

St Bene't's to St Alban's Walk

17th – 21st June 2024

Information Pack

I am planning to walk with anyone who would like to join me from St Bene't's to St Alban's Abbey during the week leading up to the Alban Pilgrimage. This is approximately 65 miles making for 5 days of an average 13 miles a day. The route lends itself to a combination of overnight stays and day walks utilising the railway line between Cambridge and London. Anyone is welcome for the whole route or days of their choosing and I have identified some shorter sections that are suitable for those who are less mobile or prefer a shorter walk to join. Pilgrimage is an ancient Christian tradition and many have found walking together draws us closer to one another and to God. In the time after Anna's death and burial at St Alban's I was drawn to this concept as a challenging way for us to collectively strengthen our bond as a congregation, and a chance to pay our respects together for those who would like to do so.

This information pack contains the itinerary, maps and some general information about the walk which has been timed to arrive in St Alban's to coincide with the Alban Pilgrimage event on Saturday 22nd June.

Many thanks to Andrea Harrison, James Gardom, the 20s and 30s and the social committee who have been instrumental in helping me bring this to the wider congregation.

Please sign up if you are interested, either on the online form here <https://forms.gle/2iLqgcFskiZaGpOz7>; the sign-up sheets at the back of church or by emailing myself (robin.cumming4@gmail.com) or Andrea. I am also happy to hear from anyone with questions or suggestions ahead of the walk.

Maps detailing our route (as described below) can be found here:  Maps

With love in Christ,

Rob Cumming

Day 1: Monday 17th June

Start: St Bene't's Church

End: Meads Farm, 21 Cambridge Road, Foxton, CB22 6SH

Distance: 17.3km / 10 ¼ miles

08:30 Meet at St Bene't's for morning prayer +/- Eucharist

09:30 Walk to Trumpington Meadows

11:00 Meet at Byron's Pool Car Park for accessible segment of walk across Trumpington Meadows including bring-your-own picnic lunch (see below)

13:00 Continue walk to Meads Farm campsite

18:00 Arrive at campsite and say Evening Prayer together (some may want to go and book into alternative accommodation)

19:00 Meet for dinner either at campsite or at The White Horse, Foxton - depending on numbers, preferences and dietary requirements.

21:30 Compline

22:00 Bedtime

Accessible Section

The section of the walk from Byron's Pool car park in Grantchester to the A10 opposite Hauxton looks from maps and research to be wheelchair-accessible. We would be meeting anyone who wanted to join us for this at the Byron's Pool car park and then walk 3.6km (2 ¼ miles) across Trumpington Meadows, sharing a picnic lunch on the way. The accessible section ends as we reach the A10 at Hauxton Mill. Walkers doing the accessible route could return via to Byron's Pool car park via the same route, arrange to be collected at Hauxton Mill (there is a dropped kerb to cross the A10 and a layby on the other side of the road) or detour to Trumpington Park & Ride.

Alternative Accommodation

Those who don't want to / aren't able to camp could return to Cambridge from Foxton Station, or take a taxi to the Cambridge Motel at Shepreth, either meeting us back at the campsite in the morning or joining us as we pass through Shepreth the next day.

Day 2: Tuesday 18th June

Start: Meads Farm, 21 Cambridge Road, Foxton, CB22 6SH

End: The Old Bull Inn, 56 High Street, Royston, SG8 9AW

Distance: 17km / 10 miles

08:00 Breakfast at Meads Farm campsite (bring your own)

09:00 Morning Prayer

09:30 Set off walking

11:15 Optional detour into Meldreth village for comfort break

13:00 Bring-your-own picnic lunch at or near St Mary's Church, Whaddon

14:00 Set off to walk to Royston

15:00 Meet in Kneesworth for start of accessible section of walk (NB not suitable for all wheelchairs)

18:00 Arrive in Royston; say Evening Prayer at St John's Church Royston.

