

# Chichester Heritage Trails



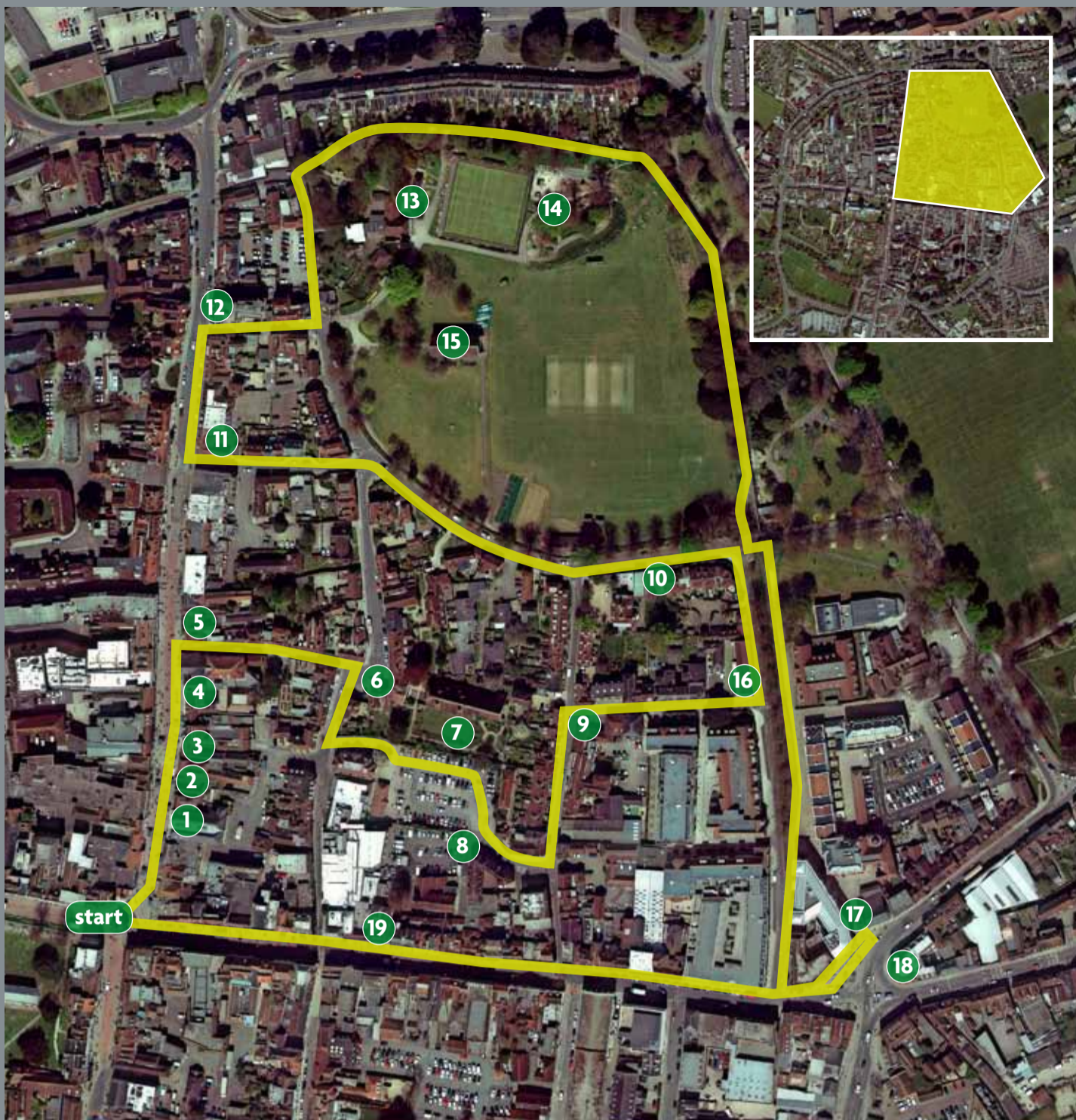
## Trail 2: North-East Quadrant

### General Introduction

Chichester's four principal streets still mainly follow the pattern of the Roman settlement, founded nearly two thousand years ago. The city walls – remarkably intact for an English town – also follow the Roman plan and contain masonry from the original construction. These four city centre walks explore each of Chichester's historic quadrants that are divided by the four principal thoroughfares of North, South, East and West streets. Each quadrant has its own special atmosphere and distinctive history. A great rebuilding from the late seventeenth century replaced or re-fronted timber-framed thatched houses with the characteristic Georgian street scene of brick and stucco buildings that exists today.

