

= Taunton =

Taunton / ˈtʌntən / is the county town of Somerset , England . The built up area of the town had a population of 64 @, @ 621 in 2011 .

The town has over 1 @, @ 000 years of religious and military history , including a monastery in the 10th century and Taunton Castle which has origins in the Anglo Saxon period and was later the site of a priory . The Normans then built a stone structured castle , which belonged to the Bishops of Winchester . The current heavily reconstructed buildings are the inner ward , which now houses the Museum of Somerset and the Somerset Military Museum . The town is undergoing a regeneration project with redevelopment of the town centre . It has various transport links which support its central role in economy and commerce . These have included the Grand Western Canal which reached Taunton in 1839 and arrival of the railway in 1842 . It is the county town of Somerset .

Taunton is the site of Musgrove Park Hospital and Somerset County Cricket Club 's County Ground and is home to 40 Commando , Royal Marines . Central Taunton is part of the annual West Country Carnival circuit . It hosts the Taunton flower show , which has been held in Vivary Park since 1866 . The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office is located on Admiralty Way .

= = History = =

The town name derives from " Town on the River Tone " ? or Tone Town . Cambria Farm which is now the site of a Park and ride close to Junction 25 of the M5 motorway was the site of a Bronze and Iron Age settlement and Roman farm . There was a Romano @-@ British village near the suburb of Holway , and Taunton was a place of considerable importance in Saxon times . The Saxon town was a burh with its own mint . King Ine of Wessex threw up an earthen castle here about 700 , but it was destroyed by his queen Æthelburg of Wessex in 722 , to prevent its seizure by rebels .

A monastery was founded before 904 . The bishops of Winchester owned the manor , and obtained the first charter for their " men of Taunton " from King Edward in 904 , freeing them from all royal and county tribute . At some time before the Domesday Survey Taunton had become a borough with very considerable privileges , and a population of around 1 @, @ 500 and 64 burgesses , governed by a portreeve appointed by the bishops . Somerton took over from Ilchester as the county town in the late thirteenth century , but it declined in importance and the status of county town transferred to Taunton about 1366 . Between 1209 and 1311 the manor of Taunton , which was owned by the Bishop of Winchester , increased two and a half times . The parishes of Staplegrove , Wilton and Taunton itself were part of the Taunton Deane Hundred .

In 1451 during the Wars of the Roses Taunton was the scene of a skirmish between Thomas de Courtenay , 13th Earl of Devon , and Baron Bonville . Queen Margaret and her troops passed through in 1471 to defeat at the Battle of Tewkesbury . In the Second Cornish Uprising of 1497 most of the Cornish gentry supported Perkin Warbeck 's cause and on 17 September a Cornish army some 6 @, @ 000 strong entered Exeter before advancing on Taunton . Henry VII sent his chief general , Giles , Lord Daubeney , to attack the Cornish and when Warbeck heard that the King 's scouts were at Glastonbury he panicked and deserted his army . Henry VII reached Taunton on 4 October 1497 where he received the surrender of the remaining Cornish army . The ringleaders were executed and others fined a total of £ 13 @, @ 000 .

Taunton Castle changed hands several times during the Civil War of 1642 ? 45 but only along with the town . During the Siege of Taunton it was defended by Robert Blake , from July 1644 to July 1645 , with the town suffering destruction of many of the medieval and Tudor buildings . After the war , in 1662 , the keep was demolished and only the base remains . On 20 June 1685 the Duke of Monmouth crowned himself king of England at Taunton during the Monmouth Rebellion and in the autumn of that year Judge Jeffreys lived in the town during the Bloody Assizes that followed the Battle of Sedgemoor .

The town did not obtain a charter of incorporation until 1627 , which was renewed in 1677 . The charter lapsed in 1792 owing to vacancies for the members of the corporate body , and Taunton

was not reincorporated until 1877 . The medieval fairs and markets of Taunton (it still holds a weekly market today) , were celebrated for the sale of woollen cloth called " Tauntons " made in the town . On the decline of the woollen industry in the west of England , silk @-@ weaving was introduced at the end of the 18th century .

In 1839 the Grand Western Canal reached Taunton aiding trade to the south , which was further enhanced by the arrival of the railway in 1842 .

A permanent military presence was established in the town with the completion of Jellalabad Barracks in 1881 .

