

A thriving port, trading hub, frontier stronghold and religious centre, Chester was a powerful and wealthy city in the Middle Ages. Discover places, voices and people from the past in this tour of the city's medieval highlights.

Starting at the Grosvenor Museum, this tour is approx. 3.09 miles / 4.95 km long and takes approx. 60 mins (round trip).



This mayor's seal of 1467/8 was attached to the document 'Sealed articles and rules drawn up by masters and brethren of the crafts of Fletchers and Bowyers'. The civic seal shows the city's arms, and this document also reflects the importance of craft guilds making bows and arrows in this medieval frontier city.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This is one of a series of Discover Medieval Chester tour leaflets. The full set includes:

- Discover Medieval Chester
- Discover the Welsh Stories of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Churches of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Characters of Medieval Chester



Further resources, including interactive maps, medieval texts, images and artefacts, and downloadable multi-media tours, are available at the **Discover Medieval Chester** website: discover.medievalchester.ac.uk

Contact information:
info@discover.medievalchester.ac.uk



DISCOVER MEDIEVAL CHESTER

DISCOVER
MEDIEVAL CHESTER

THE HIGHLIGHTS



1. Castle

Built in 1070 by Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester, the castle was the earl's seat in the city and hosted visits from many powerful figures in the medieval period, including kings Edward I and Richard II. Edward I used the castle as an important base in his campaigns against Wales. Writing in the late 12th century, the Chester monk Lucian describes the castle as a 'nuisance' where 'pride and pomposity' are to be found.

2. St John's Church

Chester's scribes (scribes) congregated in St John's Lane, close to this important medieval church. In the late 1430s, Elys ap Gruff arrived from Wales, intending to further his education. However, things don't seem to have worked out as planned: he soon moved on, leaving behind debts to a scrivener for instruction and to a townsman for his board.

3. St Werburgh's

Founded as St Werburgh's Abbey in 1092, today's cathedral still houses the shrine of St Werburgh, the city's patron saint and daughter of Wulfhere, king of Mercia (657–74). Her relics were an important pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages. Henry Bradshaw's Life of St Werburgh (c. 1513) tells us that wealthy local citizens also gave many rich gifts to the abbey, while poor people gave 'candles, torches and towels' for the monks' use.

4. High Cross

At the point where the city's four main streets intersect, the High Cross was the site of the principal medieval marketplace. While some of the cross structure is modern in date, parts (such as the cross head) date to the fourteenth century. This was the symbolic centre of medieval Chester, where proclamations were made, a focus for civic purposes, and a point passed by the city's many religious processions.

