

A Pilgrimage from Dorchester Abbey to Christ Church, Oxford

Introduction

This leaflet provides you with all you need to know to undertake a pilgrimage from Dorchester Abbey to Christ Church in Oxford. Along the way you will have the opportunity to visit a number of churches as well as Newman College.

This leaflet includes walking instructions and some ideas of things to look at and/or reflect on as you make this journey. You may also find it helpful to have a Bible with you.

The walk is just over 11 miles and it took us around 7 hours including stops. In the [Practical Information](#) section we have given some advice about how you could do the walk in smaller sections if 11 miles is too much for you to do in one day

Please read the Practical Information section before you start and please also note that all distances and timings are approximate.

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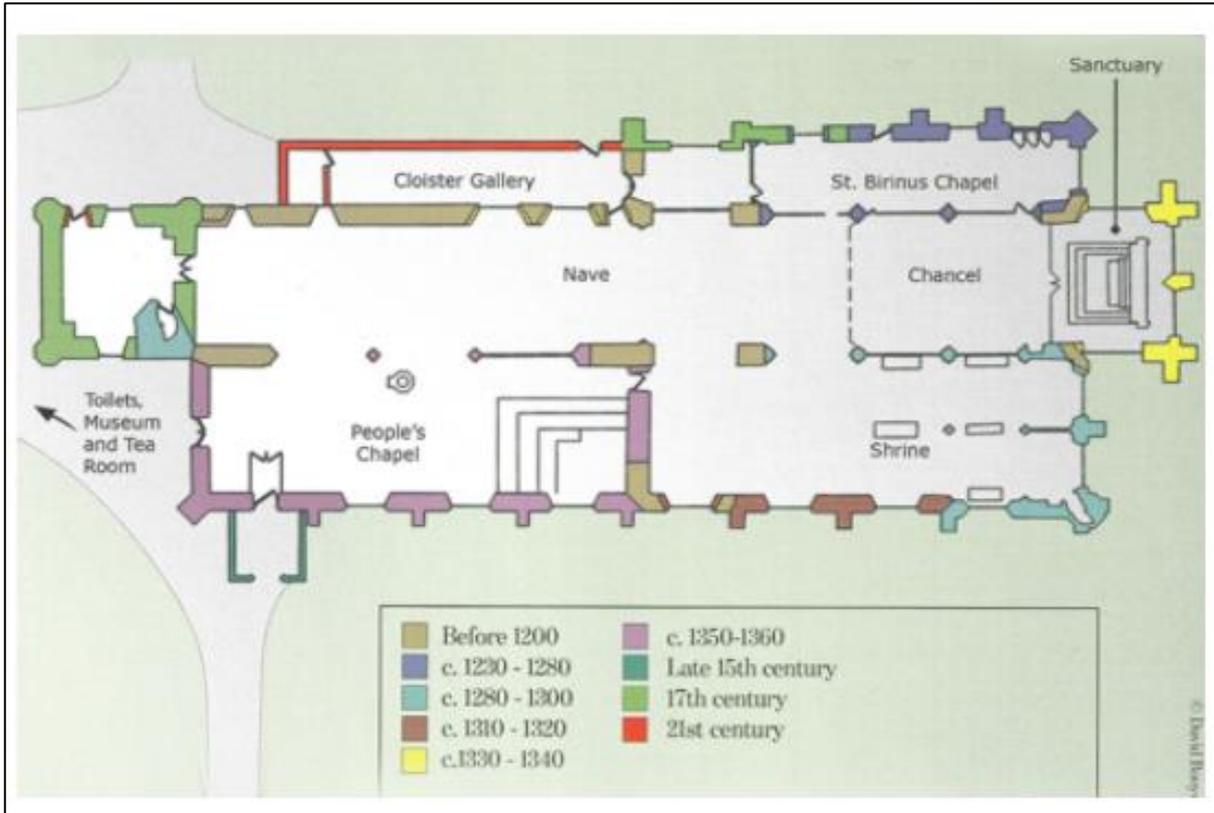
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Getting Started

Before you start ... You may want to have a look around Dorchester Abbey. For information about the historical features of this church see <https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/historical-tour/> Page 16 has information about opening times



The Pilgrimage starts by the cross on the north side of Dorchester Abbey (i.e. the side furthest from the car park by the bridge). Follow the signs for the Cloister Garden to find this.

