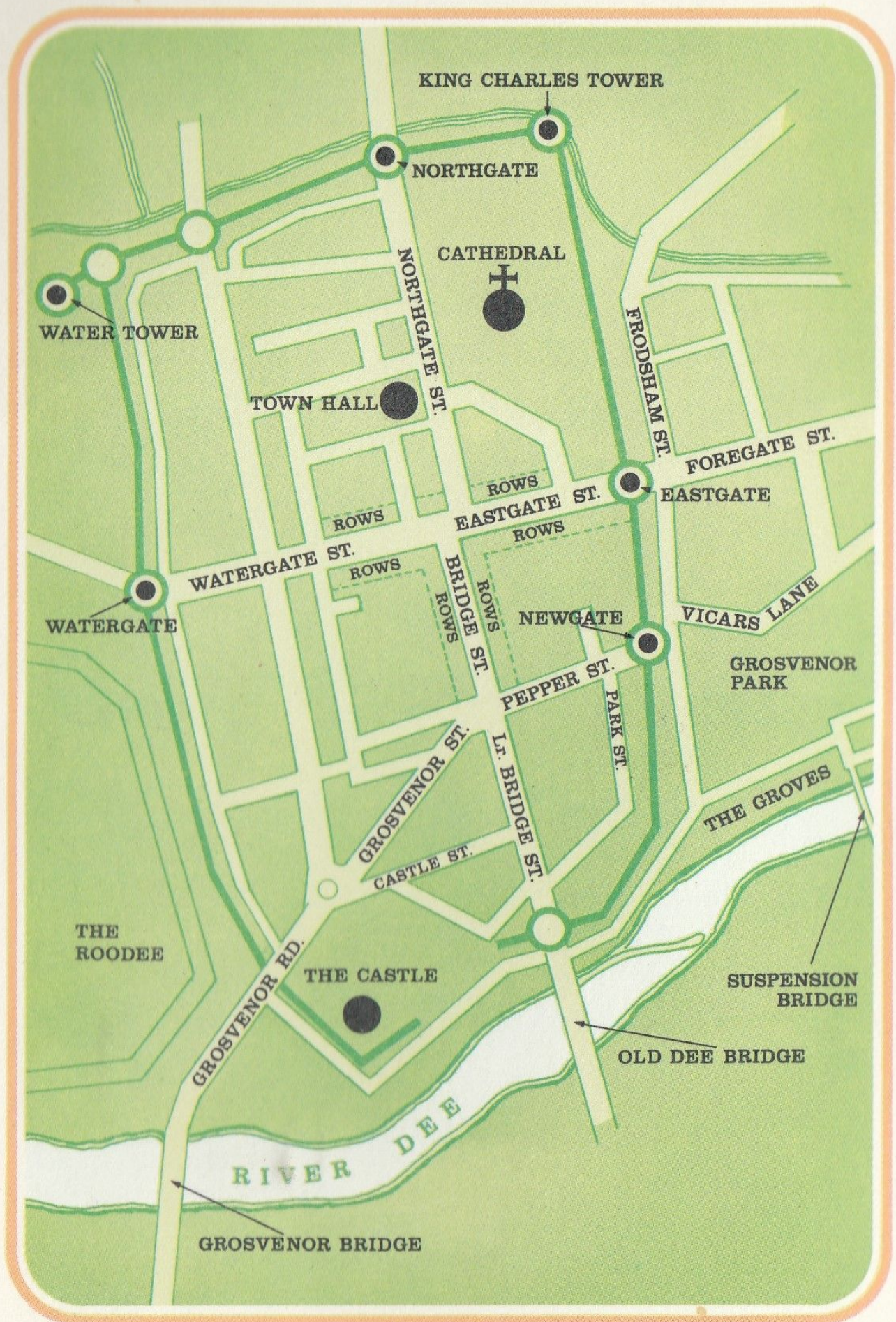


HISTORIC CHESTER



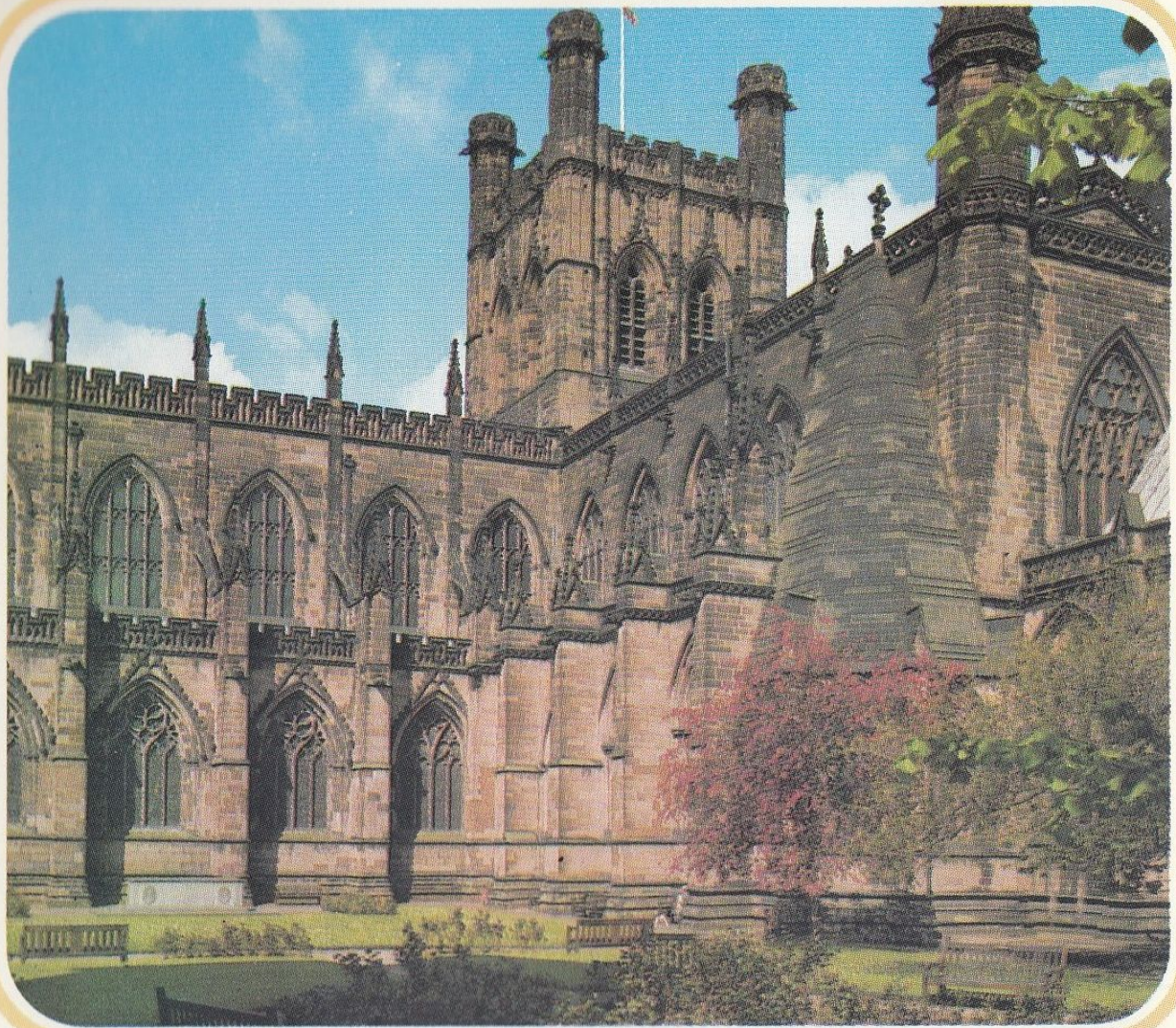
A Salmon Cameracolour Book

Historic
CHESTER

including

The Cathedral
The Medieval Walls
The City Streets

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Chester Cathedral from the south-east

CHESTER

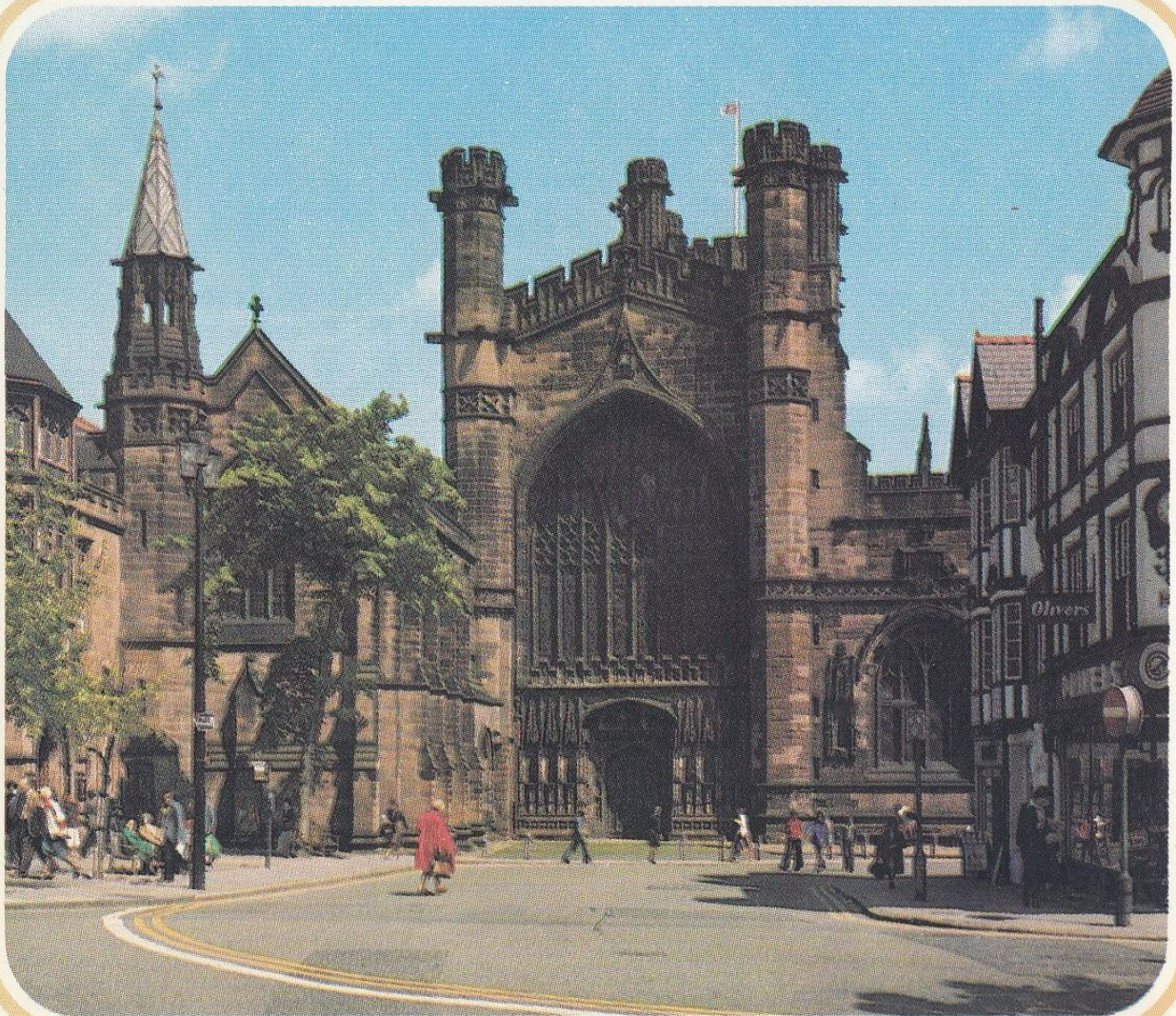
The history of Chester dates from c. AD 70 when the Romans established on the site the fortress of their 20th Legion. They named the place Deva and it developed into a thriving trading port. After the Roman withdrawal from Britain the town fell prey to plundering Saxons and Danes. It remained almost derelict until a revival of fortunes in the 10th century, when the first minster church was built. Under the Normans Chester became the centre of a powerful earldom. Since the 13th century the title of Earl of Chester has traditionally been conferred on the eldest son of the monarch. By the 13th century the city had revived in importance, its port trading as far afield as Spain, France and the Low Countries. However, the gradual silting up of the River Dee once more brought decline, which was hastened by a damaging siege in

