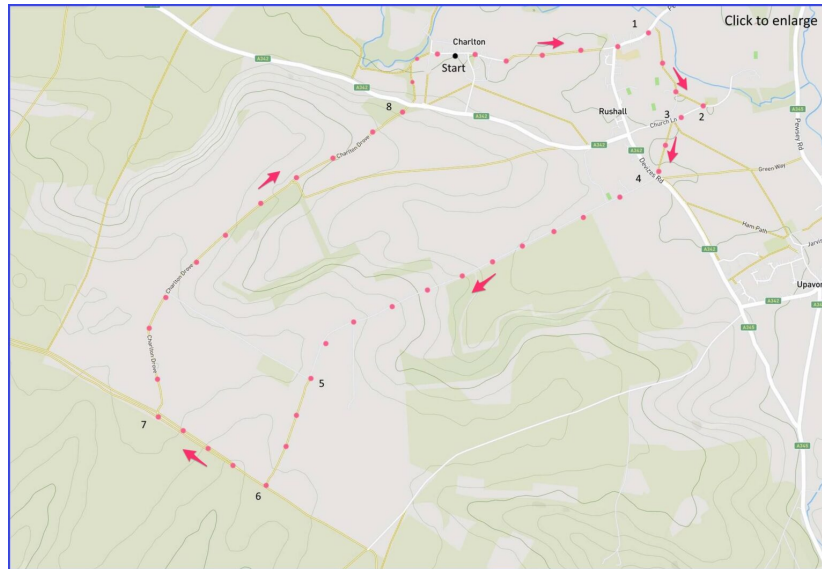




## Charlton St Peter

[Leave a Comment](#)

*Click map to enlarge.* A 5-mile walk, mainly paved lanes with wind-swept open views. (Limited) parking opposite telephone in village. [Click here](#) for an arial view. [Click here](#) for a PDF download/print.



(Routes suggested from each map point + metres to next point)

From **start** point walk forward. Cross Devizes Road at junction with row of brick houses. Walk to footpath on right of slated fence. 950m

**1:** Through gate. Cross field, walk parallel to river and row of three trees. Head for the church and gate to road. 420m

**2:** Turn right out of church. Walk to marked path and kissing gate on right. 70m

**3:** Walk diagonally across cricket pitch to gate in middle of fence. Walk diagonally to road. 250m

**4:** Walk paved lane of Rushall Drove [D] until passing left-leading path (now private) [E]. 2km

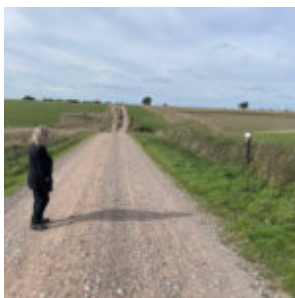
**5:** Continue straight to intersection with military road. 550m

**6:** Walk up this track to Charlton Drove entrance on right [H]. 770m

**7:** Walk this path [I] until junction with main road. 2km

**8:** Take steps down to footpath adjacent to Charlton Cat turning right to start. 400m

*The pictures below are in the order things were seen on this walk. Clicking on any one will enlarge it (and the slideshow)*



[F]



[G]

## Village: Charlton

Charlton is served by such narrow roads that it almost seems to be defying visitors. However, there is some tight parking on Friday Lane west of the church. Otherwise an alternative plan is to start the route with verge parking near Rushall Church (point 3 on the map), heading then in either direction for walking, according to preference.

There are many 'Charltons' in the county. So many that the good folk of this one successfully petitioned in 2003 to change their village name to 'Charlton St Peter'. Just a name change, nothing else. Wiltshire settlements of this sort typically boast a church, a manor house, a pub and a phone box. There may also be a village shop (but not here) and thatched houses (yes, many here).

The phone box works, but the pub ([Charlton Cat](#)) – a 1750s alehouse – has become a tea room. The church [A] has also undergone some re-invention. Because while there is evidence of a church here since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, what you see today is largely Victorian. Although it does include a 16<sup>th</sup> century side chapel funded by the legacy of William Chaucey (thereby a memorial to self and wife). The manor house at the western end of Friday Lane is 18<sup>th</sup> century (of which little survives); today it seems to host a caravan and motorhome club.

All these features are set against the background of an agricultural community. The village does boast a certain fame that arises within that context. Such fame comes from a humble agricultural labourer, Stephen Duck (1705-1756). Although Duck left school at 14, he had acquired from somewhere a thirst for knowledge. Him and a friend exercised this through an appetite for books. They built a personal library and they studied together. First arithmetic but then literature and poetry. Eventually Stephen started writing himself and, in fairy tale fashion, he was 'discovered' by a local parson (the Rector of Pewsey). His poems were propagated through the sympathetic aristocracy and, eventually, they reached Queen Caroline (consort to George II). Greatly impressed, she set him up with a salary and various positions – culminating in him becoming the Rector of Byfleet.

Stephen Duck published several [collections of poetry](#): these built a reputation whereby he was known as the "thresher poet" (examples of his work online [here](#), scholarly discussion of it [here](#)). Sadly, in an apparent fit of depression, he ultimately committed suicide. By drowning. To be fair, some authorities are a little uncertain about this ending – although others are so precise as to say it was "in the trout stream behind the Black Lion at Reading".

How does the village celebrate this distinguished son of Charlton? You may notice a 'Ducks Cottage' signed at the end of Friday Lane. Don't be fooled. Having once been a stable block to the local Manor House, it is not exactly convincing as the implied home of a local thresher. On the other hand, it probably works well as a typical Wiltshire [holiday let](#). More authentically Duckian is the annual 'Duck's Feast' at the Charlton Cat. Lord Palmerston committed funds to this in 1729 – to be a dinner for 12 threshers. It seems to have remained a tradition regularly held on June 1<sup>st</sup> for a dozen people (plus a thirteenth 'Chief Duck' who wears some sort of eccentric hat).

## Village: Rushall

There are no eminent individuals of a poetic disposition associated with neighbouring Rushall. Although when the Rushall Horse Trials were flourishing, the village welcomed some fairly [distinguished visitors](#) of a more horsey variety. However, of more traditional village features, today there is a fine parish church and there was – once – a notable manor house. There is nothing left of the church that once stood here in the Norman period. The present establishment dates from 1332. What you see now is an attractive brick, stone and flint building with just a few remnants of that 14<sup>th</sup> century period (such as the font). However, how striking are the two 15<sup>th</sup> century stained glass windows in the south chancel.

The church [B] lies in a rather romantic isolation. One naturally wonders how a parish church can be so firmly detached from the village. This oddity is explained in the history of the former manor house. There was a manor here in 1332, at that time the present church was located in the park associated with this house. Later, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a new house was established (perhaps incorporating parts of the old) by Sir Edward Poore. This wealthy MP (for Salisbury) bought up most of the parish of Rushall, altering the village layout to suit the extensive grounds of his house. The existing church thereby became a 'feature' within those grounds. And thus it became detached from the village. Around 1839 the Poore house was demolished, seemingly as a

consequence of the land being split up among heirs and then sold off piecemeal. The church of course stood. Untouched but isolated.

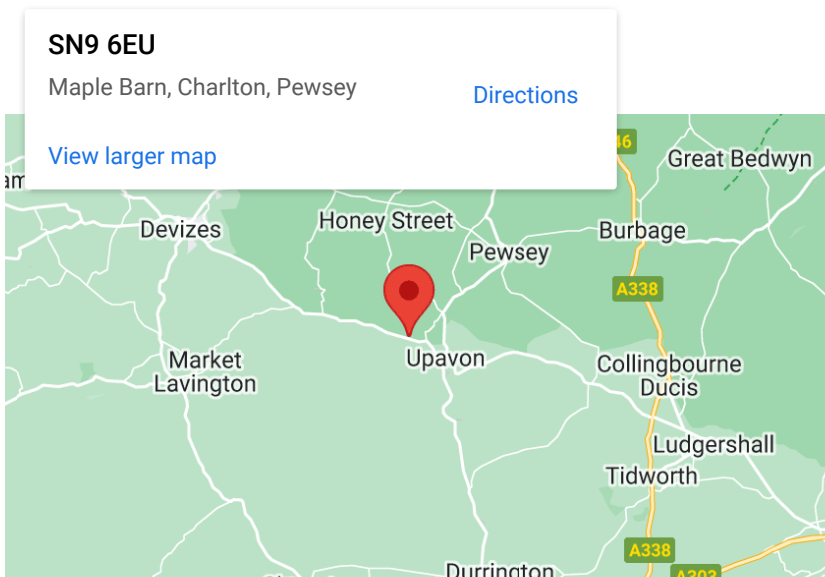
The Poore family association helps explain one other local curiosity – the name of the Charlton Cat. In the 1820s this pub was called the ‘Poore Arms’. Outside the Inn was a version of the Poore Baronetcy coat of arms. Its design included a pair of badly painted leopards. On that basis the pub become known locally as “The Cat”. And – as these things often go – an affectionate title became official.

Rushall seems home to a thriving community – at least as projected by its local [website](#). As a working village, its identity is currently dominated by [Rushall Organics](#). This is a farming business that has built a reputation based on the chemical-free cultivation of wheat. By all reports, excellent bread results from this and is sold locally (somewhere, see if *you* can find it). The company’s ‘brand story’ is set out [here](#).

### The walk

There is much to enjoy in the two villages but your memory of this walk is most likely to be dominated by the drama of the Pewsey/Salisbury landscape. If you appreciate a wide-open, wind-swept, to-the-horizon walking experience [G] then the drover paths on this route give you a relatively painless treat. Perhaps the encounter is quite brief on the normal scale of such things – although if you wanted to make it still shorter, the useful cut across at point 5 [E] visible on the map is one of the several routes that Rushall Organics seems to have rendered private.

Warning: a less pastoral experience is sometimes provided by off-roaders. The Charlton drove in particular proves a magical route for such tiresome invasions of that sort. Keep your ears open – not just your eyes.



Share this page

## Leave a Comment

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked \*