

The Chapel



Introduction

The Chapel was built as part of the foundation of the College in 1517. The interior was altered in the 17th century when the records in the archives note the 'beautifying of the Chapel'. The marble floor was laid, and the stalls and reredos were added during 1675-77; the screen was added slightly later.

Although largely Anglican in its style of worship, the Chapel welcomes and attracts members of the College from a variety of traditions and of all faiths and none. Visitors are welcome at evensong: Sunday evenings in term-time. The Chapel sees other services for its members, hosting weddings, funerals and the occasional baptism.



The roof

The ceiling bosses are original and repeat much of the symbolism found in the Hall. Look out for Oldham's owl (and play on his name), which at a distance looks more like a parrot. The ceiling was restored in 1843 using older material. The external roof was repaired in the last decade, solving some damp problems.



The altar

The altar painting, Rubens' *Adoration of the Shepherds*, was given in 1804 by Sir Richard Worsley.

The stained glass window is by H.A. Payne and dates from 1931, and was erected in memory of Charles Plummer, Senior fellow (d.1927). In the foreground is depicted St. Christopher carrying a child, emblematic of Plummer's charity work for the Poplars School in Cowley. The Latin verse at the foot of the window translates roughly as "and he brought them to the haven for which they wished" (Psalm cvii. 30), illustrated by the ship shown first in stormy weather, and finally reaching calmer waters. The four coats of arms are of Plummer, the College, Bishop Oldham, and the Pelican.

The altar candlesticks were given in 1726 by Sir William Morice.



The altar frontal

Suellen Pedley, Director of the Cathedral Embroidery Centre at Christ Church, designed the frontal, and the embroidery work was carried out by the All Saints Embroidery at St Mary's Convent in Wantage. It is entirely fitting that the pelican, symbolic of the Eucharist, should be at the very centre of the new frontal. The two side panel shapes are taken from the finial end of the Arts and Crafts altar crucifix, while the surround of the entire frontal is based on the Chapel's wood panelling.



The lectern

The brass eagle lectern was given by, or is a memorial to, the first president, John Claymond (d. 1536). It is the only pre-Reformation brass eagle lectern in Oxford.

The Chapel continued



Monuments to presidents

High on the wall, there are the facing monuments to John Rainolds (died 1607) and his successor as President, John Spencer (died 1614). The closed and open books respectively on their monuments represent their involvement in translation efforts that produced the King James Bible in 1611 (one of the translating committee met here in college). Other wall monuments are to Thomas Turner (President of Corpus from 1688 until his death in 1714), and Robert Newlin (President in 1640, expelled in 1648 by parliament and restored 1660; d. 1687/8)
Left: Monument to John Rainolds (photo ©Tim Rawle)



War Memorials

Memorials to Corpus members who died serving their country in the First and Second World Wars are located on the left and right of the altar. Full biographical Rolls of Honour for both world wars are on the college website, and paper copies are usually available in the Chapel.



Plate

Corpus has a unique and splendid collection of early silver and gold, including table silver for daily use, items of common use in earlier centuries (tazze, chambersticks, and scone pots), ornamental cups, and Eucharistic vessels. Some of these items were acquired in the earliest years and have been successfully preserved ever since, others are gifts from Old Members over succeeding centuries. Of particular note are items of the Founder's plate that survived the spoilings of the Reformation and Civil War, when the melting down of both secular and ecclesiastical plate was undertaken on a massive scale.

Left: Ablution basin, c. 1514-15, one of a pair belonging to Richard Fox (now on display at the Ashmolean Museum)



The Organ

As the earliest College statutes specified that there should be an organist, Bishop Fox evidently intended there to be an instrument in the chapel. Little is known about this first organ, though the College accounts record its repair in 1547-8. By 1654 the Chapel was without an organ, and remained so until the present instrument was installed around 1890, by William Hill & Son. The case was designed by Sir Thomas Jackson, and the organ was specially constructed to fit the west end of the Chapel. Music plays a large part in chapel services, drawing on the richness of sacred music from across the centuries. The Senior and Junior Organ Scholars take the lead in directing the choir and developing the music programme, and thereby gain hands-on experience in managing a busy choral programme.