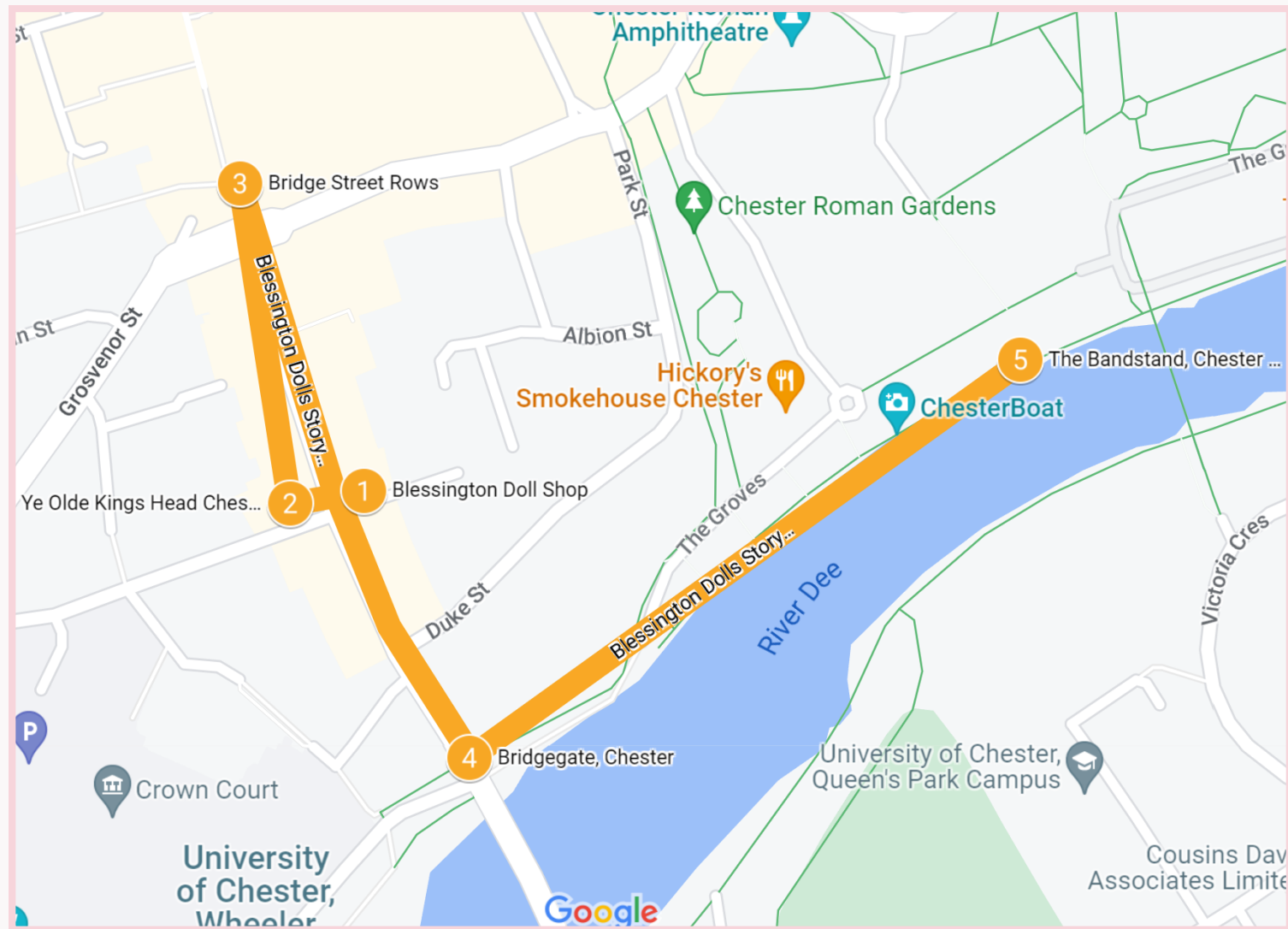




Storybook Trail





Learning Objective

To engage story seekers in a literary adventure, providing insights into the creative process of the author, Evelyn Winters, while also challenging them to explore and research the real history behind the locations featured in "The Blessington Dolls." Ultimately, the objective is to inspire individuals to become more imaginative and accomplished storytellers through a combination of creative exploration and historical research.

