



Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust

Supporting Oxfordshire's Churches since 1964

Ride and Stride All Day Route

A cycle ride described by a Ride + Stride participant

1. St Mary, Pyrton

The route

A church was on the site in 987 and around 1115 it was granted to an Augustinian foundation of canons at Runcorn, Cheshire. The present church building dates from the 12th century with a porch added in the 15th century. The nave and chancel were largely rebuilt in 1854 by JC Buckler, who preserved the basic lines of the former church and retained some of the original features. In springtime, the churchyard is full of native English daffodils.

2. St Leonard, Watlington

People have worshipped here since 1100. The church is dedicated to St. Leonard, a sixth century French monk, the patron saint of prisoners. His statue, sculpted by Faith Tolkein, on the wall of the south aisle. The font is dated 1898, commemorating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Above the steps between the chancel and the nave is a hanging rood. The carved figures represent Christ on the Cross, with Mary his mother and St. John the disciple on either side.

3. St Edmund Campion, Watlington

A modern church dedicated to St Edmund Campion, an English Roman Catholic martyr and Jesuit priest. While conducting an underground ministry in officially Protestant England, Campion was arrested by priest hunters. Convicted of high treason, he was hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. He was canonized in 1970 as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

4. Methodist Church, Watlington

Charles Wesley preached in Watlington but the Methodist Church itself was not built until 1812.

5. St Margaret, Lewknor

The chancel is a fine example of early 14th century decorated style, with a big east window and flamboyantly carved sedilia and piscina. The chancel arch and nave are early 13th century. The font is Norman, with unusual decorative pattern.

6. SS Peter & Paul, Aston Rowant,

The oldest parts of the church are the north and south walls of the nave, which are Norman and date from around 1100. The chancel was rebuilt late in the 13th century in the decorated gothic style. The bell tower and north and south aisles were added in the 14th century. The church tower had a spire until 1811, when some of the stonework of the tower parapet fell off and the spire was removed during the tower repairs.

7. Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary, Crowell

Crowell church existed by the middle of the 12th century and the blocked-up Norman north doorway survives from this time. In the 13th century the chancel arch was rebuilt and in the 14th century the chancel was rebuilt, made taller than the nave and given decorated gothic windows. In 1878 the church was largely rebuilt to designs by the architects H.J. Tollit and Edwin Dolby. They re-used the Norman north doorway, 13th century south doorway, 14th century piscina, sedilia and chancel arch responds and a low-side window in the chancel. There had been a wooden west tower but Tollit and Dolby replaced this with a stone bellcote. They also added a vestry on the north side of the church.



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8. St Andrew, Chinnor

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The fine window tracery, the porch with vaulted ceiling and the saddleback tower date back to the 14th century. The brasses (now removed from the floor and mounted on boards against the chancel wall) are among the finest in the country. Around the walls of the nave are sixteen large oil paintings of the Apostles and Evangelists ascribed to Sir James Thornhill.

9. Chinnor Community Church

The church was built in 1805 and enlarged in 1811. A school was added to the chapel in 1884 but closed in 1893. During the schism in 1826 a second chapel was built in the village but this later became the minister's manse. The church survives as Chinnor Community Church.

10. St Mary, Sydenham

In 1293 it was reported that the church was "in ruins" and a rebuilding had just begun. This was carried out in the early English gothic style. The church retains most of the lancet windows inserted during the rebuilding. The bell tower was built at the same time.

11. St Lawrence, South Weston

South Weston is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 and the Hundred Rolls of 1279. The current parish church of St Lawrence was designed by the gothic revival architect R.C. Hussey and built in 1860. It is in a decorated gothic style and incorporates some elements of the previous Norman church. The font is 13th century, and there is a 14th century tomb recess in the north wall of the chancel. Over the east window, on the outside is a statue of St Lawrence.

12. St Mary, Adwell

In 1086 the Domesday Book recorded the village as Advelle. The original parish church is believed to have been built late in the 12th century. The old church building was demolished and in 1865 was replaced with a new building designed by the gothic revival architect Arthur Blomfield. The new church retains the memorials from inside the old one, including a stone effigy of a knight from about 1300. The new building has no aisles, but has north and south chapels arranged as transepts either side of the chancel. There is also no tower, but a bell-cot with one bell.