18:30 Check into The Old Bull Inn for food and accommodation

21:30 Compline

22:00 Bedtime

Info:

theoldbullinn.royston@gmail.com

01763242003

Accessible Section: There isn't a section that looks to be suitable for standard wheelchairs until we reach the outskirts of Royston. The 6.5km / 4 mile section between Kneesworth and Royston may be suitable for **very rugged** mobility vehicles (such as Trampler or Mountain Trike off-road mobility vehicles), which are permitted on footpaths. It may be suitable for some children's pushchairs. It does offer a shorter afternoon walk on reasonable terrain for those who would like to join us for a shorter section

The overnight accommodation at the Old Bull Inn at Royston unfortunately doesn't appear to be wheelchair accessible. I will check wheelchair access at the dining area if anyone would like to join us for dinner. Those who wish to return to Cambridge can do so by train from Royston station.

Wednesday 19th June

Start: The Old Bull Inn, 56 High Street, Royston, SG8 9AW

End: Church Farm, Ardeley, Nr Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 7AH

Distance: 18.67km / 12 miles

08:00 Breakfast at The Old Bull Inn (included with accommodation)

08:45 Morning Prayer

09:00 Set off walking from the Old Bull Inn.

12:00 Bring-your-own picnic lunch at Notley Green. End of accessible section.

13:00 Walk on to Ardeley

19:00 Arrive at Church Farm campsite, Ardeley for evening prayer. Those camping pitch tents at the campsite.

19:45 Dinner at the Jolly Waggoner Pub

22:00 Compline

22:30 Bedtime

Accessible Section: The morning's walk looks to be on reasonable terrain for rugged mobility vehicles and pushchairs, with options to turn round or be collected at Therfield (5km / 3 ¼ miles) or Notley Green (9.2km / 5 ¾ miles). It is worth noting that there are no guaranteed food, drink or toilet facilities during this entire day; there may be a cafe in Therfield but the pub that is marked on the map is not open until 5:30pm.

Alternative Accommodation: For those who don't want to / aren't able to camp, Stevenage and Hitchin are the nearest large towns where there are a multitude of hotel or B&B options. Taxi or arranging a lift would be the only feasible way to get to these unless you wanted to detour from the walk at an earlier point in the day. You could also return to Cambridge by train from Stevenage station.

Thursday 20th June

Start: Church Farm, Ardeley, Nr Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG2 7AH

End: Hertford Camping and Caravanning Club Site, Mangrove Rd, Hertford SG13 8AJ

Distance: 21.4km / 14 miles

08:00 Breakfast (bring your own) at Church Farm campsite

08:30 Morning Prayer

09:15 Start walking

11:15 Meet at Burn's Green for start of accessible section

13:00 Lunch at Watton-At-Stone. There are two pubs, several cafes and shops here. Public toilets are available for use at the Community Hall.

14:00 Walk on to Hertford camping & caravanning club

18:30 Arrive at Hertford camping & caravanning club; say Evening Prayer

19:15 Dinner (location TBC, but will be a pub in Hertford)

22:00 Compline

22:30 Bedtime

Accessible Sections: I need to do some further research on this. The morning's walk as far as Watton-at-Stone (10.6km / 6 ½ miles) is on a mixture of bridleways and tracks - however the ground may be uneven and further research is needed to establish how accessible it will be. The more promising section is between Burn's Green and Watton-At-Stone (4.2km / 2 ¾ miles) which appears to be grassy track and bridleway all the way and if conditions are dry underfoot should be suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. For those who would prefer an afternoon walk, the section alongside the River Beane from Waterford Heath Nature Reserve to Hertford (3-4km / 2 miles to Hertford, 5km / 3 miles to campsite) looks promising in terms of both length and terrain.

Alternative Accommodation: There are a number of hotels and B&Bs in Hertford for those who don't want to / aren't able to camp. You can also return to Cambridge by train from Hertford North station, changing trains at Stevenage.

Friday 21st June - this is a long day to finish the route!