### North-East Quadrant

This part of Chichester once had five churches and a Franciscan Friary; today three of the churches have been lost and the remaining two, along with the priory chapel, have been converted to secular uses. The open greenery of Priory Park, framed by the city walls, gives a sense of space and peace to the north-east quadrant. This trail includes the east side of North Street and the north side of East Street. The west side of North Street is included in Trail 1 and the south side of East Street in Trail 3.



### More from Doris Le Conte

Stops 14 and 15 of this trail include the history of Priory Park and Chichester Castle motte or mound. There is also a quote from Doris Le Conte, who grew up in Chichester in the early years of the last century. She was brought up in a very strict middle class household, where matters of religion and status were uppermost in her parents' minds. Between 1912 and 1918, the Mayor of Chichester was Sir Archibald Garland, a man, we may think, was very much to the liking of Doris' parents. But in 1920, local baker, Joseph Hobbs became the mayor – not perhaps a man whom Doris' parents would have necessarily wished as a house guest? Oral history is not always the best historical source for historical accuracy (Dr Bostock was actually mayor in 1927 – after Joseph Hobbs) but it does tell us what people in the past felt and thought – bringing the past alive in a way documents alone rarely can. The contrast between the 'tall' Bostock and 'little Joey Hobbs' is as much a social metaphor as a literal reminiscence.

"I remember about the Mayor. I remember as a child every May we had to go to Priory Park and we had to walk round where the Mound is. It had a flag fixed [on it], and we had to salute the flag. We had a platform put there – it was a wooden platform and a flag-post on it. All the schools went and they walked round and they saluted the flag, you see, on Empire Day.

And I remember the Mayor of Chichester had been Dr Bostock. Now he was a very tall man who lived where the Post Office is now in West Street, and he always went on all his rounds by horseback. He was a very tall man. Well then the next Mayor was Joey Hobbs who was the baker and had a little shop just near the Cross. Well of course, the Mayor finished on that day and the next day it was Joey Hobbs – well, they didn't have time to alter the robes, did they? And of course Dr Bostock, he was tall, and Joey Hobbs was very short and tubby, something like Ronnie Corbett or Charlie Drake, and so of course he had to climb up there, up these steps to be on the platform and stand by the flag, you see, with us all saluting. And when he started to climb up the stairs all these cumbersome robes were too much, and he fell flat on his face to everyone's great amusement. Terrible. Poor little man, poor little Joey Hobbs."

## Did you know?

Chichester has 518 listed buildings, 18 of which are Grade 1. Find out more about them on the heritage trails and discover a lot of hidden architectural gems and stories about Chichester's amazing history that will surprise you.

Do you have memories of old Chichester? If so, we would like to hear from you. We are recording memories of the city for future generations. A memory recorded, is history saved.

Please let us know what you think about this trail. We would really like to know which aspects of Chichester's history you would like future trails to cover. Local volunteers, including Chichester University students and pupils at Bishop Luffa School, are currently creating these walks leaflets through the Chichester Heritage Trails project, which is run by the Chichester Society and managed by History People UK.

The project has received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £53,000. As part of the project, volunteers are doing archival research and carrying out oral history interviews with residents to recall their memories of Chichester in the past. They have received training in these heritage skills through the project.

Project partners: Bishop Luffa School, Chichester BID, Chichester City Council, Chichester Local History Society, Chichester Society, Chichester Walls Trust, University of Chichester, West Sussex Library Service, West Sussex Record Office.

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You will find a lot more about the Chichester Heritage Trails project and local history on our website and social media sites.