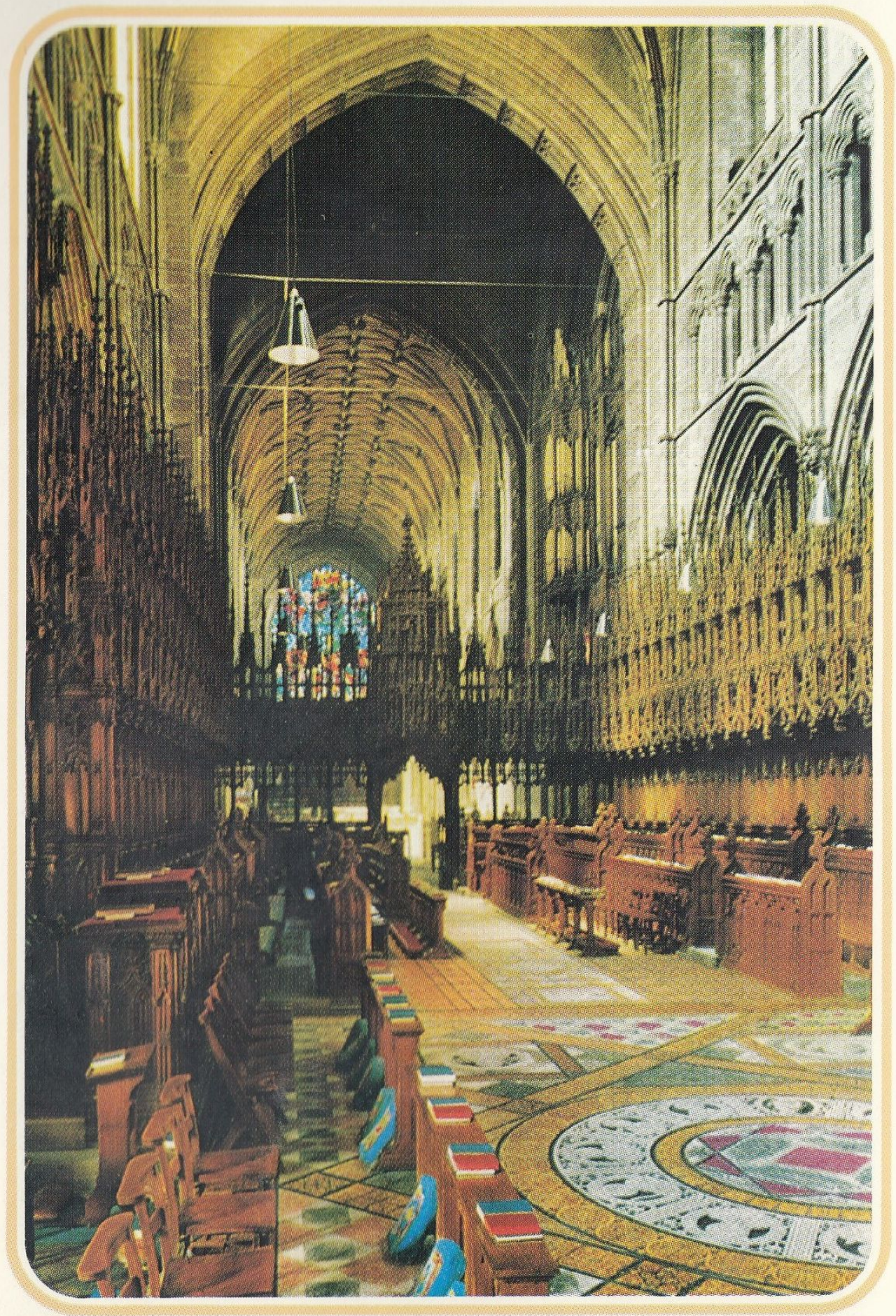
1645/6 during the Civil War. For the visitor today Chester is a beautiful and historic city and the legacy of its Roman and medieval importance is some of the finest and best-preserved urban architecture in Britain.

