



## Chester u3a Walk, Tour, and Treasure Trail 5 - Tudor Chester

We have produced a walk, an historical tour of Tudor Chester, or a treasure trail. Distance is around 3 miles, and circular. One section is optional, and there are no treasures in that section. We have included a map.

Chester's arms have been in use since the 14th century, but the crest and supporters were granted on September 3, 1580, by Elizabeth I. There are several places you can see the Arms on this route round the city – see how many you can spot. The arms are displayed both with and without supporters, and in various more or less elaborate guises.



The shield combines the Royal arms of England - a red shield with three gold lions - and those of the Duchy of Chester - three gold wheat garbs on blue. The sword in the crest is part of the Lord Mayor's regalia. The supporters are the gold lion of England and the silver wolf of Hugh Lupus, 1st earl of Chester. The motto translates as 'Let the ancients worship the ancient of days'

The Siege of Chester, in the mid-1600s destroyed much of the fabric of the Tudor city, but glimpses of it still survive, if you know where to look. If you want to know more about Tudor Chester, then read the text in black, given after the directions (for those interested, we have included a brief timeline of Tudor Chester at the end).

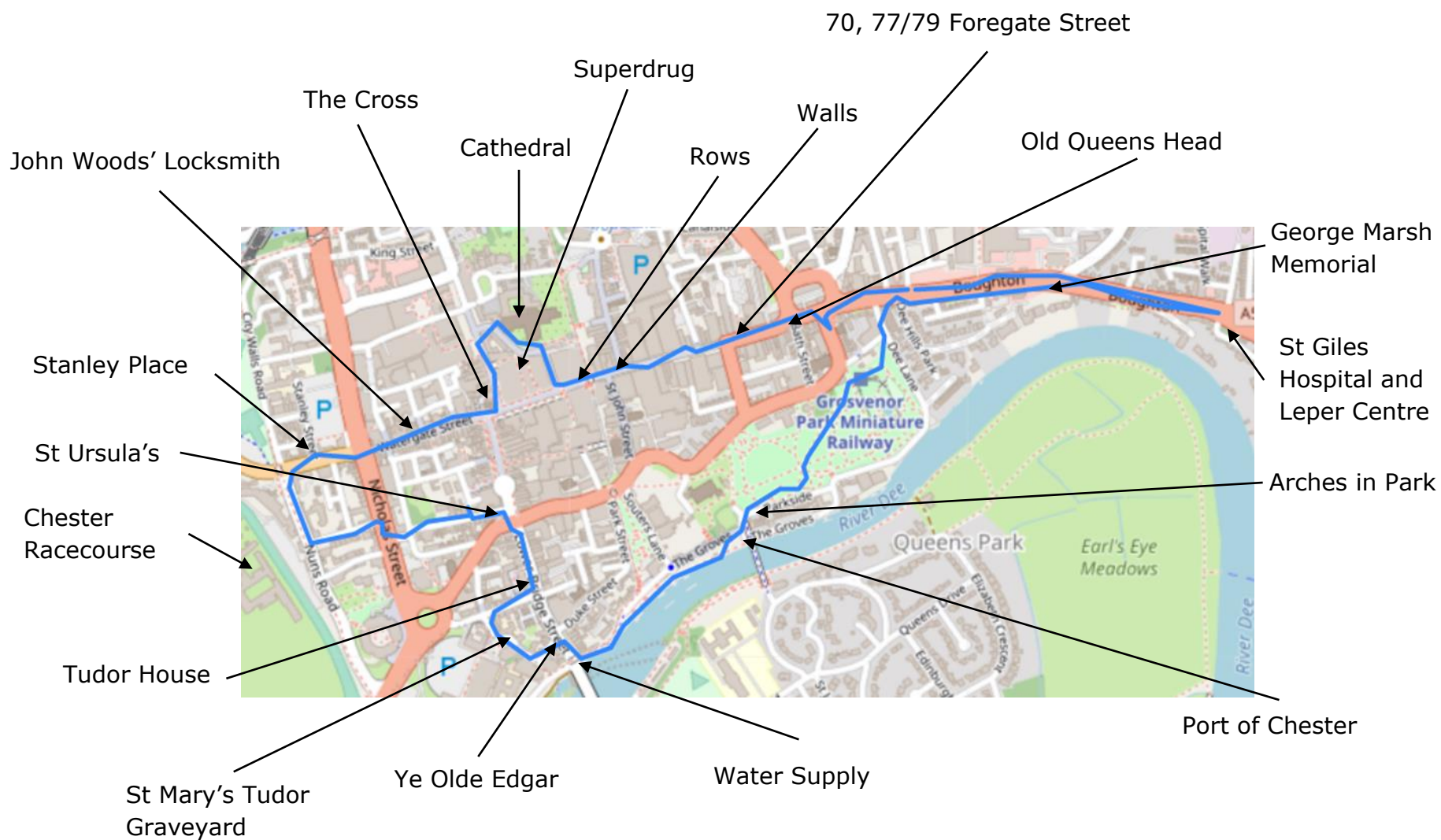
If you wish to participate in the Treasure Trail, then look at the photographs and see if you can identify where they were taken.