Chichester Heritage Trails  
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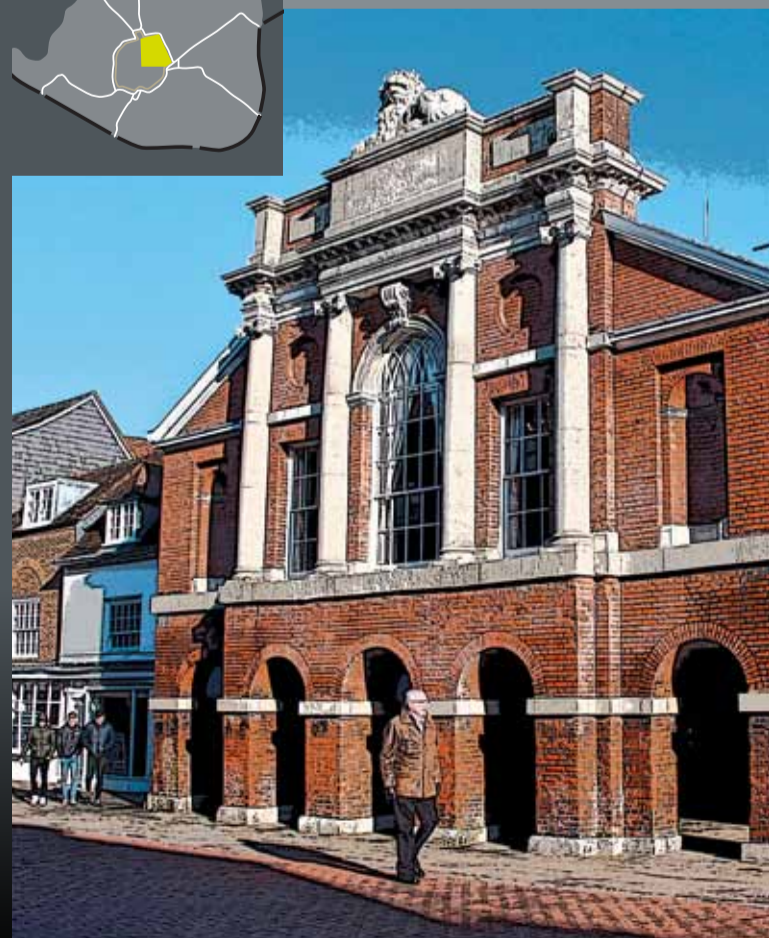
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# Chichester Heritage Trails



## 2

## North-East Quadrant





**1** We begin this trail at the Market Cross (see Trail 1 for the history of the cross) and head up North Street. The prominent building on your right is the **Market House**, which was opened in 1808 to give a larger covered area to the market traders. It was designed by John

Nash who also designed the Royal Pavilion at Brighton. Initially stallholders paid one shilling a day for their pitch which was regarded as a good investment by the traders, some of whom remained a familiar sight for many years. For example, Agnes Cripps ran a fresh fish stall here from the early 1930s until 1976. Today shops have replaced the market stalls and only the portico remains of Nash's original design. Substantial alterations took place in 1900 including the upper floor, which originally opened as the Technical Institute and Art School. Two notable artists associated with the school were George Herbert Catt, the school's principal, and Eric Gill, the school's most famous pupil.



**2** **St Olave's Church** is the oldest religious building in the city. It is said to have been founded by Norwegian merchants in 1050 and dedicated to their martyred king, Olaf II, who died in battle in 1028. His successor, Cnut (Canute), was king of Denmark and England. The ancient little church, which was partly re-built in Victorian times, closed in 1953 and became a Christian bookshop three years later.

**3** On your right you will see a little alley or 'twitchen' called **The Crooked 'S'**, which is believed to refer to the butcher's shambles (slaughterhouses) once located here. The presence of raw meat in such a confined space on a hot summer's day, would have presented many health risks to our ancestors, who relied on heavy salting to preserve meat in an era before refrigeration.



