



A Guide to the Chapel of St Mary & St George



CHELTENHAM
COLLEGE

Chapel of St Mary and St George, Cheltenham College

INTRODUCTION

From College's foundation in 1841, boys attended churches in the town. From 1854 they attended the newly-built St Luke's church until, in 1858, they had a purpose-built Chapel of their own, designed by local architect Daniel James Humphris. 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.



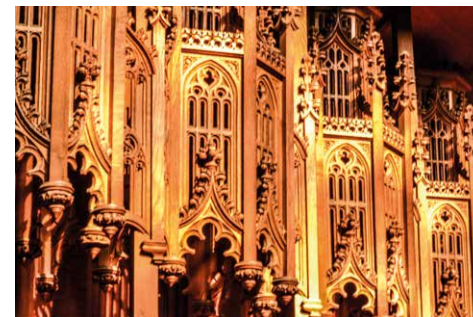
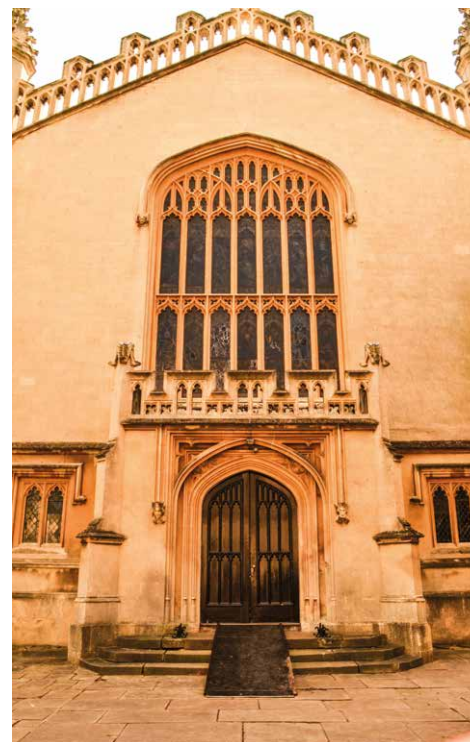
Design

There would be a competition for the design and the building would be financed by donations. The competition attracted architectural heavyweights: 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 (1862-1867, Turnbull and Hazelwell), known up to that point only for a wing of The Cheltenham Ladies' College,

which was dismissed by eminent architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as an aesthetic disaster. Prothero was a partner in a Cheltenham firm whose former head, John Middleton, had previously designed College's Junior Department (now Old Junior). The firm also had contact with that guru of the Gothic Revival, Sir George Gilbert Scott, and also the chief exponent of the Arts and Crafts Movement, William Morris.

Building and dedication

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 their new chapel.



The Chapel was privately dedicated on Tuesday 13 October 1896 by Dr Charles Ellicott, bishop of Gloucester. The public celebrations and opening by Dr Edward Benson, archbishop of Canterbury, were scheduled for the following day, but the archbishop died suddenly on 11 October. The celebrations were postponed until 16 December, when they were presided over by a former pupil, the archbishop of Dublin, Lord Plunket, (1842-1846, Baxter). 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.

Dimensions

The building's scale is impressive for a school chapel and its lofty proportions and light interior never cease to impress visitors. At 164 feet long (148 feet inside), with an interior width of 34 feet, the nave is wider than many cathedrals. The ceiling height is 55 feet and the vaulting is just 4 feet lower than that of Tewkesbury Abbey. The west gable is 75 feet high and the cross on top of the cupola of the turret is 122 feet above the ground. The east window is an impressive 26 feet wide.

EXTERIOR

The length is comprised of eight bays, separated by massive buttresses, crowned with small pinnacles. Three of the four corners have pinnacles, but the north-west corner has a turret and cupola – the gift of the College magazine, *The Cheltonian*.

West end

Above the west door are statues of Christ the Good Shepherd, in benediction, with an angel on either side. Beneath the figure of Christ, the College coat of arms is flanked on the left by the royal coat of arms and those of Simon Harcourt and Captain James Iredell (co-founders of College), and on the right by those of Lord Sherborne (first President of College Council, 1841-1862), Rev. Dr Arthur Phillips (first Principal, 1841-1844) and Cheltenham town. To the left of the great west door is a statue of a baleful Queen Victoria, representing when the building was started, and to the right, Edward VII representing when it was completed.

