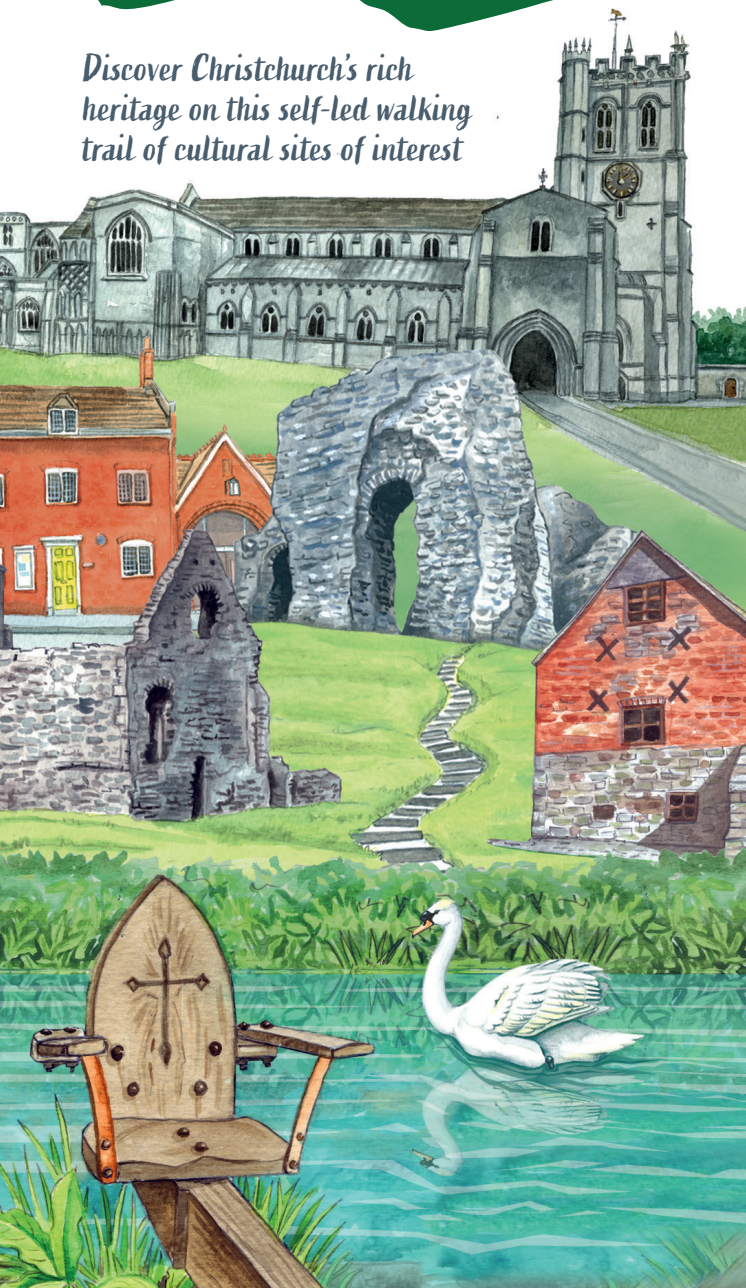


# CHRISTCHURCH CULTURAL TRAIL

Discover Christchurch's rich heritage on this self-led walking trail of cultural sites of interest



## Discover the rich history of Christchurch...

Tracing its origins back to an early Saxon settlement in the 7th Century, Christchurch was first known as Thuinam. This later evolved into Tweoxneam (Twynham) in Old English, signifying its strategic location "between the rivers".

Let the imposing ruins of the castle transport you to medieval Christchurch when the weekly market and annual fair created a lively atmosphere for both locals and visitors. Continue your journey to the bustling Quay, where the river Stour winds its way past the historic fishing harbour. From there, wander through the atmospheric Priory and its gardens, which stand as a testament to the town's heritage.

This trail will guide you through 10 key landmarks within walking distance of the High Street, each a chapter in Christchurch's compelling history.



A digital version of this trail can be found on our trails website, along with more cultural and historical trails of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area.