**4** The **Council House and Assembly Room** represent the blossoming of civic pride in eighteenth century Chichester. A medieval council house had stood in the centre of North Street but was regarded as being far too lowly for the resurgent Georgian city. The new building was erected in 1731 and fifty years later the



lavish assembly rooms were added at the rear of the Council House. Balls and recitals attracted all the wealthy fashionable families during the Georgian and Victorian eras. In 1840 Franz Liszt elicited 'rapturous applause' when he gave a piano recital of his music here.



**5** We now turn right into Lion Street, but before doing so, note the buildings, **82** and **83 North Street**, just to the north of Lion Street. Although appearing to be Georgian, they are actually far older, timber-framed buildings that were re-fronted in brick and re-roofed in the eighteenth century.



**7** Now make your way across the car park, and as you walk through, observe the great sloping roof behind the wall on your left. This is the medieval chapel of **St Mary's Hospital and Almshouses**. Built here in 1290, widows and widowers of the city still reside in small bed-sitting rooms within this ancient structure. A sign on the hospital entrance in St Martin's Square gives details of how visits may be arranged to view the chapel, which is renowned for its oak-beamed vaulted roof and the highly rustic carvings (known as miserikords) in the chapel choir stalls.

**8** Cross the car park towards another former church, **St Andrew in the Oxmarket**. Now a community and arts centre, it was recently discovered to have a Norman nave. Before exiting however, note the array of Roman remains, assembled on the edge of the car park to your left. We now reach **Little London** which is supposed to have got its name because its bustling street scene reminded Queen Elizabeth I of a street in the capital when she visited, but this story is far more likely to be folklore than fact.



**9** Continue northwards up Little London. Turn right into **East Row** passing the sculpture by the artist John Skelton, (the nephew of Eric Gill). It was commissioned in 1964 by Chichester City Museum, originally sited here. The Museum has since relocated to more spacious accommodation at The Novium in Tower Street.



in 1700. Quakers established themselves in Chichester in the 1650s, although they suffered much persecution, including imprisonment, in their early days.

**10** Turn left into East Walls and left again into Priory Road. On your left you will see **The Friends' (Quaker) Meeting House** which was built in 1967. It replaced a smaller meeting house built

**11** Turn left into St Peter's (the modern road that runs through the former garden of the church of St Peter the Less, demolished in 1957) and then right into North Street. **62 North Street** was the home in the seventeenth



century of Marjorie Wilkinson, who was an early convert to the Society of Friends (Quakers). It is believed that George Fox, the founder of the movement, addressed a meeting of 'Friends' here in 1655. Marjorie's home became a place of regular Quaker meetings for many years and led to her arrest and prosecution. In 1684 she was imprisoned at Horsham gaol for her Quaker activities.



of Chichester. In 1944, General Eisenhower stayed at The Ship Hotel (as it had become) prior to the D-Day invasion of France.

**12** On the northern corner of North Street and Guildhall Street is the **Ship Hotel**, part of the Harbour Hotel Group. This Grade II\* listed building was built between the years 1804–06 as the home of Admiral Sir George Murray, who had gained fame as a commander with Nelson at the Battle of Copenhagen in 1801. It is said that Nelson wanted Murray to be his second-in-command at Trafalgar, but Murray was in England at the time attending to family business and could not be at the great battle. Like his brother, Richard, who lived opposite him at Fernleigh, Sir George also became mayor

**13** Turn into Guildhall Street and turn left into Priory Lane. On your right you will see a sign for the Chichester Walls Walk, take this path onto the promenade that runs along the walls. As you do so, to your right you will see a statue below you. This figure of an aged man was placed in the park in 1873 and is known locally as **'The Druid'**. Previously it had stood by a vault in the cathedral when it was known as 'Old Father Time'. Originally, however, it had been commissioned by the Corporation in 1777 for the South Street water conduit and represented Neptune. It is made from Coade Stone, a ceramic created by the artist and businesswoman, Eleanor Coade. Many of the iconic statues and architectural details in central London are made from this hard-wearing material.



to overthrow the unpopular King John. The following year the king died and with him support for the French cause. The castle, a wooden fort rather than a stone building, was demolished during the reign of John's successor, Henry III.

