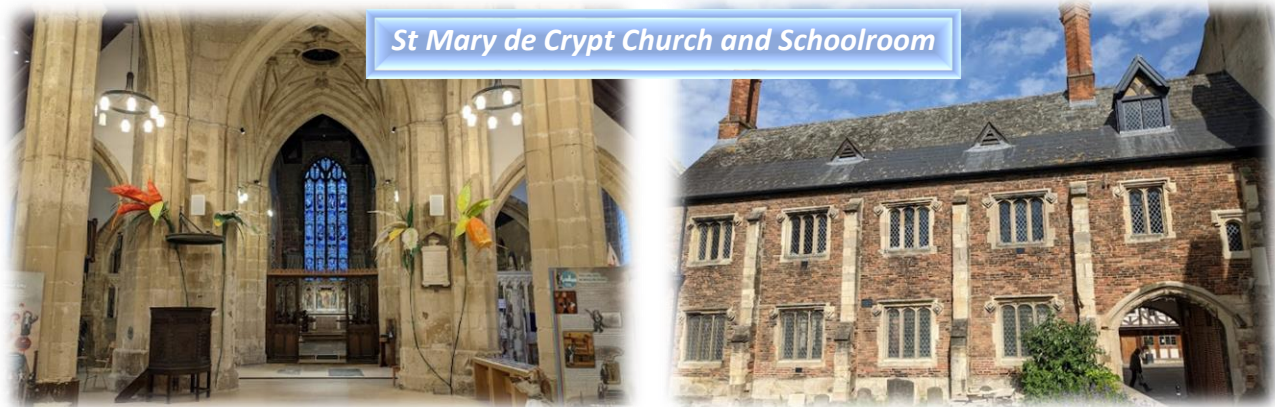


# Discover DeCrypt, Gloucester Annual Report for 2023



Discover DeCrypt is a charity based in the Church of St Mary de Crypt and the adjacent Tudor schoolroom in Southgate Street in the centre of Gloucester. Our £2.1 million restoration project, completed in 2019, was made possible through a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and donations from other trusts, organisations and individuals. Our aims are to share our faith in Jesus Christ, to promote the story of our history and heritage and to enhance the community life of our city.



Inspired by the vision of sharing our 'Faith', our 'Story' and our 'Life', Discover DeCrypt has continued throughout 2023 to maintain a mission to welcome people in the spirit of Christian hospitality. In addition to groups which use our buildings on a regular basis, we have welcomed 25,800 visitors over the course of the year, an increase of 18% over the previous year. Visitors are greeted by our team of well-briefed volunteers, who are always keen to share their passion for our heritage and their interest in the story of the city of Gloucester.

2023 has been an important year in the development of the Discover DeCrypt charity. In spring, our NLHF funding came to an end, although we were fortunate in receiving an additional resilience and recovery grant to offset some of the impact of the pandemic on our business plan.

