haytor. The stone was exported to London and Haytor granite has

been used in London Bridge, the National Gallery and the British Museum.

It is sad to relate that just as the whole affair was becoming very profitable, George was forced to sell up. In 1829, after less than seventy years in the Templer family, George sold off the house and estate to the Duke of Somerset. George stayed on as the granite company's chief agent. He eventually came to an appropriate end, in a hunting accident in December 1843.

The tramway ran for forty years, at which point competition effectively closed the quarries. The canal continued to operate until the South Devon and Mortonhampstead Railway was the successor to both canal and tramway. On your walk you cross the railway several times. Where you pass under the line have a look at the stone used in the bridges. Much of the railway follows the same route as the tramway and many of the granite rails were used by the railway builders.

I'm told there is much to interest the natural history enthusiast along the way. Two hundred years ago I didn't pay it much attention, but my land was much richer in its wildlife than yours is now. In a way it was all nature reserve because I couldn't drain, or spray, even if I had wished to. However nature appears to be a popular pursuit at the present. Apart from my lake there is much to be seen alongside the River Teign; herons, kingfishers and agile sand martins, among others.



Throughout your walk the flora common in my time, and maybe less common in yours, is much in evidence.

I trust you find the walk pleasant and enjoyable.
Your humble servant,

James Templer

Note:

A guide describing the full route of the Templer Way, complete with maps, is also available - **free of charge**.

There are also a series of Guided Walks organised by Dartmoor National Park, Teignbridge District Council and Stover Country Park (Devon County Council) covering the whole route of the Templer Way. Please contact any of the above authorities if you would like further information.



01626 835236



www.devon.gov.uk

James Templer's



Guide to the *Heritage Trail*



Saddle Tor

Haytor

View towards Dartmoor

Sand