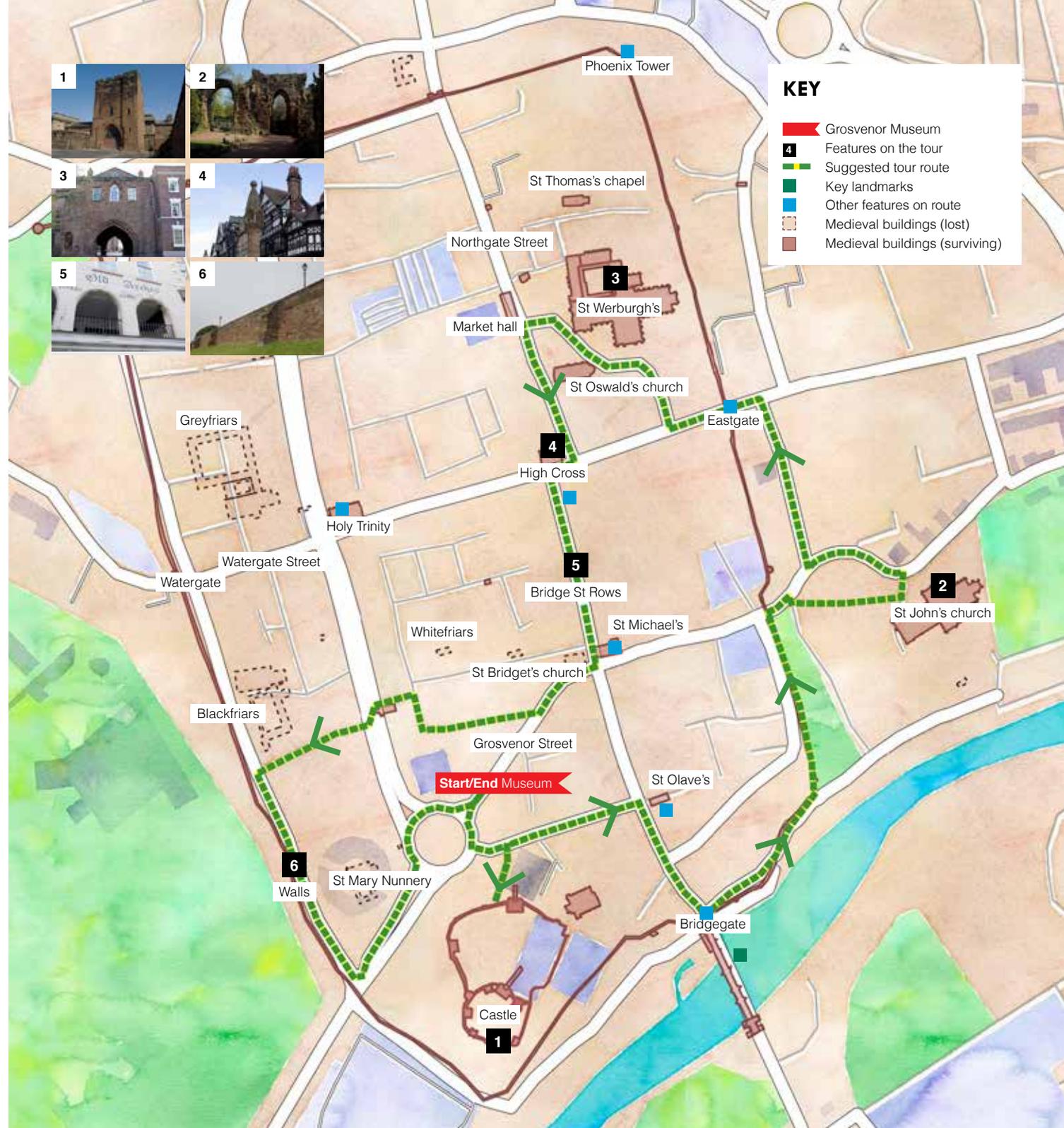
5. The Rows (Bridge Street)

Iconic and unique to Chester, the surviving Rows are externally modern in many cases, though excavations and structural analyses by archaeologists have shown many of the buildings that form The Rows are internally medieval in date, and recent research suggests their appearance in the city came during the end of the 13th century. They housed shops and homes, with the back yard used for cesspits and rubbish.

6. Walls

Writing in the 14th century, the monk of St Werburgh's, Ranulph Higden, marvels at the mighty structure of Chester's walls, and their history stretching back through Anglo-Saxon to Roman times:

'Stones are supported in walls like a deed of Hercules, and the earthwork is reinforced so it might stand more safely. Small Saxon stones stand on top of larger ones, and a hollow double vault lies beneath the ground.'



Chester was an important religious centre and pilgrimage destination in the Middle Ages. Follow in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims and local citizens and discover the city's churches, treasures and relics.

Starting at the Grosvenor Museum, this tour is approx. 3.29 miles / 5.27 km long and takes approx. 60 mins (round trip).



Found in the Lache area of Chester, this late 13th or early 14th century silver-gilt posy ring is inscribed 'AVE MARIA GRACIA PLENA' ('Hail Mary full of grace'), reflecting the popular piety of citizens in medieval Chester.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This is one of a series of **Discover Medieval Chester** tour leaflets. The full set includes:

- Discover Medieval Chester
- Discover the Welsh Stories of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Churches of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Characters of Medieval Chester



Further resources, including interactive maps, medieval texts, images and artefacts, and downloadable multi-media tours, are available at the **Discover Medieval Chester** website: discover.medievalchester.ac.uk

Contact information:
info@discover.medievalchester.ac.uk



DISCOVER THE CHURCHES OF MEDIEVAL CHESTER

DISCOVER
MEDIEVAL CHESTER

THE HIGHLIGHTS



1. St Mary on the Hill

At the top of the winding hill leading down to the River Dee, St Mary's was founded in the Norman period and the building you see today dates from the 14th and 15th century. The church originally served Chester castle, situated nearby. Its dedication reflects the importance of devotion to the Virgin Mary in medieval Christianity.