Read and Reflect: Pilgrimage

A Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to a sacred site. The travelling and the destination are inseparable – the journey is as important as the end.

A Pilgrimage is a physical thing: it is in the action of travelling, of encountering the new and the unfamiliar, of allowing ourselves time and space away from the routine of everyday life that we receive insights and spiritual growth.

A Pilgrimage is an opportunity to travel lightly, to walk free of daily routines, to meet people, to make friends, to enjoy and celebrate God's creation. An opportunity, too, in the travelling, the conversations and the silences to reflect on the journey of our lives and on our journey homewards to God.



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Our starting point for today's Pilgrimage is this Abbey Church – which was founded nearly 900 years ago for a group of Augustinian monks. However, before that there was an earlier cathedral on this site built by St Birinius nearly 1400 years ago - we will learn something about St Birinius at our next stop



A Pilgrim's Prayer:

Creator God, on the palm of whose hand we journey, we ask that you hold and guide us gently. Incarnate God, whose earthly pilgrimage is our inspiration, we ask that you walk with us every step of the way.

Companion God, whose wisdom kindles our hearts, we ask that you will give us all we need as we journey together this day. Amen

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Dorchester to Berinsfield [1.5 miles]

Walking Instructions

- Head towards the small brick building in the right-hand corner of the grassed area and then right onto the footpath which slopes down, turns left and becomes Manor Farm Road.
- Continue to the end and turn right by the school on to Queen Street.
- Follow this road northwards, continuing on Martins Lane past nos 19 and 21 and on to a public footpath at the side of the cemetery. This comes out onto Drayton Road.
- Almost immediately opposite pass through two white posts to enter the sports ground. Walk diagonally across this (or around if matches are being played) towards a lone tree next to a white house where there is a gap in the hedge and onto Oxford Road.
- Turn right and follow this road northwards, pass round the white gate and continue along the old road (now a footpath) for around 750m through the woods with lakes on the left and then alongside the main road (A4074).
- Cross this road where the speed limit changes to 40mph (be very careful!) and continue on the footpath alongside the road to the roundabout.
- Turn right, cross this road and then head into Berinsfield along Wimplestraw Road. Continue along this road to the junction with Fane Drive. On this corner you will see the church of St Mary and St Berin.

This church (which was built in 1962) is unlikely to be open but, if it is, take a look inside.

The church notice-board should tell you where you can get hold of a key if the church is closed.



Read and Reflect: St Birinius

St Birinius was a Benedictine monk living in Rome who was sent by Pope Honorius 1 to England to convert the West Saxons in 634. Within one year of landing on the south coast he had reached the Thames valley where he converted and baptised Cynegils, King of the West Saxons – and baptised him in the river Thame in Dorchester. The king's conversion led to Christianity spreading throughout the south and west of England.

So, one ordinary monk given one task, led to the establishment of Christianity in this area. He would not have fully known the impact of his obedience to God's call on his life.

Berin is the un-Latinised form of Birinius and Berinsfield the name given to the village (built on a former air-force base in the early 1960s) in honour of him.

As you walk this next section, think about some of the people who have played a key role in your faith journey. Whose life and faith has significantly impacted yours?

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Berinsfield to Marsh Baldon [2.25 miles]

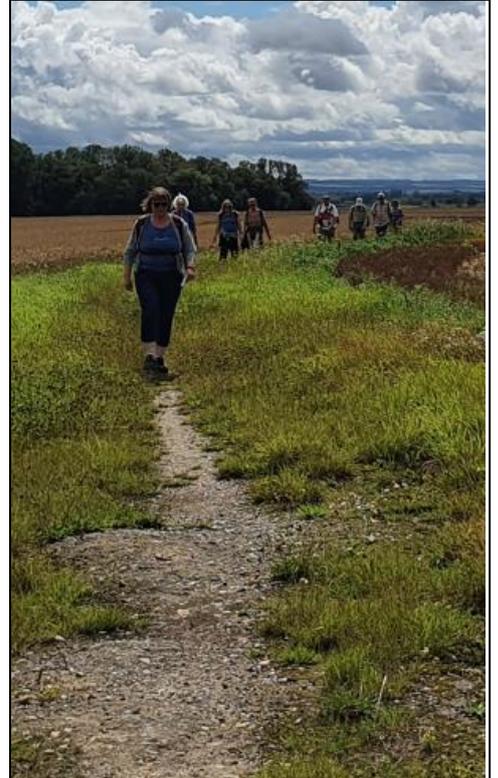
Walking Instructions

- Turn right along Fane Drive, past the shops and continue for approx 400m until you see Roman Road to the left (opposite a small play area).
- Turn left and follow this bridleway past a few houses then alongside fields and open countryside.
- At the end of the path (approx. 600m) you reach a farm track. Turn right and after about 80m turn left along the signed Bridleway through a gap in the hedge.
- Continue along this bridleway for 1km to the main road (B4015).

