

## St Amphibalus Way



*Walk from Redbourn to St Albans with our 5.5 mile walking pilgrimage. Following the River Ver, this beautiful route will trace Saint Amphibalus' journey from his resting place back to the shrine built in his honour.*

# A Journey for Your Soul

## Pilgrimage Preparation

Follow the route instructions included in this leaflet on your walking pilgrimage from St Mary's Church to the Amphibalus Shrine at St Albans Cathedral.

A GPX version of the route for your smartphone's map app can be downloaded from the British Pilgrimage Trust website.

## Ways to log updates and photos of your journey

We would love to view your progress throughout your journey! Use the following hashtag and social media handles to show us updates, photos, and videos or alternatively feel free to send them to us via email.

**Hashtag:** #StAmphibalusWay

**Twitter:** @StAlbansCath

**Facebook:** @StAlbansCathedralOfficial

**British Pilgrimage Trust Facebook:** @pilgrimtrust

## Pilgrim Passport

When you have finished your journey, don't forget your Alban stamp at the Welcome desk in the Cathedral – Pilgrim passports can be bought in the Cathedral shop.

## The Story of St Alban and St Amphibalus

The earliest account of the story simply states that an unnamed Christian priest, who was fleeing from persecution, was offered shelter by Alban, a local Roman citizen of the town of Verulamium.

This was around the year 300, when Christianity could still not be openly practised in the Roman Empire.

Alban was so impressed by the priest's teaching that he became a Christian. When soldiers searched for the priest, Alban exchanged cloaks with him. This enabled the priest to escape dressed in the garb of a local citizen. Alban gave himself up and was arrested in the priest's place.

Alban refused to give up his new-found faith and was tried and executed. Tradition says that after Alban's execution the priest fled to Wales where his preaching persuaded many to become Christians.

However, he was followed by his persecutors, captured and brought back in chains to Verulamium, eventually being executed at nearby Redbourn.

Amphibalus is the name now given to that originally unnamed priest who inspired Alban to become a Christian.

The priest is first recorded by name as 'Amphibalus' in 1135 by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his History of the Kings of Britain.

Because of the exchange of cloaks to enable the priest to escape, Geoffrey called the priest Amphibalus, meaning roughly 'the cloaked one'.

The chronicles of St Alban's Abbey record that in 1178 Robert Mercer, a local townsman, had a vision of St Alban.

Alban wanted Robert to find the remains of his priest and teacher, Amphibalus. In the vision Robert was shown the burial place a few miles away in Redbourn, the traditional site of the priest's martyrdom.

Under Robert's direction, graves were uncovered on Redbourn Heath and the bones that were found were declared to be that of the martyr and his nine companions. Swords lay near the bodies and one body had two large knives in the skull and heart: this was proclaimed as that of St Amphibalus.

## **Begin at the south porch of St Mary's Church, Redbourn**

*When the grave of St Amphibalus was discovered, St Mary's Church was already well-established in Redbourn.*

*The tower is part of a church that was built in 1110 on the site of an even older one.*



*The Abbots of St Albans created the Priory of Redbourn, sometimes called the Church of St Amphibalus, on Redbourn Heath. It became a place of health and recuperation for the monks of St Albans when they were ill. The daily prayer and work regime at Redbourn was less demanding than that of the Abbey.*

- From the south porch, continue south to Hemel Hempstead Road. Turn right for 50m then cross the road and go up the signposted footpath to the embankment of the Nickey Line (a disused railway).
- Turn left for 700m to Chequer Lane, then turn right and carefully cross the main road (B487) to the track opposite.
- Follow the track for 450m and bear left with hedges on the right to the kissing gate at farmyard (Dolittle Mill House).
- Go through farmyard to St Albans Road (A5183).

*The mill you can see today was built around 1790 on the site of an ancient mill belonging to the monks of St Albans. In 1539, the Abbey lands, including the mill, were seized by Henry VIII. The King gave Redbournbury Mill and its income to his daughter, later Queen Elizabeth I.*



- Carefully cross the road and go through gate and down the steps opposite.
- Follow the path with hedges on the left-hand side to Redbournbury Watermill. Turn left on farm track, past buildings on the right using footbridges.

- At cross-track, turn right and follow the path along the valley through the kissing gate.
- Continue on path with open meadows and River Ver to the right into and through the trees
- Cross access road (*water treatment plant on the left*). Continue on the path with river on the right to meet the track, then continue on track for 1.4km (*past Shafford Mill*) to A5183.
- Carefully cross the road.

***It was in the fields and water meadows of this area that a dramatic 'meeting of the saints' took place on 25 June 1178.***

***As the relics of St Amphibalus and his companions were being transported towards the Abbey, they were greeted by a magnificent sight: The monks of St Albans emerged in a glorious, colourful procession with vestments, incense and sacred objects.***

***The monks were carrying the relics of St Alban out of the Abbey and into these fields to greet the relics of St Amphibalus.***

***As the two processions met there was a sudden, heavy rain which revived the fields and crops that had been suffering a long drought. The chronicler says 'That which had been parched and dead became green and alive again'.***

***A few years later, the Church of Mary de Pré was built by Abbot Warin to honour this event. Today it gives its name to Prae Wood, the mill and the fine house and hotel nearby.***

***Abbot Warin was interested in early forms of medicine and treatment. Next to the church he built a hospital for the care and treatment of women with leprosy. It was also known as 'Blessed Mary of the Meadows'. No remains of the Pre survive today.***

### **If the Gorhambury Estate is open:**

- Go through the gate and down the steps opposite. Keep walking with river to the right (*the river can be flooded*) until meeting the access road (*past site of Prae Mill*).
- Turn right over the bridge and follow road to the cross-road.
- Turn left and the Cathedral will be visible ahead (*roughly the line of Watling Street*).
- In 550m pass between Verulamium City walls, then continue to Bluehouse Hill. Cross the road at the Pelican crossing and turn right to St Michael's Church.

### **If the Gorhambury Estate is closed:**

- Turn left and walk beside the road for 1.7km to the roundabout.
- Cross Bluehouse Hill and turn right, crossing St Michael's Street to St Michael's Church.

***St Michael's Church is built over a Roman basilica, the most likely site of Alban's trial and judgement. His execution and burial took place on the hillside where the Cathedral now stands. This last part of the journey traces the probable route of Alban to his martyrdom on the hillside.***

- At the end of the wall, turn left through the gates and continue with hedges to the right to the gate into Verulamium Park.
- Continue on the tarmac path for 600m with hedges to the left to the cross track with the Roman city gatehouse on the right.
- Turn left on the tarmac path, passing the lakes and toilets to cross the bridge.
- Turn right with the Fighting Cocks Pub House on the left to the entrance of the Abbey Orchard.
- Bear left up the path to the Cathedral.
- Enter through the West End to the left, or the Welcome Centre to the right.
- Walk to the east end of the Cathedral to visit the restored shrine of St Amphibalus, restored in 2021 with the support of The National Lottery Heritage Fund and many other generous supporters.