

## The Town Trail

The town trail leaflet provides the basis for a walk around Chatteris highlighting some of the older and more interesting buildings, and the stories behind them. The extended trail follows a route down to the site of the railway station and through the area affected by the Great Fire of Chatteris.

Peterborough to Newmarket. Western Counties and from Huntingdon and the roads from Norfolk to

on the junctions of the was due to its situation prosperity its later settlements in the fens.

The town grew around The Abbey of St Mary, which was founded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. A market place was formed in front of it and streets evolved to connect the Abbey to the other settlements in the fens.



# Chatteris & Mini Guide & Town Trail



Cambridgeshire Fens



1 The town trail starts at the car park in Church Lane. This car park is built on the site of the old school room and former parish room. In 1819 the school was built by the National Society for the education of 200 boys and 150 girls on (Weekdays and Sundays). This remained open until 1927 (Victoria County History) after which boys transferred to King Edward School in Railway Lane, then became St Peter's

2 The George Hotel was once the departure point of the six-horse coach 'The Defiance' which left for London at 9am every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and for Wisbech and March at 5:30pm every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In the 1950s the boxer Freddie Mills stayed at the hotel and trained there for a big championship fight. At the rear of the Hotel is a large yard from which there is a view of the other side of the Crown Theatre roof.

3 Just along from the Palace and opposite the War Memorial is the Cross Keys 17<sup>th</sup> century inn. This was one of many of that name around the country, which being close to the bible. Around the corner in Station Street there is a shallow bath like slab fixed on the wall. It was once a mortician's slab.

4 If you look across the road and to the left you will see the Palace ballroom. It was a thriving Corn Exchange in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was converted into the Picture Palace cinema. The cinema was then transformed into a ballroom in 1937. It had the first properly sprung floor in the country.

5 The War Memorial was built to those from Chatteris who died in the two World Wars. It is on the site of an old vicarage which no trace remains. A new fire engine house was also built to the front of the churchyard in 1798.

6 Walk through to the churchyard and look to the right near the wall for more evidence of catacombs. Bishop Nigel of Ely gave the church of St Peter and St Paul, to the Chatteris nuns in 1162. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century a stipend paid for a parish priest. The church was destroyed by fire shortly after this award and was rebuilt in 1352.

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8 Bramley House, across the road on the corner, was once a private house. It was later part converted to a butcher's shop, with a slaughterhouse in the grounds, it then became a dress shop before its present use as a guesthouse.

9 Chatteris House was built in 1828 as a private residence with 3 stores and a basement. At the end of the nineteenth century the Seward family, who ran the auctions in the Auction Yard next door, occupied it. The Seward family sold the house in 1954. It was used for a time as a tractor showroom with flats above, a grocery shop, furniture store, English restaurant, and eventually became an Indian restaurant. After being empty for many years it has now been renovated and converted into luxury apartments.

10 The Old Auction Yard was once the site of the coach house and outbuildings of Chatteris House. The auctions, which were started in 1908 by Frederick William Seward, were popular events that were held every Friday. They could last for 8 or 9 hours, and handled sales of furniture, livestock and dairy and farm produce. The auctions continued until the retirement of Lindsey Seward in the 1970s. The Army in World War II commandeered the auction yard.

11 Further down the High Street on the same side is Lindsells Walk. On the left is the Old Brewery, now known as Lindsells House, which became Coles Engineering Works before recently being converted into apartments. The tall chimneys, which were originally detached, still remains as a marker. Charles Cole the proprietor of Coles Engineering made the first carrot washing machine in the country.

12 Continue down the High Street to Pecks Yard on the right hand side just past Furrowfields. This yard was known for a time as Earls Place and though quite modernised, is still a good example of one of the yards of labourer's cottages, which were found throughout the town in the nineteenth century.