North and South sides

On both the north and south sides, there is a series of portrait heads on the label stops by the windows, charting the history of College, the town, and Victorian times. They include the founders of College; Lord James of Hereford who was the first pupil; the first seven Principals; the aforementioned Prothero, Benson and Ellicot; the last four Victorian Prime Ministers; and literary legends Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning.

Above the south door are the armorial bearings of the province of Canterbury and the diocese of Gloucester. To the left of the door is a memorial to Christopher (Kit) Tanner (1916-1927, Christowe) son of a former Housemaster of Christowe, who won five caps playing rugby for England, became a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve chaplain in the Second World War and died rescuing men from a sinking ship in the Battle of Crete, 1940.

East end

The east end is dominated by the large window, above which is a figure of Christ, blessing, with kneeling angels on either side. The four corner buttresses represent the four evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Cloister

The Cloister links the choir-room and the vestry with the Chapel, and commemorates nearly 700 former pupils who gave their lives in the First World War. The Perpendicular style fan vaulting and roof tracery by Leonard William Barnard is possibly the last example of fan vaulting in this country, which in turn pays homage to the first, in Gloucester. The foundation stone of the cloister was laid on 4 July 1919 by Lord Lee of Fareham (1880-1886, Leconfield; member of Council, 1911-1917, President 1917-1939). There is also a quote from Virgil's *Aeneid* which, when translated, reads appropriately: 'With crowning tribute grace these splendid souls, whose life blood won for us our fatherland'. Above the window are inspiring words written by Rev. Reginald Waterfield, dean

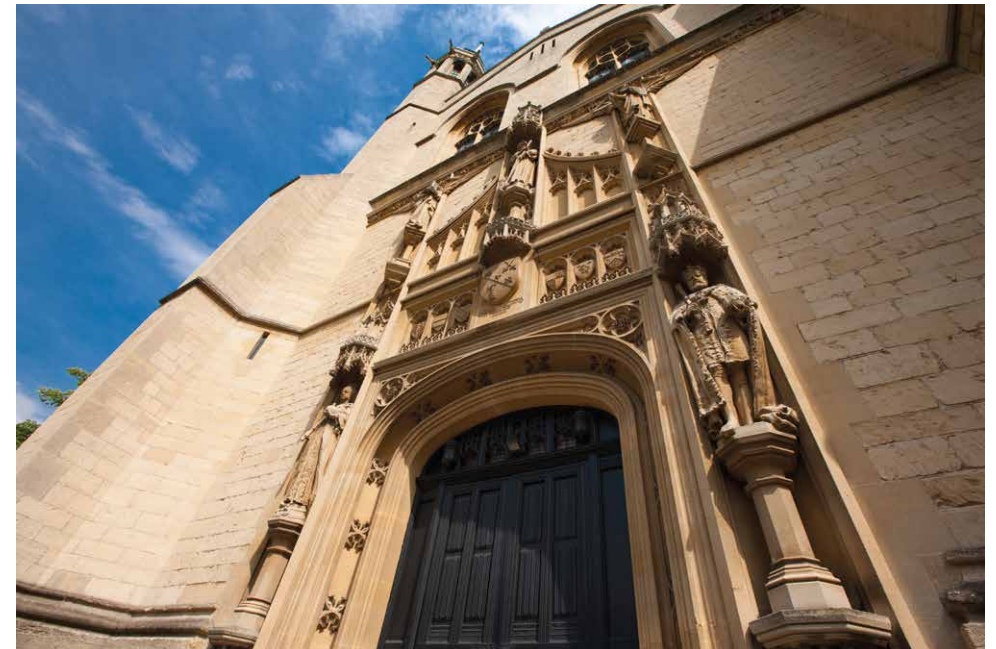
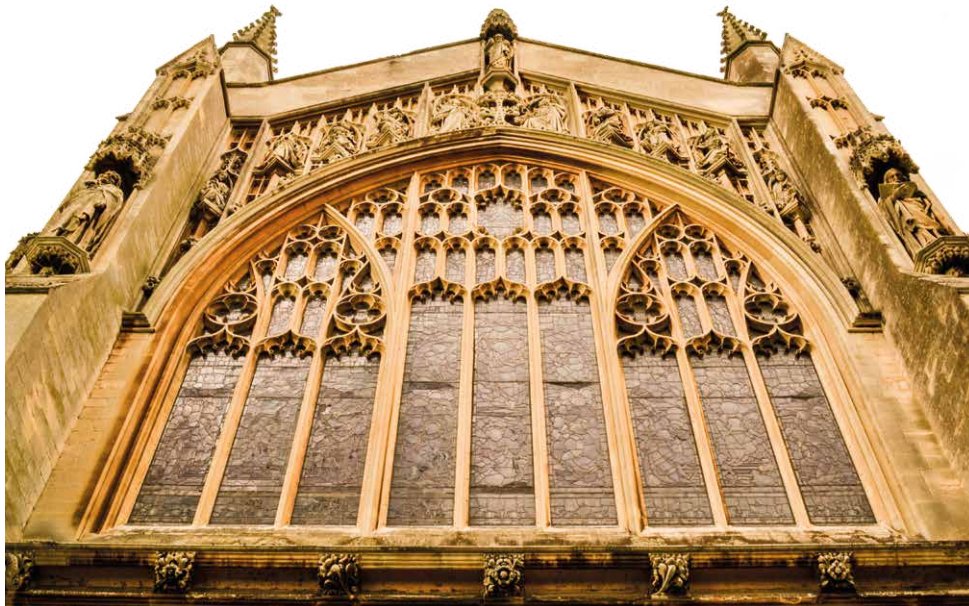
of Hereford, who, as Principal (1899-1919), would have known so many of those who had given their lives in the conflict.

