

THE CLWYD-POWYS ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

St Asaph Cathedral: A Survey



CPAT Report No 809

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ST ASAPH CATHEDRAL

General

Only a little more than 55m long, this is the smallest cathedral in either England or Wales, smaller than many English parish churches. Nevertheless, it has had a long and at times turbulent history and this is reflected in the fabric, creating one of the most complex and at times impenetrable sequences identifiable in the churches of the diocese.

Dates in the history of the Cathedral

560-573. Traditional foundation of first church (and monastery) by St Kentigern.

596 Death of St Asaph who succeeded Kentigern as abbot-bishop.

1143 Foundation of diocese.

1152 Geoffrey of Monmouth styled bishop of St Asaph. New cathedral built away from the old church in the settlement of St Asaph.

1188 Visited by Geraldus Cambrensis.

1235-40 Building work undertaken by Bishop Hugh. Reputedly, some survivals at the west end of the cathedral.

1282 Cathedral fired by the English, but the lower walls of the nave are said to have survived.

1284-1392 Cathedral rebuilding using fine-grained limestone from nearby Cefn quarries; yellowish sandstone quarried at Flint or Talacre for outer casing of walls and for architectural details; purple sandstone from two miles away; and red sandstone to be seen in the southern and western walls.

1310-20 Dr J Madison has suggested a unified scheme of rebuilding: nave arcades with their wave mouldings, the crossing and the upper parts of the west front built anew, including the west window, and a new west doorway inserted. Aisle walls were partially rebuilt and refenestrated and new clerestories in the nave. The transepts were the last to be rebuilt, probably between c.1315-1320 (the south one was classed as new in 1336). Master Henry of Ellerton (d.1323), who was responsible for the king's castles in north Wales was probably responsible.

1375 The bequest of Llewelyn ap Madoc, an incentive to complete the cathedral. In 1391-2 Robert Fagin, a mason of Chester, was contracted to build the bell tower.

1402 Glyndwr's rebels destroyed the cathedral.

1411-33 Bishop Robert de Lancaster. Nave re-roofed and other repairs.

1471-1495. Bishop Redman. Roofless transepts restored. Canopied stalls designed (and some of these survive – there were originally ten each side) and a stone pulpitum in the east crossing arch designed.

1607 Chapter House ruinous and ordered to be repaired.

1670 Repairs to cathedral, particularly the north and south aisles, by Bishop Barrow.

1714 Cathedral tower damaged by a storm and choir roof damaged. Stalls and organ shattered.

1721 South transept divided into two by fourteen-foot high brick wall. Used as a chapter house, consistory court and library until c.1899.

1778-80 Choir remodelled. Chapter House on north side of choir taken down (1779). South side of choir to be taken down and refaced in Liverpool stone and two windows of two lights to be made on each side rather than one of three lights (1778).

1780 Determined that no more corses to be buried in the choir.

Late 18th/early 19th century (1780-1830). Joseph Turner (d.1807) remodelled the choir, and John Turner employed in 1809 to complete it with wainscoting. Faced with Liverpool stone. No burials in the choir from then on. Transept roofs sealed with stucco.

1800 East window given new tracery and painted window put in by Eginton.

1806 Battlemented parapet of tower renewed in simplified form.

1814 St Asaph Cathedral Act of Parliament to pay for the repairs, apparently those mentioned above under 1809.

1820s Lewis Wyatt inserted plaster vaulting in nave and obscured the clerestory. He is supposed to have removed the north aisle clerestory windows entirely and probably converted the north nave parapet to battlements.

1830 North aisle windows added.

1832 Timber choir screen and entrance in the east crossing arch removed by Thomas Jones who inserted a stone organ screen in the west arch. Timber screens placed behind the stalls in the north and south crossing arches and these still survive.

c. 1840 Pinnacles topping the western buttresses added.

1844 Windows in south aisle inserted. Probably also the south doorway.

1855-6 Great west window created by Gibbs but only tracery now survives for the stained glass is by Powell from c.1940.

1863 New east window, to an unjustified design, replacing that of 1800. By Scott.

1867-75 Restoration by Sir George Gilbert Scott. Furnishings re-ordered and tidied. New casing of the walls externally. Replacement of the 'poor' early 19th-century windows and battlemented parapet with characteristic lancets and cornice of Edward I's time (Thomas). Stone screen between choir and nave taken down. Organ removed to the north transept. Chairs instead of pews in the nave and open seats for the pews in the chancel. Chancel roof ceiled in panelled oak to the cradle form of the old timber framing, and the portion under the tower was vaulted in oak in place of stucco and made to spring from carved angel corbels. Floor paved with encaustic tiles in laid with bands of Anglesey marble. Chancel raised one step above the choir and the sanctuary four steps above the chancel. Sedilia restored from fragments discovered in the old work. Likewise the two western windows of the chancel in which original stonework from earlier windows was incorporated having been found when the walls were pierced. Nave clerestory windows re-opened on the south and reinstated on the north.

A new high altar, a new east window, a new cathedra or bishop's throne. Additional stalls added in 1869 are listed in the guide book.

1929 Tower found to be sinking and leaning to the south-west. Shallow foundations with rough stones laid on bed of clay. Tower underpinned with much larger foundations. Fine transept roofs revealed by removal of plaster ceilings, but many of the timbers had to be replaced because of beetle infestation.

1932 Canons' stalls but not choir stalls moved back into chancel (choir). Choir stalls moved, too, by 2004.

1956-7 Vestry wing added on south side.

1968 Colouring of roof added.



Architecture

A significant range of fabrics can be identified in the cathedral building, but much more difficult to elucidate are the minor variations in those fabrics.

Fabrics:

'A' rectangular blocks of pink to red sandstone ashlar; regularly shaped; variably shaped arrises.

'B' blocks of pink to red sandstone, some badly weathered; both slabs and blocks.

'C' is olive-coloured slabs and blocks of sandstone; of variable size and shape.

'D' fashioned blocks of off-white limestone; surfaces tooled to give variably smoothed surfaces.

'E' is a buff-coloured sandstone.

'F' is a buff coloured limestone fashioned into regular blocks and slabs. It has a more mellow appearance than 'D'.

'G' appears to be a honey-coloured sandstone, but this colour could be due to oxidisation. Where flaking some blocks look to be like 'C' in colour.

'H' is brick-red sandstone ashlar, well coursed.

'I' regularly shaped blocks of pink to red and even purple sandstone showing minor weathering/erosion (externally but little internally).

Fabric dating.

A is modern, though perhaps from different restorations.

B could be medieval, although in places difficult to distinguish from eroded A.

C is not dated.

D is not dated but generally should be 18th or 19th-century, though some may be medieval.

E could be 19th-century.

'F' may be medieval.

G is probably Victorian?

H is late 18th century.

I is not dated.

Sequence.

a) Earliest surviving fabric is in west wall of south transept, visible both internally and externally. As this extends further southwards than the corner buttress noted below it points to a south wall line (whether of aisle or nave) further south and earlier than anything obvious in the west wall of the cathedral, or alternatively a contemporary part of that earlier aisle/nave coupled with an early transept.

b) The Early English structure was built by Bishop Hugh (1235-40). Reputedly, survivals at west end in the gables and chamfered buttresses, the south-west corner buttress with simple chamfered base which originally extended around the whole facade, which was then replaced, according to Hubbard, by mouldings of the 14th century, though what are now visible is not authentic; the west end is reputedly the least altered part of the medieval building. Also supposedly the wall cores of the choir. Thus the chancel (choir) was part of the 13th-century building but altered in the 18th century and restored and re-faced in the 19th century.

c) Madison's view is that between 1310 and 1320 the nave arcades, the crossing and upper parts of the west front were built anew and the west doorway was inserted, the chamfered mouldings there matching those at the castle at Caernarfon. Early 14th-century rebuilding was in limestone. Aisle walls partially rebuilt and refenestrated, the two-light aisle windows with sunken chamfers in west wall being of 14th-century date. Above the aisle rose the clerestory with perfectly square windows, those on the south side remaining. Transepts were the last to be rebuilt in 1315/1320: the tracery and mouldings in the south

window of the south transept parallel those in Henry of Ellerton's own chantry chapel in Caernarfon, completed in 1316: the tracery of intersecting ogees with reticulated pattern of daggers and concave lozenges is a design not far removed from early Perpendicular work at Gloucester and Hereford from c.1364, yet is probably early 14th century here. Whether the north transept was entirely rebuilt or just the upper portions of the walls – see the change in stone size – remains to be ascertained.

d) 1284-1392 period of rebuilding using Cefn limestone and Talacre or Flint yellowish sandstone for outer casing of walls and for architectural detail; and purple sandstone from near St Asaph which seems also to be classed as a red sandstone and is to be seen in the southern and western walls.

