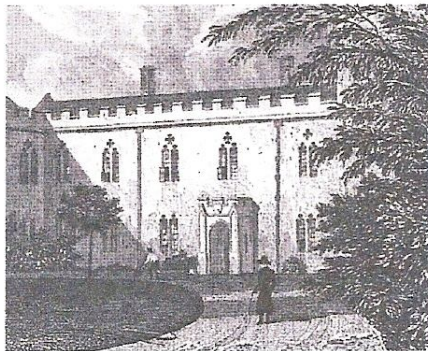


Bishop's Palace Timeline

- c 705 First church built near springs
- 909 The church became a cathedral for the Diocese of Wells
- c1088 Cathedral status was transferred to Bath Abbey
- c1175 New church building started at Wells
- 1189 Bp. Reginald supported Richard I when he stumbled at his coronation earning the Bp. the right always to be at the monarch's left hand at coronations.
- 1206 King John granted land to Bp. Jocelyn to build a palace next to the new church

Sometime in the early 1200s a medieval hall building was started on present site close to a river formed by water from the springs. It was two stories high with the ground floor being used for storage and protection against flooding. Living quarters were on the first floor.



Medieval Hall in 1820

- 1245 The church at Wells became a cathedral and Bath Abbey returned to simple abbey status. Pope decreed that Diocese should be known as Bath & Wells
- 1275 - 93 Bp. Burnell built the Chapel and the Great Hall, as a dining and entertaining hall. Expected Edward I, who did not come.



- 1329 Following acrimonious disputes with the townspeople of Wells, Bp Ralph of Shrewsbury obtained a "Licence to Crenellate" from Edward III and built castle walls and a gatehouse. He diverted the river to create a moat. The defences were intended as a symbolic demonstration of power.

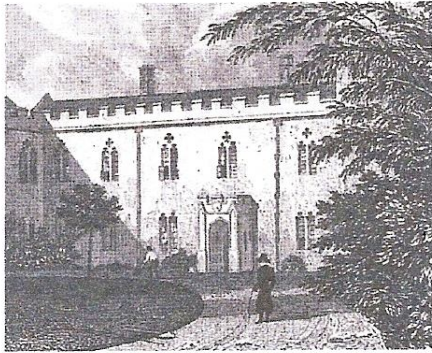


- 1331 Edward III stayed in rooms in the Great Hall
- 1443 Bp Bekynton built more comfortable residential quarters and Virgin's Tower on the north side. Also built the Pumphouse to pump water into kitchens and out to the market place.
- 1539 Abbot Richard Whiting and Treasurer John Thorne (from Glastonbury Abbey) were tried in the Great Hall, for treason against Henry VIII and robbery and executed on Glastonbury Tor



- 1552 Sir John Gates took the timber and lead off the roof of the Great Hall and it began to fall into ruin. (Sir John Gates was later executed by Mary)
- 1642 Parliamentary troops shelled Palace which was a Royalist camp
- 1685 Bishop Peter Mews (Winchester) saved James II's artillery at Battle of Sedgemoor

- 1685-93 Following the Battle of Sedgemoor, Bp Ken fed prisoners who were held in the Cathedral cloisters awaiting the Bloody Assizes. He also composed hymns on ramparts.
- 1703 Bp Kidder and wife were killed by falling chimney whilst asleep
- 1820s Walls of Great Hall further demolished to create a picturesque ruin for a new garden. The Chapel was renovated. (Bp Law).
- 1831 Bp Law had the drawbridge raised during Bristol riots in case of local disturbances
- 1845 Benjamin Ferrey carried out major modifications. A second floor was inserted in the Hall, the roof raised, the porch moved and much interior work



- 1902 Coronation cope created
- 1953 Coronation Cope worn for coronation of Elizabeth II
- 1977 Arboretum planted to mark Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee
- 2002 Coronation Cope last worn at Bp Peter's consecration

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Entrance Porch

This porch was built in 1846 when Bishop Bagot (1845 – 1854) employed a well known Victorian architect, Benjamin Ferrey, to make changes to the building. These changes included the addition of the top storey and other alterations.

Prior to 1846 this porch was positioned one bay to the left and it did not stand in the centre of the façade as it does today. The coat of arms above the entrance to the porch is that of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The keys of Saint Peter and the sword of Saint Paul are the arms of Bath Abbey and the cross of Saint Andrew is the arms of Wells Cathedral. The bishop's mitre announces the building to be the Bishops Palace. The lanterns on either side of the entrance would have had lamps placed inside them. From the outside, look up to the drainpipe heads which show a pelican wounding its own breast to feed its young, a design taken from Bishop Pier's (1632 – 1670) coat of arms.