In World War II the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal formed part of the Taunton Stop Line , designed to prevent the advance of a German invasion . Pillboxes can still be seen along its length .

= = = Regeneration = = =

Taunton was named as a ' Strategically Important Town or City ' in the government 's Regional Spatial Strategy , allowing Somerset County Council to receive funding for large @-@ scale regeneration projects . In 2006 , the council revealed plans which it called " Project Taunton " . This would see the regeneration of the areas of Firepool , Tangier , the Retail town centre , the cultural quarter , and the River Tone , aiming to sustain Taunton as a central hub for business in the South West .

The Firepool area on the northern edge of Taunton town centre , adjacent to the main line railway station , currently includes a high proportion of vacant or undeveloped land . The Council is promoting a sustainable , high quality , employment @-@ led mixed use development . The Firepool project is set to attract 3 @,@ 000 new jobs and 500 new homes .

In Tangier , a brownfield area between Somerset College of Arts and Technology and the bus station , the project proposes to build small offices and more riverside housing .

The " Cultural Quarter " is the area along the river between Firepool and Tangier . The proposals have plans to extend riverside retail , an aim to attract more smaller , boutique businesses , such as those already found in the Riverside shopping centre .

Plans for the town centre include greater pedestrianisation and an increase in size and number of retail units .

Several sites along the River Tone are set to undergo renovation . Firepool Weir lock ? long silted up ? will be dredged during 2011 to allow boats to pass from the navigable section of the Tone through Taunton to the Bridgwater and Taunton Canal . Goodland Gardens has received a makeover and a new cafe , The Shed , has opened . Projects to develop Somerset Square (the paved area next to the Brewhouse Theatre) and Longrun Meadow (country park near to SCAT) have already been delivered .

The government sees Taunton 's traffic congestion problems as a serious obstacle to its continuing economic growth . An important part of the government 's growth strategy for the town is new road infrastructure consisting of a new link road (Taunton 's Third Way) which was completed 27 September 2011 at a cost of £ 7 @.@ 5 million , and a second link road (the Northern Inner Distributor Road) planned for completion by the end of 2014 at a cost of £ 21 million . The road would link Staplegrove Road with Priory Avenue , running across Station Road .

= = = Governance = = =

Taunton includes an area named Holway which was once a village in its own right . Holway was originally one of the Five Hundreds of Taunton Dean , the Infaring division or district of the three districts that made up Taunton Dean . The parish of Staplegrove is situated in the northern suburbs of Taunton . The parish , largely built by Monsell Youell Construction Ltd in the 1970s , has a population of 1 @,@ 889 .

= = = Borough Council = = =

Taunton is the main settlement and administrative centre of the local government district of Taunton Deane . The district was formed on 1 April 1974 , under the Local Government Act 1972 , by a merger of the municipal borough of Taunton , Wellington urban district , Taunton Rural District , and Wellington Rural District . Taunton Deane was granted borough status in 1975 , perpetuating the mayoralty of Taunton . The district was given the name of an alternate form of the Taunton hundred .

Taunton Deane Borough Council consists of 55 councillors , of whom 20 are elected for wards in the town of Taunton . The wards are : Blackbrook & Holway ; Eastgate ; Fairwater ; Halcon ; Lyngford ; Manor & Wilton and Pyrland & Rowbarton . Eastgate ward returns two councillors , with the remaining wards each returning three .

= = = County Council = = =

Somerset County Council is based at County Hall in Taunton , and consists of 58 councillors . The town of Taunton is included in six electoral divisions , each returning a single county councillor : Taunton East ; Taunton Fairwater ; Taunton North ; Taunton South ; Taunton West and Taunton and Trull (which also includes rural areas) . Five councillors are members of the Liberal Democrats , and one is a Conservative .

= = = United Kingdom Parliament = = =

Taunton Deane is a county constituency represented in the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom . It elects one Member of Parliament (MP) by the first past the post system of election . It is based on the town of Taunton but extends to include Wellington , many small villages and parts of Exmoor . The current MP is Rebecca Pow , a member of the Conservative Party .

= = = European Parliament = = =

Residents of Taunton also form part of the electorate for the South West England constituency for elections to the European Parliament .

= = Geography = =

Taunton lies on the River Tone between the Quantock , Blackdown and Brendon hills in an area known as the Vale of Taunton .

