



## Chester u3a Walk, Tour, and Treasure Hunt 3



*Map of Chester as it was before the Siege, in 1581, by kind permission of Cheshire Archives*

This time we have produced a walk, an historical tour, or a treasure hunt around Chester. The whole trail is around 3 miles, and circular.

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

If you want to know more about Chester, particularly about the siege of Chester, then read the text in black, given after the directions.

(For those interested, we have included a brief timeline of the siege of Chester at the end).

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

We have included a map, and, for anyone who can't get out, or is unable to do the whole route, there is a time lapse video (compressed to under 11 minutes) here: <https://youtu.be/hLcM1UmDjjI>



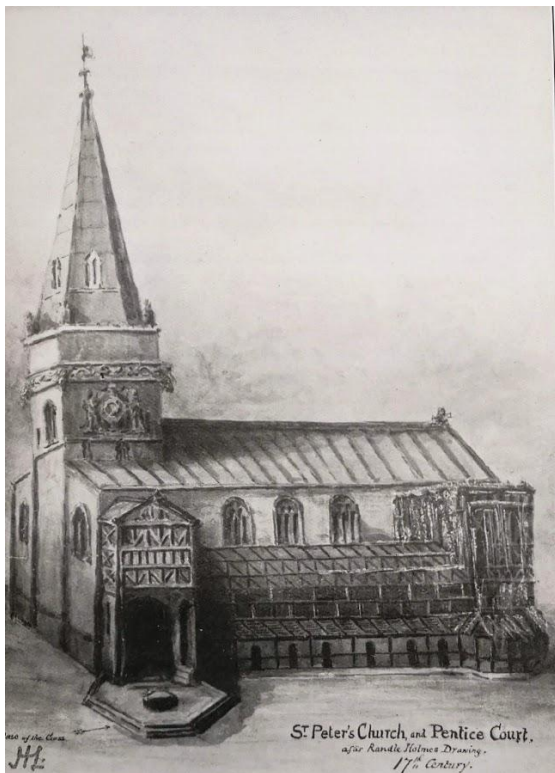
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## Directions

*Start the walk at The Cross.*

## The Cross

By the Cross was the Pentice, a two storey timber building extending along the south wall of St. Peter's Church. The upper floor contained civic offices, with shops below. Civic celebrations took place in the Pentice, and distinguished guests were entertained there by the Corporation: Charles I was feasted there in 1642, when he was trying to drum up support to elect a Royalist mayor.



*Face the Eastgate Clock and turn left into Northgate St. Walk towards the Cathedral along Northgate Street, turn right when you reach the Cathedral and walk down St Werburgh's Street until you can enter the Cathedral grounds.*

## The Cathedral

During the Civil war all the medieval stained glass (thought to be idolatrous) was smashed and replaced with plain by the Puritans. You can also see the memorial to Thomas Greene and his wives – they had their hands cut off because they were joined in prayer, regarded as a popish gesture. The altar rails in St Anselm's Chapel survived, perhaps because they were hidden.



*Walk through the Cathedral Grounds and exit onto Abbey St. Turn right down to the Walls and go up the curving stairs. At the top turn left, and follow The Walls to the tower where the Wall turns left. This is the Phoenix Tower.*

## King Charles' (or Phoenix) Tower

24<sup>th</sup> September 1645 - legend has it that King Charles watched the battle of Rowton Moor from this tower, but, whilst he may have started here, he retreated to the top of the Cathedral tower. Rowton Moor was a scattered





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fight, and the King probably saw defeated remnants of his forces straggling back to the city. He was so downcast by this that he gave the city governor, Lord Byron, permission to surrender if no help came within 20 days. Help did not arrive, but Chester held out until New Year 1646.

