

Christ Church Cathedral Oxford: Building timeline

Pre Conquest

c670 AD	An Anglo Saxon double monastery was founded by King Dida (a Mercian sub king) in the centre of the walled town of Oxford. Dida made his daughter Frideswide the first Abbess. The Mercian King Aethelbald wanted to marry her but was refused. She died in 727 aged 77. The monastery continued until 1002 when it was destroyed by Danes. A shrine was built on the site of the monastery which was not rebuilt.
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Post Conquest

1122	After the 'conquest' the Normans built a small Augustinian priory on the site of the Shrine (Henry 1 st founder) but very little of this building has survived, just a small part of the cloister and south transept.
c1170-1220	The church was enlarged and in 1180 St Frideswide's translation was recorded and was attended by King Henry II and the archbishop of Canterbury, which lead to further enlargement of the Priory. The choir, transepts crossing and nave were completed by about 1220 giving us the present fine Norman arcades and the Chapter House portal.
1220-50	The Chapter House was completed with its fine lancet windows in the EE Style.
1249-1314	Balliol College was the first University College in Oxford with its own Master, Merton followed in 1264 and Exeter in 1314. Christ Church College was not founded until c1530, see below.
1280-1330	The Lady Chapel and the Latin chapel with 'decorated' style windows were built onto the south aisle, and the St Lucy chapel with its fine curvilinear 'Becket' window was added to the north transept. The reconstructed Shrine of St Frideswide was installed in 1289.
c1500	The fine 'pendant lierne vault over choir and presbytery was added. The Master Mason was William Orchard.
1525-39	Cardinal Wolsey suppressed the Priory and started building Cardinal College, adding Tom Quad to the west of the Priory Church, and removing 3 nave bays from the west end of the church intending to demolish all of the church later. In 1529 Wolsey was in disgrace for failing to secure the King's divorce, and Henry VIII took over the development of Cardinal College renaming it Christ Church College, with the former Priory Church as College Chapel. The Shrine of St Frideswide was vandalised at the Reformation.

Reformation

1546	Henry made the decision to retain the College Chapel as Cathedral Church of Oxford (in preference to Osney Abbey). It is the smallest cathedral in England but Christ Church College is the largest college in Oxford.
1681	Christopher Wren designed Tom Tower over the main college gatehouse.

Victorian Restoration

	GG Scott was engaged to restore the Cathedral in 1870 and he made changes to the east end, restoring the rose window and other internal alterations. William Morris provided several new windows, assisted by Edward Burne Jones. Morris was very critical of Scotts work and in 1880 Morris founded the SPAB to protest at the unnecessary changes made to ancient buildings. The SPAB is still trying to hammer this point home!
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