

WALK AROUND HISTORIC CHEDDAR

(available as download from www.cheddarvillage.org.uk)



Cover illustration courtesy Jackie Skidmore

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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).

(Numbers refer to Map on centre pages)

After visiting the interior of St. Andrew's Church walk around the outside from which The Church House, Church Farm and the Vicarage can be seen. Then walk into Parsons Pen.

1. St. Andrew's 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.

Walk down Parsons Pen to its end and onto the footpath through the wall where it meets the footpath/cycle path around the King’s of Wessex Academy playing fields. Turn right onto the path but watch out for cyclists. Continue along this path with the Academy grounds on your left. At the front of the Academy are the sites of the Cheddar Saxon/Medieval Palaces and the ruins of the Medieval chapel of St Columbanus (no public access without permission).

6. The site of the Cheddar Saxon/Medieval Palaces

- Built between 941 – 1200AD and excavated in the 1960s, 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.

At the end of the footpath turn left onto the Station Road footpath, cross the Academy driveway and on your left 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 memorial is in St. Andrews church.

Cross Station Road using the pedestrian crossing and turn right towards the Lloyd's Bank Building. You are now walking through the original cattle market area and "green" of Cheddar:

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.

Stop at the corner of Lower North Street just before the Bank. Looking ahead is the 18th and 19th century facade of the old Cheddar high street (now Bath Street) including two interesting buildings, the Old Post Office and the Bath Arms. Feel free to visit these and then retrace your steps to Lower North Street corner:

10. The Old Post Office – This building was Cheddar's post office from the 1840s until 2015. It was associated with the Hill family for over 100 years.

11. The Bath Arms Hotel – This 1930s building replaced an old coaching inn called 'The George'. Dating from at least the 18thC, 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 into Lower North Street and walk up to its intersection with Tweentown. North Street was the major medieval route into Cheddar from the north and west. Along the way are interesting 17th and 18th century houses interspersed with some large Victorian buildings including the Baptist Church, Hannah More Cottage and garden, the Old National School and the cottages around Norville Lane:

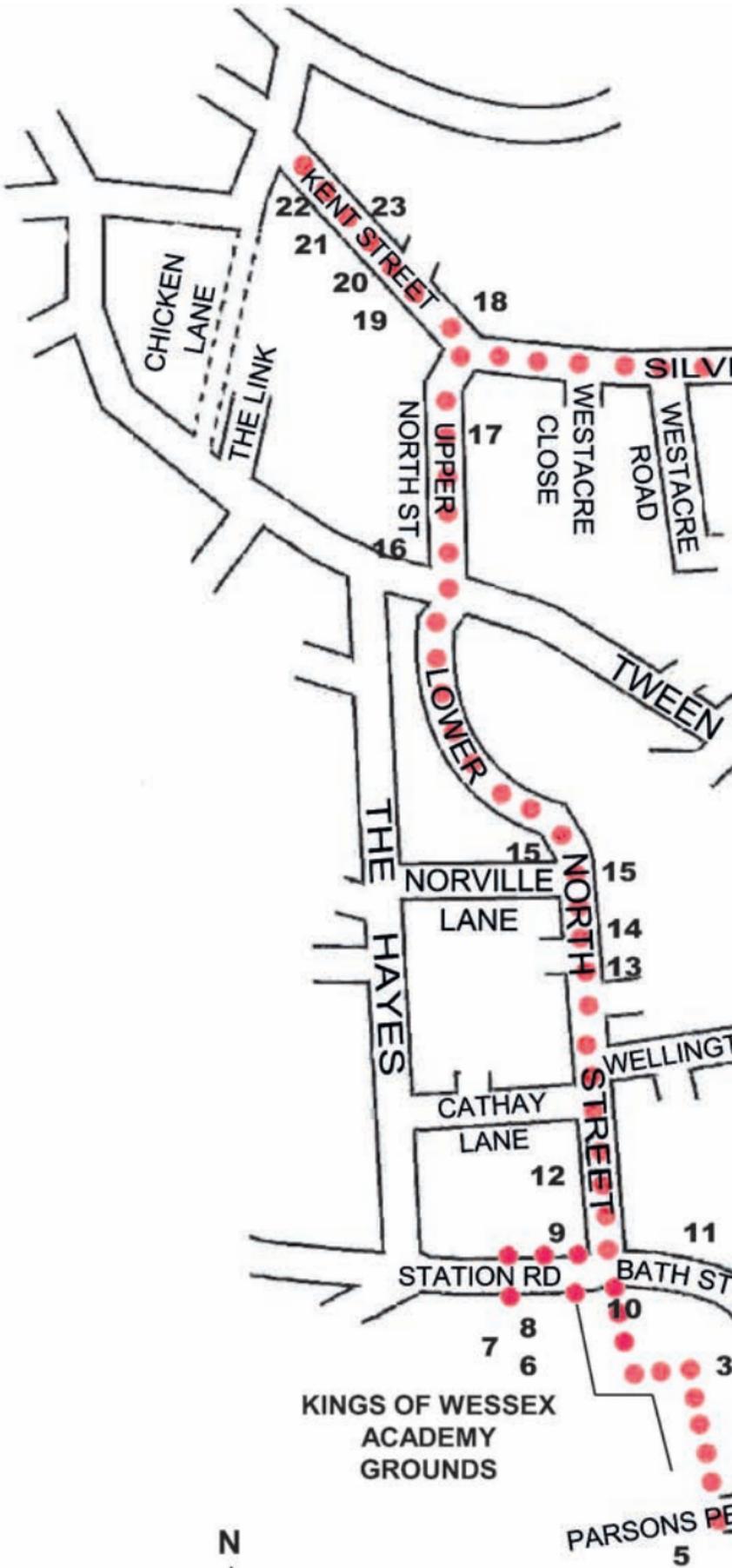
12. Baptist Church – A small chapel was opened on this site in 1831. The building was greatly extended in the 1840s- 1860s providing a gallery and new school rooms.

