

The Jacobean Undercroft and St Alfege Church 5th July 2022

Nine group members attended this two part visit to Greenwich organised and guided by Michele Stapleton.

After coffee at the Painted Hall café, Old Royal Naval College we were privileged to visit an area of the ORNC not normally accessible to the public, The Jacobean Undercroft. The function of this space is not exactly understood but the best guess is that it was some sort of store room servicing the banqueting hall of the former Tudor Palace. In later years it was a coal store and air raid shelter during the 2nd WW. In the entrance are numerous sculptured heads. These were to be used as decorative features in the College but were never used possibly due to shortage of funds.

After a very good value lunch at the Greenwich University Student Union we walked up the high street to visit St Alfege church. The church is named after the Archbishop of Canterbury – Alfege who was killed and martyred here in 1012 by the Vikings. Michele is a volunteer guide at the church so we were very fortunate to have an expert and in depth tour. We started in the crypt where amongst many other people General James Wolfe is buried. Following the crypt it was back up into daylight and the main church itself. It is thought that Henry VIII was baptised here and the composer Thomas Tallis played the organ here. The church was famously refashioned by Nicholas Hawksmoor in 1712-1714 and has recently completed a restoration thanks to Lottery Funding.

I have walked past St Alfege many times and had no idea of the history associated with the church. I would thoroughly recommend a visit next time in Greenwich.

Thank you Michele for a fascinating day out.