*If you just fancy a walk, then follow the directions in blue italics.*



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## Map







# Chester u3a Walk, Tour, and Treasure Trail 5 - Tudor Chester

## Directions

*Begin at Chester Cross.*

Pause here for a minute to gaze down Bridge St, and over the river to Handbridge, where, in a car park, the marriage bed of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York was found in 2010. It is likely to be the bed where their children (at least Prince Arthur and perhaps including Henry VIII) were conceived. The story is fascinating (the bed appeared in a Carry On film), and you can read more if you click on the following links:

[International Business Times](#),  
[Wikipedia](#), [Shropshire Star](#)



*Photo courtesy of Hever Castle*

Originally, outside St Peter's, were the Pentices, a two-storey fairly substantial lean-to (see our Treasure Trail 3 for an illustration). When [Prince Arthur](#) visited Chester from 4<sup>th</sup> Aug to 9<sup>th</sup> Sept 1498 he was feasted at the Pentices (Tudor feasting usually involved massive over-catering, the surplus was used to feed the poor), and watched the Mystery Play of the Assumption from here. He was created the Earl of Chester in the following year, which

has remained the title of the oldest son of the monarch ever since.

*Walk towards the town centre and take the left into Northgate Street. Turn Right into St Werburgh Street past the Cathedral on your left.*

Chester Cathedral was a monastery until the Dissolution in 1541, when it became one of only three to be saved from destruction and turned into a Cathedral. There are various points, both internal and external, where you can see evidence of the Tudors.

Above the West door is a rare example of Prince Arthur's coat of arms.



Internally, just in front of the choir stalls, is the Greene memorial. Dated 1602 the style of dress is mid-to-late Elizabethan, and all three of the Greenes are wearing ruffs. Ruffs were not possible until the arrival of



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starch in 1564, and were an indication of a high status wearer (Thomas Greene was sheriff in 1551, and mayor in 1569), who could afford the effort involved in [making a ruff](#) and maintaining it.



Wearing a ruff requires care, it restricts your ability to turn your head, which can add elegance to movement, requiring you to turn your torso rather than your head. Eating is difficult, any fallen food shows dreadfully and stains are difficult to get out.

The arms of Henry VIII and cardinal Wolsey are in the cloisters, on either side of the refectory door, and also in the camber beam ceiling of the north transept, which was constructed between 1516 and 1524. See if you can spot the Tudor rose in the transept ceiling - they are small. There is also a much larger stone rose boss in the cloister ceiling.



*Henry VIII arms in cloister*

After the monastery was dissolved, the refectory became a school for 24 scholars with 8 attached choristers, and provided an education for 'poor friendless boys' aged 9-15. The school stayed there for most of the next 400 years and eventually became the King's School.



*Wolsey arms north transept ceiling*

In the south transept is a Tudor memorial to [Sir William Gerard](#), who served as an MP for Chester during the reigns of both Mary and Elizabeth.





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*Gerard Memorial*

Outside, in Abbey Square, there was a pond called the Horse Pool, where visitors could water their horses. In 1523 there was an inquisition into the death of Roger Ledsham, keeper of the great gate of the abbey, who drowned in the pool. 1584 saw it filled in.

*Follow St Werburgh St, pausing at:*

Superdrug, or St Nicholas Chapel, is one of the most interesting buildings in Chester, having been through a wide variety of uses. Originally a church, it was decommissioned and conveyed to the Mayor and Assembly of Chester in 1488 then altered, with an upper floor inserted. It was used both as a Commonhall, where court cases were heard and civic assemblies held, and a Wool Hall in 1545. Some Tudor features can be seen from Music Hall Passage.

*Carry on until Eastgate Street, then look back at the Rows.*

The Rows are largely mediaeval in origin, and were in full swing during the Tudor period.