*'The sad disaster of this place the King (good man) beholds from the Phoenix Tower, from whence he removed to St Werburgh's steeple, where, as he was talking with a captain, a bullet from St John's gave him a salute, narrowly missing the King, hit the said captain in the head, who died in the place.'*

*Continue to walk along the walls. After the Cathedral grounds end, there is a Garden to your left.*

### Alexanders Garden



*Jeff Chadwick, one of the original excavators, dressed as a siege engineer*

c.1975 an excavation took place here expecting to find Roman remains, but instead uncovered Civil War trenches just inside the city walls, which brings into question how well

maintained the walls had been at this point.

*Follow the City Walls over the Northgate, until on the right you can see Morgan's Mount.*

### Morgan's Mount



Named after a gun emplacement commanded by a Captain Morgan. This was a vital area of the defences as the Parliamentarians had four cannons stationed opposite and gave the walls a severe pounding. At one point they mounted a massive assault and scaled the walls with ladders (don't forget, the canal was not yet there). The loyal troops pushed them off their ladders when they reached the top, encouraged by the Comte de St Pol, clad only in his shirt. There were only fortifications on the outside of the wall, so that the corpses of fallen soldiers could be rolled off the wall to the ground below, where they would not get in the way.

*Continue walking along The Walls crossing over Nicholas St and you will pass Pemberton's Parlour on your right.*



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### Goblin Tower (Pemberton's Parlour)



An assault was carried out here on the 9th Oct 1645, and a breach was made. This breach was difficult to scale because of the dry ditch under the wall. After two hours of fighting, which involved women filling up the breach with earth and mattresses, the attackers were repulsed. The city had 40 dead, including at least 8 women shot or slain, but Parliamentary losses were thought to be higher.

*Continue to follow The Walls past the Queens School on the left and the playing fields on the right. The Walls lead over The Watergate but come off the Walls to do a short detour up Watergate Street towards Chester.*

*The detour will allow you to see both buildings. Return to the Watergate after the detour.*

### Stanley Palace and Holy Trinity (the Guild Hall)

Both buildings were standing during the war, although Holy Trinity was rebuilt in the 1860s on top of the original vault.

Sir Thomas Stanley was a magistrate, and one of the few prominent Cestrians who supported Cromwell. He objected so much to the payment of King Charles' ship money that he threatened to shoot anyone who came to confiscate his goods.

Chester was the gateway to Ireland, from whence supplies could come, but the Parliamentarians blockaded the Irish sea in 1644, which meant Chester became less important to defend.



The Holy Trinity parish registers are missing from 1644, because 'the Clarke was putt out of towns for delinquensey, so no more is entered till 12 Mar 1645 – for all this time the city was in great siege'.



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## The Watergate



The main western gate. From 1642 there was a constant guard of four musketeers and four halberdiers. The city was so well prepared that, even before war broke out, they were training men to become a strong fighting force. In contrast the New Model Army was not set up until the winter of 1644-45.

*Follow the Walls past the racecourse*

## Nuns Road

From this point you can see across the racecourse and the river Dee to the site of Brewers Hall (now on the golf course), where the Parliamentarians set up camp with their largest cannon aimed directly at the Walls. Near to this point is the site of Nunnes Hall, town house of Sir William Brereton, local leader of the Parliamentary forces. He attempted to recruit from within the city walls and provoked a near-riot. Nunnes Hall was attacked and burnt

to the ground, forcing Sir William to leave Chester.

*Continue along Nuns Road until Black Friars on the left. Walk down Black Friars and turn right. Follow the main road down to the roundabout, past the HQ building, crossing in front of the Castle. Turn left. And first right into Castle Drive. Turn right into St Mary's Hill. Follow St Mary's Hill so that you can view the Church.*

## St Mary's on the Hill

The churchyard saw more burials during the Civil War than at any time since the great plague 50 years earlier. Both soldiers and civilians were buried here – civilians had to maintain the defences, and casualties included people like Ellen Smith, who was buried here next to her mother after being shot and killed by Parliamentarians.

