

St Catherine's Chapel is unusual in that it is constructed entirely of stone, from foundation to roof, with walls that are at least four feet thick. Such buildings are rare in Great Britain although there is one other like it in Dorset (St Aldhelm, near St Alban's Head, 6 miles west of Swanage). The roof gives us an insight to how the Tithe Barn would have appeared since that too originally had a stone roof. The chapel has two porches (north and south) to accommodate processions of pilgrims, windows facing in all directions with main ones to east and west and it has a staircase in the northwest corner leading to the turret on the roof. There are three apertures here facing the sea – useful at times of hostilities. All the stone was quarried locally. Non-denominational services are held monthly during the summer. The legend of St Catherine herself is long and varied and she is the patron saint of sailors, students, philosophers, spinners, wheelwrights, engineers and spinsters. Although St. Catherine was a powerful medieval saint, her legend has been discredited since the 16th century and her saint's day removed from the church's calendar in 1967. Nonetheless the cult continues as you will see by the prayers and messages left in the Chapel. Walk 50 meters south from the Chapel to savour the spectacular views before you leave.

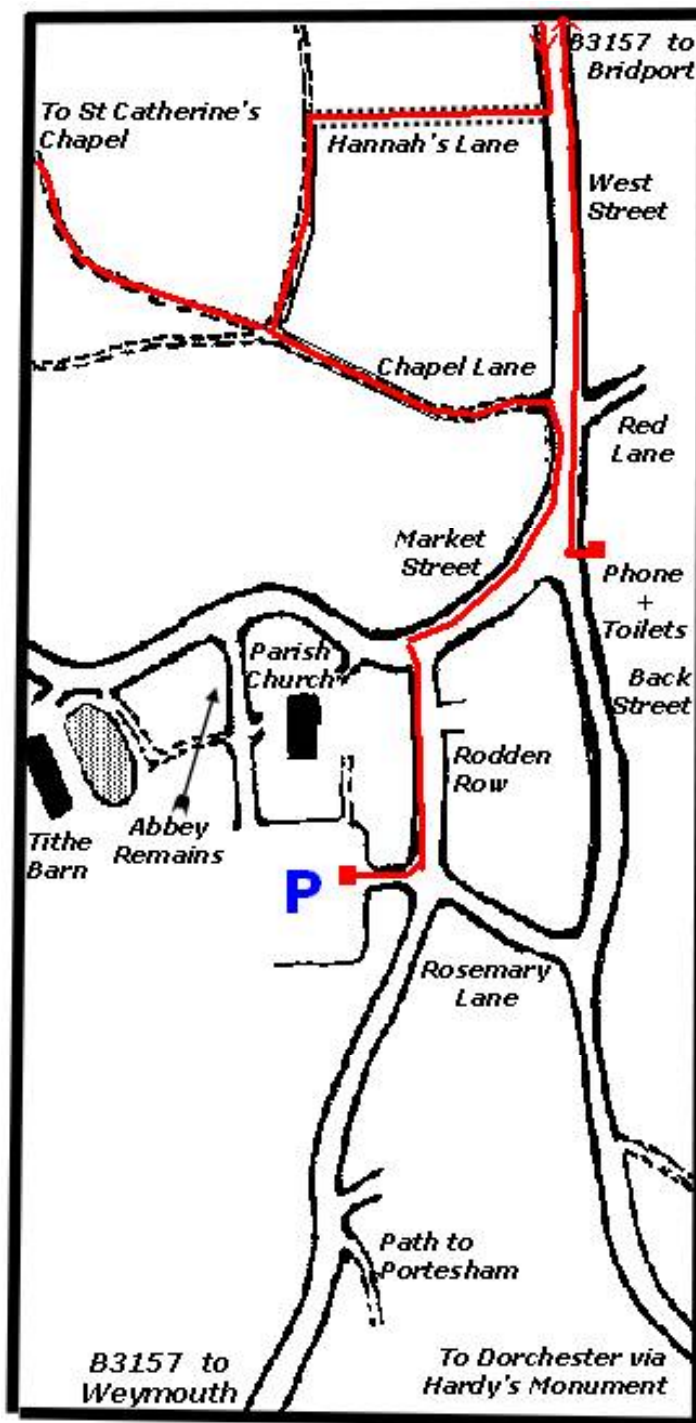
Return down the footpath to the kissing gate but proceed straight ahead down **Chapel Lane**. At the end turn right back into **Market Street**.

