

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

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Drawn by Jeremy Bays, www.art-work-shop.co.uk

Welcome

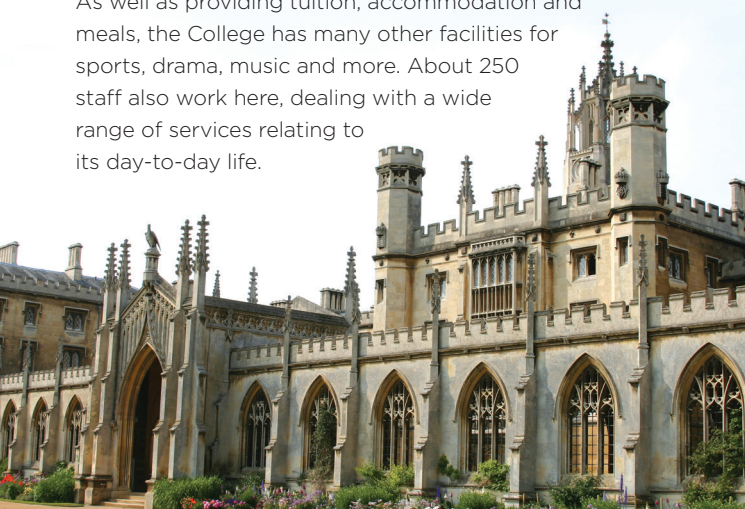
This guide offers a short introduction to St John's as you follow the tourist route through the College. We welcome visitors, but please remember that the College is a place where researchers and students live and work. Please keep to the route marked on the attached map, follow instructions from our staff, and do not go anywhere marked "private".

The University of Cambridge dates back the early 13th century. At first its scholars lived in private houses, but gradually they established communal hostels which became Colleges.

St John's was founded in 1511. Before that, a monastic community – the Hospital of St John – stood here. By the early 16th century, it had fallen into decay. Bishop John Fisher, a Chancellor (head) of the University, persuaded Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII, to found a College on the site. Sadly, she died in 1509, before formal permission to establish St John's was finally granted in 1511.

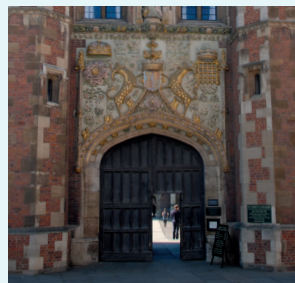
Over its 500 year history the College has grown into one of the largest in Cambridge. St John's now has more than 150 resident senior academics (known as Fellows), 580 undergraduates and 300 graduates. There are more than 700 student rooms on the College estate.

As well as providing tuition, accommodation and meals, the College has many other facilities for sports, drama, music and more. About 250 staff also work here, dealing with a wide range of services relating to its day-to-day life.



1 The Great Gate

The Great Gate, at the front of the College facing St John's Street, was completed in 1516, and bears a carving of Lady Margaret Beaufort's coat of arms. The curious animals on either side are "yales" – mythical beasts with elephants' tails, antelopes' bodies, goats' heads and horns that supposedly swivel from back to front! Above this is a statue of St John the Evangelist with an eagle, his traditional symbol, and an emblem of the College itself. He carries a poisoned chalice, with a snake representing the legend that he charmed the poison out in the form of a serpent before drinking from it safely.



2 First Court

Much of the College is made up of quadrangles or "courts". There are three running west to east from the Great Gate to the river, known simply as First, Second and Third. First Court was built in 1511 to the south of the old hospital and contained living quarters, the original chapel, library, hall and kitchens.

Look out for

- The stone carved doorway and statue of Lady Margaret, foundress of St John's, in the west range.
- The chapel, which forms the north range, was built in 1868 beyond the original hospital chapel, whose foundations remain visible in the lawn.
- The south range was refaced in 1772-6 in a classical style that was part of a scheme to remodel the whole court, but was never completed.
- The pointed windows in the east range are those of the first college library.

