

A Carrot King (9)

At the end of Victoria Street you come to a road junction. Take a left hand turn passing along East Park Street.

Looking across the road you will see **Victoria House**. This was where the farmer Arthur Rickwood lived and from where he ran his farming business. In the late 1950's he was one of the largest producers of carrots in the UK. George VI is said to have referred to him as the "King of Carrots".

When he died he left one of his farms to the nation to be used as an experimental farm. This is located on the A142 towards Ely just outside Mepal. In addition to his farming activities Mr Rickwood also gave much time to public service and became High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire in 1961, when he was also awarded an MBE.



Emmanuel Church(10)

Moving along East Park Street the Emmanuel Church is on your left. It is a grade two listed building and was built in 1838 for the Congregationalists. It is made of brick but has Barnack stone dressings.

Within the church is a deep pool beneath the floor for baptism by full immersion (not available for viewing).

In 1990 the building was modernised and renamed the Emmanuel Church. This work was a prelude to the church becoming the place of worship for the Methodists, Baptists and the Congregationalists when the other chapels closed. The original organ was put into an auction and was bought by a wedding chapel based in Japan. How curious to think that something from Chatteris now resides in the Far East

Continue along the street to look at the parade of shops on the Market Hill/ Park Street corner. You can see an estate agent, beautician's and a convenience store. There is a tale to tell about this spot.

The Devil in Market Hill? (11)

Here was once a confectioners shop run by a gentleman called Mr Taylor. However some of the locals referred to him as "Satan" Taylor. What was his crime to merit such an alias? Was he a murderer or a robber? No, not quite as serious as that. In a time when Sunday trading was definitely not an accepted practice, he opened his shop on a Sunday!

Walk on towards the "Cross Keys" hotel.

Cross Keys Inn (12)

This one of the oldest buildings in Chatteris. It is said that the famous diarist Samuel Pepys stayed here on Sept 18th 1663 when on his journey back to Huntingdon after visiting his relatives in Parsons Drove.

Some people think he stayed at the Golden Lion in the High Street. (This has now been demolished).

Tantalisingly his diary does not mention the name of the inn he stayed at while he was here but he does record that he enjoyed telling some ghost stories to his fellow guests before they retired to bed. Let's hope they had a restful night's sleep.

Cross the road and retrace your steps back past the war memorial through the church graveyard to reach your starting point at the car park opposite the museum in Church Lane.

Visitors are welcome to see more about the history of Chatteris at the **museum** which is open on Saturday mornings and Tuesday or Thursday afternoons. You can find it in Church lane.

You can also view many photographs of Chatteris past and present on the website:

chatteris.ccan.co.uk.

Run by volunteers the website is a part of a county wide network of Community Archives. The aim is to preserve the history of the town for future generations to enjoy. If you have a photograph of Chatteris or Chatteris residents you can upload it to the website or contact the volunteers who will help to do it for you.

Chatteris Quirks and Curiosities Trail



Follow our trail and discover some of the hidden or unusual features in Chatteris.

Leaving the car park in Church Lane (1) take the path into the churchyard. On the old brick churchyard wall to your left, you can clearly see arches of the remains of Reverend Gathercole's burial chambers or catacombs. This would originally have been a wide double skinned wall with a walkway on the top leading over the path down into the vicarage gardens

He had the chambers built to house his body and that of some of his parishioners when the churchyard was full. He was a man of strong opinions and would perhaps be regarded these days as a bit of an eccentric. Somewhat surprising that a man in such an esteemed position in the community should find himself in Wisbech Gaol in 1875. His crime was listed in the gaol register as publishing libel...

(2) Take some time to study some of the grave stones as you pass through the graveyard. A lot of the curious carvings are quite worn. See if you can spot a cherub face in the middle of a pair of wings. This is known as the symbol of the winged soul. It represents the idea of the soul leaving the body at death to await God's judgement. Other symbols can be seen in the churchyard such as upside down torches which represent life being extinguished. A flaming torch the correct way up signified eternal life.

On one stone, a carving of an urn can be seen which represents mortality. On another is a crown, the symbol of heavenly reward.



Brave "Donkey" Clare (3)

Leaving the churchyard and heading towards the main street, Market Hill, you will see the war memorial in front of you. The memorial is made of Clipsham stone and at the top of the column are carvings of St Michael and also St George.

Pause to take a look and see if you can find the name Private George Clare VC. George lived in the town all his life and sang in the Church choir and in the local pubs. When the first world war broke out George became a stretcher bearer in the Medical Corps and bravely rescued many wounded while under severe enemy fire, ultimately sacrificing his own life.

