

# INTRODUCTION



## Earliest Memories

'Everybody remembers the first time they see Durham Cathedral', explained a steward one quiet Sunday afternoon as we stood at the top of the nave, looking east towards the Rose Window. 'I'm retired, and I remember the first time I came here as a nipper with the school, and I bet you remember too.' The steward was right; I do remember my first visit to Durham Cathedral. I remember that I went there on a day trip with my primary school. I was seven, maybe even younger. I remember the building looming into view through the fog as we walked two by two up the steep cobbled bank onto Palace Green, entering through the North Door and being greeted by the familiar smell of an old church. I remember that the smell reminded me of our village church, St Mary's. I remember being told the story of the 'Daily Bread Window', just next to the North Door. A bird's-eye view of the Last Supper, it depicted Jesus and his disciples all sitting around the table, with just one head out of line: that of Judas Iscariot. I remember craning my neck up high to see the beautiful colours – purple, green and blue – thinking the heads looked like rows of cabbages. I remember looking at the 'Durham Miners' Memorial Book', a book of remembrance for all the miners who had died in accidents in the mines of County Durham. One of the people looking after us children that day had the book opened on the page recording her father's death in Horden Colliery, the mine in the village where my classmates and I lived and went to school. I was struck by the fact that something

that had happened in our community had been recorded within this building and was treated with such care that the names were locked in a glass case. What stands out most about that day is my sense of wonder, standing in the nave between impossibly tall stone columns that reached upwards to an incredibly high ceiling and feeling so small, hardly able to comprehend the building's size in relation to my own.

I have visited Durham Cathedral often, with either my family or school. My family and I are not religious people and I did not attend religious schools. However, the Cathedral occupies a prominent position in the minds of those who grow up and live in County Durham. It is considered to be 'our cathedral' by many, regardless of religious outlook, and is often a source of pride for local people. Having been born and grown up in County Durham, this is how I view Durham Cathedral: a familiar friend standing high upon its peninsula, welcoming you home as you return by train. During my fieldwork, I encountered many others who viewed the Cathedral in this same way, as an entity that offered them something, whether that be a place to sit and think, worship or meet with friends. One regular visitor to the Cathedral even had a favourite column in the nave, which she would hug every time she visited.

Stepping into Durham Cathedral is a notable experience, during which the grandeur and age of the building become immediately apparent. Entering, you are greeted by people whispering and moving about, a sense of people trying to be quiet and a building continually reacting to the noises they make, amplifying them and sending them reverberating down the vast echo chamber that is the nave. According to Nikolaus Pevsner and Priscilla Metcalf, the character of Durham Cathedral has changed so little since its inception in 1093 that, after entering the Cathedral through the North Door and taking a seat 'to abandon himself to his first impressions, [the visitor] can be certain that it is essentially at the design of the first great master that he is looking' (1985: 81).

The first dominating visual experience is the view down the full length of the nave towards the east and the massive Rose Window. Standing in the central aisle of the nave and looking towards the Rose Window brings home the majestic size of the building, allowing you to take in all of the 201 ft long, 39 ft wide and 73 ft high space at once. From this vantage point, the north and south transepts are not easily visible, nor is the empty space of the tower above the crossing, known as the lantern. You get the impression of a long tunnel lined with long wooden pews, all facing east. The central aisle is flanked by side aisles that seem to retreat from the bright stage lighting that delicately illuminates the central aisle. Above, the stone vaulted ceiling uniformly works its way down the nave, evenly interspersed with pointed transverse arches that bear the load of the ceiling ending with a rounded arch at the crossing.