Country Bakers Row was in Eastgate St. If you stand with your back to the clock the shops on the right, stretching from St Werburgh Street to Godstall Lane were bakers, some of which would have also sold pies – poorer Tudor properties had no cooking facilities, and their occupants would have relied on takeaway food, or would have used the Baker's ovens to cook.

The ovens were wood-fired; slowly but surely the Tudors deforested Britain and as a result the Jacobean began to use coal, which burns hotter and produces poorer results.

Beyond them were the Buttershops, and on the opposite side Cornmarket Row, with the Honey Stairs leading up to Browns of Chester.

There were 22 master bakers in 1536, rising to 29 in 1587, and between them they employed about 230 people, serving, at the end of the Tudor reign, a population of around 6,000. It is easy for us to underestimate the importance of bread in the Tudor diet, but think back over the last week on all the pasta, rice, noodles, and potatoes you have eaten, and replace them with bread. The same for any cereals, and also items such as bananas, and sweetcorn. Tudors ate vast quantities of [bread](#).

Leather craftsmen were the largest occupational group, and Chester



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shoemakers sold their goods far and wide. Corviser's (shoemakers) Row was at the top of Bridge St, opposite Mercer's Row. A mercer traded in linens, woollens and silks, from which people would have made their [clothes](#). Buttons were largely decorative objects for men's clothing, they were not yet fastenings, as buttonholes did not really exist. Chester was also famous for its gloves, which were a common gift at marriages. Average ages at first marriages were 24 for women and 26 for men.

In Tudor times apprentices served a minimum of 7 years to learn a craft, and this was insisted on by the guilds in Chester in 1557. Masters were typically supposed to supply all food, lodging, and clothing for the apprentice. In winter working hours were from dawn to dusk, in summer work was supposed to stop by 8pm.

Some contracts also specified that the apprentice should go to school, or be taught to read and write, and during the Tudor period literacy rose from around 5% of men and 1% of women in 1500 to around 25% of men and 10% of women by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

*Follow Eastgate Street under the clock.*

The Walls were supposed to be kept in good repair by murengers (or muringers, or muragers), and they received customs levied on certain goods entering Chester in order to pay for this. In 1555 frequent and extensive repairs were carried out.

In 1556 a good deal of stone was used for the Walls, and a large amount of female labour employed for carrying loads.

*Continue walking through the pedestrianised part of the street past Lush (you will smell it!)*

75/77 and 70 Foregate Street are the last remnants of the Tudor houses that would have originally lined the street, but were destroyed during the civil war. Tudor houses would either have had wood left natural, as per no. 77, or whitewashed, the black and white paint is a later invention.



*75/77 Foregate St*

During the Tudor period the population of Britain doubled, and many migrated from the country to the town. Mediaeval houses tended to be single storey and have long back gardens, but space became at a premium, upper floors were added, and back gardens built on. This led to a new-fangled invention – the chimney.



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Typically, a Tudor property would have a wooden frame, either [cruck](#) or box, and was infilled with wattle and daub.

[Bricks](#) were beginning to be used, but were generally made on site. As a result, they were non-standard sizes and also lacked a frog – the dent in one side of a brick. They were not good infill for a wooden frame as they were too heavy. Also too heavy were the roofing materials, which often meant steep roof pitches and restricting houses to one room deep.



75 and 79 both have [jettied](#) upper storeys, and 75 has a [dragon beam](#) on the left, both typical Tudor features.

*Continue straight along Foregate Street. Take the subway and exit so that you are on the side of the road nearest the river. **Either** continue along in the same direction along the*

*A51 (Broughton), **or** turn right and head for the park gates in front of you, then rejoin the directions in bold below. There are NO treasures in this section.*

[George Marsh](#) was an ardent Protestant caught out by the change to Catholicism when Mary came to the throne. He was held prisoner in the chamber above the Abbey Gate, and his trial was held in the Lady Chapel. Despite being given every opportunity to repent, he was burnt as a heretic at this site in Boughton. The memorial was erected by Nessie Brown, one of the family behind Browns of Chester.



***George Marsh Memorial***

This is also the site of Gallows Hill, where public executions by hanging were carried out. We know that Chester employed a hangman in 1584, whose house was specifically mentioned as one where 'almost contunualie hores and theves and baudes do their remayne'.





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Hanging was seen as a more merciful killing – if you refused to plead guilty at your trial, but were convicted, you would be pressed to death as a more severe punishment.

*Continue along the A51 until the main road splits.*



St Giles Hospital and Leper cemetery were here, and the wall shown above encloses the cemetery. If you climb up on top, you can still see gravestones.

