

Information for Teachers and Group Leaders

# Planning your visit *to*

# *Birkenhead Priory*



*Birkenhead  
Priory*



THE SMALL PLACE WITH A BIG HISTORY  
[www.thebirkenheadpriory.org](http://www.thebirkenheadpriory.org)

 **WIRRAL**

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lottery fund**  
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### Location of *Birkenhead Priory*

Priory Street, Birkenhead,  
Wirral, CH41 5JH  
**Open Wednesday to Sunday**



### Background to *Birkenhead Priory*

The Birkenhead Priory, founded c1150, by the Benedictine monks is the oldest standing building on Merseyside and is a scheduled ancient monument. Today it is surrounded by modern Birkenhead, factory units and is direct neighbour to The camel Laird Shipyards. The whole history of the town is wrapped up in this one site – "the small place with a big history".

Far from being an isolated place of retreat, the priory monks looked after travellers for nearly 400 years and supervised the first regulated "ferry across the Mersey", up to the Dissolution in 1536. First restored over a century ago, the site continues to develop and share its rich history with recent restoration and conservation.

There are a number of areas of interest on site, including The Chapter House, Undercroft, Refectory, Western Range, Scriptorium and St Mary's Tower, all of which create a great opportunity for **exploring local history/geography units of work and enhancing cross curricular teaching and learning.**

Further detailed information on the site can be found on the website [www.thebirkenheadpriory.org](http://www.thebirkenheadpriory.org)



### What to see at *Birkenhead Priory*

#### **Chapter House** (c1150)

is the oldest building on site, is consecrated as an Anglican church and is now home to the parish of St Mary's Church and Christ the King.

#### **Scriptorium** (c1375)

The function of this room is uncertain. If a scriptorium, it would have been used by the monks for reading and writing but it may simply have been a store.

Restored in 1919 and repaired after WWII bomb damages. Today it is a small museum of nautical artefacts dedicated to the training ship HMS Conway which formerly stood in the River Mersey off Rock Ferry.

#### **Undercroft**

Traditionally undercrofts were storage cellars but this one is carefully finished which suggests it may have been used to shelter people. The space now hosts a small museum telling the history of the site with a community interpretation area.

#### **Refectory**

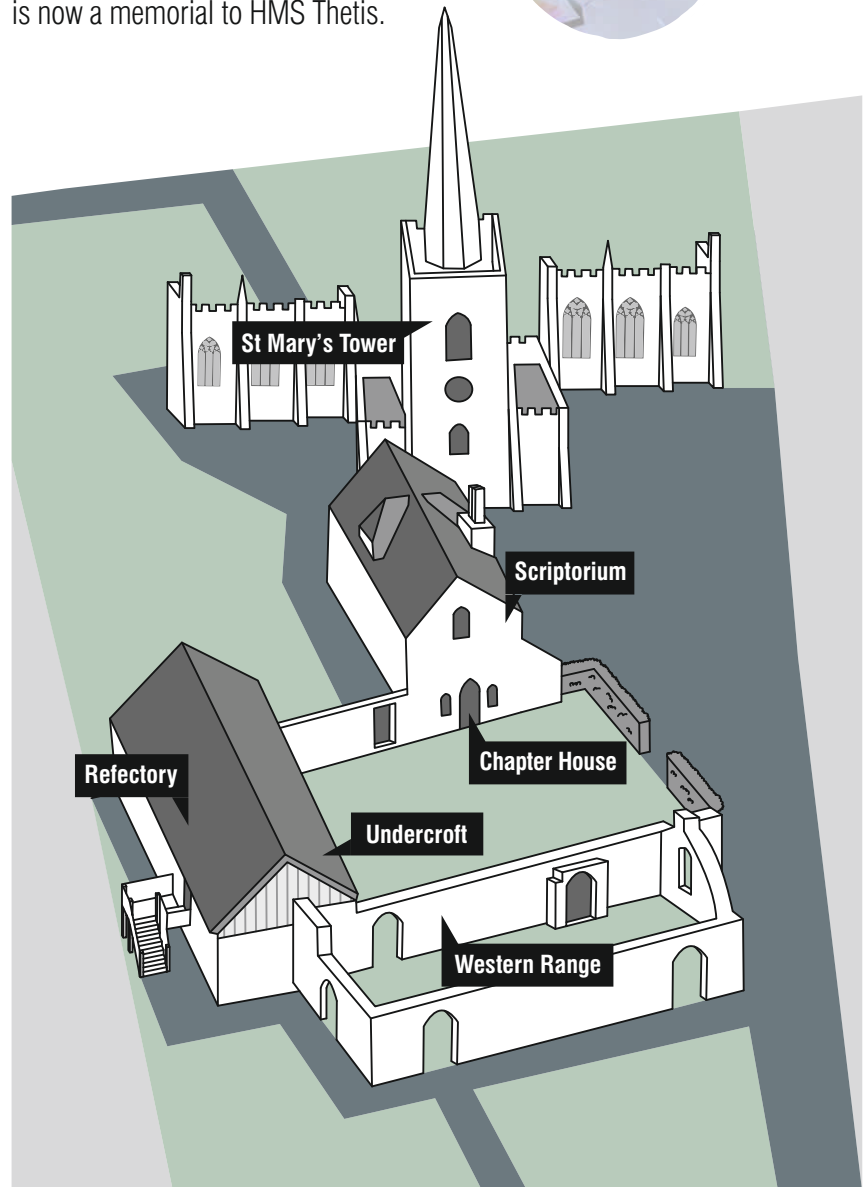
This area originally would have been the eating and drinking area for the resident monks. Today the Refectory is a multi-purpose space for events, exhibitions and school workshops.