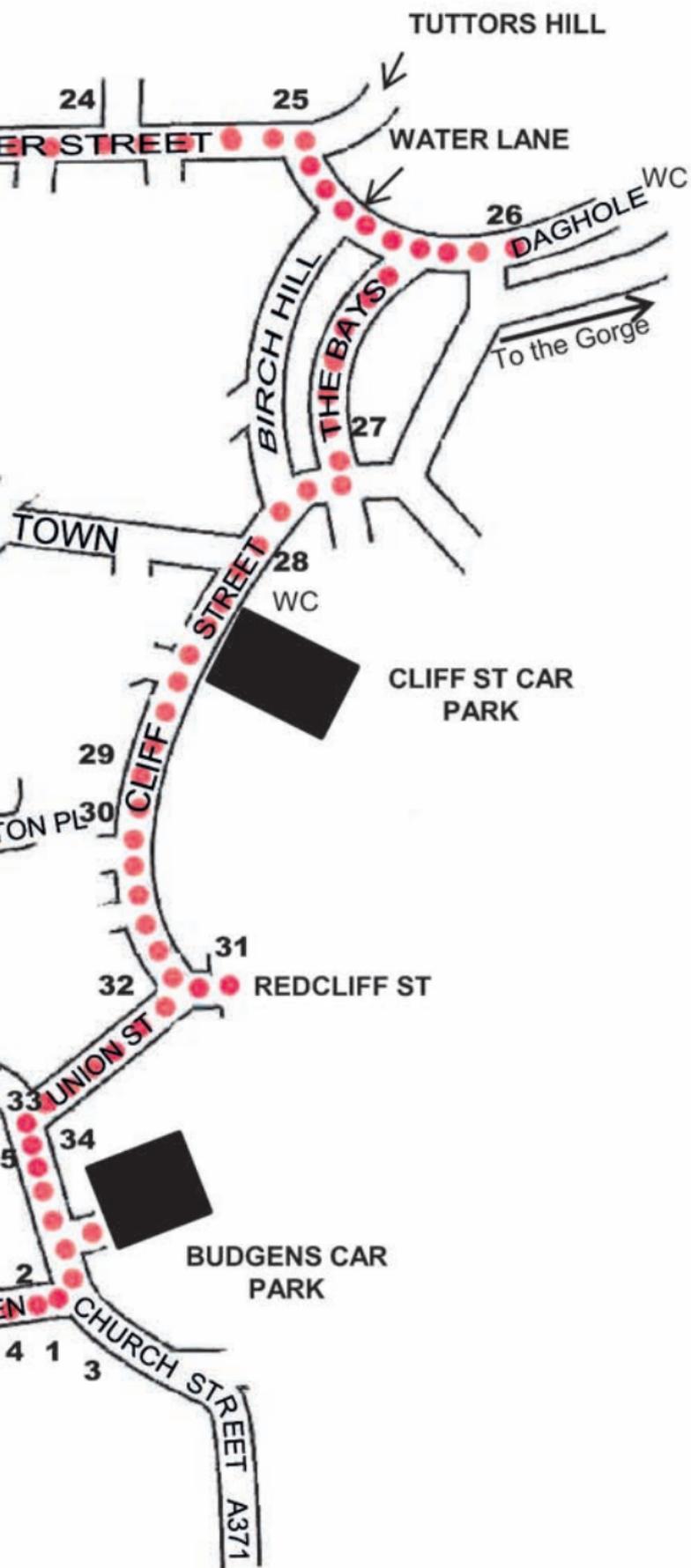
13. Hannah More Cottage (in Venn's Close) - Hannah and Patty More were philanthropists who pioneered education in the village. This building was leased by Hannah More from a farmer in 1789 and opened as a public school house in the same year. A plaque on the cottage wall commemorates this. The village school was held in the long room which was formerly an ox-house. The cottage end was occupied by the headteacher.

