



St Wistan's Pilgrimage Walk

The only true pilgrimage route in Leicestershire!

A family-friendly 4-mile walk between Wistow and Wigston



Who was Saint Wistan?

St Wistan – sometimes written as St Wystan, St Wigstan or St Wigston – was in line to be King of Mercia, one of the most powerful Saxon Kingdoms of England. Legend has it that he had the opportunity to become king in 840 but gave up his right to the throne to follow a holy religious calling.

Famously, legends tell that he was violently killed by his own uncle Beorhtfrith, son of Beorhtwul, after Wistan refused to allow him to marry his widowed mother.

As revenge for this refusal, Beorhtfrith went to visit the King feigning peace, but when the two greeted each other, he struck Wistan on the head with the shaft of his dagger and his servant ran him through with his sword.

According to Florence of Worcester – ***Miracles from heaven were not wanting in testimony of his martyrdom; for a column of light shot up to heaven from the spot where the innocent saint was murdered and remained visible to the inhabitants of that place for 30 days.***

His untimely murder on 1 June 849 became St Wistan's Day.

According to legend, the exact site of Wistan's murder is identified by a miraculous shaft of light, and an annual crop of human hair on each anniversary of his death.

His body was taken by his followers to be buried in the royal mausoleum at



Repton in Derbyshire passing through the village of Wigston on the way (which is also named after the saint). The body is believed to have rested overnight in Wigston and a small shrine was set up to honour him.

By 1086 the small commemorative shrine in Wigston had become integrated into a chapel. This disappeared and later, after the land was put to housing and other uses, the current St Wistan's Church was built. It is currently closed and too dangerous to access but the church authorities are exploring with the local community and council on ways to ensure the treasured heritage of the site can be retained.

Remembering Saint Wistan

In late medieval times the shrine in Wigston became the centre of an annual pilgrimage held on the anniversary of St Wistan's murder, 1 June, when the whole village took part in the celebrations and worshipped a jewelled figure of the saint in the north aisle of the chapel.

There are only three churches in the country that are dedicated to St Wistan. Two of them - Wistow and Wigston

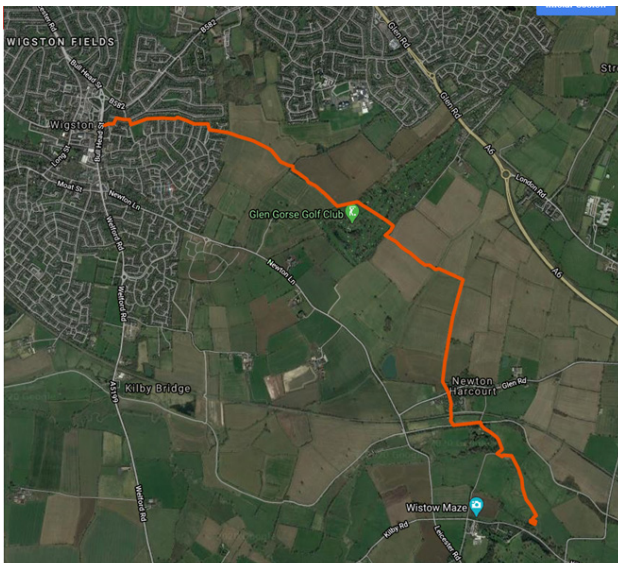
- are within four miles of each other and mark the route of the St Wistan's Pilgrimage Walk. The other is at Repton in South Derbyshire, where St Wistan's crypt can still be seen today, although his body was moved to Evesham by the Vikings sometime after his death.

In modern times, an annual pilgrimage takes place on 1 June between Wistow and Wigston.

The route

St Wistan's Way starts at the medieval church of Wistow and proceeds across country, over the historic Grand Union Canal, through the countryside and reaches its conclusion at the monument on Bell Street, Wigston near to St Wistan's Church.

Look out for our St Wistan's Pilgrimage waymarker along the four-mile route to help you find your way.



The map below also helps indicatively show the way you'll be heading but if you need a detailed map of the entire route, please visit www.britishpilgrimage.org/st-wystan where it can be downloaded onto you smartphone.

A well-trodden walk

The St Wistan's Pilgrimage route can of course be walked at any time of year, and we encourage you to return with you friends and families.

We encourage you to support businesses at either end of the route wherever possible, whether it's buying a snack, stopping for lunch or grabbing a well-earned drink!

Transport and parking

Remember – you can park at either Wistow or Wigston but there is no transport between the two locations. So planning ahead is always a good idea! Unless of course you've got the stamina to do complete the 8-miles there and back all in one day!

