

## *From the Rector*

Welcome to Dorchester Abbey! I hope you enjoy your visit to this beautiful and historic Abbey, and that you will leave uplifted by its peaceful and inspiring atmosphere.

This Abbey is so much more than just a historic monument – it is a holy place. Christians have worshipped on this site for nearly 1400 years. Today it serves as a parish church for a village of just under 1000 inhabitants and is often used for special services, ecumenical worship and as a very special venue for cultural events such as dance and drama, concerts and exhibitions.

Do take time to reflect on some of the key points described in this leaflet as you move around. Visitors value the St. Birinus chapel as a place for stillness and prayer, and you will find there a board where personal requests you have for prayers can be placed.

We hope that you will meet with God in this place and go away refreshed.

*Sue Booy*

*On behalf of all who work and worship in Dorchester Abbey*

*May the Abbey always be  
a place of prayer and pilgrimage,  
of renewal and reconciliation,  
of faith found and faith shared,  
of hearts lifted and sorrows comforted,  
of God's love made known  
and His glory glimpsed*

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Sunday Worship

You are very welcome to join us

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.15am Morning Service (non-communion)  
and Sunday Club
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.15am Sung Eucharist
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.15am Family Service  
6.00pm Choral Evensong (BCP)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday 8.00am Holy Communion (BCP)  
10.15am Sung Eucharist
- 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday 8.00 am Holy Communion (BCP)  
Dorchester Team Ministry Morning Service  
(a notice is displayed in the porch)

**Said Evensong** at 4.45pm on Saturdays and Sundays when Tea Room is open

### Tea Room (in Abbey Guest House)

Open for delicious home-made teas 3-5pm Easter weekend to end Sept Sat, Sun, Bank Hols. Weds, Thurs, from Mid-May. All proceeds are donated to charity by the Abbey.

### Museum and Gift Shop (admission free)

Portrays the history of the Abbey, the village and neighbourhood from pre-Roman times.  
Open Easter weekend and from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> September.  
Closed Mondays except Bank Holidays.  
Tuesday to Saturday & Bank Holidays: 1pm to 5pm  
Sundays: 2pm to 5pm

Colour guide books containing a full history are available on the bookstalls in the Abbey and in the Museum.

**Website:** [www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk](http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk)

**Rector:** The Reverend Sue Booy Tel: 01865 340007

# *WELCOME TO DORCHESTER ABBEY*



*Birinus Roundel (c.1225)  
in the  
Birinus Chapel*

# DORCHESTER ABBEY

This is a very special place in the history of Christianity in England. Here in 635AD (a few years after Augustine had arrived in Canterbury) *Cynegils*, the King of Wessex, welcomed *Birinus*, the Pope's missionary, and was baptised by him with *Oswald*, King of Northumbria, standing as Godfather. *Birinus* built a small church on land which the King gave him, and the present, mainly Norman, Abbey is on the same site.

The importance of this event is that not only did Christianity spread from here throughout central southern England, but it was also the admission to the Christian faith of the head of the royal house from which, through Alfred the Great, our royal family can trace its descent.

This walk-round guide draws your attention to the principal features of the Abbey. More details may be obtained from the guide books on display. We suggest that you follow the numbered text for your tour.

- 1 Lead Font** c.1170, This rare survival from the Norman monastic church is decorated with figures of 11 apostles seated under an elaborate Romanesque arcade.
- 2 The Nave** was built over the remains of the original Saxon Cathedral. People have been worshipping on this spot for nearly 1,400 years.
- 3 The Cloister Gallery** was opened in 2005. Designed to give a sense of the monastic cloisters it houses an architectural display tracing the history of the Abbey.

- 4 East Window** A line of small sculpted figures portray scenes from the life of Christ. In the top three rows the glass dates mainly from early C14<sup>th</sup>. Look for St Birinus preaching and baptising King Cynegils. The two lowest rows contain Victorian glass. The rose window was designed by William Butterfield who restored parts of the church 1846-53.
- 5 Jesse Window** A unique window combining C14<sup>th</sup> tracery, sculpture and stained glass in a single theme. It shows the descent of Christ from King David's ancestor Jesse - the figure on the windowsill.
- 6 South Window and C14<sup>th</sup> Sedilia** These three seats with magnificent canopies are decorated with fine tracery and small figures of saints. Inside, three tiny C13<sup>th</sup> roundels are decorated with 3-petal flowers and a ball. Look also for the stone figures depicting the seven deadly sins.
- 7 Birinus Roundel** This is the earliest piece of glass in the Abbey (c.1225) and depicts the blessing of Bishop Birinus by Archbishop Asterius of Milan in preparation for his mission to Britain. This chapel is a place for quiet prayer.

- 8 The Birinus Shrine** The original shrine of St Birinus was demolished in 1536. Fragments of Medieval rib-vaulting found in the 1870s were used in this 1964 reconstruction. In 2006 the painting on the South wall will be uncovered.
- 9 Effigies** Include the famous Dorchester knight, now thought to be William de Valance the Younger (died 1282); also John de Stonor (died 1354), Lord Chief Justice of England under Edward III; a knight in plate armour c.1400, and a bishop in the style of the early C14<sup>th</sup>.
- 10 People's chapel** The original C14<sup>th</sup> wall painting of the crucifixion showing St Mary & St John and the sun and moon.
- 11 Corbel and Medieval floor tiles** This corbel, now on a colonnade pillar, shows sleeping canons being woken by the devil blowing a horn.
- 12 Edith Stedman carving** Above the west door, a carving honours the work of this American lady, whose fundraising efforts in the 1960s included restoration of the East Window.