Start: Hertford Camping and Caravanning Club Site, Mangrove Rd, Hertford SG13 8AJ

End: St Alban's Abbey

Distance: 26.65km / 16 miles

07:30 Bring-your-own breakfast

08:00 Morning Prayer

08:30 Set off

11:00 Quick comfort break at The Five Horseshoes, Little Berkhamsted

11:30 Set off again

13:30 Lunch and meet for accessible section at The Red Lion, Hatfield

14:30 Set off to walk from Hatfield to St Alban's along disused railway

15:30 Meet for shorter accessible section at Ellenbrook Lane, Hatfield

19:00 Arrive at St Alban's Abbey and say Evening Prayer together

19:30 Pub Dinner (location TBC) & disperse to own accommodation in St Alban's.

Accessible section: The section starting at Ellenbrook Lane and recreation ground at the edge of Hatfield and finishing at St Alban's Abbey (7.64km / 4 ¾ miles) is along dismantled railway which should be easy underfoot and suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. If you'd like to join us for lunch the section between the Red Lion pub and the starting point mentioned above is through the town and should also be accessible - this is around 3.2km taking the whole afternoon's walk to 10.8km or just over 6 ½ miles.

Accommodation: Those arriving in St Alban's on the Friday may like to book somewhere together but as there are multiple options I haven't included this in the planning. Rob & MJ will likely be staying at the Travelodge.

Saturday 22nd June

Meet at starting point for Alban Pilgrimage - see separate itinerary for this day

General Information

Costs: The approximate cost of accommodation for the week is £100-£150; the exact amount will depend on how many people sign up and the configuration of the rooms and tents we end up with. You will also need to pay for your own food and drink throughout the week.

Walking:

Most of the walk is across farmland with some wooded and heathland areas, and some unavoidable sections walking on roads. We have tried to stick to tracks and paths as much as possible (from the appearance of the map) but some sections may be wet, muddy or a little steep. For this reason a good pair of walking boots is essential!

Distances have been dictated by available places to stay and are therefore variable - between 10 and 16 miles a day, with the first two days being the shortest and final day being the longest. Most people with a reasonable (not extreme!) level of fitness should be able to manage this.

We have tried to flag potential comfort stops along the route but there are sections where these are few and far between, and can't all be guaranteed to be open as we pass through. You'll therefore need to bring enough food and water for the whole day each day. There is a national lack of public toilets, particularly in more rural areas, and there will be sections of the walk where these are not available. This doesn't need to put you off, but is something to be prepared for.

We will not need to carry all our overnight luggage and camping equipment as MJ Black has kindly volunteered to drive this between sites for us - so all you will need to carry while walking is the clothing, food and water and anything else you need for during the day.

For anyone wanting to join us for a shorter section - either a whole day or a shorter easier walk - we have indicated approximate timings and suitable meeting places on the itinerary for each day.

"Accessible" sections are (in theory) on reasonable path or track that should be suitable for a reasonably robust wheelchair or off-road mobility scooter. They should also accommodate a buggy or pushchair for those with young children. Rob and MJ will be testing these over the coming weeks and be able to better advise once we've seen them in person. Please let Rob or Andrea know if you're planning to join for a section so that we know to look out for you and wait if we get to the meeting point early!

Food: Breakfast and lunch will be bring-your-own (or bring-and-share if you would like). Anyone who would like to is welcome to join us for lunch each day; I have given locations and approximate timings for this daily. Please let us know if you're planning to come so that we can look out for you.

Depending on numbers, preferences and dietary requirements evening meals will either be cooked together at our campsite or will be in a nearby pub.

Accommodation:

Due to the locations and suitable break points in the route, the most affordable and practical option for most nights is camping (aside from the second night in Royston). This will be on campsites with fresh drinking water, toilet and shower facilities. For the first and fourth nights it will be possible to find

alternative accommodation locally or take a train back to Cambridge and return the next day if you would prefer not to camp. The third night is quite remote and if you didn't want to camp you would probably need to get a lift or taxi to your preferred accommodation.

Equipment:

Many people will be familiar with all of this, however some may wish to join us having not done a multi-day walk before; this information is primarily for them.

For everyone walking the whole route, you will need:

Day bag: This should be a comfortable rucksack which you can carry all day without getting a sore back.