Story Seekers will be encouraged to unlock their creativity and generate story ideas. By taking them on a virtual tour of locations in Chester inspired by the enchanting story of "The Blessington Dolls," the text aims to demonstrate how real history and locations can serve as rich sources of inspiration for creative writing. The emphasis is on the three essential elements of storytelling: character, setting, and plot.

Throughout the text, Story Seekers are prompted to use the internet and books to conduct research on the history of specific locations in Chester. The questions posed at each stop encourage them to delve into the historical background, architectural features, and events associated with the places mentioned in the story. This fosters research skills and promotes a deeper understanding of the historical context, contributing to a more immersive and authentic storytelling experience.

You will visit real locations in Chester from the story: The Blessington Dolls. Available in paperback, Kindle and Audio on Amazon. Published date: 19th March 2017 ASIN: B06XQR6XCG

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 1

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

About the Story

by *Evelyn Winters*

Narrated by *David Williamson*

Edited by *Robin Chambers*

Meet Leonard Blessington, a dollmaker who stumbles upon the fact that his dolls have some serious supernatural powers. Of course, this attracts a whole bunch of shady characters who want to use these powers for their own greedy gain. Will Leonard be able to navigate the treacherous waters of magic and morality? You'll just have to read and find out! And get this: it's actually based on a real-life doll museum and a boozy joint called Ye Olde Kings Head in Chester. So, when you're done reading, why not take a trip and see where all the action went down? Who knows, you might even spot some dolls with freaky powers and a pint or two to wash 'em down. Cheers to that!



ORDER
NOW

Evelyn Winters

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 2

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Intro

Calling all aspiring writers! Unlock the secret to a never-ending supply of story ideas with this immersive storybook trail. It's not just for writers, though – if you have a passion for history or simply enjoy the art of storytelling, this experience is perfect for you.

Join me on a journey through real locations in Chester inspired by the enchanting tale of *The Blessington Dolls*. Explore the intersection of history and storytelling in a way that brings the narrative to life! You will visit real locations in Chester from the story: *The Blessington Dolls*. Available in paperback, Kindle and Audio on Amazon. Published date: 19th March 2017
ASIN: B06XQR6XCG

Let me tell you a little about Chester. Picture a city where medieval charm dances with modern attraction, where cobbled streets whisper tales of ancient times, and Tudor buildings play hide-and-seek with contemporary boutiques. Chester, located in Cheshire in the North West of England, sits gracefully on the border to Wales. This city wears history like a stylish cloak, inviting you to unravel its quirky tapestry while sipping tea in half-timbered tea rooms or chasing shadows through the hauntingly beautiful Rows. Follow the scent of eccentricity, and you will find Chester—a delightful blend of yesteryear's magic and today's vibrant spirit.

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 3

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

About the Author

Here is a bit about me...

I'm your friendly neighbourhood children's author Evelyn Winters, and let me tell you, I've got a knack for shrinking giants and getting toy dolls to boogie on down! It's not just a talent; it's practically my own little superpower. In my world of dreams, folk tales, and myths, we're diving headfirst into the real history of the ancient Roman walled city of Chester, right here in jolly ol' England.

Picture this: a parade of characters—some a bit bonkers, others absolutely enchanting (though, I must admit, a few don't exactly smell like roses). As we journey through the cobblestone streets, my tales unfold, weaving together history and morals in the most imaginative way I can think of.

Now, you might be wondering, "Evelyn, how on earth do you know so much about the fantasy and magic of Chester?" Well, it's not just because I've read about it; it's because I call this whimsical wonderland my home sweet home. So, grab your imagination and join me on this virtual adventure through the heart of Chester!