It is surrounded by many other large towns and cities which can be seen on this directional compass :

= = = Geology = = =

In the Taunton area Permian (295 ? 250 million years ago) red sandstones and breccia outcrop , while rocks of Triassic age (248 ? 204 million years ago) underlie much of Somerset and form the solid geology to the Somerset Moors and Levels .

= = = Nature reserves = = =

There are several local nature reserves in and around Taunton , which are protected under a statutory designation in Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 . South Taunton Streams is an urban wetland , and in the northern suburbs is the Children 's Wood riverside reserve which provides a movement corridor for animals including otters along the banks of the River Tone . Birds occurring at the site include : kingfisher , dipper , grey wagtail , mute swan , grey heron and reed warbler . It is also home to butterflies such as the small and large skipper ,

marbled white , small heath and small copper , and to dragonflies and damselflies .

Weirfield Riverside is a linear nature reserve along the bank of the River Tone providing alder and willow woodland , bramble , scrub and rough grassland . The wetter areas which are sometimes flooded include hemlock water dropwort , and yellow flag . Silk Mills Park and Ride includes landscaping and ponds in three areas next to the River Tone created when the park and ride was created . The woodland and grassland supports aquatic and marginal vegetation . There are a variety of birds , bats , reptiles and invertebrates . Frieze Hill Community Orchard has been converted from allotments to rough grassland and an orchard . The kingston black and yarlington mill varieties of apples are among those grown .

== Climate ==

Along with the rest of South West England , Taunton has a temperate climate which is generally wetter and milder than the rest of the country . The annual mean temperature is approximately 10 ° C (50 @. @ 0 ° F) . Seasonal temperature variation is less extreme than most of the United Kingdom because of the adjacent sea temperatures . The summer months of July and August are the warmest with mean daily maxima of approximately 21 ° C (69 @. @ 8 ° F) . In winter mean minimum temperatures of 1 ° C (33 @. @ 8 ° F) or 2 ° C (35 @. @ 6 ° F) are common . In the summer the Azores high pressure affects the south @-@ west of England , however convective cloud sometimes forms inland , reducing the number of hours of sunshine . Annual sunshine rates are slightly less than the regional average of 1 @, @ 600 hours . In December 1998 there were 20 days without sun recorded at Yeovilton . Most the rainfall in the south @-@ west is caused by Atlantic depressions or by convection . Most of the rainfall in autumn and winter is caused by the Atlantic depressions , which is when they are most active . In summer , a large proportion of the rainfall is caused by sun heating the ground leading to convection and to showers and thunderstorms . Average rainfall is around 700 mm (28 in) . About 8 ? 15 days of snowfall is typical . November to March have the highest mean wind speeds , and June to August have the lightest winds . The predominant wind direction is from the south @-@ west .

== Demography ==

The town of Taunton (which for population estimates includes the unparished area ? or former municipal borough ? plus the neighbouring parishes of Bishop 's Hull , Comeytrowe , Norton Fitzwarren , Staplegrove , Trull and West Monkton) had an estimated population of 61 @, @ 400 in 2001 . It is the largest town in the shire county of Somerset .

Taunton forms part of the larger borough of Taunton Deane which also includes the town of Wellington and surrounding villages . Taunton Deane had an estimated population of 109 @, @ 883 in 2010 .

The figures below are for the Taunton Deane area .

== Economy ==

Taunton Deane had a low unemployment rate of 4 @. @ 1 % compared with the national average of 5 @. @ 0 % in 2005 .

Taunton is home to the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) which is an organisation within the Ministry of Defence responsible for providing navigational and other hydrographic information for national , civil and defence requirements . The UKHO is located on Admiralty Way and has a workforce of approximately 1100 staff . At the start of the Second World War chart printing moved to Taunton but the main office did not move until 1968 .

Taunton is also home to one of the head offices of Debenhams , Western Provident Association , Viridor and CANDAC .

Moreover , the town is home to local offices for Defra , the Charity Commission for England and Wales , and General Electric . The first ever store of the multinational clothing retailer New Look

opened in Taunton in 1969 . Taunton is also famous for the production of cider .