15th-century restoration.

Window design of tower with transoms and tracery of intersecting ogees of authentic Perpendicular design. Upper part of tower rebuilt after 1715.

Late 18th century. Parapets added to nave and transepts. In 1806 battlemented parapet of tower renewed in simplified form in white Runcorn stone.

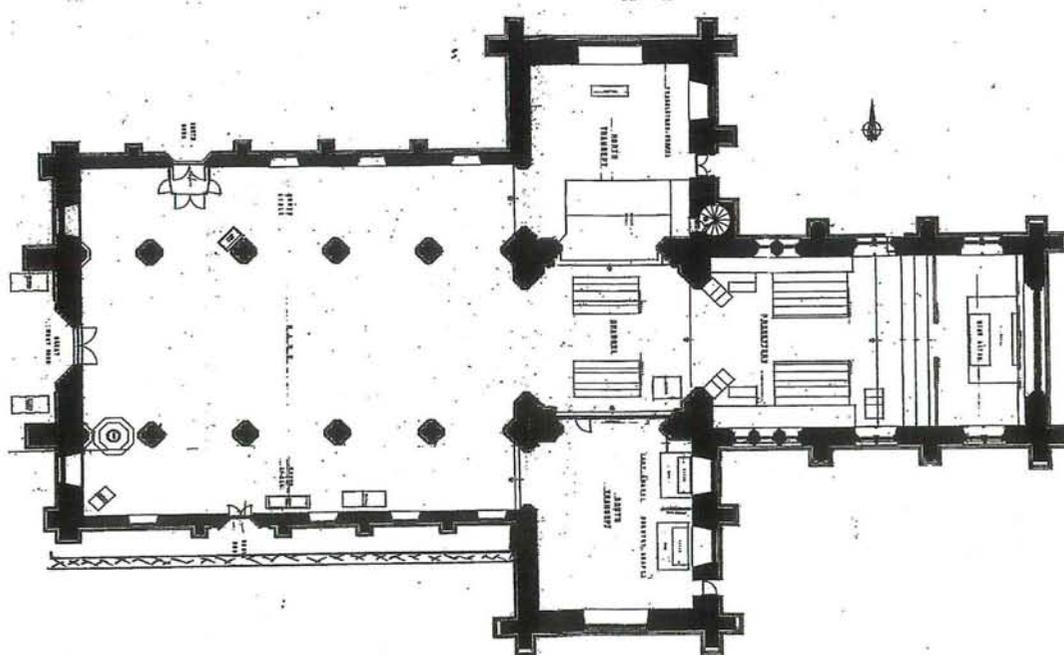
Undated. North aisle demolished. Rebuilt in limestone (D') to give consistent appearance outside. But inside some re-use of earlier stonework, mainly in the north wall. The roof height was raised slightly and two new courses added above the arcade. The west wall was partially demolished down to a height of 2m. A new asymmetrical arch led into the north transept.

In 1830 north aisle windows and probably doorway inserted, and in 1844 south aisle windows likewise.

1832 Screen work in north and south crossing arches added by Thomas Jones. Stone organ screen inserted in west arch.

1864. Under Scott, a new Decorated design for the great east window. It originated in the 14th century in the Decorated style, was converted to a seven-light Perpendicular in the period 1471-1495; and in 1778-80 the Perpendicular tracery was replaced with Geometrical tracery. 1865-7 Chancel walls re-faced internally and externally.

Later 19th century: clerestory rebuilt entirely on north side.



EXTERIOR

Nave

General: pitched roof, slated; lead along apex. The side towards the town (i.e the north) is a little more elaborate with its crenellated parapet.

North wall: visible only at clerestory level upwards.

- The fabric is predominantly 'D' and well coursed, but occasional blocks of sandstone (? 'B') are incorporated, and towards the west end a little olive sandstone (? 'C'). At the extreme west end, also, the limestone fabric of the wall and the supporting buttress (from the west wall) looks from a distance to be treated rather differently and the stone of the latter look less regular; there is however no obvious butt joint.
- At the top of the wall roll-moulded corbels support a battlemented parapet in grimy ashlar. The wall contains five square windows, each with an octafoil light and a frame of two orders, all in a pale sandstone (? 'E') of 19th-century date.

East wall: none visible, the nave abutting the tower.

South wall: visible only at clerestory level upwards.

- The fabric is predominantly pink sandstone ('B'), but towards the east end there is some 'G', and at the west end some limestone that could be 'D'.
- The windows are of the same design as in the north wall, as are corbels supporting the plain (and unbattlemented) parapet which is in 'C'. However, some of the architectural stonework of the windows appears to be original and is certainly medieval.
- Three downpipes.



West wall: a truly heterogeneous fabric mix, with considerable colour variation, unmatched elsewhere in the cathedral. Seen from the side the wall has a slightly outwards lean at the gable apex. Three features: the west doorway, the big west window above it and a small slit immediately below the apex of the roof, in addition to which there are two buttresses.

- Foundation plinth, seemingly of purplish-pink sandstone ashlar which may be little more than a facing, topped by a double chamfered coping in 'A' and 'C'; all this looks to no older than Victorian. The wall to either side of the west doorway is a mix of 'A', 'B' and 'D'; there appears to be some largely unweathered 'B' in the lee of the northern buttress; then much of the fabric to both sides of the upper part of the door is 'D', surely indicating a rebuild, perhaps associated with the window and perhaps the doorway itself.
- In line with the apex of the doorway is a stringcourse across the wall face, almost certainly a Victorian addition. Above this the fabric is a mix of 'B', 'C' and 'D', with only a little 'A' visible. 'C' predominates to the north of the window, but both 'C' and 'D' to the south. About half way up the window the fabric to either side turns to 'D', its appearance reflects rather more regular coursing than the stonework lower down. Immediately below the roof line is a 'diagonal and irregular course' of 'C' to supporting the coping and provide the kneelers.
- The west doorway is in 'C' but the stonework shows variable weathering and it would not be surprising to learn that most of the architectural stonework is replaced and relatively late in date (?Victorian); two jambstones have been replaced in modern 'A'. The doorway is of six orders with flat sunken chamfers and has a two-centred arch, but there is little embellishment. Pyramidal stops to the outermost jambstones.
- The window above has beneath its two-centred arch six cusp-headed lights in three pairs, the central pair the longest; traceried foil lights above with daggers and mouchettes (Curvilinear style). All look to be in 'E' and Victorian, but the form is authentic.
- The apex of the gable supports a cross finial.



- To either side of the door are buttresses. The coped plinth is carried around these and then the rectangular buttress with its chamfered edges rises to another moulded coping but at a higher level than that forming the stringcourse over the west door. It continues to rise further. The buttress to the north of the doorway has stonework that can be classed as 'A', 'B', much 'C' and

'F' but in line with the change in the west wall 'D' becomes prevalent in the buttress too, though 'C' is used for decorative banding. The buttress to the south of the doorway consists of 'A', a little 'B', some 'C' and 'F' at higher levels, and again 'D' in line with the west wall change. Decorative banding in 'C' at higher levels. Both buttresses are topped by pitched gables backed by ornate acroterions which look no older than the 19th century.

