

Discover DeCrypt, Gloucester Annual Report for 2021



Discover DeCrypt is a charity based in the Church of St Mary de Crypt and the adjacent old 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. We aim to share our faith in Jesus Christ, to promote the story of our history and heritage and to enhance the life of our city.



2021 has been a challenging year. The first few months witnessed a national lockdown to limit the spread of Covid and throughout the summer and autumn recovery remained hesitant, impacting on all our streams of income. Nonetheless, inspired by the vision of sharing our 'Faith', our 'Story' and our 'Life', Discover DeCrypt has maintained its buoyant, welcoming and uplifting atmosphere, meaning that we end the year in good spirits and full of hope.

This report highlights some of the major events we have held in 2021 and the groups we have supported in order to fulfil the three-fold objectives at the heart of the vision for Discover DeCrypt.

Objective 1 – FAITH:

To share an inclusive sacred space

- As a consecrated Christian church, we have continued to hold our weekly service of Prayers for the City, either physically inside the Discover DeCrypt building or virtually online.
- A special service was held in May to mark Christian Aid Week, and the year ended with an inspirational and well-supported service of carols and Christmas readings.
- A Lent quiet day was held online in March, focusing on the life of Mary, Mother of Jesus, and offering activities to encourage people to think about their own faith journeys.
- The annual Gloucester Day service took place in the church in September. Although originally a thanksgiving for the lifting of the Siege of Gloucester in 1643, this year the service also encompassed thanks for the many acts of kindness and support that have sustained the local community during the difficulties of the pandemic.



Taking part in Gloucester Day Parade



Women at the Well

- Prayers for Pride were held in the church prior to Gloucester's annual Pride March, which was also held in September. We then hosted a Transgender Day of Remembrance, inviting people to contemplate, pray and light candles to remember those who have fallen victim to acts of anti-transgender violence.
- We held a service for COP26 and had prayer stations around the church focusing on environmental concerns. As they made their way on foot from Bristol to Glasgow, Camino for Climate Change pilgrims were welcomed at Discover DeCrypt to break their journey and sleep the night. To raise awareness further, we hosted a thought-provoking banner entitled 'Women at the Well'. Produced by a group of Gloucestershire Muslim and Christian women, it focused on the importance of clean water and its sustainability.
- Among several art displays in the church over the year was an exhibition of Guardian Angels by Stroud-based artist, Jo Howe. An accompanying workshop also dwelt on this theme, enabling participants to paint their own angel, and a family 'angel trail' was organised to invite young people to explore the many beautiful angels depicted in our church.



Transgender Day of Remembrance



Wall Painting

Objective 2 – STORY:

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

- Plans are now taking shape for a major project to begin the conservation of the spectacular and unusual medieval wall painting of the Adoration of the Magi in St Mary de Crypt's chancel and to provide interpretation for visitors. A visit has been made by one of the country's leading conservators and reports have been commissioned to investigate what needs to be done to conserve the painting, stonework and stained glass in this part of the church.

- As in previous years, we took a full part in the Gloucester History Festival. During the Spring Festival in April, we shared an online virtual tour of the Crypt, part of the building which cannot be opened to the public for health and safety reasons.
- We provided a number of guided tours of the church and schoolroom as part of the Heritage Open Days held during the main History Festival in September. We also organised a hands-on Tudor school workshop for families and talks on the Tudor schools of Gloucester and the links between our church and the life of Florence Li Tim-Oi, a pioneer of women's Anglican ministry.
- Over the summer we mounted an exhibition of finds from the archaeological digs conducted beneath the schoolroom in 2013, including examples of pottery, coins, slates and even a toy cannon. So popular was this exhibition that it had to be extended for an additional month!