**Figure 0.1.** The nave of Durham Cathedral looking east towards the Rose Window.  
© Arran J. Calvert.

Over the years since that first visit, the building has continued to inspire wonder in me and, with time, I grew curious about the ways in which people live in a building that is over nine hundred years old, a building that has persistently endured so much change and has itself changed so much. One common phrase I heard during my fieldwork was that Durham Cathedral could be whatever you wanted it to be. This stuck with me. That a building so clearly devoted to Christian worship could be whatever you wanted it to be highlights the complex, multifaceted relationship between the building and those who use it, a dynamic relationship in which people do not simply live in Durham Cathedral but live with Durham Cathedral. Indeed, that is what this book is about: the many forms of engagement between the community and the Cathedral in daily life. I want to show that Durham Cathedral is not a background to life. It is not something in which life happens; rather, it is something with which life happens.

## A Brief History of Durham Cathedral

In showing that Durham Cathedral is not a backdrop to life, it is important to summarize some of the key moments in its history. Many individuals have left their mark on the fabric of the building, on the stories people still tell about it and on the ways people relate to the building.

Just as Igor Kopytoff's 'The Cultural Biography of Things' (1986) argues that to understand the value of things, we must examine their biographies, Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall (1999: 170) highlight that taking a biographical approach to understanding things helps to reveal the meanings that have come to be invested in them. Arguing that meanings change and are renegotiated over the course of the life of things, Gosden and Marshall rightfully point out that 'meaning emerges from social action and the purpose of an artefact biography is to illuminate that process' (ibid.).

While my intention in this book is to show how Durham Cathedral as it is known and experienced today emerges through social action and interaction, I do not intend to trace its biography, spanning eleven centuries, in detail. However, understanding the world in which the building emerged will set the scene for its development.

The Bishop of Durham was described as having control over a territory that was independent from the Crown during the Middle Ages, called the Palatine of Durham. Some even used the term 'Prince Bishop' to describe him, though this term was not used in medieval times. The independence and privileges of Durham were at times tolerated by the Crown and, at other times, encouraged as Durham occupied a strategically important position between Scotland and England.

Set high on a peninsula, Durham Cathedral is surrounded on three sides by the River Wear – an excellent location from a strategic point of view. Indeed, in the 1817 poem *Harold the Dauntless* by the celebrated Scottish writer Walter Scott, Durham Cathedral is described as being ‘Half church of God, half castle ’gainst the Scot’. However, according to local oral history, defence is not the reason why the Cathedral was founded on this site. According to the chronicler Symeon of Durham’s *Libellus de Exordio* (written in the early twelfth century and translated by David Rollason; 2000), the monks from the See of Lindisfarne, established in AD 635 by St Aidan, had left the island of Lindisfarne in AD 875 out of fear of continuing Viking attacks. They took with them as much of their riches as they could carry, among the most important of which was the incorrupt body of St Cuthbert. They eventually established an episcopal see in Chester-le-Street from 882 until 995, when they left, again fearing Viking attacks. During their second period of wandering, the cart carrying St Cuthbert came to a halt in a place called Wrdelau and could not be moved. Taking the cart’s lack of movement as a sign of St Cuthbert’s unwillingness to return to Chester-le-Street, the monks undertook three days of fasting, prayers and vigils in the hope of a heavenly sign. They did receive a sign, telling them to take St Cuthbert to a place called Dunelm and prepare a resting place there.

While the *Libellus de Exordio* does not describe how the monks found Dunelm, school children from Durham (such as I) are told the story of the lost monks encountering a milkmaid looking for her Dunn cow. The monks followed the milkmaid and found her cow on the peninsular hill of Dunelm in 995. Upon this peninsula, the monks again established the episcopal see, which had begun with St Aidan in Lindisfarne. They built a small wooden church that was later followed by a larger stone church known locally as the White Church. Finally, the construction of the current Cathedral began in 1093 with the laying of the foundation stone by the prior Turgot of Durham (later Bishop of St Andrews) and the Norman bishop William de St Calais.

