

SHORT WALKS FROM THE VILLAGE

1. From the Bridge End car park walk along past the Chequers (now a private house) and into Wittenham Lane (signposted to Day's Lock) follow the path that leaves the Dyke Hills on the left, to Day's Lock. **Approx 20 minutes.** At Day's Lock one can cross the river to Little Wittenham and then climb Wittenham Clumps, part of the Sinodun Hills. **Approx 45 minutes.**
2. As above, but just before the Dyke Hills go through the gate and across the fields to the Thame Streambridge (where the Thame joins the Thames), and up the other side of the river to the end of Dorchester Bridge. **Approx 45 minutes.** (The Thames Path joins up with this walk at Thame Stream Bridge)
3. From the Bridge End car park cross Dorchester Bridge and turn immediately left into the hamlet of Overy. Pass the 18th century Overy Manor, bear left across a stile to Overy Mill (a working mill until about 1920). Leaving the mill pool cross another stile, and take the path across the Hurst, a water meadow held in trust for the villagers, and a pleasant walk in itself. At the far side the path crosses a small bridge over the Thame and leads around via Manor Farm Road to the back of the Abbey. **Approx 30 minutes.**

OS map: Explorer 170, 1:25 000

Dorchester Walking Guides: available in Museum and hotels

OTHER RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

- Abbey cloister garden (for picnics and quiet contemplation)
- Recreation ground (cricket, football, tennis courts, basketball court, children's playground)
- Fishing in Hurst meadow (daily fishing permit required) www.hurst-water-meadow.co.uk
- Village Hall, Queen Street, used for events, local functions and available for hire www.dorchesteronthamesvillagehall.org.uk

VILLAGE AMENITIES

The George Hotel, High Street, Tel: 01865 340404
Accommodation, Carriages Restaurant, Potboys bar and conference facilities.
www.georgedorchester.relaxinnz.co.uk

The White Hart Hotel, High Street, Tel: 01865 340074
Accommodation, Harte's restaurant, bar meals and conference facilities.
www.white-hart-hotel-dorchester.co.uk

The Fleur de Lys Inn, High Street, Tel: 01865 340502
Accommodation, bar meals and restaurant with large rear garden. www.fleurdelys-dorchester.co.uk

Co-op, High Street, Tel: 01865 340038
General store, including newspapers. National Lottery outlet. Open seven days.

Hair, 65 High Street, Tel: 01865 340194
All hair and beauty treatments available. Open Tues-Sat.

Lily's, 28 High Street, Tel: 01865 340900
Farmshop and tearoom selling local organic produce. Light lunches and gifts. www.lilystearoom.com

Dorchester Fireplaces & Interiors, The Barn, 3 High Street, Tel: 01865 341452
HETAS registered showroom & full in-house installation service. Wood burning stoves, mantelpieces and all accessories. www.dorchesterfireplaces.co.uk

Parking
Bridge End car park. Occasional special arrangements for concerts, weddings and other events. See village website for details.

Transport
Buses: Fast bus service to and from Oxford and Wallingford on A4074 (Dorchester by-pass). Less frequent services, involving interchange, from village to Wallingford, Abingdon, Didcot, Berinsfield.

Trains: Nearest mainline station is Didcot Parkway.

Website
www.dorchesteronthames.co.uk

© Brochure prepared by Dorchester Parish Council, April 2003, revised December 2012, Edited by Margot Metcalfe: This edition August 2017.

Acknowledgements: Mary Tame (original text), John Cotton (layout), Leslie Radford and Frank Blackwell (photos), Michael Evans, Brian Oliver and Hallidays Antiques (maps & illustrations)

Dorchester on Thames Oxfordshire



**Charming, historic village at
the confluence of the rivers
Thame & Thames, just 9 miles
south east of Oxford**

**Once a Celtic market centre -
then a Roman town**

Centre of Saxon Christianity

**Site of an early medieval monastery
of which the magnificent Abbey remains**

Early settlement

There is evidence of human settlement in Dorchester from Neolithic times. To the south, Iron Age people occupied a hill fort on Castle Hill; later the Celtic people enclosed their settlement by building the Dyke Hills, a rare example of a pre-Roman town, about half a mile from the present village.