North aisle

North wall: the fabric is a well-finished form of 'D', the stonework well-coursed, and the buttresses are in the same stone. There is a basal plinth with three staggered levels of coping, showing some replacement of individual stones. The top coping course is not continued around the buttresses. The walls are topped by a low and uncrenellated parapet supported on roll-moulded corbels, smaller than those for the north side of the nave but broadly comparable.

- There are three windows, each occupying a bay between buttresses; all the windows are in 'G', with two-centred arches and two cusped lights with a quatrefoil above; the hoodmoulds terminate in head-stops. The most easterly window has perspex protection, the other two have wire grills. The four integral buttresses have moulded triangular pediments in 'G'.
- The north doorway into the cathedral – commonly in use – lies to the west of the windows. It has a two-centred archway and is of three orders. As with the windows it is in 'G'.
- At the north-west corner is a more substantial buttress, predominantly of 'A' although fabrics 'B', 'C' and 'F' are also present. The buttress has chamfered angles and a pedimented top.
- Is the use of limestone throughout the north wall an attempt to provide a uniform appearance? If so the north-west buttress disrupts the picture.

East wall: none visible externally

South wall: none visible externally

West wall: coped plinths as on north side. The fabric is predominantly 'A' but with much 'D' included, although this is of rougher appearance than in the north wall.

- The window has a two-centred arch and has two cusped lights with a small cusped light above; there is neither hoodmould nor stops; the dressings show a mix of fabrics.
- The window is of a different form to those in the north wall, and certainly of a different period.
- The angle buttress is of the same design as the adjacent buttress on the north wall.

North transept

North wall: one large window of five lights with reticulated tracery, much renewed. The hoodmould is in poor condition and some of its stones have been replaced; some of the jambs on the other hand are well worn. As with the east wall, at about 5-6m off the ground the large and carefully coursed blocks give way to a mix of large and small masonry, much more random in appearance.

East wall: the masonry is 'D' except that unlike elsewhere, other than in the north wall, larger blocks give way to smaller ones as the wall rises, though the line defining the change is less regular than in the north wall. Features from the south northwards are the tower turret, a small doorway, a buttress, a window and an angle buttress.

- The usual triple-coped plinth close to the ground, and above the doorway but below the window is a stringcourse.
- Doorway deeply recessed into a flat-arched embrasure and around this some of the masonry is in 'B'. The doorway is in 'A', while the wall to the south is in primarily in 'A' with some 'D', and beyond the buttress the stonework comprises large and medium-sized blocks of 'D'.

- Window has a two-centred arch and three ogee-headed, cusped lights with reticulated tracery above, and a simple hoodmould. All the dressings are in 'C'/'G', but there has been much replacement, while some dressed stone is worn.
- The buttress between the door and the window is in 'D' but is faced with 'G', and there is some recent replacement of this stone.

West wall: in limestone ('D'). No features.

Chancel

The fabric is largely good quality, unweathered 'G', occasionally with a pink tinge to it (notably the lower courses below the first stringcourse on the north and south sides). There is the usual triple-coped plinth at the base. A corbel table (introduced by Scott) is set beneath the eaves, and a slated roof with lead along the ridge.

At ground level there is concrete along most of the south side, but this gives way to grass at the south-east corner and along the east side, while tarmac edges the north wall.

North wall: sequence from the east is buttress, window, buttress, window and door, buttress, window, tower turret. The eaves are supported on roll-moulded corbels with cusped blind arcading between each pair of corbels.

- The door is set in a deeply recessed embrasure, the outer archway pretty well a Caernarvon arch, while the inner arch over the door is round-headed and is reputedly original.
- The two most easterly windows are of two orders with simple, paired two-centre arched lights, in pale buff sandstone. Decorative detail is provided by small shafts on each side of each window with rings (pseudo-capitals) half way up. Between the two orders an arch of dog-tooth ornament. This, however, appears only on the two more easterly windows. A continuous hoodmould arches



over both lights with ball-flower ornamented stops, and a boss above the point where the two lights join. The third window to the west is different. Its form is the same with paired lights, but stone of type 'A' has been used as a decorative device in the jambs and arches (cf interior walls of aisles), and the pseudo-capitals and hoodmould stops are subtly different. Also the stonework around the window is different with smaller blocks of 'C', although they are of standard form below the stringcourse. Apparently Scott identified traces of the original windows in the chancel as he worked from east to west. His most westerly windows were truer to the originals immured in the chancel walls, but he could not undo what had been done further east.

- Immediately below window level a stringcourse runs along the wall and around the buttresses but not the angle buttress.
- The two side buttresses have pyramid gables, and the front of each buttress is chamfered back to allow small columns in 'A' to rise from the plinth to the bottom of the gable.
- The angle buttress is plain by comparison with other buttresses – in three stages inset by coping. Topped by a small gable with concave sides and rising above this, a crocketed pinnacle.

East wall: the fabric is all 'G', but from about half way up the wall the stonework is beginning to weather, whereas lower down it appears fresher. The usual triple-coped plinth and also the stringcourse below the window, although this is not carried around the angle buttresses. It is embellished with simple downturns just outside the lines of the window, but the line of the stringcourse is nevertheless continued by the slightly plainer edge of the window sill.

- The window is of two or even three orders with a two-centred arch over seven cusped, ogee-headed lights, and above pseudo-Decorated reticulated tracery. All the mullions and tracery are in a paler version of 'G' while the jambs etc are in conventional 'G'. A simple concave hoodmould is carried out to each side of the window as another stringcourse. It has been suggested that the arch could be a 14th-century original, but this is unlikely, even though the dressings may have been accurate replicas.
- Above the main window and high up in the gable is a very small circular window with a quifoil light in it. The gable itself is surmounted by a cross finial.
- Angle buttresses as described for the north wall.

South wall: in most ways this parallels the north wall.

- The obvious difference is that the most westerly window has three rather than two lights, but like its counterpart of the north side it has coloured stone embellishments but no dog-tooth ornamentation.

South transept

South transept has a pitched roof with a cross finial.

North wall: none visible.

East wall: two windows are separated by a buttress with another buttress at the south-east angle. A stringcourse runs beneath the windows. Appended to the southern end of the wall is the new administrative block in plain 'G' ashlar, partially coursed.

- The fabric is a real mix. Beneath the more southerly of two windows the well-coursed masonry is 'B' with some 'A'. Under the more northerly window the masonry is 'G' ashlar looking like a continuation of the masonry of the chancel. Around and above the windows is coursed 'D', but above the windows is more of a mix of 'B' and 'D'.
- The complex moulded plinth is in a variant of 'G' as elsewhere.
- An angle buttress on the south is in 'D' and faced with 'G'. There is also a buttress in the centre of the wall with elaborate (and unnecessary) stops at the top and bottom to create pseudo-niches. It would be logical for this to carry a chimney but there is no evidence for such a feature.