The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 4

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

About the Narrator

Meet David Williamson, a super talented guy with lots of experience in using his voice to make things awesome! He's like a voice wizard, and he's been part of cool projects on TV, radio, drama shows, online audio, and even in animated fun. David is so good at creating characters with his voice, thanks to his acting and comedy skills. People love him because he can sound like all kinds of different ages and styles – he's like a voice chameleon!

Oh, and guess what? David is the magical voice behind the audio version of "The Blessington Dolls"! So, when you listen to the story, it's his voice making the characters come alive.



The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 5

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Starting Point

Welcome to the enchanting starting point of The Blessington Dolls storybook trail! Immerse yourself in the Roman walled city of Chester, a place brimming with captivating tales. I'm your guide, Evelyn Winters.

As we board this literary adventure, let's delve into the three essential elements of storytelling: character, setting, and plot. My creative process begins with exploring the setting, and I'm here to share my secret with you. The key to a never-ending well of story ideas lies in researching the real history of the locations around you. Pick a setting that captures your imagination, and you'll be amazed at how the elements of character and plot effortlessly fall into place!

Join me on this unique book trail, and you'll not only unravel the magic of The Blessington Dolls but also enhance your creative writing skills. Prepare to become a more imaginative and accomplished storyteller—I'll be your guide every step of the way!

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 6

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 1 Dollectable

You are outside Dollectable, the whimsical doll haven on Lower Bridge Street in Chester! This family-owned museum, known for its collection of antique Victorian dolls and toys, beckons you to take a peek through the window. To some, the sight may seem a tad spooky. I've connected this charming doll paradise to the haunted pub across the road (more on that spooky tale later). Behold the grade II listed building, a charming Tudor townhouse dating back to 1621, adorned with ornate guttering and painted bricks, it's a perfect dolly abode for sophisticated figurines like those within. In the United Kingdom, the term "listed building" refers to a structure that has been officially recognised and recorded on the National Heritage List for England. Grade II listed buildings are buildings of national importance and special interest.

While the museum is rarely open, I've gathered this exclusive tidbit and transformed it into my very own doll shop, open only during the doll-making season leading up to Christmas. Enter the world of The Blessington Dolls, where Leonard Blessington crafts magical dolls within these historic walls. Chester's children adore visiting, and each Christmas, the orders flood in, keeping this monocle-wearing craftsman busy. Yet, one chilly afternoon, an unexpected visitor, Stinky Joe, cloaked in a tatty, claret garment with colossal whiskers resembling a disheveled Santa, steps into the shop.

He enquires about the trio of dolls in the window—Florence, Elena, and Isabelle but Len tells him they are not for sale. They were the ones his father made and were just for show.

"You can place an order and I will make a similar doll for you. All my dolls are unique so they won't be exactly like those."

"Why are they so special to you? Surely you can sell them to a fellow dolliteer?" The man asked - curt in his response. He was exactly a foot smaller than Leonard so shouldn't really have been a threat. "I'm not one to put all my eggs in one mixing bowl, but I'm willing to pay good money to have them all now. Can't you replace them?" He sounded too insistent for the shop owner's liking.

"I think you mean basket." Leonard eyed the man. A haircut and a shave would improve his appearance no end. He says he has money and yet looks so shabby and talks so confused. Santa shook his head not understanding.

"It should be: put all eggs in one basket." continued Leonard. He grunted then tenderly laid the precious doll in his hands onto the counter, taking care to plump her dress and to neatly arrange her hair. "They can't be replaced. They were the ones my father made - they are NOT for sale."

Stinky Joe bewitches both the window figurines and Len's hands before departing. Now, all of Len's cherished dolls, old and new, possess the magical ability to dance! How utterly awesome is that?

For your next stop, gaze across the road at Ye Olde Kings Head, where Len takes residence during the doll-making season. The adventure continues!



