



About St Mary Magdalene's

A church at Croome is first mentioned in 1283, though one family dominated church and parish for nearly 400 years. The Coventrys owned Croome from 1592 to 1949 and were elevated to the peerage in the 17th century. At first they made only modest improvements to their estate but in the mid-18th century George William, 6th Lord Coventry, commissioned Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to rebuild his house and the church and to redesign the gardens. Brown, in turn, took on Robert Adam as a partner and it was Adam who designed the interior of the remodelled house, many of the garden buildings and the furnishings of the new church, which was built on a fresh site away from the house and made to resemble a garden temple. The new church was consecrated on 29 June 1763.

The newly-fashionable Gothick style was chosen and some of the best craftsmen of the day were employed: we know the names of many of them – Joseph Rose, John Hobcraft, Sefferin Alken, amongst others – since the building accounts and Adam's drawings survive.

The chancel is longer than usual for churches of this period since it had to accommodate the celebrated series of monuments to the Coventry family brought from the old church.

The church has been changed but little since it was built. After the Coventry family left Croome in 1949 the parish was too small to be able to maintain such an outstanding building. It passed into the care of The Churches Conservation Trust in 1975.

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Access

Due to their age, historic church floors can be uneven and worn, and lighting can be low level. Please take care, especially in wet weather when floors can be slippery.

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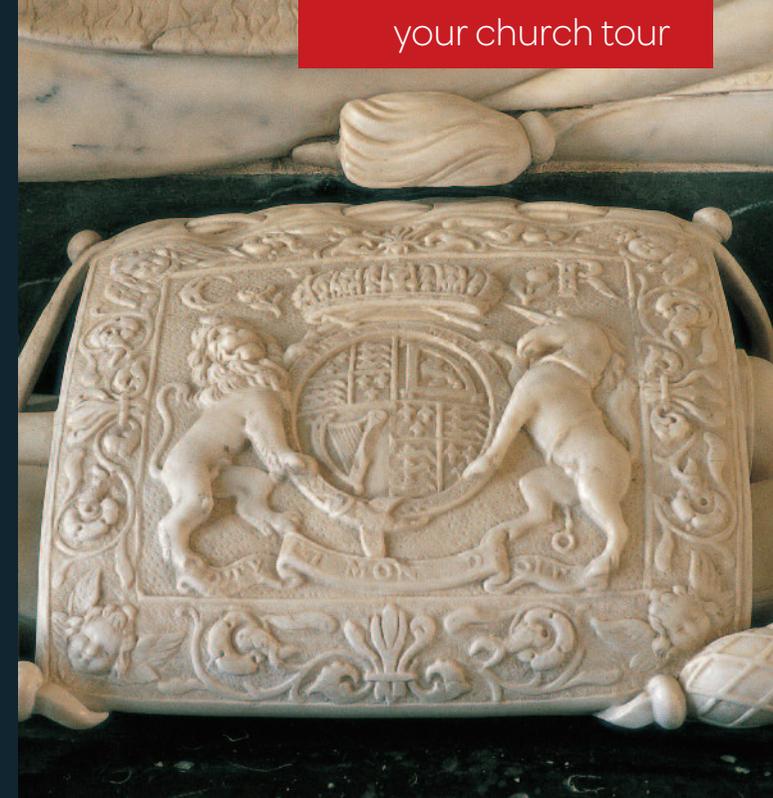
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Church of
St Mary
Magdalene

Croome D'Abitot, Worcestershire



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1 The church is entered through the base of the **tower**, which is octagonal inside with a fine vaulted ceiling. The iron **gates** were designed by Robert Adam, as were the tall carved **doors** into the church. Almost all the furnishings, including the doors, pews, etc. contain a quatrefoil motif in the panelling. The niches probably never contained statues.



2 The ornate mahogany **font**, designed by Adam, was carved by Sefferin Alken in 1763.

3 The vaulted **ceilings** of the nave, with an intricate centrepiece in each bay, were Adam's design; the aisle ceilings are plainer with decorated borders and cornices.

4 The **pews** have panelling of similar design to other woodwork in the church. At the west end are two large box pews, probably for the Coventry family.

5 The **floors**, designed by Adam, are of limestone slabs with insets of black slate.

6 **Monument** to George William, 9th Earl of Coventry and his wife Blanche (both died 1930).