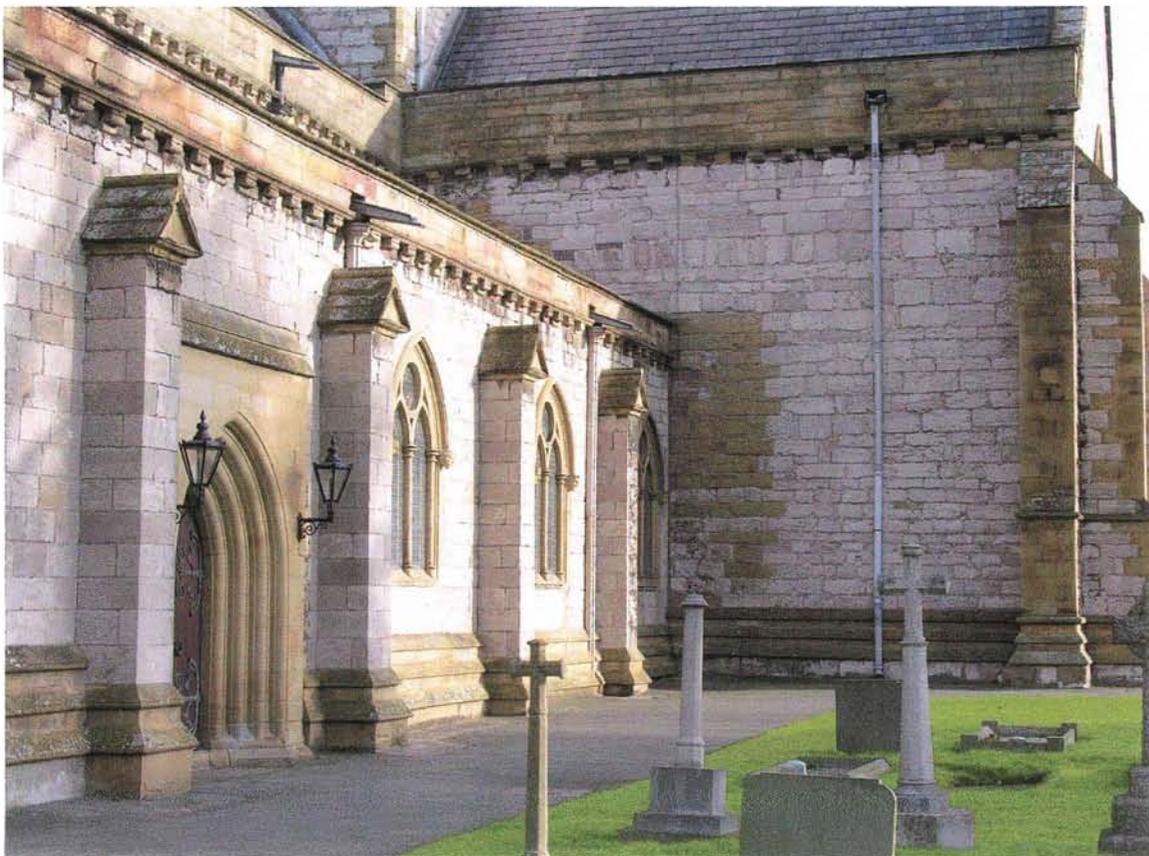
- Two two-centre arched windows with three ogee-headed lights in each in 'C' with reticulated tracery, some of which is certainly replaced, yet there may be other dressings in these windows which are original. So, too, the hoodmoulds, while all four stops also look to be original, two of them head-stops.

South wall: one main window.

- Fabric is all coursed 'D', though occasional irregular lumps of 'G' have been inserted. The coping to the gable is supported on stones in 'C' which were presumably easier to cut to diagonal shapes.
- A large window with a two-centred arch, five cusped lights and pseudo-reticulated tracery above; the hoodmould has simple out-turned terminals. The stone is 'G' and looks decidedly Victorian.
- Angle buttresses at both east and west ends, as usual in 'D' but with 'G' facing.

West wall

- Triple coping to the plinth as elsewhere.
- Wall in 'D' comparable to lower part of the tower, but there is one curious course of stonework, at say about 7m off the ground, where the individual blocks are set vertically rather than horizontally, but for no obvious reason. Around the junction of the transept with the aisle the wall has been patched with 'C' and a little 'B' and this patching rises diagonally above the aisle roof as the transept wall retreats towards the nave into the top of the corner. It also continues a little further south in this wall as a wedge of masonry, albeit with some replacement stones. Indicative of either a former wider and higher south aisle, or perhaps more likely the pitched roof line of the previous aisle together with the wall of an earlier and smaller transept.



- Moulded corbels beneath a plain parapet, a clear continuation to that that runs along the top of the south nave face.
- In the angle of the transept and the nave there is evidence of subsidence.

South Aisle

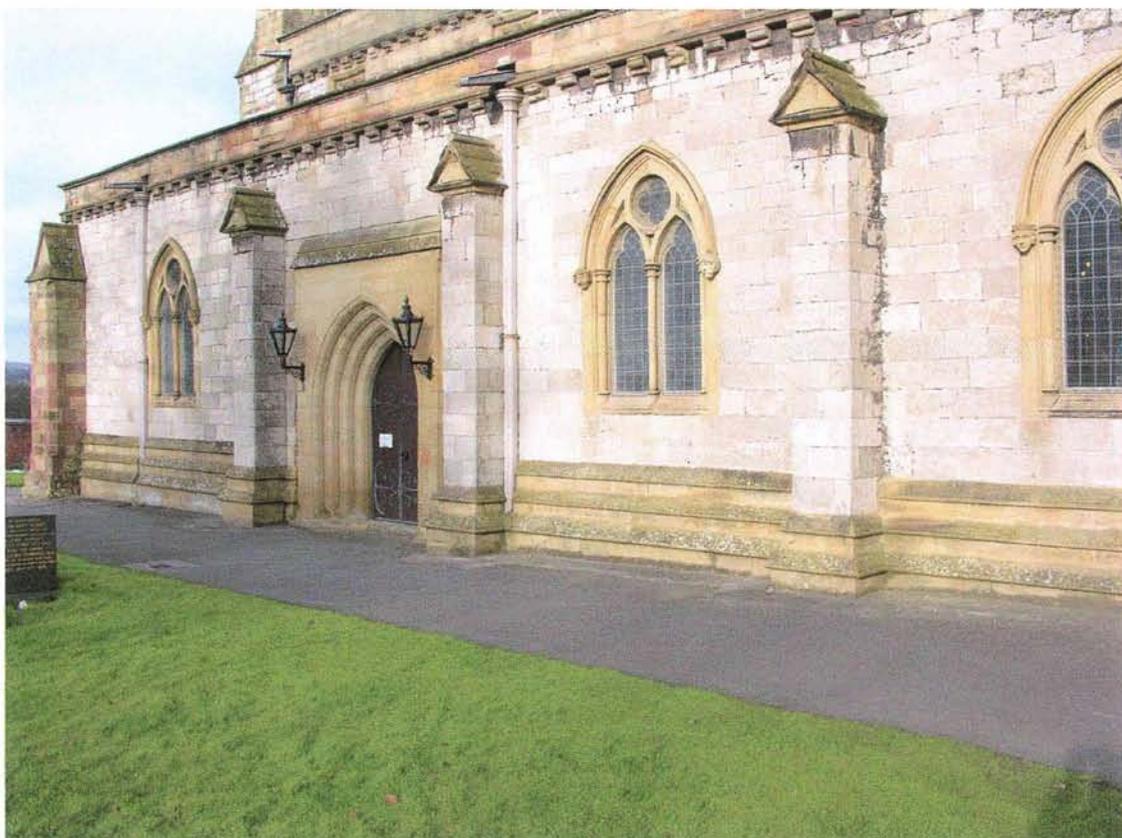
This has points of similarity with the north aisle. The coped plinth is of the same design. And it is topped by a low parapet supported on moulded corbels.

North wall: none visible.

East wall: none visible.

South wall: Constructed of 'D' as the north aisle.

- Including the larger angle buttress at the south-west corner there are five buttresses creating four bays of regular size and a fifth almost double bay at the west end. Buttresses are similar to those on the north side and have sandstone pediments. The larger angle buttress at the south-west corner likewise mirrors that on the north side but has a different plinth (see west wall below).
- There are four windows with two-centred heads, each of two cusped lights with a quatrefoil above; each has a hoodmould with headstops. Each window occupies one bay. It has been suggested that the first head of the second window (from the west) is perhaps older than the rest and from its appearance this is possible.
- The south doorway occupies the second bay from the west. In 'G'. It is of four orders and the door 'frame' projects slightly and has a coped top. Lamps are attached to either side of the doorway.