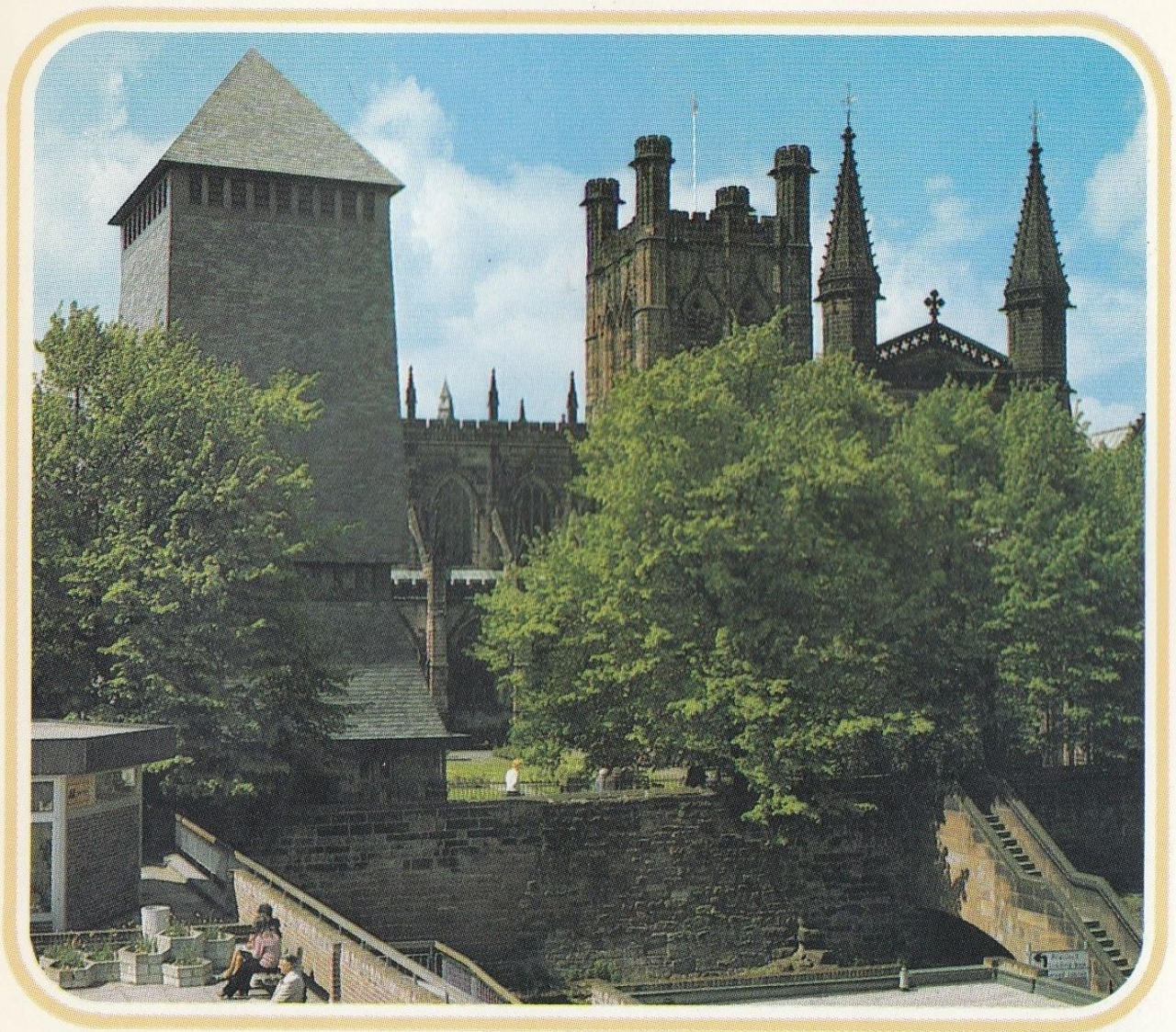
THE CATHEDRAL. Chester's principal landmark is its magnificent cathedral. A minster church was founded on the site in the 10th century to house the remains of St. Werburgh, a Mercian princess who died in AD 707. The present building is largely 14th century but in fact it was not until 1540 that it was created a cathedral. Throughout the Middle Ages it was a Benedictine Abbey founded in 1092 by Hugh, Earl of Chester. To this day it is one of the best preserved groups of monastic buildings in Britain.

Construction of the cathedral *Nave* was begun in the 14th century but not completed for a century and a half. In its north western corner is the *Baptistry* where the massive arches are of 12th century date. One of the

The West Front, Chester Cathedral







The Bell Tower and Cathedral

features of the cathedral is the large *South Transept*, which contains, among other monuments, the ensign of H.M.S. Chester on which the boy Jack Cornwell won a V.C. in 1916. From the south transept there is a good view of the Chester Imp, a grotesque stone figure to be seen in the north clereſtory of the nave. In the *Choir* are some of the finest examples in Britain of 14th century carved stalls. Behind the high altar in the *Lady Chapel* are the remnants of the stone shrine which once held the relics of St. Werburgh. A doorway in the north transept leads past the 13th century *Chapter House* into the cathedral *Cloisters*. Here the arched recesses are where the monks sat to study. On the north side is the monastic *Refectory*, or dining hall, and on the west side the vaulted Norman *Undercroft*. In the north western corner of the cloisters a stairway gives access to Abbey Square, which is surrounded by charming houses dating from the 16th to the 19th century. In the square