The previous bishop, William Walcher – who, in 1076, bought the position of Earl of Northumberland after the rebellion of the previous Earl Waltheof – was a Lotharingian; Lotharingia was a kingdom that emerged from the Carolingian Empire, located on what is today the northernmost border between France, Germany and western Switzerland. In 1071, Walcher became the first Norman appointed bishop to help subdue the local Anglo-Saxon population during a tense period following the 1069–70 ‘Harrying of the North’. The religious community at Durham Cathedral at the time was comprised of secular monks. As Symeon of Durham’s *Libellus de Exordio* explains, when Walcher ‘found clerks in that place he taught them to observe the custom of clerks in the day and night Offices’ (Symeon of Durham

2000: 106). Historical and archaeological records also suggest that Walcher may have intended to replace the secular community with a fully monastic one, with Symeon stating that Walcher began to build what he describes as a ‘*monachorum habitacula*’, or monk dwellings, adjoining the existing cathedral.

Following the murder of Walcher – the result of a feud between a local aristocrat and two of Walcher’s henchmen – King William sent his half-brother Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, with an army to harry the area again, in the course of which they laid waste to much of the region between York and Durham. As a replacement for the murdered Walcher, William de St Calais was appointed, becoming the first Norman Bishop of Durham. This was a political decision rather than a religious one. The new bishop needed to be a robust and capable leader in the dangerous and unstable north. At this time, the position of Bishop of Durham ‘cannot have been much coveted by any conventionally ambitious clergyman’ (Matthew 1994: 6).

These two events – Walcher inviting the monks to the Cathedral and his murder – helped set clear boundaries ‘between the bishopric of Durham and the earldom of Northumbria’, the former being established between the rivers Tyne and Tees (Liddy 2008: 187). The origin story of Durham Cathedral and several other mythical and miraculous stories, drawing on the Old Testament’s ‘chosen people’, which were often described and perpetuated by Symeon, helped establish this territory as the rightful land of the people living there, ‘the people of the saint’, whose continuity was constructed on the basis of carrying Cuthbert’s body onwards. As Christian Drummond Liddy argues, ‘whatever St Cuthbert’s wider regional cult, it was at Durham that the body of Cuthbert came to rest, and it was with the land between Tyne and Tees that he was most closely connected. It was here that the “people of the saint” lived’ (ibid.: 189). This powerful sense of community, connected to St Cuthbert, allowed the bishopric of Durham to maintain a powerful autonomy from the king as the Bishops of Durham during the late Middle Ages claimed a ‘self-professed position as trustees of St Cuthbert’, in turn allowing them to ‘lay claim to an ideological source of power independent of the crown and to affirm their autonomy from royal intervention in matters of finance and jurisdiction’ (ibid.: 197). This strong sense of community and identity allowed the people of Durham to hold some bishops accountable and remind them that the land between the rivers Tyne and Tees was not private land for bishops to use as they wished; rather, ‘it was a territory which also belonged to his people’ (ibid.: 198).

The introduction of the Rule of St Benedict had a significant effect on the Cathedral’s layout because in addition to housing the cathedra, the building would need to house a community of monastic monks who needed a place to sleep, eat, work and pray separately from the public. Indeed, Richard

D. Irvine highlights ‘the active role of buildings in Benedictine life’ (2013: 25). Moreover, since Durham was a cathedral priory, it needed to accommodate pilgrims and members of the public during particular services, which also influenced the building’s emerging shape.

Throughout its history, Durham Cathedral has been almost continuously inhabited and it has gone through several periods of change, affecting its fabric and community. After ceasing to serve as a Benedictine priory on 31 December 1540, as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, it became a place of Anglican worship with a college of canons in January 1541. Following the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, the Cathedral was used as a prison, housing an estimated 3,000–5,000 Scottish prisoners, many of whom died daily from ‘the flux’ (Letter from Haselrigge to Parliament, October 1650, in Bowles 1927: 8–11). After this dark period, the Cathedral was used continuously as a place of daily worship, with the building and community slowly modernizing as a result of changes such as the addition of heating systems in the nineteenth century and Wi-Fi routers in the twenty-first century. Amid such changes, the importance of continuity in Durham Cathedral has been repeatedly established and re-established.

In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, John Ruskin perceptively acknowledges that ‘the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold’; rather, he considers a building’s greatest glory to be its age and describes ‘that deep sense of voicefulness . . . which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity’ (1849: 233–34). This sentiment recurs throughout this book as members of the community recognize the deep history of the building and the many lives that have engaged with the building. The common acknowledgement of the centuries of prayers that have seeped into the stones of Durham Cathedral is a testament to the recognition that the building has not simply been witness to history but is a consequence of it. Indeed, Sally Foster and Siân Jones, in discussing Ruskin’s suggestion in relation to the biography of the Hilton of Cadboll Pictish cross-slab, argue that ‘it is the effects of human engagement over time which produces their voicefulness or sense of authenticity’ (2008: 266).

While this brief history cannot serve as the sole testimony to this fact, this book continually finds that human engagement has been central to the emergence of Durham Cathedral as it is experienced today: not as a building that is separate from its turbulent but temporally distant history but as a continual emergence from this history as events are remembered, retold and experienced in the materiality of the building. From the stories of lost monks told to school children to the damage caused to effigies of local nobility in the nave by Scottish soldiers, this history is not separate from the present but is at all times experiential in Durham Cathedral.

## What Is a Cathedral?

In the English medieval world that gave birth to Durham Cathedral, religion was strongly intertwined with the state and state power. At the same time, the Catholic Church's power extended across Europe, with the pope at the head of the Church. In England, the highest representative of the pope was the Archbishop of Canterbury, one of two archbishops in the country, which was divided into two provinces that were, in turn, subdivided into dioceses (or sees). The northern province was governed by the Archbishop of York. Within the provinces, dioceses were governed by bishops. Both archbishops also had their own diocese. English dioceses were among the richest in Europe, which led to the building of exceptional churches and cathedrals. The importance of cathedrals derived from them being the 'headquarters' of the bishops, who had both political and pastoral powers. The term 'cathedral' comes from the 'cathedra', the throne of a bishop, which was housed within a cathedral.

In the medieval world, there were two common ways of living within the Church. Firstly, there were the monks who devoted their entire lives to God by living under a written Rule. In Durham Cathedral, it was the Rule of St Benedict that guided the monks' day-to-day existence. Second, there were 'secular churchmen', such as most bishops and parish priests. These were men who lived out in the world, separate from the community of monks, and were allowed to possess their own property. Aside from being the headquarters of a bishop, then, cathedrals were also home to a religious community that supported the bishop in the running of his diocese. Durham Cathedral, a monastic cathedral that was called a cathedral priory, was home to a community of Benedictine monks led by a prior. In this particular structure, the bishop took on the role of the abbot, outranking the prior. The monks were all members of the Chapter, the governing body of the cathedral, and received financial support from lands owned by the cathedral. Ten English cathedrals, including Durham, were run on this model. The other nine cathedrals were secular, following the collegiate-church model, with a core community of senior priests, or canons, who were supported by a portion of church land. They formed a Chapter and were led by a dean, who was hierarchically the second in command under the bishop.

During the sixteenth-century Reformation, as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries (1536–41) and Henry VIII's decision to break with Rome, most cathedral priories had shifted to a secular structure by 1541. Henry VIII also changed the power relation between the state and religion, secularizing the state. At this time, many of the cathedrals' riches and relics were either seized by the Crown or taken away and destroyed. Such major destruction was later repeated during the English Civil War (1642–51), with Puritans destroying religious images and many cathedrals being abandoned



and locked. This included Durham, which was used as a prison for Scottish prisoners of war following the Battle of Dunbar in 1650. Such historical and social changes and the various power shifts mean that today many cathedrals look very different to how they would have looked throughout their earlier history. For example, medieval glass and large sculptures, in general, have not survived and Durham Cathedral's wooden furnishings were destroyed by Scottish soldiers, who used them for firewood. Throughout all of this, cathedrals have undergone much change – both changes in their interiors and architectural and spatial changes – as styles and modes of dwelling have slowly developed.