This is the final part of the **Discovering Abbotsbury** series – we hope you have found it useful and informative.

For more information about our village visit the Abbotsbury Heritage website at:

www.abbotsbury-heritage.org.uk

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DISCOVERING ABBOTSBURY



6: West Street & St Catherine's Chapel
(Walk – wheelchair access with some narrow pavements)

Prepared by Chris Wade & Peter Evans for
Abbotsbury Heritage Research Project



With Strangways Hall behind you and heading west you enter **West Street**. All along this street you will notice that the cottages are typically built of rubble ironstone with wood or stone lintels over openings and wooden casement windows with vertical boarded doors, two stories high with reed thatched roofs. Most cottages date back to the 18th century or earlier. On the other side of the road you will see a large barn conversion and opposite, at **No 43**, was a bakery once. On Sundays, when no baking was carried out, residents from the village would bring their Sunday roasts to cook in the baker's hot ovens.

Any new buildings in Abbotsbury must blend in with the architecture of the village and a little further on you will see two new houses built in 2005/6. Opposite, next to **No 4**, is where the Methodist church once stood – a private garage stands there now. The church (pictured below) was built in 1925 and remained there for just 50 years.



Further along the street you will see some excellent stone carvings leaning against **No 36**. This cottage is home to our local stonemasons, who specialise in letter cutting, carving and restoration work. Next you will come to a charming thatched property that was once the pottery but is now **Abbotsbury Pictures**. Watch your head if you enter the building since, as with many in Abbotsbury,

the overhead beams are dangerously low for 21st century people! Pause also to consider that this little building, and others in the village just like it, once housed entire families from the baby to great-granny! Outside **No 30a** there is an interesting stone water feature (pictured) that is probably Victorian and provided residents with their mains water supply.



Many of the houses in Abbotsbury have been built with fragments of the old Abbey and these are often visible. If you cross over to **No 16** at the west end of the village you will see a particularly superb example above the doorway.

Returning down West Street on this south side you will come across **The Smithy**. This was once a thatched building with a flourishing roof garden of self-seeded wildflowers imbedded into the thatch. Unfortunately as the thatch deteriorated it was replaced with the tiles now existent. The smithy is still operational and the local farrier can often be seen at work utilising traditional farrier and blacksmith skills.

Next on your right is **West Yard Barn** where you will find the **Ilchester Estate's Leisure and Tourism Office** and some offices. A little further on you will come across the **VR letterbox** on the wall; a splendid piece of antique Victorian street furniture.

Very shortly you will reach **Hannah's Lane** on your right and it is from here that we leave the village to visit **St Catherine's Chapel**. This does involve a climb up the hill so wheelchair users and those who do not wish to climb should continue along West Street and return following the final directions in the previous leaflet.

Turn right into Hannah's Lane and continue pass the allotments on your right. Beyond them you will see the village sports and cricket field. At the junction turn left and after passing some farm buildings on the right, pass through the kissing gate also on your right. Now follow the well-worn path up the hill to **St Catherine's Chapel**.



This chapel, dedicated to St Catherine of Alexandria, stands as a sentinel keeping watch over the village of Abbotsbury and serving as a beacon to those at sea. It was built in the 14th century, about the same time as the Tithe Barn, and was probably used as a chantry by the monks from the abbey to say prayers for the wealthy deceased and as a place of pilgrimage. It probably survived the dissolution of the Abbey because of its importance as a seamark to local fishermen. The medieval strip lynchets etched into the side of the hill are known locally as the **Chapel Rings**.