= = Landmarks = =

Gray 's Almshouses on East Street were founded by Robert Gray in 1615 for poor single women . The red brick buildings bear the arms of Robert Gray , dated 1635 , and another arms of the Merchant Tailors . A small room is used as chapel and has original benches and a painted ceiling . It has been designated by English Heritage as a grade I listed building . St Margaret 's Almshouses was founded as a leper colony in the 12th century . Glastonbury Abbey acquired the patronage of the hospital in the late 13th century and rebuilt it as almshouses in the early 16th century . From 1612 to 1938 the building continued to be used as almshouses , cared for by a local parish . In the late 1930s it was converted into a hall of offices for the Rural Community Council and accommodation for the Somerset Guild of Craftsmen . It later fell into disrepair until the Somerset Buildings Preservation Trust with Falcon Rural Housing purchased and restored it for use as four dwellings of social housing . It is a grade II * listed building .

The grounds of Taunton Castle include the Somerset County Museum and The Castle Hotel , which incorporates the Castle Bow archway . Together with the municipal buildings they form a three @-@ sided group of buildings just beyond the Castle Bow archway from Fore Street . The centre of the square is used as a car park , and a plain brick edifice of Mecca Bingo hall makes up the west side of it .

The frontage of the Tudor Tavern (now a branch of Caffè Nero) in Fore Street dates from 1578 but the rest of the building is thought to date from the fourteenth century .

The area by the river north of the centre is surrounded by Morrisons supermarket , retirement housing and the Brewhouse Theatre . Towards the centre , is the Dellers Wharf Nightclub , Bridge Street and Goodlands Gardens . Currently a regeneration programme is being executed , north of Bridge Street , which will include redeveloping the County Cricket Ground . The cricket ground has hosted large open @-@ air music concerts for Elton John in 2006 and 2012 ; and for Rod Stewart in 2014 .

= = Shopping = =

Hankridge Farm is a retail park close to the M5 motorway , with large stores including PC World , Currys , Mothercare , Halfords , B & Q and Taunton 's second Sainsbury 's store . In addition , there is a ' Venue ' on the park , with restaurants , the Odeon cinema and Hollywood Bowl bowling . Now known as Riverside Retail Park .

Taunton has three other retail parks . Belvedere Retail Park is situated close to the town centre and consists of retailers such as Bathstore , Laura Ashley and Johnsons Cleaners . St Johns Retail Park is just off Toneway , going towards the motorway and consists of two units . It is occupied by DFS and more recently joined by Go Outdoors , where two vacant units were amalgamated into one for their opening in April 2014 . Taunton 's second largest retail park is Priory Fields Retail Park and this is also just off of Toneway . It consists of five units plus an anchor store , Wickes Extra . It was redeveloped in 2003 to modernize the rather worn out appearance of the retail park and also to increase retail floor space .

The Old Market was a farmers market and took place on the Parade in front of Market House but this eventually moved to the Firepool area , although cattle trading on the site ceased in 2008 . A large indoor shopping centre to the east of the Parade was built on a site which had , at one time been a pig market . Although its official name is now Orchard , and before that the Old Market Centre , locals still refer to it as " The Pig Market " as one operated on the site from 1614 to 1882 .

County Walk is an indoor shopping complex in the centre with an anchor supermarket , Sainsbury 's , plus several other large national retailers such as Subway , Costa Coffee , Maplin and The Entertainer .

= = Public parks = =

There are a number of public parks around Taunton including Vivary Park , Goodlands Park and Victoria Park . The most notable is Vivary Park , located on land that was formerly a medieval fish farm , or vivarium , for Taunton Priory and Taunton Castle . Fronted by a pair of cast iron gates made by the Saracen Foundry of Glasgow , it contains the Sherford Stream , a tributary of the River Tone , which flows through the 7 @. @ 5 hectares (19 acres) park , which is located near the centre of the town . It contains two main wide open spaces , as well as a war memorial dating from 1922 , a miniature golf course , tennis courts , two children 's playgrounds , a model railway track which was added in 1979 , and an 18 @- @ hole , 4620 @- @ yards , par @- @ 63 golf course . The park includes trees , rose beds and herbaceous borders , with around 56 @, @ 000 spring and summer bedding plants being used each year . The rose garden includes the Royal National Rose Society Provincial Trial Ground . Taunton Flower Show has been held annually in the park since the 19th century . It has been described as " The Chelsea of the West " , and attracts around 24 @, @ 000 visitors over its two days . Goodlands Gardens , located in the centre of the town , is behind the Debenhams department store and The Castle Hotel .