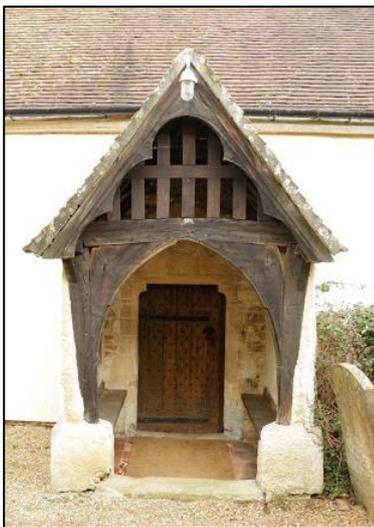
If you are doing this as a group you may want to use this section (which is best walked single-file) for some silent reflection.

You may want to reflect on one of these verses from the Bible which are all about walking in God's way.

Psalm 56:13 Psalm 25:1,4 Psalm 86:11
Psalm 5:8 Psalm 119:105



- On reaching the road, cross carefully and continue along the bridleway keeping the houses of Little Baldon on your left.
- After 300m turn left (through a large gap in the hedge) onto a footpath which crosses the field. Head towards the tree line and then follow the footpath left along the edge of the field.
- After 300m you will see a wooden kissing gate in the corner of the field (ignoring the metal one on your right!)
- Pass through this, turn right and walk round the edge of this field until, on the right-hand side, you see a stile alongside a wooden field gate.
- Cross over the stile (or use the gate if unlocked) continue northwards with some farm buildings to the left and onto another stile/gate.



- Go over/through this and bear left, following the boundary of the churchyard, then through a final gate and turn left into the church of St Peter.

The entrance is round the side through the porch (where you can leave muddy boots) and where the door is always unlocked.

Notice the Saxon sundial above the door as you go in – is the oldest feature of the church.

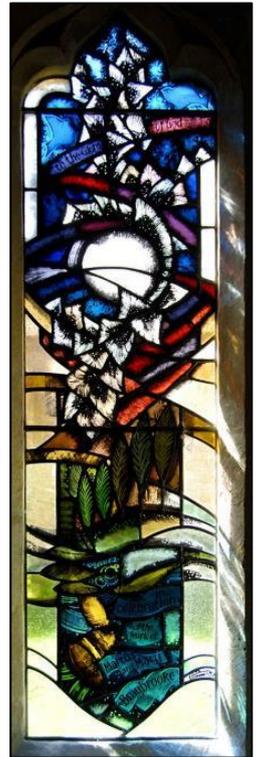
The light switches inside the church are by the door on the far side.

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Take time to look around. There has been a church on this site since at least 1161 – and possibly before that. However much of what you see here dates from the 19th century restoration.

However, the painting of the Annunciation by Pompei Batoni was given to the church in 1794 by Sir Christopher Willoughby. Previously it had hung in the chapel of Corpus Christi College Oxford.

Now take a look at the modern stained-glass window dating from 2005 – which celebrates the life and works of Marcus Braybrooke, a former vicar here.



Read and Reflect: Love

Marcus was president of the World Congress of Faiths and Patron of the International Interfaith Centre. The window interprets the Christian faith which lies at the heart of his ministry. It uses symbols drawn from creation, church and faith expressed in an upward movement towards light, life and embracing love.

Here are some words which Marcus wrote in 2018*

Looking back at my life's journey I would say that 'Love' is the meaning of life and as I have travelled I have discovered new and ever-deepening dimensions of that Love.

I first experienced love long before I heard the word ... certainly in the care and love my parents showed me and in the widening circle of family and friends.

I learned about God's love in Jesus ... but I still thought God – rather like a parent – expected me always to be on my best behaviour.

Then, at one service, I was suddenly overwhelmed by the sense that God loves me just as I am. I realised that God's love is a gift that sets me free ... Love is a gift, but like a plant I had to allow it to grow...