West wall

- The coped plinth is visible on the face of the west wall but significantly is not carried around the angle buttress. Instead an earlier coped plinth remains and is visible here and on the south wall angle buttress.

- Wall is a heterogeneous mix of 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D' and 'F'. 'D' appears at a lower level than on the west wall of the north aisle.
- The window has a two-centred arch and two cusped lights surmounted by a lozenge quatrefoil. Some of the dressings are in 'E'; not all are worn but whether any are early cannot be established.

Tower

This is visible only from nave clerestory level upwards. It has a battlemented parapet of similar design to the nave north wall with at its base a cavetto moulding. All the belfry windows are of similar design: tall, two-centred arches, three cusped lights of equal height and smaller lights above; a transom to each. 'G' used and looks to be 19th-century.

North wall

- Lower part of wall is ordered, coursed 'D' as in the aisles, though not necessarily contemporary. The upper part of the wall face in brick-red sandstone ('H'), well coursed with a few other ashlar inclusions. At higher levels it is mixed with 'G', indicative of the rebuilding after 1715.
- The lower part of the belfry window is covered by an ornate clock face carrying the date 1794 and the depiction of a bishop's mitre.
- At the north-east angle a projecting but integral square turret which is carried down to ground level. Its fabric is a mix of 'C' with some 'G' and 'H', the last of these mainly on its east face. Nine small lancet slits are set at intervals in the north wall of the turret. A trig point engraved about 1m off the ground at the north-east angle.

East wall: similar to the north wall

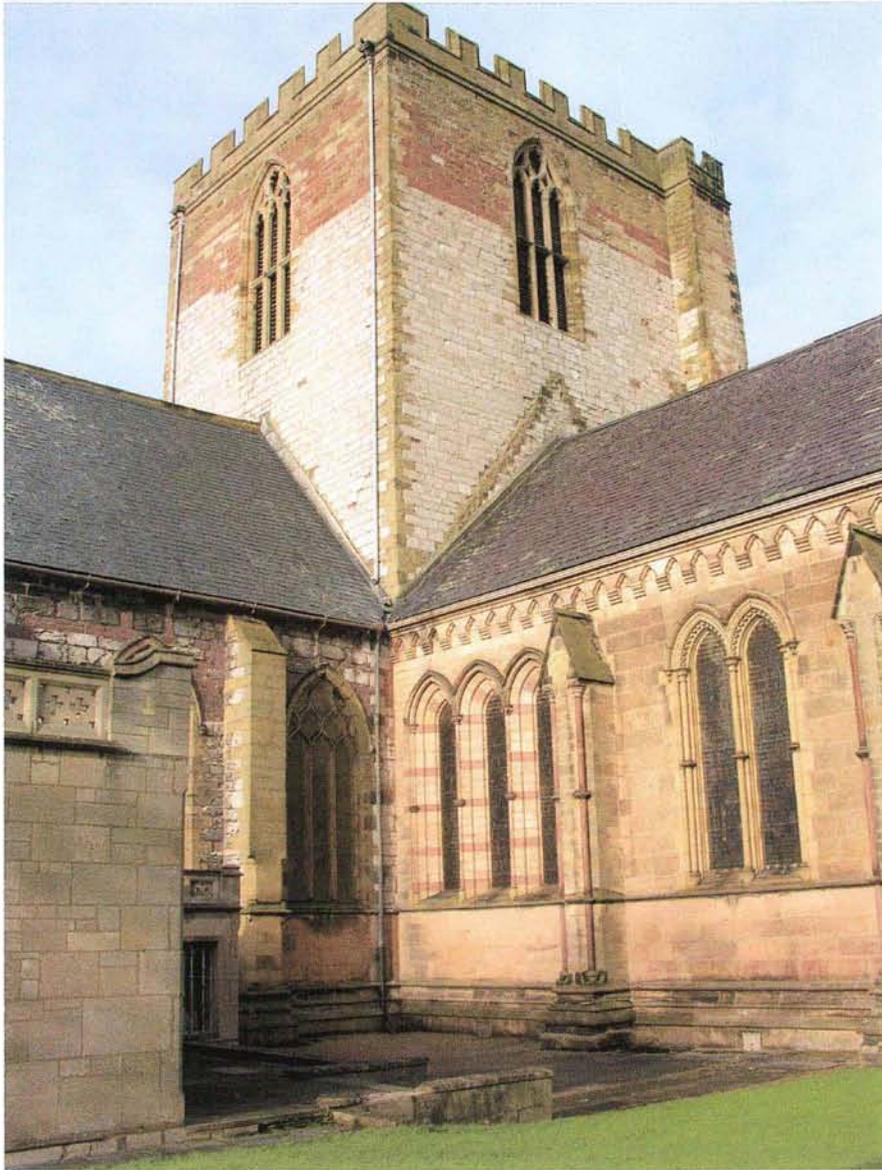
- The roofline of an earlier, higher pitched chancel roof is visible. Where this roof line was recessed into the tower wall, this has been infilled in 'C'.
- 'D' survives to a lower level at the south end of this wall than at the north end, indicating the greater magnitude of the tower destruction on the south side. Again 'H' at higher levels but 'C' (or 'G') appears towards the top.

South wall: largely as north wall.

- At the top 'D' has been replaced by 'H' but there is rather less 'C' than in other walls. However, immediately below the parapet another course of 'G' is visible and below this two courses where 'C' is mixed with 'H'. At the south-east angle the quoins are of 'C' but not obviously chamfered. At the south-west angle the quoin chamfers are resumed as on the north-west angle.

West wall

- Lower part of wall is ordered, coursed 'D' as the north wall. The quoins at the north-west angle in 'G' are chamfered to just below the nave roof apex level.



THE INTERIOR

As with the exterior there are considerable variations in the fabric. A much more detailed study than is possible here will be required to characterise all the visible stonework of the interior.

North Aisle

The pitched ceiling is in modern timber, some moulded; the supporting corbels on the south wall are effectively built in with the woodwork to give a continuous frieze face; there are five central bosses, circular with quatrefoil cut-outs, again all modern, with decoration in gilt, blue and red. The floor is of stone slabs exhibiting some spalling. There are no visible memorial slabs set into the floor.

North wall:

- Unlike the exterior appearance, this wall shows a fabric mix. There is a stringcourse integral with the projecting sills of the windows and below this most of the fabric is dressed pink and olive sandstone which is thus mainly 'A' and 'C', but interspersed with these is 'D'-type limestone. Overall this appears to be a deliberate and neat attempt of late date to create a polychrome effect for the limestone slabs are of similar size to the sandstone. Interestingly the bottom visible course is all in limestone.
Above the stringcourse, at 2m+ above the ground, the irregularly coursed but regularly sized blocks of sandstone give way to similarly coursed and shaped blocks of limestone, not as a consistent zone across the wall but variably. Between the second and third windows from the western end, there is a patch of large limestone blocks at the lowest levels between the windows, but otherwise blocks of this material are generally higher up. The grubby appearance of some though not all of this limestone indicates that it has been re-used, and some of this stonework could be of earlier construction and perhaps in-situ. There is, however, little consistency, for in some places blocks of sandstone intrude into patches of limestone.
Some of the sandstone above the stringcourse is more like 'B' and is classed here as 'I'.
- The windows have embrasures in 'A' but their arches are turned in a pale buff-coloured sandstone, done presumably for effect. The embrasures have chamfered edges. Externally, there is no convincing evidence that these windows have been inserted, but inside there are indications that some have, reinforcing the view that the aisle walls have been re-faced.