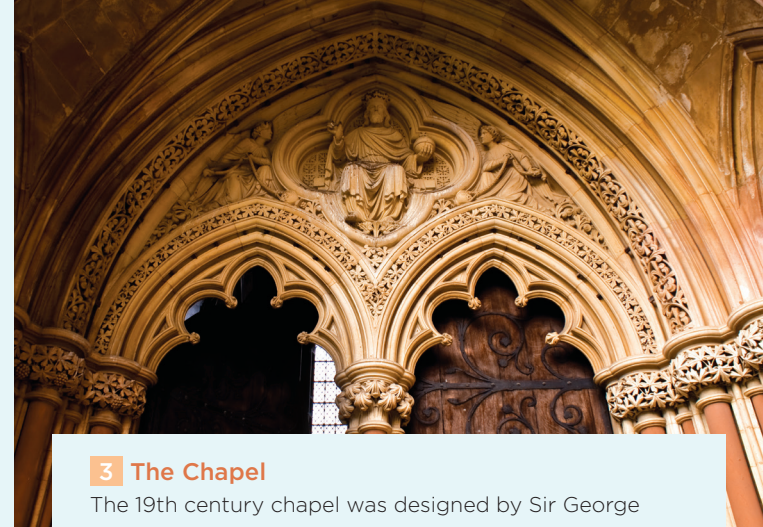


3 The Chapel

The 19th century chapel was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, apart from the tower which was an afterthought made possible by a former member of St John's called Henry Hoare, who unfortunately died before he could pay for it all!

Look out for

- The stained glass shows scenes from the life of Christ. The great west window in the antechapel portrays the Last Judgement.
- The painted ceiling depicts notable Christians of each century.
- The painting by Anton Raphael Mengs on the south wall of the antechapel shows the Deposition from the Cross.
- The tomb of Hugh Ashton, a 16th Century Fellow. On the railings you can see his "rebus", a visual pun on his name, showing an ash tree growing out of a barrel, or "tun" (ash-tun).



4 Chapel Court

Chapel Court is a mix of styles – the south range is Tudor, the west range Victorian and the remainder built by Sir Edward Maufe in 1938-40. Part of the west range was transformed into a new College library in 1994. The arms above the archway in the centre of the north range are those of John Fisher, carved by the famous sculptor, Eric Gill.

5 Second Court

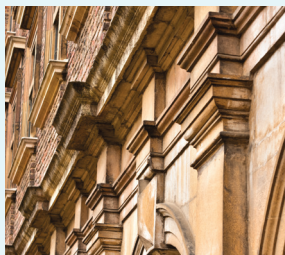
This court was built in 1599-1602. Its harmonious proportions and fine brickwork offer one of the best examples of this style of architecture in Cambridge.

Look out for

- The Shrewsbury Tower (west range), named after the Countess of Shrewsbury, who helped to fund the Court's construction. You can see a statue of her and her coat of arms.
- The oriel window in the north range has a roundel of stained glass showing Queen Henrietta Maria, whose engagement to Charles I was signed in that very room.
- The door beneath the northeast turret was the entrance to the old Master's Lodgings.
- The date, 1599, is stamped in the lead gutters on the north range.

6 Third Court

Third court was built in two stages. The Old College Library (north range) was constructed in 1624. The rest followed in 1669-72, after the College had recovered from the Civil War.



Look out for

- The Library designed by John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln.
- The large arch in the west range was probably designed to let light into the library.

Leave by the round-headed door on the south side, the back entrance to the College from 1672-1831. Follow the path to the "Kitchen Bridge" over the River Cam for the best view of the Bridge of Sighs.

7 New Court

Across the river is New Court, completed in 1831 and designed by Thomas Rickman and Henry Hutchinson, to accommodate the growing numbers of students.

Look out for

- New Court's details are neo-Gothic, especially the dome over the central block, known in the College as the "Wedding Cake". The view from across the lawns can be magical on a misty morning or at dusk.
- The famous Bridge of Sighs, between New Court and Third Court, which barely resembles its namesake in Venice. Queen Victoria was one of its many admirers.

You can leave St John's by walking up the long path to the Queen's Road Gate, or see more of the College by entering New Court via the Eagle gateway.

8 Cripps Building

The land behind New Court was originally an orchard, and later used for buildings such as the bath house, built in 1921, which prompted one Fellow to ask: "What do they want baths for? They're only here for eight weeks at a time!"



After the Second World War, the need for more student accommodation led to the construction of the new Cripps Building in the early 1960s, which became a landmark of 20th Century architecture and attracted many awards.

Look out for

- Cloisters are used to lighten the large blocks of the building, allowing views on to the river and the Backs.
- The Fisher Building, completed in 1987, connects the Cripps complex with New Court. It contains various meeting rooms including a large hall named after the 19th century Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, who went to St John's.



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