The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 7

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 1

Dollectable

Research

What can you find out about the history of this location? Use the internet and books to do some research then see if you can answer these questions

What does it mean by a grade II listed building?

What makes a building Tudor?

What did every little Chester girl want to own?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 8

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 2 Ye Olde Kings Head



We are just a hop across the street from Dollectable at the legendary Ye Olde Kings Head. This is where Len stays after his jolly stagecoach rides from Ramsbottom. Why, you ask? To whip up his dazzling dolls in his shop across the road, of course—Christmas-ready and full of enchantment!

Now, brace yourself for the historic charm of Ye Olde Kings Head, built way back in 1622 on foundations as ancient as your grandma's secret pancake recipe from the early 1200s. Rumour has it, this pub hosts not one, not five, but thirteen friendly ghosts, making it the spookiest spot in all of Chester! It's so renowned that it's the subject of My Haunted Hotel, offering a supernatural experience where you are the star of the show and will leave you questioning your bravery. Daring adventurer, are you up for the challenge?

This pub has been a paranormal playground for years, and it gave me the idea to link its ghostly tales with the mysterious doll museum just a stone's throw away—cue the dolls coming to life!

Len tells some of the punters about his mysterious visitor.

“That’s Stinky Joe,” said George, one of the regulars. “I’m surprised you don’t know of him. He smells of wee. He was never the same since he slipped on that banana skin and he took to tying his drawers round his head.

Our ingenious dollmaker parades his trio of enchanting dolls into the pub to flaunt their magical moves. The sceptics scoff until he lines them up on the table, cranks his trusty music box, and voilà! They dance like it's nobody's business. Inconceivable, especially back in those days.

George, ever the pragmatist, raises his cut glass tumbler and inspects his drink for any foreign invaders.

“It must be some type of high-tech device like clockwork or something,” he declares.

Word spreads faster than spilled glitter, and soon folks from miles around want their own slice of enchantment. Len's pockets jingle with riches, but here comes the snag—everyone wants a custom-made Blessington Doll. Greed takes centre stage, prompting Len to drop the hammer.

“I’m sorry,” he croaked one morning as he emerged from his shop, too weary. Buyers woke from their sleeping bags and makeshift tents. The street was jam-packed with them. They would be waiting anywhere there was a space: a step, a pavement, a doorway, his doorway! Leonard didn’t know what they’d suffered just to get their hands on one of those money making dolls... and then he told them:

“I’m not taking any more orders.”

His words hit silence. They weren’t fully awake. It was open to question whether he had chosen the right time to release this bit of information because if they weren’t morning people they could take this somewhat badly.

“Please tell everyone, I’m not taking any more orders!” he called out and slammed the door, locking and bolting it behind him.

Now, let's shuffle up to the top of Lower Bridge Street and take a leap across the crossing for our next stop—get ready for a peek at the quirky 'Rows'!

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 9

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 2

Ye Olde Kings Head

Research

What can you find out about the history of this location? Use the internet and books to do some research then see if you can answer these questions

In the pub, what was found under the floorboards of bedroom no.4 in the 1930's?

What can you be the star of at Ye Olde Kings Head?

What were the dolls abilities?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 10

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 3 Bridge Street Rows

Welcome to bustling Bridge Street, the lively gathering place for all the whimsical Blessington Dolls! As we wander along this ancient thoroughfare, marvel at its rich history—Bridge Street is one of the original streets crafted within Roman Chester. Look up, and you'll spot half-timbered galleries accessible by charming steps, forming a second row of shops known as 'The Rows.' These unique structures, found not only on Bridge Street but also on Watergate Street, Northgate Street, and Eastgate Street, have mystified scholars for over 700 remarkable years.

Now, picture this: Len's handmade dolls were driving folks wild with desire, turning the owners into unintentional millionaires. Demand soared, and every encounter with Leonard prompted people to demand their very own doll. The atmosphere around the doll shop became so hostile that even the once-charmed little girls now quivered at the sight of it.