St Giles' was given the right to tolls on all food bought in Chester, and also a fishing boat on the Dee. Founded in mediaeval times, initially in order to keep lepers out of the city, by 1537 the city authorities ordered that admissions should be confined to the sick, on penalty of loss of the market tolls, and it appears that able-bodied Tudors could inherit the right to live in the Hospital.

*Return along the A51, the way that you came. Just before the subway, take the left into Dee Lane.*

*After about 50m you will see an entrance to Grosvenor Park, go into the park. **Now you should start looking for Treasures again.***

*Cross the park until you get to the path that runs near to the Southern edge of the park. Pass underneath the two archways at the low point of the park.*

The dissolution of the monasteries caused not just displaced monks and nuns, but also land for sale, snapped up by prominent local Tudors; reclaimed building stone; and lead for roofs. One of the arches here came from St Michael's Church, and is reputed to once have been the porch.

*Follow this path to the gate opposite the suspension bridge. Follow the river, past the bandstand, until you get to Lower Bridge Street.*

The Port of Chester in Tudor times was silting up fast, and moved further down the river. Boats that could handle shallower waters would still land goods on the stretch from Bridge St to the Water Tower.

We have customs lists of goods that came in through the port. Fish and wine were common, but during the reign of Henry VIII the list includes hides of deer, badger, goat, sheep, lamb, fox, otter, marten, and still, occasionally, wolf. Aquavit, turpentine, sword blades from Bilbao, bow staves, oil from Portugal,





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figs, raisins, mace, cloves, ginger, marmalade, almonds, oranges, pitch, cork, soap, honey, tallow, wheat, rye, grain, cloth, wheat, feathers, flockbeds, yarn, old brass and pewter, mantels, chequers, saffron, yellow ochre, madder, alum, fuller's earth, sumac, 14 packs of damask, and 2 bales of hops from Penmarke.

The skins were probably destined for the tanning industry that had sprung up around Lower Bridge St and below the Castle – tanning is a very smelly industry, and needs easy access to water.

Until 1601, Chester had no piped water supply. John Tyrer then built a ['lofty tower'](#) above the Bridge Gate, and undertook to supply water from the Dee to any of the houses in the city. You had to pay to be connected, so only the wealthy could afford it.

*Turn right into Lower Bridge Street and walk towards the town centre for about 50m. Look on your left.*



Built in 1570, originally, Ye Olde Edgar was part of a group of

buildings belonging to the Earl of Shrewsbury, and was two houses, later converted into a pub and then back to houses. At the corner there is a single trunk of oak tree, with the curve of a bough hewn to support the first storey jetty.

The Earl had the right to collect duties on goods coming in through the Ship and Bridge Gates. Charges differed according to whether the load was a man's, a horse, or a cartload, and were paid on a wide variety of goods, including timber, bark (for the tanners), coals and turf, all manner of fish and farm produce, knives, ploughshares, and barrels.

*Turn left into Shipgate Street, and follow it as it changes to St Mary's Hill, then follow St Mary's Hill until Castle Street.*

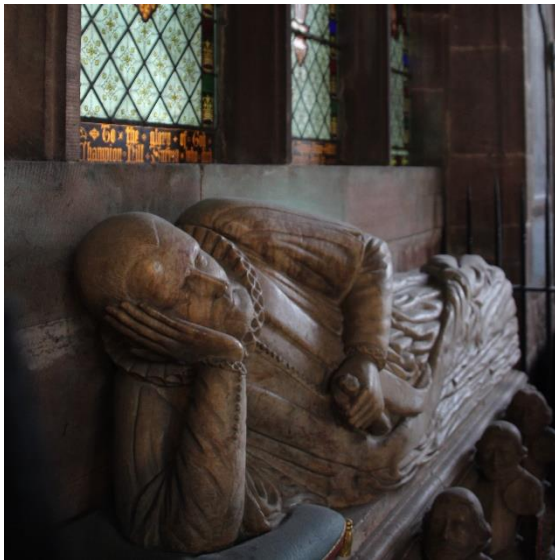
St Mary's on the Hill was the richest local church. Under Henry VIII old services and ceremonies continued; the reign of Edward VII brought removed altars and holy water stoup, the church interior whitewashed, and the incumbent married. Under Mary new altars, a new rood and image of the Virgin Mary were installed and old customs and practices reinstated. Elizabeth I once again removed altars, painted the church, and the ten commandments were displayed.