In the most basic terms, therefore, a cathedral is simply a church within which the bishop's 'cathedra' is housed. The Bishop of Durham's throne is situated within the quire, set above the tomb of the fourteenth-century Bishop Hatfield. The cathedra is mounted high above all other seating and is ornately decorated. Bishops today rarely use the throne, viewing the cathedra's high position as aloof. This position demonstrates that, throughout its history, the bishop's headquarters and throne have been part of political power as bishops were appointed by the Crown and 'played their part in the running of a secular government, attending royal councils and shire courts' (Brown 2003: 28). The cathedrals were, and are, like businesses and institutions striving for vast wealth and independence. Their power and embeddedness in the social order are attested by the fact that city status was linked to cathedrals. 'As new dioceses were created in Anglo-Saxon England, the towns in which they were located enjoyed the status of cities' (Beckett 2001: 1). This practice continued under Henry VIII. Birmingham became the first town without a cathedral to be granted city status in 1889, though a cathedral was soon established in 1905.

While the Church was widely integrated into society during the Middle Ages, it was also characterized by the diversity of its 'religious culture' (Brown 2003: 4), 'containing an enormous variety of ideas, institutions and people' (Cannon 2007: 23). As will emerge throughout this book, the Chapter of Durham Cathedral still tries to open up the Cathedral for the wider Durham community, leading to a wide range of people and ideas being brought within the Cathedral walls. Today, a cathedral has come to mean a lot more than a building that houses a bishop's throne for those who dwell in it. While Danny Danziger defines cathedrals as 'the most phenomenal expression of spirituality' (1989: 8), for some, they represent a place in which one can 'belong, but in a rather "arm's-length" manner' (Platten 2006: 5). Often, they are big enough to offer those unsure about worship a sense of anonymity.

More broadly, cathedrals can be viewed as 'iconic buildings for many who rarely enter them', with 'many communities competing for space in any cathedral' (James 2006: 13), and Durham Cathedral is no different.

A cathedral, therefore, is a building that has the potential for many competing and negotiating spaces to be created by people in the building. Indeed, these negotiations are often at the centre of discussions throughout this book.

The question of what a cathedral is has inspired a large amount of research across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Taking a wide cross-section of such research, Chaoran Wang and Michael Andrew Hann (2019) examine the inspirations behind medieval cathedrals' floor-plan designs, revealing their complex geometric constructions. Similarly, Norman Smith takes an approach informed by engineering history to understand historical structural questions, for example, 'whether the observation of cracking was a part of the design experience, or whether cracks were regarded as merely a nuisance which let water in'. Ultimately, Smith concludes, it is important to recognize that 'the medieval engineer's concepts and methods depended predominantly on experience, intuition and trial and error' (2003: 57). Such research is clearly relevant to the reconstruction of Notre Dame de Paris, which featured in an article entitled 'Notre Dame: Rebuilding an Icon' in the February 2022 issue of *National Geographic*, as well as appearing on the cover.

Elena Giovannoni and Paolo Quattrone used the construction of Siena Cathedral between 1259 and 1357 to display the interconnections between conceived, perceived and lived spaces, thereby challenging the 'so-called metaphysics of presence in organization studies' (2018: 849). Meanwhile, Marie Clausen's (2016) approach to cathedrals investigates their long-lasting appeal. Using Durham Cathedral as an example, Clausen considers how and why such buildings should be preserved. In doing so, she makes use of visitor feedback and personal experience to interpret architecture as experience-based instead of discussing it in more conventional ways, such as those proposed above by Smith (2003).

Considering the conservation of cathedrals, Siân Jones and Thomas Yarrow (2013, 2014, 2022) have examined how historic buildings such as Glasgow Cathedral are cared for through conservation efforts. They focus on concerns ranging from the authenticity of materials in conservation work to the engagement that occurs through the skilled practices of masons. Taking a different approach to conservation, Michael O'Connor (1998) considers the negative aspects of securing conservation funding, arguing that the speed at which work can be carried out should never take precedence over the quality of work and in cases in which there are insufficient funds to ensure the necessary quality of the work, a reduced response would be preferential.

