

AVON HISTORIC TOURIST DRIVE



The 'Avon Drive' was the original route between settlements of Toodyay, Northam, York and Beverly. This guide details that part of the route between Toodyay and Northam. Follow the brown and white 'AVON DRIVE' signposts.

*Features of interest are indicated on the map with details of each overleaf. Many of these features are on private property – **please do not trespass.***

Your journey commences at Toodyay: Start your drive from Toodyay town site, via Stirling Tce, head south towards Midland.

You will see James Cottage on your left before the Northam turnoff. Any (kms) noted are from the Northam turnoff.

James Cottage: an example of a mud brick cottage of the type common in the district in the 1890's

Take the "Avon Drive" sign to Northam

Industrial Extracts factory and Nardie Cemetery: (1.7km) The factory used local wandoo trees to extract tannin. It was closed in 1971. The cemetery next to the factory is the oldest in the Toodyay district and was used until the 1930's.

Windmill Hill Railway Cutting: (4km) Turn right at the signpost. Right again at T junction, then parking area on your left with pathway leading up to The deepest cutting on the standard gauge rail line.

Glen Avon 1860's: (8.8km) On Toodyay–Northam road just past the border. This is a 'working farm' and private residence. This old stone barn was the first building erected for James Wilkerson, the first year after he took over occupation by lease with right of purchase from the estates of the late Frederick and Jane Slade in 1860. It is the last original building of many other buildings erected there, first by the Slades (1841 to 1858) and then by the Wilkersons (1860 to 1900). There are also parts of five other buildings erected by

the Slades and Wilkersons still existing within the present day home area of 'Glen Avon'. The brick granary (1891) is still whole. The Slades with the Cookes at Katrine, then later the Wilkersons with the Viveashs at Katrine, with their large numbers of employees and tenant farmers, established quite a large settlement in the 'Katterine' (Aboriginal name) area over that period.

Take the next road to the left – ROUTE 254 'AVON DRIVE'

Picnic area next to the river with toilets - access to right on corner of Katrine Rd. There is a "memorial" to a young contestant in the 1991 Avon Decent who drowned near the Katrine Bridge.

Katrine Causeway: (Pro. Cat Rhine) or Mrs Slade's Crossing. : Mrs Slade lived at Glen Avon in the 1850's. By then the causeway had become the main river crossing. Early in 1853 a convict road party began work on the road. The causeway was completed by 1866 after being damaged by floods. Stone was brought from Noondeening Hill opposite from the causeway construction. Built at the location of an earlier crossing, the causeway was built on the unstable mud bed of the river, using free stone, packed and sealed by grey clay from the river banks. There were four small culverts built of bush timber logs through this structure. The whole area was surfaced with small stones and gravel. Alterations were made by the Northam Road Board in 1923-24, a piled wooden bridge 25 yards in length was built to divert most of the winter flow through this point. By the 1980s erosion had started to undermine the piling of the bridge, and all the exposed rock was concreted over. Pipes to

divert flood water were introduced and the road surface was bituminized. Vegetation adapted to semi-saline conditions protects the causeway against further erosion. The Glen Avon Weir, some two kilometres downstream, maintains the flood levels.

St. Saviour's Church: (10.5km) Built in 1862, St Saviour's is the oldest existing church in the Northam district and still used today. It is constructed of stone blocks with mortared quoins. It has a gabled parapet, high pitched roof (now corrugated iron, but previously shingle). The porch and steps were added in the 1890's using the original brick flooring. Wooden flooring was laid and the shingle roof was replaced with iron. The ground cemetery consists of graves of prominent Northam Pioneers: Viveash, Cooke, Wilkerson and other names. Nearby on the same side of the road as the church was a very small timber school.

Katrine Homestead & Barn: (11.2km) A fine example of a colonial building. The small out-house was used as the Inn and Post Office by travellers on their way to the goldfields in the 1890's. The small brick buildings by the creek, beyond the barn, were the area's first school built in the 1860's by the settlers. It had 16 pupils in its first year. The school was closed in 1929.

The homestead at Katrine was developed over a period of forty years. One of the earliest buildings in the area was the Katrine Inn, which is a single roomed red brick and shingle roofed building visible from Katrine Road. It is said it was built 1842. The stone two storey front central section of the

homestead was built in the 1860s. Various sturdily built outhouses, barns and sheds make up the rest of the homestead buildings. The building materials vary from brick to stone. The brickwork is English bond in some sections and garden wall bond is also visible. The kitchen buildings at the rear are built of handmade red clay bricks with timbered and corrugated iron roof. The windows are timbered box frames. A cellar was accessible from outside the house, adjacent to the external original kitchen, laundry and cooks room. A very old stone barn, in excellent condition, bears the date 1858 on the wall. The barn is a large rectangular building made of stone with timber framed roof and corrugated iron. On the south east side is a large archway which gave height to allow the wheat and hay carriages that passed through to unload. The barn is strongly built and well portioned, with ventilation panels in the north east gables. The barn was built by convicts.

Glenfield Homestead: (12.1km) Ruin on the right. Stone portion built in the 1860's by Abraham William Morgan on the narrow Lynwood section of the Bardeen property near Katrine. Abraham William Morgan was married to Annie Morrell (John Morrell's daughter) and lived here with their daughter Susannah Mary Morgan.



Morgan's Wine Plant: Was almost opposite Glenfield. Cuttings from the vines are now grown at Muresk Agricultural College.