Doors

The large carved oak west door is a monument to Rev. Arthur Sim, (1875-1881, Christowe), a former Head Boy who became a missionary in Africa and died of fever at Lake Nyasa in 1896, aged 33.

The south door is dedicated to Edwin Osborne (1889-1890, Hazelwell), Second Lieutenant in the 16th Lancers, who died at Lucknow in 1895.

On the north side, there is a door to the former boiler house, which was converted to a Crypt Chapel and dedicated by Rev. George Simms (1924-1928, Southwood House), archbishop of Dublin, on 19 June 1966. It fell into disuse and for a time was used to store rugby posts. It was later restored and, on 11 November 1990, rededicated as the Chapel of Christ the King by the same George Simms, by then the retired archbishop of Armagh. It was further refurbished in 2011 to become the Chaplaincy Centre.



INTERIOR

THE NARTHEX

The stonework of the narthex, or ante-Chapel, is the work of Messrs R L Boulton & Sons of Cheltenham.

Narthex memorials

The first, south, bay is a memorial to Charles Turnbull (1852-1861, and member of College Council, 1894-1910), and the north bay is a memorial to two Principals, Bishop Alfred Barry (1862-1868) and Canon Herbert Kynaston (1874-1888). Their coats of arms will be found in the roof bosses. On the right, memorials transferred from the original chapel commemorate former masters, including Rev. William Dobson (Principal, 1845-1859), Rev. Thomas Southwood (Headmaster of the Military and Civil side at College (1843-1879) and Rev. John Brooksmith (Housemaster of Boyne House, 1853-1888).

Just to the north of the west door is a memorial to Geoffrey Burton, (1889-1892, Day Boy), who drowned whilst saving his sister's life soon after leaving College.

The porticus, which leads from the narthex to the Chapel, is a memorial to the Chapel's architect, Henry Prothero. Above the door, the Venetian glass mosaic, designed by J. Eadie Reid (Art Teacher at The Cheltenham Ladies' College), portrays King Solomon offering to God the Temple he has built for His worship. Esoterically, it perhaps represents Prothero presenting his Chapel.

Narthex windows

The small windows in the narthex are in memory of Lt Col. Cecil Troughton (1880-1887, Teighmore and Boyne House, and Secretary of the Cheltonian Society, 1903-1912). He was also founder and first Secretary of the Old Cheltonian Lodge of Freemasons, and the windows were given by the Cheltonian Society, the Public School's Masonic Chapter, and the Masonic Lodges of ten public schools. The arms of those schools are included, along with their founding

date and initials of founders. Two of the window lights on the north side show Masonic emblems.