In terms of cathedral research that focuses on the people who enter cathedrals, Richard Voase used qualitative data from focus-group discussions to explore the psychology of a 'rich experience' in cathedrals. He found that experiences in these places were 'romantic and primarily emotional' and concluded that visitor management at the unnamed English cathedral in

question should ‘emphasize connection with human continuity’ (2007: 41). Myra Shackley (2006), on the other hand, questions the impact of cathedral tourism in England, finding that cathedrals offer a substantial benefit in terms of visitor spending in the local area as tourists spend time not only in the cathedrals but also in the surrounding urban centres in which they are situated. Reports by both the Theos and the Grubb Institute (2012) and Dee Dyas (2017) have examined the wider roles of English cathedrals and found that the importance of cathedrals resides in their ability to engage in and sustain a broad range of connections that extend beyond a tourist and pilgrim scope. The reports found that they offer diverse spaces of valuable spiritual capital. Finally, Leslie Francis’s (2015) edited volume offers a range of theologically informed empirical studies on cathedrals, dedicated to topics ranging from who attends cathedral carol services and why, to the spiritual quest of visitors and even the motivational styles of cathedral congregations.

What is often overlooked in such research is the interconnected relationships in which cathedrals are involved. In taking a more focused approach to the study of cathedrals as those mentioned above, one inevitably loses the complexities of the various parts of cathedral communities and, in turn, the multiple connections to and relationships with the buildings as individuals and groups engage and interact with the cathedral organism in their own unique way.

In choosing to undertake a long-term ethnographic study spanning fourteen months, I aimed to take a more holistic approach to understanding what a cathedral is, beyond a tourist attraction, a place of worship and a building of importance to historical and cultural heritage. I wanted to understand what a cathedral is around the edges, how it is experienced on cold January mornings and how this differs from busy religious holidays. To do so, I undertook numerous interviews with people engaged in many areas of cathedral life and those connected to the Cathedral from afar, for example, county council leaders. Similarly, I spent a large amount of time working in the archives of Durham Cathedral and Durham University, where much of the Cathedral archive is held. Exerting perhaps the greatest influence on my research, however, were the many voluntary roles I filled, for example, as a LEGO builder, a Sunday afternoon steward, helping out on weekday mornings in the finance office, and simply being useful whenever and wherever I could, all of which brought me into contact with the many different parts of the Cathedral community. This not only allowed me to grasp the multitude of ways in which the community and building are experienced; it also gave me a sense of what it means to be an invested part of the community and daily life of Durham Cathedral.

One of the central points of this book is that life in Durham Cathedral is an emergent process of dwelling. As people go about their daily lives, they

are engaged in caring for and cultivating the building/community symbiosis. This symbiosis is ‘the Cathedral’ and it is a continuous process of negotiation. Being present in Durham Cathedral for such an extended period of time afforded me the opportunity to see how these negotiations were expressed and engaged, which revealed a complex and dynamic process of dwelling that emerges through these multiple negotiations between community and building. While this process is not always easy, it is necessary for the continuation of the Cathedral as a living, dynamic and symbiotic organism.

Viewing the community and building as separate, or at least failing to give credence to the relationship between them, results in cathedrals being perceived as tourist attractions or places of worship against a backdrop of historically significant materials that undergo conservation in order to maintain their authenticity. What then falls out of focus is the fact that cathedrals are qualitatively more complex than the sum of their parts. That is not to say that other researchers have not recognized this complexity. Indeed, such recognition has likely inspired the diverse approaches to the understanding of cathedrals. However, by taking a more holistic, immersed approach and understanding that the spaces of Durham Cathedral open up over time, intersections begin to appear between the experience of life in Durham Cathedral and meaning-making. These intersections offer spaces in which creativity in negotiation occurs. In each of the three parts of this book, these negotiations are the central focus, whether the negotiations be between the various parts of the community of Durham Cathedral (Part I), the ways the building and community experientially engage (Part II) or the manner in which building through dwelling is a continuous process of negotiation (Part III).

