

HATTERS' TRAILS

in South Gloucestershire

Frampton Cotterell and Watley's End

Walks through a neglected part of our local heritage



Key to symbols



Buggy friendly



Wheelchair friendly



Toilets, restricted opening



Refreshments. Car park and toilet for patrons



Muddy after rain



Bus stop: **327, 581, 202, 222, 482, 483**



Car park



Uneven ground

The Hatters' Trails offer three circular explorations of Frampton Cotterell and Watley's End, with shorter alternative routes for the less mobile or wheelchair users. Over 50 viewing points illustrate different aspects of the hatting trade, and, taken as a whole, present a comprehensive, informative and entertaining picture of the subject.

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INTRODUCTION

the Local Hatting Industry

Until recently it was not generally known that the parishes of Frampton Cotterell and Winterbourne were home for about 300 years to an unusual and fascinating industry – the making of felt hoods and hats from wool and animal fur. Together these two centres employed about 4,000 men over this period. The manufacture began around 1570 in a dozen villages to the east of Bristol, squeezed between the escarpments of the Cotswolds to the north and the River Avon to the south. Hat making, using only hand tools and skills learned as an apprentice, was a cottage industry serving haberdashers in Bristol who finished and then sold hats throughout the West of England, exported them across the Atlantic to the new colonies, and provided cheap hats to barter for West African slaves and to wear in the slave plantations.



Felt hoods ready for hat-making - figure 3

From about 1770 the Winterbourne hatters mostly moved to squat on or near common land at Watley's End, effectively creating a new village, most of which still exists today. To a lesser extent Frampton Cotterell hatters did the same around Frampton Common and on the waste ground around Brockridge. These squats were not casual occupations of existing property; they were all deliberate and illegal encroachments by professional men and industrious craft and farm workers, who built permanent dwellings and workplaces. This movement coincided with greatly increased demand from powerful London hat merchants who set up local manufactories which stimulated many new small workshops. A period of security followed for these industrial villages in the countryside, and the hatters, although from a poor trade involving hard work over long hours, became relative labour aristocrats among their neighbouring quarry workers, coal miners and farm hands.

The 1841 census shows that 196 hatters were still employed in Frampton, and 177 in Winterbourne, representing 32% of the working population across the two villages; in Watley's End there were 121 hatters, 67% of all men in work. However, in the 29 years to 1870, hat manufacture disappeared almost completely from

the area. The ending of the slave trade, the arrival of the silk hat, a rejection of machinery and a series of vicious local strikes all resulted in a move of investment to the north, principally to places around Stockport.

Making a Felt Hat



Feltmaker with bow - figure 1

There are many stages in the manufacture of a felt hat, but local hatters concentrated mainly on the early processes from fur to felt hood production. Felt is unique: unlike other fabrics it is unwoven and has no thread. It is manufactured when animal hair or wool is rolled and squeezed into an even compact mass. Feltmaking for hats was an unusual and highly skilled craft involving two operations: separating and laying the fibre into the required shape or batt; and rolling the batt under hand pressure to compact it.

In the first process a 7ft bow was twanged into the top of a pile of wool or fur to make it fly piece by piece 'like snow.' This flight caused extensive separation of the fibres. Part of the skill was to make the fibres fall in the required pattern and to the variable depth needed to make a batt hood (see figure 1).



Hatters at a Felting Kettle - figure 2

The batts produced by this first process were then thickened and shrunk by skilfully rolling and felting the fibres together on the hatters' kettle, comprising wooden planks around a metal bason of heated acidic liquor (see figure 2). The batts were then joined together into felt hood blanks that were again thickened and shrunk by up to a third or more (see figure 3).

The hatters' working environment had many adverse effects on their health. It led to a high incidence of asthma; flying fibres entered the lungs; the hot

acid baths corroded hands making sores slow to heal; all-day pressure rolling of felts led to loss of muscle power; chemicals like mercury, and possibly anthrax, together with a high alcohol intake, led to a miserable life for many. Hatters often died young but, if they survived, lived only a year less than the average working man. However, by age fifty they were much more likely to be sick, their occupational diseases often leading to an uncomfortable old age.

Further information

- Felt-Hatting in Bristol & South Gloucestershire, Part 1: The Rise, Chris Heal, booklet, Avon Local History and Archaeology, March 2013; £3.50. Part 2: The Fall will be available at the same price later in 2013. Both booklets offer suggestions for further reading. Contact Jonathan Harlow, 01454 775731.
- The Hatting Industry of Bristol and South Gloucestershire, 1530-1909, unpublished PhD thesis, Chris Heal, University of Bristol, 2012; bound copies are held by Bristol Central Reference Library, Bristol Record Office (NPM/A/96), and the Arts and Social Sciences Library at Bristol University - (reference A7859).

- Copies are also held by Gloucestershire Archives (B151/55195GS), and by FC&DLHS and WERS. The thesis is available for free download as a scanned pdf file from the British Library at <http://ethos.bl.uk> (THESIS00618690)
- FC&DLHS and WERS.
- **Encroachment:** deliberate illegal squatting on common land by local professional men and craft and farm workers
- **Garnishes:** drink hatters were expected to provide at major events, for example a marriage
- **Hood:** the basic felt hat before being shaped on a block

Hatting Glossary

- **Bason:** a metal pot of variable size containing heated acidic liquor
- **Batt:** the opened out fur in a rectangular shape ready to be made into two hoods
- **Blank:** Signed declaration of good character for a hatter on the tramp
- **Bow:** hatter's tool for working fibre to make a batt
- **Kettle:** heated water vessel surrounded by planks for hand felting
- **Squat:** to build houses and workshops on common or waste land
- **Tramp:** to walk from town to town in search of work
- **Turnhouse:** meeting-place, usually an inn, where a tramp hatter went when looking for work

Hilly Fields (see page 24)



THE TRAILS

2



2



Rear walled garden with evidence of hatters' workshops

WATLEY'S END

Hatters' Trail (WET 1-23)

DISTANCE → 1 ML / 1.7 KM



Description: Flat firm surfaces, but lacking pavements in quiet roads. The first part is suitable for the less mobile and wheelchair users, who should then follow the shorter route* after Point 13 and continue at Point 20 (see page 15).

Start opposite Winterbourne Community Centre, Watleys End Road, BS36 1QG. Proceed along Factory Road, pausing at:

1. Beaver Close, Factory Road

These street names evoke the hatting history of the village. Beaver Close is on the site of the Amos Hat Factory (established about 1780). The hatters' cottages next on the left (Nos 11-21) were linked to this factory.