When stretchers were not available he carried the wounded to safety on his back and earned the nickname "Donkey" Clare. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery. Clare Street in the town is named in his memory.

If you take a moment to explore inside St. Peter & St. Paul's church, you will find a stained glass window dedicated to George Clare.



A Deadly Monument (4)

Cross Market Hill and head towards the road beside the Cross Keys Inn called Station Street (once known as Cross Keys Lane).

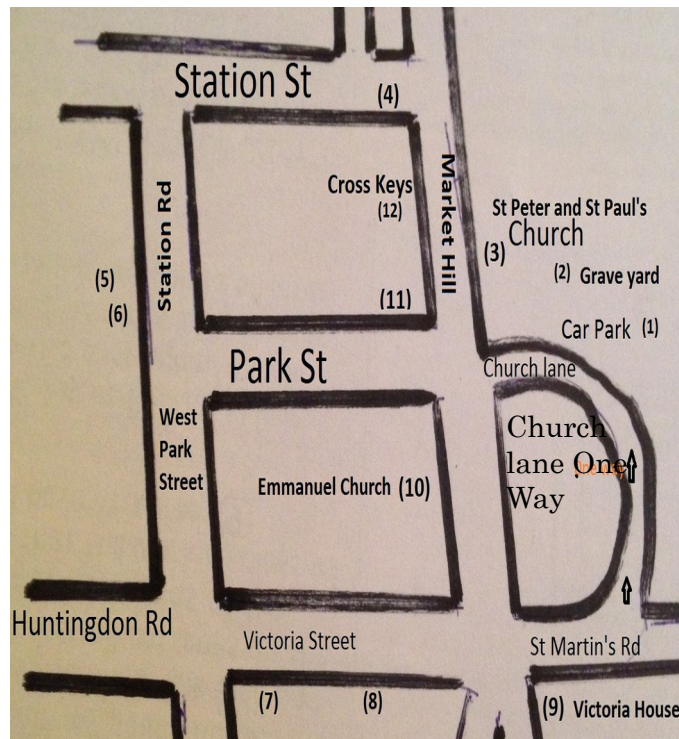
Prepare yourself for the grisly sight of the town's mortuary stone which is mounted on the wall of the old public conveniences next to the rear entrance to the Cross Keys Inn. This small building was the town mortuary. Perhaps in the days where transportation of bodies to ascertain cause of death could be an arduous task it was more convenient to carry out the job locally.

Maybe the slab was simply used for the preparation and embalming of bodies before burial. What is for sure is that many people hurry past the stone without even noticing it is there or thinking about its sombre history.

Greek Keys and Saw Teeth (5 and 6)

Travel further down Station Street and turn left into Station Road. Follow Station Road along to the junction with West Park Street. On your way admire the large houses on your right. No 14 is a late 18th Century house. Notice the saw-tooth eaves cornice. No.2 Station Rd has a Greek key design under the eaves. It is a mid 19th century house and Grade II listed.

Smaller cottages for the working class nestle between houses built for rich landowners. This is something you can observe in other streets in the town.



Timepiece Left behind (7)

Turn right at the junction head along West Park St. Walk past David Richards Printers. Turn left into Victoria St. Cross so you are on the South Side of Victoria St.

Opposite you, note the brick wall which then merges into an old stone wall. Stones of many shapes and sizes are used in the wall. These came from Chatteris Abbey, the buildings of which have long since been demolished.

The abbey was built around 980 AD for a community of nuns. In 1310 it suffered a fire and had to be rebuilt, finally being re-consecrated in 1352. Notice that some of the stones in the wall have pink patches. This pigmentation is caused when the stone is subject to high temperatures. Perhaps these stones were in the Abbey fire.

Now try to spot a small clock like a sun dial etched into the stone. This is actually a Mass dial. The builders, when constructing their wall, put the dial in upside down. This would have been the nuns' clock to tell the time of their religious services.

Chatteris was recycling years ago.(8)

Walk the length of Victoria Street looking out for two houses on the right hand side that seem a bit different from the rest.

These two are made from stone also from the abbey buildings. Victoria Street, constructed in the late 19th century, was built roughly in the middle of the area where the abbey was located. The Park Streets mark the Abbey boundary.

The abbey was dissolved by King Henry VIII in 1538, the nuns were sent out into the world with a small pension, their home was dismantled and the materials used in construction elsewhere in the locality. You can find out more about the abbey in Chatteris Museum.