2. St Olave

The dedication of this small medieval church to St Olave reminds us of Chester's early medieval connections to Scandinavia. It may have originated as a private chapel for the large mansion next door. Margaret Hawarden lived here in the late 15th and early 16th century, a wealthy woman whose will shows that she owned furred gowns, girdles decorated with pearls and gold, and numerous gold rings. Today's church building dates to the 16th century.

3. St John's Church

With Anglo-Saxon origins, and much-altered in the nineteenth century, St John's Church was an important destination for Welsh pilgrims in the Middle Ages. The church housed relics of the 'True Cross', reputedly washed into Chester on the tide. Medieval Welsh poetry celebrates this 'living image' and its healing powers.

4. St Werburgh's

Founded as St Werburgh's Abbey in 1092, today's cathedral still houses the shrine of St Werburgh, the city's patron saint and daughter of Wulfhere, king of Mercia (657–74). Her relics were an important pilgrimage site in the Middle Ages. Henry Bradshaw's Life of St Werburgh (c. 1513) tells us that wealthy local citizens also gave many rich gifts to the abbey, while poor people gave 'candles, torches and towels' for the monks' use.

5. St Peter

Churches didn't only serve a spiritual function. Oaths were often sworn at St Peter's in the Middle Ages. In December 1467, William Preston, master of the ship Margaret of Chester, was called here to swear on the bible that the goods on his ship had not become wet because of any leak in the vessel, nor by any fault of the shipmen, but by the grace of God.

6. St Mary Nunnery

The Carol of the Nuns of Chester, composed and sung by the Benedictine nuns of St Mary's in the 15th century, embodies different facets of their lives as religious women. Based on a Latin hymn, each line is followed by the words of a lullaby, enabling the nuns to imagine themselves sharing Mary's maternal role as she rocks the baby Jesus. It begins: 'He who made the starry skies, lully Sleeping in a manger lies, by, by Ruler of the centuries, lully...'



KEY

- █ Grosvenor Museum
- 4 Features on the tour
- Suggested tour route
- Key landmarks
- Other features on route
- Medieval buildings (lost)
- Medieval buildings (surviving)

Surviving medieval documents and archaeological finds give us clues about the real people who lived and worked in Chester in the Middle Ages. Follow in the footsteps of these medieval characters and discover their stories.

Starting at the Grosvenor Museum, this tour is approx. 2.21 miles / 3.54 km long and takes approx. 45 mins (round trip).



This hand-stitched medieval shoe, found in Chester, could have been worn by a man or a woman. John Pynchware and his son made shoes in Chester in the 15th century — although perhaps their name suggests that the footwear wasn't always a good fit!

FURTHER INFORMATION

This is one of a series of **Discover Medieval Chester** tour leaflets. The full set includes:

- Discover Medieval Chester
- Discover the Welsh Stories of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Churches of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Characters of Medieval Chester



Further resources, including interactive maps, medieval texts, images and artefacts, and downloadable multi-media tours, are available at the **Discover Medieval Chester** website: discover.medievalchester.ac.uk

Contact information:
info@discover.medievalchester.ac.uk



DISCOVER THE CHARACTERS OF MEDIEVAL CHESTER

DISCOVER
MEDIEVAL CHESTER

THE HIGHLIGHTS



1. Castle: Richard Farrier

Richard was keeper of the king's horses at Chester in the summer of 1283. Records show that he purchased cut grass for 20 horses, including that of the queen, and also for 10 'great' horses arriving from Caernafon. He bought horseshoes, bridles, surcingles (straps) and ropes, as well as canvas, lights for the stables and horse-salve. Local townsmen are named as suppliers — the horse-salve came from St Werburgh's.

2. Bridge Street: John of Ewloe

From a Welsh migrant family, John of Ewloe rose to great success in Chester, and was elected mayor in 1405, even whilst the Welsh Glyndwr rebellion was still causing tensions with Wales, and was re-elected in the following four years. In August 1409, however, John was suspended from office for allegedly associating with the Welsh rebels and his loyalty was suspect

3. The Pentice: John Man

Here was the site of the Pentice, the administrative centre of the medieval city. John Man caused trouble for the civic authorities for 16 years, from 1474 when he was presented for assaulting an Irishman. Records show that he caused continual nuisance with his pigs, breaking down hedges to give the animals access to his neighbours' crofts and allowing them to roam the streets. Anti-social behaviour is not a modern invention!