Shortly afterwards on the right is:

2. Northend House 16 Factory Road

One of the early purpose-built Factory Road hat manufactories. A 'house, hattery and large walled garden' were built illegally on the edge of Watt-Lay's End common in 1789 by Thomas Hollister, local feltmaker. Hollister was 'forbid going on' by a freeholders' committee. He agreed to pay £35 for his plot, plus payment for a lease; neither was paid when the committee



½ mile



**327
202**

WATLEY'S END

reported to the rights holder, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Bristol, that the house was 'nearly finished'. There was a permanence about the housing and gardens of the feltmakers who squatted in this way; above all, they were local craftsmen creating a 'landscape of busy-ness'. Today, of the 102 houses in the heart of Watley's End, two-thirds are stone cottages built mainly by and for hatters. The survival of so many original dwellings helps to give the village its distinctive character.

About 40 metres further on the left is a lane.

3. The Gully



No 1 is a typical early hatter's cottage and workshop, recently modernised. In 1834, this group of buildings shared a pump and 'way lane to the road'. At the time of the 1841 census there were 137 households in Watley's End, with an average of 4.8 individuals per home. These figures reveal a close and supportive family hamlet, populated principally by married couples who

cared for stay-at-home children and grandchildren, dependent sisters and aged parents. Hatter occupants of the Gully in 1841 included George England, Joseph Turner and Thomas Lowe whose descendants still live in No 4.

Return to Factory Road. Continue past more hatters' cottages on the left, to:

4. Old Factory House 39 Factory Road



Rear of Old Factory House

This building stands out from its neighbours through its classic Georgian design; its very confidence and character indicate out-of-area money. The date stone is inscribed 1770 when it was probably a manager's house and hat warehouse with hat manufacturing in many outbuildings. Top floor cubicle rooms are correctly sized for feltmakers' bowing garrets (see Introduction figure 1); rusting hooks have been removed from ceilings. The house was owned, from at least 1827, by Rickards

and Morris of London. Local hatter George Howes leased it for £70 a year from 1851 and, with 12 men and two apprentices, supplied the Bristol wholesale hat trade. In 1863, Morris's 6-acre estate was sold: 'capital freehold residence; fertile garden; extensive buildings used as a hat factory, but suitable for any other purpose requiring cheap coal and water; arable field; a valuable well of water'. With the collapse of the hatting trade, the house became one of several outposts in the village making trousers and other wear for a Bristol wholesaler.

5. Hatters' Cottages 41-49 Factory Road

Somewhat unusually at right-angles to the road, these cottages were once part of Morris's estate. Occupiers under George Howes were hatters George Harcombe, John Skidmore and George Maggs senior (whose father, also a hatter, kept the George and Dragon in Winterbourne).



Typically, from the 17th century, feltmakers made hat bodies quietly, without machines, in a small extra workroom, often with a sloping roof, behind their cottages. Such a workroom still exists at the far end of this terrace.



Old workroom door

Continue a few metres to turn left down a lane between the cottages and Salem Church to see the old workroom door at the rear.

6. Salem Methodist Church



The first Wesleyan chapel in villages in this area, built of pennant stone by hatters and other tradesmen in 1787. Hatmaker Robert Curtis was one of those who bought the chapel's land. To mark the chapel's significance, the 84-year-old John Wesley deviated on a trip from Bath to Bristol to preach at its foundation. Formerly called the New House, it was registered at Gloucester by a group of seven local men,

including three hatters, led by William Pullin. Hatting families, manufacturers and craftsmen dominated the early membership and many are buried here.

Continue to the end of Factory Road. Turn left down Cloisters Road, looking beyond a stile (see below) at open land, formerly Cloisters Common. Pause by Shenstone and Rosemead (houses on left).

7. The King & Queen of Watley's End



Stephen & Hannah (née Pullin) Francombe lived near this spot in the early 1800s, and were called 'the King & Queen of Watley's End'. Francombe was reputed to employ over 100 men in his factory, now gone but roughly in line with Shenstone and behind Rosemead. He supplied hats for Vaughan's of London when they first came to the village. When Vaughan built his own, larger factory in the 1830s, Francombe became his foreman (see WET22).

8. Rosemead and Glebe Cottages

The hatting industry required furriers – men who shaved hairs from animal skins and prepared them for the



hatters. Two to four rabbits were needed per hat, depending on style and the amount of fur used as a base. About 1830, there were 3 cottages here and one, probably Rosemead, was occupied by furrier Herod Maggs, the others by hatters Robert and Luke Simmonds. Herod was related to the Howes family who managed the major hatting warrens at Cloisters (see below) and Siston. At the peak of the hatting trade about 15 furriers were employed in Watley's End and Frampton Cotterell. In 1872, when the trade declined, Christy's left behind two employees at Watley's End: George Maggs (Herod's son) and Richmond Rodman, as skin pullers to supply Christy's Stockport factory (see FCT 14/15). Evidence of their pay rates survives, including 3s 1d for ten dozen 'best skins'.

9. Cloisters' Warren

Village hatters made their reputation from their skill in using the lowest quality wool and fur. Better quality imported materials were kept from them by royal monopoly (Spanish merino wool) or by auctioning only in large bundles at high prices in London (beaver and other exotic furs). Rabbits were used increasingly for better finishes on hats. Warrens had been used as food for the Lord of the Manor and included pillow mounds that encouraged the rabbits to stay. When cheap tinned rabbit meat was imported from Australia, and the introduction of winter crops in the 1790s allowed rabbits to feed in the wild, many warrens closed, but some continued to supply local hatters. Cloisters Common was enclosed and sold in about 1856. The name of the area is not monastic in origin; it is thought to derive from 'Claysters', denoting high clay content in the soil.



Medieval rabbit pillow mound

10. Village Hedgerows

Teasel seed heads were used to 'fetch up the surfaces of wool hats'. This practice may have been extensive



Teasel seed heads in 2nd year. Hatmaker in Tunis using teasels in 2011

into the 19th century. In 1851 Francis and son Henry Derrick, in Frampton Cotterell, and Benjamin Badman, in Winterbourne, were teasel merchants. Hatmakers in Bristol in the 1600s also used pumice stone imported from Italy for the same job.

Return to the junction with Factory Road, and look to the left to see:

11. Row of hatters' dwellings 74-88 North Road



The stone building without windows near the road was probably a hatting workshop, but from the 1870s it is said to have been home to watchmaker George Luton and his apprentice springmaker, George Maggs.



Return along Factory Road, immediately passing more former hatters' cottages on the left (Nos 30 & 28). Turn left into Salem Road, and look at the first house on the right.