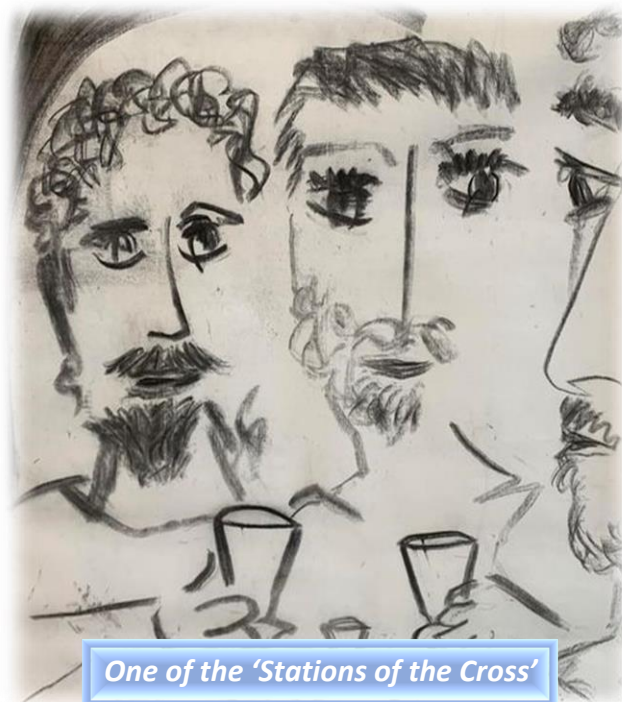
At the same time a complete review of all aspects of the operation of the charity was undertaken by Cultural Associates Oxford. From this process, trustees have an increasing resolve that Discover DeCrypt should function as an active community hub and should seek deeper partnerships with our local community. As a result, lots of new contacts have been made with various groups and our space has been used almost to maximum capacity during the second part of the year, with bookings which bring real community impact being prioritised. We aim to keep our Christian ethos at the forefront, but we seek to be a church that does things differently and is open to all in our community. A significant part of our appeal is the ambience and hospitality created by an on-site café, which has now been rebranded as a Tudor Tea Room; although we have yet to find the right complement of staff to run this to its full potential, trustees are of no doubt about its overall importance. Also stimulated by the CAO report, 2023 has seen an increased focus on fundraising. This, together with the increasing number of groups using our facilities, has enabled Discover DeCrypt to end the year on a note of cautious optimism. We look to the future with confidence and trust in God's provision as we seek to build on the real sense of enthusiasm and concern for the community that pervades our life.

This report highlights some of the major events we have held in 2023 and the groups we have supported in order to fulfil the three-fold objectives at the heart of Discover DeCrypt's vision. It also reflects the growing importance of our community role.

## **Objective 1 – FAITH:**

### **To share an inclusive sacred space**

- As a consecrated Christian church, we continue to offer space within our busy city for people to pray, contemplate or simply take in the tranquillity of our building. Several exhibitions have enhanced this reflective atmosphere, such as the 'Stations of the Cross from the Eyes of Jesus' by Jonathon Brown during Lent.
- Each Friday lunchtime we host a weekly service of 'Prayers for the City' and commemorate Christian festivals such as Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday and Ascension Day with special services. We held a Christian Aid service in May, a service to mark the Coronation of Charles III and a Holy Communion to remember the departed on All Saints' Day.



*One of the 'Stations of the Cross'*



*Canon Nikki with our Pride flag*

- Discover DeCrypt continues to occupy a special place in the religious and civic life of our city. The annual Gloucester Day service, which takes place in September, is held in the church followed by a parade through the four main gated streets led by the Town Crier. This year's celebration was very well-attended.
- In March, we also had the pleasure of hosting the Back Badge service for members of the Gloucestershire Regiment. The service was led by Rev Canon Arthy, accompanied by ex-members of the Glosters Band, and was followed by a march through the city.
- Our aim is to operate in as inclusive a manner as possible and to share God's love broadly. We continue to engage with the LGBTQI+ community, hosting the Pride AGM, a very well-supported Transgender Day of Remembrance and a powerful service for International AIDS Day.

## **Objective 2 – STORY:**

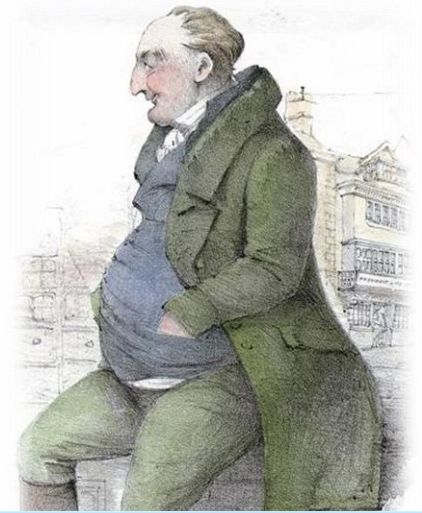
### **To preserve and enhance our heritage, making heritage and history accessible**

- Our team of volunteer guides has continued to staff the church throughout the year to escort visitors, focusing on the architecture and historical characters who have given interest to this place.
- We showcased the church at its best during the Gloucester Heritage Open Days in September with 'Bones and Bells' tours, which included areas such as the crypt and the tower which are not



normally open. One innovative aspect saw our team of bell-ringers teaching the public the first principles of bell-ringing.

