

= St Mary Redcliffe =

St. Mary Redcliffe is an Anglican parish church located in the Redcliffe district of Bristol , England . The church is a short walk from Bristol Temple Meads . The church building was constructed from the 12th to the 15th centuries , and it has been a place of Christian worship for over 900 years . The church is renowned for the beauty of its Gothic architecture and is classed as a Grade I listed building by Historic England . It was famously described by Queen Elizabeth I as " the fairest , goodliest , and most famous parish church in England . "

Little remains of the earliest churches on the site although a little of the fabric has been dated to the 12th century . Much of the current building dates from the late 13th and 14th centuries when it was built and decorated by wealthy merchants of the city whose tomb and monuments decorate the church . The spire fell after being struck by lightning in 1446 and was not rebuilt until 1872 . Little of the original stained glass remains following damage in the English Civil War with extensive new glass being added during the Victorian era . The tower contains 15 bells designed for full circle English Style change ringing . Other music in the church is provided by several choirs and the Harrison & Harrison organ .

= = History = =

The first church on this site was built in Saxon times , as the Port of Bristol first began . In medieval times , St. Mary Redcliffe , sitting on a red cliff above the River Avon , was a sign to seafarers , who would pray in it at their departure , and give thanks there upon their return . The church was built and beautified by Bristol 's wealthy merchants , who paid to have masses sung for their souls and many of whom are commemorated there .

Parts of the church date from the beginning of the 12th century . Although its plan dates from an earlier period , much of the church as it now stands was built between 1292 and 1370 , with the south aisle and transept in the Decorated Gothic of the 13th century and the greater part of the building in the late 14th century Perpendicular . The patrons included Simon de Burton , Mayor of Bristol , and William I Canynges , merchant , five times Mayor of Bristol and three times MP . In the 15th century Canynges ' grandson , the great merchant William II Canynges , also five times Mayor and three times MP , assumed responsibility for bringing the work of the interior to completion and filling the windows with stained glass . In 1446 much of this work was damaged when the spire was struck by lightning , and fell , causing damage to the interior ; however the angle of the falling masonry and the extent of the damage is unclear . Although the spire was to remain damaged for the next 400 years , Canynges continued in his commitment to restore and beautify the church . He took Holy Orders after the death of his wife , and is buried in the church . Other families associated with St Mary Redcliffe include the Penns , the Cabots , the Jays , the Ameryks and the Medes .

In 1571 , the school that was to become St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School was formed in a chapel in the churchyard . The church and school have remained closely linked in many aspects of their operations .

The 17th century saw the loss of many of the church fittings and much of the stained glass during the Reformation and the English Civil War . During the reign of Queen Anne , and partially funded by her , the interior of St. Mary Redcliffe was refitted in the Baroque style .

Thomas Chatterton , whose father was sexton of St Mary Redcliffe , was born in the house next to the church in 1752 . He studied the church records in a room above the south porch , and wrote several works which he attempted to pass as genuine medieval documents . He committed suicide in London at the age of seventeen . In 1795 the church saw the marriages of Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Sarah Fricker and Robert Southey to Sarah 's sister Elizabeth .

The upper part of the spire , missing since being struck by lightning in 1446 , was reconstructed in 1872 to a height of 292 ft ( 89 m ) . Funds for the spire rebuilding had been raised by the Canynges Society , the Friends of St Mary Redcliffe , which was formed in 1843 . They raised most of the £ 40 000 needed . The 1 tonne ( 0 . 98 long tons ; 1 . 1 short tons ) capstone was laid by the Mayor , Mr William Procter Baker , at the top of the scaffolding . Because of the effect of

environmental pollution on the Dundry Stone , further repairs to the spire and other stonework was needed in the 1930s . A mobile telecommunication mast is fitted inside the spire .

During the Bristol Blitz in the Second World War a bomb exploded in a nearby street , throwing a rail from the tramway over the houses and into the churchyard of St Mary Redcliffe , where it became embedded in the ground . The rail is left there as a monument .

= = Archives = =

Parish records for St Mary Redcliffe church , Bristol are held at Bristol Record Office ( Ref . P.St MR ) ( online catalogue ) including baptism , marriage and burial registers . The archive also includes records of the incumbent , churchwardens , overseers of the poor , parochial church council , chantries , charities , estates , restoration of the church , schools , societies and vestry plus deeds , photographs , maps and plans . Records related to St Mary Redcliffe are also held at Berkeley Castle in the Muniments Room and on microfilm at Gloucestershire Archives .

= = Architecture and fittings = =

St Mary Redcliffe is one of the largest parish churches in England , and according to some sources it is the largest of all . The spire is also the third tallest among parish churches , and it is the tallest building in Bristol .

