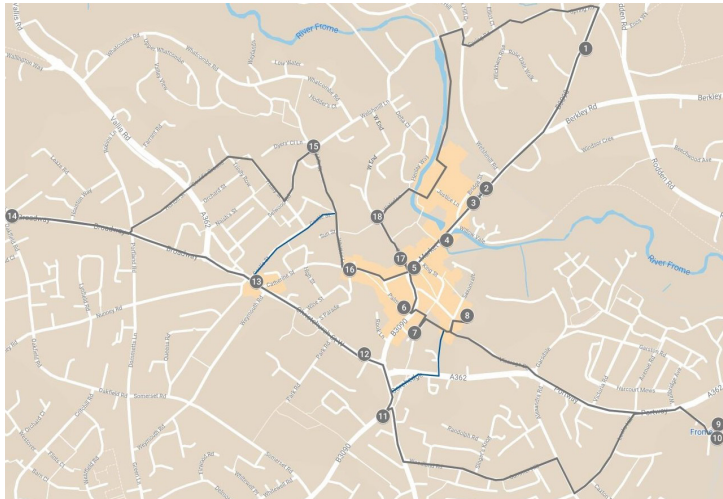


# Plaques of Frome Trail

This trail follows the plaques established by the Frome Society for Local Study to explore the rich heritage of Frome through its buildings and the interesting people who occupied them.



- |                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Christina Rossetti    | 10 Leonard Woolf      |
| 2 Clara Grant           | 11 Sir Benjamin Baker |
| 3 Champneys Arms        | 12 Elizabeth Rowe     |
| 4 The Blue House        | 13 Charles Oatley     |
| 5 Boyle Cross           | 14 Lois Maxwell       |
| 6 Cockey & Sons         | 15 Fred Knee          |
| 7 Gentle Street         | 16 Chantry Chapel     |
| 8 Alice Seeley          | 17 Duke of Monmouth   |
| 9 Frome Railway Station | 18 J.W Singer & Sons  |

Thanks to the Frome Society for Local Study for providing the information contained in this walk.  
Find out more about the society at [www.fsls.org.uk](http://www.fsls.org.uk)

## START

From the entrance to the Cheese & Grain, turn right and join the riverbank path by the Canoe Club. Follow the path along the river to your left and at the road near the play area (Welshmill Lane) turn right again into Welshmill Road. At the end of the pavement cross the road carefully and walk up Spring Road.

At the top of Spring Road turn right. The first plaque is located on a house to your left, across from Stoneleigh House. For a shortened walk start at plaque 2 on North Parade.

## Plaque 1 - Christina Rossetti



*“Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894). Poet and pre-Raphaelite model, ran a school in this building from April 1853 until March 1854 when the Rossetti family returned to London.”*

Christina Rossetti was a Victorian poet who wrote a wide variety of romantic, religious and childrens’ poetry. Rossetti’s earliest poems date back to 1842, with her first published works, “Death’s Chill Between” and “Heart’s Chill Between”, appearing in Athenaeum in 1848. She also modelled several portraits for her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti - painter, poet and founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

From 1853 - 1854, she and her mother ran a young ladies’ school in Frome, although the venture proved unprofitable and was abandoned. Her most famous work “Goblin Market and Other Poems” was published in 1862, to widespread critical praise. Christina Rossetti continued to write throughout her life, until her death in 1894.

Popular during her lifetime, Rossetti has remained widely known and is viewed as one of the most important English women poets.

Walk down Fromefield to reach North Parade. Plaque 2 is located at 6 North Parade on your right.

## Plaque 2 - Clara Grant



*“Clara Grant. Teacher, Educationalist, Founder of the Fern Street Settlement, Inventor of the Farthing Bundles Scheme lived in this house 1875 - 1885. Born Chapmanslade 21 June 1867. Died Bow, East London 10 October 1949.”*

Clara Grant grew up in Frome from the age of 8, and subsequently enrolled for teacher training in Salisbury. She taught in Somerset and Wiltshire before moving to Bow in London in the late 1890s.