THE NAVE

Vaulting and bosses

The roof vaulting is arranged in the 'Union Jack' configuration: a quadripartite system of four half bays divided by intersecting ribs. In the centre of each compartment the ribs converge in a carved boss, nearly three feet in diameter. There are eight bosses which, running from west to east, chronicle the life of Christ: the Annunciation (partly hidden by the organ), the Nativity, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the Last Judgement.

Windows

The windows along the north and south sides have four lights in two rows separated by stone transoms. The original intention was that those on the north side would depict the eight Christian virtues whilst those on the

south side would depict the eight Beatitudes. In each window the upper lights would give Biblical illustrations and the lower lights provide illustrations from history and legends. However, only three windows have been filled.

On the south side, the window of the Merciful and the window of the Pure in Heart commemorate respectively Harold Stables (1898-1905, Day Boy) and Norman Coghill (1911-1915, Christowe), who gave their lives in the First World War. Both windows are by Louis Davis of Pinner, one of the most distinguished of the later Arts and Crafts window painters. The upper lights of the 'Merciful' window show the Ark under the rainbow, flanked by David sparing Saul and the parable of the Good Samaritan; below is a personification of Mercy falling like the rain, Orlando from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Prospero from *The Tempest*, and finally the Merciful Knight from a Florentine Legend. The upper lights of the 'Pure in Heart' window show two angels with ruby wings portraying God's majesty, flanked by Joseph interpreting his dream to Potiphar and Isaiah; below are Parsifal, Joan of Arc, a figure of Purity and Sir Galahad.



On the north side the window depicts Fortitude, and is a joint memorial to Brig. Gen. John Tanner (1868-1875, Teighmore and Hazelwell) who was killed in 1917, and Captain William Gardiner (1901-1904, Southwood House), who died in Assam in 1922. The two central panels of the upper lights show St Paul inspiring confidence during the shipwreck, flanked by David slaying Goliath and Jonathan with his armour-bearer. Below there are figures of Fortitude (with First World War soldiers in the trenches behind him), Sir Richard Grenville, Sir Philip Sidney and Dr Edward Wilson (1886-1901, Day Boy) who accompanied Captain Robert Scott on both the 1901-1903 and 1910-1913 Antarctic expeditions, and died with Scott on their return from the South Pole in March 1912.

The great east window, at 26 feet across, is divided into three groups of three lights each. The central subject is the Ascension, supported on either side by representations of the Nativity and Christ before Pilate. The stained glass was presented to College by Baron and Baroness de Ferrières, to commemorate their Golden Wedding on 20 February 1901 and 40 years' residence in the town. The Baron was a former

mayor of Cheltenham, Liberal Member of Parliament, and gave the town its Art Gallery.

Lunettes

Beneath the windows and above the stalls, lunettes, or painted panels, illustrate the ministry of angels, with scenes from the Old Testament on the north side of the nave facing scenes from the New Testament on the south side. Running from east to west on the north side are the Expulsion from Eden, the Escape from Sodom, the Vision of Jacob, the Offering of Isaac by Abraham, the Angel appearing to Hagar, and the Burning Bush. On the south side, from east to west, are the Annunciation, the Flight into Egypt, the Ministry of Angels to Christ after the Temptation, the Agony in the Garden, the Resurrection (part of the Myers Memorial), and the Ascension. They are all memorials to Old Cheltonians and, with one exception, were all by J. Eadie Reid. The one exception is the Angel appearing to Hagar, which was painted by John Batten, a relative of Francis Winterbotham (1856-1857, Day Boy) who died at Peshawar in 1879 and is commemorated by it.



THE SANCTUARY

The reredos

The reredos, of clunch stone from Cambridgeshire, like the narthex is by Boultons. In the centre is Christ on the cross, between the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist. There are then four groups of larger statues: immediately to the left of the crucifix, four great churchmen who were also statesmen; further left six who established Christianity in Britain or became its martyrs, with personifications of faith, hope and charity beneath. To the right of the crucifix, four men who gave us the Bible in our native tongue and the Prayer Book, and further right, six who showed fruits of Christianity in religion, education and social reform, with personifications of fortitude, truth and justice beneath. Those groups of larger statues are separated by buttresses, with six smaller figures on each. The 24 smaller figures represent men in every walk of life: artists and scientists, leaders, writers, and men distinguished in their various fields, many of whom had some form of local affiliation. Under the Crucifixion is a bas-relief of the Adoration of the Magi, with

the patron saints of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales to the north, and the four archangels to the south. There are also carvings of the national emblems – rose, thistle, shamrock and leek, together with the oak and vine, symbols, respectively, of national and Christian unity.