Enter the man behind the chaos, the one and only instigator—Stinky Joe. Len, desperate for relief, pleads with him to lift the spell. The quirky man agrees but with an unusual request: Len must surrender his three cherished dolls.

"Give me them dolls and I will help you with that, what do you call it? Thingamapig..." he stopped and sniggered. "Oh yes a charm, and peace and hostility will be restored across Chester and indeed across the country."

Reluctantly, Len consents, determined to end the madness.

As Stinky Joe lifts the spell from Len's hands, he promises to summon all 250 frilly dolls back to Chester. For the next six months, Stinky Joe spends his nights winding music boxes and orchestrating a lively street performance—hopping, flapping, and clapping.

Len, thinking Stinky Joe might have lost his marbles, is in for a surprise one evening. He hears a familiar tapping and clattering, following Stinky Joe to Bridge Street Rows. Astonishment sets in as he discovers all 250 dolls neatly lined along the banisters, like a row of pegs on a washing line.

"Well, blow me down with an ear trumpet!" The dolls have returned home!

Before we head back down Lower Bridge Street to our next stop at Bridgegate, take a moment to appreciate the Three Old Arches on the left side of Bridge Street. This Grade I listed building, recorded in the National Heritage List for England, showcases the earliest surviving shop front in the country. The adventures continue—onward we go!



The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 11

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 3

Bridge Street Rows

Research

What can you find out about the history of this location? Use the internet and books to do some research then see if you can answer these questions

Can you name all four original streets built inside Roman Chester?

What is the difference between Grade I and Grade II listed buildings?

How many dolls gathered on The Rows?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 12

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 4 Bridgegate

Now, follow the whimsical trail as Stinky Joe struts down Lower Bridge Street to Bridgegate, coaxing the dancing dolls like a modern-day Pied Piper with his trusty music box. Picture this lively scene unfolding just before the Old Dee Bridge, where you find yourself now.

Let's dive into a bit of history! The Roman city walls, already impressive, got a southerly extension in the 12th century with a wall along the north bank of the River Dee. The original Bridgegate, a sturdy guardian, was already standing proud by the 1120s, watching over the southern gateway to town. The North Wales Road would pass through this very gateway after a jaunty crossing of the Old Dee Bridge.



Speaking of which, the Old Dee Bridge takes the crown as the city's eldest bridge, dating back to Roman times when Chester was a bustling port. The bridge you marvel at today, however, is a 1387 makeover masterpiece. It gracefully spans the River Dee, leading to the charming village of Handbridge.

Fun fact: the Welsh name for Handbridge is 'Treboeth,' translating to either "the hot town" or "the burnt town," owing to its fiery medieval history or its connection to metalworking.

Now, shift gears and turn left, winding your way along the Groves towards the bandstand. The Groves, with its enchanting riverside stroll, exudes a Mary Poppins ambience—utterly delightful and ready to sweep you away on the next leg of our merry journey!

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 13

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 4 Bridgegate

Research

What can you find out about the history of this location? Use the internet and books to do some research then see if you can answer these questions

What is the River in Chester called?

What happened to the river which prevented ships using it as a port?

Why did the Blessington Dolls like the music boxes?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 14

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 5

The Bandstand

As the curtain falls on this dramatic scene, the dolls are teetering on the brink of a watery adventure, and what better melody to accompany their aquatic escapade than "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on Stinky Joe's trusty music box? It's a momentous night, but hey, let's not get too sentimental—they're just dolls after all! Children can giggle and frolic, but dolls, well, they're destined to be played with and laughed at.

As the drama unfolds, Len sneaks along with Stinky Joe, tiptoeing down to the River Dee and slyly concealing himself on the bandstand platform for a front-row view. Now, keen-eyed observers might spot a teensy-weensy flaw in our tale—the bandstand didn't grace the scene until 1913, while our story unfolds in the Victorian era, ending in 1901. But hold your horses! Remember, this is a tale spun from pure imagination. While we're tossing in real locations and a smidge of actual history, fiction allows us to dance freely on the edges of reality.



