

## Bristol Cathedral timeline

603: The Venerable Bede is reputed to have made reference to St Augustine of Canterbury visiting the site, and a religious shrine being founded.

803: St James' Priory reputedly founded. The presence of a significant work of Anglo-Saxon sculpture (c1050), the Harrowing of Hell (now in South Transept) perhaps an indication of something of religious significance on College Green in Saxon times.

1009: Bristol market active and thriving by this time.

1140: St Augustine's Abbey founded by Robert Fitzharding and building begun, the church was consecrated on Easter Day in 1148, in the presence of the Bishops of Worcester, Exeter, St Asaph and Llandaff. It is thought that the Abbey church was completed including Nave, in Norman style c 1170. Though named as an Abbey, it had no monks, it was a community of Austin Canons serving an Abbot (similar to Carlisle Abbey, later a cathedral). The Abbey precinct was sited on high ground overlooking the bustle of wharves and cranes of the docks below. Shipping trade and ship building was a major part of the town's economy which also included the trade of slavery between England and Ireland, and much later the 'triangular trade' with Africa and the Caribbean. The Abbey church and its domestic buildings included a magnificent Chapter House, a Cloister with Refectory and Kitchen, a Dormitory linked by the night stair to the south transept, Cellars, an Infirmary, the Abbot's Residence and the usual domestic ranges within the precinct including a splendid Gatehouse. Of these claustral buildings only the Chapter House with vestibule and the Gatehouse have survived intact.

1220: The Elder Lady Chapel built under Abbot David, designed by Adam Lock (Harvey), master mason at Wells Cathedral, is sited on the north side of the choir aisle. It is a good example of the Early English style, with Purbeck marble shafts to the blind arcading, stiff leaf foliage to the capitals, and four triple lancet windows on the north elevation. The eastern window is c1300 late decorated style.

1298: Construction started on the east end Lady Chapel, complete by 1332, when the great East window was glazed.

1300: Construction of Berkeley chapel commenced.

Early 14<sup>th</sup> century: The eastern end of the Norman cathedral was dismantled and a new eastern end was built, mainly under Abbot Knowle, from the Lady Chapel westwards, providing a new chancel and chancel aisles and starting on the tower and transepts. All of this was built in the 'decorated' style, partly geometric, partly reticulated, with many innovative features (flying rib vaults, early lierne vaults, very tall windows from window cill to parapet level, the Chancel became a 'Hall Church' where the aisle vault is as tall as the chancel vault) innovative work by the Master Mason from Wells Cathedral (possibly

MM Geometer, or Thomas Witney). 'Bristol's eastern arm is superior to anything else built in England or in Europe at the same time 1300-1330' (Pevsner).

1330: Newton Chapel begun, finished c. 1340

Mid-14<sup>th</sup> century: rebuilding work on the abbey church stopped when the Newton Chapel was completed and the new South transept begun.

1470-1520: the new south transept was completed and the central Tower was raised above the crossing with 2 tiers of perp. arched openings (5 per tier). The central Tower height is the same height as the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western Towers (see below).

In 1520 the choir stalls were repositioned 3 bays further east of the crossing to allow for the rebuilding of the nave. The original stalls had 28 original misericords which later received canopies with flamboyant tracery.

1515: The Norman nave was still standing up to this point when Abbot Newland began to rebuild, however work only reached sill height of the aisle windows (or the Norman masonry was taken down to this level). After that the ground lay open, apart from some houses, for more than 300 years.

1534: St Augustine's Abbey dissolved awaiting the King's instructions. At the dissolution the Abbot received £80 per annum, the 18 Canons received an annual pension of £10

1542: the Anglican diocese and bishopric of Bristol was founded and the abbey church became the cathedral.

1868-1888: a new nave and west towers were built, to the design of G E Street, who rebuilt the missing 14<sup>th</sup> century Nave with a sensitive 5 bay design similar but subtly different from the Chancel bays, less varied, and less ornate, an 'homage' to the brilliance of the 14<sup>th</sup> century masons. Street also designed the west front with rose window and west portal.

After Street's death in 1881 JL Pearson became cathedral architect and he is mainly responsible for the West Towers. Pearson also reordered the eastern arm in 1899 placing his stone reredos and high altar as a screen to the eastern Lady Chapel.