= = Transport = =

= = = Rail = = =

Taunton railway station is on the Bristol to Exeter line , the Reading to Taunton line , and the Cross @- @ Country Route . It is served and operated by First Great Western and served by CrossCountry , with services to Manchester , Birmingham , Cardiff , Bristol , London , Exeter , Plymouth and Penzance , as well as the rest of the West Country . There are generally one fast and one slow trains each hour to both Bristol Temple Meads and Exeter St Davids and one train to London Paddington .

The former railway route to Minehead is now a heritage railway known as the West Somerset Railway .

In 2009 , Project Taunton , the authority responsible for Taunton 's major regeneration project , revealed plans for Taunton metro rail , as part of their transport sustainability plan .

= = = Road = = =

Taunton also has good road links , having the M5 motorway junctions 25 (Taunton) and 26 (Wellington) close to the town , as well as other major roads such as the A38 and A358 . The Taunton bypass section of M5 , from J25 @- @ 26 , opened in April 1974 , relieving the town of heavy holiday traffic on the A38 . Taunton Deane services are located between junctions 25 and 26 on the M5 . However , with the flourishing local economy , traffic is a problem with Somerset County Council giving a prediction of a significant increase based on 2001 levels . Two major new road have been undertaken since 2010 . The " Third Way " linking Bridge Street and castle Street opened in 2011 , and a Northern Inner Distributor Road between Staplegrove Road and Priory Avenue is due to open in March 2015 .

= = = = 2011 M5 motorway crash = = = =

On the evening of 4 November 2011 , 34 vehicles were involved in an accident close to junction 25 of the M5 motorway northbound , on the north eastern edge of the town at West Monkton . Seven people were confirmed as dead , with a further 51 injured .

= = = Buses and coaches = = =

Many local bus services are provided by The Buses of Somerset . In addition to town services ,

these run to destinations such as Minehead , Bridgwater and Weston @-@ Super @-@ Mare . Another major oprator is Webberbus who run services to places such as Weston @-@ super @-@ Mare Bridgwater and Wellington . Other services are provided by Stagecoach South West and Hatch Green Coaches .

Taunton Bus station is run by The Buses of Somerset and is served by National Express coaches . A cross @-@ town park and ride service is operated by The Buses of Somerset linking the Taunton gateway (near the M5 Motorway) and Silk Mills on the north @-@ west side of the town .

== Air ==

The nearest airports are Exeter International Airport and Bristol Airport ; both are within 40 mi (64 km) of Taunton .

== Trams ==

The Taunton Tramway was opened on 21 August 1901 . Six double deck cars operated on the 3 ft 6 in (1 @, @ 067 mm) gauge line between the railway station and East Reach where the depot was situated . In 1905 the service was withdrawn for two months while the track was improved ; the cars were replaced at the same time by six single deck cars and the old double deckers were sold to Leamington Spa . A short extension beyond the station to Rowbarton was opened in 1909 , making the line 1 @. @ 66 miles (2 @. @ 7 km) long . The price of its electricity was due to increase in 1928 which the company refused to pay so it offered to sell out but this was not accepted . The electricity was cut off on 28 May 1921 and so the system closed .

== Canal ==

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal is a navigable waterway which links Taunton with Bridgwater , which first opened in 1827 and having been closed to navigation in 1907 it re @-@ opened following restoration in 1994 .

== Education ==

State secondary schools in Taunton include The Castle School , Heathfield Community School , Bishop Fox 's School and The Taunton Academy . Further Education is provided by Richard Huish College , The Taunton Academy (which is sponsored by Richard Huish College) and Somerset College of Arts and Technology . Heathfield Community School also has specialist Further Education provision for performing arts called The Space . Somerset College of Arts and Technology is a partner college of Plymouth University . There are three coeducational independent schools in Taunton : Queen 's College , King 's College and Taunton School .

In March 2009 , it was announced that Jim Knight , Minister of State for Schools and Families , had approved plans that would mean the closure of both Ladymead Community School and the nearby St Augustine of Canterbury RC / CoE School both in the Priorswood area of Taunton .. The schools closed in August 2010 , and were replaced in September 2010 by The Taunton Academy .