Mead's Rock: (13.2km) Parking area on right, rock on left. It was here c June/July 1837 that Peter Chidlow (35) and Edward Jones (30) were speared to death by natives. Peter Chidlow helped build Morby Cottage and Edward Jones is a pioneer of Northam. William Chidlow later went to the spot where he found a hut burning and his brother's body buried nearby. Joseph Green who was carting produce to Toodyay found the body of Jones in a thicket.

Lockyer's Flour Mill: The mill building (1857) is situated to the right on private property and not clearly visible from the road. This building was damaged in the Meckering earthquake of 1968 when the main house was destroyed. Lockyers Mill was situated on Hampton Farm, close to the Avon River on the Katrine Road. The original building would have been made of local stone, with mud mortar. The main part of the building has two storeys, and it is topped with a corrugated iron roof, which was originally shingles. When the building was re-roofed in the 1920s, four courses of bricks had to be laid, as the original roof was set at a different angle, with a steep pitch. The building is bolted together in places after earthquake damage. Attached to the side is a corrugated iron lean-to. The mill was driven by what was called horse works. The number of horses operating the mill could range from 1-4, but in most instances an even number of 2 or 4 was used. They walked around in a circle, turning a shaft that went down and was attached to a large cog. This large cog drove a smaller cog which was on a horizontal shaft. On the end of this shaft was a pulley, and from this pulley a belt went to another pulley in the mill. As the horses walked around

turning all of this, the grinding operation in the mill was operating, cleaning and grinding the grain and making flour.

Newleynie Homestead Site: (15.7km) On the left. Only foundations remain. Mr John Taylor Cooke lived here on his farm with his wife Mary Anne Morgan and his son Nathan William Cooke. Mr Cooke imported the 1st Steam Mill and established the 1st Flour Mill in new Norcia WA. Mr John Cooke was the Post Master at the Post Office that once stood here. John Taylor Cooke passed away on the 7th December 1875. Aged 67 years.

Northam Cemetery (Heritage section): (22.8km) The heritage section of the cemetery is where the pioneers of Northam lay. George Throssell and John Taylor Cooke are two of the people that have been laid to rest in Northam. Some other family names include Twine, Beard, Jahn and Martin.

For Irishtown: Take the next road on the left or veer right towards **Site of St. James Church:** The cross on the left marks the spot where the first church in Northam was built by John Morrell. It was built near the first settlement of Northam.

Morby Cottage: (24.6km) Built in 1836, the former home of one of the founders of Northam, John Morrell. The cottage is thought to be one of three of the oldest buildings still standing from pioneer days. Morby Cottage was built using quarrying stone, cutting timbers & shingles for the roof, doors & windows were brought with John Morrell from England, as well as glass panes for the windows. Most of the work was undertaken by Peter and William Chidlow. There were roads to the new

town of York but from there he had to cut his own track along the river for another 25 miles. When he arrived at his chosen place he set about building shelters and fenced paddocks for stock. He named his land Morby Farm and built his cottage.

Open to the public on Sundays: 11am – 3pm

Back to Toodyay via Main Road: If you wish to return to Toodyay via the main road or take the road to Perth – proceed down the main street of Northam to the Avon Bridge Hotel and flour mill. At the junction turn right and cross the White Swans Bridge. If travelling to Perth turn left at the next road; if returning to Toodyay continue straight up the hill. **Back to Toodyay via Irishtown:** retrace your steps past **Morby Farm** and continue past **St James Church site** onto Irishtown Road.

Irishtown: Just before Haddrill Rd all that remains of the town, is a Hall (1894) and Irishtown School Site 3 - 1916-1939, and on the corner of Hadderill Rd a Catholic Church (1893) now privately owned.

**Continue along Irishtown Rd, just after crossing the bridge turn left onto Dumbarton Rd.
(Gravel & Bitumen Rd)**

Maisemore Farm: (km – from Dumbarton turn off)
James Twine & his sons took large pastoral leases to the east of Newgain 'Maisemore' is the nucleus of the original 618 acre grant which was altered and extended to a red brick dwelling with green corrugated iron roof. c.1930's extensions and alterations have removed much of the original character of the house. Many windows have been replaced. There is decorative iron work to the

verandah, garage constructed of stone, brick and mud brick with a pitched iron roof. This is Private property, so please view from the road.

Newgain Granary: (km – from Dumbarton turn off) an attractive red brick structure, is nestled behind the tree line, the only one of its kind left in the district. Private property so please view from the road. The site has historic value for the associations with the railways and Chinese market gardening in the area. James Twine came to the Toodyay district in the early 1850's and was one of the few settlers who established themselves through the 1860's. He built the considerable granary.

Shepherds Rock: Aka: “Kirby’s Rock” In 1849 (right side of Rd) a shepherd to James Sinclair “Richard (Dick) Kirby” carved his name, date, outline of a shepherds crook and a bottle (which was symbolic of the bottles that all shepherds carried, containing tobacco water to treat scabby sheep) into a 8ft high boulder on the Sinclair property. The boulder is shaded by a Gum along a brook flowing through the grassy field. Richard Kirby continued as a shepherd and 30 years later still a shepherd to the Dempster family. Private property and not accessible.

Sinclair Crossing: Dumbarton Bridge now exists over a natural ford originally named Sinclair Crossing. James Sinclair built the “Bush Inn” not far up river. James and Mary Sinclair had regular visitors past their door from shepherds and sandalwood workers when they carted their loads to market.

[Courtesy of Toodyay Visitors Centre](#)