Throughout this book, I argue that Durham Cathedral can be viewed as a laboratory, a place of experimentation in which community, experience and building are all in a process of continuous negotiation through dwelling. This dwelling involves care and cultivation, which result in ‘the Cathedral’ unfolding into the world. As such, Durham Cathedral, and many other cathedrals and community buildings, should not be viewed as disconnected backdrops to life within the building. Nor should they be seen as representations of the community. Rather, they are living, symbiotic organisms of dwelling that are continuously unfolding over time. This book, therefore, explores the various ways in which dwelling is articulated, thus displaying the continual unfolding of the Cathedral.

When viewed in its totality, this book reveals the complex ways in which cathedrals are deeply woven into a collective and dynamic understanding of heritage, community and belonging. I argue, therefore, that in order to understand what a cathedral is in its current state, one must attempt to understand the tapestry into which the building has, for centuries, been

continually woven. It is only when we begin to step back and view this wider tapestry of meaning that we can start to appreciate the complex unfoldings that are cathedrals.

As I briefly showed above, cathedrals have inspired, and continue to inspire, a vast amount of academic literature, much of which is concerned with what a cathedral is. However, long-term ethnographic research has not been a key component of these studies and so the benefits of the methodological approaches afforded by long-term fieldwork have not been able to flourish. As this book reveals, it is only through long-term fieldwork that the unfolding of the Cathedral through dwelling and the symbiotic relationships involved in that process begin to reveal themselves. Indeed, in the absence of extended fieldwork, such relationships might be suggested but never viewed in action. One of the recurring and perhaps most revealing comments that I have heard in Durham Cathedral is that community and the many actions in which it engages, including worship, meeting friends for coffee and a plethora of other activities, are given space in which to engage with the building. The result of this is that people can find their own space within the Cathedral and thus continue the symbiotic process of care and cultivation.

## Experiencing Durham Cathedral

In considering the way in which cathedrals provide space for people, one particular approach that has been used involves viewing English cathedrals as heterotopias. A term initially formulated by Michel Foucault (2008), Michiel Dehaene and Lieven De Cauter comment that Foucault's use of the term referred to 'various institutions and places that interrupt the apparent continuity and normality of everyday space' (2008: 3–4). In articles by Shackley (2002) and Jorge Gutic, Eliza Caie and Andy Clegg (2010), the term is applied to English cathedrals in an attempt to make sense of visitor motivations. While neither article relies on long-term fieldwork – the latter involved questionnaires being completed over an eleven-day period – both argue that visitors are searching for 'sacred spaces, or heterotopia' (Gutic, Caie and Clegg 2010: 756). While Shackley suggests that this is a conscious effort, Gutic, Caie and Clegg argue that it is subconscious.

Although both studies illuminate the issues I have noted above, namely that such short periods of fieldwork reveal nothing but the shallowest of the complex relations that exist in cathedrals, the concept of the heterotopia may still have proven useful to this study. However, as Edward Soja points out, it was never fully worked out by Foucault and, as such, the concept is 'frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent' (1996: 162). In elaborating on

the difficulty of the concept, Benjamin Genocchio argues that the heterotopia represents a

space of exclusion within [Foucault's] writings, but, knowing full well the impossibility of its realization, it comes to designate not so much an absolutely differentiated space as the site of that very limit, tension, impossibility. (1995: 42)

As a result of the lack of unity in the interpretation of the concept of the heterotopia and the fact that the term is 'seldom employed as a systematically developed concept', Nikita Kharlamov argues that the term is most often 'used to pin down the basic intuition that some places and spaces manifest a certain tension between different and contradictory organizing logics, patterns, and meanings' (2014: 864). While these tensions are of interest to this study, the analytical pathways that heterotopias might reveal were, I felt, overly restrictive. I do not doubt that many who enter cathedrals find a heterotopic space, 'a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable' (Foucault 1986: 15). Yet, there are just as many who do not, finding instead a place of employment, a place that is firmly a part of their everyday actions and experiences. In recognizing the vast number of ways in which Durham Cathedral is engaged with and experienced, my approach has been influenced by more phenomenological approaches, offering a means of understanding and analysing the diverse ways in which Durham Cathedral is experienced.