[www.explorebcp.co.uk/christchurch-cultural-trail](http://www.explorebcp.co.uk/christchurch-cultural-trail)



Designed and illustrated by Maria Burns Illustration & Design [www.mb-id.co.uk](http://www.mb-id.co.uk)

## Millennium Blue Plaque Trail

As you explore Christchurch's Cultural Trail, you can find a series of blue plaques that were put up in 2000 to commemorate sites of importance, using research undertaken by the Christchurch Local History Society (now Christchurch History Society). These plaques detail the fascinating histories of Christchurch and many of its prominent buildings.

### 1. The Regent 1

On Boxing Day in 1931, the Regent Cinema opened with a grand ceremony and delighted visitors by showing *The Taming of the Shrew*. Following a period of dwindling cinema attendance, the venue transitioned into a bingo hall in 1973, but was soon restored to all its early Art Deco glory as a cinema again in 1983. It is renowned as one of the finest examples of an early 1930s British cinema and has recently undergone a revitalizing 1930s-inspired renovation. The Regent continues to be a vibrant hub for entertainment in Christchurch.



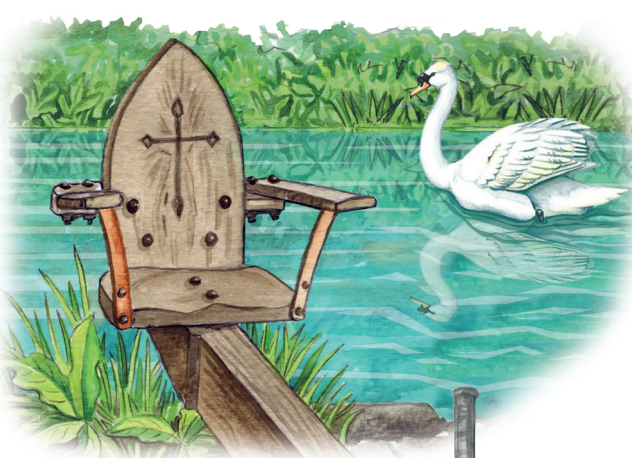
### 2. Saxon Square & Mayor's Parlour 15

The old Town Hall building, now the Mayor's Parlour, dates back to 1746. Christchurch has seen various town halls over the years. The first town hall was a medieval timber structure built in Millhams Street. Interestingly, even this Town Hall isn't in its original spot; it was relocated from the old Market Square, across from The George Inn, in 1859. To enhance its utility, a spacious lecture hall was added to the rear. During the Victorian era, this hall became a hub for various popular entertainments of the time, including lectures, exhibitions, ventriloquist performances, plays, musicals, and even magical lantern shows.



### 3. The Ducking Stool

Here stands a replica of the Ducking Stool used from the mid-14th Century in Christchurch. Contrary to popular belief, this ducking stool wasn't used to uncover witches; instead, it was used for 'scolds' - women who had been convicted of engaging in verbal abuse, brawls, or other disruptive behaviours. While the Mill Stream appears quite shallow, it would have been much deeper so that the stool was submerged.



### 4. Norman House

In the 12th Century, this was built for the Lord of the Manor and later belonged the constable or bailiff to give them a more comfortable setting. It's a rare example of a domestic Norman building, especially being one of only two to retain its original chimney. Picture it roofed in stone, surrounded by timber buildings. Its survival is largely owed to the vicar of the late 18th Century, who managed to halt its demolition, but only after three days of deconstruction work. The area between here and the castle was once the defended courtyard or bailey of the castle.



### 5. Castle Ruins

This 12th Century motte-and-bailey castle was originally built by the Normans to assert their dominance over their Saxons predecessors. It witnessed two significant conflicts: the 12th Century Stephen and Matilda disputes and the 17th century Civil Wars, during which it switched from Royalist to Roundhead control.

It was during the Civil War that the moat was re-excavated and cannons were placed on the keep. In 1651, Cromwell ordered its deliberate dismantlement to render it militarily useless. Locals helped themselves to the building materials, and by the late 17th century the castle was a ruin.





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## 8. The Priory

In 1094 Ranulf Flambard, a chief minister of King William II (Rufus), began the building of a Norman Priory on the site of the old Saxon church. The work that resulted in the Priory looking much as it does today wouldn't have been completed until the 16th century.

The Priory is the subject of many intriguing local legends. One has it that Flambard originally planned to build the church on top of nearby St. Catherine's Hill but overnight all the building materials were bafflingly transported to the site of the present priory. Another tells the story of the Miraculous Beam, probably of the 12th century; a beam that was cut too short by carpenters but was salvaged by one mysterious carpenter. He restored the beam and fixed it in place, then was never seen again. The belief that this carpenter was Jesus Christ was widely thought to be the reason for the change in the name of the town from the Saxon Thuinam to the present day Christchurch. The beam can be seen today inside the Priory.

Look up! Can you spot the Priory's landmark golden salmon weather vane?

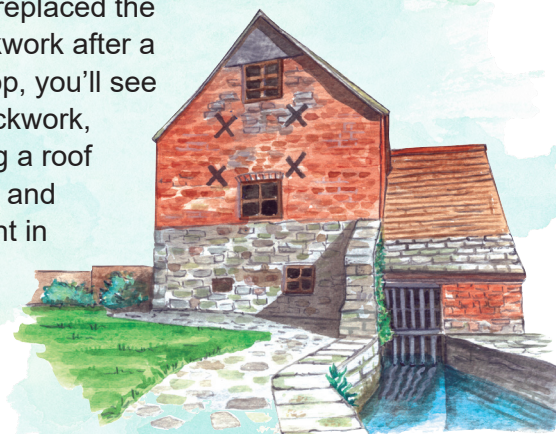


### Blue Plaques

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1 Gleeson White                             | 11 Trolley Bus Turntable |
| 2 The Old Tolsey                            | 12 The George Inn        |
| 3 The Old Court House                       | 13 Clingan's Trust       |
| 4 Benjamin Ferrey                           | 14 Robert Harvey Cox     |
| 5 Covent Walk                               | 15 The Town Hall         |
| 6 Gustavus Brander                          | 16 Bow House             |
| 7 Place Mill                                | 17 The Bargate           |
| 8 The Parish Workhouse                      | 18 Town Pound            |
| 9 Priory Church                             | 19 Saxon Cemetery        |
| 10 Saxon Defences (temporarily unavailable) |                          |

## 6. Place Mill 7

Mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1087, this corn mill stands at the meeting of the Rivers Avon and Stour. Take a closer look at the mill, and you'll notice distinct layers of brickwork, each revealing a different era of its history. The base features the large Saxon bricks from the original mill, followed by Tudor brickwork, which likely replaced the original brickwork after a fire. At the top, you'll see Victorian brickwork, added during a roof replacement and refurbishment in 1874.



## 7. The Red House Museum /Parish Workhouse

The building dates from 1764 and was the parish workhouse. In 1886, a new union workhouse was built in Fairmile, so this building was sold to the vicar of Christchurch Priory, the Reverend T. H. Bush, who named it 'The Red House' for the colour of its bricks. Later, Herbert Druitt, a local collector, turned it into a private museum, showcasing his collections of textiles, fashion, and historical artifacts. The museum has been open to the public since 1951 and operated by the independent charity, Hampshire Cultural Trust, since 2014.



## 9. Ye Olde George Inn 12

This building was originally a dwelling house with deeds dating back to the 15th century and is the oldest surviving inn in Christchurch. It was once a coaching inn where dissenting priests sought refuge and prisoners were held whilst waiting to be deported to Australia. Rebuilt after the civil war, some of its stone foundations are said to have been looted from the nearby castle! Easily spooked? This Inn is thought to be haunted by figures of its past, including the Grey Lady!



## 10. Saxon Cemetery

Archaeological excavations of the 1970s uncovered a Bronze Age ring ditch and a pagan cemetery containing at least 30 burials and 4 cremations dating to the Saxo-Jutish period. While the acidic soil had consumed the skeletons, faint black stains outlining their presence were discovered, alongside numerous pieces of metalwork.

Visit the Red House Museum for more information about this site!

