

## ☩ Tea Rooms

Refreshments are available during the summer in the Hundred Mens' Hall from 10.30am to 12.30pm and from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on most days. This is situated in the outer quadrangle, near the outer gate, in buildings which date from the 14th century and on the site where the "hundred poor men" were fed each day. Catering for groups by previous arrangement.

## ☩ gift shop

A selection of high quality gifts, books and mementos of your visit to St Cross are available from the Porter's Lodge.



## ☩ opening times

1 April - 31 October 9.30am to 5pm Monday - Saturday  
and 1pm - 5pm on Sundays

1 November - 31 March 10.30am to 3.30pm Monday - Saturday  
Closed on Sundays except for church services

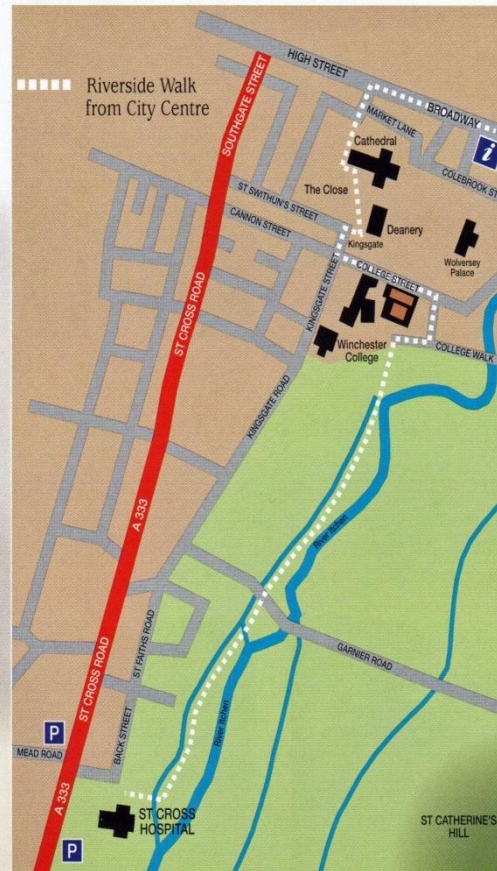
Guided tours are available by arrangement

## enquiries

Please contact the Porter - 01962 851375  
or email: [visitors@stcrosshospital.co.uk](mailto:visitors@stcrosshospital.co.uk)

The Hospital of St Cross  
Winchester SO23 9SD

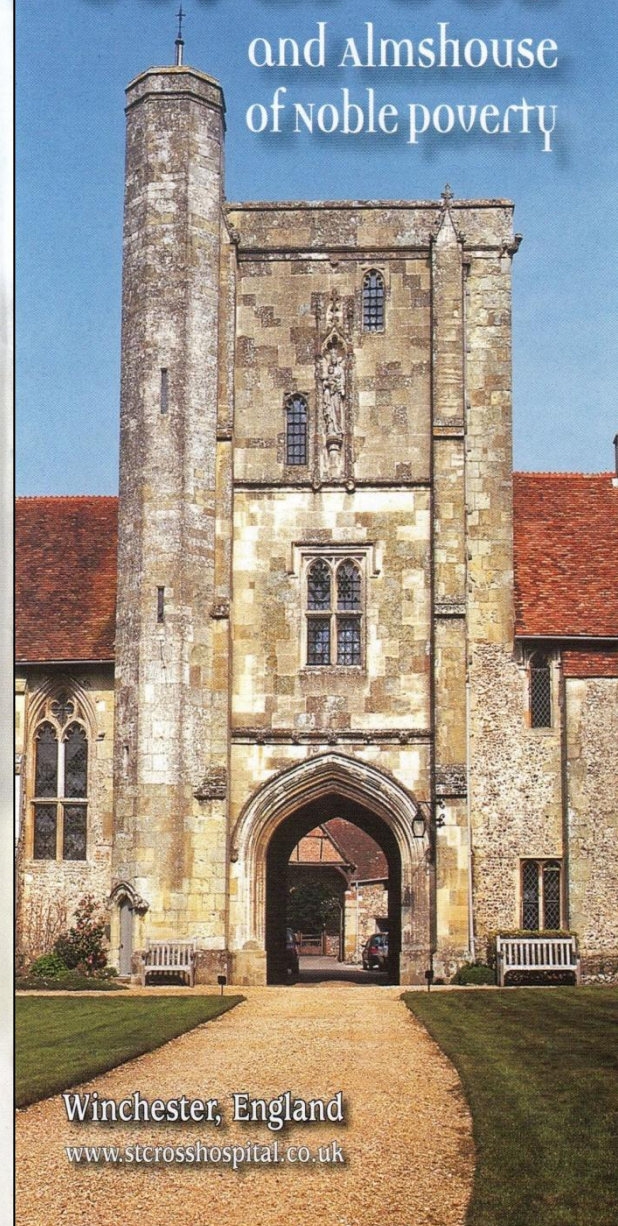
Designed by Digital Imagemakers, Bideford, Devon EX39 6ZX. Tel: 01288 531717  
Photography: William Heller & City of Winchester Tourism



An ideal way to reach St Cross is on foot from the City Centre. The route passes some of Winchester's best known landmarks and meanders alongside the beautiful River Itchen. The walk is flat and less than 1 mile - follow the route on the map.

# The Hospital of ST. CROSS

## and Almshouse of noble poverty



Winchester, England  
[www.stcrosshospital.co.uk](http://www.stcrosshospital.co.uk)

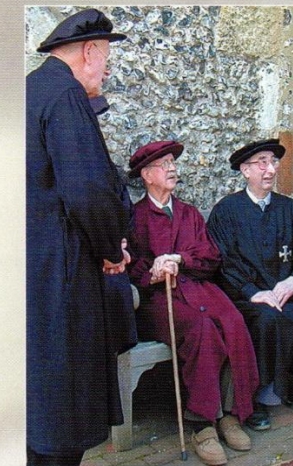
"Thirteen men, feeble and so reduced in strength that they can scarcely, or not at all, support themselves without other aid, shall remain in the same Hospital constantly: to whom necessary clothing, provided by the Prior of the establishment, shall be given, and beds fit for their infirmities: and daily a good loaf of wheaten bread of the weight of five measures, three dishes at dinner, and one for supper, and drink of sufficient quantity ..."

And besides those thirteen poor men, one hundred other poor persons, as deserving as can be found and more indigent, shall be received at the hour of dinner ..."

THE CHARTER OF FOUNDATION

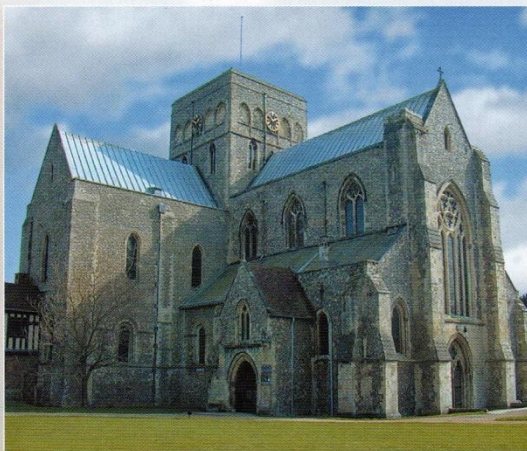
## ☩ history

Legend has it that the Hospital's foundation originated in a walk Henry de Blois, a grandson of William the Conqueror, took in the Itchen Meadows. He was stopped by a young peasant girl who begged de Blois to help her people, who were starving because of the civil war. The parallel to the Virgin Mary was not lost on de Blois who was so moved by the girl's plight that when, a little further along the river, he discovered the ruins of a religious house he resolved to use the site to establish a new community to help the poor.



How much of this fact is unclear, but we do know that Henry de Blois was young, wealthy and powerful; a monk, knight and politician in one. Appointed Bishop of Winchester in 1129 at the age of 28, he founded the Hospital of St Cross between 1132 and 1136, creating what has become Britain's oldest charitable institution.

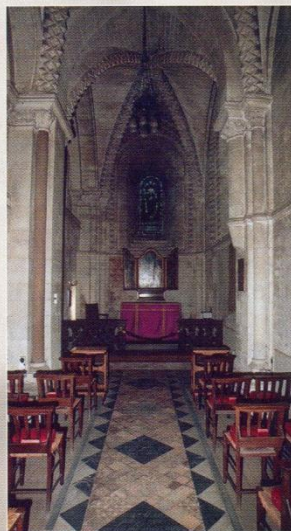
## ✚ The church



“.. a norman cathedral in miniature..”

from England's Thousand best Churches, by Simon Jenkins

The fine Transitional Norman Church is all that remains of the original Hospital. Building began in 1135 at the east end with the north porch added nearly 200 years later. The walls are over one metre thick and built from stone brought from as far afield as Caen, in France, Dorset and the Isle of Wight, as well as some flint taken from local chalk pits.

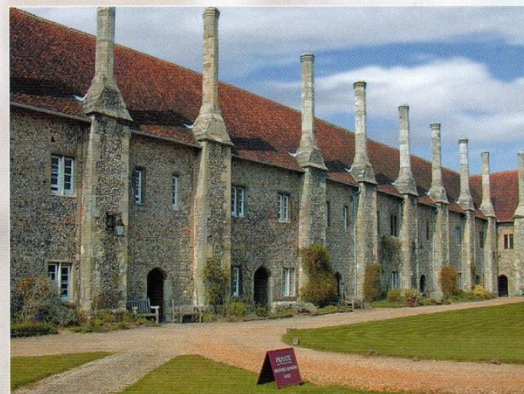


In the church, at the window nearest the crossing on the eastern side of the north transept, the stone surround is strangely angled. On a pillar on the north aisle is the cross of St. Cross. Sunlight from the window falls on the cross only on 3rd May, the day in the church calendar of the Invention of the Cross, and 14th September, Holy Cross Day.

## ✚ The hospital

The term hospital, in this context, has the same origin as 'hospitality' and for over 850 years St Cross has provided food and shelter to people in need.

Today, the Hospital is far more than a part of our national heritage, it is a living community which offers a home and haven to elderly gentlemen. The Brothers who live here now still wear the traditional gown and trencher, the black gowns signifying the original de Blois foundation and the red the later Beaufort foundation (the Order of Noble Poverty).



“England's oldest and most perfect almshouse”

from England's Thousand best Churches, by Simon Jenkins

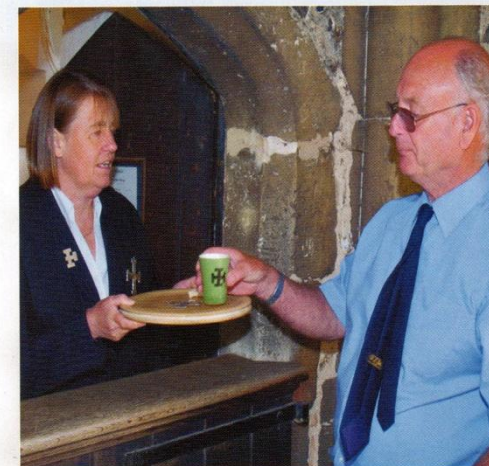
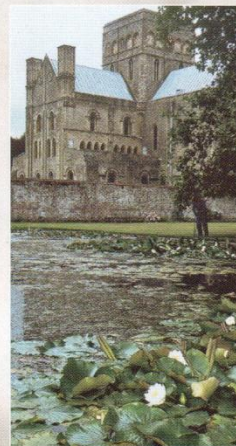


Visitors are invited to admire the architecture; The Brethren's Hall (right), is where the Brothers gathered and ate for several centuries and almost all of the original features can be seen today, the central hearth where a charcoal fire used to burn, the stairs leading from the Master's lodging, the raised platform where he took his meals and the fine musician's gallery above the entrance. Continue on to explore the Georgian kitchen, Tudor ambulatory and flower gardens.



## ✚ gardens & meadows

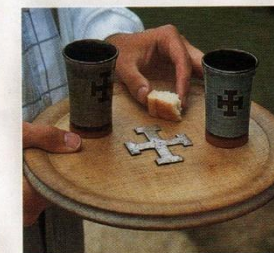
Enjoy a tranquil stroll around the gardens and absorb the quiet calm which has been a feature of St. Cross for so many centuries. In the summer months, why not walk from St Cross to Winchester along the footpath by the river.



## ✚ The wayfarer's dole

The Hospital of St Cross is famous worldwide for its unique and ancient tradition of the Wayfarer's Dole. The founder of this tradition was a Cluniac monk whose order always gave bread and wine to travellers at a time when St. Cross stood on an important east-west route for merchants and pilgrims.

Today's Dole, a drink of beer and some bread, has come to reflect this custom. It is still given at the Porter's Gate to visitors who request it.



“honestly requested and willingly given”