

Victorian & Edwardian Stoneygate



An engraving of the original architect's line drawing of 2-8 Stoneygate Road, (De Montfort Court).



Tour 2

Introduction

This tour is an ideal companion to Tour 1 and will take you into the southern part of Stoneygate. The majority of the buildings included on the tour are late 19th and early 20th century in date, with a large number by many of Leicester's best architects of the time (Goddard, Gimson, Barradale, Stockdale Harrison). It covers an area that in the mid-19th century comprised a series of 'mini' estates' – large houses and gardens in what was then Knighton parish. Bought and developed by wealthy manufacturers and businessmen these homes provided a means of 'escape to the country'. These same businessmen later fled further out to again remove themselves from the city as it expanded its boundaries to include part of Knighton. Stoneygate has been a conservation area since 1978.

While the majority of the houses you will see today are of the late 19th century, the first house is very definitely of the 20th century. Your tour starts in Avenue Road at the corner with Avenue Gardens. There is easy parking in Avenue Road. The walk should take about 1-1½ hours. Refreshments ☺ can be found locally in Francis Street/ Allandale Road (the other side of London Road) or Queens Road.

1 The first house on your tour is **22 Avenue Road**, one of the few 20th century listed houses in the city – its Grade II listing was awarded in 1998. This house, small and unassuming from the outside, was commissioned by the late Mr H Goddard (of Goddard Metal Polish fame) in the 50s and was designed by James Cubitt & Partners, a firm of London architects whose appointment was the cause of some heated local debate on the issue of not using local architectural firms! It was built in 1958 – a very modern open plan house in the American style. It still has its original built in furniture and there is also an independent children's wing facing onto the back garden. The L-shape creates a quiet, secret refuge inside the plot. The original owner lived there until only recently.

2 Turn right to the junction with London Road and look at the building on the left hand corner, number **1 Avenue Road**. This is a fine example of the Tudor Revival style of house that was very popular in Leicester during the last couple of decades of the 19th century, and a style of which Stoneygate boasts many examples. This particular pair of houses was designed by a local architect, W A Catlow (a member of the Goddard & Paget practice), and was built in 1890. Note its lovely chimneys, bold timber framing with fine carving and the plaque on the Avenue Road elevation.

3 Turn right. From here down as far as **Southernhay**



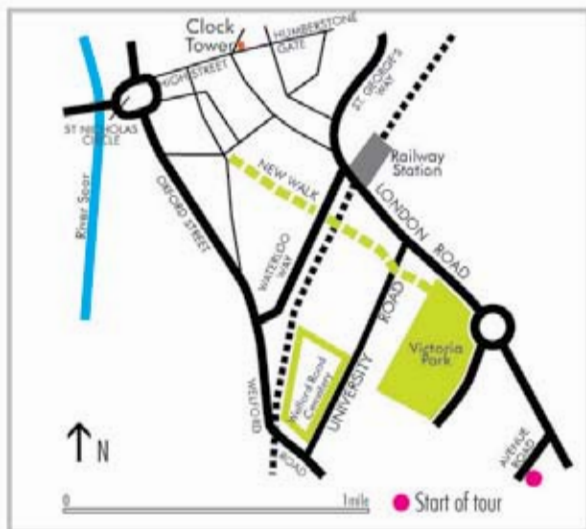
1. 22 Avenue Road, top:



2. 1 Avenue Road and 273 London Road

* image of garden studio, 22 Avenue Road: from Modern House Estate Agents website

- Refreshments:
1. Queens Road
 2. Allandale Road & Francis Street



Road was a large house in its own grounds. Like many of Stoneygate's 'mini-estates' this was later sold for development and the house demolished so that all that remains are the gate piers and wall in white brick on the London Road frontage. The house was called 'The Laurels' and was the home of H S Gee, the founder of the Stead & Simpson shoe firm. After he moved in he changed the name to 'Knighton Frith' – presumably that sounded somewhat more upmarket!

4 Now cross London Road at the pelican crossing and walk into **Stoneygate Road**. On your right is a pair of semi-detached houses that have been much altered but have a long history of school use that has culminated in them becoming the Islamic Academy. The original houses are by Goddard & Paget, built in 1882, and were known as 'The Limes' and 'Newlyn' (the carved name plaque on the Stoneygate Road elevation still remains). They are again built in the popular Tudor style and were for well-to-do families who could afford to have carriages (there are stables off Stoneygate Road). The modern additions do little, unfortunately, to enhance the site.