13. St Andrew, Wheatfield

An enchanting little church, standing isolated in the park of a long-vanished country house. Its simple nave and chancel were built in the 14th century but a rebuilding in about 1750 has given it large, classical windows and a battlemented roof. Its unspoilt Georgian interior contains box pews, pulpit and memorials to the squires of the great house, burnt to the ground on New Year's Eve, 1814.

14. St Mary Magdalene, Stoke Talmage

Stoke Talmage seems to have had a parish church since the 11th century, although the first clear historical reference to it dates from 1219. The parish church of St Mary Magdalene was restored in 1758. In 1860 it was restored again and extended to plans by George Gilbert Scott.



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15. St Peter, Easington

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The village of Easington seems to have disappeared and St Peter's is set in the midst of a working farm. The simplest of little churches, built in the 13th century and hardly touched since, it is a remarkable survival. Probably the newest thing in the church is the 17th century pulpit and tester. There is a modern association with the artist, John Piper.

16. St Mary, Chalgrove

This church used to have a spire on top of its tower until it came down in a violent storm in 1727. There is a wide nave with two aisles separated by transitional Norman arcades with carved capitals. The chancel contains an extraordinary collection of medieval wall paintings with scenes from the life of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the stem of Jesse.

17. St John the Baptist, Stadhampton

The church dates from the 13th century and was rebuilt and enlarged by the Gothic Revival architect E.G. Bruton in 1875. Since the Reformation St. John's has always had the same parish clergy as St. Mary's, Chiselhampton. The Welsh clergyman and writer John Roberts was priest of both parishes 1798–1803.

18. St Katherine, Chislehampton

By 1146 Chiselhampton had a chapel dedicated to St Mary. It was a peculier of Dorchester Abbey and seems not to have been an independent parish. St. Mary's had no graveyard: villagers buried their dead at Stadhampton, which was another of Dorchester Abbey's chapels and peculiarers. St. Mary's chapel remained under Dorchester Abbey until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, when Stadhampton became a parish separate from Dorchester. Chiselhampton seems then to have become a chapelry of Stadhampton. Despite this new status, until about 1835 clergy for both Chiselhampton and Stadhampton were licensed not by the Bishop of Oxford but by the peculier of Dorchester. After the English Reformation Chiselhampton and Stadhampton always shared the same parish clergy.

Until 1706 St. Mary's chapel was reported to be in a good state of repair, but by 1717 the parish curate had taken the villagers to the peculier court in Dorchester for failing to pay the church rate for the building's upkeep. In 1763 Charles Peers told the court that St. Mary's was in "so ruinous and decayed a condition that the inhabitants cannot assemble for worship without manifest hazard [to] their lives", and so he requested permission to demolish the chapel and build a new one.

In 1763 the mediaeval chapel was demolished and the materials re-used to build a Georgian church on a new site beside the main Oxford - Stadhampton road. That same year it was completed and John Hume, Bishop of Oxford, consecrated it. Charles Peers provided the new church with a graveyard to spare villagers from having to bury their dead at Stadhampton. He dispensed with the Norman chapel's dedication to St Mary and had the new church dedicated to St Katherine. With the new church Chiselhampton was made a parish in its own right, but it continued to share the same parish clergy as Stadhampton.



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St. Katherine's is a neoclassical building whose architect is unknown. It has a bell-turret and clock over the west door. The interior is fitted with box pews, a west gallery on Tuscan columns, a carved altarpiece and a Jacobean pulpit which is presumed to have been re-used from St. Mary's chapel. In 1952-54 the church was restored after an appeal for funds supported by the poet John Betjeman who wrote verses for it and the artist John Piper who repainted the clockface. Concealed electric lighting was installed in the pews in 1956 but St. Katherine's is still largely lit by its candle-lit candelabras. The church has since been made redundant and the ecclesiastical parish reunited with Stadhampton. The civil parishes had already been reunited in 1932. St. Katherine's church is vested in the Churches Conservation Trust. Services are still held in St. Katherine's three or four times a year, including re-enactments of historic Anglican liturgy and west gallery music.