facing: The Choir, Chester Cathedral



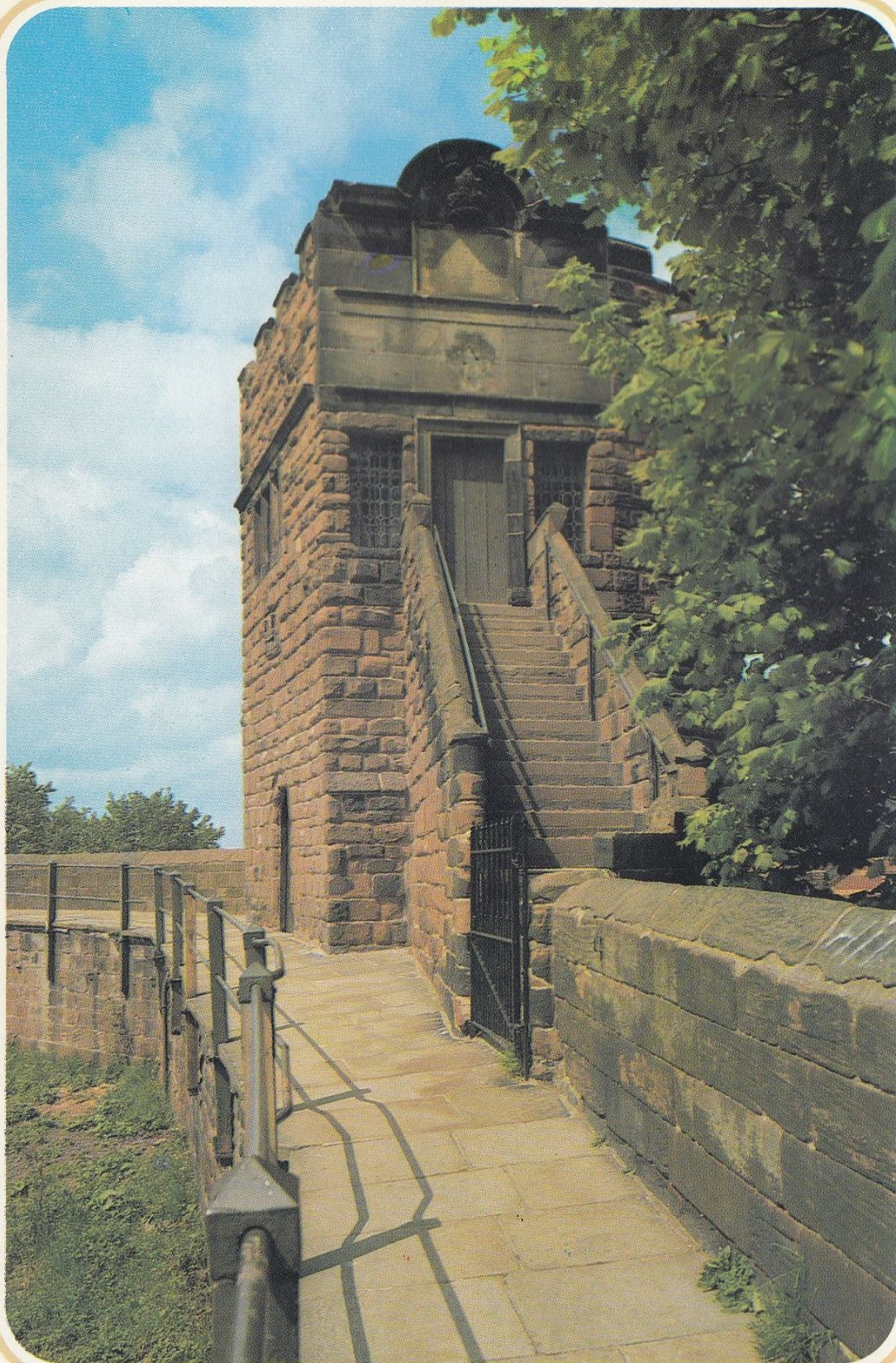
Eastgate from Foregate Street

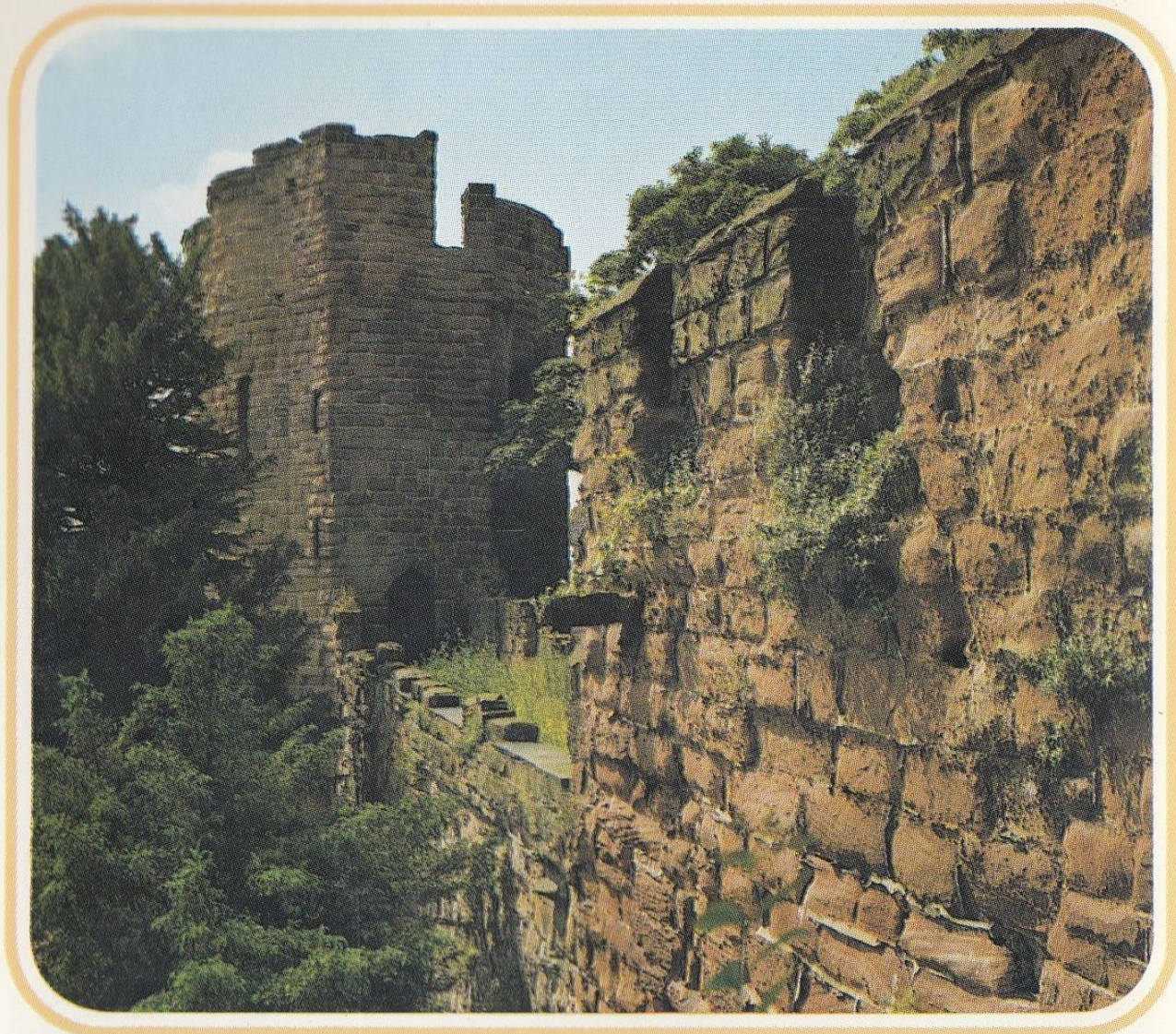
the famous medieval Mystery Plays were performed, and today it is an oasis of calm in the city centre.