Skedaddle past the bandstand, and voilà! Behold a nifty footbridge, the Queen's Park Suspension Bridge, an engineering marvel originally born in 1852. But wait for the twist; a demolition drama ensued only for it to rise from the ashes in 1922 as the snazzy bridge you see today. Right in the sweet spot between the bandstand and the footbridge, Stinky Joe plants the music box on a drifting piece of wood and nudges it into the current. Hold your breath, here come the dolls, one by one, tumbling into the river as they chase the irresistible tunes. Splashy spectacle, anyone?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 15

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Stop 5 The Bandstand

Research

What can you find out about the history of this location? Use the internet and books to do some research then see if you can answer these questions

What is the bandstand currently used for?

What was the opening date for the new Queen's Park Suspension Bridge?

Gossip has it, the pitter-patter of dolls dancing feet can still be heard in which location?

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 16

www.evelynwinters.co.uk



The
End

Ta-da! We've reached the grand finale of our whimsical journey! I hope you've been thoroughly entertained by The Blessington Dolls storybook trail. But hold onto your quills, for now comes the real fun challenge: Can you weave your own short story, a dazzling narrative under 5000 words, utilising the enchanting locations and rich history we've just explored together? Let your creativity run wild, and may your words dance like The Blessington Dolls on a moonlit night.

And if you find yourself craving more enchantment, don't forget to grab a copy of The Blessington Dolls storybook on [Amazon](#). Dive into the magical world we've just scratched the surface of, and let the adventures continue! Thanks for tagging along on The Blessington Dolls storybook trail, and here's to many more whimsical tales spun by you. Happy storytelling!

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 17

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Points of Interest

If you have enjoyed visiting the locations on this storybook trail, you may also be interested in exploring these additional points of interest...

Chester Cathedral: A stunning Gothic cathedral with a rich history and impressive architecture. It's usually a must-visit for tourists.

Chester City Walls: The city is surrounded by well-preserved Roman and medieval walls, offering scenic views of Chester.

Eastgate Clock: One of the most photographed clocks in England, located on the city walls near the Eastgate.

Chester Rows: Explore the unique two-tiered medieval galleries of shops along the main streets. Great for shopping and experiencing the historic architecture.

Roman Amphitheatre: Chester has one of the largest Roman amphitheatres in Britain, showcasing the city's Roman history.

Grosvenor Museum: Learn about the history of Chester through various exhibits and collections.

River Dee: Take a stroll along the River Dee or consider a boat trip for a different perspective of the city.

Chester Zoo: If you're interested in wildlife, Chester Zoo is a renowned attraction and one of the largest zoos in the UK.



The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 18

www.evelynwinters.co.uk

Answers

What does it mean by a grade II listed building?

A Grade II listed building in the UK is like a special type of building that people think is extra interesting and important. It's like a treasure that needs extra care to make sure it stays the way it is. People work hard to keep these buildings safe and sound because they are so special and unique!

What makes a building Tudor?

Tudor architecture is like a special style of building that was really popular in England a long time ago, between the late 1400s and the early 1600s. Tudor buildings have some cool features that make them stand out, like Half-Timbering, which is when you can see the wooden framework on the outside, and they also have really tall chimneys. It's like they wear a unique outfit that makes them look different from other buildings of their time!

What did every little Chester girl want to own?

Every little girl in Chester dreamed of having her very own Blessington Doll. These dolls were like magical Victorian dolls made by a clever person named Len Blessington in a special doll shop in Chester, England. Imagine having a doll that feels like a piece of history and brings the charm of the past right into your playtime!

In the pub, what was found under the floorboards of bedroom no.4 in the 1930's?

In the 1930s, when they were fixing up Ye Olde Kings Head, they found a hidden sword under the floorboards! Now, that very sword is hanging up on the wall in the bar, showing off its cool history for everyone to see. Imagine stumbling upon a secret sword while sprucing up a place! How awesome is that?

