

St Mary's Church Barnard Castle

Outline of Architecture



Original Manuscript by R.J. Jones 1913

NORMAN PERIOD	The Church is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, and owes its foundation to Bernard Balliol, who built the castle (1112-1132), and from whom the town derives its name. The original building consisted of an oblong nave without aisles or transepts, and a long chancel. The only existing portions of this edifice are part of the north wall of the chancel containing two round headed windows, and the wall above the arcade in the North aisle.
1130 Henry I	
1161 – 1181	The first extension to the Church. Insertion of North arcade and rounded arches and pillars, the building of a narrow North aisle, and the erection of the south doorway. This work is attributed to Bernard, the son of the above named Bernard Balliol.
Henry II	
EARLY ENGLISH PERIOD	Further enlargement of the Church. Insertion of the South arcade with pointed arches and octagonal pillars, the building of the South aisle and transept, and the removal of the South doorway to its present position. The original tower, probably no higher than the North aisle) surmounted by a leaden spire, erected at the north-west angle of the Church. East window in the chancel of geometrical design inserted, possible through the influence of William de Roundell, Vicar, from 1260, of the Mother – Church, Gainford, who was closely connected with St. Mary's Abbey, York; the Churches of Gainford and Barnard Castle having been given to this abbey by Bernard Balliol the First. The Church at this period consisted of a nave and two aisles, covered by a roof of one span, the south transept having a flat roof. During the early part of the fourteenth century a chantry, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was founded in the south transept (note piscina) by Robert de Mortham, Vicar of Gainford, who is buried here. His tomb now lies in the north transept.
1260-1339	
Henry III	
Edward IV	
DECORATED PERIOD	North transept erected, and north arcade lengthened by the addition of an octagonal pillar and pointed arch. Here also was a chantry, the piscina originally being situated in the wall now occupied by the archway of the organ chamber. The recesses in the north wall probably were intended for the tombs of the founders. To this period may be dated the two-light window above the organ chamber in the chancel.
1380	
Richard II	
PERPENDICULAR PERIOD.	Extensive alterations carried out. North aisle widened and north porch erected, south transept widened (note old buttress on exterior); the walls of both arcades raised to form a clerestory with windows, and embattled; chancel walls raised, also the wall of south aisle and the present windows inserted. Chancel arch rebuilt and decorated with rudely carved roses. Rood-loft erected, the entrance to the loft may be seen in the walled-up doorway above the pulpit, and traces of an outside newel stair were discovered during the restoration (1868 - 70), in the north wall of the chancel adjoining the pillar of the arch. Vestry with chamber over it for priest, added. Much of this work is attributed to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, (afterwards Richard III) who was Lord of Barnard Castle, 1477 - 1485. He gave 40 marks for the embellishment of the church and furthermore, obtained a license from Edward IV to found a college under the jurisdiction of the castle,
1477 – 1485	
Edward IV	
Richard III.	

consisting of a dean, 12 secular priests, 10 clerks, and 6 choristers, but there is no evidence to show that it was ever carried into execution. From the extent of the additions to the church it is presumed that Richard intended to create St. Mary's a Collegiate Church. The east window in the south transept, which is one of the interesting features in the church, bears the cognizance of Richard, a "boar passant", on the southern label termination outside.

Following the Reformation came a period of general debasement in church architecture, and few characteristics associated with pre-Reformation times were preserved.

1774. George III. Leaden spire removed and tower raised to a height of 60 feet.
- 1780-1814 During this period the church appears to have been in a wretched condition. The floor was unpaved, (George III) and burials were permitted in the interior; the building was damp and noisome, and no means of lighting or heating existed; structural repairs formed a frequent topic at vestry meetings. In 1814 the much-needed work of renovation was carried out, but the stately Geometrical east window was destroyed and replaced by one of inartistic design. The south wall of the chancel was rebuilt and four narrow windows superseded by a three-light window. West and north galleries were erected.
- 1823 George IV Barrel organ purchased and placed in south transept.
- 1868 - 70. Victoria. Extensive restoration of the church at a cost about £4,000. The principal alterations included the closing of the west entrance and the insertion of the present window; two galleries removed, one 41ft. long at the west end of the nave and the other in the north transept; easternmost pillar and pointed arch of north arcade displaced when gallery was erected, was rebuilt. East wall in the chancel rebuilt and a new window inserted; two new windows placed in south wall of chancel; organ chamber erected. Floor of nave lowered 2 ft. to its original level, the floor throughout relaid, and the entire fittings renewed. New windows in clerestory and other parts of church, inserted; old roof timbers repaired and strengthened. The restoration, which was carried out in the Perpendicular Style, was entrusted to Mr. F. R. N. Haswell, architect, of North Shields.
- 8th December.
1870. The church re-opened for divine service by the Bishop of Durham (Dr. Baring).
- 1873 - 74. The old tower demolished and a new structure erected at a cost of some £2,000 under the direction of Mr. Hodgson Fowler, of Durham.
1875. The chiming clock, presented by the late William Watson, Esq., of Spring Lodge, was placed in the tower about the beginning of the year
- 1913 R.J. Jones fecit