THE CITY WALLS. Chester is unique in England in having its ancient city walls complete in their entirety. The Romans were the first to fortify the city and parts of their original wall are still visible. In the 12th and 13th centuries the walls were extended and further defensive towers added. Unfortunately several of these, including the four main gateways were subsequently destroyed and replaced by 18th and 19th century structures. However, the walls have been restored and give an excellent impression of what a medieval city looked like. They also offer an excellent vantage point from which to view some of the city's best known landmarks.

The principal entrance to the city is the *Eastgate*, surmounted by a clock tower, which was built in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's

facing: King Charles's Tower





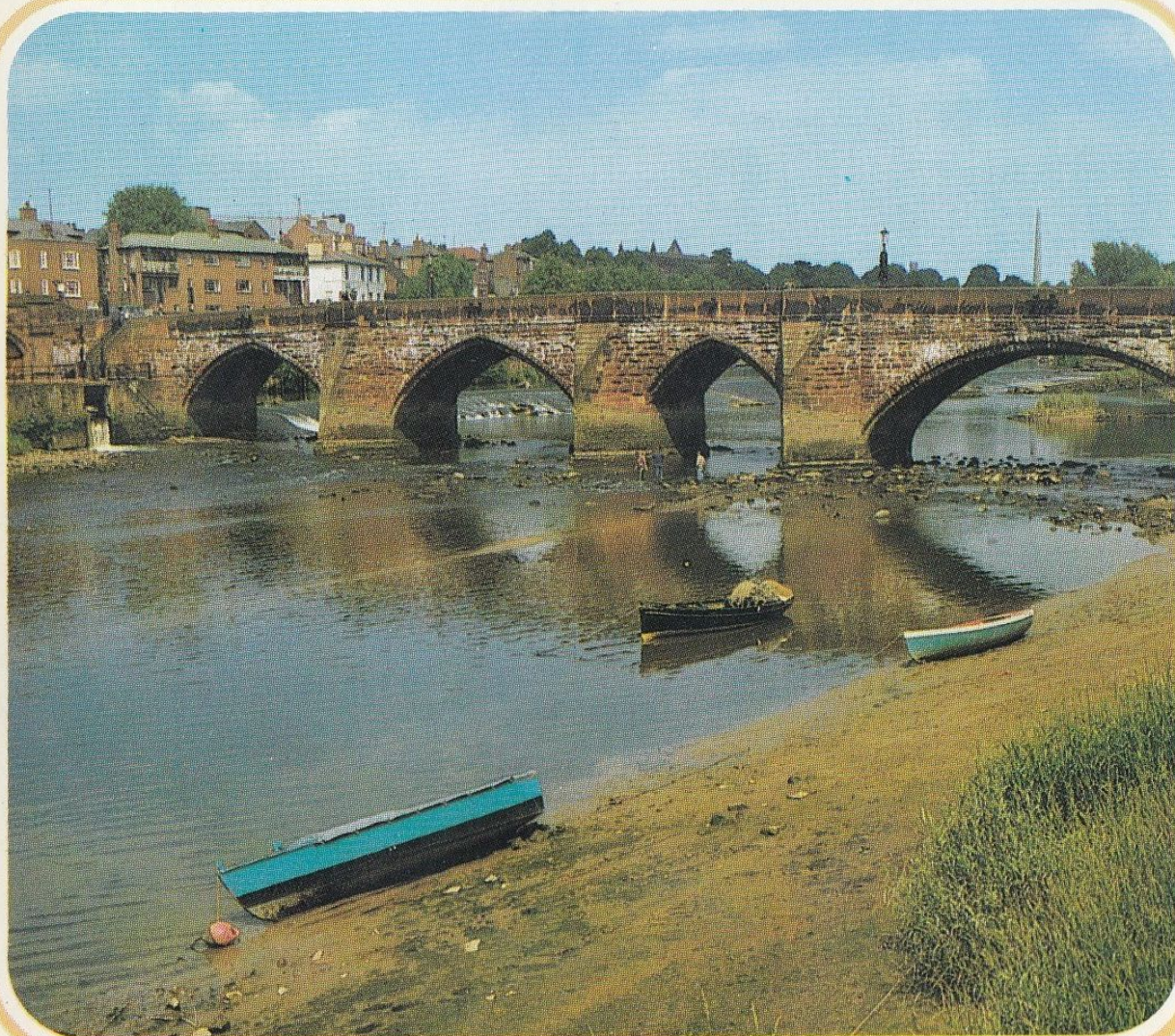
The Water Tower

jubilee. The gateway itself is 18th century and replaced the original medieval towers. To the north of the Eastgate excellent views of the cathedral are obtained from the walls. At their north-eastern corner stands *King Charles's Tower*, so named because from it King Charles I is said to have watched his army suffer defeat at the Battle of Rowton Heath in 1645. Restored this century to its medieval appearance the tower contains an exhibition relating to the Civil War. The section of wall between here and the *Northgate* includes the best preserved parts of the Roman fortifications, up to 17 feet high in places. Running parallel with the wall at this point is the Shropshire Union Canal. Below the Northgate the canal is spanned by a footbridge known as the Bridge of Sighs. It is so called because condemned prisoners from the city gaol in the Northgate once used to cross the bridge to their final church service in the Chapel of Little St. John outside the wall.

At the north-western corner of the walls a battlemented spur connects the main defences with the massive *Water Tower*. Built in 1322 this was once entirely surrounded by water and guarded the port of Chester. The main western entrance to the city is the *Watergate* and to the south of this there are fine views across the *Roodee*. This open expanse of land was once covered by water but is now the site of Chester racecourse. After crossing Grosvenor Road the walls pass the modern County Hall, and *Chester Castle*. Dating originally from 1069 the castle was later fortified in stone by Henry III. The medieval walls were largely removed when the present range of buildings was erected between 1789 and 1813. However, the square Agricola Tower is 13th century and contains the Museum of the Cheshire Regiment, and the vaulted Chapel of St. Mary de Castro.

