

IN THE VILLAGE

There are a variety of congregational buildings located around Gray's Inn. Here is a selection of some interesting ones that you might like to visit. As well as religious and non-religious gatherings on a Sunday, some offer music recitals and even ethical yoga classes. ▶

Temple Church



OUR CONGREGATION

DANIEL DOVAR, KATRINA MATHER, RICHARD HANSTOCK, NATALIE BIRD

1. Temple Church

Nestling between a number of chambers and on the boundary between the City of London and Westminster, Temple Church has stood at its current site since 1156. It provided a base and protection for early pilgrims to the Holy Land and now exists as the mother-church of the common law.

The church was bombed in 1941, and it took some 16 years to repair. Various plaques around the church give details of some of the members and Benchers of Inner and Middle Temple during the First and Second World Wars, and a number of memorials (including a circular one built into the centre of the round part of the structure) commemorate soldiers who lost their lives in the war – a particularly devastating memento has been placed on the wall to the left of the altar.

Also a popular concert venue, Temple Church boasts an all-male choir. At mattins on 15 March, this reviewer was blown away by the standard of the singing; the size and shape of the church was also just right to give warmth to the sonority to the voices without sacrificing detail.

2. Conway Hall

Conway Hall describes itself as a home for Humanism and is the base for the Conway Hall Ethical Society (whose aims are the study of ethical principles based on humanism and free thought). It was named after Moncure Daniel Conway, an anti-slavery campaigner, out-spoken supporter of free thought and biographer of Thomas Paine.

The Hall and building, designed by F. Herbert Mansford, was constructed in 1929 on the site of the South Place Chapel which had been built in 1824. The Hall contains a charming wood panelled hall on two levels. It is a venue for a variety of concerts, plays, talks and functions. There are also regular events, such as the Sunday Assembly on the first and third Sunday of each month which sees a godless congregation celebrate life and Ethical Yoga courses.



The building also contains the Humanist Library and Archives and strives to be the national research library for humanism and closely related subjects. Access to the library is by appointment, Sunday to Thursday, 10am to 5pm.

3. Gray's Inn Chapel

Of course no tour would be complete without a visit to our very own Chapel. Indeed, it is said to be older than the Inn itself, with a document recording the existence of a chapel on its current site as far back as 1314/15. Since then it has had many incarnations: from being reconstructed in the 1690s and restored in the late Gothic style in 1893, before being destroyed by enemy action in 1941. And those who attend regularly may know that the windows of the south wall date from the late 15th century.

In action today, the Chapel's cosy acoustic lends itself to a more intimate sound when the Inn's Chapel Choir sing at services such as Mattins, Evensong, and Eucharist. The Choir is formed from members of the Inn from students to judges, together with professional singers selected by the Inn's



Photo Ben Jones

esteemed choir director and organist, Christopher Bowers-Broadbent. The Inn's Preacher, Bishop Michael Doe's sermons are always engaging and challenge members of the congregation, religious and secular, to re-evaluate current affairs and modern issues.

4. St Etheldreda's

St Etheldreda's is a Roman Catholic Church at Ely Place, just a short walk along High Holborn from Gray's Inn. The church was built by John De Kirkeby, Bishop of Ely and Treasurer of England under Edward I, and was completed in 1290. However, it was the site of the town chapel of the Bishops of Ely as long ago as 1250 until 1570. Inside, the church is characterised by a beautiful stained glass window



behind the altar. Ornate statues of saints adorn the walls and watch over worshippers.

In its current guise, it is the oldest Catholic church in England and one of only two remaining buildings in London from the reign of Edward I. In 1531, King Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon attended a feast given by the then Bishop of Ely, Nicholas West, which is said to have lasted for five days – a feast which surely would have even surpassed the air of occasion at Gray's

Inn Grand Night! The sumptuous feast is rumoured to have been one of the first public signs of trouble in their marriage as Henry VIII and Queen Catherine dined in separate rooms.

5. St George the Martyr

St George the Martyr (commonly referred to as 'St George's') is a local Anglican church situated at the south end of Queen Square just a short walk north-west from Gray's Inn.

The building of the church was commissioned by a group of trustees including Sir Streyngsham Master, who was one of the 17th century pioneers of the English East India Company. It was designed by architect Arthur Tooley and built between 1703 and 1706. St George's became a parish church in 1723, and it was then that it received the dedication to St George, in honour of Streyngsham Master's governorship of

Fort St George in India. It is an elegant white-walled church and was Grade II* listed in 1951.

The parishioners pride themselves on their work with local charities and organisations including St George the Martyr Primary School which is located just a few streets away on John's Mews.

It was at St George's that the English poet and writer Ted Hughes married Sylvia Plath, the American poet and novelist, in 1956.



6. St Peter's Italian Church

This Roman Catholic Church in Clerkenwell Road is the oldest Italian church in London, built at the request of Saint Vincent Pallotti, and still belongs to the Pallottine Order which the Saint founded. He was motivated by the increasing number of Italian immigrants in the mid 19th century.

St Peter's was the work of Irish architect Sir John Miller-Bryson, who modelled it on the Basilica San Crisogono in Rome. It was consecrated on 16 April 1863 as 'The Church of St Peter of All Nations'. At the time, it was the only Basilica-style church in the United Kingdom.



The church's façade consists of a loggia and portico with twin arches, underneath three alcoves. In the centre is a statue of Christ, and to the left and right of the façade are statues of St Bede and St George. Between the statues are two large mosaics which depict the miracle of the fishes and Jesus giving the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to St Peter. Its organ was built in 1886 by the Belgian craftsman Anneesen, but perhaps the church's most distinguishing feature is its 33 metre bell tower, built in 1891, which contains a bell known as 'The Steel Monster'. ■