Inside St Mary's are the tombs of three Tudors, Thomas and Alice Gammull, and Philip Oldfield who died in 1616, and has a macabre alabaster monument. The Latin



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inscription extols him for his distinction as a barrister, and for the work he did to improve the highways and bridges of Cheshire. His effigy lies on top of the tomb, turning towards you, right arm supporting his head, and on the face of the tomb, his skeleton is shown in exactly the same position. There are black 'purgatorial rails' protecting him.



*Philip Oldfield Tomb*

The Castle hosted Henry VII when he stayed there in 1495 with his wife, Elizabeth of York, and mother, Margaret Beaufort, both of whom had arguably a better claim to the throne than he did. Elizabeth was beautiful, pious, and fertile, an excellent combination for a Tudor queen, and she is said to be the model for the queen of hearts in a deck of cards.

*Turn right onto Castle Street and then left onto Lower Bridge Street.*

Tudor House was originally built for a wealthy merchant, and used to have

a claim to be the oldest house in Chester, with a date of 1503, but it was discovered that someone had painted over a 6 to turn it into a 5, so the real date is 1603, just scraping in to the end of Elizabeth's reign. If you look carefully, you can see where a Row used to run through it.

*Follow Lower Bridge Street into Chester and cross Grosvenor Street into Bridge Street. The building on the corner (currently Sick Unto Death) was once St Michael's Church.*

The chancel of St Michael's Church was built in 1496, and the ceiling is original. Parish records survive from 1560 and it is apparent that the church was practically rebuilt in 1582.



Thirty-one 'tymber treees' were obtained from Wrexham. The work also required 3,000 double and 2,000 single slates and it took two labourers four days to take down the roof. A crane was brought from Chester Castle to raise a new one. At the dissolution the goods it owned were reckoned to be worth 15s 4d (a





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rough guide as to what that is worth today is to multiply by 500).

*Take an almost immediate left into White Friars. Pause at the corner of Bollands Court and look up towards Pierpoint Lane.*



This area was the first site of the Common (or Moot) Hall, before it moved to St Nicholas' Chapel. After the move the building was used as St Ursula's, a chapel and hospital for members of the council and their widows who had fallen on hard times. From 1547 they had built almshouses, and the chapel and buildings were sold.

[Tudor medicine](#) was rudimentary, and hospitals were a place of last resort for the very poor. One in five women died in childbirth, and infant mortality was high, even for the very rich – Henry VII and Elizabeth of York had 3 or perhaps 4 children die in infancy, and Elizabeth of York, Jane Seymour and Katherine Parr all died in childbirth. It has been

estimated that only 10% of Tudors lived past 40.

There were also some severe famines in 1527-9, 1554-6 and 1594-97, where very many were faced with severe malnutrition. The bones of Tudors who were children during these periods show incidents of disease linked to malnutrition – rickets, scurvy, and anaemia.

*Follow White Friars until reaching Weaver Street. Turn left into Weaver Street and follow it to Nicholas Street and turn right.*

*Cross Nicholas Street and turn left into Grey Friars after about 30m. Follow Grey Friars until Nuns Road then turn right onto Nuns Road, alongside the Race Course.*

The first recorded prize given to a winner of a horse race, a hand painted wooden bowl, was presented to the winner of a race at a Chester fair in 1512.

Chester Races were founded in 1539, by Henry Gee, when he became mayor of Chester for the second time. One of the many reforms Gee introduced, was an annual horse race meeting on the Roodee (replacing games of football that had become too dangerous). The original prize of a silver bell was presented to the winning owner of, "The horse that ran before all others". In those days the race would have been run straight, as the Grosvenor Bridge had not yet cut off the end of the course. The start date of this event makes Chester Racecourse the



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oldest continuous site of horse racing in the British Isles

In the same year Henry Gee also laid down a law that said 'Shute on Roodey, or elsewhere, for pinns or points...All parents of children to buye them Bowes and Arrowes to shute with on Roodey, according to the Statute of Artillery, beinge the Auncient use and means of defence of this Kingdom'. Other local laws passed by him included one banning women aged between 14 and 40 from keeping alehouses. He also forbade expensive drinks and dishes being taken to women in childbed. He claimed they were a luxury.

*At the end of Nuns Road, turn right into Watergate Street.*

Stanley Palace was built in 1591, on land that had formerly belonged to a Dominican Friary, and it has one of the long galleries that were fashionable at the time. Its first owner, Sir Peter Warburton, was Chester MP at the time.