Where next?

- Step from the 19th Century porch into the 13th Century Entrance Hall

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Entrance Hall

This hall and the parallel undercroft created the firm foundation for the first floor hall built for Bishop Jocelin (1206 – 1244). Using the red and yellow triassic limestone, the mason chose the finer doulting stone for the vaulting. Before the 16th century fireplace was installed the space would have been heated with charcoal braziers. The windows contain fragments of Rouen stained glass which Bishop Law (1824 – 1845) collected after the destruction of church windows during the French Revolution. This glass along with pieces of 15th and 19th English glass century decorate many of the Palace and Chapel windows. Spiral stone stairs at both ends of the hall provided access to the first floor Hall and Long Gallery. In the seventeenth century one of the stone spiral stairs was replaced by the wooden staircase you can see today.

Items of Interest

- The long refectory table where Bishop Ken shared meals with 12 poor men and women when he was in residence
- Bishop Beckynton's coat of arms (1443 - 1465) which is to the left of the wooden Jacobean staircase
- Bishop Henderson's coat of arms (1960 – 1975) above the door leading to the chapel
- Tudor fireplace with coat of arms combining arms of Bath and Wells
- Windows with medieval glass fragments
- Seventeenth century wooden Jacobean staircase

Where next?

- Go to the Undercroft Restaurant through either of the two doors
- Go to the Bishop's Chapel through white arch shaped doorway
- Go to the first floor up the wooden Jacobean staircase

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Chapel

This Chapel, dedicated to the Holy Trinity and St Mark, is the private chapel of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. It was built by Bishop Burnell (1275 –1292).

The main stones of the building are red and yellow triassic sandstone and again the finer local doulting stone is used for the vaulting. The windows are large for the late 13th century and the tracery is an example of the Early English Decorated Style. Finding the Chapel in a derelict state Bishop Law (1824 – 1845) restored it. In the east window, which had been boarded up, he used some fragments of French medieval glass which had come from Rouen following the destruction of churches during the French Revolution. The pews were carved by local woodworkers in the early 20th century. The names of the parishes where they lived can be found if you look carefully at the carved patterns. (See separate information sheet).

In order to celebrate the octocentennial year of the Bishop's Palace the altar and chair designed by David John were dedicated in 2006. The materials used are maple wood and Ancaster stone.

Items of Interest

- Medieval vaulting and roof bosses which are decorated with naturalistic foliage
- Blue/grey columns made of local blue lias
- The east window with the arms of the diocese (left) arms of Bishop Law (right) and arms of Bishop Henderson (lower right).
- A piscina (near the altar) which is a basin with a drain used for washing communion vessels
- A sedila (near the altar) which is three graduated seats for the priest, deacon and sub deacon
- Four tapestries depicting the winged lion of St Mark the seal of Bishop Burnell (1275 – 1292), the arms of Bishop Ken (1684 – 1690) and the arms of Bishop Henderson (1960 – 1975)
- A frieze around the chapel displaying the arms of bishops from the 16th century
- Christ the teacher – a wood sculpture by Tom Preator
- Resurrection Cross – a processional cross by Pat Sampson
- A contemporary Russian icon – Christ Pantocrater (True God and true man)

The
BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS



The Undercroft (The Inner Hall)

A visit to the Undercroft and restaurant gives an opportunity to enjoy workmanship which dates back to the 13th Century. Vaulted with doulting stone the pillars that support the state rooms above are blue lias stone which came from the Somerset Levels. The windows are very similar to their original appearance. In past centuries the undercroft was partitioned and used as a wine store, a buttery, pantries, a cellar for coal and firewood and as accommodation for servants. Bishop Law (1824 -1845) displayed his collections of fossils and minerals here. Bishop Hervey (1869 – 1894), who had a large family, converted the Undercroft into a dining room. As the kitchen was some distance away food was kept warm by a 'hot steam and hot water apparatus', in the room which is today's modern kitchen.