Alice Thornton (nee Wandesforde) lived nearby in the summer of 1643, when she was 17 years old, and wrote a diary of her experiences under sporadic gunfire and of the occasion when she narrowly missed being hit by a cannon shot:

*'standing in a tirritt of my mother's house, having bin at praier in the first morning, we weare besett in the towne; and not hearing of it before, as I looked out at the window towards St. Marie's church, a cannon bullett flew soe nigh the place where I stood that the window sudainly shutt with such a force the whole tirritt shook; and it pleased God that I escaped without more harme, save*





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*that the waft took my breath from me for that present, and caused a great feare and trembling, not knowing from whence it came. I blesse and praise the Lord our God for this my perticuler preservation at this time.'*

What Alice described as "feare and trembling" is now termed 'autonomic arousal', an acute and involuntary reaction to extreme stress. It is a common symptom of combat stress reaction - 'CSR'. Alice's experience as a civilian under fire was enough to traumatise her, affecting her in much the same way as it can a soldier in the field.

From 370 years' distance, Alice also provides us with a clear explanation of the effects of air pressure caused by the close passing of the shot, slamming the window shutters in its passage and forcing the air out of her as 'the waft took my breath'. She also witnessed the effect of the speed of sound, the cannon shot having passed her window before she had heard the report of the gun: 'not hearing of it before'.



*Francis Gamul*

If you can go inside St Mary's there is an effigy of Francis Gamul, on his parents' tomb, and a memorial to Randle Holme II.

*Continue down St Mary's Hill then turn left into Shipgate Street. At the end of Shipgate Street turn left into Lower Bridge Street. Walk up Lower Bridge Street until you can see the Brewery Tap on your left and, across Castle Street, the King's Head.*



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### The Brewery Tap (Gamul House)



This was once the home of the Gamul (or Gamull, or Gammull) family – Francis Gamul had it extended to as a home for his new bride, Christian, daughter of Earl Grosvenor. She died in 1640 after bearing 10 children, two of whom survived to adulthood. The last time Charles I came to Chester, on the night before Rowton Moor, he dined and stayed overnight here with Francis, one of his most loyal supporters and a former mayor of Chester. Francis was later to be executed at Exeter, after supporting Charles II in an abortive uprising, and he is buried in St Mary's.

On the other side of Castle St is the King's Head, once the home of Randle Holme II, who was mayor in 1643-4, and who wrote accounts of the siege and drew some of the buildings.



1645 Dec 10<sup>th</sup> - 'Eleven huge granadoes like so many tumbling demi-phaetons threaten to set the city, if not the world, on fire. This was a terrible night indeed, our houses like so many split vessels crash their supporters and burst themselves in sunder through the very violence of these descending firebrands.'

*Turn around and walk back down Lower Bridge Street. Go through the Bridge Gate and turn left.*

### Bridge Gate

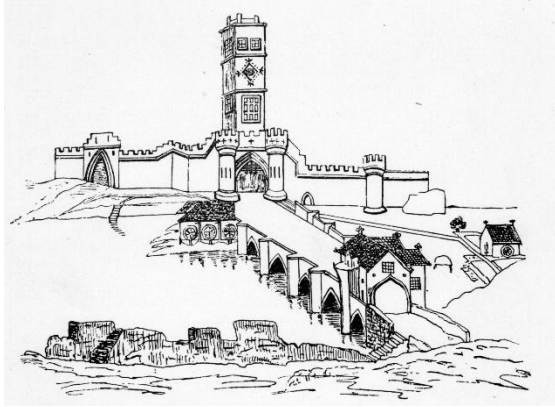
This was an important point in the defences, there was a water tower, to supply the city with water, and grain mills on the opposite bank, which were destroyed by Parliamentary artillery. On a little rise just over the bridge stood the Royal Mount, guarding the road for the Royalists.

