

Walk Through the United Kingdom and Ireland. 2026

9/21/2026 through 11/15

Results of Week 4 10/12 through 10/18

During this week we collectively walked 388 miles and had 21 participants. Sources for photos and other images are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. A magenta line on the map for the week shows how far we walked that week.

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We left Nottingham on Monday morning and headed to Birmingham which is the second largest city in the U.K. We were still in the West Midlands area of England.

The Industrial revolution led to an increase in the size of Birmingham; it grew from a market town to a large commercial and financial powerhouse. In addition, major advances in science and technology led to innovations significant to our modern society. Birmingham contributed to the development of nuclear weapons, the cavity magnetron significant in radar and microwave technology, and jet engines. Birmingham also developed a strong political base that resulted in the largest influence in the UK after that of London. It also helped propel the UK toward a more democratic society.

During WW II, there was significant damage to the city's infrastructure. The reconstruction that

followed the end of the war was carefully managed by the city planners, resulting in major regeneration of the city over the next several decades. Today, the service sector is the major source of economic growth.

Current Cityscape, Arne Müsseler, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons



Our first stop was at the Metropolitan Cathedral and Basilica of St. Chad, below left. It is most commonly referred to as St. Chad's. The church was built in red brick. The narrow building site had a significant slope, so to keep the floor of the church level, a large crypt was built below the main floor to even out the area. It was used primarily for burial tombs. Currently the space is used for choir rehearsals. The Cathedral sits on the site with the altar facing approximately northwest instead of east, also a result of the dimensions of the property on which it is built.

The building was built similar to some German "brick hall" churches, with the nave significantly higher than its width. Many of the decorations were removed or painted over after the Vatican II renovations but some of the removed artifacts have been restored.



Wikimedia Commons



The exterior, left, St Chad's Cathedral by Philip Pankhurst, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Apse, center, and the Archbishop's Cathedra, right

James Bradley, CC BY 2.0, via



the church was one of the first Catholic churches built in the UK after the reformation. The church was finished in 1941. It became the cathedral for the new newly elevated diocese two years after the Catholic Hierarchy was restored. It was then elevated to an archdiocese in 1911. During WW II, a bomb fell on the building and set a fire. However, it bounced against the steam heating pipes, which burst open, spewing water on the fire and extinguishing the flames. Only minor damage occurred as a result of the fire and water. We attended Mass here.

St. Chad was a student of St. Aidan of Lindisfarne, who we learned about earlier in our pilgrimage. St. Chad became the bishop of Mercia, that same area the produced St. Werburgh. St. Chad was a very “hands-on” type of Bishop. In his work to bring Catholicism to the rural areas, he walked through his midlands area preaching, baptizing, and teaching about Jesus to gain converts to Catholicism. He was a humble man dedicated to the church and a servant leader, following Jesus’ example. Soon after his death in 672, he was venerated as a Saint.

The we went to visit a newer Catholic church established by the other St. John Newman, not to be confused with our St. John Neumann. John Henry Newman (1801 –1890) was an academic at Oxford , along with some other academics, who wanted the Anglican church to restore many of the practices and beliefs of the Catholic church to the Anglican liturgy. This group of Academics were known as the Oxford movement and they had some success in reaching their objectives. In 1941, Newman published a booklet known as *Tract 90*, which suggested that the theology of the Anglican Church was more Catholic than Protestant, which resulted in a negative response from those in higher authority. After that, St. John Newman determined to resign from Oxford and he converted to Catholicism. He became a priest and moved to the Birmingham area where he was an important religious leader. He was elevated to Cardinal by Pope Leo XIII. He also played an important role in establishing the Catholic University in Ireland, later to become the University College Dublin. He published many important treatises on Catholic theology.

St. John Newman established the first house of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in England in Brimingham in a small church. It later moved to a larger site and included the parish church of the Immaculate Conception. From its inception in Birmingham the Oratory was noted for its outstanding music.

A school was also developed that served as a Catholic option to Eaton College. The Oratory school later moved to Reading but the school buildings at the Oratory in Birmingham were used provided education to poor Catholic boys until 1995.



We made a visit to the Oratory. The present church was built after the death of St. John Newman, and finished in 1910. It was built as a memorial to St. John Newman. It includes a chapel that is a shrine to Newman added in 1927.

