

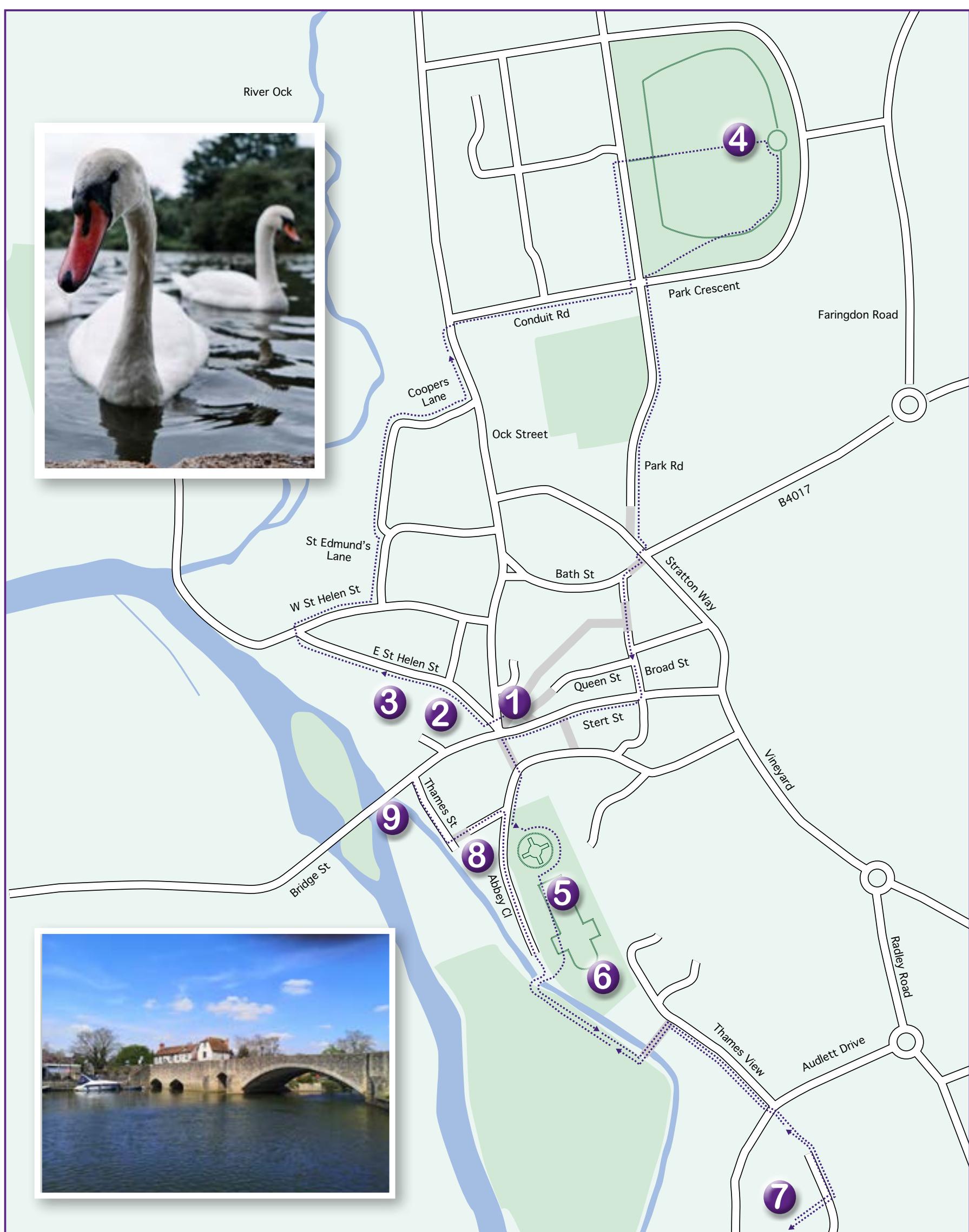


THE FRIENDS OF
ABINGDON
CIVIC SOCIETY

ABINGDON'S

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Royal History WALK





1: Royal bun throwing

Bun throwing is unique to Abingdon and takes place on royal occasions. It started with the coronation of George III in 1761. The Mayor and other dignitaries ascend to the roof of the County Hall Museum and throw buns over the heads of the waiting throng in the Market Square who all strain to catch one as a souvenir. The buns are specifically baked and some have a crown design on the top. The museum has a selection of freeze dried and varnished buns on display. The rooftop of the County Hall is open to visitors at specific times and provides a lovely view of the town.



