

Winchester Stations of the Cross Walking Trail

The devotional exercise of visiting and praying in front of each of the 14 stations of the cross and meditating on the Passion of Christ stems from the practice of early Christian pilgrims who visited the scenes of the events in Jerusalem and walked the traditional route from the supposed location of Pilate's house to Calvary.

Ways of the Cross were established in Europe, and the tradition of 14 stations probably derived from the best known of them: Leuven (1505). The Franciscans long popularised the practice. We have chosen a trail around Winchester to connect these meditations with the City and to link the prayers to our concerns today.

The whole walk in order is about 7km or 4.5 miles; you may adapt it to your time and pace today.

1. Jesus is condemned to death. Winchester Law Courts, Romsey Road

Designed in the modernist style and built in stone with brick and flint panels the Law Courts were opened on 22 February 1974. Prior to this judicial hearings in Winchester were held in the Great Hall of Winchester Castle (up the steps to the right and attached to the Law Courts).

Pilate said, 'So, then you are a king?'
Jesus answered, 'It is you who say that I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth; and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice.'
'Truth?' said Pilate. 'What is that?'

We pray for all who seek and deliver justice; those who seek the truth.

2. Jesus takes up his Cross Westgate, Romsey Road

This fortified medieval city gateway was once a debtors prison; it was where Charles I was presented with the city mace by the royalist mayor in 1648 on his way to trial and execution in London and it houses a gruesome set of gibbeting irons reputedly used to display the executed body of Jack the Painter, a notorious traitor who was caught trying to burn the docks in Portsmouth at the time of the American War of Independence. If you climb to the rooftop you can see the layout of the City where this journey will continue.

We pray for all who live in, work in or visit the city and the burdens they may be carrying today.

3. Jesus falls the first time Winchester Beacon (formerly Winchester Night Shelter)

The Winchester Beacon provides accommodation, food and vital support services to help break the cycle of homelessness and enable residents to rebuild their lives. It is open 365 days a year. It was founded in 1988 by Churches Together in Winchester. In 1995 it became a registered charity, moving into these premises on Jewry Street in 1997.

The building, which was owned by Hampshire County Council, has variously been used as a Victorian gas-works, a Burberry factory, a bakery, a co-operative dairy, a printing works and finally a library store.

We pray for all who experience homelessness in Winchester.

4. Jesus meets his Mother Winchester College entrance, College street.

Winchester College is dedicated to Mary. The statue on College Street over the entrance survived the destruction of many such statues that honoured her during the Cromwellian era. This statue would have been brightly painted.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.
Seeing his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.'
Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

We pray that Mary who was with Jesus as he died on the cross will inspire us and help us in constancy and love.

5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross The leaning Cathedral southern walls seen from the path

In 1906 Winchester Cathedral was in imminent danger of collapse as it was sinking into peaty ground. To enable bricklayers to build supporting walls, the groundwater level had to be lowered. Normally, the removal of the groundwater would have caused the collapse of the building. Temporary concrete support to the foundation walls were put in place by William Walker an experienced diver, working in the dark under water for 5 years. He worked six hours a day in complete darkness as the water was full of sediment. Once the groundwater was pumped out conventional bricklayers then were able to do their work and restore the damaged walls and save the Cathedral.

As they were leading him away they seized on a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus.

We pray for all who work to maintain Winchester's historic, religious and civic life.

6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus Nunnaminster, Abbey Passage

The Nunnaminster, later known as St Mary's Abbey, was one of Winchester's three great Late Saxon royal monasteries. Founded by Queen Ealhswith, Alfred the Great's wife, in 903, it became one of the foremost centres of learning and art in England. It would have housed holy relics but it is written in September 1538, Thomas Cromwell's commissioners proceeded 'to sweep away (from St. Mary's) all the rotten bones that be called relics.'

Legend has it that Veronica's cloth held the imprint of the face of Jesus in blood and sweat. Such relics provide a tangible connection in Christian faith.

We pray for all who care for those in pain and those near death especially in the children's hospice 'Naomi House', and Winchester Hospice opened Summer 2021.

7. Jesus falls for the second time St John's Almshouse, Broadway

St John's Almshouse supported the old and infirm, needy travellers and the poor of Winchester. Now it is focused on care and housing for older people. This is one of the oldest charities in the country, dating back to the 12th Century. The original St John's Hospital was the focal point for civic and community life in medieval Winchester. At the time of the Reformation, the hospital avoided suppression as a religious foundation because the legislation allowing Henry VIII to suppress the monasteries did not include foundations which could rightly be described as hospitals: places of hospitality. At one time a school was run from St John's House and financial support given to fund local apprenticeships and start-up funds for local businesses.

We pray for those who need help and support in the City today. Lent is a time to give alms (donations to the poor)

8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem. The Statue of Licoricia, Jewry St

Jesus was a Jew and his first followers and friends were Jewish. Licoricia was a powerful and influential woman from the Jewish community in medieval Winchester. She lived on Jewry Street, its name recalls the significant Jewish population living in Winchester at the time. She suffered persecution in later life and financial burdens were placed on her and the Jewish community. She was murdered at home in Jewry St for unknown reasons in 1277.