It was over this bridge that King Charles rode, disconsolate after watching the defeat at Rowton Moor. Accompanied by a few guards, he



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made his way to the safety of North Wales, never again to return to Chester.



*The Old Dee Bridge by Randle Holme, as it looked before the Siege. Look for the water tower, corn mills, and Horse and Ship Gates*

Also, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1646, the Royalist garrison marched out to surrender, after piling arms (around 2,000 of them) and some 520 headpieces in the castle courtyard. They were led by their commander, Lord Byron.

*Walk along the Groves, between the Walls and the Dee until you reach the path up to the Roman Gardens.*

### The Groves

From here you can look upriver, to the entrance to the Meadows, where Parliamentary forces built a bridge of boats to be a supply line during the siege. The Royalists tried to burn the bridge with fire boats but miscalculated and the fuel burned out harmlessly. The only visible Parliamentary earthwork is also here, among the trees just past the school boathouse. Glance up at Barnaby's Tower, part of the Walls, on your left, and you can see where

cannonballs landed and made marks in the Walls.

*Turn left and walk uphill through the Roman Gardens.*

### Roman Gardens

There was a major breach in the walls here, you can see where it has been repaired. At noon on the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep 1645 guns began to fire from St John's, and made two or three holes in the upper part of the wall. Randle Holme II organised woolpacks and feather beds to stop the breach, but it continued to widen. At four in the afternoon the assault ceased, and for 4 tense hours the Royalists waited. At 8 o'clock the Parliamentarians, fortified with brandy and gunpowder, broke through, but each man was swiftly killed as they tried to force their way through the breach (partly because their scaling ladders were too short). As soon as night fell, the women of Chester came to repair the damage, putting their lives at risk to defend their city.







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Randle Holme 1645 Oct 10<sup>th</sup> – *'By this time our women are all on fire, striving through a gallant emulation to outdo our men and will make good our yielding walls or lose their lives. Seven are shot and three slain, yet they scorn to leave their undertaking and thus they continue for ten days apace. Our ladies likewise like so many exemplary goddesses create a matchless forwardness in the meaner sort by their dirty undertakings.'*

*Turn right as you leave the Roman Gardens, cross Souter's Lane, and walk along the footpath through the Amphitheatre. You will see St John's Church.*

### St John's Church



This was used as a barracks by the Parliamentarians, and also as a secure base for bombarding the Walls. A gun was mounted on the west tower, and the vibrations from firing this may well have contributed to its later collapse. The interior of the church suffered much damage,

but there is a later stained glass window portraying Charles I and a mace board showing the list of mayors. The sword and mace were stolen and sent to Cromwell.

In 2011 an archaeological excavation was carried out in Grosvenor Park, and several finds were made that are highly likely to be connected to the Siege, specifically Parliamentarian ammunition-making.



*A quantity of musket or pistol balls.*



*A casting sprue – shot towers had not yet been created, although the idea of dropping shot to make it round was known.*



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*A lead spout from a gunpowder flask*

The rector of St John's also tells me that, around 2012, the church had outside floodlighting put in, and, in the process, discovered the remains of a 25 year old male, who, at the time of his death was in good health, other than the musket ball lodged in his chest. It is presumed he was a Parliamentarian, shot by a sniper on the Walls.

*Walk back past the Amphitheatre along Little St John Street then cross the road into St John Street. Turn left into Foregate Street walking through the Eastgate, pausing under the clock.*

### Eastgate

Sep 20<sup>th</sup> 1645 – the Parliamentarians stormed through the outer defences of the city and through the eastern suburbs. Mayor Charles Walley was at his home outside the Walls and ran for the safety of the city. He left not only the sword and mace of office outside, but also his wife. The Royalists' attempt at a sally was thwarted by delay (in the panic, no-one could find the key to the sally post) and 6 men were killed or wounded.

During the siege the gate that stood here was filled with earth and dung to prevent Parliamentarians breaking through, and ditches were dug around the Walls. Unfortunately the ditches filled with stinking fetid water which seeped into the cellars of many houses, caused evil smells, and diseases such as cholera.