Items of Interest

- A painted stone shield of the coat of arms of the Bishop of Bath and Wells. Depicted in the shield are the diagonal cross of St Andrew, a pastoral staff, and the keys and sword from the arms of Bath Abbey.
- A second painted stone shield is a rebus (a name in a picture) for Bishop Beckynton (1443 – 1466). Here is a beacon above a tun or barrel.
- The tapestries on either side of the fireplace were designed and woven by the Norwegian artist Mrs Molle-Cecilie Major. One shows the swans, trees and water of the Palace gardens and the other was inspired by the wild life on Exmoor
- The coat of arms of Bishop Hervey (1869 – 1894) is in the glass above the door which leads to the terrace and elements of the coat of arms appear in the glazing of the windows
- The Victorian fireplace and ornamental mitre

Where next?

- To the Long Gallery up the Jacobean wooden staircase
- To the garden by the terrace restaurant

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Jacobean Staircase

In the 13th century two stone spiral stairs at either end of the Entrance Hall gave access to the Long Gallery on the first floor. You pass by the remaining spiral stairway as you go from the Entrance Hall through to the chapel. The stairway at this end of the Entrance Hall was demolished during the building of the adjacent wing (which today houses offices and residences). Bishop Montague (1608 – 1616) installed this wooden staircase. Once painted in the style of the period, the paintwork was stripped off in the 1970's and today the only colour is in the four effigies of green Somerset dragons bearing the arms of Bath (key and sword) and Wells (cross of St Andrew).

The wallpaper is a modern copy of one used in the House of Lords by Pugin (1812 – 1863) and it helps to make the transition to the Victorian era of decoration on the first floor.

Where next?

- Enter the Long Gallery at the top of the stairs

The
BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS



The Long Gallery

In medieval times a long gallery was an essential space for work and recreation and this space may have been divided into three rooms. During the civil war between King and Parliament 1641, the Royalist forces made their headquarters in the Palace. The Parliamentary forces camped on Penn Hill, damaged the Long Gallery with cannon fire. When the Parliamentary troops entered Wells, the Palace was looted and portraits and an organ stolen. Following the Civil War the palace was neglected for several decades. By 1824 Bishop Law had turned it into a comfortable Georgian residence and began the present collection of portraits.

The building of a storey over this Long Gallery by Bishop Bagot (1845 – 1854) enabled the architect Benjamin Ferrey to renovate the whole of this first floor. In the Long Gallery, windows were enlarged, plaster ceilings installed and the decorations carried out in Victorian Italian Gothic style.

Items of Interest

- The moulding on doors, panelling and coving made from papier mache to look like wood carving
- The wallpaper is modern blocking of a Victorian design taken from a medieval fresco in a Norfolk church
- Bishop Bagot's motto seen in mouldings below the windows is 'Antiquam obtinens' ('possessing antiquity')
- The long table is one of three made for Bishop Hervey (1869 – 1894)
- The Coronation Cope and pictures

Where next?

At the end of the Gallery turn left into the Drawing Room and notice how thick the wall is between these rooms

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Drawing Room

In the 13th century this room and the adjoining Conference Room were once Bishop Jocelin's Great Hall. The Hall was once open to the beams and rafters of the roof and painted stonework of the walls. It was untouched by the building work over the Long Gallery and the window in this room overlooked the deer park. In 1977 two of the original window embrasures were found behind Victorian bookcases. These spaces now contain the Glastonbury chair and Abbot's chair.

In past centuries this room has been used as a nursery, a music room, a drawing room and lastly as Bishop Bradfield's study (1946 –1960). He later moved his office and family accommodation to the north wing of the Palace which had been built as servant's quarters by Bishop Beckynton (1443 – 1466).

Items of Interest

- Ceiling installed by Bishop Bagot (1845 – 1854) and decorated with his coat of arms
- Elaborate papier mache decorative work on doors and covings which were made to look like wood carving
- The coat of arms is that of Bishop Piers (1632 – 1670) who was the longest serving Bishop of Bath and Wells. It is fashioned from a single ring of oak and was made to mark the restoration of Charles II in 1660.
- Glastonbury Chair and Abbot's Chair
- The central table is one of 3 tables given to the Palace by Bishop Hervey's widow
- The clock was made in 1785 and belonged to the Skipwith family

Where Next?

- To the Conference Room (notice how thin the wall is).