When in 1900 she became a Head Teacher she began improving the lives of the children by revising classroom techniques, providing hot breakfasts and supplying clothes and shoes. Most famously, she created “farthing bundles” which provided children with toys at minimal cost, which led her to be known as the “Bundle Woman of Bow”. These proved so popular that children would start queuing up from 7am, and continued until the 1970s.

She also founded the Fern Street Settlement, for mothers to meet and discuss their problems. In 1949 she was awarded an Order of the British Empire for Services to Education.

Walk a little further down North Parade, the next plaque is on your right.

## Plaque 3 - Champneys Arms



*“This house, formerly the ‘Champneys Arms’ inn and London Coach Office, was built in 1739 by William Bailey, joiner, under lease from Richard Champneys, of Orchardleigh 1739 - 1989.”*

In its heyday the Champneys Arms was an impressive structure comprised of 3 floors, each with 3 rooms, a brewhouse, tower and even a tennis court. In 1771 the landlord, Benjamin Coulston, hosted a flower festival there, with the odd caveat that the winners had to contribute 5

shillings each towards next years’ prize.

John Scott took over the inn later that year, and quite quickly had trouble with customers. Sarah Salter was accused of stealing from Mrs Tippit, with whom she had shared a room, as was common for inns of the time. The case was brought before magistrates, but was quickly dropped when Mrs Tippit’s husband warned them not to believe her, as she had falsely accused others before.

The Champneys Arms was sold in 1790 to pay the debts of its owner, Sir Thomas Champneys of Orchardleigh.

Continue across the bridge and use the pedestrian crossing to find the Blue House on the left.

## Plaque 4 - The Blue House



*“An almshouse was founded on this site c.1465 by William Leversedge. It was replaced by the present building in 1728 at a cost of £1401: 8:9d. A free school was incorporated which survived until 1921.*”

*The house derives its name from the blue coats worn by the scholars. Statues of an almswoman, Nancy Guy and a schoolboy, Billy Ball, adorn the facade. Behind the building are the statues of two maids which came from the Keyford Asylum, built in 1803 and demolished in 1956. Today the house contains flats for retired people and is managed by trustees. It is a Grade I listed building of national importance.”*

The almshouse originally consisted of a hall, chapel and 12 chambers. By the early 18th century, however, the house was in decay. James Wickham, a local solicitor, came up with a plan to completely rebuild the house and incorporate a charity school for the local population.

The new building was erected between 1720 and 1728, along with the reconstruction of two arches of the town bridge, a guardhouse, various walls and a clock. The sophisticated classical Georgian building intended for the school contrasts with the plain recessed wings reserved for almswomen. Despite facing decay in the end of the 19th century, the Blue House has continued to survive.

Continue on into the Market Place to find the Boyle Cross monument on the left by the entrance to Cheap Street.

## Plaque 5 - Boyle Cross



*“This monument, originally a fountain, was erected in 1871 by the Hon. and Rev. R.C.Boyle, rector of Marston Bigot, as a token of his affection for Frome. It was designed by his wife, the Hon. Mrs. E.V.Boyle, artist and author, well known to the Victorians as E.V.B.*

*The cross of red Devon marble weighs a ton and took six months to carve. The sculptor was Joseph Chapman of Frome. The site was given by Richard, 9th Earl of Cork and Orrery, Lord of the Manor of Frome. This plaque, to replace the worn inscriptions, was given by G.H. Boyle, great-grandson of E.V.B., and*

*the Frome Society for Local Study, 1st May 1977. “God’s providence is my inheritance”*

Richard Cavendish Boyle was born in 1812 to Isabella Henrietta and Edmund, 8th Earl of Cork and Orrery. He was appointed Rector of Marston Bigot in 1836 and quickly became popular with his parishioners, and was known for being charitable. In 1845 he married Eleanor Vere Gordon, who became known as E.V.B.

Upon moving to Marston Bigot, E.V.B. began to spend her time painting and sketching. In 1852, her illustrations appeared in print for the first time and she eventually achieved success as an artist and illustrator. The idea for and design of the Boyle Cross, originally a fountain, was E.V.B’s.

