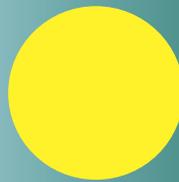
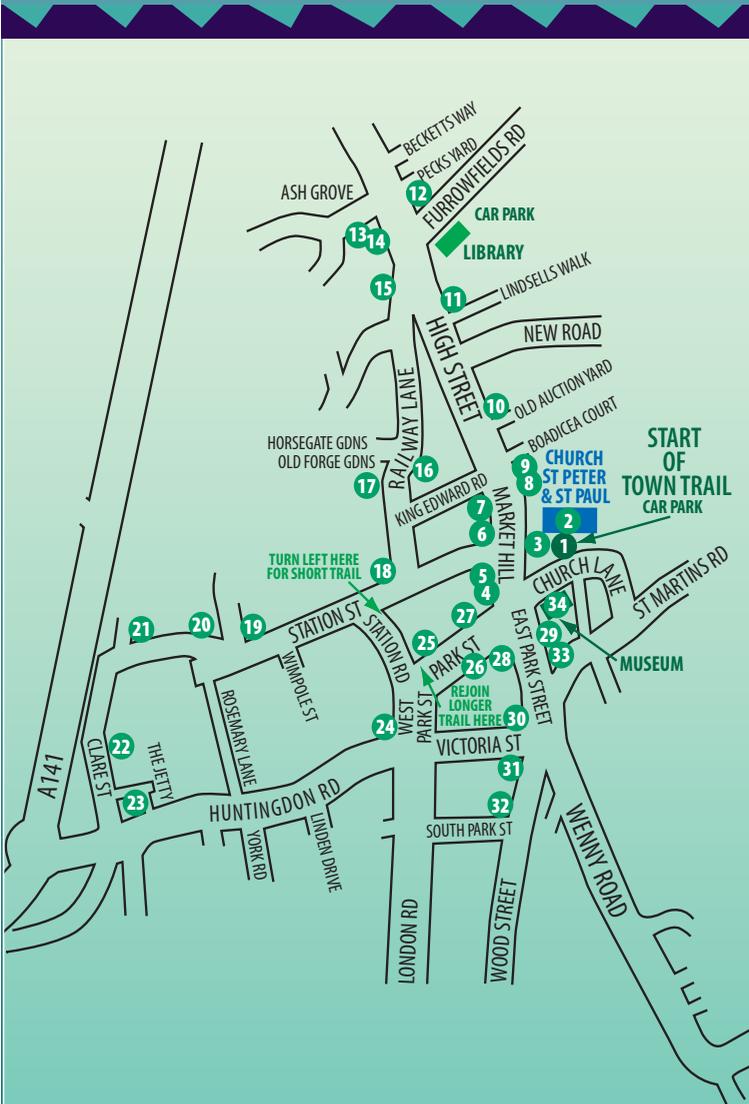


Chatteris Town Trail

(not to scale)



Walk
town
Trail

chatteris

Town
Trail



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Trail devised by Maureen James

Design Bob Ledger

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Chatteris has been a place of settlement since at least the Bronze Age. The low ridge of Langwood just south of the town is reputed to be the site of the largest Iron Age settlement in the Fens. The name 'Cetriz' or 'Cateriz' probably derives from the ancient British word 'ceatta' (wood) and the old English word 'ric' (stream).

The town grew around The Abbey of St Mary, which was founded in the 10th century. A market place was formed in front of it and streets evolved to connect the Abbey to the other settlements in the Fens. Its later prosperity was due to its situation on the junctions of the roads from Norfolk to Huntingdon and the Western Counties and from Peterborough to Newmarket.

The town trail leaflet provides the basis for a walk around Chatteris highlighting some of the older and more interesting buildings, and the stories behind them.



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The extended trail follows a route down to the site of the railway station and through the area affected by the Great Fire of Chatteris. The shorter trail should take about an hour at a leisurely pace. The longer trail is about 2 miles.