12. Old Brewery 29 Salem Road



Hatter's blank for the Associated Feltmakers of Winterbourne

Reputedly built on the site of a stone quarry about 1840 and variously managed in hatting times by the Howes and Flook families, the brewery had a 'commodious taproom, spacious clubroom, bar, sitting room, two bedrooms, brewhouse, and two large barrel-vaulted cellars'. The clubroom became the hatters' turnhouse (a pub used as a local headquarters) and centre of their union administration. Local men met here to discuss pay, trade union activities, apprenticeships, and to allocate new jobs. Remarkably, Watley's End hatters, through their union, directed operations in major towns such as Bristol and Gloucester, and also in South Wales (see FCT9).

The hatters were one of the earliest

trades to have a national employment network. Out-of-work hatters from across the country were given bread, beer and accommodation, then taken round local employment opportunities and, if unsuccessful, given money for onward travel. An itinerant hatter, visiting in 1830 during a 'free jollification' marriage party, saw 'a half-witted fellow' being made to run the gauntlet nude through the packed house. The present garage of the Old Brewery is on part of the site of the early Protheroe Hat Factory that operated early in the 19th century in tandem with the row of hatters' cottages beyond (Nos 23-27).

Continue on Salem Road to reach No 19 on the right.

13. Former Dando Hattery



Manager's house, 8 Salem Road

Salem House and No 19 Salem Road were built in an old quarry on the site of the Dando hat factory. The family came from Dursley, and the Watley's End business was managed from 8 Salem Road opposite, built in 1779 as

an encroachment on the Common (see WET2). Branches of the family moved their hatting business from Watley's End to Castle Green in Bristol and London and New York. Nathaniel Dando became Master of the Worshipful Company of Feltmakers in 1828, just before the major trade strike that so affected Watley's End (see FCT9). The Dando manufactory at No 19 probably operated from c.1797 when a partnership with Protheroe ended (see WET12). By 1831 William Hollister owned the site and the Dando's had a factory in North Road (see WET16). Dando's appeared in a book of parodies in 1824, supposedly containing endorsements of commercial products by prominent literary figures.

*'Each summer gale or winter blast that roars,
Puffs some new folly to thy guileless shores:
See, graced by fashion, Petersham's cravats,
Hoby's spring boots, and **Dando's** dandy hats.'*

***Shorter route for wheelchair users and the less mobile:**

Continue to the end of Salem Road. Go to Point 20 and turn right into Watley's End Road to continue the trail.

Go back a few metres to the last junction and turn right into Common Road. Find the 2nd house on the right, set back from the road.

14. 4 Common Road



This was George Howes' home and factory before he moved to Old Factory House (see WET4). With the collapse of the local industry, sons George and Gilbert moved to Castle Street in Bristol and were likely suppliers to Garlick's (see WET18). By 1900, Howes Brothers had over 400 employees in Bristol and supplied annually some half a million hats worldwide. Some Watley's End men moved to Bristol with the brothers; among early ones were George Flook (hatter) and George Harcombe (Watley's End fur cutter who became the Howes foreman), Aaron and Isaac Flook, Robert and David Maggs (who later moved to Stockport) and William Howes.

Continue to end of road and turn left into North Road for a few metres. Just past No 66 on the right there is a low stone structure adjacent to the roadway.

15. Dudsley Well (locally-listed building)



This spring, accessed by a flight of steps, is one of many

wells and springs in Watley's End. It fed a pond for animals on the old Common and may have been later used by hatters. It is said that the well water had such curative properties that womenfolk would walk all the way from Coalpit Heath to fetch it, because it 'soothed their men's chests'.



Go back up North Road passing No 43, the oldest house

in the village (see above). Continue on North Road, which was the southern boundary of Watley's End Common, past the Mason's Arms till you reach:

16. 39 North Road

Emanuel Maggs, a substantial hat manufacturer, lived here on land taken from the Common in 1779. His factory and workshops, now demolished, stood over the road from at least 1820.

Also opposite were two more hat manufactories: one owned by Robert Sergeant and then his daughter Laura; the other by the Dando's, managed by John and James Smith.

Continue about 100 metres to a road junction. Ahead and slightly to the left are:

17. Hatters' cottages 39-41 Park Avenue

Built on the common for Sidenham Hollister in 1779.

Turn right (still North Road) and look for a row of cottages a few metres further on the right.

18. 7-11 North Road



These attached dwellings are on the site of two factories, owned

by journeymen hatters Isaac and George Simmonds from at least the 1820s. In 1856, they were described as 'two newly-erected houses, hatters' shops and outbuildings'. The Simmonds were the second biggest hatting family in Winterbourne (after the Maggs) and had strong connections with Frampton Cotterell, Mangotsfield and Westerleigh. In 1837, Charles Garlick was apprenticed to Isaac (a probable relative of his mother) with his £6 fee paid by a



18

Garlick's Bristol Store at right c.1938

fund started by Miller Christy (Quaker founder of Christy's). Charles set up in Bristol to great success; but his premises were destroyed in the blitz during the second world war.

At the end of North Road, turn right into Watleys End Road. Look across at:

19. Oak Cottage 77 Watleys End Road

This dwelling was initially an encroachment on the Common by victualler Mark Richards in 1788. In 1825, hatters Ambrose Maggs and Richard Curtis lived here.

Proceed along the road, pausing at a cluster of hatters' buildings on the right side of a sharp bend and on opposite corners of the entrance to Salem Road.

20. 128-130 Watleys End Road; 1/2 Salem Road

Hatters' cottages built by Mark Hollister in 1785.



20

2 Salem Road

Continue along Watleys End Road, passing the Community Centre on the left to view, opposite each other:

21. 129 and 140-146 Watleys End Road

No 129 was the Pullens' dwelling from before 1825. Nos 140-146 were hatters' cottages owned by the King family in this part of the encroachment on the Common as it narrowed.

Continue to the entrance to York Gardens on the left.



21

22. Vaughan's Hat Factory



Constable's Hay Wain

George Vaughan founded the London dynasty and was an intermediary between the Prince Regent and the destitute playwright Sheridan. His son George, a London hat trader, built a large hat factory, probably in the 1830s, where the entrance to York Gardens now is. He employed about 100 men. Later it was leased to the Hollister family. Henry Hollister, aged 30, hanged himself here in 1868 in the top garret of his father's shop. The premises were auctioned after the death of the third George Vaughan in 1874. Vaughan's brother and sleeping partner, Henry, a co-scholar of Benjamin Disraeli, used his factory revenue to buy Constable's Hay Wain and later presented it to the nation.