Roman to Saxon

Dorchester today lies over the old Romano-British walled town, of which the southern and western boundaries can still be traced. This town later became the centre of the Saxon settlement. The present-day allotments were once the Hempcroft.

Cynegils the king of the West Saxons was baptised in the River Thame by St Birinus in 635 and Dorchester became the episcopal centre for Wessex. Later it came under the control of Offa King of Mercia, which led to the See of Dorchester stretching from the Thames to the Humber, but in 1075 Remegius removed the See to Lincoln.

Medieval to Tudor

In 1140 Dorchester's Augustinian monastery was founded and the Abbey was built on the old Saxon foundation. At the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the church building was saved for posterity through its purchase for £140 by local wealthy man Richard Beauforest, who left it to the village in his will.

Modern

As Wallingford and Oxford grew, Dorchester's importance as a centre decreased. However, its location on the main roads from Gloucester and from Oxford to London ensured its role as a focal point for travellers, with several inns as well as two stagecoach inns. The road was one of the earliest to become a toll road. The building of the bypass (the present A4074) in the 20th century brought further changes. The population in 2000 was 1023.

For further information, refer to:

Jean Cook and Trevor Rowley, eds: *Dorchester through the ages* (Oxford University Department for External Studies, 1985) available in Museum shop.

- Saxon Cathedral • Augustinian Abbey
- Parish Church since the Reformation
- Architectural gem, recently restored and refurbished
- Musical and other cultural events



For up-to-date information, including event and concert programmes refer to: www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk

Abbey Guest House: Medieval building adjacent to the Abbey (Tel: 01865 340007 or events@dorchester-abbey.org.uk for bookings). It also houses the Abbey's:

Museum: Open Easter – end September
www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/museum

Tearoom: Run by volunteers, serves home made cakes, scones and jam, and raises more than £10,000 each year for charity.

Open Wednesday and Thursday 11.00 am – 5.00 pm, Friday to Sunday (and Bank Holiday Mondays) 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm. www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/tearoom

Dorchester Festival (biennial):
www.dorchesterfestival.com

For further information about the Abbey, refer to the *Dorchester Abbey Guide*, available in the Abbey and the Museum shop, or *Dorchester Abbey: Church and People 635-2005* (Ed: Kate Tiller), Stonesfield Press 2005.

Bridge End

Just South of Bridge End car park is the beautiful little Roman Catholic church, built in 1849 and dedicated to St Birinus, and its Presbytery. Opposite is another listed house dated 1797, which has a mansard roof.

The road leads on to a little green surrounded by some interesting old cottages. A path down to the riverbank leads to the site of the Roman crossing point and of the old bridge, which was replaced by the present road bridge in 1815.

High Street

Across the road from the car park is the Toll House, beside the Rose Walk leading to the Abbey. On the left the antique shop now known as Dorchester Antiques (formerly the Shambles) was once one of the village butcher's shops. Beyond Rotten Row, another collection of interesting cottages, is the Fleur de Lys inn, dated 1520, one of the village's old inns.

A little further along the High Street are three old thatched cottages of cruck construction probably built in the 15th century.

The George Hotel with its galleried yard dated 1495 was one of the coaching inns. Opposite is a 17th century house, now the Post Office.

The building on the corner of High Street and Queen Street (which housed Halliday's Antiques until 2005) was formerly Dorchester's Missionary College, founded in 1878. The cottages opposite are 17th and 18th century. The White Hart, the other coaching inn, was 'restored' in 1691.

Opposite the White Hart, down the narrow Malthouse Lane, is a row of very old thatched cottages, together with a courtyard of modern houses built on the site of the former blacksmith's yard.

A short distance up the street is a beautiful half-timbered Elizabethan house dated 1610, with another, smaller house of the same period opposite. Bull Inn and The Crown on opposite sides of the road are now private houses.

Near the War Memorial are several timber-framed houses, as well as the ashlar fronted Willoughby House, now divided into two homes. Beyond is a thatched cob wall.