

A WALK AROUND HISTORIC CHEDDAR

This circular walk is approximately 2 miles in length. It can be started from any of the numbered sites and followed in a clockwise direction. It is relatively level except for the short steep walk down Water Lane into the Gorge (see map).

1. St. Andrews Church –A church has been present on this site from at least the 11thC, but the earliest part of the present building is the chancel (1250-1350 AD). The Perpendicular nave and beautiful Mendip style tower were built between 1350-1450. The Church has many features of local and regional importance and a detailed guide can be purchased inside the Church.

2. Church House –The present Church House opened in 1895, is dedicated to a former vicar of St. Andrew's, Reverend a' Court Beadon. Building on this corner replaced two older cottages on Church St.

3. Church Farm – The old house directly to the east of the Church dates from the late 16thC. At that time, it was a thatched Church House used for parish and guild meetings, and other social activities. From the 17thC, it was the nucleus of a major dairy farm owned by the Rogers family.

4. The Vicarage – Built between 1836 and 1839, the current house replaced an earlier 16thC vicarage. Under the Vicarage garden are the remains of a Roman villa possibly part of more extensive Roman settlement in Cheddar.

5. Parsons Pen – The Church House car park and adjacent houses stand on the site of the old Tithe Barn and the 'pens' used for holding animals that were part of the Tithes (taxes) due to the Vicar from parishioners.

At the far end of Parsons Pen roadway, there is a footpath. Turn right, the King's of Wessex Academy schoolgrounds are on your left to which there is no public access. However sites 6,7, 8 on the map can be viewed through the mesh fence towards the end of the footpath.

6. The site of the Cheddar Saxon/Medieval Palaces - Built between 941 – 1200AD and excavated in the 1960's, the site was a Royal centre for hunting on Mendip. The Kings Edmund, Edgar, Henry I and II are known to have stayed here. It was also used as a centre for the regional Saxon Parliament (Witan). The concrete markers in front of the school indicate post holes once supporting the palace roofs.

7. St. Columbanus chapel ruins –The chapel is the third of those used to serve the Palaces. The present ruins date from 1321 AD and are dedicated to the Irish saint, Columbanus.

Leaving the Academy driveway on your left, adjacent to the school is:

8. Hanam Manor House –The roof of this substantial house has been tree ring dated to 1341-42 AD. It was owned by the De Hanam family and later purchased by the De Cheddre family, whose tombs are in St. Andrews church.

On the opposite side of the road what appears to be a verge area (paved, grass, trees) is:

9. The site of Cheddar Cattle market until WW1.

Prior to this, two fairs were held; St. George (April 23rd) and St. Luke (Oct. 18th). Both were granted by Henry III in 1218 AD. This strip remains as common land today.

To your right is Bath Street. Proceed along the pavement. On your right is:

10. The Post Office –was established in this building by the Hill family in the late 1840s. The family were involved with the post office for almost 100yrs. Today, it still remains a great service to the community.

Continuing along Bath Street, passing the NatWest Bank, cross the road using the pedestrian crossing. To your right is:

11. The Bath Arms Hotel – This 1930s building replaced an old coaching inn called ‘The George’. Dating from at least the 18th C, it stood on the roadside in front of the present building. On the entrance pier closest to the Cross is a plaque commemorating Sarah Comer, an 18thC benefactor of children’s education and welfare in Cheddar.

Turn left from the crossing, walk to the corner by Lloyds Bank and turn right into Lower North Street. This is one of the major medieval thoroughfares into Cheddar and contains interesting 18thC houses interspersed with Victorian and 20th C rebuilding. Of interest as you proceed up the road are:

12. Baptist Church – A small chapel was opened on this site in 1831. The building was greatly extended in the 1840s- 1860s providing a gallery and new school rooms.

13. Hannah More Cottage (in Venn’s Close) -

Hannah and Patty More were philanthropists who pioneered education in the village. This building was leased by Hannah More from a farmer in 1789 and opened as a public school house in the same year. The village school was held in the long room which was formerly an ox-house. The cottage end was occupied by the headmistress.

14. Old National School (now Hannah More Court) –

This was built in 1837 to expand and develop educational facilities in the village. Originally accommodating 140 children, it served as one of the principal schools in the village until it was relocated in 1964/65 and became the Kings of Wessex School/ Academy. The old building is now converted for residential use. In the front boundary wall is a plaque commemorating Dr R. Statham a local benefactor.

15. Norvill House and Cottage (opposite) – The

Norvill family were important landowners in Cheddar from the 16th C until the Victorian period. Both properties were part of the Norvill estate; the cottage dates from the 17th C and the house from the early 19th C.

Walk to the intersection of Lower North Street and Tweentown, cross over into Upper North Street. On the left corner stands:

16. Our Lady Queen of Apostles Catholic Church -

This stands on the site of a substantial medieval farmstead. Building was started in 1965 and prior to this, services were held in the small cottage (Old Chapel Cottage) just to the west.

Upper and Lower North Street were at one time continuous and formed part of the principal medieval route into Cheddar from the West.

17. North Street Chapel – This is an evangelical Christian place of worship in a reused 19th C building.

At the junction of Upper North Street, Kent Street and Silver Street is:

18. The Kings Head Inn –Probably the oldest surviving inn building in Cheddar, of 17thC date. It has fine beams and framed ceiling. It is strategically built at the top of North St and was probably a focus for the 17thC settlement in Kent Street.