5 Further down on your left is **De Montfort Court at 2-8 Stoneygate Road**. This is a big block of what were four separate houses (but are now divided into flats). This is a grand terrace in the English Vernacular style by Isaac Barradale (1879) and a report on their construction was included in the August 20th 1880 'Building News' – a respected, if occasionally pompous, publication for the architects and builders of the time. An original drawing is reproduced on the front cover of this leaflet.

6 Next door is **12-18 Stoneygate Road** – another group of large middle class houses converted into flats that have lost their front gardens and boundary walls in the process. Such are the impacts of the motor car. These were designed by Stockdale Harrison and date from 1896. The big red brick semis round the corner at 1-7 Albert Road are also by Harrison.

7 Walk back to London Road and turn left. **322 London Road** is Hampton House which dates from 1889. Built in a local brick it is very plain, contrasting strongly with the more ornate Tudor style houses around it. It is much altered inside.



5. De Montfort Court, Stoneygate Road



6. 12-18 Stoneygate Road



8. Oliver Court, London



9. 328 London Road

8 Beyond is **Oliver Court** which was built in about 1974 to the designs of the well-known local architectural firm of Douglas Smith Stimson & Partners. It replaced 2 large houses called Tythorne and Woodbank which were built in 1880 and 1878. The latter had a ballroom, a huge billiard room and stables for 6 horses.

You'll see many examples of the redevelopment of the sites of large houses and grounds in Stoneygate, few of them successful. Oliver Court is an exception. The many flat developments partly reflect the changes in society during the inter-war period when domestic staff became difficult to find and people could no longer afford to run big houses. Victorian buildings were seen as old-fashioned too and some new developments were built in the new fashionable styles such as the 'moderne' style of Stoneygate Court (100m to the north of here and worth a closer look if you have the time). There was also a huge rise in the cost of building materials after WW1 so it was only the well-off who could afford to build new houses or speculative 'select' apartments. During the 1950s and 1960s large houses became increasingly unfashionable and it was not until after the 1980s that the value of Victorian architecture was fully appreciated by legislation and the development industry.

9 The next house is **328 London Road**, 'Thornleigh', of 1871, built for J G Wood, the MD of Stead & Simpson's (remember the founder lived opposite at The Laurels/Knighton Frith, number 3 on your map?). From 1904 it was the home of the Hewitt family, the proprietors of the Leicester Daily Mercury (now the local paper, the Leicester Mercury) and the Leicester Daily Post. It is built in expensive white bricks with red brick details (called 'polychromy'). It's a bit Gothic-y and has an eye-catching tower feature. Much of its character was, however, lost when the original windows were replaced.

10 These fine houses, number **330 London Road** and **1 Sandown Road**, were built in 1890 and are an interesting solution to building semis on a corner. The one on the left is still a single family home, although recently sold.

11 Crossing back over London Road and turn left into **Toller Road**. This road runs through



10. 330 London Road and 1 Sandown Road



11. 9 Toller Road



12. Front door to number 14 Stoneygate Avenue

what was the site of another large house with 7 acre grounds. Built in 1756, and remodelled over the years following, it was known as 'Stoneygate House' and was the home of John Biggs, a local hosiery manufacturer, but later of the Toller family. The estate was sold in 1896 and broken up for development – Southernhay Road, Burlington Road, Stoneygate Avenue, Woodland Avenue are all on the site. The house itself survived on the site of numbers 3 & 5 and was occupied for a while by a Denzil Jarvis, another of whose residences we will see later. It was demolished in the 1960s.

12 Walk towards the far end of Toller Road and turn left into **Stoneygate Avenue**. Here you will find several examples of houses by the Goddard practice again – **numbers 6-12, 18-20, 3 and 7-13**, all different but all extremely well designed and full of interest and character.

13 Walk to the end of the road, turn right then cross over Knighton Road at its junction with Knighton Drive. Walk into **Knighton Drive** and you'll see one of Leicester's few Gothic homes, **75 Knighton Drive**. It is dated 1877.

14 Now walk on to the junction with **Elms Road** and turn right and continue on to the junction with **Ratcliffe Road**. Diagonally opposite you is one of Leicester's, and the country's, architectural masterpieces. This is **Inglewood**, by Ernest Gimson for himself (the other house by him in Stoneygate is the White House on North Avenue. That's in Tour 1). It is in the Arts and Crafts style and dates from 1892. Note its lack of ornament, the small paned windows with gently curved heads, the stone slate roof and catslide roof. The brick is left plain, unlike the White House which was whitewashed. If you have the time turn right into Ratcliffe Road and walk down to see two more Goddard houses at numbers 52 and 56, and a fine group of 3 houses by Amos Hall at 34-38 in what could be called a Domestic Free-Style. These were Grade II listed in 2003.