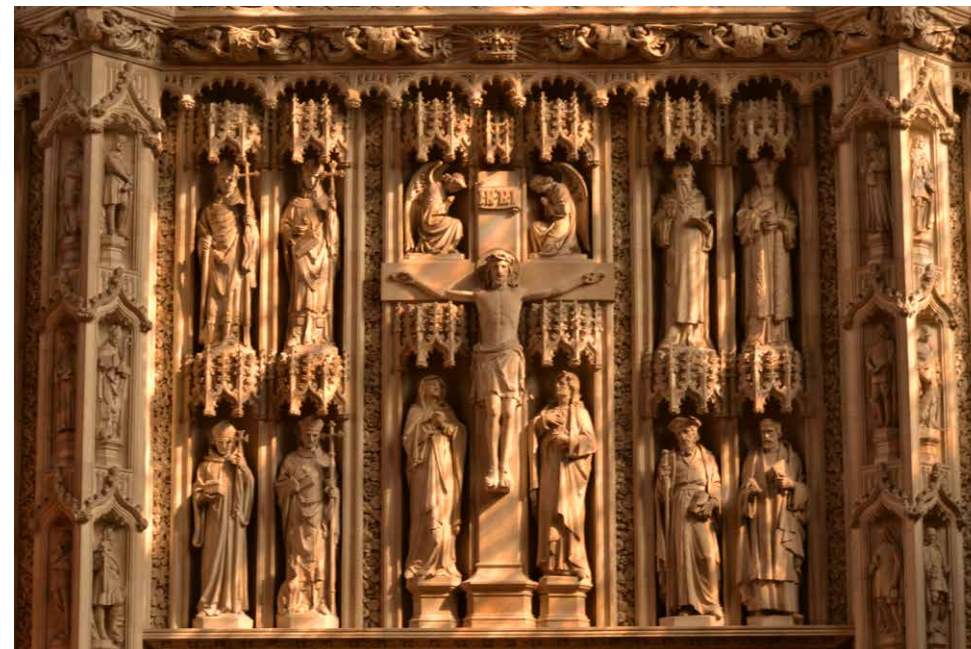
[Full details of all the figures are given in a key by the altar rail.]

The whole reredos was made as a memorial to those former pupils who died in the South African War of 1899-1902. So much money was collected for a memorial that, as well as the reredos, there was enough to build the Eleanor Cross, bearing the names of the 54 fallen, which stands at the front of College, and a prayer desk *[temporarily unavailable]*.

MEMORIALS

Fittings

Most of the fittings are memorials as well. The altar was given by Mrs Southwood in memory of her husband, the aforementioned Thomas



Southwood. Behind it there is a retable (shelf) of brown and white alabaster, commemorating Clarence Moores, (1887-1888, Newick House). The finely carved pulpit is a memorial to George Adami (1890-1895, Hazelwell) and also refers to other members of that family; the lectern commemorates John Whipple (1890-1892, Cheltondale); the sedilia (stone wall seats) are in memory of the aforementioned Lord Plunket, archbishop of Dublin, who died a few months after officially opening the Chapel; and the altar rails commemorate Arthur Thomson (1886-1890, Leconfield), who was killed in action at Bida, Nigeria, in 1897.

Brass plaques

There are, of course, many memorials in the Chapel. Around the walls are brass plaques commemorating those former pupils who gave their lives in the various wars and campaigns since College was founded in 1841, but not those in the Second World War who are commemorated on a memorial in the Dining Hall. Particularly poignant are the names of the 692 who gave their lives

in the First World War. There are also numerous brasses to the memory of various former pupils, staff or Council members.