Provision for young people with Special Educational Needs in Taunton is provided by two Special Schools and one Complex Pupil Referral Unit . Sky College caters for boys aged 10 - 18 who have Social , Emotional and Mental Health difficulties . Selworthy School has pupils on roll between the ages of 4 and 19 who have complex and multiple learning difficulties whilst the Taunton Deane Partnership College is a complex PRU for children in Key Stages 2 , 3 and 4 as well as a Medical Tuition Service , Outreach & Advisory service and an Area Access Team .

== Health Services ==

Taunton is within Somerset Primary Care Trust and is home to Musgrove Park Hospital , within

Taunton and Somerset Foundation NHS Trust . This is one of two district hospitals within Somerset alongside Yeovil District Hospital . A Nuffield Hospital is also situated within the town , run privately by Nuffield Health . The town is also home to several doctor 's surgeries as well as a family planning clinic , occupational health centre and chiropractic clinic .

= = Religious sites = =

The parish church of St. Mary Magdalene , built of sandstone more in the South Somerset style , preserves an attractive painted interior , but its most notable aspect is its 15th- and 16th @-@ century tower (rebuilt in the mid @-@ 19th century) , which is one of the best examples in the country and a 163 feet (50 m) tall landmark . It was described by Simon Jenkins , an acknowledged authority on English churches , as " the finest in England . It makes its peace with the sky not just with a coronet but with the entire crown jewels cast in red @-@ brown stone . " The tower itself has 12 bells and 3 bells " hung dead " for the clock mechanism .

The parish church of St. James is also located near the centre of Taunton quite close to St. Mary Magdalene . The oldest parts of St. James Church are early @-@ 14th @-@ century , and there are fragments of 15th @-@ century glass in the west end . Like St. Mary 's it also has a sandstone tower but built to a much less impressive design . The tower was also , like St. Mary 's , rebuilt in the 19th century ? in this case thought to be due to building defects in the original tower . The church backs onto the County Ground and forms a familiar backdrop to the popular cricket ground .

St George 's is the town 's Roman Catholic church and dates from the mid @-@ 19th century . It was the second Catholic church to be built in Taunton after the Reformation , replacing the much smaller St George 's Chapel . The main church building is designated by English Heritage as a Grade II * listed building , while the rectory is Grade II listed .

The Mary Street Unitarian Chapel , which dates from 1721 , is located on Mary Street in Taunton . Samuel Taylor Coleridge , while living Nether Stowey 16 miles (26 km) away , came to the chapel to preach on several occasions . Dr. Malachi Blake , who founded the Taunton and Somerset Hospital in East Reach , Taunton , was also a preacher at the chapel , attending in 1809 in celebration of the fiftieth year of George the Third 's reign . The Chapel still has the original interior including Flemish oak pillars in the Corinthian style . The pews and pulpit are also in oak , and there is an early @-@ 18th @-@ century candelabra .

In the latter part of the 17th century , Taunton had two dissenting places of worship : " Paul 's Meeting " and the Baptist Meeting . Paul 's Meeting was built at the top of Paul Street soon after 1672 on part of a bowling green behind the Three Cups Inn , now The County Hotel , and rapidly became one of the largest congregations in the county . After Mayor Timewell sacked both Paul 's Meeting and the Baptist Meeting in 1683 , the dissenters were driven to worship in private houses on the outskirts of Taunton , where their assemblies were regularly raided by the Justices . Paul 's Meeting survived attempts to turn it into a workhouse and , with the coming of William and Mary , followed by the Toleration Act 1688 , was reopened . Hugh Willoughby , 15th Baron Willoughby of Parham , was educated in early life at Taunton Dissenters ' Academy . The Baptist Meeting became the Baptist New Meeting was registered in 1691 and rebuilt in 1721 as Mary Street Chapel .

= = Culture = =

Although at the centre of a large region stretching at least 30 miles (50 km) in all directions , the town lacks a public building such as an assembly room , municipal hall or large covered space in which events and entertainments can be held .

Radio stations BBC Somerset , Tone FM and Apple FM broadcast from Taunton .

Until its closure in February 2013 , caused by financial difficulties , the small Brewhouse Theatre provided a busy programme of drama , dance , comedy , music , exhibitions and poetry by both local and national touring artists . Since closure , the building has been in the hands of Administrators . With support from Taunton Deane Borough Council , a grassroots voluntary group was able to reopen it in April 2014 . The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre has been fully open

since this date .

The Tacchi @-@ Morris Arts Centre also operates as a theatre and is based at Heathfield Community School on the northern outskirts of the town .

Several concerts are held each year Taunton 's largest church , St Mary Magdalene . In recent years The Sixteen , The Tallis Scholars and Gabrieli Consort have all performed to full capacity audiences .

Taunton is home to several choirs and orchestras who perform in the town 's churches and independent schools ' chapels . Many local musical and drama groups are members of the Taunton Association of Performing Arts (TAPA) which produces a diary and anti @-@ clash calendar of performances in and around the town .

= = = Popular culture references = = =

Taunton is mentioned in The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro , Tinker , Tailor , Soldier , Spy by John le Carré , Evelyn Waugh 's Scoop and was given the fictitious name of " Toneborough " by Thomas Hardy .

Taunton also features in So Long , and Thanks for All the Fish by Douglas Adams part of The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy series of books .

Comedian Bill Bailey mentions the town in his stand @-@ up DVD Part Troll , claiming to have taken part in a teleportation experiment sponsored by Taunton Cider .

= = Sport = =

Taunton Rugby Football Club is an English rugby union club that is based in Taunton . They currently play in National League 2 South , having achieved back @-@ to @-@ back promotions in 2009 and 2010 .

The County Ground was originally home to Taunton Cricket Club , which was formed in 1829 and played at the County Ground until 1977 before moving to Moorfields , Taunton in conjunction with Taunton Vale Hockey Club , after which the County Ground has been solely used by Somerset County Cricket Club . Somerset CCC was formed in 1875 , but the club did not achieve first class status until 1891 . The County Ground has a capacity of 8 @,@ 500 and the ends are called the River End and the Old Pavilion End . It is the current home of the England women 's cricket team . The Somerset Cricket Museum is situated by the County Ground .

Taunton Cricket Club have since 2002 been located at the new Taunton Vale Sports Club Ground , in Staplegrove , which features two cricket fields . The Taunton Vale ground is also a regular home venue for Somerset 's Second XI . Taunton Deane Cricket Club have a ground adjacent to Vivary Park , while Taunton St Andrews Cricket Club are located at the nearby Wyvern Sports and Social Club . All three clubs play in the West of England Premier League or one of its feeder leagues .

Taunton Town F.C. are a football club , who play at Wordsworth Drive in the town . They were formed in 1947 by a few local businessmen as Taunton F.C. , changing to the current name in 1968 , and played their first friendly fixture in 1948 . For most of their history , Taunton were members of the Western League . They spent a six @-@ season spell in the Southern League from 1977 , and after a further period in the Western League , returned to the Southern League in 2002 , after winning the FA Vase in 2001 . After the latest re @-@ organisation of the English football league system , the club are currently members of the Southern League Division One South & West .

Somerset Vikings are a Rugby League Club who were formed at the beginning of 2003 as part of the Rugby Football League 's plans to develop the game further beyond the traditional areas in the north of England . Initially the side was made up of a mixture of Royal Marines based in Taunton and Exeter together with a number of local rugby union players keen to try the 13 @-@ man code . The Vikings play at Hyde Park which is the home of the Taunton R.F.C. , a rugby union club , which was formed in 1875 .

The Taunton Tigers is a semi @-@ professional basketball team competing in the English Basketball League Men 's Division 1 . The team play all their home games at Wellsprings Leisure

Centre , which has a capacity of 500 seats .

Taunton Racecourse is close to the Blackdown Hills and about 2 miles (3 km) from the centre of Taunton . Although racing had been held in the area previously , the first race at the present site was held on 21 September 1927 . The stands are called the Orchard Stand and the Paddock Stand which provide catering facilities and are used for meetings and conferences on days when racing is not taking place .

Volleyball Taunton are a local volleyball club that have played for a number of years , more recently in the Exeter & District League . They train and play their home games at Wellsprings Leisure Centre .

There is an oval motor racing circuit at Smeatharpe which is close to the Somerset / Devon border , it is frequently referred to as the Taunton Banger racing circuit although it is around 11 miles (18 km) from central Taunton .

Local skateboarders raised £ 183 @, @ 000 for a replacement skatepark at Hamilton Gault Park which opened in May 2010 .

Taunton Freeriders is a community mountain bike project in partnership with the Forestry Commission who are developing a series of northshore and downhill (DH) style mountain bike trails just outside the town . Run by volunteers from the local close @-@ knit riding community and funded solely by kind donations , they are also involved with the redevelopment of the " Norton Dirt Jumps " .

= = Notable residents = =

The following people were born or have lived in Taunton :

Joseph Alleine ? (1634 ? 1668) . English Puritan Nonconformist pastor and author .

Colin Addison ? former professional footballer and manager . Born in Taunton 8 May 1940 .

Jenny Agutter ? actress . Born in Taunton 20 December 1952 .

William Larkins Bernard ? architect (1 October 1843 ? 22 July 1922) . Born in Taunton .

Andrew Bicknell ? actor . Born in Taunton 17 June 1956 .

Pattie Boyd ? Actress and model , born 17 March 1944 . Former wife of both George Harrison and Eric Clapton .

Deborah Criddle MBE - Para @-@ equestrian who won three gold medals at the 2004 Summer Paralympics in Athens and three medals at the 2012 Summer Paralympics in London . Born in Taunton 10 May 1966 , and currently lives in Trull , a village on the outskirts of Taunton .

John Crockford ? publisher .

William Crotch ? Noted composer and Principal of the Royal Academy of Music . Buried at Bishops Hull Church , Taunton .

Stephen Daldry ? Three @-@ time Academy Award nominated and Tony Award winning theatre and film director and producer .

Charles George Gordon ? British general , known as Gordon of Khartoum . Was educated at Fullands School , now a retirement complex off Shoreditch Road , and also lodged in a house next to the Temple Methodist Church .

Antony Hewish ? Astronomer and Nobel Prize for Physics winner

Rebecca Huxtable -Born in Taunton . British radio personality and producer , currently co @-@ producing The Scott Mills Show on BBC Radio 1

Alexander William Kinglake ? barrister , travel writer and historian (5 August 1809 ? 2 January 1891) . Born at Wilton House near Taunton .

Scott Laird ? English footballer currently playing for Scunthorpe United .

Lee Martin ? footballer who currently plays for Millwall F.C .. Born in Taunton 9 February 1987 .

Deborah Meaden ? business mogul , philanthropist , star of T.V series Dragons Den . Born in Taunton 11 February 1959 .

William Ellis Metford ? (1824 ? 1899) ? engineer , best known for the Metford rifling in the .303 Lee @-@ Metford service rifle of the late nineteenth century , born in Taunton .

Ciara Michel ? Member of Team GB Olympic Volleyball squad , the first GB volleyball team to play

in the Olympic games .

Frank Montague Moore (1877 ? 1967) ? painter and the first director of the Honolulu Museum of Art , born in Taunton

Alfred B. Mullett ? architect to Abraham Lincoln . Born in Taunton (7 April 1834 ? 20 October 1890) .

Justin Pipe - professional darts player

James Purefoy ? actor , one of the stars of the joint HBO @-@ BBC series , Rome . Born in Taunton 3 June 1964 .

Gary Rhodes ? celebrity chef who was head chef at The Castle Hotel from 1986 ? 1990 .

Viv Richards ? former West Indies cricketer . Born in Antigua , resident in Taunton while playing for Somerset 1974 ? 1986 .

Andy Robinson ? former England rugby union international and head coach . Now head coach of Scotland . Born in Taunton 3 April 1964

Miranda Shearer ? Author . Born in Taunton 11 May 1982 , but resident of Spaxton , later Over Stowey and Taunton .

Hugh Trenchard , 1st Viscount Trenchard ? Military officer involved in establishment of Royal Air Force (3 February 1873 ? 10 February 1956) . Born in Taunton .

Marcus Trescothick ? England cricketer , given Taunton Deane Citizenship Award in 2005 .

Sir Charles Trevelyan , 1st Baronet ? Governor of Madras (2 April 1807 ? 19 June 1886) . Born in Taunton .

Phil Vickery ? Celebrity Chef

Frederick Porter Wensley ? chief constable of Scotland Yard CID (1865 ? 1949) Born in Taunton .

David Henry Wilson ? English writer , known for his children 's stories such as the Jeremy James series .

= = Twinning = =

Taunton is twinned with Lisieux in France , Königsutter in Germany , and Taunton , Massachusetts in the US .