

Worcester Cathedral: Building timeline and significant historic events

Pre Conquest

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| 680 | St Peter's Priory founded on the banks of the Severn by Bishop Bosel, as seat of new diocese. |
| 983 | St Oswald, Bishop of Worcester, founds the Benedictine church of St Mary which supersedes St Peter's as the Cathedral of Worcester. Oswald's church was partly destroyed in 1041 when the town was sacked by the Danes |

Post Conquest

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| 1062 | Wulfstan was appointed Bishop of Worcester, and retained his post at the conquest. By 1075 he was the only English bishop to retain his see, the rest had been given to Normans. He starts to rebuild the cathedral in 1084 in grand Norman style, despite being reported as weeping when he saw the surviving parts of St Oswalds simple church being demolished. The surviving crypt from this period was completed by 1089. Wulfstan died in 1095 and was canonised by Pope Innocent 3 rd in 1203. |
| 1120 | The circular Norman chapter house was finished at this time and work continued on rebuilding and enlarging the nave over a long period, from 1170 to 1317, in a succession of styles, Norman, Transitional and Early English Gothic. Work was much impeded by a fire that ravaged Worcester in 1113, causing the Cathedral roof to collapse |
| 1175 | The central tower collapsed, with much collateral damage. |
| 1216 | King John was buried in the choir before the main altar, between the shrines of St Oswald and St Wulfstan (these shrines now no longer extant). |
| 1218 | At this time the restoration of the cathedral, following the tower collapse and disastrous fire of 1202, was almost complete and a service of rededication was held in the presence of King Henry III. The new dedication was to St Mary, St Peter, St Oswald and St Wulfstan. |
| 1224 | The Lady Chapel and the West end were begun and completed by 1269, in a fine version of Early English with many similarities to that of Salisbury Cathedral |
| 1374 | The handsome central tower, considered 'exquisite' by Alec Clifton-Taylor, was completed. Originally it was topped by a lead-covered timber spire. |
| 1404 | North and South ranges were added to the cloisters and the Western range |
| 1432 | completed the quadrangle between 1435 and 1438. |

- 1502 Prince Arthur, eldest son of King Henry VII, who had died young at Ludlow, was buried off the South choir aisle and then an elaborately decorated chantry chapel was erected around the tomb by 1504, possibly by masons from Westminster.

The Reformation

- 1541 At the reformation the monastery was dissolved, however the bulk of the endowments were retained by the newly established Dean and Chapter. However, the Cathedral fixtures and fittings did not all survive, the image of the Virgin Mary in the Lady Chapel was despoiled at an early date and Dean Barlow and Bishop Hooper caused the rood screen to be pulled down and the monks stalls removed. Soon after, Commissioners for Edward VI set about breaking up statues and stained glass, presaging further destruction in the 17th century.
- 1642 During the Civil war (1642 – 1651) the cathedral suffered much damage. Worcester was a strongly Royalist town, known as the 'Faithful City' and was fiercely fought over and harshly treated afterwards. After an initial victory at Powick Bridge on 23rd September 1642, the Royalist troops were soon swamped by superior numbers of Parliamentary forces and they retreated into the city which was soon over-run by the rebel troops. On Sunday 25th September the violation of the Cathedral began, the altar was vandalised and vestments, books, furniture and fittings were destroyed. The nave and cloisters housed both troops and horses until the forces left in October 1642 to face the King in Shrewsbury. After the battle of Edge Hill, in November 1642, Royalists re-occupied the city and held it until July 19th 1646, although the city was bombarded for a day in June 1643. As well as damage by parliamentarians the lead was stripped from the cathedral roof by Royalist defenders to provide ammunition. After the Royalist surrender in 1646 the town and cathedral suffered further looting and damage.
- 1651 Further great disruption was experienced when Charles II was defeated at the battle of Worcester on 3rd September.
- 1660 After the restoration of Charles II considerable restoration of the Cathedral was required to rescue it from its ruinous state.

Saxon

Norman

Gothic

Tudor

Stuart