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. Norville House and Cottage (opposite) – The 17th century cottage and late 18th century house are likely to have been built on the footprints of their medieval predecessors. The Norville family (yeoman farmers) occupied Norville House during the 18th century while the cottage was owned by the Durban family at the same time.

At the top of Lower North Street, cross Tweentown with care and follow Upper North Street. This street becomes increasingly narrow and lined with older cottages. There are also two more churches/chapels reflecting the varied religious background of the village. At the top of Upper North Street is the 17th century King's Head pub:





16. Our Lady Queen of Apostles Catholic Church -

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

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

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 left into Kent Street the original way to/from Axbridge and walk to its end. Along the way is a collection of picturesque 16th, 17th and 18th century farmhouses each with unique features. At the intersection with Hannay Road, retrace your steps to the King's Head.

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.

23. Hobbswell House – A late 18th-early 19thC house. This was the home of the surgeon, John Lawrence from at least 1841.

From the Kings Head continue straight ahead along Silver Street which was the old approach to the Gorge from the west. The first buildings you pass were part of a bustling hamlet with 18th and 19th century shops and a smithy. After leaving the hamlet, Silver Street originally ran through rich open fields. A reminder of those days is the 17th century Gardener's Arms.

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 19thC.

Continue along Silver Street to the junction with Tuttors Hill Road on your left.

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.

Walk a short distance to the end of Silver Street. At the right angled bend there is a seat overlooking the Gorge from which there are excellent views. Just below the seat is a narrow steep path (Water Lane). Walk down and bear left to the 18th century 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 back past the entrance to Water Lane and along The Bays by the millpond to the bridge over the Cheddar Yeo river. Here the mill pond still feeds through the sluices into the ruins of another water mill:

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.

At the bridge turn right onto Cliff Street to the Riverside Inn and Restaurant:

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 19thC.

Next door on the left is the Cliff Street pay -and- display car park. Continue to walk down Cliff Street which was mostly fields, orchards and farmhouses until the Victorian period when the land was subdivided for residential development and the Methodist church was built.

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.

At the junction of Cliff and Redcliff Streets turn left to walk over Bray's Bridge and back. The river here was originally negotiated by a ford and later used as a cart washing site:

31. Bray's Bridge – This is an old and important river crossing negotiated by successive bridges of wooden and stone construction. The current stone bridge has an 1822 date stone inserted above the central span which 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 20thC. 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 20thC including the production of charabanc bodies, pottery and a concrete works. It has now entirely residential development.

Returning to the junction with Cliff Street, straight ahead of you is a large three storey house:

32. Magnolia House – This 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.

Veer left into Union Street and walk towards the medieval market cross. Stop at the bus stop. There are some interesting buildings around the Cross.

33. Market Cross – The central part is a 15thC 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 – On the corner of Bath Street opposite the Cross the 16th century Bath Arms Cottage gives an idea of how the market area would have appeared surrounded by similar houses and shops. On the east side of the Cross, on 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.

Veer left into Church Street and on the right is the Victorian Court House:

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.

Continue down Church Street to return to St Andrew's Church or turn left at Royan Way to the pay-and-display car park..

Information for this leaflet has been provided by members of Cheddar Local History Group, October 2015.