- In July Discover DeCrypt joined with the civic trust and other heritage organisations to host the Gloucester Festival of Archaeology. Our particular focus was on the Romans and we were able to exhibit the fragments of the cornice and altar stone from the Roman temple discovered in Southgate Street in 2019.
- Another special event that brought our story to a wider audience was a sell-out performance of scenes from 'A Christmas Carol' expertly performed by drama students from the Crypt School. Sponsored by our Friends organisation, the performance was preceded by a short lecture on the life of Jemmy Wood, the 18<sup>th</sup> century Gloucester banker who is buried beneath our chancel and is believed to have been one of the inspirations for Dickens' character Ebenezer Scrooge.



*Eccentric banker Jemmy Wood*

### **Objective 3 – LIFE:**

**To provide an inspiring community space that is affordable, accessible and welcoming**

- The groups which lease our premises on a regular basis reflect a diverse range of different interests. Among those included are the Heart of Gloucester community choir, a tai chi group, an Inclusion Gloucestershire drama group, AA meetings and the Cuddesdon, Gloucester and Hereford training course for ordinands.
- Throughout May the church was brought alive by an exhibition of artwork by the pupils of Beech Green Primary School.
- An indoor street party with food and games was held for the local community to mark the coronation of Charles III. Events in London were shown on large screen TV at the same time.



*City dignitaries at Discover DeCrypt for the Coronation, May 2023*

- We have continued to host a number of concerts and drama performances throughout the year, which have been very well-received by the community. The monthly Coffee Concerts pioneered by local musicians Vicki and Seb Field have provided a wealth of beautiful music in an inspired setting. Evening concerts have included the joyous and uplifting folk concert by the Rodborough Folk Orchestra. One of the most successful drama productions over several nights in February was 'Great Expectations' by the Rococo Players.
- As in previous years, we have been a venue for a number of well-patronised weekend trading fairs. Foremost among these have been Love Viva Cakes and Crafts and Pre-Loved Kilo, an organisation which offers vintage and retro clothing at affordable prices.
- The main community development of the year has been the hosting at Discover DeCrypt of two hugely successful Steampunks Weekends, which have seen the site taken over by madcap shenanigans, with music, markets and monster hunts for all ages. These weekends have brought in many new visitors and raised our profile among those who might not normally visit.



*The Community Events: Viva Crafts, Steampunks and 'Great Expectations'*

## Charity Details

Registered Charity Number: 1167097

Address: St Mary de Crypt Church and School, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1TP

The following have continued to be trustees throughout 2023: Rev Canon Nicola Arthy (Ex-Officio Chair); Mr Peter Gould (Treasurer & Vice-Chair); Mr David Evans (Secretary); Rev Dr Sandra Millar, Ms Ursula Corcoran and Mr Richard Ryan. Rev Guy Treweek resigned as a trustee in January.

Trustees are either nominated by the PCC or appointed by the Chair following consultation with existing trustees. The full Board of Trustees has at least four meetings a year, whilst a smaller group referred to as the Operations Board meets more frequently.

The charity employs an Operations Manager and a Community Manager and others in duty manager, café manager and cleaning roles. In addition, we rely extensively on a good group of stalwart volunteers, all of whom work hard to help make Discover DeCrypt the lively and vibrant community it is. We are also grateful to our faith community, on whose continued prayer we rely, our regular hirers, who are always so appreciative of our facilities, and all our visitors and supporters, whose continued engagement and interest has made all we seek to do worthwhile.

*David Evans on behalf of Discover DeCrypt Trustees*