

SHORT HISTORY OF CHURCH HOUSE

- Formerly part of the west range of the cloisters constructed probably in the late twelfth century although remodelled in the fourteenth century.
- May have housed the more public facing Priory activities such as the cellarer's range with a parlour and guest house accessed from the west courtyard.
- After the dissolution of the monasteries, the Priory's cloister was sold and converted into a mansion house with great hall, long gallery and bed chambers.
- Eventually came into the ownership of George Winter and Sir Charles Somerset (who is commemorated in the north aisle west lobby).
- The achievement of arms over the fireplace is believed to represent those of a later George Winter and one of his two wives, who owned the house as well as Dyrham House. As such it is dateable to the first quarter of the seventeenth century.
- As the fireplace was inserted after the ceiling, the latter is thought to date from around 1600.
- In 1666 the house was sold to Thomas and Anne Ellis whose initials are recorded over the front entrance. Thomas was involved in the sugar refining business which took place in Whitson Court and was a leading figure in the Bristol Baptist community who met on the first floor of Ellis's sugar house.
- Originally the house would have been twice as wide but part of it was demolished in Victorian times to make way for the expansion of the north aisle.
- Today Church House is used by the St James Priory Project for meetings and offices.