

Simple but elegant, the Altar with the Retro Choir behind that was added in the 1960s

Ancient and modern: *Derby's divine cathedral*

It may be one of our newest cathedrals, but All Saints', Derby, is a fascinating mix of medieval and modern.
Norman Wright sings its praises

PHOTOGRAPHY: CLIVE NICHOLLS

UPGRADED FROM parish church to become one of Britain's newest cathedrals, All Saints', Derby, has a long and intriguing history going back more than 1000 years.

Bonnie Prince Charlie prayed here and ordered the bells rung but, with London unprotected and at his mercy, opted to turn back to Scotland the next day.

Bess of Hardwick, one of the most colourful characters of Tudor England, is buried here. Georgina Duchess of Devonshire, an equally colourful 18th century character, also rests in the same Cavendish family vault.

Derby Cathedral is an eclectic mix of the ancient and the new. Its tower has stood for 500 years while the rest of the church has been rebuilt and modified around it, then extended in the Seventies for its role as a cathedral.

Joseph Wright, the 18th century Derby artist famous for his portraits and his portrayal of the Industrial Revolution and the technology of the time, is commemorated here. What a contrast between Wright's detailed, almost photographic realism and the striking blue and yellow abstract design of the two stained glass windows created by the 20th century Welsh artist Ceri Richards. Both artists, however, are masters of light.

Richards's mastery is there for everyone who enters to see. The windows on either side of the altar are the only coloured glass in the cathedral. Installed in 1965, they are very much of the Sixties but still work perfectly with the traditional interior.

Wright's mastery, however, is available to admire just down the road at the Derby Museum and Art Gallery, which holds the finest collection of his work. The cathedral

"The cathedral site on Iron Gate has been used for Christian worship since around 943, when it is believed All Saints' was founded by King Edmund"



Bess of Hardwick's flamboyant memorial that she planned and supervised herself

memorial is that of Bess of Hardwick, who planned and supervised its construction well in time for her death.

More correctly known as Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury, she was buried in the vault below the part of the church that was built on St Katherine's Quire. The little St Katherine's Chapel, reached down stone steps on the south side of the cathedral, is the route into the vault.

The Cavendish family – the second of her four husbands was Sir William Cavendish – then used the vault for family burials. That tradition was ended in 1858



North Aisle, to the left as you enter the cathedral, has several memorials, including those to local regiments including the Derbyshire Yeomanry.

One of the memorials is to Sir William Wheler, who died in 1666. He fled from London to avoid the plague but ended up succumbing to it. His ironic epitaph reads: "He changed his dwelling place but not his fate." The most extravagant

site on Iron Gate has been used for Christian worship since around 943, when it is believed All Saints' was founded by King Edmund. Definite records exist for the early 11th century, when the church was gifted by King Henry I to Lincoln Cathedral.

A new building was raised in the 14th century, although its tower did not last long. It may have been structurally unsound and was replaced by the present tower between 1510 and 1532.

Although the tower remained strong, and still does, the rest of the building deteriorated and in 1723, probably frustrated by lack of support from the city corporation, the then vicar Dr Michael Hutchinson took matters into his own hands and ordered an immediate demolition.

The new church was designed by architect James Gibbs, fresh from acclaimed work in London. His design also included the full church-width wrought-iron screen.

Various improvements and small extensions were added in the 19th century.

Originally Derby was part of the diocese of Lichfield but was transferred to Southwell when that was created from part of the huge Lincoln diocese. In 1927 Derby became a diocese in its own right and the parish church became the new cathedral. Further extensions were added in the Sixties and Seventies.

The result is a harmonious mixture, from medieval tower to Sixties stained glass art, that makes the cathedral such an interesting and beautiful place to visit. The



St Katherine's Chapel, next to the Cavendish family vault, below the South Aisle; inset, one of the oldest memorials



The bell tower has a ring of ten bells, all over 300 years old

"Bonnie Prince Charlie prayed here and ordered the bells rung but, with London unprotected and at his mercy, opted to turn back to Scotland the next day"

when the sixth Duke of Devonshire was buried at Edensor near the family seat at Chatsworth House.

By that time the vault was becoming full. Now, when royal visits are paid to the cathedral, a macabre task involves security-checking the vault – a job that usually falls to a policewoman who is slim enough to squeeze into the spaces.

Joseph Wright's memorial is his original tombstone from St Alkmund's Church, brought to the cathedral in 2002. Also commemorated is William Duesbury (1725-86), the founder of Royal Crown Derby porcelain.

A panel also marks the fateful service that Bonnie Prince Charlie and his senior army staff attended in 1745. The Prince decided against pressing home his advantage and returned to Scotland to be later heavily defeated at Culloden.

A statue of the mounted Prince stands behind the eastern aspect of this historic building at the heart of the Cathedral Quarter of Derby. This quarter is one of the jewels of what is frequently an underrated city to visit.

The tower has its own treasures – breeding peregrine falcons – and you can keep an eye on these magnificent

birds of prey through the webcams available on the cathedral website.

There's plenty more to see and do in Derby, but make sure you visit the cathedral while you are there: it is a true Treasure of Britain.



Derby Cathedral's 500 year-old tower

Passport to Derby Cathedral

Getting there

■ By car: From the M1 Junction 25, take the A52 into Derby, then follow the brown tourist signs

■ By train: Derby railway station is well served by frequent trains from across the country. For all rail enquiries, tel: 08457 484950, website: (www.nationalrail.co.uk)

■ By coach: National Express Coaches offer cheap tickets to Derby. Coaches run frequently from London Victoria coach station, website: (www.nationalexpress.com).

Where to stay

■ We stayed at the beautifully restored Cathedral Quarter Hotel in the heart of the city at 16 St Marys Gate. It's an elegant hotel full of history and perfectly placed, tel: 01332 546 080, website: (www.cathedralquarterderby.com).

Find out more

■ The cathedral website is: (www.derbycathedral.org)

■ Visit Derby is the city's official tourist organisation. Its Derby Tourist Information Centre is in the Assembly Rooms, Market Place, Derby DE1 3AH, tel: 01332 643411, website: (www.visitderby.co.uk).