'Love is God's meaning,' said Mother Julian of Norwich many centuries ago. Little by little we learn more of its meaning and I hope, as she did, that we shall discover that in this love 'our life is everlasting.'

As you walk from here to Toot Baldon you may want to reflect on these words – and on the different ways people have shown love to you.

* <https://excellencereporter.com/2018/06/08/rev-dr-marcus-braybrooke-on-the-meaning-of-life/>

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Marsh Baldon to Littlemore [4.25 miles]

Walking Instructions (Marsh Baldon to Toot Baldon – 1.25 miles)

- Leaving the churchyard, turn right onto the road, taking care as traffic can appear quite quickly.
- At the letter box by the Seven Stars Pub, turn off the tarmac and onto a rough track which goes round the south side of the village green.
- Continue along this track as it winds rounds the green and then turn left onto a tarmac road, passing 'Willowbrook' on your left.
- Within 100m there is a junction with other roads – turn right then immediately left to continue in a generally northwards direction, up a gentle slope.
- After about 250m turn right onto a public footpath alongside a stone wall. Pass through the kissing gate into a large field and head straight across the middle towards a gate on the far side.
- Pass through the gate and turn left onto a broad track. Drop down into the valley, ignore the first path on the left and take the second across the stream on a narrow bridge. Walk up the hill to St Lawrence's church, passing through a kissing gate into the graveyard.



Take a seat and enjoy the view and then take time to look round the church. This is slightly newer than the one in Marsh Baldon as it only dates back to the 13th century. It too, however was restored in the 19th century.

There is a large stained glass window which dates from 1875. This shows Christ's crucifixion flanked by depictions of two OT stories which pointed towards this – the (near) sacrifice of Isaac and the substitution of a lamb – and the snake being lifted up by Moses so that all who might look on it would live.

One other notable feature is the memorial to the Little Baldon Air crash in July 1965.

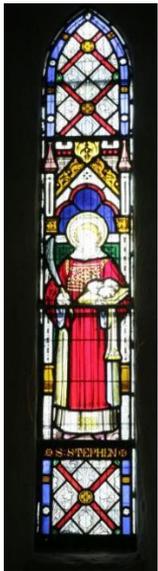
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Read and Reflect: St Lawrence

Whilst he may not be well-known to us, Lawrence is one of Catholicism's most revered saints and is especially honoured in the city of Rome, where he is considered the third patron after St. Peter and St. Paul.

It is generally believed that Lawrence was born in Valencia in 225 to Christian parents. At the age of 32, he was ordained as a deacon by Pope Sixtus II. Despite his young age he became the senior deacon - a position of great trust that included the care of the treasury and riches of the Church and the distribution of alms to the poor.

The following year (258) the Emperor Valerian issued an edict that all bishops, priests, and deacons should immediately be put to death. Pope Sixtus II was captured on 6 August and immediately executed. Lawrence was then ordered to turn over to Rome all the riches of the Church,



The story is told that he asked for three days to gather the wealth. During that time he worked quickly to distribute as much as possible to those in need, to stop it being seized.

On the third day he surrendered himself to the Roman Prefect and, when ordered to deliver the treasures of the Church, he presented the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the suffering, and declared that these were the true treasures of the Church.

This act of defiance led directly to his death on 10 August

There doesn't appear to be a specific mention of St Lawrence in this church but there is a stained glass image of Stephen – another deacon who was martyred. You can read about him in Acts 6:7 – 7:60

Take some time to think about the many, many people who have died because of their faith in Jesus over the centuries and to pray for those people undergoing persecution for their faith right now.

Walking Instructions (Toot Baldon to Littlemore - 3 miles)

- Leave the church through the lych-gate and head down the grassy track keeping the graveyard on your left. At the bottom of the slope pass through the wooden gate and turn right onto the road, Follow this for around 200m then keep right for another 100m or so to a road junction with grassed triangle with a large tree.
- Take the right-hand fork and walk along the verge (the traffic here can be a little fast) for 250m.
- Shortly after passing New Farm turn left onto a bridleway. As the gravel track bears left, continue straight along the grass path at the rear of the row of houses until this path turns left.
- Shortly after a metal gate on your right, pass through a 6-barred metal gate fixed with string and take the left fork. Follow this undulating track for about 400m until, at the far side of the wood, you reach a stile with large field beyond.
- Turn right, walking along the field edge then down a slope and across another large field towards a hedge line on the far side. On reaching the hedge cross the small bridge over the ditch and then continue at the edge of the field for 600m to a concrete farm track.