Continue up past Boyle Cross and follow the road round to the left up the hill into Bath Street. Pass the entrance to St John's Church on your left and shortly after cross at the pedestrian crossing. Walk a short distance back down the hill and turn left into Palmer Street. Plaque 6 is located a short distance along on the left.

## Plaque 6 - Cockey & Sons



*“Edward Cockey & Sons 1816-1960 Iron Foundry & gas industry pioneers Edward Cockey introduced gas lighting to Frome in 1831. His foundry was on this site by the 1840s, manufacturing gas components and cast iron street furniture, including columns for the new gas lamps. This frontage dates to c. 1860, by which time the firm employed over 150 people.”*

In 1862, Lewis Cockey (1666-1703) moved from Warminster to Milk Street, in Frome. He established a foundry in nearby Bell Lane, casting bells that would grace numerous churches throughout Somerset and beyond. His son, William, carried on the business. It was another descendant, however, who became a gas industry pioneer. This was Edward Cockey (1781-1860). His business began in the Market Place, but soon moved up to Palmer Street. This was only the start of the company's expansion with a further move, to Garston, in the late nineteenth century, as well as gas works at Welshmill.

The firm wound up in April 1960, although by then, had been taken over by Bath Gas, Coke & Light Co and then nationalised. Despite Edward having 16 children, there are no Cockeys left in Frome, but the company's memory remains with bollards, gate-posts drain covers and lamp standards, many displaying the name.

Head up Cheap Street. At the end of the road, turn right up the Church steps, then cross St John's courtyard to Gentle Street.

## Plaque 7 - Gentle Street



*“Paved in its entirety with stone setts and once a major entry, goes back to the origins of Frome in the 7th century. Here St. Aldhelm trod and the Saxons had a look-out. Mediaeval men called it Hunger Lane because of its steepness. Later the Gentle family gave their name to it and the London coach left from the Wagon & Horses Yard.*”

*This plaque was given by the Frome Society for Local Study to commemorate the repaving of this historic way by Somerset County Council in 1987. The contractors were Winterbourne Excavations Ltd of Bristol, and the mason Brian Mahon, assisted by Michael O’Loughlin.”*

Hunger Lane is one of the earliest street names to be recorded in Frome, in about 1300. Argyll House, located here, is a classical house, built in 1766 by Mary Jesser. Its name refers to the Duchess of Argyll who occupied it from 1855. It was at the height of fashion when it was built, and included fine details such as a staircase in chinoiserie style, which remains intact today.

Another significant building on this street is Gentle Street House, now the Chantry and Hermitage. It was purchased by the Thynne family in 1548 and later became known as Gentle Street House when James Whickham III (solicitor and builder of the present Blue House) purchased it in the early 18th Century.



Come back down Gentle Street towards St John's, and turn right down the path running alongside St John's Church. Walk down the steps, cross the road towards the car park and turn left. Walk a little way down the road then right after the hairdressers (no. 1 Vicarage Street) into Merchants Barton, outside the entrance to the Silk Mill.

