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# 'Breathe' on the Bull Croft

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The Bull Croft has been a public space in Wallingford since 1914 and can be accessed from both High Street and St George's Road. This leaflet contains suggestions for things you might like to reflect on / pray about when you are there. You can do these in any order you like!

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**The Gates:** In Matthew 7:13-14 we read ...

*'Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it'*



There are two gates into the Bull Croft from High Street. A wide one (which is locked) and a narrow one which everyone goes through!! Very different from Jesus' illustration about paths in life!

**Reflect** on why people don't always make the right decisions, or go through the right gates, or walk God's way through life. Pray for people you know who appear

to be heading in the wrong direction at the moment.

**The Priory:** You can't see this now although there is a sign giving some information about it near the main entrance.

However ... many, many years ago the Parish Church of the Holy Trinity stood somewhere in the SW corner of the Bull Croft. Towards the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century it was taken over by St Alban's Abbey and became part of a new Benedictine Priory.

The Church of Holy Trinity now served both parish and priory and priests were also supplied for three other Wallingford churches: St Martin's (where Waitrose now stands), St John Super Aquam (once in Thames Street) and St Mary the More, still in the Market Place.

There is no longer any 'Church of the Holy Trinity' here in Wallingford – although, interestingly, there is a 'Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church' in Wallingford, Connecticut and a 'Holy Trinity Lutheran Church' in Wallingford, Pennsylvania!

There is also no longer a priory here – that was dissolved (and then pulled down) in 1525 by Cardinal Wolsey partly in order to fund the building of his 'Cardinal College' in Oxford. Now known as Christ Church.

120 cartloads of stones from the priory were used to repair Wallingford Bridge so, in some, sense the priory is still part of the town.

Churches and other places of worship come and go. Buildings are built to the glory of God – and some are pulled down or repurposed. Styles of worship evolve over time. But God remains the same "I the Lord do not change" said God through the prophet Malachi. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

**Reflect** on things that have changed in your life or how you have changed – and the fact that through all those changes God has remained the same.



**The Obelisk:** This can be found in the SW corner of the park – near the back of the Cross Keys pub.

This was originally in the market place from 1835 to 1921 when Gas-lamps were hung from it. Sadly there are no longer any lamps – it's now a lamp-stand without lamps!

In Matthew 5 (The Message version) we read Jesus' words ...

*You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.*

**Reflect** on Jesus' words – in what ways are you a light-bearer?

**Which way to go?** There are various paths in and around the Bull Croft and sometimes you have a choice of paths.

In life there are many times when we have a choice of paths to take. Some decisions are easy but many are not.



God can guide us in various ways – **Reflect** on one or more of these verses in the light of decisions you are facing.

*In you, Lord my God, I put my trust. Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. (Psalm 25:1 and 4)*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)*

*Your words are a flashlight to light the path ahead of me and keep me from stumbling. (Psalm 119:105)*

**Anglo-Saxon ditches:** In various places around the edge of the Bull Croft (mainly on the west and northern sides) you will come across remnants of the town's original defences – earthen banks and ditches. These were probably first constructed during the reign of King Alfred as part of his strategy to defend Wessex against Viking attack.

*Psalm 27: 1 says "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?"*

If you have a Bible with you then you may want to read the whole of Psalm 27

Take time to **Reflect** on the things you are afraid of or the dangers you believe you need to be aware of. In what ways do the words of this Psalm speak to you about these?

## Site of Demolished Buildings:

Since the dissolution (and demolition) of the Priory in 1525, other buildings have come and gone – and this is the site of the most recent demolition in 2020. Buildings which once housed facilities for the community are no more – demolished because they were unsafe. It is unclear (at time of writing) what is being planned for the future of this site.

Sometimes we can feel as though the things we know and hold dear are being demolished – but God always has plans for what will replace them! Although written to a specific group of people at a specific time, God's words through the prophet Jeremiah still speak to us today.

*"I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for." (Jeremiah 29:11, The Message)*

**Reflect** on those words and what God might want to say to you through them. You may also want to pray for those who will make the decision about any new facilities here in the Bull Croft.



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