15 Otherwise turn left, passing on both sides the former University halls of Residence to **Knighton Spinneys, 14 Ratcliffe Road**. This house was designed by Joseph Goddard for himself and dates from 1885. There are lots of carved bargeboards, mock timber



13. 75 Knighton Drive



14. Inglewood, Ratcliffe Road



15. Knighton Spinneys, 14 Ratcliffe Road



16. Knighton Hayes, 6 Ratcliffe Road

framing and big gables, features that are typical of the Domestic Revival style. This house was one of the first in the county to be lit by electricity. Goddard was also interested in recycling – for example, the use of compacted brick dust for the surface of tennis courts or using boiler cleanings as a base for silver polish. The design won a silver award at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889. There is a very interesting book called ‘Men of Property : The Goddards and Six Generations of Architecture’ by Brandwood & Cherry, published in 1990 by the Leicestershire Museums Service that provides a lot more information on the family and Victorian architecture generally.

16 Beyond is **Knighton Hayes, 6 Ratcliffe Road**. Designed by Edward Burgess and built in 1880 it stood in a miniature estate of around 18 acres. Its manorial detailing includes mullioned windows, big gables and chimneystacks. Its inside was laid out in a typical hierarchical way with a clear separation between the family and its servants – the former’s ‘Entertaining Rooms’ and bedrooms being approached by a wide oak stair, while the latter were provided with a Back Hall and Back Staircase. Many of the interior features such as the bell board were retained even when used as student halls of residence by Leicester Polytechnic.

17 Last, there is **2 Ratcliffe Road**, the original entrance lodge to Knighton Hayes. This is a delightful little building and a valuable addition to the character of London Road. It was originally the coachman’s house and dates from 1885.

18 Turn left now, back onto London Road passing **Martin House, formerly Knighton House**. This dates from the mid-19th century – the plain Classical stuccoed frontage gives that away – and it originally stood in a 13 acre ‘mini-estate’. It was the home of Richard Harris, a prosperous hosiery manufacturer, but from 1880 to the 1890s it was occupied by Alfred Donisthorpe, the head of Donisthorpe & Sons (Bath Lane). Another well-known owner was Godfrey Stibbe (hosiery machine manufacturer). The house was sold in 1946 to the County Council who used it as a home for elderly people.

19 Continuing on to **Knighton Drive** the house on the corner, **337 London Road**, is another God-



17. 2 Ratcliffe Road



18. Martin House, London Road



20. Stoneygate Baptist Church, London Road



21. The Regency Hotel, 360 London Road

dard design as are the former semi-detached houses at number 368 London Road by the traffic lights (currently being converted into flats). The high quality materials and decorative interest help them stand out.

20 Cross Knighton Road at the traffic lights and walk on past **Stoneygate Baptist Church** (1904). This is a good example of the revived Classical style popular in the first quarter of the 20th century - the church is in what is called the Baroque style.

21 Opposite are **362 London Road and the Regency Hotel, 360 London Road**. The former is another Goddard & Paget building of 1876, while the latter was once two very large houses, dating from 1902. The one on the right was the home of J. Denzil Jarvis (remember him from Toller Road?) who was one of the unfortunate passengers to be lost at sea in the Titanic disaster (along with 3 other people from Leicestershire). There is a memorial to him in the church yard of St Mary Magdalene, Knighton.

22 Finally, have a look at the houses beyond from **350 London Road back to Sandown Road**. Number 350 is Hazeldean and dates from 1880 and has nice Dutch style gables and a recessed porch framed with columns. This is followed by two fabulous terraces of white brick houses that were built in the Gothic style in 1876-7. Their big gables, pierced bargeboards, horizontal red brick banding and architectural details make these some of the most attractive groups of buildings on London Road. **Numbers 346-348** have the Leicester Wyvern in Terracotta plaques and were built by Thomas Bland (more of whose houses can be seen round the corner at **2-10 Sandown Road and 1-13 and 2-8 Alexandra Road**).

342-344 have great chimneys while at **338-340** stands a handsome pair of buildings from 1890 by Cecil Ogden (who designed the Belvoir Street section of the Grand Hotel in the city centre). You will also note some Scottish house names such as Glenfinnan and Drumashie that reflect the popularity of all things Scottish started by Queen Victoria. **Verecroft** on the corner of Sandown Road is a ‘one-off’ from 1870 with big bow windows and a corner turret. Finally, back to point 10 on our map.



22. 338 London Road



22. Detail of 346 London Road



22. Villas along Alexandra Road.