East wall:

- this is dominated by the arch leading into the north aisle.
- an asymmetrical two-centred arch of two orders, the dressings in grey-buff sandstone which has not been classified; sharp arrises do not suggest that this stonework is of any antiquity. However, some jambstones have a 'softened' appearance and could be re-used. Around the sides and top of the arch, the same pale pink sandstone as in the north wall gives way to limestone blocks.
- There is evidence of an earlier roofline on a slightly steeper pitch.

South wall:

- dominated by a five-bay arcade, with all the arches having two-centred heads and two orders. The piers are essentially octagonal in section with the four main sides chamfered back to create four additional though narrower faces. Above the arches the stonework is 'I', regularly fashioned. However, the two uppermost courses are in 'D', appearing consistently along the full length of the wall and indicating the heightening of the aisle.
- In the first bay from the east the lower stages of the respond look to be Victorian or later. The first pier appears to be original and displays masons' marks and evidence of former limewashing.
- In the second bay the lower courses of the second column have been renewed, though not all of the individual blocks of stone. The difference between the original pinker stone and the modern buff replacement is obvious.

- In the third bay, the third column is mainly original and the column base (the plinth) shows considerable damage. The difference between the old and the new is particularly clear in the mouldings of the bases.
- In the fourth bay the column shows some stone replacement.
- The fifth bay is slightly narrower than its fellows and the apex is a little lower than its neighbour, a feature mirrored on the south side. Much of the respond is modern. The significance of this variation is not yet clear. Hubbard noted, however, the large, simple and shallow plinths of the arcades' west responds and indicated that these must belong with the earlier buttresses of the west front.
- Masons' marks are commonplace on all the pillars and the arches. They have been plotted and a leaflet, available in the cathedral, has been produced.

West wall

- this is very different from the north wall. No stringcourse is present. The masonry is 'I' to a height of about 2m and then large limestone blocks ('D'), except between the window and the respond where 'I' continues upwards. This suggests that when the original aisle was demolished the wall was taken down to 2m and rebuilt in 'D' except against the arcade where the earlier wall was retained.

North transept

Floor of stone slabs, renewed in 2005, the old floor surveyed before its removal, and limited excavations conducted of underlying deposits, including restricted examination of the Luxmoore vault. The roof comprises 14 close-set, arch-braced collar-beam trusses with plain raking struts. Their age is uncertain, though the backing boards are of no great antiquity. Hubbard thought this and the south transept might have been intended to have timber wagon ceilings, a reasonable suggestion in view of the close set trusses.

East wall:

- this is constructed largely of massive blocks of 'D', and as on the outside the size of the blocks diminishes at higher levels.
- The doorway is inserted into the wall and has a hoodmould over it with plain shield stops, presumably primarily for decoration.
- Across the face of the wall a diagonal of infilled stone of later date ascends from beneath the window and over the door. Opinions differ as to whether this reflects the position of a stairway, now removed, or the former position of a chimney.

North wall:

- this is in 'D' as the east wall.
- The downsloping sill of the window has been filled in to give a level, horizontal appearance; the stone used is the same as that for the diagonal fill in the north wall.
- There are three memorials on the wall, the Lloyd memorial of 1763 with a large slab set into the wall to take the monument's weight.

South wall:

- there is not much to this wall for the wide arch led into the crossing, of two orders and much of it is original. Almost all of what is there is hidden by the organ. The lower courses of masonry around the arch are of greyish sandstone with a brown, oxidised surface, and there is evidence of criss-cross scoring to take plaster. From a height of around 3m there is more pink sandstone, the equivalent of 'I', but rougher and mixed with limestone.

- Towards the top of the wall, an arcing groove or stain suggests a different, slightly lower roofline.

West wall:

- leaving aside the archway into the north aisle, much of the wall is 'D', yet there are anomalies not matched in terms of their scale in the other walls, and some infilling in the same stone as the diagonal feature in the east wall. No convincing pattern(s) emerge from these anomalies, but it could be that the archway into the north transept was created when the transept was built. It developed in its present form when the north aisle was rebuilt. To the south of the archway the stonework is 'I', but at apex level it becomes standard 'D'. The significance of this change has yet to be resolved.
- The original archway was wider on the north, hence the mix of stonework immediately to the north. The archway was probably originally medieval for there is a very shallow hoodmould over it with a worn stop on the south. There is nothing equivalent on the north, suggesting it has been removed.

Nave

General:

- stone slab floor is a continuation of those in the aisles but these were laid at different times for there is a distinct linear division along the line of the piers on both sides. All the walls are unplastered.
- A modern roof: the profile is not quite four-centred. It is based on six main trusses springing from corbels; the tie beams are moulded; subsidiary ribs spring diagonally from above the corbels; and there are further diagonals, subsidiary trusses and purlins breaking the roof structure into 32 squares which are in turn sub-divided. The last bay at the west end conforms with the narrower arches of the arcades and comprises 4 panels of unequal sizes. The main intersections are marked by painted and gilded floral bosses, 52 in all. The wooden blocks which are set on the corbels are also heavily decorated and painted/gilded in similar fashion to the bosses. Further braces, flush with the walls, arch out to support the wall plates. The tops of the wall plates are crenellated. The corbels are presumed to be original with one exception (as noted by Hubbard): there are twelve in all: two are flower heads, four are leaves, four show figures and there are two heads, and it may be that it is one of the heads that is a replacement..

North wall:

- a five-bay arcade. Between the arches the masonry is of pink sandstone in regular blocks ('I'), although some of it is quite small. Putlog holes, now filled, are visible in at least some of the spandrels on both sides, but are perhaps more likely to be holes for the earlier corbels that supported the earlier roof. Above the apex level of the arcade arches the fabric is largely limestone blocks with some slabs of a yellow stone that may be sandstone and pink sandstone intermixed. The clerestory window arches have almost flat triangular heads with chamfers around the whole of each window; they are narrower than their counterparts in the south wall, but still coincide with the aisle bays. Windows of dressed pale stone; it matches the limestone but is probably sandstone for it has been worked to smooth faces with sharp arrises. Around each window the stone is varied but there is not enough evidence to indicate whether these windows were inserted into an existing wall.

East wall:

- dominated by the two-centred arch to the crossing; of two orders and no capitals. As high as the apex of the arch there is a mixture of pink sandstone and limestone, but above it there is limestone alone, showing some coursing. Towards the top of the wall there are narrower slabs but also some larger blocks ('D').

South wall:

- five-bay arcade. The arches of both arcades have a pink (or red) sandstone element which occurs only in the outer order of each arch. Is this a decorative conceit to tie in with the stonework of the spandrels? There is little obvious difference in wear between the two types of stone used for the arches. Between the arches the spandrels have pink sandstone masonry in regular blocks, some of it quite small, as on the north side. But above the apices there is a mix of pink sandstone and pale limestone, some of the latter appearing decidedly irregular. The clerestory embrasures are in both pink and pale buff sandstone. There are chamfers only to the inner edge of each window arch.

West wall:

- a large west window, the embrasure not splayed, but with a concave chamfer.
- The doorway below it shows occasional stone replacement and has a complex moulded chamfer.
- Below the window much of the wall is in a pink sandstone fabric. However, on the north side, less than 1 m in from the respond, a vertical band of pink sandstone with striations give the appearance of infill after something was taken down. There is also something comparable, in part, on the south side but different stone is used for the infill. To either side of the big window the stonework is a varied mix of limestone and pink sandstone with more limestone at higher levels.

Crossing

General:

- floor of regular, polished stone slabs. Traces of limewash on the jambstones to a height of just over 3m, but not on the arches, nor convincingly on the transept sides of the jambstones. Roof has a wooden lierne ceiling with a very large painted and gilded boss in the centre. Wooden corbels in the angles display with angels holding shields, also painted. Arches show some signs of stone replacement.

North wall:

- two-centred arch of three orders, no capital. The stonework is mainly buff sandstone with some pink sandstone intermixed. Arch is filled with the organ.

East wall:

- two-centred arch as north wall.