## Plaque 8 - Alice Seeley, Lady Harris



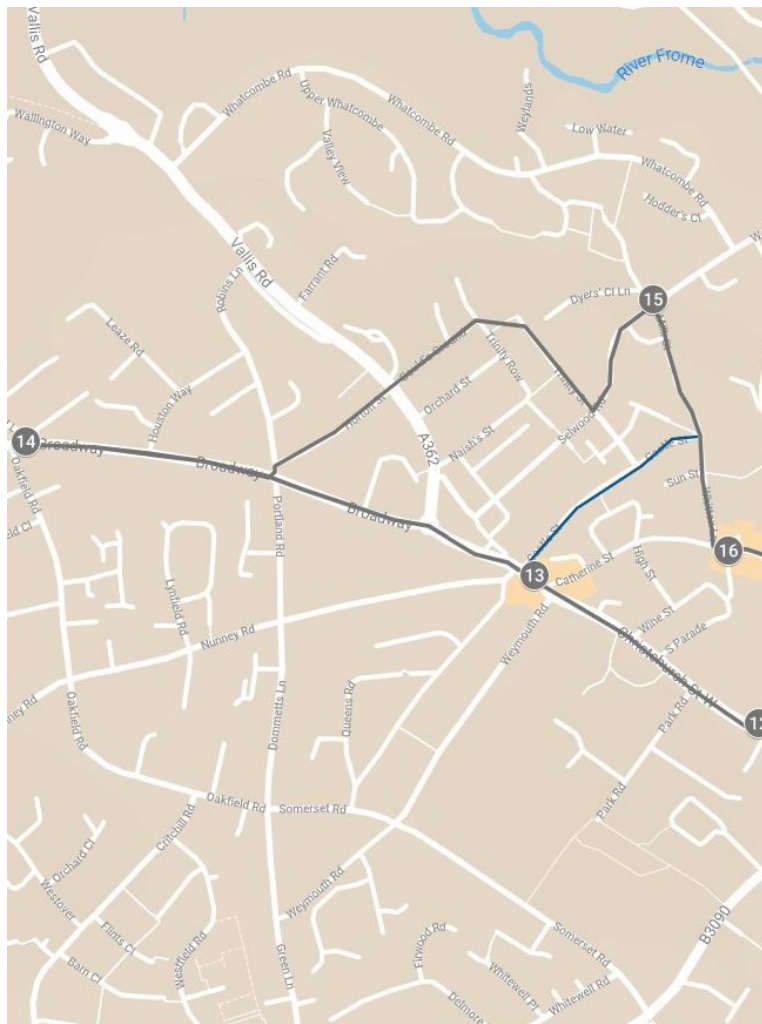
*“Anti-slavery campaigner, photographer, missionary to Congo, artist, scourge of King Leopold II of the Belgians, lived at 3 Merchants Barton 1882-1888.*”

*Born Malmesbury 24 May 1870.  
Died Guildford 24 November 1970.”*

Alice Seeley and her husband, John Hobbis Harris were Baptist missionaries in the Congo Free State, which was the personal fiefdom of Leopold II King of the Belgians. They

found that the natives were beaten and tortured if ‘they had not produced enough rubber in a day’. Their children had hands and feet amputated and their wives were raped. Alice Harris took hundreds of pictures of these atrocities, and publicised these upon their return to England in 1902.

Alice and John gave hundreds of lectures, all illustrated by Alice’s damning photographs, which led to King Leopold ceding ownership of the Congo to Belgium in 1908. This led to real improvements in the treatment of natives in the Congo. They became Joint Secretaries of the Congo Reform Association and later John became Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society and a Liberal MP for which he was knighted.





Turn back towards the path then left onto Vicarage Street. Follow the road until you reach the roundabout, then continue down Portway. Cross over the road at the pedestrian crossing and continue downhill past the petrol station. Turn right into Station Approach and follow the road until you reach Frome Railway Station.

For a shorter walk, go directly to plaque 11: Retrace your route back up the steps at the side of St John's Church. Turn immediately left up Blindhouse Lane. Continue uphill until you reach Christchurch Street East, then turn right and follow the left-hand fork onto Gorehedge. Turn left and head up Butts Hill where you will find plaque 10 on the fire station.

## Plaque 9 - Frome Railway Station



*“Designed by T R Hannaford, an assistant to I K Brunel, and opened on 7 October 1850. This timber construction is largely unaltered and a rare example of a Brunelian through train shed still used for its original purpose. Listed Grade II.”*

Frome station is one of the oldest railway stations still in operation in Britain and is a unique example of historic railway architecture of national importance. The station structure consists of a 36.5m by 14.6m timber train shed. The line was authorised in 1845, reached Frome in 1850, and was completed in 1857. The original route of this line forms the basis for today's Bristol to Weymouth route. A branch from Frome to Radstock, authorised by the same act of 1845, opened to freight traffic in 1854 and to passenger traffic in 1875. In 1895 the GWR directors announced that new lines were to be constructed to reach Exeter, Plymouth and Penzance in a shorter time. This transformed Frome from a station on a secondary North to South line, to one on a main east to west route. The resulting route forms the current London to Penzance line.