Myers memorial

Perhaps the most impressive memorial is around the south door and is to the scholar and poet Frederic Myers (1843-1859, Day Boy), who tried to establish scientifically the doctrine of immortality and whose greatest work was *Human Personality and the Survival of Bodily Death*. The 'Tree of Life' is handcrafted in sycamore and details, allegorically, the triumph of life over death. The wild rose is a reference to such a tree that grew in Myer's childhood garden in Keswick and it is full of all sorts of wildlife, symbolizing the triumphs of life over death. There are birds and insects, grasses and reeds. The robin is a known symbol of martyrdom with its red breast, but there are also crossbills which, according to legend, gained their name from trying to pull out the nails from the hands of Christ on the cross, and their crests were died red from the blood which poured forth. The

zoomorphic carving is intricate and is, in some cases, esoteric to Myers – the mole emerging at the base refers to Myers' first encounter with 'the awfulness of annihilation' when, as a child, he encountered a dead mole. The memorial was designed by Myers' friend Prothero and executed by H.H. Martyn & Co. Harry Breckin was responsible for the carving over the door, but the rest was by Harry Dean, who has been compared to the great wood carver Grinling Gibbons; the memorial is arguably the zenith of the building's interior schema.

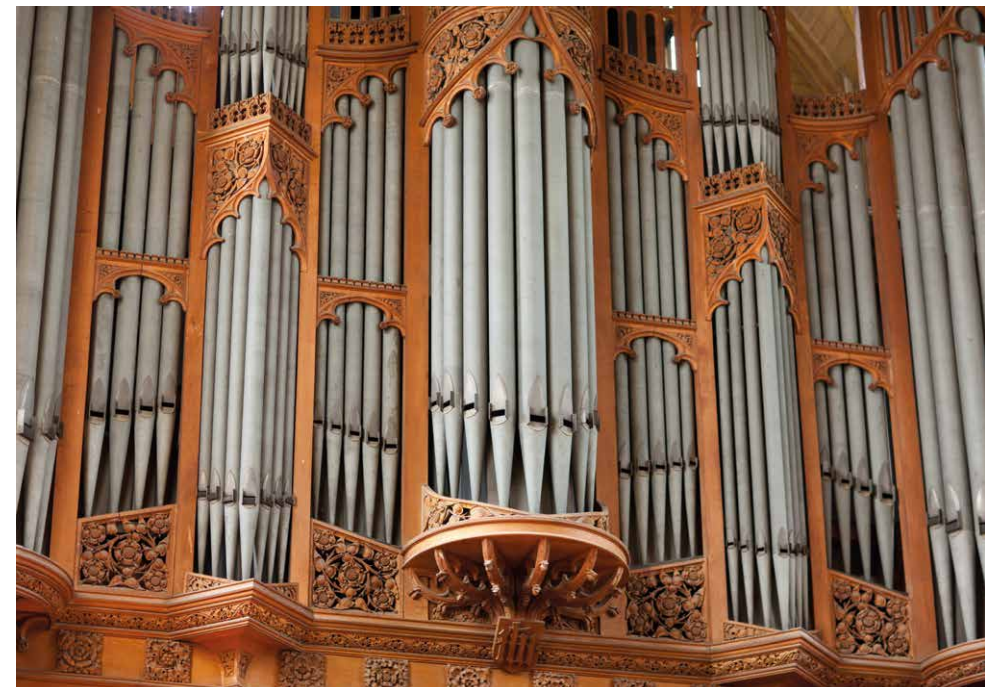
The bronze tablet with the bust of Myers in relief is the work of JE Hyett. The Greek quote from Homer's *The Odyssey* translates: 'Striving to win his own life and his comrades' homeward way'.

ORGAN

At the west end of the Chapel is a gallery housing the three-manual organ built by the Norwich firm Norman and Beard, the inaugural recital being in May 1906. Prothero, himself a competent organist, designed its magnificent

case, 40 feet tall, as a memorial to Dr Arthur Dyer (Organist and Choirmaster, 1875-1902). In the centre at the top is the figure of St Cecilia, the patron saint of music, and on either side an angel blowing a trumpet. The organ was rebuilt and extended by Harrison and Harrison of Durham, first in 1930 and again in 1976. An instrument capable of achieving a wide range of colour and dynamics, its three manuals and pedals encompass a well-balanced traditionally-voiced instrument which is very well suited to the liturgical and choral needs of an independent school with a renowned and highly regarded musical tradition. In 2013, it was further enhanced by the addition of a 32-foot 'Double Ophicleide' stop, the type of stop only found in the largest organs, such as in cathedrals, making College one of the finest non-cathedral locations in the country for choral and organ music. The carved screen behind the organist's seat is the gift of Mr Thomas Waterhouse, the father of three boys who were in Leconfield.

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