

## SOME STONES

*(Originating from the walls of CHATTERIS ABBEY)*



**Top Left** – Abbey stones in a wall near the west end of Victoria Street. The stone on the right appears to have an *upside down* sundial scratched into it.

**Top Right** – Original Abbey stones can be seen in the wall at the junction of South Park Steet and Wood Street.

**Bottom Left** – Stones originating from Chatteris Abbey were used in 1847 to build the houses that comprise *Seymour Place* along London Road.

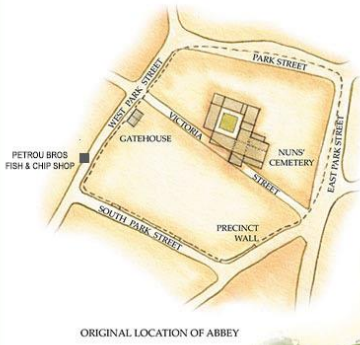
Chatteris Abbey was founded as a monastery for Benedictine Nuns in 1016 by Aednoth, Bishop of Dorchester. Before 1310 much of the monastery was destroyed by fire. By the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, some of the local families appear to have been using the nave of the monastic church as their parochial church.

Never a wealthy abbey, it survived the first wave of closures during the *Dissolution of the Monasteries* and was finally surrendered to the King's Commissioners in 1538, by which time there were eleven nuns in residence. At this date many families still used the abbey church as parochial but this, unusually, did not save it from demolition, the parishioners being transferred to the nearby *St Peter and St Paul's Church*. A range of the cloister buildings survived as part of a mansion known as *Park House*. This was demolished in 1847 and some of the stones used in the building of *Seymour Place* (see picture [bottom left] above).

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Scroll down to see a drawing of *Chatteris Abbey*; some more history and a map of its location.

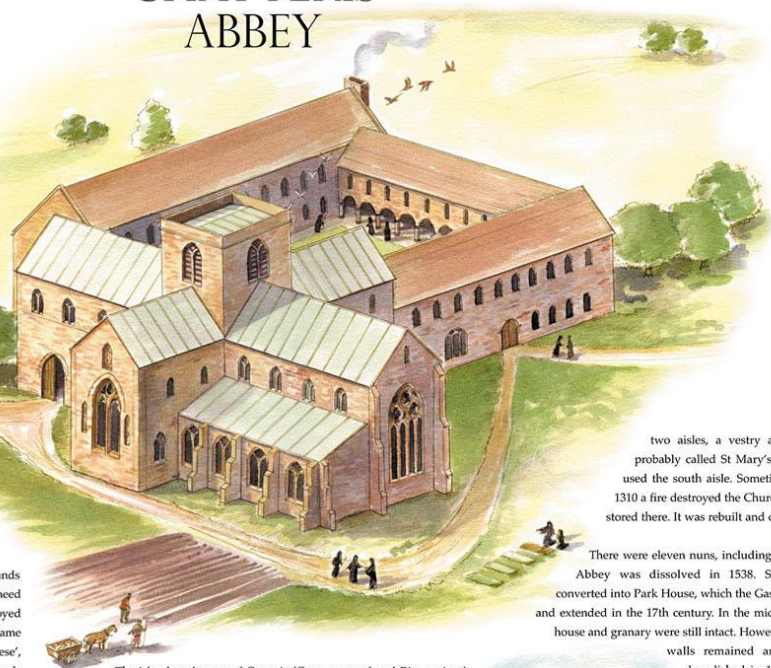
# CHATTERIS ABBEY



ORIGINAL LOCATION OF ABBEY

Chatteris Abbey was founded by Bishop Aednoth of Dorchester (previously Abbot of Ramsey) between 1007 and 1016. His sister, Aelfwen became the first Abbess. The Abbots of Ely and Ramsey gifted two Chatteris manors to the Abbey in 1086. At first the Abbey was relatively poor because it lacked a royal founder. It is the poorest of the eight nunneries mentioned in the Domesday Book. Even so, abbey lands became sufficiently widespread during the 12th and 13th centuries to need three manorial courts, Chatteris, Foxton and Barley. The courts employed estate managers, stewards, bailiffs and rent collectors. Income also came from churches, tithes and legacies. Gifts, for example 'a weight of cheese', were part of the conditions of entry for a novice. Transportation of goods such as grain from the Abbey's mills was often by boat. By 1535 the Abbey was valued at £97 3s. 4d.

Henry I gave the Bishop of Ely rights over the Abbey in the early 12th century. Succeeding bishops exercised their spiritual authority over the nunnery by overseeing the election of professing nuns and abbesses.



two aisles, a vestry and a steeple. It was probably called St Mary's and the townspeople used the south aisle. Sometime between 1306 and 1310 a fire destroyed the Church and manorial goods stored there. It was rebuilt and consecrated in 1352.

There were eleven nuns, including the Abbess, when the Abbey was dissolved in 1538. Some buildings were converted into Park House, which the Gascoyne family acquired and extended in the 17th century. In the mid 18th century the fish house and granary were still intact. However, by 1819 only a few walls remained and Park House was demolished in 1847. Walls marked on the Ordnance Survey map are not original, but were built of ragstone and quoins from the ruins. Original stones are incorporated into buildings in London Road and the sidewall of 24 Victoria Street.

The island settlement of Caeteric (Ceto - a wood and Ric - a river) already existed when the Abbey was founded near the centre. The additional economic activity encouraged the development of the village. The Abbey building would have contained bedchambers for the residents and guests, a dormitory, cellarer's room, three butteries, a bake house, a brew house, kitchen, hall, frater, fish house, granary, barns, chapter house and infirmary. There would also have been carts, farm implements and livestock. The Abbey Church had a choir,



THIS PROJECT IS BEING PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY European Regional Development Fund

Fenland District Council

This information is based on archive material from Chatteris library.

**Footnote** – Did you notice that the Petrou Bros. Fish & Chip Shop stands just outside what would have been the boundary walls of the abbey in West Park Street? I don't know if there are any records that show whether this shop existed between 1016 and 1538 but if it did it would have been jolly useful on any night when the nuns didn't fancy cooking.