19. St Giles, Newington

The tiny hamlet of Newington is on the banks of the Thame. The church is large for such a small community, with an engaging tower and spire. Very little has altered since the church was rebuilt in the 14th century. One of the chancel windows contains good medieval glass and there are two fine monuments to the Dunch family, who owned the house next door.

20. St Laurence, Warborough

A large, plain church, mainly 13th and 14th century. The chancel and nave are continuous, with no chancel arch, which is rather unusual in Oxfordshire. There are two features of particular interest: the initials CP and feathers painted on a partition between the nave and the chancel referring to a Prince of Wales, probably Charles I, who held land here in the 17th century; and a fine Norman lead font.

21. Friends Meeting House, Wallingford

This Quaker meeting house was built in 1724 and retains many of its original features. One of my favorite stops on the bike ride every year.

22. St John the Evangelist, Wallingford

This Roman Catholic church was originally built in 1798 for the Congregationalists, on the site of a previous meeting house. The congregationalists disbanded in 1881, and the building was used by the YMCA, the Evangelisation Society and for "undenominational" services, before being auctioned off in 1905, after which it was temporarily used for storage by a local tradesman. It was reopened as a Catholic church in 1920, and rebuilt in the 1950s, with further changes in the 1990s.

23. St Mary-le-More, Wallingford

Rectors date back to Richard Mortor, 1312. It was made the "mother church" of all the parishes, creating the parish "Saint Mary le More and All Hallows with Saint Leonard and Saint Peter", which appeared in the Guinness Book of Records as the longest name for a parish. The tower, destroyed by lightning in 1638, was rebuilt by Will Loader in 1653, just after Wallingford castle was demolished. It was the only church to escape serious damage and to be in continual use after the Civil War. The church was substantially rebuilt by David Brandon in 1854.



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24. Ridgeway Community Centre, Wallingford

In 1977 they took over the Primitive Methodist Church, built 1888 in St Mary's Street, which closed in 1934. It was used by Petitt's department store as a carpet shop and as a public library in the interim.

25. Methodist Church, Wallingford

Methodism in Wallingford has a long history. According to his journal, John Wesley himself visited the town on at least four occasions. In October 1769 "The whole town seemed flocking together, rich and poor, in the evening, and received the word with joy. Abundance of people came again at five in the morning, and were ready to devour the word." A year later Wesley "set out for Oxfordshire and was thoroughly wet on my way to Wallingford. The congregation was large and deeply serious." The present Church building, in St. Leonard's Square, is situated at one end of the town centre. Built in 1873, the premises have been modernised and extended in recent years, to serve a growing congregation.

26. St Leonard, Wallingford

Thought to have 11th century origins and likely to have been built by Robert D'Oyley. It appears to have been known previously as Holy Trinity the Lesser and may have Saxon origins. It was known to be active from 1299 and St Luciens was later united with it. The building was used as a barracks for Parliamentary soldiers during the Civil War, and much of the building was damaged by fire. It reopened in 1704. The church was further restored (or "mistreated" according to Nikolaus Pevsner) in 1849-50 by Henry Hakewill.

27. Baptist Church, Wallingford

Built in 1794 by solicitor Richard Lovegrove, who owned the adjoining Calleva House.

28. St Peter, Wallingford

An earlier church on the site was destroyed in 1646 during the siege of Wallingford in the Civil War. Building of the present church started in 1763, the contractors being William Toovey and Joseph Tuckwell. In 1767 the interior of the church was paved, pews were added, and the exterior was stuccoed under the supervision of Sir Robert Taylor. A spire designed by Taylor was added in 1776-77. A local resident, Sir William Blackstone, a lawyer and author of the Commentaries on the Laws of England, took an interest in the building of the spire and paid for the clock face visible from his house. The chancel was built in 1904, designed by Sydney Stephenson. The church was declared redundant on 1 May 1971, and was vested in the Churches Conservation Trust on 26 July 1972.

