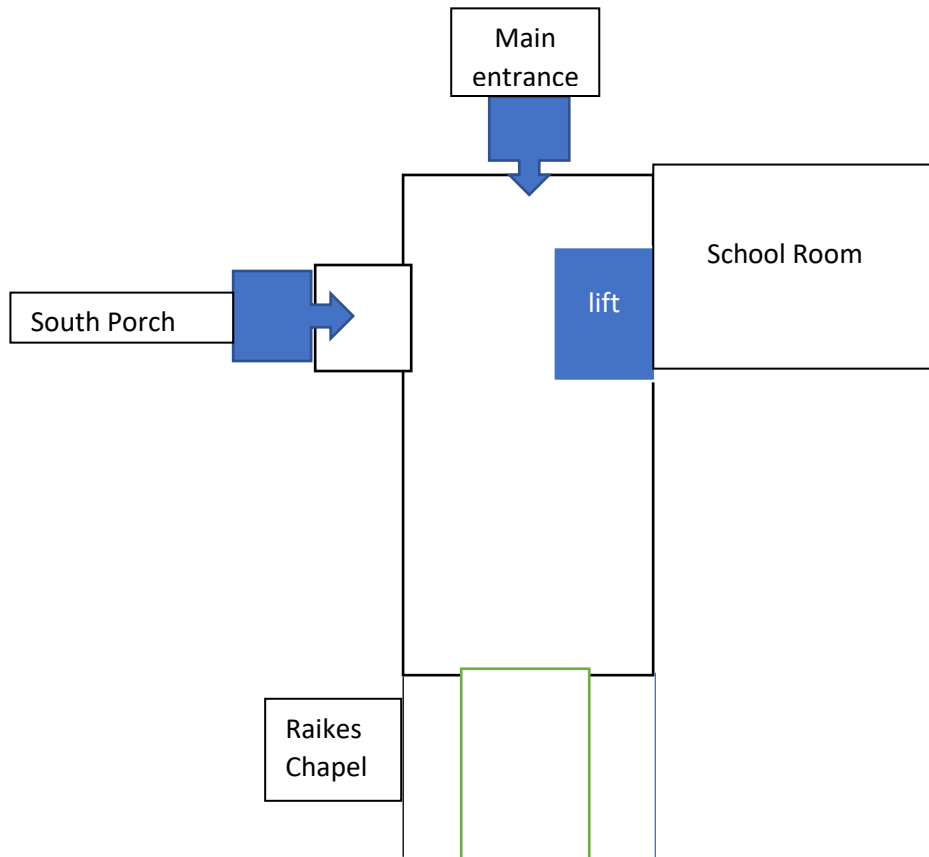


A WALK AROUND ST MARY DE CRYPT

This self-guided tour around the church is intended to let you discover the main points of interest to be found in this magnificent, newly restored, building. The outline plan shows the two entrances, the lift (staircase behind), the Crypt school room and the Raikes chapel.



Start your tour outside in Southgate to see the 1880 stone façade that is a feature of that side of the building; it commemorates the centenary of the founding of Schools on Sunday. Next, look at the tympanum over the entrance door. It is possibly original Norman with a Victorian re-cut; it is a depiction of the Agnus Dei with military style bannerette. There has been a suggestion made by a visitor who studied the period, that this could have connections with the Crusades, but a more traditional view is that the Lamb and Flag represent the Resurrection of Christ in accordance with the Book of Revelation.

The South Porch provides level access and it is a good place to see the general architectural style of the church, Norman base with English Perpendicular additions,

Moving around to the back of the building, the East window stonework shows traces of canon ball and bullet strike marks, the sundial marks the spot where a red-hot cannonball hit the building during the Civil War. The North Chapel entrance door and the entrance to the crypt are self-evident; see also the gravestones all neatly lined up against the Café Rene wall and the Tudor brick work that is the school room. The Marylone, a relic of Gloucester's Saxon past, takes you back into Southgate St. During the Civil War, the church was used as a gunpowder store and the crypt was part used as a tavern for about 100 years in the pre-civil war era. The crypt interior can be seen on the de Crypt tablet whirl point tour.

Re-enter the church and proceed anti-clockwise. On the west wall are the Norman respond pillars either side of the door which are all that remains visible of the church consecrated in 1137. The steps that access the priest's stairs, were used to access the vestry that also gave access to galleries removed in the 19th century. (please note that the public are not allowed to use the stairs) Next in the south porch itself, is the Annunciation window with Latin inscription (Hail Mary full of Grace is the translation) and the ledger stone dedicated to a former rector John Goulter Dowling, who is buried under the floor.