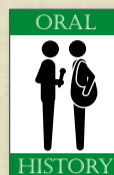
**14** As you walk along the Walls, with the park to your right, you will observe a large mound. This was the 'motte' of **Chichester Castle**. In 1216 the French and their English allies seized the castle as part of an attempt

**15** Beyond the mound is the former chapel of the Franciscan Order or 'Greyfriars'. The friars established a priory here in 1269. The Franciscans – in common with all other monastic orders – were abolished in England during the reign of Henry VIII. Their former chapel was converted into the city's **Guildhall**. All criminal cases were held here, including some famous trials. Seven smugglers were sentenced to death in 1747 and subsequently hanged together on the Broyle (the rising ground immediately



north of the city walls). In 1804 the poet and visionary, William Blake was tried here for sedition and assault, after he was accused of evicting a drunken soldier from his garden at Felpham with the words, "Damn the King, damn the country and damn you too!" Thanks to his influential friends, the poet William Hayley and the publisher, Joseph Seagrave, Blake was represented by the best legal team available and was acquitted.

In 1918 the Duke of Richmond presented Priory Park (stop 15) to the people of Chichester as a perpetual memorial to the fallen of the Great War. Prior to this it had been available to certain residents and clubs for a fee, as Doris le Conte (born 1906) recalled – *"My father paid a guinea a year and had a key to [unlock the gates] and go into the park...My father used to go there and play bowls, and my mother used to play croquet in Priory Park. And nobody else could go unless you had a key, so really it was frightfully select."*



Mervyn Cutten (born 1916) remembered how tradespeople used the park and that most of them lived above their premises in the city centre –

*"Up until the time of the mass-produced car nearly everybody in the city lived over their premises. Consequently the town was full of an evening – people were in all the pubs, playing bowls or croquet in the Priory Park. Then when the mass-produced car came in people could afford a car and they moved out to the suburbs, which gradually emptied the town."*

**16** Carry on along the city walls and cross Priory Road by the steps that take you on to East Walls. On your right you will see a large flint built building which used to be the headquarters of the Sussex Yeomanry. You will see there is much new residential development here. During the course of its construction, many remains of Roman Chichester were discovered. Before descending into East Street, note the large chicken bone sign hanging from the building on your right. This used to be **Shippam's meat and fish paste factory** which operated in the city for 175 years.



**17** You are now in East Street. To your left is Eastgate Square and the **parish church of St Pancras**, which was rebuilt in 1750, the old church having been devastated during the siege of Chichester that took place in 1642 during the English Civil War. It is built of flints that have been cut (knapped) on all six faces to give square blocks which have been laid with very thin mortar courses – thinner than with brickwork.

**18** Diagonally opposite you, on the corner of St Pancras and The Hornet, is a curved brick-built building which was originally a pub called **The Unicorn Inn**. It opened in 1938 replacing a far older building that dated back to the seventeenth century. The Unicorn was the headquarters of The Corporation of St Pancras, a mock corporation that had been established in 1689 to celebrate and commemorate the overthrow of the Roman Catholic James II and the succession of the Protestant William of Orange. Every year the corporation held a banquet at which it was resolved, "that they should dine and eat of all ye good things of the season, and that there should be a plentiful supply of wine and ale, and everything provided to content the stomach". So drunk did the members become that apprentice boys had to push them home in wheelbarrows – hence the nickname of the corporation – The Wheelbarrow Club. The Unicorn closed as a pub in 1960.



**19** Returning to the Market Cross, we pass **21 East Street**, the site of the home in the early eighteenth century of the poet, William Collins (1721–59), who was thought by some of his contemporaries to be an equal to the pastoral poet, Thomas Gray. Collins suffered extreme mental illness which hastened his early death. A later occupant was the publisher, Joseph Seagrave, who produced Chichester's first newspaper in 1796. After his death in 1808, his friend, the poet William Hayley, made an attempt to revive him using electricity, which futile attempt may have influenced Mary Shelley to write Frankenstein ten years later.