29. St Mary Magdalene, Crowmarsh Gifford

The church of St Mary Magdalene is said to have been built in about 1120. The north door, south door, three windows in the south wall, chancel arch and font are all Norman. A north transept with a pointed arch was added in about 1200. The building was restored in 1836 and 1868.

30. St Mary, Newnham Murren

St. Mary's is a charming little flint church, close to the east bank of the Thames. Originally built in the 12th century, it has a Norman font, and a Jacobean pulpit.



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31. Holy Trinity, Nuffield

Holy Trinity was originally Norman. Some masonry from this period survives on the south side of the nave. In the 14th century the church was rebuilt and the north aisle was added. The gothic revival architect Benjamin Ferrey restored the chancel in 1845.

32. St Bartholomew, Nettlebed

The church of St Bartholomew was originally a chapelry of the adjacent parish of Benson. There is a record of the Empress Matilda giving the benefice of Benson, including chapels at Nettlebed and Warborough, to the Augustinian Abbey at nearby Dorchester, Oxfordshire in about AD 1140. The mediaeval church building was replaced in 1845–46 by the present building, designed by a member of the Hakewill family of architects.

From the 14th century Nettlebed became important for brick making, which continued until the 1930s. One remaining pottery kiln is preserved in the village.

33. St Botolph, Swyncombe

The church is picturesquely situated on the Chiltern escarpment with broad views over Ewelme to Oxford. Built in the 11th century by the Benedictines of Bec, the great Normandy abbey which produced two archbishops of Canterbury, Anselm and Lanfranc. St Botolph's has changed little since. The small-windowed round apse has survived intact, though some Victorian windows have been inserted and a rood screen was unexpectedly placed here in 1914. Today, Swyncombe is renowned for its snowdrops in early spring.

34. St Mary, Ewelme

The church, almshouses and school, all built by the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk in the mid-15th century, are a unique medieval complex. There was an earlier church, of which the tower survives, but otherwise the building was completely rebuilt in the perpendicular style, with enormous windows lighting the nave and aisles. St John the Baptist's chapel, on the south side, is the chapel for the almshouses and contains the tomb of Thomas Chaucer (Geoffrey Chaucer's son).

35. St Helen, Benson

St Helen is partly ancient. John Marius Wilson described it as "variously late pointed Norman and decorated; has a modern tower; contains a Norman font and two brasses; and is very good." The parish includes the hamlets of Fifield, Roke, and Crowmarsh-Battle or Preston-Crowmarsh. The church tower was rebuilt in 1794. It has a single clock face on the east-facing side with hours displayed in Roman numerals. The clock face erroneously has the nine o'clock marker painted as "XI". The eleven o'clock marker is also XI. This mistake gained fame during the Second World War when Germany's English-speaking propaganda broadcaster, William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw) promised an air raid on "an airfield near the village whose clock had two elevens". RAF Benson was bombed soon afterwards.



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36. St Helen, Berrick Salome

St. Helen's is one of a number of Oxfordshire parish churches that has a timber-framed tower. A photograph taken just before the restoration in 1890 shows it had then merely been faced with simple weather-boarding carried nearly to the top, whereas now horizontal openings have been made to release the sound of the bells.

37. St Nicholas, Britwell Salome

St Nicholas's dates from the 13th century. It was restored in 1867 by the architect Charles Buckridge. There is a very ancient yew tree in the church yard with extensive foxholes around its roots.

38. St Bartholomew, Brightwell Baldwin

A handsome 14th century church, little altered except for some minor additions in the following century. The north chapel is dominated by enormous 17th and 18th century monuments to the Stone family of nearby Brightwell Park. In the nave, the brass to John the Smith of 1371 is thought to bear the earliest known inscription in English.

39. Holy Rood, Cuxham

Holy Rood has a Norman bell tower. The century gothic windows on the north side of the nave were inserted in the 14th century and some of the windows in the tower were added in the 15th century. The church was heavily restored in the 18th century. The gothic revival architect C.C. Rolfe rebuilt the chancel in 1895. Our children love visiting Holy Rood on the bike ride for the regular supply of jelly babies! We might be more in need of a pint!