- Walking boots (which you have “walked in” i.e. have started to shape to your feet, preventing blisters). These obviously don't go in the day bag, they'll be on your feet.
- Suitable trousers or shorts and top for walking. Avoid heavy cotton fabrics including jogging bottoms (sweatpants) as these soak up water and take a long time to dry. Many people use lightweight walking trousers, or leggings.
- Waterproof jacket and trousers. Even in June it can be cold and wet!
- A warm layer (microfleece or softshell jacket) to go under your waterproofs if it's cold. Avoid sweatshirts / hoodies as these get very wet and take a long time to dry.
- Food for lunch - something that won't go off or mind being squashed. Cheese and oatcakes is a particular favourite of mine.
- Snacks to keep you going throughout the day. Apples, bananas, jelly sweets, cereal bars, trail mix, malt loaf are all good options. Chocolate is great, but does tend to melt in the sun...
- Water bottles or water bladder. You'll need at least 1.5 litres of water per day, preferably 2 litres or more. It is important to stay hydrated while walking particularly in Summer.
- Suncream
- A suitable hat
- Any medication you might need throughout the day (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen, hayfever tablets, asthma inhalers...)
- Low-level first aid items (plasters, insect bite spray). I'll have a more comprehensive first aid kit that I'll carry each day but it's useful to have a few bits yourself.
- Tissues, wet wipes and/or hand sanitiser
- Money

Overnight Kit: This will be carried for you from base to base but should (please!) be relatively self-contained in a bag. Camping kit can often be borrowed from friends and family, or ask me and I will try to set you up with something.

For campers:

- Tent: needs to be waterproof, but doesn't need to be super lightweight or backpacking-suitable. Not too big or it'll be hard to transport and cold to sleep in!
- Sleeping bag: 2-season will be adequate for June.

- Roll mat, camp bed or inflatable mattress. This is more important than you'd think for a warm and comfortable night.
- Mug, plate/bowl and cutlery if needed for your breakfast
- Small camping stove - a few between us would be useful but don't worry about it if you don't have one.
- Torch
- Power bank and cables if you want to charge your phone
- Some people like shoes (croc's / flip flops) for the campsite but these aren't essential.

For everyone:

- Spare clothes
- Wash kit
- Towel (campsites won't provide these, and after all you should always know where your towel is)
- Toiletries
- Any medication you need
- Spare breakfast items
- Spare supplies for the day bag (particularly extra snacks / lunch bits - we will be able to buy some things en route but don't rely on it particularly between Royston on Tuesday and Hertford on Thursday evening).

Safety Considerations:

Anyone joining us on this walk officially does so at their own risk and St Bene't's does not accept liability for injuries or illness sustained through walking. That said, we obviously don't want accidents or emergencies to arise, and want to respond optimally if they do, so please bear in mind the following advice:

This is not particularly dangerous terrain, however depending on the weather it may be either wet and slippery, or hot and dry, or both. Heat stroke, heat exhaustion and sunburn are likely to be the greatest risks so please be sure to bring plenty of water, cool clothes, and wear a hat during the hottest part of the day. To avoid the risk of injury please make sure you're wearing suitable shoes. You may get blisters and aches and pains from walking over multiple days - well worn-in boots help to avoid this but don't always prevent it! Stretching at the end of the day will help to reduce soreness and tendon / ligament injuries.

I will have a reasonable amount of first aid supplies with me and although I haven't done a first aid course in a while, I have over 10 years' experience of dealing with minor walking-related injuries and also work as an A&E doctor which I feel provides a reasonable level of cover for this setting.

Walking in the heat may exacerbate some medical conditions, particularly heart, kidney and lung problems. If you have a medical condition or are on medication, please make sure someone you're walking with knows the details of this in case of an emergency. Please also make sure someone you're walking with holds emergency contact details in case you become unwell. I am happy to hold this information confidentially for anyone who wishes.

In order to adequately safeguard the younger members of our congregation, anyone under the age of 18 who wishes to join us should be accompanied by a parent, guardian or responsible adult.