7 **Memorial** to Sir Henry Coventry (d.1686 and buried in St Martins-in-the-Fields, London) framed by a pair of caryatids. The 9th Earl of Coventry had the monument moved to Croome in the late 19th century. Probably the work of the sculptor William Stanton.

8 **Hatchment** (diamond-shaped panel) for George William, 8th Earl of Coventry (d.1843).

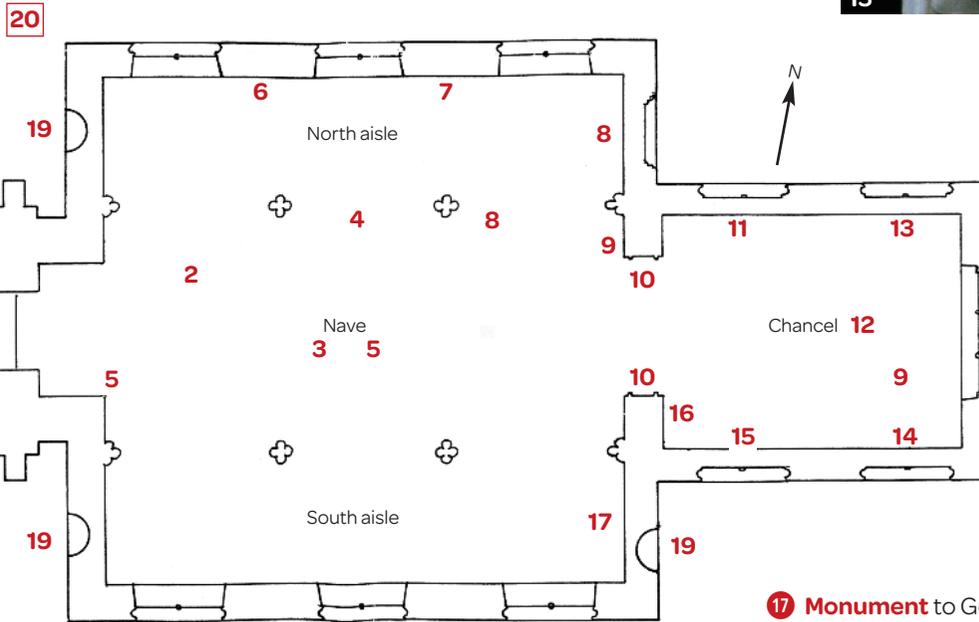
9 **Pulpit** carved by John Hobcraft. Hexagonal in shape with carved panelling. The tester or sounding board above with pinnacles is supported on delicate brackets.



10 The ogee-shaped **chancel arch** with its delicate plaster mouldings has, on either side, panels containing the Ten Commandments (north side) and the Creed and Lord's Prayer (south side). The chancel **ceiling** has a fine central plaster oval.

11 **Monument** to John, 4th Lord Coventry (d.1687) by Grinling Gibbons. His effigy reclines on a sarcophagus with his hand reaching out to Faith who once held a crown to give him.

12 The **altar rails** were designed by Adam.



13 **Monument** to Mary (d.1634), wife of the 2nd Lord Coventry and a pair with his monument opposite (14). She is shown holding a baby, indicating that she died in childbirth.

14 **Monument** to Thomas, 2nd Lord Coventry (d.1661) with his coat of arms above. He reclines somewhat awkwardly.



15 **Monument** in black and white marble to Thomas, 1st Lord Coventry (d.1639), probably by Nicholas Stone. He was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, hence he is shown flanked by Justice (holding the Great Seal) and Virtue with the cushion and mace in front (cover).

16 The **priest's stall** is of the same design as the rest of the woodwork. It may formerly have been part of the pulpit, adapted when the pulpit was altered in the 19th century.

17 **Monument** to George William, 6th Earl of Coventry (d.1809) by John Bacon the Younger and depicting a kneeling woman bending over an urn. It was the 6th Earl who built the church and house and created the gardens.

18 The quatrefoil motif is echoed in the circular windows and parapet of the exterior of the **tower**, which was intended to be an eye-catcher from the house.

19 There is no evidence that the **niches** ever contained statues.

20 On the north side of the **churchyard** is the grave of William Dean (d.1831). Dean was head gardener of Croome from 1799 to 1831 and author of *Hortus Croomensis* – a list of the entire collection of plants growing on the estate.