High up on the east end of the south aisle is a small figure reputed to be of Henry Dene who was responsible for rebuilding the present church on the Norman foundations in the late 15th century

The font dates from the 18th century. George Whitefield and Robert Raikes were baptised in it.

The Raikes chapel has been so named from 1945 when it was reordered as a memorial to Robert Raikes junior, co-founder and fervent champion and promoter of the Sunday School movement. The Raikes family vault is in the south-east corner.

The wooden eagle lectern dates from the 17th century and was restored in the 1990s.

To the north of the Raikes chapel altar is a fine memorial to Dorothy Snell by Peter Scheemacher, one of the few works signed by him situated outside of Westminster Abbey). There are 11 works by Scheemacher in the Abbey. This was moved in 1845 from the choir as part of the reordering of that area in keeping with the high church tradition of the day.

Walk through the divided pillar – itself something of a rarity according to a visiting expert on church architecture from Belgium, look at the 15th century encaustic tiles at the base. During manufacture, the chosen design is incised in the red clay base and the incision filled with white clay before being glazed and fired. The art of encaustic tiles was lost in the Reformation and rediscovered in 1830. Victorian encaustic tiles are on the floor of the high altar and show an adaptation of the city arms.

The Credo Window and reredos. The credo window is so called as around each of the named apostles are the words which each reputedly contributed to the Apostles' Creed. Our window, a copy of the original in St Mary the Virgin Drayton Beauchamp, Buckinghamshire, is by Rogers of Worcester and is Victorian and is in memory of

John Goulter Dowling, rector, and master of the Crypt School. The original window in Buckinghamshire, is pre-Reformation. The reredos was installed in 1889 and was designed by F S Walker based on original cartoon work by Antonino Salviati and carved by H C Frith. It is made from Caen stone and Venetian glass and depicts Our Saviour, St Paul, and St John together with St Mary Magdalene and Nicodemus. The church was restored in 1877 at a cost of £1009 and again in 1908 at a cost of £3000.

Look at the wall paintings, the right-hand painting is largely destroyed but the left-hand painting shows the Adoration of the Magi. The artist probably came from Antwerp, one of those working in London in the 1520s- 1530s. The painting was covered with limewash soon after completion in response to the Order of Council of 1547 forbidding 'popish' images. Over the years there were added another dozen coats including one of a pinkish hue. The paintings were rediscovered in 1842 and partly uncovered unfortunately removing much of the original paint. (a leaflet on the paintings is available)

John and Joanne Cooke are buried at the north end of the high altar. The memorial brasses and ledger tablet were removed from their tomb in 1845 when the floor of the Sanctuary was raised and placed on the north Transept wall in 1923 by the Old Cryptians' Club.

The triple Sedilia (seats for the priests) and single Sedilia are worthy of attention as is the carved seat dating from 1716. The single Sedilia on the North side of the Sanctuary is rare and Henry Dene, the Patron, is reputed to have it placed for his own use. The Sedilia's unusual location and the fact that it is single rather than double has episcopal connotations and lends weight to the argument that St Mary de Crypt is 'a cathedral in miniature'. The ornate Easter Sepulchre has a plaque affixed that is dedicated to Luke Garnons who was an MP for the City, he died 1615. The glassware on either side of the high altar is dedicated by the Fletcher family.

The ledger stones from altar to rood screen are worth noting. The Wood family tablet include the name of James 'Jemmy' Wood, once reputed to be the richest commoner in England. He built his fortune in his Westgate Street bank and is said to be the inspiration for Dicken's character of Scrooge in 'A Christmas Carol'. Of interest is the stone dedicated to 'Ione Jones' dated 1594. She was the wife of John Jones, Alderman, and fellow MP to Luke Garnons; Jones was also Diocesan Registrar to some 8 Bishops of Gloucester, and he has a grand monument to his service – in the cathedral bookshop. As one steps down from the high altar there is a brass lectern dedicated at Christmas 1890 to John Vick – the superscription is 'To the glory of God' Ironically, one J Vick is also named on the stone memorial nearby.

On the south east tower column is a mace rest dating from the reign of George II.