St Mary Redcliffe is cruciform in plan , with a chapel extending to the east of the chancel , and a large 13th @-@ century tower placed asymmetrically to the north of the west front . The tower was added to the building in the 13th century . It has broad angle buttresses and Y tracery to the windows . The bell stage has ogee gables and polygonal corner pinnacles . After the collapse of the original spire in 1446 it remained truncated until the 1870s when George Godwin rebuilt it . The nave , chancel and choir are vaulted with richly decorated with bosses in a variety of styles . The Lady Chapel has a star vault . The transepts has large pointed spandrels and a blind arcade with mullions descending from the clerestory windows . Beneath the Lady Chapel is a small crypt , with a larger one beneath the transept of three by two bays .

There is a rectangular 13th century porch on either side of the nave . The north porch has an inner component dating from 1200 , with black Purbeck Marble columns , and an outer hexagonal portion built in 1325 which is ogee @-@ cusped with a Moorish appearance . The outer polygonal part of the north porch was built in the 14th century . It has crocketed gables to the buttresses and is richly decorated with pinnacles and a quatrefoil parapet above a lierne vault .

Within the church are an oak chest with caryatids dating from 1593 . The choir stalls date from the 15th century . There are two fonts ; one from the 13th century and the other made of marble by William Paty was made in 1755 . The oak pulpit was built in the 19th century by William Bennett . A wrought @-@ iron gilded chancel screen built by William Edney in 1710 still stands under the tower .

On 1 June 2016 Purcell announced they had been awarded the contract to extend St Mary Redcliffe to include visitor amenities , step @-@ free access and a community hub .

= = = Monuments and memorials = = =

The church is adorned with monuments to individuals from the history of the city , including Sir William Penn ( the father of William Penn , founder of Pennsylvania ) . His helm and half @-@ armour are hung on the wall , together with the tattered banners of the Dutch ships that he captured in battle . The church also displays a rib of a whale that John Cabot brought back from one of his voyages .

The tombs of William II Canynge and his grandfather William I Canynge both have effigies on them , as does the tomb of Robert de Berkeley . There are also multiple wall monuments and brasses .

== Stained glass ==

Little of the early stained glass remains . In the west window of St John 's Chapel , for instance , the medieval glass barely survived the destruction ( said to have been caused by Oliver Cromwell 's men ) . Most of the higher portions went untouched , but others were severely damaged . In some cases the windows were impossible to repair , and clear glass was eventually introduced to replace the missing scenes . The Victorian stained @-@ glass windows were created by some of the finest studios of that period .

William Wailes produced a design for the seven @-@ light east window following a competition launched in 1846 ; however , delays in raising the money caused delays in its installation . Controversy over the design meant that it was replaced with the current depiction of the Crucifixion by Clayton and Bell in 1904 . The tree design in the window of the south transept was also by Wailes and was installed in 1854 . In the north transept is a memorial window to Samuel Lucas who died in 1853 , designed and installed by the St Helens Crown Glass Company which later became Pilkington . Another Wailes design depicting the Offering of the Wise Men was installed in the Lady Chapel , alongside one designed by Arthur O 'Connor . The windows in the choir aisles are by Clayton and Bell who also designed the memorial to Edward Colston which is in the north wall of the north transept .

The west window was obscured by the organ until the 1860s when it was moved to make way for a depiction of the Annunciation which was designed by John Hardman Powell of Hardman & Co. and funded by Sholto Hare . Attempts to achieve some conformity with the installed work and subsequent designs lead to a further commissions for Clayton and Bell and Hardman & Co. generally as memorials to wealthy local dignitaries who had contributed to the restoration of the church .

== Hogarth 's triptych ==

Sealing the Tomb , a great altarpiece triptych by William Hogarth , was commissioned in 1756 to fill the east end of the chancel . The churchwardens paid him £ 525 for his paintings of the three scenes depicted ; the Ascension featuring Mary Magdalene , on a central canvas which is 22 feet ( 6 @.@ 7 m ) by 19 feet ( 5 @.@ 8 m ) . It is flanked by The Sealing of the Sepulchre and the Three Marys at the Tomb , each of which is 13 feet 10 inches ( 4 @.@ 22 m ) by 12 feet ( 3 @.@ 7 m ) . They are mounted in gilded frames made by Thomas Paty . This was removed from the church by mid @-@ Victorian liturgists , before being displayed at the Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery ; it is now stored in the redundant church of St Nicholas , Bristol .

== The church bells ==

The tower contains a total of 15 bells , one bell dating from as early as 1622 cast by Purdue and two cast by Thomas I Bilbie of the Bilbie family from Chew Stoke in 1763 , the remainder were cast by John Taylor & Co at various dates , 1903 ( 9 bells ) , 1951 ( 1 bell ) , 1969 ( 1 bell ) and 2012 ( 1 bell ) . The larger Bilbie ( 10th ) bell along with the 1622 Purdue ( 11th ) bell are included in the 50cwt ring of 12 bells .