13 Cross the road into Ash Grove. A short way along on the left is a white building which was once the Society of Friends (Quakers) Meeting House. Friends had met in Chatteris from 1703 until the 1920s. The building is now privately owned. A small graveyard was sited beyond the brick wall on the site of the present road. The building was used as a place for feeding the first of the evacuees to the town in World War 2.

14 Back into the High Street a short way along is Grove House which was built in 1818. This was an elegant private house occupied for a time by the Childs' family. In 1885 an extra storey with five extra rooms was added by jacking up the roof. The house was converted from a private house to council offices and for a time housed the Chatteris Museum before coming an adult education centre.

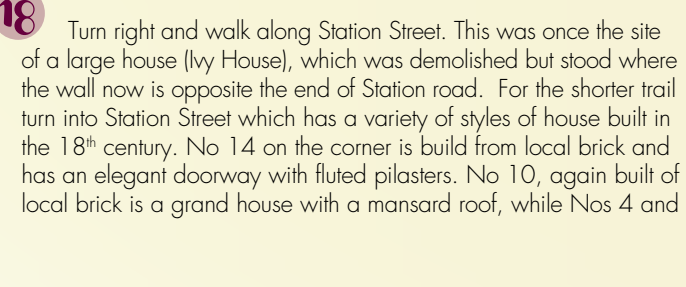
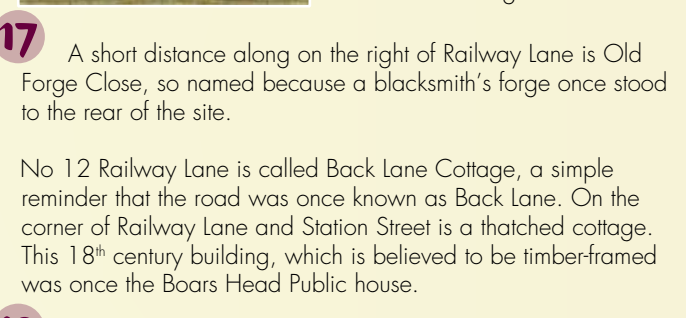
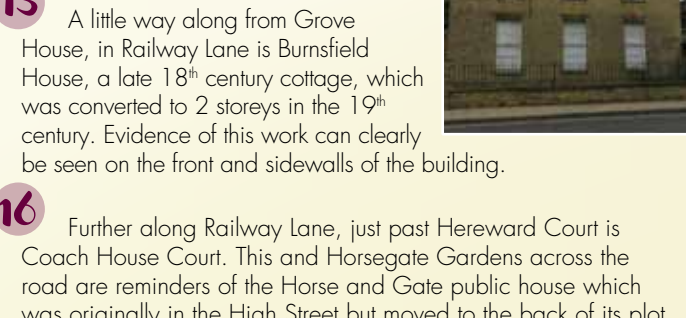
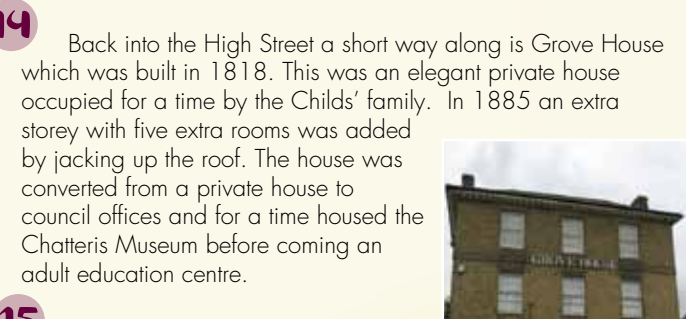
