



# Chester u3a Walk, Tour, and Treasure Hunt



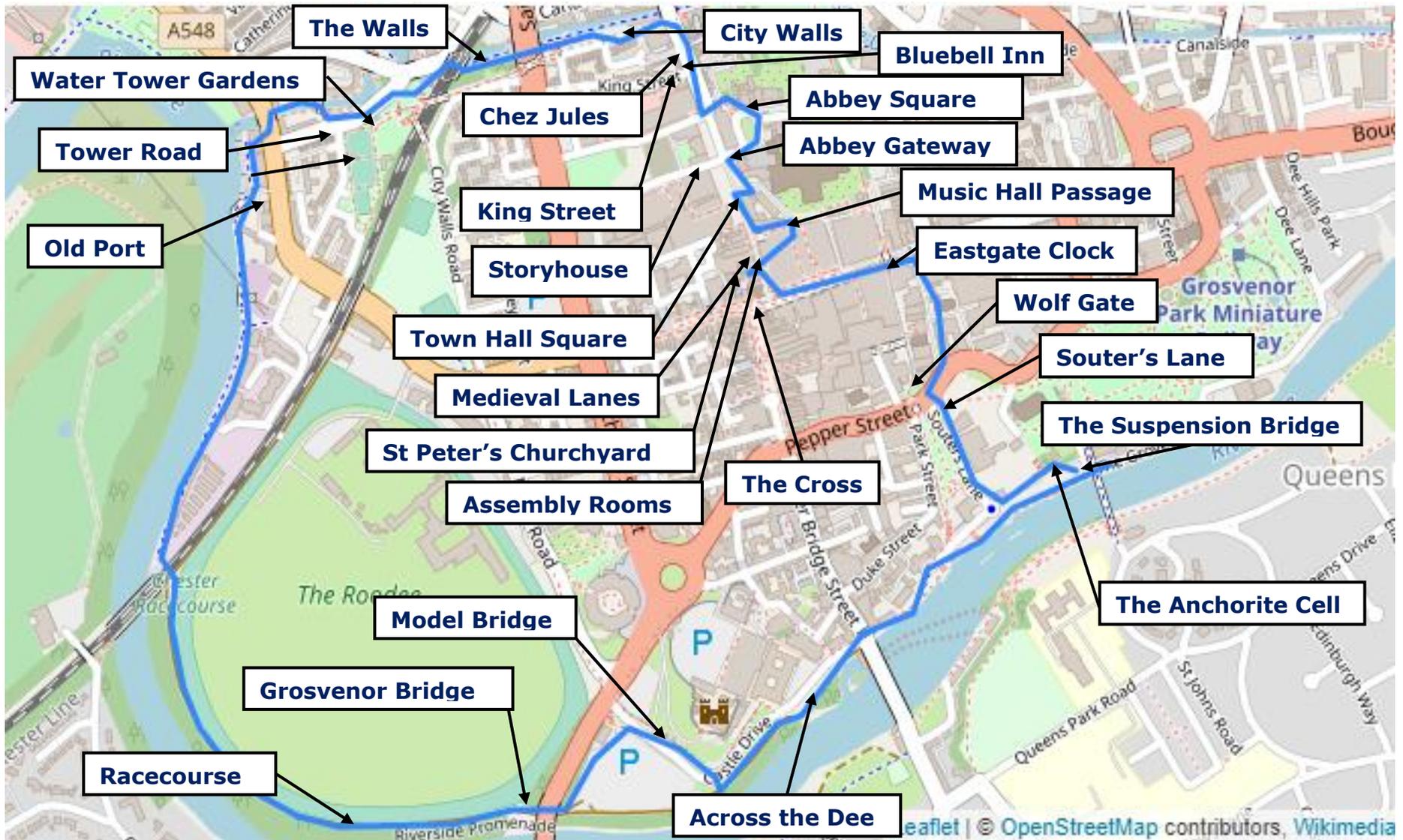
You can go for a **walk**, an **Historical Tour**, or a **Treasure Hunt** around Chester (or any combination of the three). You can even do it online using Streetview or similar.

