



TRINITY COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

A SHORT GUIDE TO

**TRINITY
COLLEGE
CHAPEL**

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Welcome to Trinity College Chapel

This is a place of worship. Please keep noise to a minimum and be respectful if anyone is praying. Food and drink are not permitted, and mobile phones may not be used in the building. Thank you.

Having entered the building through the Victorian porch, you are standing in the Ante-Chapel. You will immediately notice the six imposing statues, fine sculptures of great Trinity men. Just to your left is the famous statue of Sir Isaac Newton, by the 18th-century French sculptor Roubiliac. Newton is probably Trinity's most famous alumnus, and one of the greatest scientists of all time; he is depicted holding a prism to represent his theories of light, colour and optics.

The other statues are nineteenth-century, and commemorate (clockwise from Newton) Lord Macaulay, historian and essayist; Alfred, Lord Tennyson, poet; William Whewell, Master and benefactor of Trinity; Sir Francis Bacon, philosopher and essayist, Lord Chancellor of England; and Isaac Barrow, Master of Trinity, mathematician and preacher, Newton's tutor.

Opposite the statue of Newton is the organ screen, housing the magnificent organ built by Metzler of Zürich in 1976. This mechanical-action instrument incorporates seven ranks of pipework from the organs built by 'Father' Bernard Smith in 1694 and 1708, and the original cases have been restored. It is regarded as one of the finest organs in the United Kingdom.

Walk through the oak doors under the organ screen and enter the Chapel proper. This is where religious services have taken place regularly since the foundation of Trinity in the mid-sixteenth century. A morning service is said every day during term-time, and the College Choir of thirty undergraduates sings candlelit services three or four times a week. As befits the College founded by Henry VIII, the Chapel is part of the Church of England, though its status differs slightly from that of parish churches. Members of the public are welcome to attend all services. Special College ceremonies are also held in the Chapel, including the installation of new Masters, and the admission of new Scholars and Fellows each year.

The building, which is 205 feet (62.5m) long, was begun in 1554-55 by Queen Mary, the daughter of Henry VIII by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Mary, a Roman Catholic, was succeeded by her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth I, Anne Boleyn's daughter, who completed the Chapel in 1567.

The architectural style is Tudor-Gothic, with Perpendicular tracery and pinnacles. The roof is of an earlier style than the rest of the building, and may have been re-used from the chapel of King's Hall which preceded Trinity College on this site. Only the walls and roof are of Tudor date.

The first thing you see as you enter is the brass eagle lectern, in typical Victorian style, a gift to the College by the Master, W.H. Thompson, in 1866.

The arrangement of the wooden stalls (bench seats) along the sides of the Chapel is typical of Cambridge and Oxford colleges. The stalls, panelling, organ screen and reredos date from the early eighteenth century. The coats of arms above the stalls are worth a close look: the carving is in the style of Grinling Gibbons, though the sculptor was not Gibbons but John Woodward. They date from 1755-56, and commemorate Fellows of Trinity, including Newton, who subscribed to a fund for refurbishing the Chapel.

The stone and marble raised pavement at the east end of the Chapel was built in 1636, along with the altar. On the pavement, in front of the high altar, an inscription reads: 'In memory of the men of this College who gave their lives in war MCMXIV – MCMXVIII'. On the wooden panelling on either side of the altar are inscribed the names of over six hundred men, students, staff and Fellows of Trinity, who gave their lives in the First World War. The inscription around the top of the panelling translates as: *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth (Hebrews 11: 13).*

It is impossible to ignore the huge oil painting of St Michael binding Satan, painted in 1768 by the Anglo-American artist Benjamin West. The elaborate wooden reredos holding the painting is known as the baldacchino; it was built in the early eighteenth century in the Neo-Classical style.

The great east window above the altar has been bricked up since 1706. The stained glass in the Chapel windows is mid-Victorian (1871-5). The themes were devised by B.F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort, both distinguished Trinity theologians, and portray an eclectic choice of characters from the Bible, figures from English and continental history, and people with connections to Trinity. You may be able to spot Henry VIII with his authoritative stance, and Queen Mary holding a miniature Trinity Chapel (window 6 on the north side). The work was executed by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Henry Holiday. Many of the faces of the great historical figures of the Church are actually portraits of eminent Victorians.

As you walk back down the Chapel, notice the elaborately decorated stalls on either side of the main door. These are the special seats for the Master and the Vice-Master. They were commissioned in the eighteenth century by Trinity's most famous (and controversial) Master, Richard Bentley, whose name is inscribed above his stall (on the left) – though he was rarely seen in the Chapel during the forty-two years of his Mastership.

As you re-enter the Ante-Chapel, turn to your right and go through the wooden doors into the Vestry. Here you will find one of Trinity's little-known treasures: the Sekford tomb. Like so many statues in English churches, this monument was defaced on Oliver Cromwell's orders in the mid-seventeenth century, but it is still a touching memorial to a young student who died at the age of 15. He is dressed in red, denoting his status as an undergraduate; the fact that he was buried here and not at his family home suggests that he must have loved Trinity. The monument is a rare example of a canopied tomb chest.

Return to the Ante-Chapel, where you will notice the numerous brass plaques on the wooden wall panelling. Nowadays only members of the Foundation who are of "exceptional intellectual eminence" or have given "exceptional service" are honoured with memorial brasses.

Between 1567 and 1886 many deceased members of Trinity were interred beneath the Chapel floor, the earliest being Trinity's fifth Master, Robert Beaumont, whose resting-place is marked with a fine floor brass. Just one woman, Elizmar Smith, is interred in the Ante-Chapel. She was the sister of the then Master, Robert Smith.

Finally, look behind Newton's statue at the beautifully-carved Second World War memorial on the west wall of the Ante-Chapel. 384 members of Trinity are commemorated, with an inscription which translates as: *Night and day they were a wall around us (1 Samuel 25: 16).*

As you leave the Ante-Chapel you might like to make a donation in the wall-box in the porch. No charge is made for your visit, and all donations are given to charity.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Trinity College Chapel. More information about the Chapel may be found in our longer guide book.