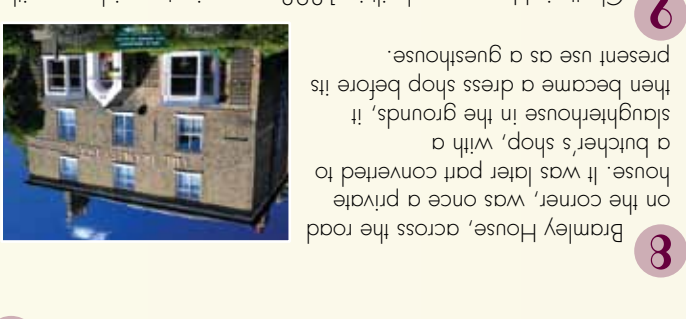
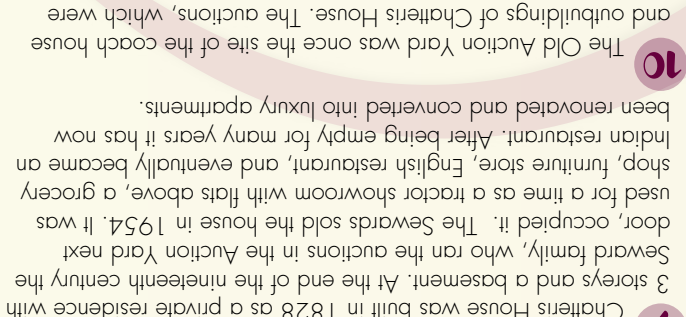
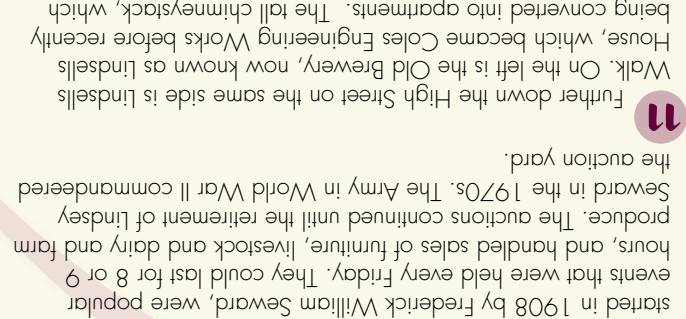
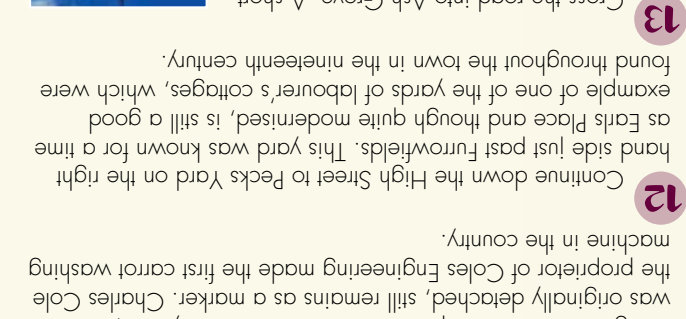
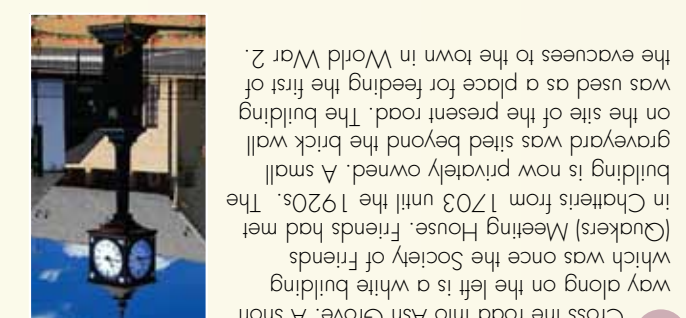
15 A little way along from Grove House, in Railway Lane is Burnsfield House, a late 18<sup>th</sup> century cottage, which was converted to 2 storeys in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Evidence of this work can clearly be seen on the front and sidewalls of the building.

16 Further along Railway Lane, just past Hereward Court is Coach House Court. This and Horsegate Gardens across the road are reminders of the Horse and Gate public house which was originally in the High Street but moved to the back of its plot in Railway Lane. It was the departure point of 'The Day' coach which departed for London at 9am on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and returned to Wisbech via March at 6pm on Tuesday, Thursdays and Saturdays.