Head inside the station to the platform to find Plaque 10.

## Plaque 10 - Leonard Woolf



*“Political Theorist travelled from this station to London on 11 January 1912 to propose marriage to Adeline Virginia Stephen. The resulting union bore fruit in The League of Nations, The Hogarth Press and the major works of Virginia Woolf writer.”*

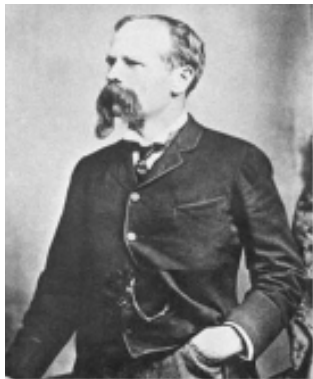
Leonard Woolf caught the 10.29 train from Frome to London in 1912 to ask his fellow writer, then called Virginia Stephen, to marry him. She did not accept his proposal immediately and only agreed to marry him months later. Her husband

was a political theorist and a writer who edited a number of magazines, such as the International Review. His first novel, “Village in the Jungle” was published in 1913 and based on his time living in Sri Lanka.

This plaque was installed by The Woolf Society. Mr Woolf’s nephew Cecil, who unveiled the plaque, said the journey to London to propose to Virginia was described in his uncle’s autobiography. “He talks about having set out from Great Elm rectory in Somerset and he walked to Frome and took the train to London and proposed marriage to Virginia.”

Head back down Station Approach and left onto Portway, then left into Lock's Hill. At the pedestrian crossing cross over and head along Alexandra Road. Turn left into Summer Hill and follow the road. At the T junction, turn right into Keyford, then left onto Butts Hill. The next plaque is located on the side of the fire station.

## Plaque 11 - Sir Benjamin Baker



*“Sir Benjamin Baker, civil engineer. Born in Butts Hill, 31 March, 1840. Died at Pangbourne, Berkshire, 19 May 1907. Designer of the Forth Rail Bridge, opened 4 March, 1890. ‘Cool, quiet judgment and a restrained strength were his marked characteristics’ 1840-1907.”*

In 1861 Baker became an assistant to the consulting engineer John Fowler and by 1875 was his partner. Baker became Fowler's chief assistant in 1869 and as such was responsible for the construction of the subterranean Railway from Westminster to the City of London. His other projects included the docks at Avonmouth and Hull and the transport of Cleopatra's Needle from Egypt and its re-erection in London.

In 1867 Baker wrote articles discussing the application of cantilevers, later used in his Forth Bridge (1882-90), over the Firth of Forth in Scotland. At the completion of that bridge, Baker was knighted. He served as a consultant for the Aswan Dam, and designed a tunneling shield that allowed the first Hudson River tunnel to be completed.

Baker was president of the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1895-1896 and a vice president of the Royal Society from 1896 to his death in 1907.

Head a little up the hill to the zebra crossing and cross over the road. Head back down Butts Hill and follow the road until the roundabout. Carefully cross the road opposite the bed shop using the island at the roundabout, turn left and walk a little way along Christchurch Street West. Rook Lane House is on the right side of the road opposite Wesley Close and near the post box.

## Plaque 12 - Elizabeth Rowe



*“In memory of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe poet who died in this house, February 20, 1737 Erected by the Frome Society for Local Study on the occasion of the tricentenary of her birth September 11, 1974”*

Elizabeth Rowe was a poet and novelist, and one of the most popular and widely read authors of the 18th century. She was the daughter of a dissenting minister. Rowe began writing poetry at the age of 12 and by 17 was contributing poems to John Dunton’s periodical *The Athenian Mercury* under the pseudonym “Philomela”. Between 1693 and 1696 she was its principal contributor of poetry. Many of these poems were reprinted in “*Poems on Several Occasions*”.

