

Bristol Cathedral

In the twelfth century an Augustinian Abbey was founded on this site by prominent local citizen, Robert Fitzharding. The remains of the abbey can still be seen in the Chapter House, the Abbey Gatehouse and the buildings of Bristol Cathedral Choir School, but it is the east end of the Cathedral which is particularly special; it is one of the finest examples in the world of a medieval 'hall church'. This means that the vaulted ceilings in the nave, choir, and aisles are all at the same height, creating a lofty and light space with a series of elegant arches. The original abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII's commissioners in 1539, and the nave that was being rebuilt at the time was never completed. The Church became a Cathedral in 1542 but did not get a new nave until the 1860s. Noted architect, G.E. Street, designed a new nave in a Gothic Revival design that mirrored the architecture of the hall church. J.L. Pearson then added the two towers at the West End and a further re-ordering of the interior was completed in the early part of the twentieth century. The choir screen, which separates the nave from the east end of the church, the reredos (or screen behind the altar), and the pulpit were added at this time.



The life of the Cathedral

This Cathedral has stood at the centre of Bristol's religious, cultural and civic life since the middle ages. It is dedicated to the Holy and Undivided Trinity and is the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Bristol, which stretches through Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to Swindon. It is a place of sanctuary, worship and prayer and all are welcome. You can enjoy the glories of a choral musical tradition that goes back to the days when Augustinian Canons first worshipped here in the twelfth century. Every day we follow that monastic rhythm with services of Morning Prayer, the Eucharist, and Choral Evensong (or Evening Prayer). Please feel free to join us, or simply walk around. The Berkeley and Elder Lady Chapel are set aside for prayer and contemplation. Ask a Verger or Welcomer if you would like information about service times. We also host recitals, concerts, education days and other events. Please see our website for full details: www.bristol-cathedral.co.uk



Floor plan

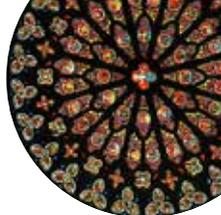
- 1 **The Nave** (1868-1877)
- 2 **Elder Lady Chapel** (c. 1220)
Strange carvings, Berkeley Tomb
- 3 **Choir** (from 1298)
Roof vaulting, choir stalls, misericords, organ
- 4 **High Altar** (1899)
Reredos, mosaic floor
- 5 **Eastern Lady Chapel** (from 1298)
Colours, tombs, effigies, candlesticks
- 6 **Berkeley Chapel** (from 1298)
Sacristy roofing, bread oven, candelabrum, remains of wall painting
- 7 **South Transept**
Saxon stone, night stair
- 8 **Cloister, Chapter House and Garden**



“Superior to anything else built in England and indeed in Europe at the same time.”

Pevsner

A brief history



St Augustine's Abbey

- 1140** The Abbey was founded by Robert Fitzharding.
- c. 1160** Norman Chapter House was built.
- c. 1220** The Elder Lady Chapel was added by Abbot David to the north transept.
- 1298** Abbot Knowle began to rebuild the Norman church, making the vaults in the nave, choir and aisles all the same height. This became known as a 'hall church' and was a very influential design in European architectural history.
- 1539** The Abbey was dissolved and the partially re-built nave was never completed.

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- 1542** The remaining portion of the building became the new Cathedral.
- 1868-1888** The nave and west front was built in the Gothic Revival style under architect G.E. Street and completed by J.L. Pearson.
- c. 1900** The choir screen, reredos and other fittings were installed by J.L. Pearson.
- 1941** Bomb damage during World War II destroyed the windows in the north nave aisle. They were replaced with windows commemorating the contribution of the civilian forces to the war effort.
- 1965** The South Choir Aisle window by Keith New was installed. It is an abstract image portraying the Holy Spirit.

In Trust for the future

The Dean and Chapter are responsible for the life and upkeep of the Cathedral. They hold it in trust for the congregation, local community and all our visitors, and are helped in their efforts by the Bristol Cathedral Trust, the Fitzhardinge Society, the Friends, and the Choral Foundation. Leaflets about their work can be found in the Cathedral.

To make your visit more comfortable

Toilets

Access to these facilities is through the Cathedral Garden, which is reached from the Cloister. Disabled facilities are available next to the Café.

Café 1542

The Café is located at the end of the Cloister.

Books and souvenirs

The Cathedral Shop is situated by the main entrance. It has a wide range of cards, gifts, devotional products and books.

For much of the year Welcomers are present in the Cathedral. A Verger is always on duty. Our staff are eager to help: please do not hesitate to ask them for assistance.



For more details about the Cathedral please contact:

Bristol Cathedral Office
Abbey Gatehouse, College Green,
Bristol BS1 5TJ
Telephone: 0117 926 4879

www.bristol-cathedral.co.uk



Bristol Cathedral

Cathedral guide

English