17 A short distance along on the right of Railway Lane is Old Forge Close, so named because a blacksmith's forge once stood to the rear of the site.

No 12 Railway Lane is called Back Lane Cottage, a simple reminder that the road was once known as Back Lane. On the corner of Railway Lane and Station Street is a thatched cottage. This 18<sup>th</sup> century building, which is believed to be timber-framed was once the Boars Head Public house.

18 Turn right and walk along Station Street. This was once the site of a large house (Ivy House), which was demolished but stood where the wall now is opposite the end of Station road. For the shorter trail turn into Station Street which has a variety of styles of house built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. No 14 on the corner is built from local brick and has an elegant doorway with fluted pilasters. No 10, again built of local brick is a grand house with a mansard roof, while Nos 4 and



## Places to visit

For more information [www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org](http://www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org)

### Chatteris Leisure

Fantastic new 50 station gym and exercise studio. Eastwood, Chatteris, PE16 6FN Tel: 01354 622 399



### Chatteris Museum

A small local museum with displays reflecting the area's agricultural heritage. Tel: 01354 696 319



### Church of St Peter and St Paul

is well sited in the centre of town. It's core is 14th century, but it has been much restored and most furnishings are modern.



### Ouse Washes Reserve

RSPB reserve attracting thousands of wintering swans and ducks. [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) Tel: 01354 680 212



Located back from the bend in the road is the King Edward School which was opened in 1902. It is now the venue for many of the towns clubs and societies - now known as The King Edward Centre



Cambridgeshire Fens

Fenland District Council, Fenland Hall, County Road, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8NQ Tel: 01354 654321 Email: [tourism@fenland.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@fenland.gov.uk) Web: [www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org](http://www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org) Facebook: Fenland District Council Twitter: #Fenland Council



6 are modest cottages. No 2 at the junction with West Park Street was built in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. All of these buildings, along with many others in Chatteris are 'listed'. Turn left now into Park Street where you will rejoin the longer trail at no 24.

**19** For the longer trail, continue down Station Street, past Windmill Mews until you reach no 23 - a large house called Homeland, set behind a wall and trees. It has an elaborate stone gated arch believed to contain materials from the old abbey, of which you will find out more later.

**20** Further down the road, just past no 51, there is a driveway leading to what was once Mill House. This listed building, which according to a plaque dates to 1807 was once the miller's cottage of Larratts Mill. No trace remains of the octagonal tower and adjacent barn to the north which were demolished a few years ago.

**21** Near the end of Station Street on the right was the Railway Tavern which is now residential accommodation. Just past this on the same side is Old Station Yard, a reminder that this was once the site of the Railway Station. The A141 March to Huntingdon road runs along what was once the railway track which suffered as a result of the Beeching cuts. Across the bypass is Stainless Metalcraft formerly Chatteris Engineering. It was famous for its production of heavy cranes and diamond mining equipment, more recently making 4km of the Hadron Collider used in scientific experiments in Switzerland.



**22** Turn left here and walk along Clare Street, formerly Anchor Street, which was renamed in honour of the Chatteris soldier, George Clare, who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross in the Great War. This road was badly affected by the Great Fire of Chatteris, which destroyed more than 70 homes in this part of the town in September 1864. A boy playing with touch paper near a wheat cob caused the fire, which started in West Street at 11 o'clock in the morning. Miraculously, though a number of animals perished, no people were killed.

**23** Continue to the Jetty, which is a narrow lane on the left hand side next to no 21. At the top of this is a row of labourer's cottages. Turn to your right and walk down the alleyway that emerges on Huntingdon Road. Turn left and continue walking back to the town. On the right on the corner of Linden Drive is the Masonic Hall, which is built on the site of a small private school called Linden School.



**24** The seating area at the corner of Huntingdon Road gives the opportunity to have a short rest before turning left into West Park Street and then right into Park Street. The little garden area was once the site of 'The White Hart' Public House which was demolished to improve the junction.