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- Straight ahead is a gap in the hedge – follow this path and across a small bridge then scramble up the bank to the roundabout on Grenoble Road.
- Cross the left hand arm of the roundabout, turning left to walk on the footpath on the far side of the road, heading towards the Kassam Stadium.
- Continue along Grenoble Road for about 800m passing Guelder Road, the Stadium and the road leading into the leisure complex. Ahead you will see an old, slightly ruinous stone building with a red-tiled roof, immediately past this turn right (signposted Cowley Centre) and continue along this tarmac path (watch out for cyclists!) across a stream, through a white gate and under the railway bridge. Keep going in the same direction along Priory Road until the road bends round to the left.
- At this point, turn right, taking a narrow path between blocks of flats and a small parking area, past a few trees and come out into a different estate (Alice Smith Square).
- Keep going in the same general direction, passing some lock-up garages on the right, and at the top of the road turn left and then first right. At the end turn left onto Northfield Close.
- At the end of Northfield Close turn left then almost immediately right along a narrow footpath to the left of 42 Giles Road.
- After 100m the path comes out onto College Lane.
- Pass along the front of the old terraced houses towards a low stone building – this is Newman College.

This is the college where John Henry Newman lived in the 1840s – making it a place of quiet prayer and study for himself and some friends.

The college grounds (plus small museum) are normally open from 10.30am – midday and from 2-5pm (weekdays) and some Saturday afternoons (2-5pm).

If it is open do go and spend time in this ‘hidden’ garden. If not, then find some where nearby to stand/sit.



Read and Reflect: Prayer by John Henry Newman

Newman was ordained at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, in 1824 but later in life (during his time here) he converted to Catholicism. He was received into the Catholic Church by Dominic Barberi, an Italian missionary priest, in 1845.

Newman moved from Anglicanism to Catholicism in the 1840s because of what he saw as the increasing liberalisation of Anglicanism – and the negative responses he received to his encouragements for his fellow Anglicans to return to their spiritual roots – accepting the centrality of Christ and the purity of the faith.

He was canonized as a saint in 2019.

Whilst he was the (Anglican) vicar of a church in Oxford the then neglected village of Littlemore was a distant part of his

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parish. Newman determined to provide it with its own chapel and school. The school was founded in 1830 and the church in 1835.

The church's website describes them as a church with a heart for the community. They say that "Our vision is to be an inclusive, seven-day church that embodies the love of God in our community. We share this vision with the founder of our church, John Henry Newman, who loved the people of Littlemore and provided them with the church and the school."

This is a prayer written by John Henry Newman

Lord Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly, that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us, and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our soul. Let them look up and see no longer me but only Jesus!

Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others; the light, O Jesus will be all from you; none of it will be from us; it will be you shining on others through us. Amen

Other churches with connections to Newman

- After leaving the College continue to the end of College Lane then left onto Cowley Road. The church on the corner is the Catholic Church named after the priest who received Newman into the Catholic Church. This is a modern building (opened in 1969) which replaced a "simple church building" erected in 1940. It is unlikely to be open but inside there is a bronze statue of Barberi and Newman which was created by Faith Tolkein (daughter-in-law of JRR Tolkein)
- Continue across St Nicholas Road to the mini-roundabout by St Mary and St Nicholas church. This is the church which Newman founded in 1835 and which may be open.

As you walk on from here you may like to re-read Newman's prayer (above) and reflect on what this might mean for you.

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Littlemore to Oxford [3.25 miles]

Walking Instructions (Littlemore to Iffley – 1.25 miles)

- Turn left along Sandford Road and cross this road at the zebra crossing. Turn right along Railway Lane then right onto Chapel Lane, which becomes Thomson Terrace.
Can you spot the home of Littlemore Baptist Church?
- Opposite the allotments, turn left onto Brocklesby Road then turn right and round the corner into the Sainsbury Car Park.
- Go through the car park (or stop for refreshments and/or toilets) and then, keeping the store on the right, follow the road out to the Heyford Hill Roundabout. Round to the right and then using the various crossing points get across the main road and turn left to head down the hill.



