

## Palace Rooms

### Volunteer Training 2017

Jocelin Trotman was granted permission by King John to build a Palace on this site in 1206. The ground and first floor were built first with a chapel on the site of the current chapel and a kitchen roughly around the great hall/stable yard.

### Entrance Hall

The stone work is predominantly red and yellow sandstone, the vaulting is made from finer Douling stone (the Douling quarry is just east of Shepton Mallet).

The fireplace was installed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and has the crest of Bath Abbey (the sword and cross keys of St Peter) and Wells Cathedral (St Andrews Cross). Before the fireplace was installed there would have been coal braziers to heat the Entrance Hall.

The long table outside the door to the chapel is **Bishop Ken's table (1685-91)**; the legs are original and the top a more modern addition. Bishop Ken invited 12 poor men and women of Wells to share a meal with him at the table when he was in residence at The Palace. It is from **this table that our café's name is derived.**

The spiral staircase between the entrance hall and chapel would have been staff access from the ground floor to the main rooms of the palace on the first floor. There would have been another where the current wooden Jacobean staircase stands.

### Coats of arms

- 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

The wooden staircase was installed by Bishop Montague (1608-1616) and would have been **highly decorated. The paint work was stripped off in the 1970's. The beasts atop the posts on the staircase are dragon's (they have four legs) and represent the story of Jocelin and the dragon.** In legend, the beast that Jocelin defeated was a *wyvern* – as on the Somerset crest – but a wyvern only has two legs!

### Undercroft

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.

The painted stone shield opposite the fireplace is a rebus (a picture which alludes to a word/name) for Bishop Beckynton (1443-1465). The shield depicts a beacon above a 'tun' or barrel, reading 'beacon-tun' or Beckynton.

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 wildlife 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

### Long Gallery

In medieval times, the long gallery would have been where all the **Bishop's Clerks worked**, meeting people who were coming to petition the Bishop or to attend hearings presided over by the Bishop. The space could well have been divided up into several rooms.

During the civil war between king and parliament 1642, the royalist forces made their headquarters in the palace. The parliamentary forces camped on Penn Hill and fired canons at The Palace. The Royalists soon deserted. When the parliamentary troops entered Wells, The Palace was looted and portraits and an organ stolen.

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

The cost of the refurbishments soon mounted up. To save money the moulding, panelling and coving in the Long Gallery was made from papier mâché to look like carved wood. Bishop Bagot's motto can be seen in mouldings below the windows - '*antiquam obtinens*' ('possessing antiquity').

The wallpaper is modern blocking of a Victorian design taken from a medieval fresco in a Norfolk church.

The long table is one of three made for Bishop Hervey (1869-1894).

#### Drawing room

In the original layout of The Palace, this room and the Conference Room were Bishop Jocelin's Great Hall. The hall was once open to the beams and rafters of the roof and the walls would have been painted white, with decorative patterns. 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.

The Drawing 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 (1443-1465).

The Coronation Cope, which was **worn by Bishop Bradfield at Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's** coronation, was also worn at the three preceding coronations. The cope has since been worn by Bishop Peter Hancock at special services in the cathedral.

The ceiling was installed by Bishop Bagot (1845-1854) and decorated with his coat of arms. 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.

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

#### Conference Room

The Victorian Italian Gothic style favoured by Bishop Bagot is seen in the fine delicate plaster work of the ceiling, the decorative fireplace and 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.

The arms of Bishop Bagot can be seen on shields in the corners of the ceiling and his motto '*antiquam obtinens*' ('possessing antiquity') and coat of arms can also be seen in mouldings across the ceiling.

#### Paneled 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 18<sup>th</sup> century and were not altered by Bishop Bagot's extensive building work (1845-1854).

These rooms were the residence for bishops from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century until the Second World War. During the War, 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-15<sup>th</sup> century. It was left to Bishop Henderson (1960-1975) to restore and open the palace to visitors.