

A ROMANESQUE BUILDING IN ENGLAND: DURHAM CATHEDRAL

The most definitive example of Romanesque style in England may be seen at Durham Cathedral, where the Norman work is largely unaltered by later additions. At Durham you can also see the first attempts at ribbed vaulting, which would evolve into the Gothic style in the 13th century.

Standing as one of the greatest achievements in Norman architecture, Durham Cathedral rests within the town of Durham and serves as the resting place of Saint Cuthbert, an early English Saint, and Saint Bede, a great scholar of the Anglo-Saxon period.

William St Carileph was the bishop responsible for building the present cathedral. He began its construction in the year 1093. The cathedral was completed in 1135.

The nave, the choir and their accompanying aisles, which were built to Carileph's design, form the central body of the cathedral. The nave is particularly striking for its massive spiral and zig-zag decorated cylindrical piers and the larger compound piers which support the impressive diamond ribbed vaulting of the ceiling. Durham Cathedral is also important for the flying buttresses, a feature invented by the Norman masons at Durham.

In later years two major additions were made to the cathedral, the Galilee Chapel and the Chapel of the Nine Altars. The Galilee Chapel is famous as the home of the black marble-topped tomb of the Venerable Bede (673-735 AD), who was the first historian in England. The Galilee Chapel is also known

as the Lady Chapel, as it was once the only part of the cathedral that could be entered by women according to the rules of the Benedictine order of monks. The huge Chapel of the Nine Altars was begun in the 13th century. A number of interesting features can be seen in this chapel, including the rose window, which was originally made in the 15th century and reconstructed in the 18th. The rose is ninety feet in circumference with a central core depicting Christ surrounded by the twelve apostles.

During the Middle Ages, Durham Cathedral was one of the greatest centres of pilgrimage in England and the chief reason for pilgrimage was the rich and glorious shrine of St Cuthbert. Today a simple grey tomb is all that remains of the shrine but prior to the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, the whole area around the tomb was an elaborately decorated shrine.



TRUE OR FALSE

● Decide if the following sentences are true or false and correct the false ones.

- ① Saint Cuthbert is buried in Durham Cathedral.
- ② Saint Bede lived in Roman times.
- ③ William St Carileph planned the present cathedral.
- ④ The cathedral was completed in 1093.
- ⑤ The choir is particularly impressive.
- ⑥ The flying buttress was invented by German masons.
- ⑦ Venerable Bede was the first English historian.
- ⑧ The Chapel of the Nine Altars is very small.
- ⑨ Women could not enter the church.
- ⑩ Durham Cathedral was one of the main centres of pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.

ACTIVITIES



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