23. Ebenezer Chapel & 137-141 Watleys End Road

This 'free' Methodist Chapel was built by hatters in 1868 as a result of a schism with the perceived authoritarianism of the founding

Wesleyan Chapel group, who built Salem Church (see WET6). The first members are said to have met in Day House (see FCT8) and also at No 137 Watleys End Road, perhaps as early as 1841. In 1867, a consortium of local Methodists paid £15 for 20 perches of land belonging to George Vaughan (see WET22). In 1884, Ebenezer Chapel trustees included hatters George Lewton, William Rodman, Charles Garlick, George Edwards and Ambrose Maggs (living at No 137 by then, but who later died in a lunatic asylum). The small graveyard is full of hatters and their families. Ebenezer Chapel closed in 1989. Next door are three hatters' cottages, No 139 in fact pre-dating the hatting period.

Return to the start of the trail.

Alternatively, to join the Frampton Cotterell Trail, cross the road and continue to the sharp bend. Take the bridleway besides Nightingale Lane (private road). Keep to the right down the bridleway to join the Frampton Cotterell Trail at FCT11, Nightingale Bridge.



FRAMPTON COTTERELL

Hatters' Trail (FCT 1-19)

DISTANCE → 2 MLS / 3.2 KM



The buggy detour avoids kissing gates and uneven fields that can be muddy. Otherwise firm surfaces but bridleway can be muddy or flooded after heavy rain – alternative route avoids this. Toilets at Crossbow House (evenings & some weekends) and Church if open. No pavement in Mill Lane. Narrow pavement at point 15.

Start in Mill Lane, beside St Peter's Church.

1. 2 - 4 Mill Lane: The New Inn until the late 19th Century

The Worthy Society of Felt-makers met here until the Society collapsed in the 1850s during declining trade and when, according to local legend, the publican and treasurer absconded with the funds. Workers formed these friendly societies to provide financial assistance for sickness, unemployment, funeral expenses and widows' support. The societies had well established rituals, including processions when men carried 'white wands' and a 'well cock'd Hat on a Poll'. Inquests were also held at the New Inn. In 1820, a verdict of homicide by misadventure was given when John Bayliss was shot dead in a local manufactory as hatters were 'rejoicing and making merry' after a Parliamentary Bill to force the divorce of Queen Caroline from King George IV was withdrawn (partly owing to her popularity).



327
581
202
222
482
483

Proceed to St Peter's Church either via the old Pound Gate in Mill Lane or via Church Road (former has uneven grass and church path is uneven).

2. St Peter's Church



Church Road 1907

St. Peter's had a strong association with the hatting trade through baptism and marriage. Until 1795 it was Frampton's only established place of worship and all parishioners had the right to burial here. However, few hatters could afford a headstone except, for example, Daniel Brown d.1855 and son Daniel d.1869; James Brown d.1850; Jonathan Bryant d.1861; Henry Hibbs workshop owner d.1763 and Daniel Holder manufactory owner d.1776. Skidmore, Tovey, Pullin and Pocock are other local names linked to hatting recorded in church registers.

Proceed on Church Road, crossing Mill Lane and passing The Globe on your right. Turn right (beside No 402) into a cul de sac to view a small group of dwellings known as:

3. Belcher's Barton



Thomas House (furrier & hatter) and hatters Thomas Parker, Thomas Pattison and George Turner lived here alongside agricultural labourers in 1841. This area is sometimes wrongly called Little London, but the 1901 census shows Belcher's Barton and Little London as separate addresses.

Cross Church Road and continue for a few metres, looking at the end of a high wall for:

4. 357-359 Church Road



Some hatters moved to the edges of Frampton Common in the late 18th century but few of their workshops remain. Here however is one good example where there was a house, workshop and gardens in 1831, reduced to cottages and gardens in 1841. It was owned by Samuel and James Colborne (felt-maker and hatter respectively), who shared it with James Packer (hatter).

Continue past the former post office, (now an Accountants) to cross School Road (dropped kerbs) and then Western Avenue (lower kerbs), going a few metres further to:



The Poor House

5. 415-417 Church Road

These two cottages were built for parish officers, when they were responsible for local destitutes resident in the poor house behind No 417 (see above). No 415 was a public house, the Stag's Head. In the front and rear gardens are three cast iron hatters' kettles (see Introduction figure 2 and FCT5b below), now decorative flower tubs. One is visible beside the double garage doors.

Return to the corner of Western Avenue, to look through the gates of No 415 to see at the base of a pine tree:

5b. Medium kettle

Hatters' kettles varied in size and had three equally-spaced lugs for suspending over a fire (see Introduction figure 2). Some were cauldron-sized and occasional horrific accidents occurred, such as when the son of a Mr Joy (Oldland Common hatter) fell into the scalding liquor. Despite prompt rescue, he died in agony.

Continue to the far end of Western Avenue (cross road at lower kerbs where houses are set back). Here, you are in the centre of the former:

5b



6. Frampton Common

This is Frampton Common as it was in 1831, between Church Road, School Road and Turnpike Road (now Bristol Road).



**Frampton Common & Poor House from
Bristol Road, 1902**

You have an option here at Robel Avenue, either:

Shorter route: turn left and then first right (lower kerbs at No 47); at corner, turn left onto a footpath. Follow path to its end (School Road). Cross road (lower kerbs to left) and turn right. Find No 56 at FCT8.

or Longer route: turn right, then follow road round corner to left. At next corner, turn right onto footpath. At end (Bristol Road) turn left to view former hatters' cottages:

7. 136-138 and 128 Bristol Road



These were originally hatters' dwellings and workshops. The one-storey part of No 128 is thought to be a former workshop. The typically long back gardens stretched to the old Frampton Common.

Retrace your way on footpath, continuing straight on pavement to follow footpath ahead to its end at School Road. Cross the road and turn right past Crossbow House Community Centre to:

8. Day House 56 School Road



Built in the 17th century, Day House is short for Dairy. Methodists, including hatters, held meetings here before building Ebenezer Chapel (see WET23).

Continue on School Road to take 2nd left to:

9. Prospect House, Prospect Close



Three generations of James Palsers were successful hatters. The first lived in Frampton End (see FRT2) but his workshops, gardens and orchards were here. He worked for Edward Ransford, perhaps the most prominent Bristol hat manufacturer, at a factory on Frampton Common.



Ransford's plots 49-50 School Road, 1825

When James died in 1825, his goods were worth £450. He left all his hatting equipment to his son James, whilst wife Mary (née Millett) received all his wool and hats.