Tudor School Workshop



One of our Roman Stones



Luba Arnold's Discover DeCrypt

- We hosted well-received school events relating to two large and beautifully carved fragments of stonework from a Roman temple, which archaeologists discovered in Southgate Street in 2019. Plans are afoot for these artefacts eventually to be on permanent display inside Discover DeCrypt. The events were supported with imaginative worksheets that encouraged children to test their own archaeological skills.
- In June, to celebrate Love Your Burial Ground week, a heritage tour of our churchyard was laid on to enable visitors to learn about the stories of some of those commemorated there.
- We have also had the pleasure of hosting two spectacular exhibitions of paintings during 2021. The first profiled the work of local artist, Luba Arnold Larnie, whose colourful landscapes are often inspired by the architecture of Gloucester and reflect the influence of masters such as Turner and Van Gogh. Later in the year came an exhibition of stunning photography by Dimitrios Zampelis, the 'Colours of the Deep', showing flowers as we have never quite seen them before.



'Colours of the Deep' on display in the Chancel



Café in the Old Schoolroom



Christmas Concert

Objective 3 – LIFE:

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

- The church and old schoolroom have remained open five days each week from May onwards and in the seven months since then we received over 10,000 visitors. Visitors are welcomed by our team of well-briefed volunteers, who are always keen to share their faith and their passion for our heritage and the story of the City of Gloucester.
- The café in the schoolroom has been enhanced with new staffing employed under the Government's Kickstart Scheme. A wider range of refreshments is now provided, offering 'holy hospitality' to all-comers in return for a donation. The café supports our weekly Coffee, Cake and Conversation mornings, regular 'Rainbow Cuppa' events supported by the local LGBTQI community and special occasions, such as the Family Eco-Café held in October.
- We provided hospitality to support one of the main civic events held in the city this year, the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Gloucestershire Regiment's part in the Battle of the Imjin River during the Korean War. Discover DeCrypt was pleased to host tea for HRH the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and others before the Duke took the salute in Southgate Street as a parade passed by.
- Groups who use our premises on a regular basis have gradually returned, representing a wide range of different interests and drawing in people from diverse backgrounds. Among those included are community choirs, a tai chi group, Inclusion Gloucestershire, adult education classes, AA meetings, U3A groups and the Cuddesdon, Gloucester and Hereford training course for ordinands.
- Performance events, although fewer in number than previously, have included the Rococo Players' production of Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night', a guitar recital which was part of GLOW, the Gloucester Music Festival, and a Christmas concert led by the City of Gloucester Community Choir.
- In June a week of community events was held in the churchyard focused on the diversity of the wildlife there. Groups of volunteers, including children, enjoyed bird-spotting, squirrel-watching and bug-hunting before submitting a summary of the species identified to a nationwide database of wildlife across the UK.



Wildlife in the Churchyard

- We are now hosting a new community walking group, the St Mary's Strollers, who have been setting off on monthly rambles into the wilds of Alney, Maisemore and Hempsted.
- The year ended with a marvellous Christmas Tree Festival, which saw charities and other organisations from across the City put up more than a dozen trees around the church during Advent.



Thank You

Christmas Tree Festival

We would like to thank all those who have enabled Discover DeCrypt to continue to flourish in 2021, despite the challenging circumstances of the ongoing pandemic: the National Heritage Lottery Fund, who have provided financial support, mentorship and encouragement; our stalwart volunteers, who have adapted brilliantly to restrictions and taken on additional tasks with unfailing good will; our faith community, whose continued prayer has done so much to support those in need; our regular hirers, who have loyally stayed with us as far as circumstances have allowed; those who are providing regular support by joining our new Friends organisation; and all our visitors and supporters, whose continued engagement and interest has made all we seek to do worthwhile.



Launch Event for the Friends of Discover DeCrypt

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 2021: Rev Canon Nicola Arthy (Ex-Officio Chair); Mr Peter Gould (Treasurer & Vice-Chair); Mr David Evans (Secretary); Rev Dr Sandra Millar, Ms Ursula Corcoran, Rev Guy Treweek and Mr Richard Ryan.

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

The charity employs an Operations Manager and a Community, Arts and Events Manager and others in duty manager and cleaning roles. We also rely extensively on a committed team of volunteers, who work hard to help make Discover DeCrypt the lively and vibrant community it is.

David Evans on behalf of the Discover DeCrypt Trustees, January 2022