**25** A short distance along on the south side of Park Street is the Hollies Dental Practice, which is in the building formerly occupied by the post office until it moved to the premises over the road in 1924. The newer building was constructed in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century building, of yellow local brick. It has a modern tiled mansard roof, and is now just a sorting office.

**26** Looking across the road, behind the modern exterior, it is possible to see the old facade of the Empress Cinema. This was built on the site of a house called the Priory, which was demolished by Henry Bancroft in 1935. The house had no connection with any religious establishment. It was called the priory by a Mr Fryer who felt that it was a fitting name for his home and also its proximity to the Abbey grounds. The cinema was converted to its present use as a swimming pool in 1964.

**27** Adjacent to the Empress is the office of Cartwright's solicitors. This building was once the site of Westwood House that was used for a time as a private school run by the Warth sisters. The present building was a private home before becoming an office and within it is a magnificent staircase from the former house. The market is held along the stretch of road in front of these two buildings every Friday.

**28** On the corner of Park Street and East Park Street is Barclays Bank, which was opened by 1800 as a sub branch of Gurneys, Birkbeck and Peckovers of Wisbech. The main building was originally the home of the bank manager, whilst the counting house was in the wing running along Park Street. One of many Public pumps was positioned on this corner.



**29** Across the road is the Gables nursing home, a late 18<sup>th</sup> century L plan house of gault brick with red brick details. Next to it is a public garden and bandstand, which was built on the site of Dr Nix's house, demolished to make the junction safer.



**30** Turning right into East Park Street, past the Emmanuel Church and the Police Station you will reach the Salvation Army Fortress which was built with a crenellated frontage between 1900 and 1904.

**31** To the right is Victoria Street, a road constructed across what was once the site of the Abbey of St Mary. The Abbey, founded circa 980AD by Aelfwen, was situated on what is now the North side of Victoria Street with the grounds surrounded by walls of which none remain. All the stonework in existing walls has been reused. The perimeter of the Abbey can be traced along the four Park Streets. The abbey buildings were dismantled and the stone reused after the dissolution in 1538 with the exception of the block on the western side of the cloisters which was converted into Park House and enlarged in the seventeenth century. In 1847 this building was pulled down and much of the stone was used in the building of Seymour Place, a terrace of 5 cottages on London Road.

**32** Continue along East Park Street as it bends to the right and continue to the junction with South Park Street. Walk back along East Park Street and cross to St Martins Road. At one time this road was called Smarts Road but it was changed by the residents to its present name in the Mid 1900s.

**33** A short way down St Martins Road, on the left, is a house called 'Old Forge'. This is the only indication that a blacksmith's premises once stood on this site. Walk a little further down the road and turn left into Church Walk. At the end of Church Walk you will find the car park in Church Lane.

**34** On your left is Chatteris Museum where you can find a large number of objects, documents and photographs connected with the history of the town. The building in Church Lane is owned by the council and houses their Chambers and offices as well as the Museum. The museum's collection is held by the Museum Trust and is managed by local trustees. Galleries are arranged to portray the history of the town, its immediate surroundings and its people, from the Stone Age right through to the recent past.



## Entertainment

For more information [www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org](http://www.visitcambridgeshirefens.org)

### Chatteris Historic Festival

A three day re-inactment spectacular, living history encampments, static falconry, Have-a-Go archery, competitions and games, stalls selling wares, food and beer tent.  
Tel: 01354 654 321