4. Northgate Street: Alexander Stanney

Medieval markets and fairs were held in Northgate Street. The inventory of the merchant Alexander Stanney (dated 1477) lists many luxury commodities including different types of cloth, a dozen bonnets, silk ribbons, half a ream of writing paper, pepper, mace, cloves, aniseed and saffron.

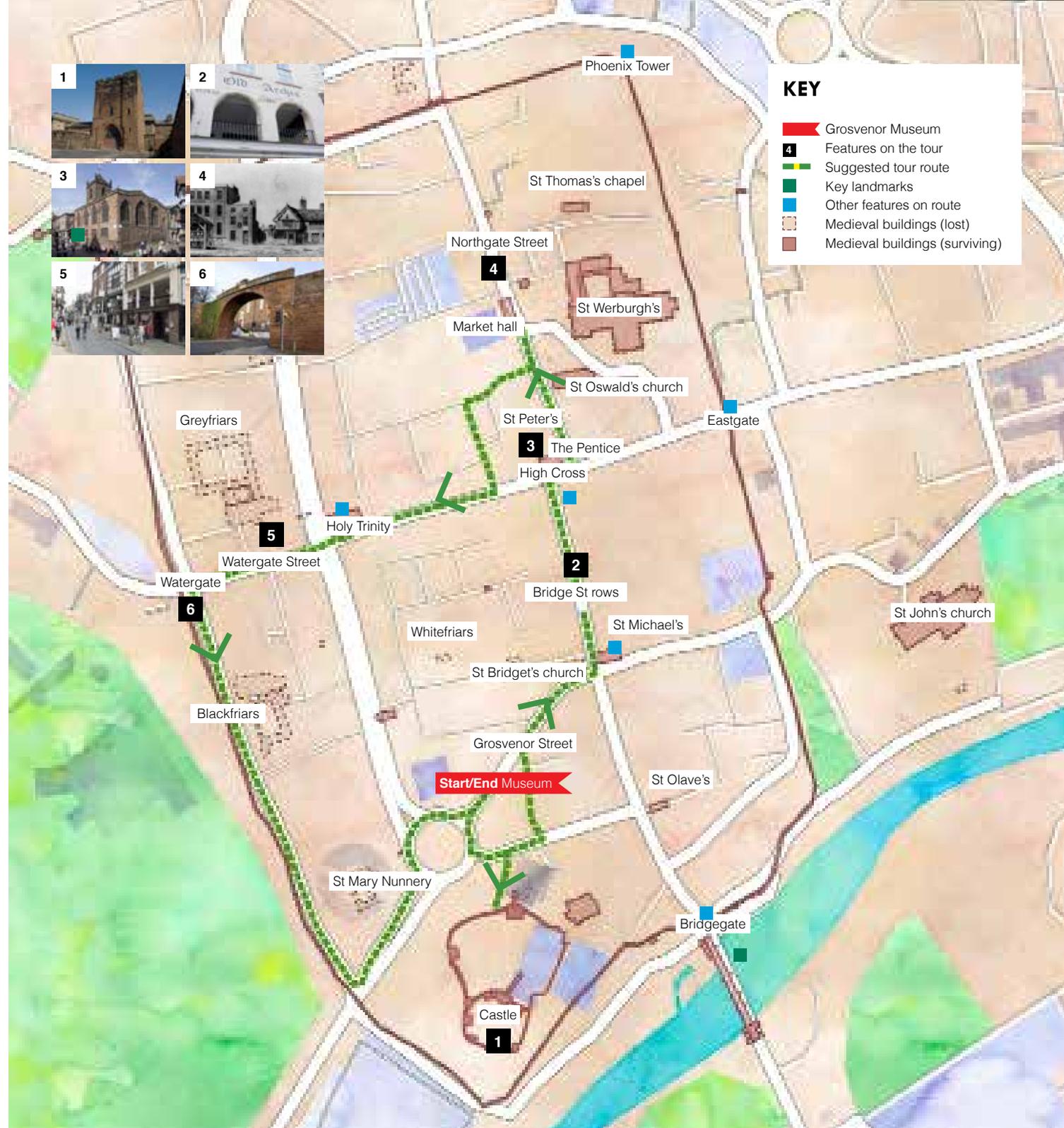
5. Watergate Street: Agnes Filene

Watergate Street's medieval cellars, used for storing ale and other goods, are still visible today. Agnes Filene was a successful businesswoman, who began as an ale-seller but later branched out into selling home-baked cakes and even wine. However, after her husband — and then her second husband — died, her fortunes changed. She had occasionally been involved in brawls with other alewives and had sometimes been in debt. But in January 1497 she was accused of brothel-keeping, and it seems that this was her main source of income from then on.

6. Watergate: Otiwell Corbet

Like many other immigrants from the Isle of Man, Manxman Otiwell Corbet lived in this area in the later 15th century. He was a successful trader with links to Ireland as well as the Isle of Man, but his prosperity also drew him into feuds and disputes. Otiwell was attacked in Watergate Street by another leading merchant in 1501. He defended himself with a 'skeyne', a type of knife used by Irish foot soldiers, and inflicted a fatal blow.

Map tiles (opposite) by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0.
Data by OpenStreetMap, under CC BY SA. Cover image: extract of William Smith's (1588) plan of Chester. British Library, Harley MS 1046, fol. 173



A frontier city on the border between England and Wales, medieval Chester was a place of cultural diversity and exchange — as well as tensions and conflicts. Follow in the footsteps of Chester's Welsh community and discover places, voices and people from the past.

Starting at the Grosvenor Museum, this tour is approx. 3.68 miles / 5.88 km, and takes approx. 75 minutes (round trip).



Pottery made in Ewloe near Buckley, Flintshire provided Chester with a wide variety of household objects in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The pots may have arrived in Chester by boat or possibly overland, entering the city over the bridge. These small jugs may have been used as measures or for storing small quantities of liquids.

FURTHER INFORMATION

This is one of a series of **Discover Medieval Chester** tour leaflets. The full set includes:

- Discover Medieval Chester
- Discover the Welsh Stories of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Churches of Medieval Chester
- Discover the Characters of Medieval Chester



Further resources, including interactive maps, medieval texts, images and artefacts, and downloadable multi-media tours, are available at the **Discover Medieval Chester** website: discover.medievalchester.ac.uk



DISCOVER THE WELSH STORIES OF MEDIEVAL CHESTER

DISCOVER
MEDIEVAL CHESTER

THE HIGHLIGHTS

1. Bridge Street

Bridge Street was the centre of much of the Welsh community in medieval Chester, including the successful gentleman John of Ewloe, who came from a Welsh migrant family. John was elected mayor in 1405, even whilst the Welsh Glyndŵr rebellion was still causing tensions with Wales, and re-elected in the following four years. In August 1409, however, John was temporarily suspended from office because he was allegedly associating with the rebels.

2. Dee Bridge

Dee Bridge connected Chester to its Welsh neighbours and was an important strategic link between England and North Wales in the Middle Ages. The arches that exist today date from the end of the fourteenth century. Introducing his home town of Chester, the twelfth-century monk Lucian notes that Cestrians are 'adjacent to the Welsh on one side and, through a long exchange of customs [are] for the most part similar'.

3. St John's Church

With Anglo-Saxon origins, and much-altered in the nineteenth century, St John's Church was an important destination for Welsh pilgrims in the Middle Ages. The church housed relics of the 'True Cross', reputedly washed into Chester on the tide. Medieval Welsh poetry celebrates this 'living image' and its healing powers.

4. Northgate

From the top of the Northgate, the hills of North Wales are visible on the horizon — a reminder of medieval tensions and conflicts. In his Life of St Werburge, Henry Bradshaw, a monk of St Werburgh's, tells how the saint's shrine protected the city at the Northgate from attacks by the Welsh 'and other barbaric nations'.

5. Water Tower

Known as the 'New Tower' in the Middle Ages, this was built in the fourteenth century to protect the busy medieval harbour, but due to silting of the river it stood on dry land by 1506. The architecture of the Tower shows similarities with castles built by Edward I in North Wales, suggesting a similar defensive and strategic purpose, and indicating the involvement of many of the same masons and builders.

6. Watergate Street

The medieval cellars which stored merchants' goods are still visible today. Welsh customers weren't always so polite about Chester goods — as in this 'Satire on Chester Beer' by Raff ap Robert:

'The flavour of weak ivy intoxicates the English,
The flavour of husks and pollution;
The flavour of the water from the town's three rivers,
The flavour of Chester's beer — a dog wouldn't touch it!'

Map tiles (opposite) by Stamen Design, under CC BY 3.0. Data by OpenStreetMap, under CC BY SA. Cover image: extract of William Smith's (1588) plan of Chester. British Library, Harley MS 1046, fol. 173