A daughter, also Mary, married Luke Fowler, foreman at Christy's during the 1834-35 great strike. Mary heroically saved the local industry. Luke called the union 'damned rascals' 'which has starved us and made me go without a coat to my back, and if my wife had not gone to London and softened the hearts of the Masters we might all have laid down here and died and rotted'.

The hatters were always ready for industrial action if their interests were threatened. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word strike was first used when hatters withdrew their labour in 1768.

Detour for buggies and to avoid kissing gates (also field if very muddy):

Return to School Road and turn left. Turn left on footpath to Prospect Lane. At end, turn left into Court Road. Cross road to use pavement opposite till you reach sharp bend – carefully re-cross here to take the path marked bridleway, next to Nightingale Lane. Continue, keeping right to go down bridleway beside Hilly Fields (FCT10) to Nightingale Bridge (FCT11).

Return to School Road and turn right.

Frampton Kettle Trail and wheelchair users:

continue on School Road to return to start.

Turn right beside the pillared National School – now Crossbow House Community Centre. Take the footpath behind the building by going straight ahead through both car parks: the path runs between the playing field and Frampton Court (if muddy, an alternative is to go the other side of hedge to the corner steps behind tennis courts). At kissing gate, walk diagonally across the field via more kissing gates and following the line of electricity cable (if too muddy, go*

across top of field beside houses, through kissing gate and turn left down bridleway beside the field). Pause in middle of field (after 2nd kissing gate) to view Watley's End to the right and Frampton to the left.

NB. Two alternatives to avoid field if muddy (FCT10) & bridge (FCT11) if flooded:

- 1.** Either continue on School Road to turn right into Rectory Road; continue over footbridge; at end (FCT17), turn left into Park Lane.
- 2.** Or at kissing gate (*above) turn left onto path leading to Park Row; right at end into Rectory Road; continue as above.

10. Home Field, otherwise known as Hilly Fields.

Here in 1871 hatter Robert Maggs died of a heart attack whilst walking from Watley's End to Frampton. Other hatters left him alone, thinking him drunk. Hatters often drank ten pints of beer daily when at work. Garnishes of drink were demanded by workmates at each major event in a hatter's life: finishing an apprenticeship, a new job, or marriage. 'When a new hatter was initiated into the drinking mysteries, he had begun the career of a drunkard and was ripe and ready to lend a willing hand in putting other novices through the debasing ordeal.' Wives of

men working at Christy's beseeched the managers to stop this 'horrible practice for the poor families' sake' (see FRT9 & FCT17).

At 3rd kissing gate, turn left onto bridleway to reach:

11. Nightingale Bridge



Pickford packhorse train c.1790

Made of locally quarried Pennant stone, this bridge is part of an old packhorse trail and a busy route for hatters between Frampton and Watley's End. Before 1800, goods were carried on stout draught horses, panniers either side, 20 to 30 strung together in caravans travelling many miles a day. From 1600, felt hats made locally were carried to Bristol to be shaped, styled and sold.

The roads were bad and attracted many robber gangs. The guard was armed with blunderbuss, pistol and cutlass. 'Many a conflict took place, but Pickford men as a rule held their own' hence the saying 'The Bold Pickford'. Pickford's still held a contract with Christy's in 1853.

Continue up the lane

12. Harris Barton

Hatters walking from Watley's End to Frampton workshops passed through Harris Barton which once had three public houses, one known as the House of Plenty and another as the Cottage of Content (now N°3). The close-set cottages, many lived in by hatters, give a good impression of what a small hatting community would have been like around 1800. Edward Skidmore used part of his home here as a workshop in 1841, renting the property from Samuel Holder senior (hatter).





Cottage of Content - see cellar left of door

Other residents supplied factories; for example, one Henry Farmer carried baskets of coal to, and ashes from, Christy's hot water boilers.

At the end of the lane, turn left into Park Lane. Look on your left for:

13. 151-155 Park Lane.



These cottages once occupied by hatters have steep pitched gables and deep fascia boards, a style of architecture common in South Gloucestershire. Most of over 30 hat workshops in Frampton have long been demolished, their small upstairs rooms, large store and kettle areas downstairs proving unsuitable for modern housing.

Many workshops were sited at road junctions, for example John and Robert Simmonds at Woodend/ Beesmoor Road in 1841; Bryant's east of Woodend Road/South View; Curtis's at South View/Brockridge Lane; Osborne's from 1790, north of Goose Green/Ryecroft Road and, from 1831, south of Park Lane/Clyde Road. Park Lane was known as Penny Lane, the amount paid to locals per bucket of urine to be used in processing hats. Those who wore the finished goods were no doubt unaware of this.

Continue on Park Lane to:

14. Christy's Manager's House, 189 Park Lane



Originally with five rooms, this and the front factory (No 191) were finished in 1840. When William Axon was manager, an 1855 inventory noted that 'high winds had blown down brickwork in the master bedroom, blocking a window and breaking a looking glass'.

Among many items, the house contained a 'four poster bed with wool mattress, feather bed, bolster, two pillows, seven blankets, six linen sheets and two printed counterpanes; one mahogany wash hand stand with blue jug and basin, glass water bottle and tumbler; one turkey carpet and hearth rug; one candle box with one pair of brass, and one tin, candlesticks; one set of china except two saucers and plates (saucers broken in transit from London and plates never sent)'.

15. Christy's Hat Factory (No 191) and Estate



The original factory and land was bought for £600 in 1818 from local hatter Samuel Holder. Christy's employed over 200 people here, in local homes, and at Rangeworthy. Behind the narrow windows on each side of the top floor, feltmakers worked in small cubicles with their 2-metre bows to separate wool and fur fibres

into a four-inch thick batt ready for hatmaking (see Introduction figure 2). In the 1830s, to the right of the manager's house were nine factory buildings; two paddocks, possibly for transport horses; outbuildings and a cottage with garden occupied by George Drew (general labourer). The last hats were made in 1871. Most of the buildings have been demolished except the two main factory buildings (now dwellings) and a cottage (No 203, now extended) which is the oldest remaining building of Christy's estate. In 1855 George Roach 'a good hatter and steady' from Iron Acton lived here and paid rent of 1s 9d.



16. Christy's Water Supply

A steady supply of fresh water was needed for hatters' kettles, washing and dyeing. Most hatters' workshops in Frampton and Watley's End were on escarpments some 10 metres above the River Frome. Christy's began in 1813 with a deep well (sited beside the rear factory; filling it took 1½ lorry loads of rubble) - hard work for apprentices hauling up water.