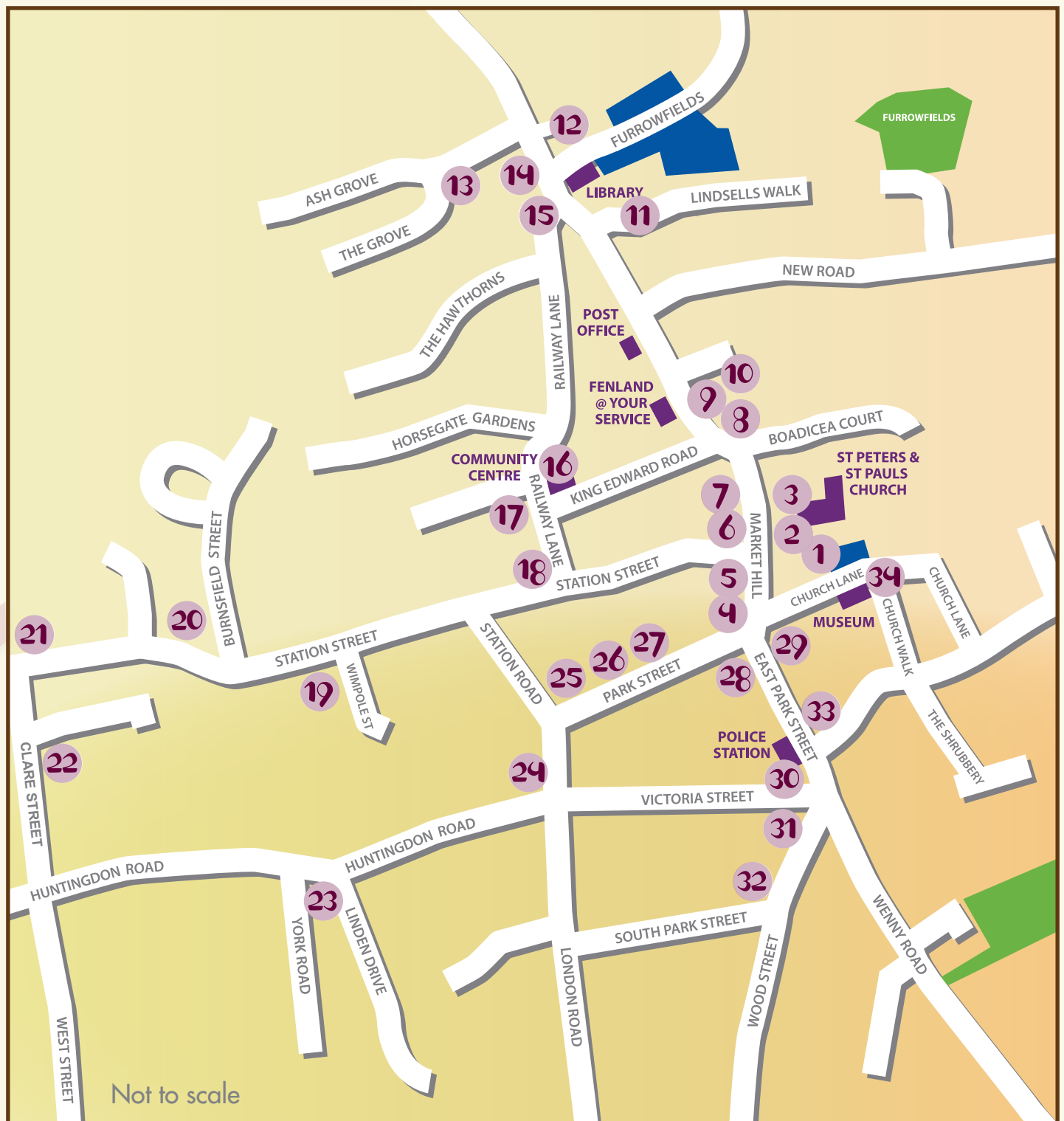
### Chatteris Community Cinema

at the King Edward Centre.  
[www.chatteriscommunitycinema.co.uk](http://www.chatteriscommunitycinema.co.uk)



### Chatteris Christmas Lights

Chatteris Christmas lights are recognised as some of the best for miles. During the festive season you wander through the town to enjoy the lights.  
[www.chatterischristmaslights.co.uk](http://www.chatterischristmaslights.co.uk)



Not to scale