#### **Western Range**

This two storey structure was built after 1250 and featured several different rooms including the prior's living room and bedroom, a monk's parlour, guest hall and guest rooms. Today only the remains can be explored.

#### **St Mary's Tower**

Designed by Thomas Rickman and completed in 1821, St Mary's Church was built alongside the Priory ruins and served the parish of Birkenhead for over 150 years. In 1975 the tower escaped demolition and now offers a unique 360 degree panoramic view of the Wirral and Liverpool waterfront and breathtaking views across the River Mersey. The tower is now a memorial to HMS Thetis.



### Visiting *Birkenhead Priory*

#### Group Visits

All group visits to Birkenhead Priory are free. You can run your visit in one of the following ways...

#### Self-guided Tour

On a self guided visit you manage your own session on site as you wish. There are a number of self-led activities including paper trails, grave rubbings, historical costume/dressing-up area, tower visit and puppet theatre. When booking a self-guided visit please complete and return the group visit enquiry form.

#### Priory Staff-led Tour/Workshop

Staff- and volunteer-led tours and workshops are available on request and offer hands-on activities suitable for children, young people and adult groups.

#### Topics for study

We offer a selection of topics for study including local history, river studies, the Mersey ferry, practical maths skills, Birkenhead and the Laird family which are all linked to the new national curriculum. However many are also of interest to other groups – youth groups, out of school clubs etc. Please visit the website [www.thebirkenheadpriory.org](http://www.thebirkenheadpriory.org) to find details or contact us to discuss how we can help to enhance and accommodate your visit.



#### Booking your visit online

Please visit the booking page and complete the booking form on the website [www.thebirkenheadpriory.org](http://www.thebirkenheadpriory.org)

Please note that all group visits must be booked in advance. Please give at least 2 weeks notice of your visit to check access and availability. Please have the following information ready to complete the booking form:

- The date you wish to visit – with alternatives if possible
- The time of arrival and length of visit
- The estimated number in your group
- The school/group telephone number, address and postcode
- The name of the teacher/leader in charge of the group
- An outline of your planned activities on site
- Arrangements for lunch/refreshments

Once you have submitted your booking form we will check the dates and confirm your trip via email with an exclusive password for teachers to access the free school resources. Please contact us directly if you have any further enquiries.

#### Adult to child ratio

We recommend the following ratio of adults to students:

- 1:4 for children of seven years and under
- 1:7 for children of eight years and above

Please remember to bring warm waterproof clothes and sensible footwear to ensure all visitors have a safe and happy time.

Don't forget to bring your smartphones/tablets and cameras to record your trip.

**We look forward to welcoming you to The Birkenhead Priory.**

#### Contact us

Telephone 0151 652 4177

Fax 0151 670 0253

Email [birkenheadpriory@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:birkenheadpriory@wirral.gov.uk)

Website [www.thebirkenheadpriory.org](http://www.thebirkenheadpriory.org)