1 The town trail starts at the car park in Church Lane. This car park is built on the site of the old school room and former parish room. In 1819 the two roomed school was built by the National Society for the education of 200 boys and 150 girls on weekdays and Sundays. This remained open until 1927 after which boys transferred to King Edward School in Railway Lane. The wall shows evidence of catacombs that were built on the instructions of Rev Gathercole when the churchyard was closed to burials in 1855.

2 Walk through to the churchyard and look to the right near the wall for more evidence of catacombs.

Bishop Nigel of Ely gave the church of St Peter and St Paul, to the Chatteris nuns in 1162. In the 14th century a stipend paid for a parish priest. The church was destroyed by fire shortly after this award and was rebuilt in 1352. A guidebook is available explaining other features inside and outside the church.

3 The War Memorial was built to those from Chatteris who died in the two World Wars. It is on the site of an old vicarage of which no trace remains. A new engine house was also built to the front of the churchyard 1798.

4 Look to your left, across the road, you will see the Palace ballroom. It was a thriving Corn Exchange in the middle of the 19th century and was converted into the Picture Palace cinema. The cinema was then transformed into a ballroom in 1937. It had the first properly sprung floor in the country. It is now a night club and restaurant.

5 The Cross Keys, a 17th century inn, stands opposite the War Memorial. Being close to a church the inn is named as such because the church keys and a copy of the bible were kept there. Around the corner in Station Street there is a shallow bath fixed on the wall. It was once a mortician's slab.

6 Look behind you at the roof above the Working Men's club. This is the roof of the Crown Theatre where Donald Pears of 'By the Babbling Brook' fame started his career. Walk back round to Market Hill passing what was once the Crown Pub. It is now used for offices.

7 The George Hotel was once the departure point of the six-horse coach 'The Defiance' which left for London at 9am every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and for Wisbech and March at 5.30pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In the 1950s the boxer Freddie Mills stayed at the hotel and trained there for a big championship fight. At the rear of the Hotel is a large yard from which there is a view of the other side of the Crown Theatre roof.

8 Bramley House, across the road on the corner, was once a private house. It was later converted to a butcher's shop, with a slaughterhouse in the grounds. It became a dress shop before its present use as a guesthouse.

9 Chatteris House was built in 1828 as a private residence with three storeys and a basement. At the end of the 19th century the Seward family, who ran the auctions in the Auction Yard next door, occupied it. The Swards sold the house in 1954. It was used for a time as a tractor showroom with flats above, a grocery shop, furniture store, English restaurant, Indian restaurant and is now converted into luxury apartments.

10 The Old Auction Yard was once the site of the coach house and outbuildings of Chatteris House. The auctions, which were started in 1908 by Frederick William Seward, were popular events that were held every Friday. They could last for 8 or 9 hours, and handled sales of furniture, livestock and dairy and farm produce. The auctions continued until the retirement of

Lindsey Seward in the 1970s.

In World War 2 the Army commandeered the auction yard.



9

11 Further down the High Street on the same side is Lindsell Walk. On the left is the Old Brewery, now known as Lindsells House, which became Coles Engineering works before recently being converted into apartments. The tall chimney stack, which was originally detached, still remains as a marker. Charlie Cole the proprietor of Coles Engineering made the first carrot washing machine in the country.

12 Continue down the High Street to Pecks Yard on the right hand side just past Furrowfield. This yard was known for a time as Earls Place and though quite modernised, is still a good example of one of the yards of labourer's cottages, which were found throughout the town in the 19th century.

13 Cross the road into Ash Grove. A short way along on the left is a white building which was once the Quaker meeting house. Quakers had met in Chatteris from 1703 until the 1920s. The house is now privately owned. A small graveyard was sited beyond the brick wall on the site of the present road. The building was used as a place for feeding the first of the evacuees to the town in World War 2.



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14 Back into the High Street a short way along is Grove House which was built in 1818. This was an elegant private house occupied for a time by the Child's family. In 1885 an extra storey with five extra rooms was added by jacking up the roof. The works cost £500. The house was converted from a private house to council offices and for a time housed the Chatteris Museum. It was also an adult education centre but is now empty because of structural problems.