South wall:

- two-centred arch as north wall. Hubbard remarked that the bases of the south-east crossing pier and of the outer responds of the arches were different from the rest with double rolls as opposed to double ogees. They are thus likely to be earlier than the rest, though only slightly so, and like the others they incorporate the wave plan of the shaft above. The present writer was not able to confirm these observations.

West wall:

- two-centred arch as north wall.

Chancel

General:

- one step up from the crossing. Five steps up in the sanctuary. Floor of plain and encaustic tiles and marble bands, all Victorian. Wagon roof of 60 panels also Victorian, the moulded ribs with gilded bosses at the intersections, the ribs backed by cusped boards. Walls faced in ashlar, all the work of Scott.
- The east window and the west arch are slightly off centre.

North wall:

- bare stonework visible, mixed ashlar with no obvious pattern. Three windows, all of two lights. There are, though, differences, comparable with the external appearance of the windows, with black marble columnettes to the two east windows.
- Stalls below window and one brass from 1864.
- East of the stalls is a small round-headed doorway with chamfered jambs (which looks 18th century but could be earlier), which gave access to the former chapter house. Some of the jambs towards the base look more worn than might be anticipated, so this could be original. Also the lower stonework of the north wall – say five courses – looks slightly rougher than that at higher levels. Is this due to damp or to the re-use of masonry?

East wall:

- stonework as north wall; large east window with reredos below it.

South wall:

- as north wall but three windows and three lights to the most westerly window, its different form matching counterpart in the north wall. Triple sedilia in the sanctuary (Scott found fragments of a predecessor).

West wall:

- two centred arch of two orders. The fabric is typically mixed with variously coloured sandstone, and then much more limestone at higher levels from a point half way between the springers and the apex of the arch.

South transept

General:

- the roof is supported on 14 close-set, arch-braced collar trusses with raking struts; the boards behind look to have been replaced on the west side but are more likely to be original on the east, though could this be due to damp?
- The floor is of newly laid slabs, though seven ledger stones have been retained from the earlier floor. The old floor was surveyed before its removal, and limited excavations conducted of underlying deposits.

North wall:

- much of this is taken up with the large two-centred arch of two orders leading from the crossing; no capitals, and all in greyish sandstone. Above the arch the stone is fabric D, but perhaps not the same in terms of block size as the west wall of this transept. At and below springer level to either side of the arch is some pink sandstone, but below this is a coarse limestone with quite well-smoothed faces which ought to be earlier.

- A niche in the outer order of the arch at a height of c.1.6m now holds a small 16th-century ivory statuette of the Virgin and Child, known as the 'Spanish Madonna'.

East wall:

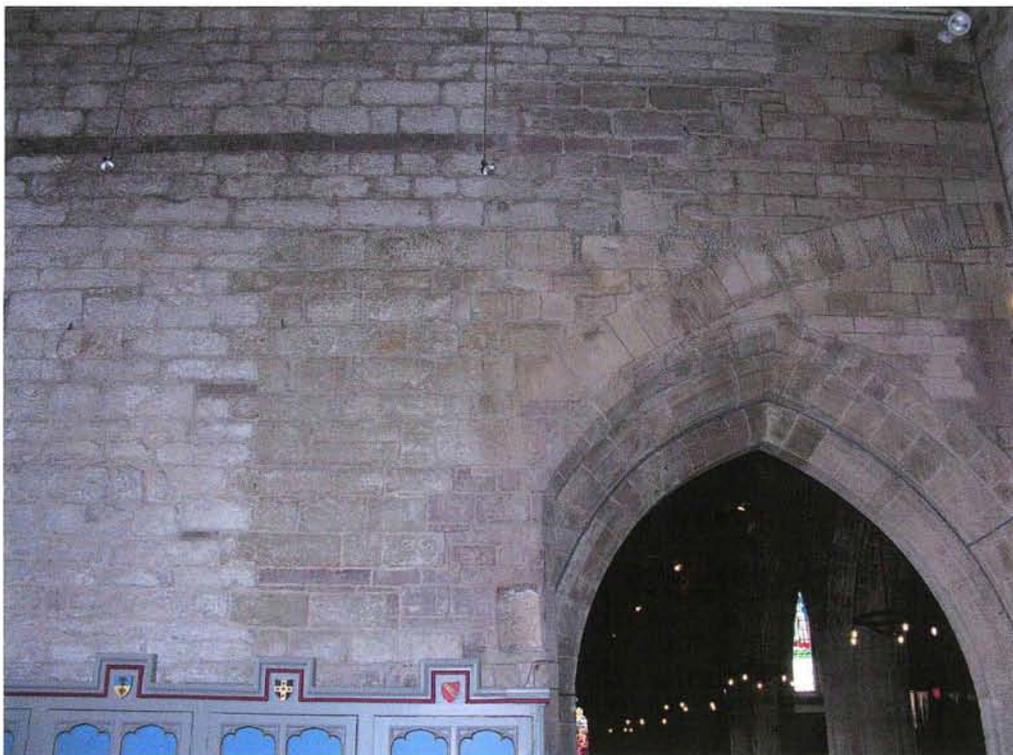
- contains two windows with slightly splayed embrasures, the architectural stonework a mix of purple and pale buff sandstone.
- The masonry of the wall is also a curious mix of purple sandstone and limestone in largely discrete patches: purple sandstone to the north of the more northerly window, and in a band from the window arch's springer level upwards; limestone to the south of the more southerly window; limestone with a small amount of purple sandstone mixed in between the two windows. The lower stages of this wall towards the north show coursing which is dipping very gently and stone which is fractured, probably indicative of the subsidence problem.

South wall:

- one large window. All the masonry is blocky limestone (D), but with some sandstone in a course at window springer level. Beneath the window the stone is different in appearance, a pecked limestone and relatively modern, indicative of the window's replacement or refurbishment.
- Adjacent to the window but at a lower level is a large display case set into the wall for the cathedral's treasures.

West wall:

- the west wall sports a two-centred asymmetric arch of three orders leading into the south aisle. There is a relieving arch above it of modern buff sandstone and the infilling below it is also modern as is some of the stonework above it.
- Much of the lower wall to the south of the arch is hidden by cupboards. Above these the fabric is a mix of olive and purplish-pink sandstone (B), the surfaces incised in criss-cross fashion to take plaster as in the north transept. A vertical stop indicates the corner of a former aisle. Southwards, the fabric is all limestone (D). But curiously about 5/6 of the way up the wall is a course of



- brownish-pink sandstone: its significance is uncertain but it runs across the whole wall face and has been renewed or inserted where it crosses into B. Could it mark the base of a wall plate? That the entrance to the aisle is a later insertion is suggested by the poor dovetailing of the arch jambstones with the stonework beside it.

A small niche is set in the wall immediately to the south of the aisle arch at a height of about 3m.

South aisle

General:

- roof as north aisle.
- Floor of worn stone slabs, but at the eastern end are some larger slabs, many of them more smooth. Also a series of grave slabs at the eastern end.

North wall:

- arcade of five arches (see nave) with slight outward lean to the south. Octagonal piers, some replacement although many stones original. There is more graffiti on the piers of the last bay. Once again the pier bases are more worn, with pitted surfaces, than higher up. There are mason's marks on the 'higher' stones, so is it that the stonework is more exposed at lower levels or older? But the third pier from the west has an asymmetric form above the pier base, suggesting that the two may not be contemporary, and there is something rather similar in the fourth pier, though such disconformities do not occur throughout. The difference in the appearance of the stonework is surprising.
- Hubbard noted that the west respond of the arcade is not in line with the arcade and greater disparity exists between the axes of the choir and the nave. On the north the arcade and crossing arch align with the wall of the choir whereas on the south they are set some two feet inwards (Hubbard).
- Above the arcade all the stonework is type 'I', except for one course of three blocks of 'D' between the fourth and fifth bays.