SilentVicinity at en.wikipedia, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, left; Michael D Beckwith, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons church façade, Oratory Nave, right.



When plans were being made to beatify St. John Newman, the Holy See ordered his remains removed from his grave site to the Oratory Church. A tomb of marble was built to receive his remains but when the grave was opened, no human remains were found. This was probably because the casket was a simple wooden casket with no lining that resulted in complete decay. Other artifacts from the funeral were in the casket. He was still beatified and then later canonized as a Saint by Pope Francis, but his marble tomb is empty.



We then had some time to individually see various parts of the city in which we were most interested. One of the places many of us chose was the Bull Ring shopping center in the heart of the city. West Midlands Police, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, shopping center, left It has both indoor and outdoor



shops. It also has a bull. w:en:User:Zukeylukey (Taken by Luke Byfield), CC BY-SA 3.0,



via Wikimedia Commons, right. Other choices included a boat ride that explored the extensive canals in the city, the beautiful Winterbourne gardens, a motorcycle museum, shops, and the Digby Street murals.

In the walled garden at Winterbourne by Phil Champion, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

Then we headed east to visit Cambridge. Cambridge, which is located on the River Cam approximately 55 miles north of London. Cambridge became an important trading center during the Roman and Viking ages, and there is archaeological evidence of settlement in the area as early as the Bronze Age. The first town charters were granted in the 12th century, although modern city status was not officially conferred until 1951. The city is most famous as the home of the University of Cambridge, which was founded in 1209 and consistently ranks among the best universities in the world. Cambridge was started by some disgruntled Oxford University students who felt students were being mistreated by authorities in Oxford. Today, there is clear rivalry between the two Universities. The Cambridge buildings of the university include King's College Chapel, Cavendish Laboratory, and the Cambridge University Library, one of the largest legal deposit libraries in the world. It also has the Cambridge University Press, which is the oldest University

Press in the World. The city's skyline is dominated by multiple college buildings, along with the spire of



the Our Lady and the English Martyrs Church, and the chimney of Addenbrooke's Hospital.

Dmitry Tonkonog, CC BY-SA 3.0' via Wikimedia Commons, Kings College Chapel, Left.

Trinity College, left Hans Wolff, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons , below left.

Trinity College is just one of the colleges at Cambridge but it is one of the biggest. It also has the largest



endowment of any of the Cambridge colleges. Some important Trinity College Alumni include Sir Francis Bacon, Issac Newton, Lord Byron and Lord Tennyson, Bertrand Russell, and A.A. Milne Trinity alumni. Rafa Esteve, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Trinity College Great Court. King Charles III, The current King of England, received his B. A . from Cambridge in 1970.

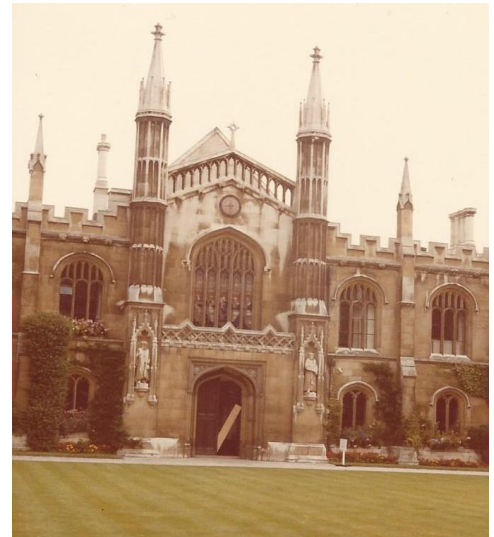
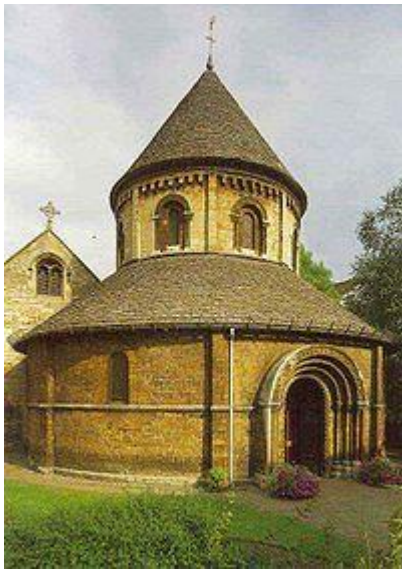
The City of Cambridge has become known as the counterpart to our Silicon Valley, although they refer to it as the Silicon Fen. Some of the city's industries are a direct result of relationships with the University, such as bioscience and software development companies.