By 1822, Christy's water came from a spring opposite the factory, but a regular supply became an increasing problem. In 1834, they dug a large pond in a field near the current southern junction of Sunnyside and St Peter's Crescent. A water culvert ran across the road to supply 13 hat batteries (about 100 men) in eight rooms.

Continue on Park Lane, passing on the right:

17. Live and Let Live



16

One of the oldest Frampton pubs.

In prosperous times, local hatters worked just three days and spent the remainder of the week 'seated on the green with barrels of beer'. In London, individual weekly spend on drink in the 1820s regularly reached 18s out of a £3 to £4 pay packet.

Miss Skinner at the water pump beside Christy's factory

In a probable reaction to drunkenness, at least four of the hatters of the Hicks family in South Gloucestershire were given the first name Sober. Sadly for the hatters, alcohol often duplicated or masked the effects of mercury poisoning and, possibly, anthrax (see Introduction and FRT9).

Continue on, crossing Rectory Road, until you reach a large house on the left.

18. Step House 243 Park Lane



The Hall manufactory at Frampton was first mentioned in 1832, but the house dates from a three gabled farmhouse rebuilt by Mr Hall in 1733 (date on rainwater hood) which would make the family one of the first hat-making firms to move from London. Hall's were leaders of the London Feltmakers Company and, at one time, the greatest house in Europe for exporting hats, with several hundred employees at their Aldermanbury and London Wall offices. In 1871, after Hall's closed, Step House was occupied by Reuben

Jefferis, a prominent hat manufacturer from Oldland Common. Auctioned in 1878, the estate had 'large entrance hall, dining and drawing rooms, kitchen, pantry, three best and three servants bedrooms over, large cellar; the whole well supplied with water'.

19. Step House Cottages 245-247



18 & 19 Hall's Factory Plan, 1841

Church Road 1908
- old bridge from
Bridge Way as it
would have looked
in hatting times

In the 1800s manufactories were clusters of rough outbuildings and lean-tos gathered round a workshop, sometimes with fine residences where the foreman lived and the entrepreneur stayed during visits from London. The workshop was a depot for raw materials like wool and fur, half-finished and completed goods. In 1841, Step House was surrounded by thirteen outbuildings, comprising feltmakers' cottages, work and store rooms, yard and gardens. To the right a path leads to cottages (now renovated) where hats were made.

Continue on Park Lane. Follow pavement round to the left, crossing Meadow Mead. Turn left into Church Road. Continue over bridge and cross road at traffic island to return to the church.





Kettle Trail (FCT 4-9)



327
581
202
222
482
483



Hatter's kettle at 415 Church Road (FCT5b)

Start: either at bus stop in Church Road, near School Road junction, or Crossbow House Community Centre, School Road. Turn right into School Road and continue to end of

DISTANCE → 0.8 MLS / 1.3 KM

Short, flat route including part of the 1st half of the FCT Trail. Suitable for the less mobile and wheelchair users.

road, using the lower kerbs if required. Turn right into Church Road. Find Nos 357-359 and then follow FCT points 4 to 9 only. Then return along School Road to the start.



Factory Trail (FCT 13-19 + 1-2)



327
202
222



Christy's manager's house and hat manufactory (FCT 14-15)

Start at Live and Let Live at the junction of Clyde Road and Park Lane. Turn left and proceed along Park Lane as far as No 168. Look across the road to FCT13.

DISTANCE → 1 ML / 1.6 KM

Short, flat route including part of the 2nd half of the FCT Trail. Suitable for the less mobile and wheelchair users.

Follow FCT Trail from point 13 to the end. Then view FCT2 & FCT1. Return across Church Road via traffic island to go back to start.

Frampton Ridge Trail (FRT 1-12)

DISTANCE → 1 ML / 1.65 KM

The first part is a flat, easy route suitable for the less mobile and wheelchair users who should retrace the route at * (after point 7) back to the start, before viewing FRT12 & FRT11.

Park in side roads. Café open weekdays till 3pm; 2pm Saturday. Toilets at Chapel if open.

Start on corner of Church Road and Lower Stone Close.

1. Main trading centre of Frampton Cotterell



This main shop was a corn merchants and general stores in hatting times. The horse-drawn delivery cart stood on a cobbled area in front of the shop.

2. Workshops, Frampton End Road

These workshops are almost certainly those described as the 'long shop' in 1831 and owned between Rachel Screen Tovey and James Palser (see FCT9). Palser employed Samuel and John Watley and Daniel Brown here. The second James Palser had a large house with workshops at Perrin Pit Road, but also rented two cottages to hatters at Brockridge (on which Zion Chapel was built), and had several more at Frampton End, and at North Corner, Frampton Common.



c. 1810 Windmill ground animal feed during the hatting period



581
482
483

There is a poignant letter from George Brown, likely son of Daniel (above), in the Bristol Observer in 1928 telling how many boy apprentices were faced either with unemployment or leaving their homes when Christy's closed in the 1870s. The bulk, including George, went to Christy's works in Stockport. Others went to Bermondsey, but 'did not live long'.

With the shops on your left, go a few metres to turn left on the footpath beside No 153 Church Road. At the end of the path turn right into Lower Stone Close, keeping right into Upper Stone Close. Proceed to the end (lower kerbs outside No 11). Take footpath beside the former windmill to Ryecroft Road and its junction with Woodend Road ahead. Carefully cross to:

3. Zion Chapel



Original Zion Chapel (extended)

Thomas Humphries, the colliery manager at nearby Frog Lane pit, and five others, sought support in 1794 for a first chapel to be erected in Frampton Cotterell, which was described as a 'neighbourhood enveloped in gross darkness, infidelity and iniquity ... these people are poor and foolish and do not know the Way of the Lord'. The Congregational Zion chapel was built the next year for £354 'in the centre of the hatting manufacturers', on land owned by James Palser (see FCT9). It attracted many independent-minded hatters from St Peter's Church (see FCT2). The original chapel (now Zion Hall) is behind the present chapel (built in 1873 for £1558).

Zion's Sunday Schools began in 1812, and were soon teaching hatters' children, but prior to this their education would have been next to non-existent. One observer recalls that in the earlier period 'little trace could be found ... of the labours of the schoolmaster; and the letters of the alphabet were frequently made to do duty where they had no right to be'.

With Zion Chapel on your left, turn left into Upper Chapel Lane. A few metres past the original chapel, look over the stone wall on your left (also accessible via car park for closer investigation).

4. Zion Burial Ground

The graveyard fell into disrepair and gravestones were either removed or, if legible, placed along the wall. Among those lost is that of Luke and Mary Fowler (née Palser - see FCT9). The body of hatter Thomas Cottle was exhumed from here in 1850 when, soon after his death in agony, his wife remarried a younger Mr Curtis. The body contained arsenic and 60-year old Hannah Curtis was sentenced to death. The night before her execution, a Queen's Messenger arrived from Balmoral with a reprieve.