Stanley Palace probably had windows with glass from the start, but this was still a luxury product, reserved for the rich. The majority of houses would have had an oiled cloth, or possibly thin horn, shutter that kept the rain and worst of the wind out. Some people had wooden shutters, which were more secure but kept out the light.

Glass was blown into a cylindrical shape, cooled, then cut into small shapes, often diamonds, that could be pieced together. The diamond panes are called quarrels, the pieces that join them are called comes. Tudor windows tend to be casement, i.e. they open outwards. [Oriel](#) was popular, rather than bay. Glass windows could be taken with you if you moved house.

Curtains at the window were nearly unknown, they were reserved for beds, to create rooms within rooms and to keep you warm and safe from draughts at night – Tudor houses rarely had corridors, so people would wander through rooms to get to other spaces. Servants' quarters were a later invention, and bedrooms tended to be divided along gender lines, with male servants and children in one room and female servants and children in another. Almost nobody slept alone – Elizabeth I was an exception, but even she would have had a gentlewoman of the Bedchamber in the same room.

Tudor houses were very sparsely furnished compared to today,





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although wooden panels were often painted. Living areas would have only a table and benches. If there was a chair, it tended to be reserved for the owner of the house, from which we get the word 'chairman'.

*Continue along Watergate Street, under The Walls and crossing Nicholas Street. Entering Watergate St on your right you will see:*

John Woods, the oldest locksmith still working in Britain, dating from around 1595. We have an invoice from that date, for work done for the constable of the Castle. It cost 8d to repair the lock in the gate, but only 6d for a hammer for the use of the keeper.

pageantry, and the [Mystery Plays](#) would have been performed here until 1578; the [Midsummer Watch](#) lasted longer, but the Puritans were coming.

Travelling players performed here, watched by an audience in the Rows. Bull-baiting also took place on each 2<sup>nd</sup> October, sponsored by the Mayor as his 'farewell to office'.



*Follow Watergate Street until you reach Chester Cross.*

A pillory stood here, opposite the Pentice in which Robert Dudley, Elizabeth I's favourite, was dined by the mayor in 1584.

Entertainment frequently took place at the Cross, The Tudors delighted in



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### Tudor Chester – A Timeline

1485	Battle of Bosworth. Henry VII crowned King
1486	Henry VII grants a Charter to Chester, at least part in thanks for support at Bosworth from Sir John Savage and Lord Stanley
1495	Henry VII and his wife, Elizabeth of York, and mother, Margaret Beaufort, visit Chester
1499	Midsummer Watch begins
1499	Arthur, Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, visits Chester
1506	'Great Charter' granted by Henry VII
1507	Serious outbreak of <a href="#">sweating sickness</a> in Chester
1509	Henry VII dies, succeeded by Henry VIII
1517	Plague
1536-40	Dissolution of the Monasteries
1539	Henry Gee, mayor of Chester, introduces an annual horse race on the Roodee
1541	St Werburghs Abbey becomes the Cathedral; King's School is founded
1547	Henry VIII dies; succeeded by Edward VI. Chester sends a member of parliament for the first time
1550	The mayor of Chester, Edmund Gee, dies of the sweating sickness
1553	Edward VI dies, succeeded by Mary I
1555	George Marsh executed for heresy
1558	Mary I dies, succeeded by Elizabeth I
1561	Charter granted to Chester by Elizabeth I
1565	Great fire outside the Northgate
1574	Second charter granted by Elizabeth I, dispute between city and county palatine ends
1575	Mystery plays cease until 1951
1588	Spanish Armada defeated
1603	Elizabeth I dies; succeeded by James I





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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. If you can't find them all, and get frustrated, then you can ask for our Hints sheet by emailing [treasuretrails@chesteru3a.org.uk](mailto:treasuretrails@chesteru3a.org.uk)

Don't forget to let us know how you get on – particularly if you want us to produce more!

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

Two Tudor recipes:

'For to make one slender. Take fennel and seethe it in water, a very good quantity, and wring out the juice thereof when it is boiled. Drink it first and last [morning and night] and it shall swage\* either him or her.' – Thomas Dawson, *The Good Huswife's Jewell*, 1596

*\*Swaging is a term for shaping metal, reducing a cross-section.*

'To cause the hair to grow. Take two spoonfuls of olive oil, two spoonfuls of new honey, and an onion as large as a pigeon's egg. Pound them together in a stone mortar until they become an ointment, and anoint your head therewith night and morning. Wear a leather cap until the hair is grown. It is best to pound the onion well before it is added to the ointment.'



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