In 2021 Winchester City Council passed a motion to commit to becoming a City of Sanctuary and Council of Sanctuary offering safety and protection for all, especially those fleeing violence and persecution. Many Ukrainian women and their children sought sanctuary in Winchester since the war.

Large numbers of people followed him, and women too, who mourned and lamented for him.

We pray for all who have found a home in Winchester and pray that it will be a city of sanctuary and safety for all.

9. Jesus falls for the third time Gravestone, Winchester Cathedral Grounds.

Bill Wilson, the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, was inspired by a tombstone in the grounds in front of the Cathedral. So much so, that the cathedral is mentioned on the first page of the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill, an American officer, visited the cathedral in 1918, towards the end of the First World War. One grave in particular caught Wilson's eye remembering a soldier of the 1700s. The book reads: "We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by a doggerel on an old tombstone: 'Here lies a Hampshire Grenadier / Who caught his death / Drinking cold small beer / A good soldier is ne'er forgot / Whether he dieth by musket / Or by pot.'" The Big Book is still used all over the world today at most AA meetings.

We pray for all of us who are addicted or attached to things that are bad for us. Lent is a time to give up something that is getting in the way of us living the life we are made for.

10. Jesus is stripped of his garments The Arc, Jewry St.

Set in an iconic, Grade II listed building the Arc is a partnership between Hampshire Cultural Trust and Hampshire County Council.

Up to 6th March. Exhibition: Shoes Inside Out.

Our feet carry us on our journey through life. Spend some time imagining the lives of those who walked in the shoes on display. Now look at your own shoes and meditate on your life's journey so far.

From 9th March. Exhibition: This is Me. This is Us. This is Winchester. Reflect on how people present themselves or present Winchester. Now meditate on how you present yourself.

Then they cast lots to share out his clothing.

We pray for all those we walk with in our lives; family, friends and acquaintances.

11. Jesus is nailed to the Cross Jolly Farmer pub, Andover Road. 0.4 km on Andover Rd

This was the site of executions until 1819. The Jolly Farmer has a framed hangman's noose on the wall next to the bar. It's not known exactly where the hangings took place, apart from in an area known as Gallows Hill, which may have been in the field behind the pub, or on the green space near its car park.

Jesus was crucified on a hill called Golgotha outside Jerusalem.

It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read, 'The King of the Jews'. And they crucified two bandits with him, one on his right and one on his left

We pray for all who are experiencing violence and injustice.

12. Jesus dies on the Cross The Old Gaolhouse, Jewry Street:

After 1819 the place of execution was moved to the County Gaol in Jewry Street, with a scaffold erected over the main entrance in full view of the public.

Jesus was crucified between two criminals and promised salvation even to the lowest in society in his final conversation.

One of the criminals hanging there abused him: 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us as well.'
But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong.'
Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'
He answered him, 'In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

We pray to know what failings we need to leave at the foot of the cross today.

13. Jesus is taken down from the Cross. .The Buttercross, High St

The Butter Cross of Winchester is a Holy Cross, dating back to the mid C14th. Traders would display butter, cheese, eggs, milk on the steps of the cross. It was threatened with removal twice but locals rose up to ensure it remained. This is still a place of encounter in Winchester, locals use this as a meeting point.

When the centurion saw what had taken place, he gave praise to God and said, 'Truly, this was an upright man.'

We pray in silence to encounter Jesus; his humanity and divinity stilled in the broken body and united to us in our brokenness.

14. Jesus is laid in the tomb Hyde Abbey, River Park Leisure Centre

King Alfred ruled Wessex for 18 years, and is particularly well known for his defence of southern England against the Vikings. He was generally regarded as a fair and just king and was buried in Winchester's Old Minster in 899. However, in 1110, his bones were taken to Hyde Abbey, but lost when it was destroyed during the Reformation. Archeologists opened up a site in the car park by the old leisure centre in 1999. You can see the 'ghost' of the Abbey marked out by the car park
King Alfred's remains have never been recovered.

When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea, called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be handed over. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away.

We pray for our journey today and that Lent will be a blessed time and Easter a fresh discovery of hope.

Thank you for joining us on the Winchester Stations of the Cross Walking Trail.

During Lent Christians reflect more deeply on how they relate to God, to all people and all creation. Hope rises on Easter Day, the tomb cannot hold him, for Jesus rises breathing forgiveness; transformation for all who follow in his way.

If you would like to pray the Stations of the Cross in a Church they are on the interior walls of St Peter's Church Jewry St.

If you are visiting the Cathedral you may like to reflect on the Crucifixion of Christ and the Thieves in Bishop Edington's Chantry Chapel, The Pieta by Peter Eugene Ball in the Lady Chapel, the ancient frescoes in the Holy Sepulchre Chapel, and Christ by Peter Eugene Ball in the North Transept.

Map thumbnail images overleaf by Stephen Harte