The bells are hung in a cast iron and steel H @-@ frame by John Taylor & Co dating from the major overhaul of 1903 . A number of small modifications have taken place when each additional bell was added . The 50cwt tenor bell is the largest bell in a parish church to be hung for full @-@ circle English @-@ Style change ringing and the 7th @-@ largest bell in the world , only surpassed by Liverpool Anglican Cathedral 11th ( 55cwt ) , Wells Cathedral tenor ( 56cwt ) , York Minster tenor ( 59cwt ) , St Paul 's Cathedral tenor , London ( 61cwt ) , Exeter Cathedral tenor ( 72cwt ) and Liverpool Cathedral tenor ( 82cwt ) . A new 8th bell was cast by John Taylor & Co in 2012 for the Queen 's Diamond Jubilee replacing the 1768 Bilbie bell a non @-@ swinging bell with an internal hammer fitted for use as a service bell chimed from within the body of the church .

The ring of 12 bells is augmented with two additional semitone bells . A sharp treble bell cast by

John Taylor & Co in 1969 is the smallest bell in the tower and a " flat 6th " cast by John Taylor & Co in 1951 and allow different diatonic scales to be rung . All the bells have been tuned on a lathe ; the tenor bell was tuned in 1903 and strikes the note of B ( 492 Hz ) . The St Mary Redcliffe Guild of Change Ringers was founded in 1948 .

The clock chime can be heard striking the quarter chimes on the 3rd , 4th , 5th and 8th bells of the ring of 12 with the hours being struck on the largest 50cwt ( 12th ) tenor bell . The clock chime strikes the " Cambridge Chimes " , commonly known as the " Westminster Chimes " , every quarter of an hour daily from 7 a.m. to 11pm . The chimes are disabled outside of these hours . If the bells are in the ' up ' position , the chimes are also disabled ( normally during the day on Sundays ) . The clock was fully converted to electric operation during the 1960s . It is now driven by a Smith 's of Derby synchronous motor . The old pendulum , gravity escapement and weights , etc . , were removed when the clock was automated . What remains of the clock movement and electrified chiming barrel is housed in a large enclosure in the ringing room . The clock face is approximately 3 m in diameter and is on the northern elevation .

= = Choir = =

The choir have released numerous recordings , as well as touring Europe and North America .

= = Organ = =

The first pipe organ in the church , built by Harris and Byfield in 1726 , was of three manuals and 26 stops . It was rebuilt in 1829 and again in 1867 on either side of the chancel . In 1912 a four @-@ manual , 71 @-@ stop organ having over 4 @,@ 300 pipes was installed by Harrison & Harrison . Towards the end of his life Arthur Harrison said that he regarded the organ at St Mary Redcliffe as his " finest and most characteristic work " . The organ remains essentially as he designed it in 1911 .

Kevin Bowyer recorded Kaikhosru Sorabji 's First Organ Symphony on it in 1988 , for which the organ was an " ideal choice " ; the notes to the recording describe the church as " acoustically ideal , with a reverberation period of 3 ½ seconds " , and notes that the organ has " a luxuriousness of tone " and " a range of volume from practically inaudible to fiendishly loud " . William McVicker , organist at the Royal Festival Hall , has called the organ " the finest high @-@ Romantic organ ever constructed " .

November 2010 saw the first performances on the organ after an 18 @-@ month renovation by its original builders Harrison & Harrison , costing around £ 800 @,@ 000 . The organ had been disassembled and some of it taken away to the builders ' workshop in Durham . The pipes were cleaned and the leather of the bellows was replaced . The manuals were also fitted with an electronic panel for storing combinations of stop settings .

= = = Organists , choirmasters and directors of music = = =

There is no record of the names of some of the early organists ; however there is a record of several payments to Mr Nelme Rogers for playing the organ in the 1730s . Rogers had a long tenure from 1727 when a new organ was installed until 1772 , when John Allen took over . Cornelius Bryan served as the organist from 1818 until 1840 . He was followed by Edwin Hobhouse Sircom until 1855 and then William Haydn Flood until 1862 . For the next hundred years the post of organist was combined with that of choirmaster and was held by : Joseph William Lawson 1862 ? 1906 , Ralph Thompson Morgan 1906 ? 1949 , Kenneth Roy Long 1949 ? 1952 and Ewart Garth Benson 1953 ? 1968 , who continued as the organist until 1987 .

From 1967 a choirmaster was appointed . The post was held by : Peter Fowler 1968 , Bryan Anderson 1968 ? 1980 and John Edward Marsh 1980 ? 1987 . From 1987 the title of the post was Director of Music and organist , with the post being held by : John Edward Marsh 1987 ? 1994 , Anthony John Pinel 1994 ? 2003 and Andrew William Kirk since 2003 . The assistant organists have

been : John Edward Marsh 1976 ? 1980 , Colin Hunt 1980 ? 1990 , Anthony John Pinel 1990 ? 1994 , Graham Alsop 1994 ? 2003 and Graham and Claire Alsop from 2003 .