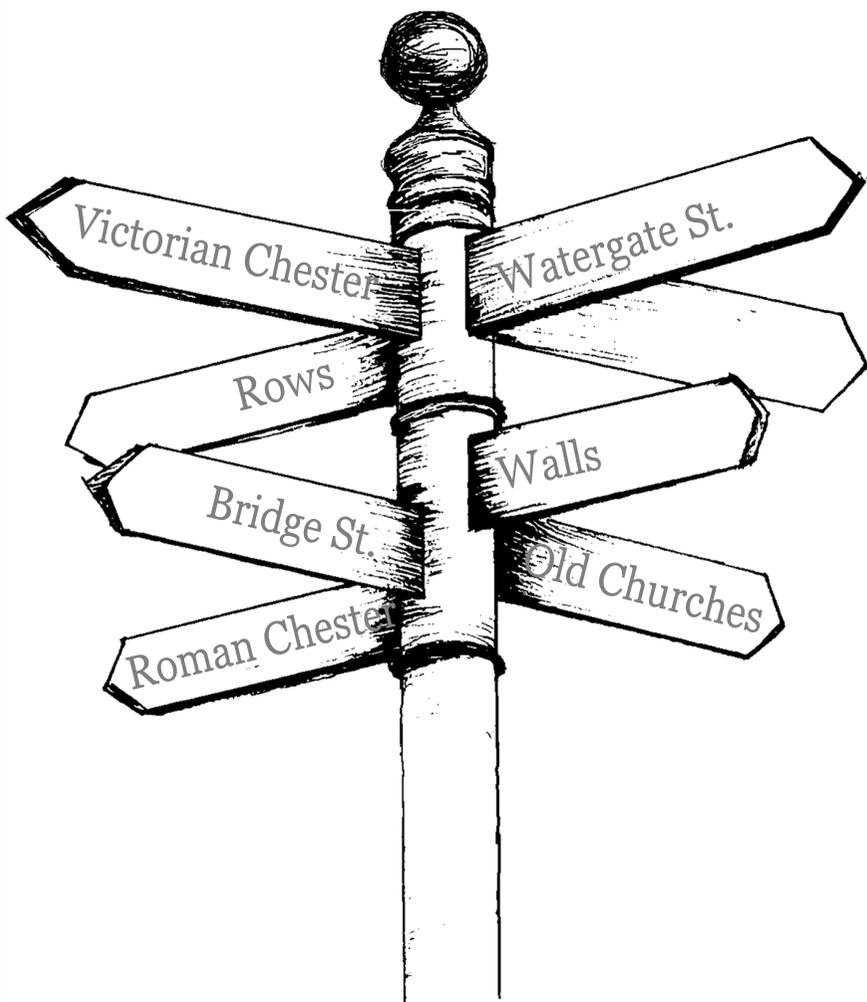


# Tudor Chester

Chester

**Our Guide**



“Our series of friendly Guides written and illustrated during lockdown by the team here at the Visitor Information Centre to give you a warm welcome to our much-loved City of Chester”.

Chester's history spans over 2000 years including Roman, Saxon, Norman, Medieval, Tudor, Stuart, Georgian and Victorian.

We will be focusing on Chester under the five Tudor monarchs reigning from 1485-1603. Our five Tudor monarchs are, Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I.

Picture the year is 1485, Richard III is King of England, and his reign has not been popular, Henry Tudor is on his way to England, determined to become the King of England.

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1485, a great battle was fought, the Battle of Bosworth, Leicestershire, between Richard III and Henry Tudor. Henry Tudor was victorious, making himself King Henry VII. This battle marked the end of the Wars of the Roses, Henry VII married Elizabeth of York, uniting the houses of York and Lancaster, the red rose, and the white rose together at last.

And so began the reign of the infamous dynasty, The Tudors.

## Our walk

Our walk is two miles, staying inside the walls of Chester city centre.

Our walk starts just outside the **Visitor Information Centre**, as you exit the visitor centre turn right and walk down towards the cross and then turn right onto Watergate Street, our first stop is Leche house.



**Leche house** is on the left-hand side of Watergate Street. It was first built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century which makes it medieval, but we have included it on our walk because of what is inside. There appears to be references and emblems to Queen Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry VIII, why or when these references were made exactly, we do not know.

Catherine of Aragon was married firstly to Prince Arthur, who was Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester. Arthur visited Chester on a state visit in 1499, there is no record of him visiting with Catherine in their short-lived marriage, whoever was the owner of Leche House at the time was an admirer. Arthur tragically died after 6 months of marriage, he died of sweating sickness

although he was unwell for long time before that. The heir was now Henry VII's youngest son, the future Henry VIII.

What is now in Leche house, is Catherine of Aragon's shield with the pomegranates, and Prince Arthur's feathers to symbolise that he is Prince of Wales. On the other side of the room, a Tudor Rose is prominent, and a shield containing a bull's head, this decoration is referring to Henry VIII.



Our next stop is **Bishops Lloyd Palace**, it was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but rebuilt in the 1600s. It used to be two medieval houses, but in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the two separate buildings were joined together to form one house. The house is most associated with George Lloyd, who was the Bishop of Chester from 1605 until 1615.

George was a student at the King's School, in 1594, and was elected to the 'divinity lectureship' in Chester Cathedral. He had a brother called David who was Mayor of Chester in 1593, there was another brother, Edward who was a mercer, also based in Chester.

Inside Bishop's Lloyd Palace, there are multiple intricate carvings depicting the serpent beguiling Eve to eat the apple, Cain killing Abel, and Abraham offering Isaac to the gods. Although, there is much more could list. The coats of arms of George Lloyd are on a centre panel with the date of his death.

Walk towards the bottom of Watergate Street, opposite Watergate Street you will see an iconic black and white building, this building is **Stanley Palace** originally named Warburton house. It was built in 1591 for Sir Peter Warburton.



Stanley Palace was built on the former site sandwiched in between Blackfriars and Greyfriars. Sir Peter was a local lawyer and Member of Parliament

Stanley Palace got its current name due to the next occupant, Sir Thomas Stanley who married Sir Peter's daughter Elizabeth.

The Stanley's are most famous for their influence in the Wars of the Roses, and they had influential posts and titles in Chester and Cheshire. The Stanley's did

very well in the Tudor period, mainly because one of the Stanley brothers was married to Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. Stanleys held key positions in Chester and surrounding areas of the Northwest.

Walk down past Stanley Palace and you will see the Watergate. Beyond the Watergate stood the old port. During the Medieval period, Chester was the principal port for Northwest England & North Wales and was second only to Bristol on Britain's West coast.

Turn left onto Nuns Road, and walk straight up, you are currently walking past what would have been **Blackfriars** and **Greyfriars**. The friaries were a source of wealth, and benefitted greatly from the monarch that was in power at the time.

Using the pedestrian crossing, you will see the **Castle**, it might not look as impressive today and most of the original castle is gone, however it used to be an imposing fortress. Chester Castle was your classic Norman motte and bailey castle. Chester Castle was built in 1070 and by the Tudor times it was falling into disrepair.

Prince Arthur, son of Henry VII, who was at the time Prince of Wales and Earl of Chester, visited Chester in 1499. He held court at Chester castle, and the city performed a play for him. This is Arthur's only recorded visit to Chester.

Walk past the crown courts and **Queen Victoria's statue** along to St Mary's on the Hill, via Castle Street, here lies **St Mary's Parish**, a very old church with a lot of history hidden inside. Many Tudor Births, Deaths and Marriages have been recorded at St Mary's. St Mary's was built in the twelfth century and the church was built

primarily for the Castle's needs, those needs were prayer and to seek comfort.

Inside are many people connected to Tudor patronage, for example the Stanleys and Brereton's.

Walk straight ahead past the Military Museum and turn right onto Castle Street. Once you have gotten down to the bottom of Castle Street, opposite you will see **St. Olave's** church and to the left the Brewery tap. At the



bottom of lower Bridge Street, is the Bridgegate, the original entrance to lower bridge street, as Grosvenor Street did not exist until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Turn left and walk past the **Old King's Head**, walk up Bridge Street for a few seconds, and stop, hopefully across the street you will see a black and white building, with a hairdresser's called Morgans now occupying the lower half, this building is ironically called **Tudor house** possibly built in 1503 but most likely built in 1603. It is classed as the oldest Tudor building in Chester.

Walk to the top of Lower Bridge Street, you are now standing beside the **Falcon Inn**, but this beautiful building used to be called Grosvenor house.

Richard Grosvenor bought the building for his family in 1602 as a town home. It was not until 40 years later it was extensively rebuilt and lavishly furnished.



Using the pedestrian crossing, cross over and walk towards Café Nero. Once you reach Café Nero, carry on walking up Bridge Street.

As you are walking up Bridge Street, try to imagine the Tudor buildings and the hustle and bustle of the citizens of Tudor Chester. A lot of the buildings on Bridge Street now date after the civil war. So many buildings were damaged during the civil war so not many authentic Tudor buildings survive.

Once you have got to the top of Bridge Street, you should be at **the Cross** and **St. Peters church**. You would not think standing here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that the cross was the site to bear or bull baiting! The cross has been in Chester since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. By 1603 the cross was gilded. During the civil war it was broken down by parliamentarians.



St Peter's church was also important in the Tudor period. The St Peter's we see today does date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century with some upkeep in later centuries. St. Peter's has had a clock since 1579, and it cost 2/6 ducats.

Following on from the cross, turn right and walk along **Eastgate Street**. During Tudor times, Eastgate street had housing for the poor paid by Thomas Greene in 1602.

Eastgate street was mainly used for accessing the pentice courts at the cross and watching any entertainments outside the cross. Eastgate street would also allow access to the markets that happened on Bridge Street.



When walking along Eastgate Street, I find it quite easy to imagine people walking up and down the streets, people up on the rows throwing out dirty water.

Before reaching the **Eastgate clock**, stop outside the Grosvenor shopping centre and opposite should be St. Werburgh Street.

Walk up St. Werburgh Street and follow the bend to the front of the **Cathedral** opposite the Town Hall. This gorgeous gothic building was not a cathedral until 1541, during the reign of Henry VIII. Chester Cathedral was originally a Benedictine Abbey built in 1092 by Hugh Lupus.



Chester Cathedral is also the place where George Marsh had his trial, the only man to be executed from Chester in the reign of Queen Mary I. George Marsh was a Protestant, and Mary was Catholic. George Marsh was for a time employed by King Edward VI, but he soon fell out of favour with Mary. George went North and started preaching Protestantism in the churches of Deane, Eccles and elsewhere in Lancashire.

In modern day times, Chester Cathedral hosts the Mystery Plays every five years. The original mystery plays were banned by Queen Elizabeth in the 1570s for being too Catholic.

We also have a whole range of self-guided walking tours inside the VIC centre!

Price £1



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