



# THE GREAT CATHEDRALS OF BRITAIN

—by Dr Peter Hammond

**E**ven secular architects and engineers have to admit that the greatest examples of excellence in architecture are the cathedrals. When you consider the limited technological resources available to architects, builders, and craftsmen, who built the medieval cathedrals - with wooden scaffolding, hand tools, and boats that transported the stones from quarries to the building sites, each of these cathedrals represent staggering sacrifices and amazing achievements.

## Awesome architecture

Many of the great cathedrals of Britain were built over a thousand years ago. These cathedrals are far more than monuments to a vibrant and

living Faith. They have been meeting places for generations of Christian communities, the focal point of Christian work and witness throughout the Middle Ages to the present day.

## Wondrous attractions

To many people, today, cathedrals are seen as tourist attractions, resting places for many of the most prominent personalities over many centuries, and as venues for royal weddings, state funerals, and inspiring Christmas choirs and Easter presentations. The cathedrals of Britain are precious treasure houses reflecting over a thousand years of extraordinary artistry, excellent craftsmanship, and dynamic faith.

## CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

Canterbury Cathedral is the seat of the country's senior archbishop, as it began with St. Augustine's mission to Anglo Saxon England in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. Canterbury Cathedral is also the resting place of the most famous of all archbishops of Canterbury, Thomas Becket, who was martyred in the cathedral, 1170.



## ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL


The original St. Paul's was destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Sir Christopher Wren oversaw the baroque masterpiece which is the current St. Paul's Cathedral. It took 35 years to build, starting in 1675, in white Portland stone. The dome is 365 feet high and, until 1962,



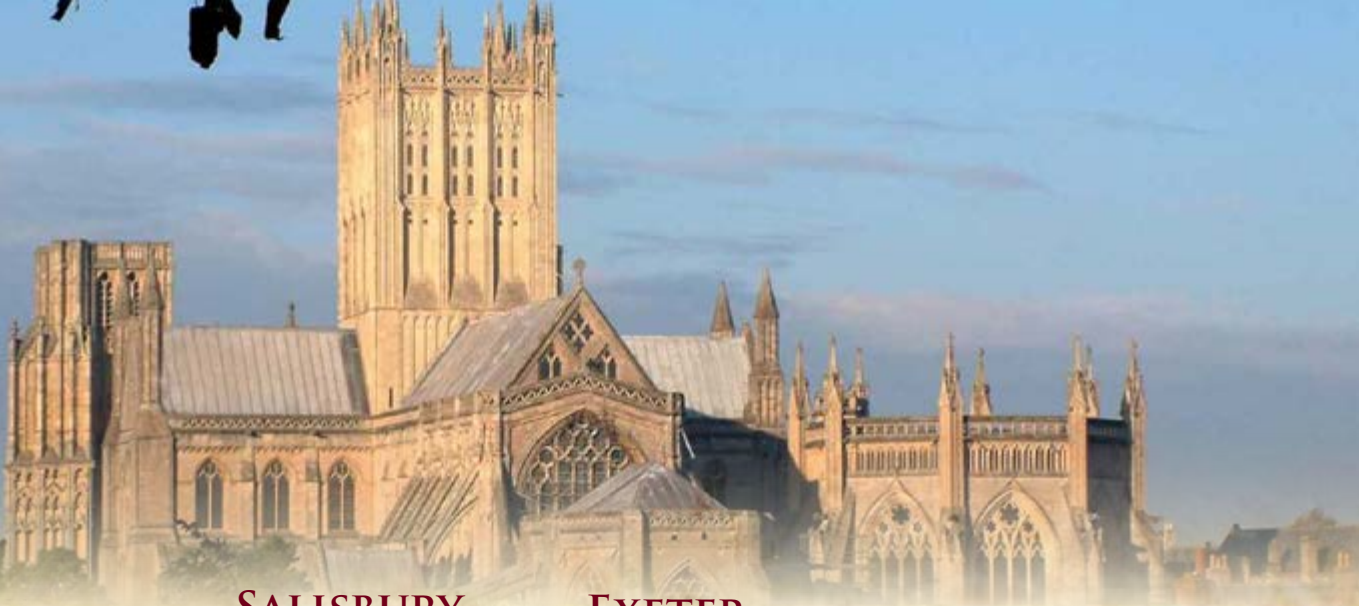
was the tallest building in London. For over 1,400 years, St. Paul's has been a place of Christian worship. It is the seat of the bishop of London and the mother church of the diocese of London. It sits on Ludgate Hill at the highest point of the city of London. The original church on the site was built in AD 604. St. Paul's is the second largest church in Britain. St. Paul's is a busy church with at least three services every day. This was the site of the famous wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1981 and of the funeral of Baroness Margaret Thatcher.

## GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL

Originally built from AD 678, the Cathedral of St. Peter and the Holy Trinity contains Saxon, Norman and Gothic architecture.