15 Next to Grove House, but in Railway Lane is Burnsfield House, a late 18th Century cottage, which was converted to two storeys in the 19th century. Evidence of this work can clearly be seen on the front and sidewalls of the building.



14

16 Further along Railway Lane, just past Hereward Court, is Coach House Court. This and Horsegate Gardens across the road are reminders of the Horse and Gate public house. This was the departure point of 'The Day' coach which departed for London at 9am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and returned to Wisbech via March at 6pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Located back from the bend in the road is the King Edward School which was opened in 1902 and is now the venue for many of the town's clubs and societies.

17 A short distance along on the right of Railway Lane is Old Forge Close, so named because a blacksmith's forge once stood to the rear of the site. No. 12 Railway Lane is called Back Lane Cottage, a simple reminder that the road was once known as Back Lane. On the corner of Railway Lane and Station Street is a thatched cottage. This 18th century building, which is believed to be timber framed was once the Boars Head Public House.

- 18 Turn right and walk along Station Street. On the corner of Station Road there is a garden area, once the site of a large house, which was demolished to give better visibility at the junction.

For the shorter trail turn into Station Street which has a variety of styles of house built during the 18th century. No. 14 on the corner is built from local brick and has an elegant doorway with fluted pilasters. No. 10, again built of local brick is a grand house with a mansard roof, while Nos 4 and 6 are modest cottages. No. 2 at the junction with West Park Street was built in the mid 19th century. All of these buildings, along with many others in Chatteris are 'listed'.

This means that any restoration or modernisation must be carried out sympathetically to retain the buildings original character and features.

Turn left now into Park Street where you will rejoin the longer town

Trail at No. 24.



- 19 For the longer trail continue down Station Street until you reach No. 23 - a large house called Homeland. It has an elaborate stone gated arch believed to contain materials from the old abbey, of which you will find out more later.
- 20 Near the end of Station Street on the right was the Railway Tavern and just pass this is Old Station Yard, once site of the Railway Station. The A141 March to Huntingdon road now runs along what was once the railway track and across the bypass is Stainless Metal craft formerly Chatteris Engineering. It was famous for its production of heavy cranes and diamond mining equipment.
- 21 Further down the road, just past No.51, there is a driveway leading to what was once Mill House. This listed building, according to a plaque, dates to 1807 and was once the miller's cottage of Larratts Mill. No trace remains of the octagonal tower and adjacent barn to the north which were demolished a few years ago.

- 22 Turn left here and walk along Clare Street (formerly Hive End) but renamed in honour of the Chatteris soldier who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross in the Great War. This road was badly affected by the Great Fire of Chatteris, which destroyed more than 70 homes in this part of the town in September 1864. A boy playing with touch paper near a wheat cob caused the fire, which started in West Street at 11 o'clock in the morning. Miraculously, though a number of animals perished, no people were killed.

- 23 Continue to the Jetty, which is a narrow lane on the left hand side next to No.21. At the top of this is a row of labourer's cottages. Turn to your right and walk down the alleyway that emerges on Huntingdon Road. Turn left and continue walking back to the town. On the right on the corner of Linden Drive is the Masonic Hall, which is built on the site of a small private school called Linden School.

- 24 The seating area at the corner of Huntingdon Road gives the opportunity to have a short rest before turning into West Park Street and then right into Park Street.

- 25 A short distance along on the south side of Park Street is the Hollies Dental Practice, which is in the building formerly occupied by the Post Office until it moved to the premises over the road in 1924. The newer building was built in the late 18th century using yellow local brick with a modern tiled mansard roof and is now a sorting office.
- 26 Looking across the road, behind the modern exterior, it is possible to see the old facade of the Empress Cinema. This was built on the site of a house called The Priory, which was demolished by Henry Bancroft in 1935. The house had no connection with any religious establishment. It was called The Priory by a Mr Fryer who felt that it was a fitting name for his home. The cinema was converted to its present use as a swimming pool in 1964.