Looking out along Foregate St there would have been the ruins of houses destroyed by Royalists, to prevent their use as cover by the enemy.

*Continue walking along Eastgate Street. Adjacent to Caffè Nero look up into the rows at The Boot.*

### The Boot



Behind the bar is a glass-fronted box with a small stone ball. However, the description with it is misleading. According to local historian Dr Sam Chadwick the ball is too large ever to have been used in a musket – the recoil would have taken your arm off. Both this and another, discovered in Alexanders Garden, are reasonably likely to have been fired





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from a cannon in the Eastgate battery, and were probably made when the Parliamentarians were running out of iron.



*Continue to walk along Eastgate Street, turning left at the Cross, until you get to Bridge Street where you can see Cowper House (No. 12).*

### Thomas Cowper House



Thomas Cowper, ironmonger, was Chester mayor 1641-2, and one of the loyal citizens who refused to sign the surrender. His initials are above the door with a date of 1664,

implying that this property suffered damage and was rebuilt just after the siege.

There is a painted memorial board in St George's Chapel in St Peter's Church at the Cross, saying his body lies there (though the board was probably moved from elsewhere), and that he died in July 1671 aged 76 years, with 3 sons and 1 daughter surviving him.

Memorial boards were painted for those who had coats of arms, this one may well have been done by one of the Randle Holmes' family.



Inside St Peter's you can also see a medieval fresco and niche, almost certainly damaged by the Parliamentarians as idolatrous.

*Walk back to the Cross and turn left into Watergate Street.*

### Watergate Street

It was said that from the Eastgate to halfway down Watergate St no house



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escaped damage. Granadoes were shot over the Walls, setting timber houses alight.

Randle Holme, Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1645 – *‘Two houses in the Watergate Street skip joint from joint, and create an earthquake; the main posts jostle each other, while the frightened casements fly for fear, in a word, the whole fabric is a perfect chaos’*

*Walk down the street a short way to see No. 9.*

### God's Providence House

After the siege was over, the suffering of the citizens continued.

The population was around 8,000 at the beginning, and 6,000 at the end of the siege, but shortly afterwards plague broke out. Between 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1647 and 20<sup>th</sup> April 1648 no fewer than 2,070 people, already starved and worn down by the siege, died.

*"The Plague takes them very strangely, strikes them black of one side, then they run mad, some drowne themselves, others would kill themselves, they dye within a few hours, some run up and downe the streets in their shirts to the great horror of those in the Citty"*

God's Providence House is supposed to be so named because it was the only house in the city where all its occupants survived, although the house you can see today was constructed five years later. Slightly

further down the street the Leche House (no. 17) still stands as it would have done during the siege, as



does Bishop Lloyds' Palace.

*Return to the Cross to finish the route.*

### The Cross



The Cross was dismantled either by Parliamentarians trying to destroy it, or by Royalists trying to save it from destruction. Either way, it was hidden under the steps of St Peter's Church, and you can see the drawing of the Pentices at the start of this tour, which shows the base of the





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Cross after its' destruction, from which it re-emerged in about 1820. After a sojourn in gardens in Wales and Handbridge it was finally (mostly) reassembled and put back into position in 1975, with the pillar replaced.

So depopulated had Chester become after the Siege that a visitor remarked that grass was growing in the streets around the Cross.



*Chester Cross as it was before 1645, from a drawing by Randle Holme, by kind permission of Chester History and Heritage Centre*



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Pemberton's Parlour

Morgan's Mount

The Cross

The Watergate

Stanley Place

Nuns Road

St Mary's on the Hill



The Phoenix Tower

Alexanders Garden

The Cathedral

Eastgate

The Boot

God's Providence House

Cowper's House

St John's Church

The Roman Gardens

The Brewery Tap

The Bridgegate





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## Timeline of the Siege of Chester

Unfortunately the Royalists and Parliamentarians didn't organise all the Civil War sites neatly in date/walking order, so we thought we had better include a timeline. Equally, the two main sites connected with Prince Rupert don't appear on the route – Rocky Lane because it was too far a diversion, and the Old Bishops Palace (where he stayed when he was in Chester) because it was a. demolished and a new building constructed on the site, and b., the new building is now closed to the public.

Date	Events
Sep 1640	Orders for repairs to Chester defences. Francis Gamul made captain of city trained band.
Oct 1641	Outbreak of rebellion in Ireland
Dec 1641 - Feb 1642	Civil War becomes inevitable
Jun - Aug 1642	Sir William Brereton expelled from Chester after attempting to recruit for Parliament. Charles I raises royal banner at Nottingham - Civil War begins
Sep - Nov 1642	Chester repairs defences, Charles I in Chester to secure pro-Royalist mayor election. 300 men trained and armed with muskets in Chester. City walls guarded by armed soldiers.
Dec 1642 - Feb 1643	First phase lasted from January 1643 to March 1644, during which time Chester was mostly out of direct conflict, though Sir William Brereton had taken much of the county for Parliament. £500 levied and spent on defences to protect suburbs.
Mar - May 1643	Mud outworks built around north and east suburbs.
Jun - Aug 1643	Conscription for men aged 16-60 introduced. First attack on Chester by Brereton repulsed. Two Royalist youths killed on city walls.
Sep - Nov 1643	Chester asks King for more money to spend on defences. Byron appointed 'Field Marshal General of North Wales and those parts'
Dec - Feb 1644	£100 of Chester City Plate melted down to pay for the war. Prince Rupert appointed captain-general of Wales and the Marches
Mar - May 1644	Defences shortened and improved by Prince Rupert.
Jun - Aug 1644	Rupert takes Liverpool; Royalist defeat at Marston Moor causes Royalists to concentrate on the South - Chester left to fight alone. Defences strengthened.
Sep - Nov 1644	Byron defeated at Montgomery; Brereton begins to close in on Chester, establishing garrisons at Tarvin, Hoole, Christleton and Puddington.
Dec 1644 - Feb 1645	Dec - siege of Chester begins. Failed parliamentary attack on the northern outworks in January 1645; Royalists unsuccessfully attack Parliamentary headquarters at Christleton; siege partially relieved by Prince Maurice on 19 February. Chester reinforced further.
Mar - May 1645	13th Mar Prince Maurice leaves Chester, siege resumed; 15th Mar Princes Rupert and Maurice relieve Chester; 16th May Brereton resumes siege
Jun - Aug 1645	Chester under siege.
Sep - Nov 1645	Eastern suburbs of Chester taken by parliamentarians



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Date	Events
	20 Sep, Mayor forced to flee his home into the city centre; 22 Sep breach in wall near Newgate - defended and rebuilt; 23 Sep Charles enters Chester; 24 Sep Battle of Rowton Moor, Parliamentarians victorious; 25 Sep Charles leaves Chester; 9 Oct Second major Parliamentary assault on the city repulsed, more taxes levied to pay for war; 10 Nov Parliamentarians begin mortar bombardment; 25 Nov last major Royalist sally repulsed.
Dec 1645 - Feb 1646	10 Dec Major damage from mortar bombardment; Brereton asks Chester to surrender - rejected; Byron surveys food stocks in Chester - increasing protests from citizens; water supplies restricted; Surrender on 3 February 1646
Mar - May 1646	At the end of the siege approx. 6,000 civilians in the city.
Sep - Nov 1646	Royalists purged from the city administration.
Jun 1647 - Aug 1648	Plague struck in Jun 1647 causing the death of more than 2,000 citizens

### 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)

You may also be able to see them (but we don't guarantee it!) on the video here: [Treasure Trail Video](#)

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!***





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