

# RIDE + STRIDES for Churches

## *A Reading church walk for September 9<sup>th</sup> 2017*

### *Including a Hunt the Animal quiz*

This walk will take you to eight churches or chapels in central Reading – in each one you are invited to look for a bird or animal featured somewhere in the building.



#### **Reading Minster (St Mary's)**

*St Mary's is the oldest church in Reading. Founded in Saxon times, over 1,000 years ago, it was originally a minster church, serving Reading and several surrounding villages. It has been known as Reading Minster again since 1999. No Saxon work survives, but there is a Norman doorway in the north wall. The splendid chequerboard west tower dates from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century when the church was reconstructed using material from Reading Abbey. The church was substantially restored and enlarged between c 1850 and 1872 by local architects, JB Clacy and Joseph Morris (who added the north aisle). There are some good windows and several monuments, including one to William Kendrick (d 1636) and, in the Lady Chapel, one to John Monck (d 1809).*

*Look for the Bishop Wilberforce memorial window (turn right as you enter the church – it's on your right, at the west end of the south aisle). The bottom left panel tells the story of the Good Samaritan.*

**What animal is shown in this window?**

On leaving the church, turn left. Walk down Bridge Street, under the IDR road bridge, and continue up Southampton Street. St Giles' Church is on your left.



#### **St Giles' Church**

*St Giles' is the third of Reading's medieval churches (the other is St Laurence's). Like many churches dedicated to St Giles, who was the patron saint of beggars, it was built on what was then the edge of the town, beyond the mill stream. The church was largely rebuilt between 1871 and 1873 to designs by J P St Aubyn, though there are earlier fragments in the tower – you can see the remains of an arch in the west wall. It is the only ancient church to have a spire. The interior has several good screens, an organ gallery, and numerous monuments.*

**What creature supports the lectern?**

Turn left as you leave the church. Cross Letcombe Street and continue into Church Street. On your left is the Meeting House of the Society of Friends (Quakers).



### Quaker Meeting House and Burial Ground

*The present Meeting House (not accessible today) dates from 1835. Walk through to the burial ground behind the Meeting House. Quaker graves are always simple, so there are no elaborate carvings, but this is a quiet spot in the middle of a busy town, and if you are lucky you may see a bird.*

**Write it here if you do.**

After leaving the Meeting House, turn left and continue to London Street. Turn right, and walk up the hill towards Christ Church. You can cross the main road at the traffic lights, and at the top of the hill cross the road at the pelican crossing. Continue to the roundabout, where you turn left into Christchurch Road. Christ Church is on your right after about 200 yards.



### Christ Church

*Christ Church is one of the many new churches built in Reading during Queen Victoria's reign. It was designed by the distinguished architect Henry Woodyer (who also designed St Paul's Church in Wokingham), and with its 164 feet tall spire is visible for miles around. The site was given by local landowner, Sir William Milman, and the church was opened in 1862. Enter by the door under the tower. Inside note the beautifully carved capitals on the pillars, the openwork screen in the chancel arch, and the fine reredos (behind the altar). There is much good stained glass in the church by leading Victorian firms. In the third window in the north aisle (on your left as you enter the church) is a depiction of Jesus being baptised by John the Baptist.*

**What creature can you see at the bottom of this window?**

Turn right as you leave the church and continue along Christchurch Road (crossing at the pelican crossing) until you reach the traffic lights. Turn left here and walk down Elmhurst Road, keeping the University grounds on your right. Cross Upper Redlands Road and go down the hill, crossing Addington Road, until you reach Erleigh Road. Turn right here. St Luke's Church is about 100 yards on your left.



### St Luke's Church

*Unlike the other churches we have visited so far, which have built of stone (or stone and flints), St Luke's is entirely of red brick. It was designed by JP St Aubyn (like St Giles') and was built in 1882-3. If you walk past the church and turn left you will see the former St Luke's School, now converted into flats. The church is long, narrow and tall, with an apsidal chancel. It has some fine stained glass, much of it by the noted stained-glass artist CE Kempe, and inserted between 1892 and 1930.*

**The fourth window in the north aisle (on your left as you enter) shows St Francis of Assisi. There are many birds and animals in the window. Can you name some of them?**

Retrace your steps along Erleigh Road, crossing Alexandra Road and making for **the** Royal Berkshire Hospital. At the roundabout turn right, and at the traffic lights turn left along London Road. Enter the hospital by the main entrance, up the steps.



### Royal Berkshire Hospital chapel

*The chapel, built in 1882, is immediately ahead of you. It is unusual to find a Victorian hospital chapel so well-preserved.*

**The first window on your left depicts Moses in the wilderness. What creature is shown in this window?**

On leaving the hospital cross the road at the pelican crossing, turn left, and then right down Watlington Street (just before the garage). Wesley Methodist Church is at the end of the street on your left.



### Wesley Methodist Church

*Wesley Methodist Church was designed by the minister, the Revd J P Johnson, in association with Joseph Morris (who designed the north aisle at St Mary's), and was built in 1872-3. Like St Luke's it is constructed of brick, though in this case black and white brick as well as red, and it has a fine brick spire.*

**Turn right into the church from the vestibule and look for the window above the altar (straight ahead of you). What creature is shown in this window?**

After leaving the church, retrace your steps back up Watlington Street to the Polish Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on your left.



### Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

*Now a Polish Catholic church, this was originally the Anglican church of St John the Evangelist. It was designed by W A Dixon and built between 1872 and 1876, replacing an earlier church on the same site built in 1837 to serve the developing suburb of Eldon Square and neighbourhood. It is built of stone in a French gothic style, and has window dressings in cream Bath stone and red Mansfield stone. The south-west tower is surmounted by a spire rising to 150 feet. The adjacent school was designed by local architect Charles Smith and built in 1858. Inside are several good windows by the famous Victorian firm Clayton and Bell.*

**Look for the window above the altar. What creature can you see in this window?**

Turn round and look at the west windows where you will see an unusual depiction of four archangels, Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Uriel.

### Answers to the quiz are shown below.

This walk was prepared by Peter Durrant, Chair of the Royal County of Berkshire Churches Trust. The Trust exists to support churches of all denominations to meet the ever-increasing costs of repair. If you enjoyed this walk, why not consider supporting the Trust by becoming a Friend of Berkshire Churches.

Please take care on the walk. Although we have taken every effort to recommend a safe route, the Royal County of Berkshire Churches Trust can take no responsibility for your personal safety.

[www.berkschurchestrust.org.uk](http://www.berkschurchestrust.org.uk)

*Reading Minster (St Mary's) - Donkey (horse will do); St Giles Church - Pelican; Christ Church - Fish; St Luke's Church - Any of rabbit, dog, owl, hedgehog, butterfly, blackbird, sheep; Royal Berkshire Hospital Chapel - Snakes; Wesley Methodist Church - Dove; Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus - Eagle.*