- 27 Adjacent to the Empress is the office of Cartwright's solicitors. This building was once the site of Westwood House that was used for a time as a private school run by the Warth's sisters. The present building was a private home before becoming an office and within it is a magnificent staircase from the former house.

The market is held along the stretch of road in front of these two buildings every Friday. The fair was held here every April and October and in its heyday it would fill Park Street up to the Post Office, East Park Street and Market Hill down to the Cross Keys.

- 28 On the corner of Park Street and East Park Street is Barclays Bank, which was opened by 1800 as a sub branch of Gurney, Birkbeck and Peckover of Wisbech.

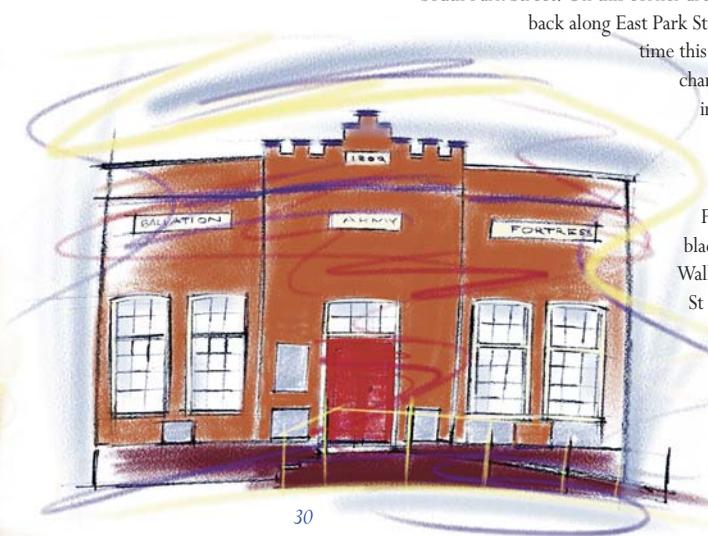


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The main building was originally the home of the bank manager, whilst the counting house was in the wing running along Park Street. One of many Public pumps was positioned on this corner.

- 29 Across the road is the Gables nursing home, a late 18th century L plan house of gault brick with red brick details. Next to it is a public garden and bandstand, which was built on the site of Dr Nix's house, demolished to make the junction safer.

- 30 Turning right into East Park Street, past the Emanuel Church and the Police Station, you will reach the Salvation Army Fortress which has a crenellated frontage and was built between 1900 and 1904.



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- 31 To the right is Victoria Street, a road constructed across what was once the site of the Abbey of St Mary. The Abbey, founded around 1010 by Bishop Eadnoth of Dorchester (formally of Ramsey) was situated on what is now the North side of Victoria Street with the grounds surrounded by walls of which only a very tiny portion remains. The perimeter of the Abbey can be traced along the four Park Streets.

The abbey buildings were dismantled and the stone reused after the dissolution in 1538 with the exception of the block on the western side of the cloister's which was converted into Park House and enlarged in the 17th century. In 1847 this building was pulled down and much of the stone was used in the building of Seymour Place, terrace of five cottages on London Road.

- 32 Continue along East Park Street as it bends to the right to the junction with South Park Street. On this corner are the remains of part of the abbey wall. Walk back along East Park Street and cross to St Martins Road. At one time this road was called Smarts Road but it was changed by the residents to its present name in the Mid 1900s.

- 33 A short way down St. Martins Road, on the left, is a house called 'Old Forge'. This is the only indication that a blacksmith's premises once stood on this site. Walk a short distance down St Martins Road and turn left into Church Walk. At the end of Church Walk you will find the car park in Church Lane.



34

- 34 On your left is Chatteris Museum where you can find a large number of objects, documents and photographs connected with the history of the town.

Toilets can be found along the route behind the library and at the rear of the Cross Keys down Station Street.