



**Oxford Diocese Pilgrim Project:**  
St Margaret of Antioch, Binsey  
OX2 0NG

Website: [www.friendsofbinsey.com](http://www.friendsofbinsey.com)



You might also like to visit other nearby churches in the Pilgrim Project:

**Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford**  
Shrine of St Frideswide

**St Mary the Virgin, Oxford**  
Spiritual heart of ancient university

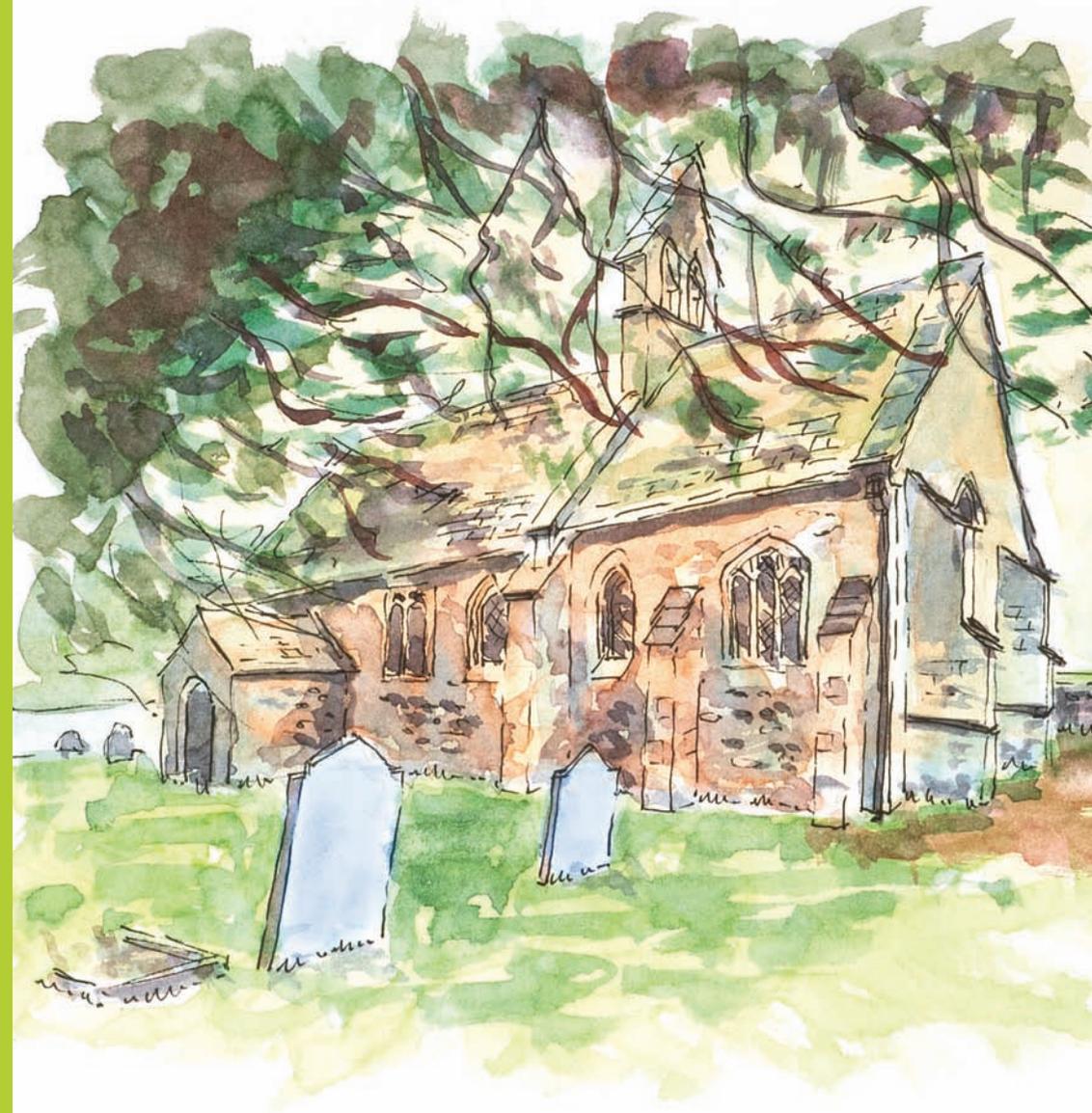
**Dorchester Abbey**  
Ancient abbey church

## PILGRIMAGE PRAYER



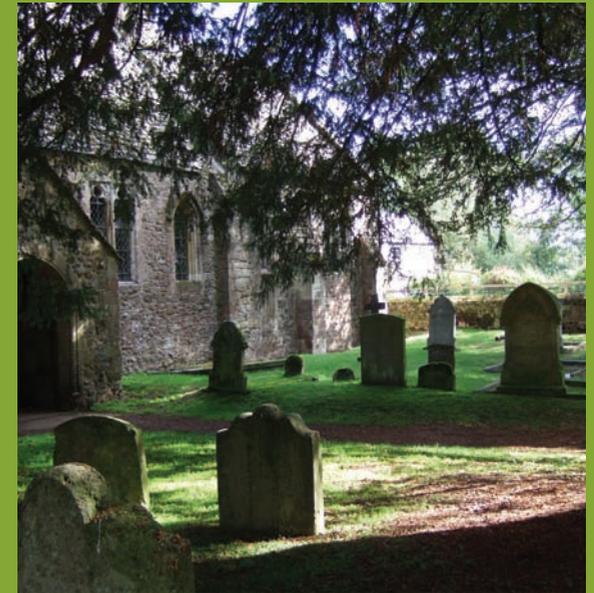
Pilgrim God, You are our origin and our destination.  
Travel with us, we pray, in every pilgrimage of faith,  
and every journey of the heart.  
Give us the courage to set off,  
the nourishment we need to travel well,  
and the welcome we long for at our journey's end.  
So may we grow in grace and love for you  
and in the service of others,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen

John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford



## ST MARGARET OF ANTIOCH, BINSEY

**St Margaret of Antioch, Binsey** stands on the site of one of St Frideswide's original monasteries. St Frideswide – the patron saint of Oxford – founded two communities, the larger at the present day Christ Church, and a smaller cell at Binsey. None of the original structure survives, but badger setts in the churchyard often bring up small pieces of Anglo-Saxon building materials.



The church at Binsey was always associated with St Frideswide's Priory in the centre of Oxford, which became first Cardinal's College, then King Henry VIII's College and finally Christ Church at the time of the Reformation.

The Priory and College looked after the small chapel and provided it with clergy in return for the rents and tithes of the village. The present church has a Norman foundation, which can best be seen in the south door in the porch. The church was rebuilt some time around the 13th century, and very little has been changed since, apart from the iconoclasm of the 16th century.

The reason for Binsey's fame was its role as a medieval pilgrimage site. At the west end of the church stood a well under a stone cover which

was famed for its healing properties. This well is reputed to have been the same well that appears in the Frideswide legend, and was known for its miraculous powers, and thus it gained the name 'treacle well'.

St Margaret's well stood until it was taken down on the eve of the Civil War in 1639. Anthony Wood, the famous Oxford historian, relates how many pilgrims came to Binsey in the High Middle Ages to seek cure at the well before visiting the relics of St Frideswide in the Priory. Pilgrims would enter the Diocese of Lincoln from the Diocese of Salisbury through the village of Seckworth (Seacourt) and would resort to the well. Here they would say their devotions, and leave symbols of their cure, such as crutches under the dome of the well. Henry VIII is known to have visited.

Binsey was made famous through its appearance in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, where the treacle well is mentioned. Given Carroll's teaching role at Christ Church, and Alice Liddell's link to Christ Church through her father, Binsey must have been a popular spot for walking on a summer's afternoon, and so its appearance in the book is unsurprising.

During the Victorian era the well was restored. Regular well services are held before evensong in the summer during which the congregation is sprinkled with the holy water.

We encourage visitors to walk or cycle to Binsey to see our very special place of pilgrimage. A very good pilgrimage route is to begin at Frideswide's shrine in Oxford before walking west beyond the

railway station, and then turning down Binsey Lane. The Eucharist is celebrated twice a month on a Sunday morning, and evensong is said every Sunday afternoon during British Summer Time.

*Remember with thanks all those pilgrims who have gone before you to this holy place. Pray for those in need of healing today, whether in body, mind or spirit. Pray for all those who work with the sick, and give thanks for their skills. Seek God's healing touch in your own life today.*