- After about 250m and just under the second big sign, turn right at the black bin onto a narrow path which comes out onto Rivermead Road between two houses.
- Turn left and follow the road round until it reaches Nowell Road. Turn left and as the road bends round to the right, turn left down a tarmac path and past a white gate.
- Continue along this path downhill until you reach the churchyard wall; turn right and follow this to the church. (St Mary's). The entrance is round on the west side.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CHURCH IS ONLY OPEN UNTIL 4PM (6pm on Sundays)

Assuming it is open, go into the church and take time to explore the building. You may like to use their "Welcome" leaflet to guide you. Note that the light switches are on the left of the door.

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If you want to use this reflection you need to stand by the font just inside the door.



Read and Reflect: Stained Glass

This is a lovely church – founded in the 12th century – but still an active thriving church today. A church whose website says “We value music and silence, word and action, the ancient and the contemporary.”

Standing by the font you are surrounded by beautiful lovely stained-glass windows. Above the door you can see the ‘Eye of God’ window which dates from the 19th century featuring the Holy Spirit descending as a dove. But on either side there are two much more modern windows.



One was designed by the artist John Piper and created in 1982 for an exhibition in Bristol. It was installed here in 1995 after being gifted to the church by Piper’s widow, Myfanwy.

The subject is the Nativity – but a very unusual depiction – no stable, manger, shepherds, angels or even a baby. Instead it shows a cast of animals announcing his birth in Latin, their respective utterances echoing the natural sounds they make. For example, “Ubi, ubi” sounds like the hooting of an owl, and “Christus natus est” has the same rhythm as “cocka-doodle-doo.”

Piper based his design for this window on an Elizabethan wall painting he had seen in Sussex. But instead of setting the animals on rolling hills, he set them on and around a tree—the Tree of Life. The brown, withered leaves—blighted by the Fall—are now turning green once again, and the much-anticipated fruit, though in its early phases of growth, peeks out from the branches with promise.

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The other window is by Oxfordshire artist Roger Wagner and was installed in 2012. It's called "The Flowering Tree" this is what Roger says about it.*

"John Piper's nativity window, with the creatures heralding the birth of Christ arranged on a tree of life, stands to one side of the great font where generations of inhabitants of the parish have been dedicated to Christ through the symbol of baptism with water.

When the new window was commissioned for the other side of the font, the only direction I was given was that the subject should relate to both these things.

For Jesus's first disciples it was his resurrection from the dead and the outpouring of his spirit on the day of Pentecost that transformed their despair after the crucifixion into an assurance that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'. Thus in this new window, the tree of life is full of blossom, and from its roots the river of life pours down to where the great font greets all who come through the doors of this ancient place of prayer with the same challenge and promise."



And so, at the entrance to this church Christmas and Easter stare face to face, each interpreting the other.

Note that the church sells postcards including ones of these two windows

* <https://www.rogerwagner.co.uk/work/item/9/the-flowering-tree-1>

Walking Instructions (Iffley to Oxford – 2 miles)

- On leaving the churchyard, turn left along Mill Lane.
- Follow this downhill for 150m until some steps are on the left; go down these turning left at the bottom and follow the road until it becomes a footpath turning right over the river, then onto the lock.
- Cross the lock then turn right and follow the river towards Oxford for a little over 2km.
- At Folly Bridge by Salters Steamers base turn right across the bridge (take care, the road and paths are very narrow).
- Continue up St Aldates for about 400m to the Tom Tower entrance to Christ Church.



Christ Church Cathedral, one of the smallest cathedrals in England, stands on the site of an ancient Saxon Church, founded in the 8th century by Saint Frideswide, the Patron Saint of Oxford.

The present building was constructed in the 12th century as the monastery church, St Frideswide's Priory, for a community of Augustinian Canons. Inside the church stood an ornate shrine on which were kept the relics of the saint. Pilgrims visited the shrine throughout the Middle Ages.

In 1524, just prior to the General Dissolution of the Monasteries, Cardinal Wolsey gained permission from the Pope to close down St Frideswide's Priory in order to use the land to build a vast new college for the university.

This is where our Pilgrimage ends. If you time it right you will be able to attend Evensong in the Cathedral – see details on page 14

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Evensong at Christ Church

There has been a choir at the cathedral since 1526, when John Taverner was the organist and also master of the choristers. The statutes of Wolsey's original college, initially called "Cardinal College", mentioned 16 choristers and 30 singing priests.

There are now four choirs based at the Cathedral although the main 'Cathedral Choir' sing at most of the services during term-time. For more information about the choirs see <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/choirs>

Evensong takes place at 6pm every evening except Mondays (when there is a service of 'said evening prayer' instead). The services are open to all – and you enter via the Tom Tower entrance on St Aldates.