2: Kings Head and Bell

There is no historical evidence that this public house, originally called The Bell Tavern, was ever used by Charles I during the English Civil war. There may be no actual proof but it is a great story!! Do read their interesting claim on their information panel.

3: William III

There is a plaque on Unicorn House stating that William III, also known as William of Orange, stayed there on 11th December 1688 on his way to London. This is an understatement. He was travelling to London to receive the crown and become the King of England, Scotland and Ireland.

As a Protestant he was more acceptable than the Catholic James II who had just had a son. There is a long-distance walk called the Orange Way which traces his route from Brixham all the way to London. He passed through Abingdon from Chieveley and on to Wallingford.



4: Prince Albert



The land where Albert Park was established was bought by the Christ's Hospital charity in 1860. The original purpose was to create a recreational ground and allotments for the benefit of the town. A £10 prize was offered for a design of the area. It was won by Mr I W Chapman of Dulwich and alterations began and trees were planted. With the death of Queen Victoria's beloved consort Prince Albert in 1861 there was a call for a monument. A public subscription paid for the 48 foot or 14.6 metres high monument, designed by John Gibbs of Oxford and built by Charles Selby. It was unveiled in 1865. Albert Park has a Grade II listing as a good example of a small mid-Victorian park. It is a lovely place to visit.

5: Queen Victoria

This statue, sculpted by William White, was made to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign in 1887. Buns were thrown to celebrate this occasion. It was presented to the town by Edwin Trendell who had been the Mayor. It originally stood in the Market Square. Where you are standing was the garden of Abbey House where Edwin Trendell once lived.



6: The dissolution of Abingdon Abbey in 1538 and Henry VIII

This is perhaps an unhappy royal association! This is the site of a Benedictine Abbey called St Mary's established in 676AD. You can walk the walls of this impressive church by following the brick outline on the grass. It became very powerful and wealthy and at its dissolution was the 6th wealthiest abbey in England. Throughout its history it had associations with royalty. It was supported by Saxon Kings in its early days, William the Conqueror celebrated Easter here in 1084 and sent his son, who would become Henry I, to be educated at the Abbey. Many other monarchs visited the Abbey before it was destroyed. Some of the stone from the Abbey may have been used to build Nonsuch Palace which was being constructed at the time.

7: Barton Court & the English Civil War

Although there is little to see of the once splendid house called Barton Court, once lived in by the Reade family, it does represent an important period in royal history. It was built in 1554 with some of the stone from the destroyed Abbey. Sir Thomas Reade who lived here in these troubled times entertained Charles I and his queen, Henrietta, at Barton Court on several occasions. It was here that Charles and Henrietta parted, never to see each other again. During the English Civil War Sir Thomas, a Royalist, took the side of the King. Abingdon fell to the Parliamentarians in 1644 and in 1646 Barton Court was used as cover by the Royalist troops from Oxford to mount an attack on Abingdon. They failed. Barton Court was then destroyed.



8: The Abbey Buildings

These buildings are open to the public on some afternoons but if they are closed you can still admire them from outside. The Abbey was wealthy and very influential when at its height. Many monarchs visited and some surely visited these buildings along with their retinues.

King John visited the Abbey five times between 1200 and 1215, King Henry III in 1258, 1260 and 1262, King Edward I in 1276 and 1281, King Richard II in 1395 and 1397, King Henry IV and Queen Joan of Navarre in 1403, and Queen Margaret of Anjou in 1485. King Henry VIII visited with Queen Catherine and all their court in 1518 to escape the 'sweating sickness' which was rife in London and again in 1535 with his new queen, Anne Boleyn.



9: Swan Upping

When you get to the end of Thames street turn left onto Abingdon Bridge, you will be able to see the River Thames as it flows under Abingdon Bridge. During the third week in July the annual royal tradition of swan upping can be witnessed. This is when the swans on the Upper Thames, all of which are royal property, are counted, weighed, ringed and given a health check. The Swan Uppers, led by the King's Swan Marker, make a 5 day boat journey rowing from Sunbury to Abingdon in 6 traditional skiffs. The King's Swan Warden attends and collects all the data for research. The ceremony is now all about wildlife conservation not actually eating the swans!



We hope you have enjoyed this walk. Return to the Market Square for some well-earned refreshment