

THE CHURCH

BAR & RESTAURANT

 History of the hospital of St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, Northampton.

St John's Hospital was opened in 1138 and in the 867 years since then has been providing hospitality in various guises. From its origins as a hospice it also became a soldiers' burial ground, was confiscated during The Reformation, became part of Northampton's first railway station, and was re-consecrated as a Catholic Church before its present incarnation as a modern restaurant. St John's is the oldest secular building left in Northampton and some of the landmarks from its history are laid out below.

1138 St John's was built in the days when hospitals were guesthouses for the benefit of the poor, sick and for orphans as well as passing pilgrims on their way to Rome or Canterbury. It was one of four placed close to the main gates of the walled town of Northampton. The buildings consisted originally of a chapel and infirmary (still existing) and a master's house that was demolished in the 19th century. The site was dedicated to St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist and manned by a religious community. The community was sustained by the rents from gifts of land donated by wealthy local people.

1154–1162 King Henry II granted the Hospital a Royal Charter, acknowledging its position and purpose. One of the witnesses to this charter was "Thomas the Chancellor" later to become Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket.

1460 During the Wars of the Roses, a large Lancastrian army swarmed south overwhelming the Yorkist Earl of Warwick at Northampton. The Battle of Northampton between Lancastrians and Yorkists was fought on the fields of Delapre and many of the 10,000 troops were killed. Some of the bodies were buried in the grounds of St. John's whilst many others were flushed down the river.

1500 During the reformation in the reign of Henry VIII the land belonging to St John's was confiscated and the buildings fell into disuse for several centuries.

1872 The land was purchased by The Midland Railway Company. The Master's House was demolished and the St John's Street Railway Station was constructed. The hospital and its adjacent chapel were sold to Henry Mulliner who used them for storage and then sold them on to the Catholic Church for £2,500 in 1877.

1939 After 67 years of operation the station was demolished and the charitable foundation that still owned the site sold much of the land to fund St John's Convalescence home in Weston Favell.

1955 The Chapel was re-opened as a Catholic Church. However, dwindling congregations, a lack of money, a fire and several attacks by vandals caused its closure again in October 1990.

1997 – 2005 The Richardsons Group purchased the site. In 2004/5 St John's underwent a complete refurbishment to restore the building and equip it to be a modern restaurant. Finally over 860 years after it was originally built St John's will revert to offering hospitality to its guests as The Church Restaurant.