She married poet and biographer Thomas Rowe in 1710. When he died of tuberculosis in 1715, Elizabeth was inconsolable. She wrote her famous poem “*On the Death of Mr Thomas Rowe*” and retired to Frome where she stayed withdrawn from society. Her father died in 1719, and in 1728 she published *Friendship in Death*. Elizabeth Rowe continued writing until her death in 1737.

Continue along Christchurch Street West until you reach Badcox. The plaque is located on Badcox Parade where it joins with Catherine Street.

## Plaque 13 - Charles Oatley



*“Professor Sir Charles William Oatley OBE FRS. Electrical Engineer and Father of the Scanning Electron Microscope was born in this house 14 February 1904, died Cambridge 11 March 1996”.*

Born in Frome, Sir Charles Oatley went on to study at St John’s College, Cambridge and then lecture at King’s College London. At the beginning of the war in 1939, he joined John Cockcroft’s team at the Air Defence Experimental Establishment working on radar. His work was a major contribution to the development of radar technologies during the war. After the war he was offered

a Fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge and a Lectureship in the engineering department. There he built up a strong research group in electrical engineering.

His work on the Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) was inspired by an interest in the pre-war work of van Ardenne in Germany and Zworykin in the United States. Oatley’s research led to the development of the first commercial SEM produced in 1965. This work won him many honours: he was elected to the Royal Society in 1969 and knighted in 1974.



Use the pedestrian crossing to cross over to the other side of the road, then turn right and walk up Broadway. Continue along this road until you reach Egford Hill. The plaque is located on the right.

To shorten the walk, go directly to plaque 15. From Badcox take the road to the right, Castle Street. Follow it down the hill until you reach Milk Street. Here turn left and walk up the hill until you reach the next plaque at Vallis School.

## Plaque 14 - Lois Maxwell



*“From 1994 to 2002 this house was the home of Lois Maxwell, actress and author who played the role of Miss Moneypenny in the first 14 James Bond films. Born Kitchener, Ontario, Canada 14 February 1927. Died Fremantle, W Australia 29 September 2007.”*

During World War II, Lois Maxwell (age 15) ran away from home and joined the Canadian Women’s Army Corps. Maxwell became part of the Army Show in Canada, performing music and dance numbers to entertain the troops, both in Canada and later when she was deployed to the UK. To avoid repatriation to Canada when her age was discovered, she was discharged and subsequently enrolled at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. She moved to Hollywood at 20 and won the Golden Globe for Most Promising Newcomer for “That Hagen Girl”. She eventually moved back to Europe, spending time in Rome and moving to London in 1957.

Maxwell continued to appear in films and TV series throughout this period. In 1962 she played Miss Moneypenney in “Dr No”, the first James Bond film, and continued to play the part in the first 14 James Bond films, until “A View to a Kill” in 1985.

Turn back down Broadway then left onto Robins Lane and immediately right onto Horton Street. At the cross roads go straight over Vallis Road, taking care over this busy section, and go straight ahead into Goulds Ground, cross carefully and head down this road. At Trinity Church head across the car park and turn right along Trinity Street. Follow Trinity Street along, at the crossroads turn left onto Selwood Road then right at The Griffin pub onto Milk Street where you will find the plaque on Vallis School to your left.

## Plaque 15 - Fred Knee



*“Christian, composer, socialist, campaigner for workers and housing. Secretary of the London Trades Council and the London Labour Party. Born Blunt Street, Frome 16 June 1868. Educated at the British School, Milk Street. Died Radlett 8 December 1914.”*

Fred Knee left school at 13 and trained as a printer, eventually moving to London in search of work. There he became involved in the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Co-operative Education Committee. He committed himself to the support of better housing for workers, which led him to found the Workmen’s Housing Council in 1898. He was elected to the Metropolitan borough of Battersea in 1900, and became chair of the Housing committee, instituting a programme which led to some of the first council housing.

Knee remained a prominent member of the SDF and its successor the British Socialist Party throughout his life. In 1913, he became Secretary of the London Trades Council and later was elected as the first Secretary of the provisional committee of the newly formed London Labour Party. Knee died in 1914 and never saw the Labour Party become a national power.

Walk back down Milk Street and follow the road uphill to the cobbles at the top of Catherine Hill. Turn left and walk a little way down the cobbles until you find Sheppard's Barton passageway on the right.

## Plaque 16 - Chantry Chapel



*“This building, traditionally associated with the medieval chantry chapel of St. Katherine, founded before 1326 and dissolved in 1548, was the home of John Sheppard, cardboard maker, when it was licensed for worship by local Baptists before the erection of their church in 1708.*

*To mark the completion of the restoration of Sheppard's Barton in 1990, this plaque was erected by St. Catherine's Community and Frome Society for Local Study.”*

It is probable that Frome developed up the slopes of Catherine Hill after the foundation of the chapel of St Katherine. Though its origins are largely unknown, it may have been founded by the Branch family sometime before 1279. It first appears in 1300 when Hugh, Chaplain of St Katherine, witnessed a local charter.

The exact site of the chapel is uncertain, although the 1774 map indicates a supposed old nunnery on Catherine Hill, where shops and the house on the left going up to Sheppard's Barton steps are now located. A possible 14th century moulded doorway and a “church window” were found on this site in 1929, helping to bolster this theory of St Katherine's location.

Nearby Sheppard's Barton gained its name from the cottages built there for weavers in the first half of the 18th century by the Sheppard clothier family.

Continue down Catherine Hill and follow it to the left into Stony Street. Turn left at the bottom into Cork Street. The next plaque is at number 3 on your left.

## Plaque 17 - Duke of Monmouth



*“This house, built c. 1600, sheltered James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, from 28th-30th June, 1685, when Frome people ‘called him King as confidently as if he had the crown on his head’. After years of neglect, Monmouth Chambers was restored by Mrs. D. Brown, M.A., M.B.E., of Bristol, in 1992. Assisted by Frome Historic Buildings Trust, Mendip D. C. and English Heritage.”*

James Scott, Duke of Monmouth, was the illegitimate son of King Charles II and Lucy Walter. Upon Charles II’s restoration to the throne, he became a favourite of the king, who named him Duke of Monmouth, Earl of Doncaster, and Baron Scott of Tindale and made him a Knight of the Garter. Monmouth eventually became a favourite for the throne over his uncle, James II, a Catholic.

After becoming involved in the failed Rye House Plot against Charles and James, he left court for the Netherlands in 1684. Upon the ascension of James II to the throne in 1685, Monmouth launched an attempt to displace the new king. He landed at Lyme Regis and quickly amassed around 4000 men, largely nonconformists, artisans and farm workers. His forces were unable to take Bristol however, and the rebellion ended in defeat at the Battle of Sedgemoor. Monmouth was executed for treason.

Carry on along Cork Street passing the car park on your right. At the junction you will see plaque 18 on the building opposite.

## Plaque 18 - J.W.Singer & Sons



*“Frome Art Metalworks was established in 1866 by John Webb Singer (1819-1904) who became renowned worldwide for his ecclesiastical work and from 1888 for casting in bronze some of our most iconic public statues including Boudica by Westminster Bridge, Justice on the Old Bailey and Oliver Cromwell*

*outside the Houses of Parliament. After statuary work ceased in 1927, a metal foundry continued on this site until 1999.”*

John Webb Singer was born at the Butts, in Frome, in 1819. His father died when John Webb was only three years old leaving the family nearly destitute, and so he received his education at the Blue Coat Charity School in the town. He was later apprenticed for five years to a local watchmaker, Thomas Pitt, and ultimately took over that business in 1848.

J.W. Singer may have remained a watchmaker if it were not for the arrival, in 1852, of St. John’s new vicar, William James Early Bennett. Bennett was a follower of the Oxford Movement and commissioned Singer to make ornate Church décor. So successful was this venture, he left watchmaking and established the foundry he gave his name to, and which would ultimately become known throughout the world. He died in 1904, in Frome, but his sons carried on the business.