



Highfield House
junction of Park Road & Cannard's Grave Road, Shepton Mallet

Probably built in the 19th Century, this house was acquired by the Allen family after the death of James Allen's father, when his wife and three sons sold the family house and mill at Windsor Hill and moved into the Townsend district of Shepton Mallet.

In a strange twist of fate, James and his older brother John married two sisters, Ellen and Emily Burt.

Both couples lived in Highfield House at different times. John and Emily lived here first, together with his brother Joseph. After John died in 1894, James and Ellen moved from Park House across the road, where James undertook his pioneering work in snowdrop hybridisation, and almost inevitably planted more here. They lived here for about 12 years, seeing in the 20th century.

James was ill for about four years before his death and probably confined to the house for most of this time. He died here on 8th March 1906 a couple of months before his 76th birthday.

After his wife's death in 1916, James and Ellen's son, John Richard Allen, lived in Highfield House until he died in 1934. Subsequently another two of James' children, Dr Frank James and Edith Emily, were known to be living here in 1939.

Although nicknamed the 'Snowdrop King', James Allen was also well known in other fields within horticulture. Two of his creations, *Anemone nemorosa* 'Allenii' and *Chionoscilla allenii* continue *to be* commercially available today.

In death, as in in life, he surrounded himself with plants. James is buried in the family plot situated in front of the first chapel in Shepton Mallet Cemetery. It is recorded that the site was lined with moss and planted with a wide variety of daffodils, anemones, snowdrops and other spring flowers, including some very rare specimens. Atop the family grave memorial was a stone obelisk, featuring carvings of the same flowers for which he had become famous in life. The stone obelisk succumbed to the weather and began to fracture. It had to be removed in the 1980s and now sits in pieces behind the chapel building.

If you walk up to the cemetery you will see the weathered base of the memorial surrounded by more than 1,000 snowdrops planted by Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival volunteers.

A founding aim of the Shepton Mallet Snowdrop Festival is to secure donations and grant funding to restore the Allen Family Memorial and commission a new obelisk from more durable stone to be erected on the site. This will ensure that James Allen is once more honoured in his home town of Shepton Mallet.

Opening Times

Grounds accessible at any time.

Admission

Admission is free but we would encourage a donation towards the Festival funds at Park House.

Parking

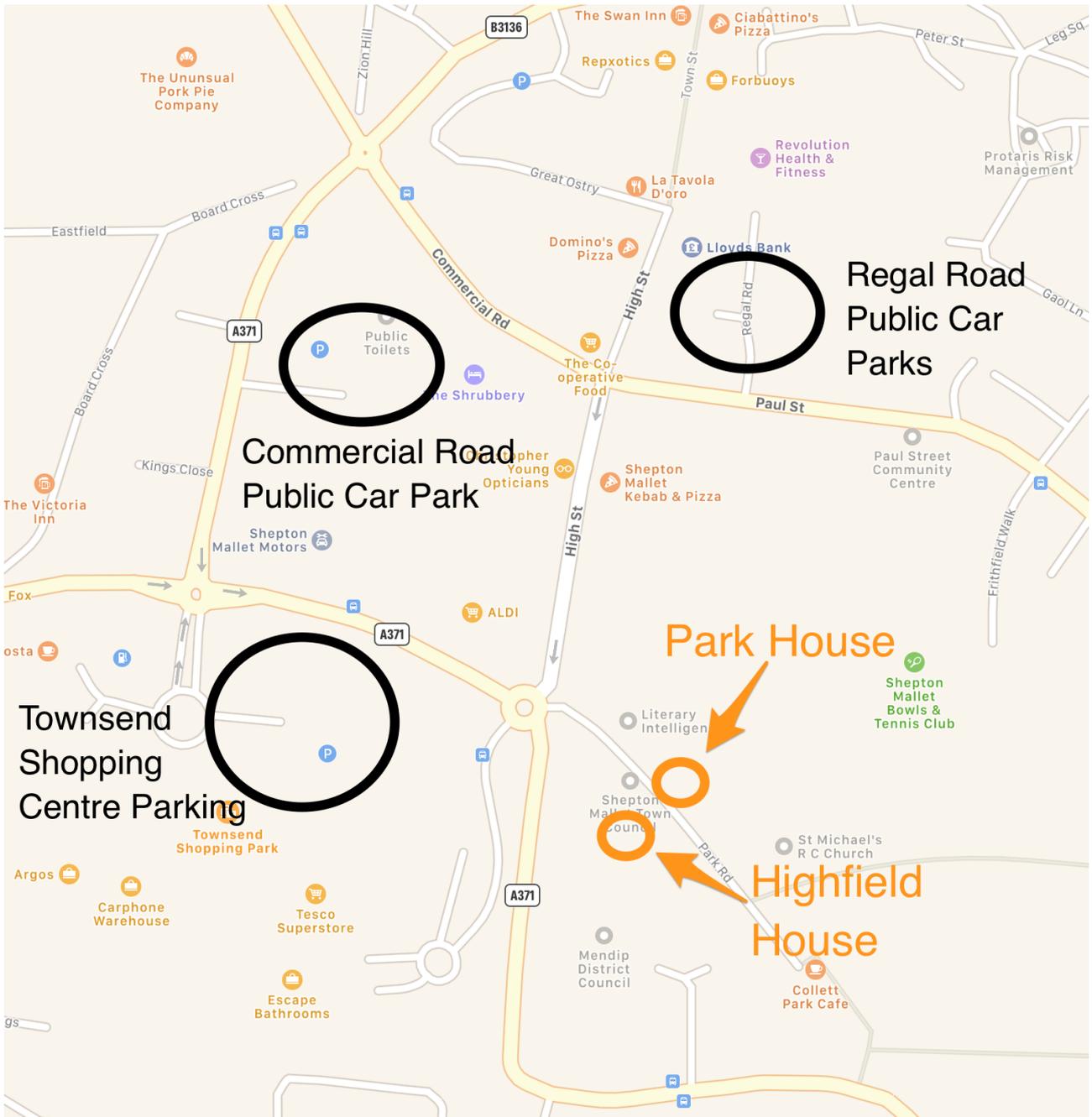
There is plenty of car parking available around the town near this location, and some time limited parking on Park Road.

The Address

Highfield House,
at the junction Park Road and Cannard's Grave Road
Shepton Mallet
Somerset
BA4 5BT

Finding the Property

Highfield House is a reasonably short walk from any of the town centre car parks – public or retail. Park Road adjoins the top of the High Street, close to the Tourist Information Centre, Cenotaph and Mendip District Council offices at SHAPE.



Regal Road
Public Car
Parks

Commercial Road
Public Car Park

Townsend
Shopping
Centre Parking

Park House

Highfield
House