

But it is the worn flagstones and steps that are the most evocative, with some pilgrims traversing this – the longest medieval church in England - on their knees. This sounds very devout but you may be able to spot carved into the stone bench at the top of the steps to the North Retro-choir nine little depressions suitable for playing noughts and crosses with marbles as you waited to visit the shrine of St Swithun!

The Tower collapsed shortly after the interment in the cathedral of William Rufus. Having been rebuilt much more strongly it now houses a magnificent ring of 14 bells, the tenor weighing 35 cwt – nearly two tons.

But it is the story of the restoration of the foundations by William Walker, the diver, that catches everyone's imagination. The original foundations had used beech trees which, after 800 years were rotting. Working in complete darkness from 1906 to 1911 Walker removed the debris, peat and topsoil and replaced them with bags of concrete. Flying buttresses were added later but, apart from one or two undulations in the floor, the cathedral now remains intact.

St. Mary's Church, Avington SO21 1DD



A superb unrestored Georgian church built in 1771, with a three decker pulpit, mahogany pews (possibly using timber from a Spanish Armada ship) and a family vault for the brother of Percy Bysshe Shelley. Anna, Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos, was buried in 1836 under the north chancel in a glass coffin. On the walls are pegs for gentlemen to hang their wigs during the service.



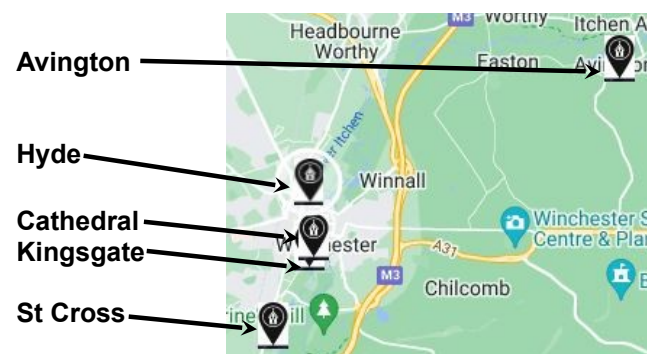
Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust **DAYS OUT:** ***Around Winchester***

These brief notes are intended to whet your appetite for the unusual and quirky secrets hidden in our churches. We have in Hampshire and the Islands the oldest bell in the world still being rung, Handel's organ, myriads of TV and Film locations and many other lovely oddities.

And, yes, please do tell us if you discover something we haven't spotted.

Winchester

For many years Winchester was the capital of Wessex and even the whole of England. Before that it had been a significant Roman city and the streets (and even the water courses) reflect that. The sheep fair held on St Giles Hill from the 12th century onwards led to much wealth and much church building.



Copy link to get map: <https://tinyurl.com/mryrtazf>

St Bartholomew, Hyde SO23 7DF

Building began in the 12th century, with the tower added in 1509 using stone from the recently demolished Hyde Abbey nearby. It is believed that the bones of King Alfred lie buried nearby.

On display in the church are six capitals from the original Hyde Abbey as well as some spectacular stained glass.



St Swithun upon Kingsgate SO23 9JP



Unusually, St Swithun's was built as part of the city walls, above Kingsgate – one of the main entrances to the city. By the 17th century it had fallen into disrepair being lived in by the gate porter Richard Allen and his wife “who doth keep swine at ye end of the chapel”. It was restored in 1660

and later mentioned by Anthony Trollope in his novel *The Warden* (thinly disguised as “St Cuthbert’s”).

The Hospital of St Cross SO23 9SD

Often used as the setting for historical Film and TV dramas from the Tudor period (e.g. the archery scene in *Wolf Hal*), the buildings are familiar. It still acts as an Alms House, caring for 25 “Poor Brothers” in their distinctive robes. The ancient tradition of giving “Wayfarer’s dole” at the gate still persists to this day – a small horn cup of ale and a piece of bread.



Within the magnificent church, on the east side of the pillar by the pulpit sits a stone cross; the window above it in the north transept is so angled that the sun shines directly on that spot

on 3rd May (feast of “The Invention of the Cross”)

Winchester Cathedral SO23 9LS



The guides who assist the thousands of tourists who visit this incredible building say that they see something new every day. The first church was built in 662, though it is the Norman building we see today. There are reminders of St Swithun, Mary Tudor (married here), Jane Austen (buried in the north aisle and countless other dignitaries).