Until the opening of the Grosvenor Road Bridge in 1832 the only

The Old Dee Bridge



southern access to the city was across the *Old Dee Bridge*. The river was first bridged by the Romans although the present structure dates from the 13th century. Upstream the River Dee is delightfully scenic, and along the north bank there is a pleasant riverside walk known as *The Groves*. From here rowing and motor boats can be hired. Set back from the river are the gardens and lawns of *Grosvenor Park*. At its western end is *St. John's Church*, which contains some fine 12th century architecture, including massive Norman pillars in the nave and the ruins of the choir. Between the *Bridgegate* and *Newgate* the city walls run parallel to Park Street. Situated here are the misleadingly named "Nine Houses", in fact an unusual terrace of six 17th century half-timbered cottages. The Newgate is modern and replaced the smaller Wolfegate just to the north. On a lawn outside the gateway are the bottom courses of the original south-east angle tower of the Roman wall.

The River Dee





The Cross

A little further eastwards is the site of the Roman amphitheatre, believed to be the largest in Britain, measuring 314×286 feet.

THE CITY STREETS. Chester's streets are laid out on the pattern that the Roman fortress builders designed over 2,000 years ago. Present day Eastgate and Watergate Streets were the Roman Via Principalis, Bridge Street the Via Praetoria, and Northgate Street the Via Decumana. The architecture, however, largely dates from the medieval, Tudor and Stuart periods and is characterised by the use of half-timbered construction. The centre of the city is the *Cross*, which takes its name from the medieval High Cross which stands there. Pulled down in 1646, this was later re-erected near the Newgate, but has since been restored to its original position. The unique architectural feature of the city centre is the famous *Rows*. These consist of double tiers of shops, one at ground level and one on the first floor set back behind a