Return to Woodend Road where the names of the houses opposite indicate their roles in hatting times.

*Turn left and cross road to pavement.
Turn left into Hillside Lane to see*



Hales: saddler & leather left; butcher, right

5. Row of old cottages and a former Hatter's Workshop.

Return to cross Woodend Road, pausing at 'The Cabin' on the corner of Gladstone Lane.



6. The Cabin and 132-136 Woodend Road



The Cabin and the adjacent cottages were owned by feltmaker William Pocock from 1825. Jabez Pullin lived in one of the cottages in 1841. He was adopted by his grandfather John, a prominent hatter and devout Methodist, who died in 1816, instructing that his 'body be decently interred in the burying ground at Zion Chapel in the spot where my wife and I have agreed to lie provided I should die in the neighbourhood'.

John asked his family to treat Jabez with 'all possible kindness', to let him live with them, and to instruct him in 'all branches of hatmaking'. By 1851, Jabez was in Thornbury, having left the trade to become a scripture reader.

Turn into Gladstone Lane and at 1st house on right, look for:

7. Well



One of many that remain locally. There was no piped water in Frampton until the mid-1890s, so hatters drew water from wells and springs (see FCT16 & WET15).

**Return to continue down Woodend Road to see*

8. 135-143 Woodend Road



These hatters' cottages contained the working premises of feltmaker James Cordy. They are described in the records as 'cottages, gardens and shops' (always workshops), and occupied in 1841 by hatters Charles Cordy, Levi Hollister, George Bryant and James Pocock among others. James Cordy was working in Frampton Cotterell from at least 1831 and was one of the last local industry survivors in the 1870s when Christy's closed. The Pocock family of feltmakers were at work in the area from the mid-18th century.

Further down Woodend Road is No 159



*Wheelchair users are advised to continue to the end of lane and cross Ryecroft Road (to pavement). Turn right and retrace the route beside the windmill back to Church Road; turn left to view Points 12 & 11 before returning to the start.

Ryecroft Road as it would have looked in hatting times. Rising Sun pub in background

9. 159 Woodend Road: the former Bunch of Grapes



The Bunch of Grapes was one of at least 17 pubs recorded in Frampton Cotterell over the last two hundred years. These public houses were frequently caught up in a web of quick violence, casual thievery and a commitment to alcohol. Between 1829-1836, the two largest categories of petty session offences among Frampton Cotterell hatters were common assault, almost entirely on each other, and poaching. In a significant third place were eighteen cases concerning alcohol licences, principally late hours or gaming in public houses. Young apprentices were kept busy running all day to and from the workshops to keep the journeyman hatters' pots full of beer.

Long before the hatters were called 'mad', 'as drunk as a hatter' was an expression in widespread common use (see FCT10 & 17).

Continue down Woodend Road to Footes (formerly Crows) Lane.

10. The Decline of Hatting and Emigration

Many Frampton Cotterell families emigrated to Australia around the 1840-50s, driven out by the rapid collapse of the local hatting industry and the great agricultural depression. The most likely groups of emigrants were the poor, those aged under thirty and females; almost 30 % of families migrated together in each decade. One emigrant family were the Footes, although Joseph Foote, who was a hatter in Frampton Cotterell in 1841, went to Australia not because of lack



Footes Lane, on your left, is named after a hatting family who emigrated to Australia.

of work, but out of religious conviction as an agent of the Colonial Missionary Society. Indeed he collapsed in the Congregational Chapel at Richmond on 9 July 1848 while preaching to a congregation which included many convicts. He died the following evening. His widow, his eldest son, John Clarke Foote and his wife, and four other children emigrated to Australia in 1850. The photo on page 35 was taken once the family had become established and prosperous in Australia.

Turn right at the junction, into South View. Cross the road and continue uphill past the Rising Sun. Continue to end of road. Turn right into Church Road and look for:



Vine Cottage, now gone, in Footes Lane; lived in by John Clarke Foote 1822-1895 (top right in photo on page 35), son of Joseph Foote. Drawn by Audrey Lewis.

11. 183 Church Road



The steep rock face behind No 183 is the remains of one of many small local quarries that supplied stone for hatters' cottages.

12. 153 Church Road



The photo shows the main shop, the chapel and the Frampton End workshops as they would have looked during the hatting period

This is the site of the Wesley Chapel, built in 1821 by a break-away group called the Tent Methodists. They were 'entreated' to come to Frampton Cotterell in 1818 and held three meetings among the hatter squatters each Sunday. In summer this was under canvas, but in winter they retreated to barns in Frampton End and Ryecroft Road.

When Tent Methodism failed in the 1830s, many hatters were received back into the main Methodist fold. The chapel was sold for £7 to the Wesleyan Methodists in 1832. Among the local trustees were 'five hat manufacturers'; Samuel Long and John Hollister, both of Frampton Cotterell, William Elliott of Dursley, Joseph Foote of Winterbourne (see FRT10), and George Vaughan of London, (see WET22). The chapel was demolished in 1967.