The
BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS



The Conference Room

Together with the Drawing Room this room formed Bishop Jocelin's 13th century medieval Great Hall. When the additional floor was made over the Long Gallery no building was done over the rooms on this side of the Palace. In the space above the ceiling there still remains evidence of the medieval hall. The Victorian Italian Gothic Style favoured by Bishop Bagot is seen in the fine delicate plaster work of the ceiling, the decorative fireplace and in the inner embrasures and the outer carved canopies of the sash windows. Benjamin Ferrey the architect distanced himself from much of the internal work which was carried out by George Jackson and Sons Ltd, London. Ferrey wrote a letter to the Bishop saying he considered himself only responsible for the masonry work.

Items of Interest

- The arms of Bishop Bagot on shields in the corner of the ceiling
- In the mouldings of the ceiling are shields and mitres bearing Bishop Bagot's arms and motto 'Antiquam obtinens' ('possessing antiquity')

Where next?

To the Panelled Room

The
**BISHOP'S PALACE
WELLS**



The Panelled Room

This room was originally the 'solar' and the east gallery which adjoins it was the garderobe. These were private rooms for the Bishop away from the busy medieval hall. The wood and plaster panels date from the late 18th century and were not altered by Bishop Bagot's extensive building work (1845 – 1854). They are a natural setting for many of the portraits. Hanging above one of Bishop Hervey's tables is an oak light fitment once illuminated by gas.

These rooms you have visited have formed the residence for Bishops from the early 13th century until the Second World War. After 1939 Bishop Underhill (1937 – 1943) moved to the north wing so that the pupils and staff of St Brandon's School, Bristol could be evacuated to a safe place. After the war, in 1945, when there were shortages of all kinds and these rooms were in need of repair, the Church Commissioners took the decision to move Bishop Bradfield (1946 – 1960) to the north wing which had been servant's quarters since the mid 15th century. It was left to Bishop Henderson (1960 – 1975) to restore and open the Palace to visitors.

Items of interest

- Oak chandelier
- Large table which was made locally and given to the Palace by Bishop Hervey's widow

Where next?

Return to the Entrance Hall by the Jacobean Staircase, or go to the garden by the garden staircase at the end of the Long Gallery

We hope you have enjoyed your visit

Notes on The Bishops Palace Gardens

- There are two full time gardeners James Cross is Head Gardener and Rob Hole is his assistant. There are two regular volunteers Ian and Derek. They manage 14 acres of garden.
- The Gardens of the South Lawn are styled in the Picturesque and the grounds were all landscaped in 1824 to the design of Bishop Law. Soil was simply brought in up to a depth of 6ft to cover up the older Dutch style garden.
- Currently we are in the process of applying for Heritage Lottery funding and are continuing to develop the gardens with a strong historical link to its past.
- The Wells Croquet Club have played here since 1976. The huge tree on the edge of the lawn is the Black Walnut and one of many fine specimens of tree at the Palace.
- Through the first arch is the South Lawn and the border at the foot of the wall has just been replanted with plants that will tolerate the very much warmer and increasingly dry summers.
- Trees to note on the South Lawn are the Tree of Heaven which is the biggest and oldest, two Mulberry trees a Tulip tree and many more.
- Behind the solitary tower is a pocket of tropical style planting containing an Ethiopian Banana tree which surprisingly survived last winter and is not hardy like the popular Japanese Banana.
- The Rampart has fine views both in and out of the grounds.
- Beyond the Restaurant Terrace is the Phelps family garden which James designed in 2004 and planted up with Rob and Ian in March 2005. This contains formal hedges containing an informal romantic style of planting using many Roses and stalwart herbaceous perennials. This garden was generously funded by Philip Phelps of Palace Farm.
- Beyond the Phelps garden is the East Lawn containing the Rotary Club border (created and planted 2004-05) and arbour with fine views of the Cathedral and Terrace (new plantings 2005). The Adam and Eve Garden (created and planted 2006-07) has just been planted and contains some unusual plants of a more woodland nature to make the most of the shady and damp conditions rare elsewhere within the inner gardens.
- The Outer Gardens will be developed soon particularly the area immediately opposite the bridge with its wide path which will be reduced in width and borders will be created in areas around the Wells using damp liking plants.

- The Wells Border has done extremely well since being planted in 2004. Designed by Mary Keen it is particularly fine in early summer.
- The Arboretum has been managed for wildlife since 2004 and since then the Primroses, bluebells, violets, cow parsley, Fritillaries and many more wildflowers have significantly increased. The Foxglove tree is very colourful in May and one of the best in England. Many of the banks are also left longer for wildlife.
- There are many benches around the garden and since 2005 three more have been added.