Canterbury Cathedral



## SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

Salisbury Cathedral, which began to be built in 1220, has the tallest church spire in the United Kingdom (404 feet). The cathedral also has the largest cloister and the largest cathedral close (80 acres) in Britain. The cathedral also contains the world's oldest working clock, (dating from 1386) and has the best surviving, of the four original copies, of Magna Carta (the great charter of 1215).



Salisbury Cathedral

## EXETER CATHEDRAL

Exeter Cathedral was completed by 1400 and has the longest uninterrupted vaulted ceiling in England. The Exeter Cathedral astronomical clock is one of the most famous and oldest astronomical clocks in the world, dating from 1484. The silver ball and inner dials show both the phase of the moon and the position of the sun in the sky on a 24 hour analogue dial. The door below the clock has a round hole near its base to allow the church cats to deter rats that are attracted to the fat used to lubricate the clock mechanism.



## LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

Building on Lincoln Cathedral commenced in 1088 and, for 238 years, was the tallest building in the world. For hundreds of years the cathedral held one of the four copies of the original Magna Carta, which now is displayed in Lincoln Castle. Lincoln Cathedral is one of the few English cathedrals built from the rock it is standing on. The cathedral stonemasons use more than 100 tonnes of stone per year from their own quarry for maintenance and repairs.



## WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Winchester Cathedral is one of the largest cathedrals in Europe with the longest nave and the greatest overall length of any Gothic cathedral in Europe. The cathedral was founded in AD 642 and greatly expanded in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Richard the Lionheart was crowned King of England in this cathedral in 1194. As a bishop of Winchester had condemned Joan of Arc to death in 1431, a statue of Joan of Arc was erected in Winchester Cathedral in 1923, when she was recognised as a martyr and a saint.



## DURHAM CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral Church of Christ of Durham dates back to AD 995. It is one of the finest examples of Norman architecture. County Durham is known as the Land of the Prince Bishops because of the enormous military and political power which the Bishop of Durham traditionally maintained for centuries. The tombs of St. Cuthbert of Lindesfarne and the Venerable Bede (the Historian of Saxon England), are located within Durham Cathedral.





### A Challenge and Rebuke

The cathedrals are a challenge and a rebuke to an age of prefabs and rentals. The generations who sacrificed and laboured to build these magnificent houses of worship to the glory of God built for future generations. It frequently took three generations to complete a cathedral. The generations who had laid the foundations were not normally alive to see the completion of the spires. Multiple generations have been blessed by their diligence and vision.

### Consecrated Work Requires Consecrated Workers

When Sir Christopher Wren began to rebuild St. Paul's Cathedral, he had signs erected on the construction site, declaring that as this was to be a House of Worship, all those involved in the construction were required to maintain daily devotions, attend worship services and anyone found taking the Lord's Name in vain would be immediately dismissed.

### Inspiration

Many of those building these Cathedrals found inspiration from the prophet Haggai who challenged the people of his time. *"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, and this Temple to lie in ruins? Now therefore, thus says the Lord of Hosts: 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.' Thus says the Lord of Hosts: 'Consider your ways!'"* Haggai 1:2-7

The attention to detail, even on the rooftops, which could not be seen before the age of flight, is incredible. Many of the craftsmen determined to do their very best, even on those parts which would not be seen by any but God and the Angels, because whatever you do, do it with all your heart as working for the Lord and not for men. ■

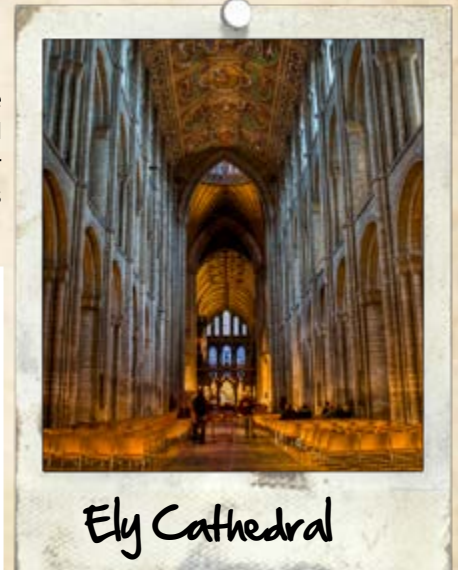


## YORK MINSTER CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral of St. Peter in York is one of the largest in Northern Europe. The large stained glass windows are the largest medieval stained glass in the world. The West window was constructed in 1339 and the great East window in 1408.

## ELY CATHEDRAL

Ely Cathedral was originally an Abby built in AD 672. The present magnificent cathedral dates back to 1083. The central octagonal tower is a unique landmark. The cathedral is a major tourist attraction receiving 250,000 visitors a year, yet maintains a pattern of morning and evening services every day.



## WELLS CATHEDRAL

Construction of Wells Cathedral began in AD 1170. Wells has been described as the most poetic of English cathedrals. The church is surrounded with sculptures and magnificent stained glass windows.