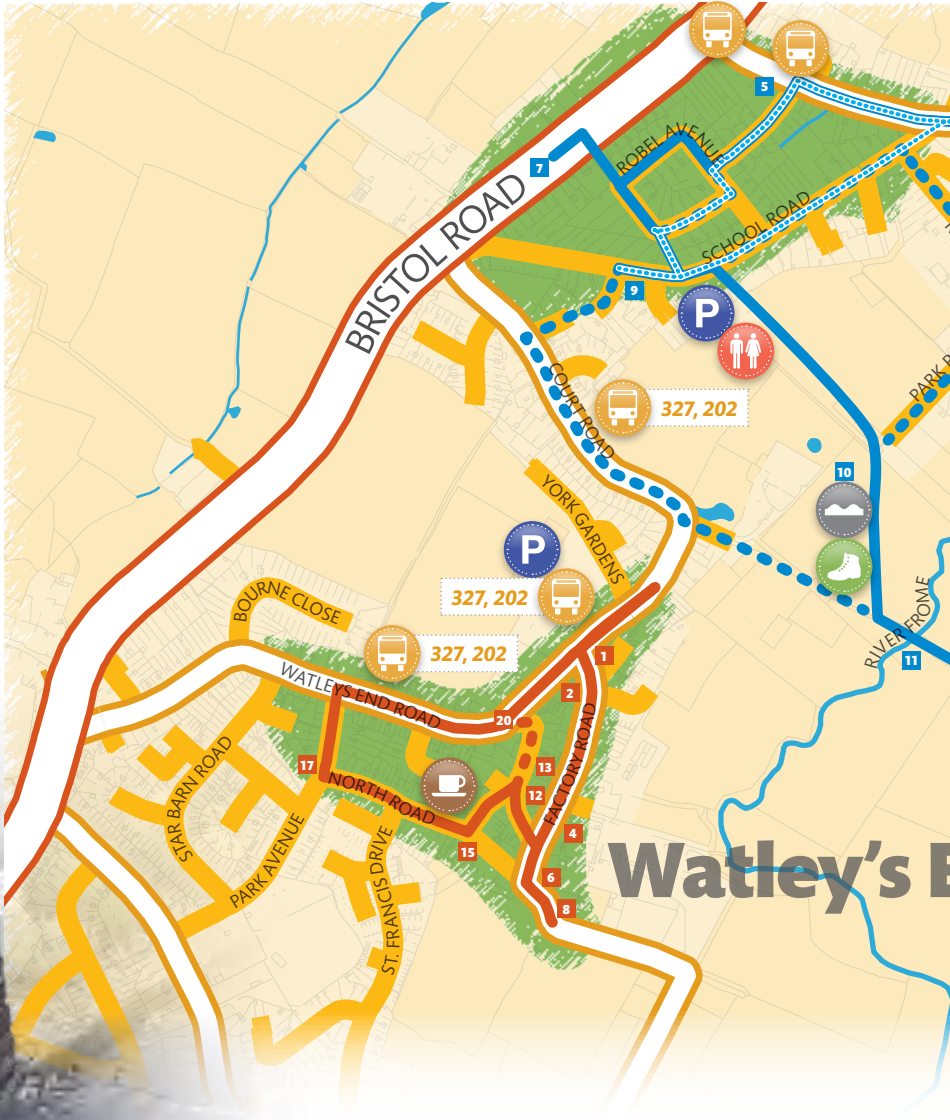
A few metres on is where the route started.

12



Sunday School 1902



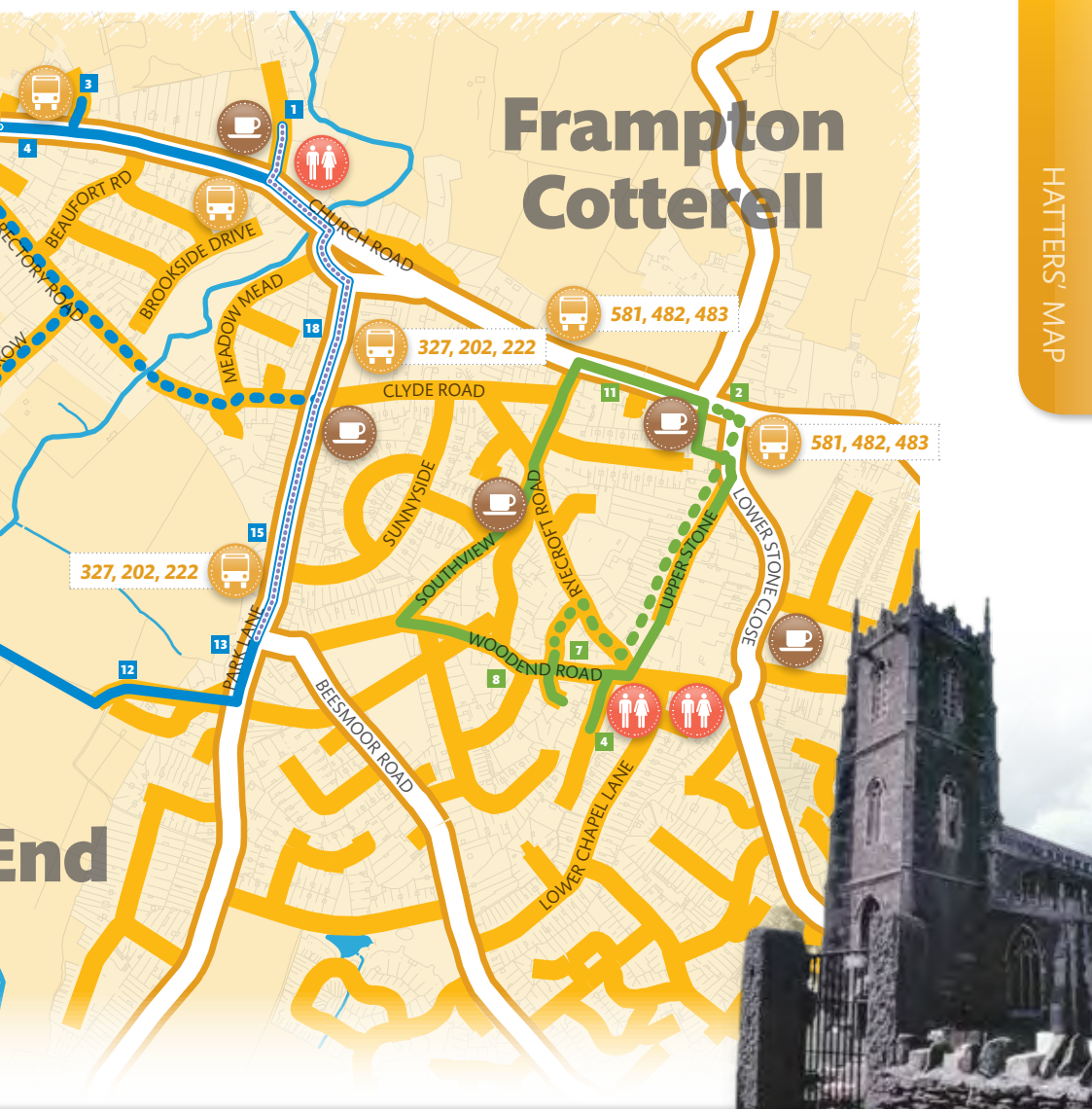


Key

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- Frampton Cotterell
- ... Frampton Cotterell - alternative
- Frampton Kettle
- Frampton Factory

- Watley's End
- ... Watley's End - alternative
- Frampton Ridge
- ... Frampton Ridge - alternative



Bus stop: **327, 581, 202, 222, 482, 483**



Muddy after rain



Refreshments. Car park and toilet for patrons



Uneven ground



Car park



Common land



Toilets, restricted opening

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Requests for further copies of this booklet plus any comments on its content:

Tony Harding, Chair of WERS and the Trail Project Advisory Group, 01454 772285 or tony@wellcottage.com

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