

The Chapel of St Mary and St George



From College's foundation in 1841, boys attended churches in the town until, in 1858, they had a purpose-built Chapel of their own. However, that first Chapel (now the Dining Hall) had many defects. In 1891, the Principal, Rev. Dr Herbert James, proposed commemorating College's jubilee by erecting a new Chapel as a thank-offering for the first 50 years of College.

There would be a competition for the design and the building would be financed by donations. The competition attracted architectural heavyweights, including: Sir Thomas Jackson, designer of parts of several Oxford College buildings, and Sir Reginald Blomfield, who had designed buildings for several independent schools. But instead the job fell to a former pupil, Henry Prothero, known up to that point only for a wing of Cheltenham Ladies' College, which was dismissed by eminent architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as an aesthetic disaster.

Friends and former pupils responded well to the appeal and on 9 November 1893, the foundation stone of the present Chapel was laid (on the outer east wall) by Bishop

Alfred Barry (Principal, 1862-1868). Thomas Collins was appointed to build the Chapel to Prothero's design, with a budget of £10,000, yet it cost a total of £12,235, without fittings. That was still a relatively meagre amount; Marlborough College had just spent £33,000 on its new chapel.

The Chapel was privately dedicated on Tuesday 13 October 1896 by Dr Charles Ellicott, Bishop of Gloucester. The public celebrations were presided over by a former pupil, the Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Plunket on 16 December. Rather dramatically, a few hours later, in the early hours of 17 December, the Hereford earthquake was felt in Cheltenham, damaging the roof and wall joins of the new Chapel – evidence of which can still be seen today.

The building was still a shell and it was not until 1907 that the interior, including the stalls and organ, was completed. The miniature cloister, with its fan-vaulting, doffs a cap to its grander local ancestor, Gloucester Cathedral; started in 1919 as a war memorial, it was completed by 1921.

How to Find Us

We are easily located on Bath Road, on the south side of Cheltenham. Some parking is available at the Chapel and in front of Reception. There is public parking a short walk away on Bath Road.

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Lunchtime Live

A series of organ recitals by internationally renowned performers, held on the first Tuesday of every month in the Chapel.

Free admission. Doors open at 1.00pm.



CHELTENHAM
COLLEGE

The College Organ



At the heart of Chapel lies the College organ, originally built in 1897 by Norman & Beard. The case was designed by Henry Prothero, architect of the Chapel. The organ was rebuilt and extended by Harrison & Harrison in 1930 and was last restored with minor alterations in 1976. In 2013, a 32-foot 'Double Ophicleide' stop was added.

The organ has been excellently maintained by Harrison & Harrison since the last rebuild, but the time was right for the entire instrument to be taken apart in 2017 for major restoration, which was again undertaken by Harrison & Harrison.

The organ has retained all its valuable historical features and, like its larger cousin at King's College, Cambridge, remains one of the finest examples of British organ building of the period.

Recital Dates

We are delighted to fully resume our Lunchtime Live organ recitals at Cheltenham College. Thanks to our amazing team, the recitals continued via live stream in April 2020 and as a result, 2023 marks the fifth anniversary of the series. I very much hope it will remain a permanent feature of our Cheltenham music scene and warmly invite our supporters of the organ – and those who would like to find out more about the instrument and its music – to attend.

Alexander Ffinch, College Organist

Mark Williams

Tuesday 7 February, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Informator Choristarum & Organist,
Magdalen College Oxford

Music by Franck and Howells

Luke Fitzgerald

Tuesday 7 March, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Assistant Director of Music Coventry Cathedral

Music by Buxtehude and Wier

Alexander Ffinch

Tuesday 4 April, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

College Organist

Music by Elgar and Holst

Darius Battiwalla

Tuesday 2 May, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Leeds City Organist

Music by Boulanger and Stanford

Simon Williams

Tuesday 6 June, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Royal College of Organists Regional Director and
Organist at Cheltenham Ladies' College

Music by J.S. Bach and Kelly

Alexander Ffinch

Tuesday 4 July, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

College Organist

Music by Price and Locklair

Edward Byrne

Tuesday 5 September, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Organ Scholar, Magdalen College Oxford

Music by J.S. Bach and Reubke

Simon Bell

Tuesday 3 October, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Director of Choral Music and Organist at Dean Close

Music by Schumann and Widor

Adrian Partington

Tuesday 7 November, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Organist and Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral

Music by Parry and Saint-Saëns

Carleton Etherington

Tuesday 5 December, 1.15pm - 2.00pm

Organist and Director of Music at Tewkesbury Abbey

Music by Vierne and Parry