Turn into Kent Street. Along the south side is a collection of picturesque 16th, 17th and 18th C farm houses, each with unique features.

19. Chestnut Farm –This 17thC farmhouse is still an active farm and retains its farm buildings.

20. Oak House –An attractive thatched yeoman’s house, it has 16thC origins.

21. Old Bakehouse – A renovated farm house with 18thC origins, it is on an older site from which it takes its name.

22. Jewell Croft – A small farm house which is probably 17thC and in original condition.

At the intersection with Hannay Rd, return back along Kent Street towards the Kings Head. On your left is:

23. Hobbswell House – An early 19thC house. This was the home of the surgeon, John Lawrence from at least 1841.

From the Kings Head, walk along Silver Street. The first few buildings once housed a number of small shops/businesses as this was a bustling area of the old village in the 19th-early 20thC.

24. Gardeners Arms Inn – This comprises three old cottages, the central one is likely 17thC and has a fine framed ceiling. Originally a farmstead an alehouse was incorporated in early 19thC and market gardening added late 19th C.

Continue along Silver Street to the junction with Tuttors Hill.

25. Tuttors Hill corner – This is an important junction of old routes. Tuttors Hill was a medieval route to the common land on Cheddar Hill, and there are several houses of medieval provenance along this steep road.

*At the Tuttors Hill corner, the road bears right for a short distance. **Stop** at the next bend in the road. A steep narrow downhill path leading to the Gorge starts at this point. This is Water Lane. Walk down*

this to The Bays and bear left towards the White Hart Inn.

26. White Hart Inn area – The inn has 18thC origins as an alehouse serving what was then an industrialised area of the village. The large building opposite was a shirt manufactory in 1880 and there were at least two grist mills further upstream as well as quarrying and lime burning operations. The lane past the White Hart called Daghole has a number of gift shops which were formerly cottages housing industrial workers.

From the White Hart, walk down the Bays alongside the millpond, to the bridge at the end of the road. The area between the bridge and the millpond was:

27. Former Paper Mill area –this is the site of a former paper mill built in 1805, and converted to shirt/clothing manufacture by 1880.

Turn right into Cliff Street towards:

28. The Riverside Inn and Restaurant – Formerly called “The Butchers Arms”, it is another establishment likely to have started life as an ancient farm with beer retailing incorporated during the mid 19th C.

The Cliff street car park and public conveniences are on your left. Walking down Cliff Street, you are entering an area which was mostly farmland and orchards with intermittent farmsteads up until the late 1880s when there was considerable late Victorian development.

29. Chestnut Farm – This is an example of an old farmstead enclosed by modern development. A date stone of 1778 and initials H.S., can be seen in the gable end facing the road, recording that Henry Starr, a yeoman farmer was owner/occupier at this date.

30. Methodist Church – A small chapel started on this site in 1800. A new chapel was erected on the same site in 1853. In 1897, a large architect designed church was added to the existing chapel to produce the present building.

Walk along Cliff Street, turn left at the junction with Redcliff Street onto:

31. Redcliff Street Bridge – This is an old and important river crossing which was originally negotiated by a ford and then by successive bridges of wooden and stone construction. The current stone bridge has an 1822 date stone inserted above the central span with a number of letters and markings which have yet to be interpreted. This can be seen from the footbridge.

Upstream 200 yards or so is yet another medieval grist mill site which was operating up to the early 20th C. Downstream is another ancient mill site which was developed as a paper mill by 1825. This site was upgraded over the next fifty years into a modern papermaking operation producing fine quality paper until its closure in 1900. The site underwent various changes in the 20th C including the production of charabanc bodies, pottery and a concrete works. It has now entirely residential development.

Returning to the intersection of Cliff and Union Streets, directly ahead of you is:

32. Magnolia House – This three storey building was home to a private young ladies boarding school, opened in the 1840s and run by the four Mason sisters until the 1880s. At one time this building housed the Cheddar telephone exchange. The unusually ornate building opposite (Swiss Villas), was used as additional accommodation for the students and also visiting Methodist ministers.

Walk to the medieval market cross.

33. Market Cross – The central part is a 15th C preaching cross and the hexagonal surround of arches was built in the 1600s (later renewed in 1834) for a covered market. It was also the site of the parish stocks.

34. Market Cross Area – From the Market Cross looking east, the site now occupied by the Homestead residential care home, was a malting house and brewery in the 19thC owned by the Budgett family. This was replaced by a non-conformist chapel and hall between 1890 and 1920, and a cinema in 1939.

The two adjacent houses (Arundel & Sungate) were built between 1790 and 1820 by the Budgett family.

The building opposite the Market Cross with a clock in the façade was built in 1858 as a Literary and Scientific Institute. The upstairs area was used as a library and reading room.

As you walk down Church Street, to the right is:

35. The Court House – This is a Victorian house built in the 1850s which replaced an earlier house previously the courthouse for the Dean and Chapter of Wells.

Continuing down Church Street, St Andrew's Church is ahead of you. This is Site Number 1 on the circular walk.

Information for this leaflet has been provided by members of the Cheddar Valley U3A Local History and Archaeology Group, June 2013