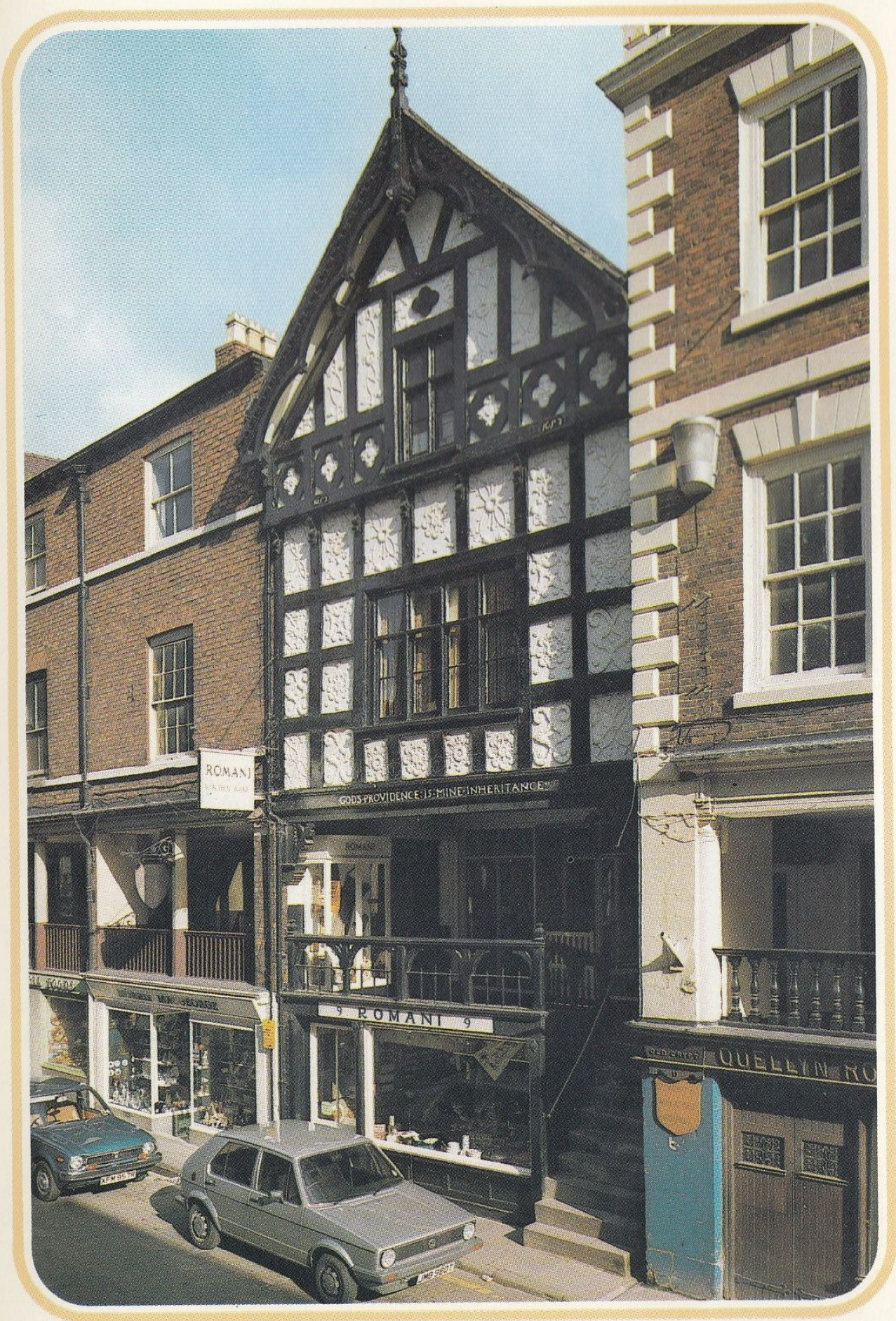


The Rows

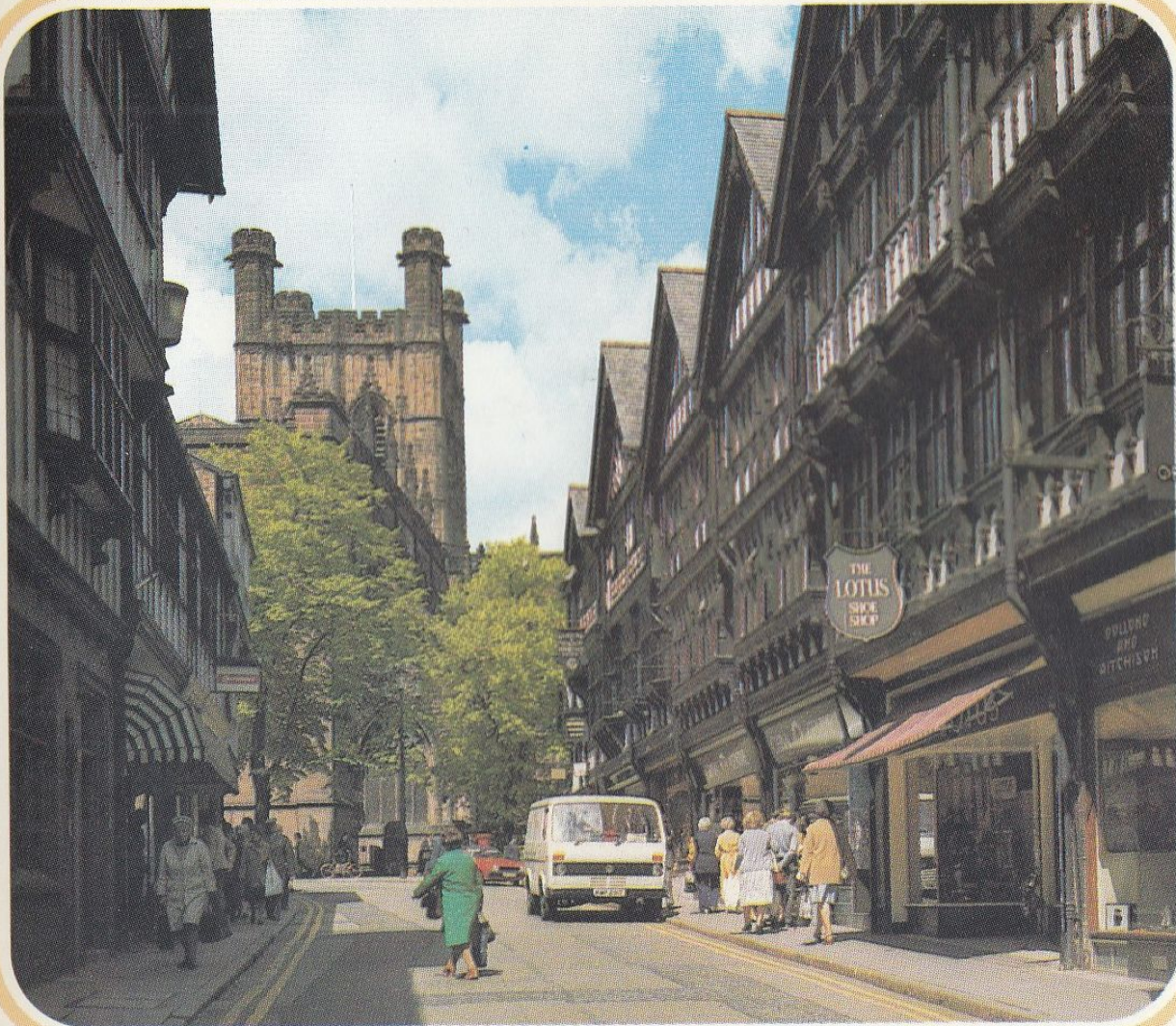
covered walkway. The true origin of this unusual style of building is unknown although evidence suggests that it was mainly adopted after a disastrous city fire in 1278. During the Middle Ages certain trades congregated in particular parts of the Rows, giving rise to names such as Fishmongers Row, Mercers Row and Ironmongers Row.

The principal thoroughfare of the city has always been *Eastgate Street*. Leading off it is *St. Werburgh Street* from which there are good views of the south side of the cathedral. Leading northwards from the Cross is *Northgate Street*. On its western side is the imposing neo-Gothic Town Hall, opened in 1869, some parts of which are open to the public. Opposite is the 14th century Abbey Gateway which gives access to Abbey Square. Beyond Town Hall Square is the Pied Bull Hotel, the oldest licensed house in the city, first recorded in 1471. Westwards from the Cross is *Watergate Street*, perhaps the most interesting in the city.

facing: God's Providence House, Watergate Street







St. Werburgh Street

Among the many attractive buildings several are particularly notable. On the south side is *God's Providence House*, restored in 1862 but still retaining the main frontal beam with its Puritan text taken from the original 17th century house. One of the best preserved buildings in its original state is the nearby 15th century Leche House. The finest in the street, however, is *Bishop Lloyd's House* with its richly carved timberwork depicting biblical and animal scenes. Its name derives from George Lloyd, who was bishop of Chester from 1604 to 1615. The interior contains fine 17th century panelling, plasterwork and fireplaces. Lower down the street stands Stanley Palace, so called because it was the town house of the Stanleys of Alderley, earls of Derby. It was built in 1591 and restored in 1935.

Extending southwards from the Cross is *Bridge Street* which has Rows on both its sides. At the junction with Pepper Street is St.

facing: Bishop Lloyd's House, Watergate Street



Bridge Street

Michael's Church where the west tower is built into the Rows. Opposite is Grosvenor Street in which is the *Grosvenor Museum*, a fascinating collection of exhibits tracing the local and natural history of the city including many archaeological finds from the Roman and Saxon periods. Lower Bridge Street possesses some interesting old inns and houses, including the Falcon, the Old King's Head Hotel, the 16th century Tudor House, and the Bear and Billet, which is dated 1664. Below Castle Street is Gamul House where King Charles I stayed during the siege of Chester.

No visit to the city would be complete without a trip to world famous *Chester Zoo*, set in some 333 acres two miles to the east. Its main feature is the display of the animals, birds and reptiles in their natural environment, with as few cages and fences as possible to hinder the public's view.



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