The boss figures surrounding the bell hole immediately overhead represent the four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The doorway in the rood screen leads to the new vestry and is not open to the public but it also leads to the North Chapel which houses the organ mechanism and a memorial to the philanthropist Daniel Lysons by Reeve of Gloucester.

Displayed on the rood screen above the vestry door is The Gloster Tapestry, dedicated to the regiment disbanded in 1994, it depicts the battle honours and bravery awards won by the regiment between 1694 and 1994. The design based on the Regimental Tenor Drum was commissioned by the Regiment and worked by local volunteers.

On the north west tower column, is the only memorial in the city of his birth to the Reverend George Whitefield (1714 -1770) that 'prince of preachers'. It was erected in 1989 following celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of his Ordination. The memorial takes the form of a portrait medallion. This was designed and cut by Bryant Fedden in his workshop in Littledean in the Forest of Dean and was commissioned on behalf of the church authorities by Dr J E Stephens of the Gloucester based architectural partnership ASTAM.

Bryant Fedden's lettering may be seen nationally and abroad. Among Bryant's many pieces of work in Gloucester Cathedral are memorials to the philanthropist Sylvanus Lysons in a side chapel and to the poet Ivor Gurney on a pillar in the nave. Other examples of his work are the lettering on the altar 'I am that I am' in St Catherine's chapel, Tewkesbury Abbey, and a piece of his Welsh slate work in the University of California Library School. He was also well known for his glass engraving, examples of which are held in a permanent collection at the V&A Museum; he worked in several mediums including stone, slate, and glass.

In 1981, prior to his work on the George Whitefield memorial, Bryant also carved the Robert Raikes commemorative floor stone to be found in the Raikes memorial chapel. This marked the bicentenary of the promotion of Sunday Schools in 1980.

There is also a modern peal board adjacent.

The Cooke brasses and ledger stone were moved as part of the 1845 rearrangement of the church. The Cookes were the benefactors and originators of the Crypt school.

The entrance to the ringing chamber is through the door in the tower. Inside at ground level are some interesting pieces of graffiti. The tower column accommodates the spiral stairway leading to the ringing chamber, it would have also given access to the rood loft. The tower houses a fine ring of 8 bells cast and hung by the Rudhalls bell foundry which used to be where the modern-day Post Office is located. Rudhalls bells may be found around the world but principally in old British colonies, including America.

The pulpit with its sounding board is almost certainly 17th century. George Whitefield preached his first sermon from it on 27th June 1736.

The Henshaw brasses are a reminder of William Henshaw's part in Gloucester's history, bell founder and 5 times Mayor between 1503 and 1519. Bell walk nearby, is named after his bell foundry.

On the window ledge overlooking the churchyard sits the bust of Richard Lane, Mayor of the city in 1667.

The stairs on the right lead up to the Cooke Room which is used for various activities. The doorway leads to the Crypt schoolroom established by the Cookes in 1539, but before you go in look at the portrait of the Cookes. This, it has been explained by a lady visitor, (her PhD in 2013, was on the social and dress codes of the time) is a will and testament in pictorial form. It shows that Mr Cooke has transferred his wealth and power over his business affairs to Mrs Cooke. The clue, apparently, is in his dark clothing under his ermine robes showing that he was no longer in the best of health and indeed it could be that he was dying or indeed already dead. In contrast, her brighter clothing, under her black overdress, is a sign of a brighter future once her period of mourning has passed. She is also carrying a pair of fine gloves, presumably Mr Cooke's Freeman of the City gloves whereas, Mr Cooke is not, gloves symbolised wealth and power at the time.

The school was intended to offer free education to the young citizens of the city. John Cooke, twice City High Sheriff and four times Mayor, originated the scheme but unfortunately died in 1528. However, his wife Joanne, in accordance with his wishes, completed the establishment of 'a frescole of grammar' which continued at this site for 329 years and continues today at the Podsmead site. The school house was built on part of the burial ground purchased from Richard Hart, Prior of Llanthony and Patron of St Mary de Crypt church who stipulated that the rector of the church should receive an annual payment of one red rose as part of the agreement, a tradition that survives to this day. The drainage ditch adjacent to the entrance is the original rainwater gutter that abutted the church. The panelling is original with schoolboy graffiti, a couple of sets of initials date from the 1700s. The Elizabethan chest dates from 1603. George Whitefield was a pupil here and the Father of English Unitarianism, John Biddle, was headmaster until his unorthodox views led to his dismissal and subsequent persecution.