You may, however, want to check beforehand that there will definitely be a service when you want to attend.

For details of services see <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/cathedral>



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Practical Information

Getting to the start and where to park

The Pilgrimage starts in the village of Dorchester-on-Thames – about 3 miles NW of Wallingford and 8 miles SE of Oxford.

If travelling to the start by car, the easiest place to park is the small free car park at Bridge End (OX10 7JP). If this is full you can park on-street in the village but please park considerately.

Travelling to the start by bus is best done using the Thames Travel service X39/X40 <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/OXBC/X39> which stops on Dorchester Bypass and it is then a half mile walk to the Abbey.

Returning to Dorchester from Oxford

If you left your car in Dorchester then we suggest you return there by bus. . This is done using the Thames Travel service X39/X40 <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/OXBC/X39> which stops on Dorchester Bypass and it is then a half mile walk to the Abbey. The nearest stop to Christ Church is on High Street (Stop T1) near the junction with Turl Street.

Options for breaking the journey

You can do the Pilgrimage in a series of shorter sections, breaking the journey at any of these points:

- **Berinsfield** – it is a short walk from St Mary and St Berin Church to the bus stops on A4074 to catch Thames Travel service X39/X40
- **Marsh Baldon** – from St Peter's Church turn left along Baldon Lane for just under 0.5 miles to Nuneham Courtenay where there are bus stops on A4074 to catch Thames Travel service X39/X40
- **Littlemore** – on Sandford Road, opposite The George pub, catch bus 3A towards Oxford City Centre <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/OXBC/3>.

You then travel into Oxford City Centre to catch Thames Travel service X39/X40 <https://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/services/OXBC/X39> from High Street (Stop T1) near the junction with Turl Street.

Timings for various stages

To help with your planning here is an indication of how long we took to walk each section

Dorchester to Berinsfield	1.5 miles	40 minutes
Berinsfield to Marsh Baldon	2.25 miles	60 minutes
Marsh Baldon to Toot Baldon	1.25 miles	30 minutes
Toot Baldon to Littlemore	3 miles	90 minutes
Littlemore to Iffley	1.25 miles	30 minutes
Iffley to Christ Church, Oxford	2 miles	45 minutes

Toilets and refreshments / shops

There are public toilets in Dorchester at the Bridge End car park. There are toilets in the church in Berinsfield (if it is open) but none of the other churches have toilets. There are, however toilets in Sainsbury's at Heyford Hill (between Littlemore and Iffley) and at the pubs/cafes along the route

Along the route there are several shops in Berinsfield and Sainsbury's is at Heyford Hill. There are cafes in Berinsfield (H Café on A4074) and in Sainsbury's, and pubs at Marsh Baldon (Seven

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Stars), along the Thames near Iffley Lock (Isis Farmhouse) and at Folly Bridge (Head of the River) – please check opening days/times before you travel.

When we did this Pilgrimage we took sandwiches and ate them in the grounds of St Lawrence's church in Toot Baldon. There are seats there and a lovely view.

Opening times for churches etc.

As at June 2022, **Dorchester Abbey** is open from 10am to 5pm (from midday on Sundays). Pre-Covid the Abbey was open from 8am so worth checking the website (<https://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/opening-times>) for up-to-date information.

St Mary and St Berin, Berinsfield is usually closed but details of where to obtain a key are on the church notice-board.

St Peter's Church, Marsh Baldon is open 24 hours a day every day

St Lawrence Church, Toot Baldon is open 24 hours a day every day

Newman College in Littlemore: The college grounds (plus small museum) are normally open from 10.30am – midday and from 2-5pm (weekdays) and some Saturday afternoons (2-5pm).

St Mary's Church in Iffley is open from 9am to 4pm (6pm on Sundays – their evening service is at 6.30pm). For more information about the church visit their website: <https://iffleychurch.org.uk/>

Christ Church, Oxford is usually open for visitors from 10am to 5pm but you will have to pay and tickets must be booked online. However entry is free if you wish to attend a service – and you don't need to book. For more information about visiting see their website: <https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/visiting-the-cathedral>

And finally: Please let us know if any of these instructions are not clear or you discover we have got something wrong. This will help improve the experience for others. We can be contacted at pilgrimage@wallingfordbaptist.co.uk

David and Rachel Tole

On behalf of the 'Breathe' group at Wallingford Baptist Church