Addenbrooke's Hospital is a major hospital in Cambridge. From the picture left you can see why their chimney is noted as a dominant feature of the skyline. The hospital is part of the biomedical campus of Cambridge. It is also the major trauma center for much of the east part of England. Notice the apostrophe in the name. In 1766, the hospital was established due to a gift from John Addenbrooke's last Will and Testament. He was a fellow and a medical doctor in one of the schools pf Cambridge.

Addenbrooke's Hospital. D Dinneen at English Wikipedia, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, left.

Next, we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, below left, generally known as The Round Church, is an Anglican church in the city of Cambridge, England. ©k scharer, left It is one of the four medieval round churches still in use in England . Of course it was Roman Catholic until Catholicism was outlawed in the 1500's. We also saw several other buildings such as the Gatehouse and Screen Wall of King's College, Cambridge, center ©k scharer and Gothic Revival New Court building and Chapel at Corpus Christi College, below right ©k scharer



King's College Chapel [Sumit Surai, CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons, Left ; [DrMoschi, CC BY-SA 4.0](#), via Wikimedia , fan vault. Commons, right

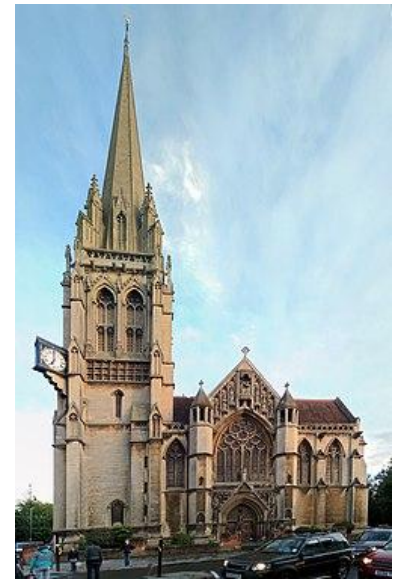
King's College Chapel was built in late Perpendicular Gothic English architecture with the biggest fan vault in the world, right. The English Kings from 1446 until 1531 all made contributions toward building the chapel. This Chapel is still used for worship today. The city often uses the building as a symbol of the city.



Then we went to the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the English Martyrs, also known as the OLEM, a Roman Catholic parish church in Cambridge. It is a large Gothic Revival church built between 1885 and 1890, right. © K. Scharer, right We attended mass here at

OLEM.

The first post-reformation Roman Catholic church was opened in Cambridge in 1841 was St Andrew's Catholic Church. St. Andrews had been the only Catholic Church in Cambridge remained the only chapel available for Roman Catholics in Cambridge until the construction of OLEM. After OLEM was built, St. Andrews was purchased, dismantled, and moved to St. Ives, a small town north of Cambridge that had enough Catholic population to warrant a parish church. Since the weather was nice we decided to go punting on the Cam River.



Punting on the Cam River, left© k. scharer,,below left.

Punting is a common way for people to enjoy the Cam River. Punts are flat bottomed boats and



propulsion is done by pushing off the riverbed using a long pole – of around 15 foot in length . They are designed to operate in fairly shallow, slow-moving water, which is typical of the Cam. On a typical summer day on the Cam, it sometimes is so crowded it looks like you could simply hop from one punt to another to cross the river rather than using the bridge. It takes a certain amount of skill and good balance to steer the punt safely for a trip on the river. The picture on the left was taken in October about the same time we were there. For safety, we had skilled punters steering our punts.

We then also spent some time just wandering around the town. There are lots of interesting places and shops in the older parts of the city around the University to find little treasures or to enjoy a pint. Afterwards, we headed south to London! It was a bit of a hike to reach London by the end of the week but we made it by the end of Sunday!

Thanks for Participating!
Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer