



UNITED KINGDOM

# FORMER COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY OF OTTERY

## BRIEF GUIDE

### **WELCOME:**

You are welcome to this historic and beautiful church, which has been hallowed by the prayers of the faithful for nearly 700 years. Although it has many historic, beautiful and interesting features, it is still pre-eminently a place of worship, with a large and lively congregation. You are welcome to join in our services, the times of which are shown on the notice board in the south porch.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

The present edifice is largely the work of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (1312-1369), who built it in 1342, as a “Collegiate Church”, on the lines of the Cathedral. This accounts for its large size for a relatively small town. The north Dorset aisle was added about 1520, since then there have been no additions, although most of the peripheral buildings, e.g. the cloisters, have long since gone. In 1545 the College of Priests was dissolved by decree of King Henry VIII and the buildings and treasures surrendered to his Commissioners. In the same year, by Letters Patent, he established the four Governors of the “Hereditaments and Goods” of the Church of St. Mary of Ottery and gave them the church with the responsibility of maintaining it in perpetuity. Seven years later eight Assistant Governors were appointed. The Governors and Assistants are still active in discharging that responsibility with the co-operation of the Parochial Church Council.

### **WHAT TO SEE:**

- Vista up the nave and chancel to the altar screen, note the painted and ornate pattern of the ribs of the vaulting, the bosses and shields culminating in the altar screen itself.
- Canopied monuments to Sir Otho and Lady Grandisson with their finely carved ogee arches.
- Bishop Grandisson’s boss at the centre of the tracery above the nave altar.
- Astronomical clock in the south transept, probably 14th century.
- South transept with its mosaic tiling, the work of William Butterfield under the direction of the first Baron Coleridge.
- Altar screen, a conjectural restoration of the original Grandisson screen.

- Ornate tracery and colouring of chancel vaulting and the bosses above the high altar and westwards.
- Vista down the chancel and nave to the west end.
- Original Canons' stalls immediately before the high altar, now used by the Governors and Assistants on special occasions.
- Lady Chapel, behind the altar screen and the Chapels of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence on either side of it. In the Lady Chapel see:
  - carved "Beer" stone gallery.
  - original Canons' stalls with misericords.
  - mediaeval eagle lectern.
- roof bosses over sanctuary and corbel-heads of the Bishop and his sister, the Countess of Salisbury.
- North Dorset aisle with its fan vaulting and pendant bosses, also:
  - Life sized effigy of John Coke, a former Governor, who died in 1632.
  - Tudor bench ends.
  - west Apostles window.
- Display cases and other exhibits in North West corner.
- Marble font by William Butterfield.
- Thomas Axe's will on west wall of south porch, much of it is still operative.

**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

If you would like to know more ask the Steward on duty and/or buy a guide book, which you will find on sale near the door through which you entered.

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE:**

We hope your visit has been a pleasurable and enriching experience and that before you leave you will think of the countless generations who have shared that experience with you, but what of the future? Will our children, grandchildren and succeeding generations be able to share this privilege?

The cost of maintaining the church in its present condition is very high and constantly rising. Apart from occasional and specific grants towards restoration from English Heritage, no Government funds are received. We continue to be, therefore, heavily dependent on visitors. Please give what you can. Thank you.