What can you be the star of at Ye Olde Kings Head?

At Ye Olde Kings Head, you can check into "My Haunted Hotel" and be the superstar of your very own ghost-catching TV show! Imagine spending the night in a place with 24/7 cameras, catching all the real action as you and other cool people have real ghostly adventures inside the pub. It's like being a ghost detective on TV – a spooky and fun experience that we can all share together!

What were the dolls abilities?

These dolls are extra special because they have a magical power – they can dance all by themselves! Imagine your dolls having their own little dance party, twirling and grooving around when no one is watching. It's like they come to life and have their very own dance moves!

Can you name all four original streets built inside Roman Chester?

Bridge Street, Watergate Street, Northgate Street, and Eastgate Street.

What is the difference between Grade 1 and Grade 2 listed buildings?

In the UK, when we talk about listed buildings, it's like giving a special badge to say, "This building is really important!" There are three levels of badges: Grade I, Grade II*, and Grade II. Grade I buildings are like super special with incredible stories and designs, only about 2.5% of all listed buildings get this badge. Grade II buildings are still really important but in a big group, like having lots of cool friends. These badges help make sure we take care of these buildings so everyone can enjoy their amazing history and designs!

Grade I Listed Buildings:

- These are buildings of exceptional interest.
- They are considered nationally important, and only about 2.5% of all listed buildings fall into this category.
- Grade I buildings are often of outstanding architectural or historic significance and may have particular cultural or artistic value.

Grade II Listed Buildings:

- These buildings are of national importance and special interest.
- Grade II is the most common listing and includes a wide range of buildings, from relatively simple structures to those with more elaborate features.
- Listing at Grade II helps to protect the special architectural and historic interest of the building.
- A small percentage are labelled Grade II*, as they are judged to be of particular national importance or special interest.

The Blessington Dolls



Answers

How many dolls gathered on The Rows?

250

What is the River in Chester called?

The River Dee

What happened to the river which prevented ships using it as a port?

A long time ago, the River Dee in Chester used to be a bustling port for ships, like a busy harbour. But over the years, the river changed a bit. Imagine the river getting filled with lots of mud and dirt, making it a bit tricky for big ships to sail through. The river also decided to take a new path, and people built some things like weirs and locks that made it a bit more challenging for ships. So, Chester's river, while still pretty and important, isn't as busy with big ships as it used to be. But hey, it's still a lovely place to visit!

Why did the Blessington Dolls like the music boxes?

The Blessington Dolls absolutely love their music boxes because something magical happens when the music starts playing. It's like a secret code that makes them come to life and start dancing! Imagine a tiny world of dolls twirling and moving to the sweet melody. So, whenever you hear the music box tinkling, you can bet the Blessington Dolls are having their own little dance party!

What is the bandstand currently used for?

Chester's super cool Edwardian bandstand loves to host concerts, especially in the summer when the sun is shining! It's like a ornamental stage where musicians play awesome music, and there are benches right in front for everyone to enjoy the show. So, when the warm days come, you can bet the bandstand in Chester is ready to fill the air with fantastic tunes and happy vibes!

What was the opening date for the new Queen's Park Suspension Bridge?

The Queen's Park Suspension Bridge in Chester was reopened in 1922 after being demolished and rebuilt. This reconstruction occurred after the original bridge, erected in 1852, was taken down. The new bridge has since become a part of the city's history and continues to serve as a crossing over the River Dee.

Gossip has it, the pitter-patter of dolls dancing feet can still be heard in which location?

Some people say they hear the tiny foot-taps of dolls' dancing feet at Ye Olde Kings Head pub in Chester on Lower Bridge Street. It could be a rumour and might actually be the playful spirits or ghosts having their own dance party!

The Blessington Dolls



STORYBOOK TRAIL PAGE 20

www.evelynwinters.co.uk