

5. Tithe Barn and Dovecote:

6. Abbey Walls and Freda Atkins Gardens.



1. Chertsey Museum

4. Chertsey Station

**Gogmore
Farm
Park**

*Bourne Meadow
and
National Cycle Path*

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A Very Short History of Chertsey



Chertsey town grew up on a low island between St Ann's Hill, which had an Iron Age hill fort and Roman vineyards, and the River Thames and its tributaries the River Bourne and the Abbey River. In 666 AD a monastery was established on the island but despite being sacked twice by Vikings it eventually grew to be the fifth most important Abbey in the country. King Henry VI was buried at the Abbey in 1471 but subsequently moved to Windsor Castle a few years later.

The town grew alongside the Abbey and in the 12th century a chapel was established for the townsfolk which eventually became the parish church seen today.

King Henry VIII dissolved the monastery in 1537 and much of the Abbey was dismantled and the materials used to build Oatlands Palace at Weybridge for his future wife, Anne of Cleves. However sufficient buildings were still standing in 1548 when Archbishop Thomas Cranmer met with a group at Chertsey to draft the Book of Common Prayer. Most of the Abbey was despoiled and all that remains on public view is a few low walls, now in the *Freda Atkins Memorial Gardens* and some fish ponds in the grounds of *The Orchard*. Some of the bells were transferred to the parish church including the present 5th bell, last recast in 1380 AD. Chertsey is one of the last places in the country where a Curfew Bell is still rung manually at about 8.00pm in the Winter months. This custom inspired the *Tale of Blanche Heriot* as commemorated by the statue near Chertsey Bridge and subsequently led to the poem *The Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight*.

Chertsey has been an important crossing point on The River Thames with a ford, or ferry, since Roman times with a bridge since 1410 AD. The present bridge was built in 1785 AD, designed by Thomas Paine.

A few houses date back to Tudor times, while the town expanded in importance in the Georgian era and was a popular coaching town. The town was a centre of trade for the local area with its economy being based initially on agriculture and later on market gardening. Local industry was based on brick and tile making, using locally sourced clay, together with the Eldridge bell foundry (1619 – 1714 AD) followed by the Herring Iron Foundry and its successors (1819- 1980's). The railway from Weybridge arrived in 1848 and the loop line completed to Egham / Staines in 1866.

Following lobbying by *The Chertsey Society* in the 1960's the majority of the town centre was designated as a Conservation Area with a view to help preserve and enhance the historic charm of the town. Today Chertsey is more likely to be known nationally as one of the traffic congestion hot spots at Junction 11 of the M25!

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1. Chertsey Museum



2. Blanche Heriot Statue



3. Chertsey Bridge



4. Chertsey Station



With the Locomotive Flying Scotsman

6. Freda Atkins Memorial Gardens



With Chertsey Abbey Walls



5. Tithe Barn and Dovecote

Further information available at Chertsey Museum, *The Cedars*, Windsor Street.

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