## Directions

- Start at Queens Park Suspension Bridge and walk towards Souter's Lane.
- Turn right into Souter's Lane, and at the top of Souter's Lane head right into Little St John Street, noting the Wolf Gate on your left.
- Turn left into St John Street.
- At the end of St John Street turn left into Foregate Street and go under the clock, which leads into Eastgate Street.
- Follow Eastgate Street and just before the Cross turn right into Northgate Street.
- Follow Northgate Street. On your left, immediately after the church, is a narrow alleyway. Head down there into St Peters Churchyard.
- Once in the churchyard, go right and take the other exit in the corner, back into Northgate St. Head left up Northgate Street, until Music Hall Passage on your right, turn into it towards the cathedral, at the end go left back towards Northgate St.
- On Northgate St go right, and go through the Abbey Gateway, exiting at the far left of the Square. Go along the alleyway and left through the Little Abbey Gateway, back onto Northgate St and turn right.
- Just before the Walls, turn left into Water Tower Street.
- Go through one of the gaps in the Walls down to the Canal Towpath.
- Follow the Towpath left under the road and railway bridges past the locks.
- After the railway bridge, where the canal forms a basin, take the path up to the left to steps down to Water Tower Gardens, do not take the steps up to the Walls.
- Walk through Water Tower Gardens keeping the Walls and the tower on the left and exit by the gate on the right.
- Turn left into Tower Road and walk to the end of the street.
- Cross the main road on New Crane Street. Go through the gap that looks like a bridge (see photo) between housing blocks, onto the riverside walkway.
- Turn left onto the walkway by the River and follow it under the railway bridge and alongside the racecourse, passing under the Grosvenor Bridge.
- Turn left through the car park and go up the ramp to Castle Drive.
- Turn right into Castle Drive and walk towards the Old Dee Bridge.
- Cross Lower Bridge Street and go through the Bridge Gate, turning immediately right onto the city walls. Continue along the walls until the Recorder steps (next to Recorder house), then go down the steps and head back to the Suspension bridge.
- On your left you can but a coffee, chips, an ice-cream or even a pint, if you wish.



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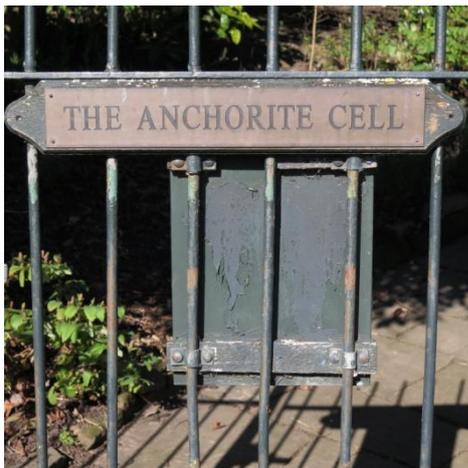
## Historical Tour

### Suspension Bridge



The tour starts by the Suspension Bridge, the pedestrian footbridge across the Dee.

### The Anchorite Cell



On the right, just before the toilets (which are on the site of a well), there is a gate to the Anchorite Cell. The Anchorite cell was formerly called the hermitage and legend has it that Harold Godwinson came there to die. This may be true of an earlier cell but not of the

one seen today. This was only built much, much later.

The small building that you can see was built in the middle of the fourteenth century, it belonged to the nearby 'St John the Baptist Church'. In the nineteenth century it was converted into a house.

### Souter's Lane



Souter's lane leads down from the Amphitheatre to the river. In Roman times it might have been used to drag bodies and other detritus down to the river from the Amphitheatre.

### Wolf Gate



The Wolf (originally Wolfeld's) Gate was once the site of an abduction of an



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alderman's daughter, after which it was ordered to be shut at night and is next to the remains of the Angle Tower. According to legend a Roman legionary was stationed here but decided to leave his post by a 'Lady of the Night' which allowed an attempted invasion of the city to happen. The same legend says his ghost still walks.

## Eastgate Clock

The Eastgate Clock is the second most photographed clock in the country, no prizes for guessing the most photographed! Look up, back, and left after you have passed under the clock and high up on the building with the white wall there is a small, round, window. This was supposed to have been built into the building for a sea-captain who missed looking through portholes and wanted to see what was going on in Eastgate St.



## The Cross



The large building seen to the right of the Cross is the site of a massive building of at least three stories (the Principia) in Roman Chester. This building situated on the corner of Watergate Street and Northgate Street would have stretched down Northgate Street up to roughly where the market is now situated. Some of the remains of the building can be seen in several of the cellars of the buildings in Northgate Street.

## City News Rooms



The City Newsrooms. When newspapers were expensive, subscriptions were paid so that you could have access to the papers. This stretch, from St Peter's to the corner before the Town Hall, was known as Ironmonger's Row.

## St Peter's Churchyard



St Peter's Churchyard now holds the entrance to the City Club, still a men-only establishment.



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## Medieval Lanes



There are four remaining medieval lanes in Chester. This one (Leen Lane) runs from Northgate Street to St Werburgh Street. There are 7 flats, and people still live down here.

## Music Hall Passage



Music Hall Passage is so-called because the building on the right was once a Music Hall; it is now Superdrug. However, it also has another claim to fame in being one of the stages from which Emmeline Pankhurst addressed a meeting calling for votes for women.

## Town Hall Square

From Town Hall Square you can see Storyhouse. In Tudor times there was a 'Corn Market House' at roughly this position, but there were other versions of the same building in two other places. It would have been used for storage of grain, wool, cloth and corn to be sold at Chester Markets.

There would also have been the medieval Midsummer and Midwinter Watches, which were parades through the square. The Midsummer Watch featured a dragon chased by six naked boys beating it. Not surprisingly, this was banned by the Puritans.

## Storyhouse

Storyhouse is a library, cinema, theatre, restaurant, and Bar serving Chester, built to replace the old Odeon Cinema that was closed and left empty for many years. There is a Roman road in Storyhouse roughly under the kitchen area, it was known in Roman times as the 'Via Quintana' or fifth road, which linked two roads running north-south.