East wall:

- two centred arch (see south transept), and asymmetric as on opposite side. Fabric 'I' above the arch, but with a relieving arch of vertical slabs visible immediately below the roof line - this is clearly different from the north aisle and might be something to do with subsidence.

South wall:

- four windows and a door. Below stringcourse level the wall exhibits polychromatic effect across its more easterly half, but then more pink sandstone ('B') to the west of the third window, giving way to modern fabric 'I' around the doorway to the west which has clearly been inserted, and then west of this a mix of the polychrome pink (which here is a more brick like red) and fabric 'I'. Then, below the third, most easterly window, blocks of 'D' appear and finally there is a return to red sandstone with 'B' giving way to what may be 'I'. All this is below the stringcourse at 1.9m off the ground, and implies either a very convoluted history or an opportunistic use of available materials. The limestone beneath the most westerly window for instance looks like blocking but probably isn't. No evidence that this wall was ever plastered over.
- Above the stringcourse there is some variation. At the east end it is the polychromatic stonework that gives way to fabric 'I' and perhaps some 'B'. West of the third window there are courses of limestone ('D') above the sandstone, although the polychromatic stonework resumes in the couple of courses immediately below the roof. Finally above the fourth window, polychrome stonework drops down around the head of the window suggesting some degree of

contemporaneity. Beyond this there is limestone ('D') almost all the way down to the stringcourse.

West wall:

- one window, the embrasure with a two-centred arch turned in buff-coloured dressed stone, but the sides are a mix of limestone ('D') and older sandstone ('B') with some replacement sandstone that could be 'I'. This then appears to be an older window than those in the south wall. Below the stringcourse the wall is almost entirely of red sandstone – some of this is 'B' or at least 'B'-type and some is badly weathered, but is it the same? Above the stringcourse is limestone ('D') and above this a cleaner limestone which could be closer to fabric 'F'.

Furnishings and Fittings

Stalls: misericords made to a single pattern; the stalls have their respective titles inscribed on each; those of the 'Cursal' canons are the occupants as they were in 1535. Thus the back row of stalls, ten to each side, are medieval (late 15th-century), the rest, though highly decorated, were added later, The canopies over the medieval stalls with their tracery are medieval, but the backs and the bishops throne, etc are all 19th-century by Scott. The detached shafts are from 1906, when the backs 'were also interfered with' (Hubbard).

Wooden chest: (under west window of south aisle) with a date of 1596 and initials which might be E R H.



Iron chest: dates from 1738, the work of Robert Davies of Croes Foel, near Wrexham. Now used for visitors' offerings.

Chairs: two small chairs with decorated backs are currently in the south transept. Perhaps 17th or 18th-century.

Effigy: a bishop, perhaps Anian II (1268-1293), between the second and third windows of the south aisle. Said to be well carved and not Welsh in style or workmanship (Hubbard).



Chest slab: probably of the 14th century, found under the chancel floor in 1932. Displays sword and shield with a hound chasing a hare. Perhaps associated with the Holland family. Now raised on a concrete plinth and set just inside the south door of the south aisle.

Grave slabs (ledgers): in the south aisle: a) Petrus Middleton (date worn away); b) ***, armiger (d.1691) with inscribed crest and a running pattern at the base; c) Henry Ham...rd (d. 16*8); d) George Griffiths (d. 1666) with crest at bottom; previously in the choir; e) Price family (d. 1643 and 1685).

Memorials: all marble unless otherwise stated:

north aisle, north wall: from east Robert Jones (d.1856), Rev William Moreton (d.1895), a brass; John Blewer (d.1855); brass to Welsh nurses who died in the First World War; Herbert Jones (d.1881), a brass in the widow; Major Henry Bibby (d.1917), a brass; war memorial for both world wars; a First World War memorial in stone.

North transept: on the north wall, Anne Marie Lloyd (d.1763); John Luxmoore (d.1830) in Latin by T Kelly, this replacing the massive memorial that was erected there after his death; Richard Thelwall (d.1775) by R Bromfield of Liverpool. On the west wall: Bishop Harold Charles (c.1982).

Nave: on the west wall a World War One memorial (and also five flags to the north and four to the south); also a marble tablet to Canon Rowland Williams (d.1854?) and a brass to the 16th battalion of the Welsh Fusiliers from 1919.

Chancel: on north wall, brass to Bishop William Carey (d.1864). On south wall brasses to George Griffith (d. 1666, erected 1907) and John Owen (d.1651; but a new [replacement] brass) and two photos.

South aisle – south wall: a) Harriet Browne (d.1857); b) Louise Browne (d.1823); c) Sir Henry Browne (d.1855); d) Felicity Browne (d.1827); e) Felicia Hemans (d.1835); f) Elizabeth Browne (d.1826); g) brass to Richard Bonnor (d. 1889) h) brass to Edward Smart (d.1889); i) modern slate memorial plaque to H M Stanley (1841-1904); j) to William Carey (d.1840); k) with angels to Sir John Williams (d.1830) by R A Westmacott; l) Richard Bythell (d.1845); m) Sir J H Williams (d. 1859) with sculptor's name, L Droses of Athens, in Greek; n) brass to Lady Sarah Williams (d.1876); o) Maria Price (d.1732); p) Charles Thomas (d.1867) by Gaffin of London; q) brass to Colonel John Rogers (d.1900); r) window dedication brass to Major William Bythell (d.1866); s) William Price (d.1691?); t) slate memorial below third window to Brigadier Mainwaring (d.1976);

South aisle – west wall: a) to Elizabeth Wyatt (d.1839). Also in south aisle is seated figure of William Shipley, dean (d.1826), by John Ternouth.

South transept – various stone ledgers. Floriated cross in north-west corner to Bishop William de Spridlington (d.1376). Bishop George Griffith (d.1666). Dean Daniel Price (d.1706). Five others.

Reredos: 19th-century, of Derbyshire alabaster.

Lectern, pulpit and rails: all from Scott's restoration.

Font: 19th-century but four of the eight panels around the bowl are much earlier and have been incorporated into a Perpendicular-style replacement. Original destroyed during the Commonwealth (Hubbard).

Paintings: copy of del Sarto's 'Madonna of the Harpies' on west wall of north transept.

Stained glass: three-light window on south side of chancel to Dean Bonnor (1859-86) with brass memorial. All the glass in the presbytery including the east window (1864) by Ward and Hughes of London. West window by Gibbs (1855-6) but only tracery lights remain. West window in the nave has 20th-century glass showing the arms of the Welsh dioceses.

Organ: from 1834 by William Hill of London, but rebuilt in 1897, again in 1966 and then in 1993-97.

CATHEDRAL YARD

A raised grass yard on the north side up to 1.5m above the road. Occasional trees and bushes but no burials. Also a 19th-century tercentenary memorial of the translation of the bible into Welsh, created in 1888; in red sandstone; four-step plinth. To the north-west of the cathedral re-used provides the surrounds for several 'garden' patches; this stone includes occasional architectural fragments but is not particularly ancient. There are in the same area several column stones, octagonal in cross-section, but of uncertain age and one broken 19th-century table tomb in a heap with other discarded material.

No visible burials on the east, although the ground is uneven, particularly to the south-east of the chancel.

On the south, there are burials, more particularly to the south-west, but all the standing memorials are 19th or 20th-century. There are also some ledgers from the early 18th century, the earliest seen from 1719, mixed indiscriminately with more recent ones. There are also some 20th-century brasses set into stone: all six to members of the Edwards family. By the west door are two table tombs of 1680 and 1872, but it is only the tops that are original, and the one with the 1680 inscription look suspect. At the south-west corner, sunk into the tarmac, is a ledger of 1724.

Boundary: a modern retaining wall. Stone revetment wall on the north side, while on the west a brick wall of different builds edges the bishop's garden, while to the south-west the modern brick wall is set at the base of a scarp 1m or more high.

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