## Abbey Gateway

The Abbey Gateway leads to Abbey Square in the grounds of Chester Cathedral. There is a story that a woman, who was seeing her lover up in the room above the gateway, saw her husband approaching across the square and ascending the stairs. She leapt from the window but because of her wide billowing skirts she landed safely and ran away.



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If you look down as you enter through the gate, there are slabs lain in the cobbles; these 'wheelers' were to give a smooth carriage ride into the Abbey. This was also important in order not to dislodge the fashionable wigs. Besides the embarrassment of losing a wig, hygiene was so lax that fleas and even small rodents could pop out.

## Abbey Square



The buildings set back slightly from Abbey Square are on the site of the old bake houses for the Abbey.

In medieval times all the buildings around the square would have been

service buildings for the monks in the abbey.

Beer used to be brewed with gruit for flavouring before hops, and the monks had a monopoly on gruit and when hops were introduced lost out economically. The green in the middle of the square used to be a pond but was probably filled in when someone drowned in it. Too much gruit?



If you look carefully round the north side of Abbey Square, you may be able to see an original 'fire mark'. These were displayed on buildings as proof of fire insurance. No mark, no fire-brigade, no building.

## King Street



King Street, as it is now known, was called Barn Lane in earlier times.



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This is the route that the monks from the abbey used to get to their Tithe Barn in the north western corner of the city.

King Street contains a number of listed buildings but in 1945 it was planned to demolish much of King Street. Fortunately, in 1960, this plan was dropped. Whilst under threat, many of the properties were neglected but they have since been renovated.

## Bluebell Inn



The Bluebell Inn outrigger was used as a pay booth for coach passengers in former times. The passengers at the top could buy a ticket from the booth at the top window and the passengers at the bottom, the bottom window.

This, you can see from the sign, is Lorimer's Row. A lorimer is a person who makes small metal items; in particular, buckles and trappings for horses.

## Chez Jules

This building is currently known as Chez Jules, a French Restaurant. It was originally Chester's fire station. However, the original purpose of the building was abandoned once they

realised that larger fire vehicles would not be able to get in and out of the doors. The square behind the building is Fireman's Square.



## City Walls



There is a nice long straight stretch of the Walls at this spot. They were so straight that they were used for making ropes and so were also known as the 'rope walks'. Up on the walls is 'Pemberton's Parlour'; Pemberton was the owner and would sit up on the walls, looking down at the ropes being made (and presumably making sure no-one was slacking). The ropes were made from flax.



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Also on this stretch, recent repairs uncovered the original Roman North Gate, which is to the left of the one that exists today.

## The Walls



As you pass through one of the gates in the walls you can see how friable the red sandstone used as a building material is. This explains why The Walls are constantly being repaired. Cheshire is the pond capital of Britain, we have more ponds than any other British county - it's all in the geology.



If you look at the Walls then you can see how they have been built up, increased, repaired, subsided etc. The history of the changes in the Walls can be seen recorded in the Walls.

## Water Tower Gardens

As you pass through Water Tower Gardens you should be able to see the large rock shown below.

This has been tentatively identified by a local historian as the 'Gloverstone'. This was a stone used for making payments upon when Chester had a thriving glove industry and was originally in the area round the Castle.



## Water Tower Road



Here, the street doors are painted black on all the houses. According to local tradition these houses are known as 'Plague Houses' and the doors have always to be painted black to commemorate the plague. But which plague, and when? We are not sure that this is true - perhaps they just happen to be Rolling Stones fans.



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## Old Port



Chester used to be a seaport. As the River Dee silted up the port was moved from the centre of Chester to the location shown, but later moved yet further up the Dee, to Parkgate. Cheshire Cheese was exported from here.

## Racecourse



The first recorded race was in 1512, and in 1539 Henry Gee, mayor of Chester, introduced an annual horse race meeting. It replaced the far more dangerous sport of football.

In Roman times the whole of the Roodee was almost certainly underwater. When the Pavilion suite

was constructed recently, the remains of a Roman pier was discovered, and there is a small selection of Roman artefacts displayed inside the Pavilion.

## Grosvenor Bridge and Model

The Grosvenor Bridge was, at the time of its construction, the longest single span bridge in the world. The people of Chester doubted, before construction, that such a bridge could be built or remain standing, so they made the architect construct a scale model, which you can see on Castle Drive.



## Across the Dee



Looking through the trees at the other side of the River Dee it is possible to see Greenway Street.

This is where the fisherman of Chester lived; in particular those that caught salmon, which were so plentiful that apprentices complained of being fed on nothing but salmon.



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## **Treasure Hunt Instructions**

On the following page is a sheet of photos. By following the map and/or directions you should go past all of them, but not necessarily in the order in which they are shown. Take a photo of each one as you find it and submit them to Chester U3A speaker ([speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:speakersec@chesteru3a.org.uk)) if you want (but please send them all at once, not one at a time!). The first complete, correct, set will win a small prize, and be covered in glory. If you want a copy of the Word template to put your photos into, please ask. If you can't find them all, and get frustrated, then you can ask for our Hints sheet (but then you won't win a prize...).

***So, get out there, and get hunting!***

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