As Maurice Merleau-Ponty outlines, phenomenology is 'the study of essences', understood not as being separate from the world we experience but 'within existence'; in his view, the only way to 'understand man and the world is by beginning from their "facticity"'. In short, phenomenology is the account of "'lived" space, "lived" time, and the "lived" world' (2014: lxx). However, as both Henri Bergson (1946) and Tim Ingold point out, life does not 'begin here or end there' (2000: 172). Rather, it is in a state of constant motion. Since we are in every way so completely related to the world, 'the only way for us to catch sight of ourselves is by suspending this movement' (Merleau-Ponty 2014: lxxvii). This must be done because presuppositions are otherwise "'taken for granted" and they pass by unnoticed'. However, by breaking away from our familiarity with the world, such a 'rupture can teach us nothing except the unmotivated springing forth of the world' (ibid.). Phenomenology, therefore, offers pathways towards 'thinking rigorously and . . . describing accurately the complex relation between person and world' (Seamon and Mugerauer 2000: 1).

Developing on a phenomenological approach, it is important to consider the concept of the 'environment'. My own perspective on the environment

is informed by Ingold's description, whereby the environment takes on relevance depending on who is experiencing that environment. 'Thus, *my* environment is the world as it exists and takes on meaning in relation to me, and in that sense it came into existence and undergoes development with me and around me' (Ingold 2000: 20, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, environments are never complete: created through the ongoing 'activities of living beings, then so long as life goes on, they are continually under construction' (ibid.). This is essential to the understanding of the relationship between Durham Cathedral and the people who have inhabited and continue to inhabit the building because, as will become apparent throughout this book, the continuing 'usefulness' of the 900-plus-year-old building is dependent on the building's state of constant making.

In contrast to the term 'environment', David Seamon uses the more phenomenological term 'lifeworld', describing this as the 'everyday realm of experiences, actions, and meanings typically taken for granted' (2017: 1). Designating buildings as both lifeworlds and places, Seamon suggests that place is the 'lived component of lifeworld that is most relevant for examining architectural experience and meaning' (ibid.). Thus, from a phenomenological standpoint, 'place can be defined as any environmental locus that draws human experiences, actions, and meanings together spatially and temporally' (ibid.). In this sense, buildings such as Durham Cathedral become places that not only underpin and maintain lifeworlds, but also maintain a lived engagement with a number of different lifeworlds that come to be connected through that building. Thus, a building such as Durham Cathedral becomes a constellation of 'actions, events, situations, and experiences all associated with and activated by the individuals and groups that make use of that building' (ibid.).

How, then, might we go about practically experiencing a building? Richard Kearny recalls Merleau-Ponty's argument that our bodies are 'living centres of intentionality' in which a symbiotic relationship exists as 'we choose our world and . . . our world chooses us' (1995: 74). Similarly, Juhani Pallasmaa develops an approach to architecture and the world around us that situates its existence through the body. This again results in a symbiotic relationship between our embodied experience and our environment in which each comes to define the other. Consequently, 'I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me' (2012: 43). The parallels between Pallasmaa and Ingold are clear: the environment and our bodies are continually under construction as a result of the process of day-to-day life. Our continuous interaction and engagement with our environments continuously inform and redefine both our environments and ourselves. We experience the world around us in a unified way, with 'the percept of the body and the image of the world turn[ing] into one single continuous existential experience'

(ibid.). Pallasmaa's understanding of how we experience architecture has had a significant influence on my approach to daily life in Durham Cathedral, particularly my examination of the relationship between the people of Durham Cathedral and the building itself.

The role of negotiation in maintaining a relationship between the building and the people is also important. As Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold point out, 'there is no script for social and cultural life' (2007: 1). Instead, life needs to be worked out as we go along, improvising our way through various situations. Setting out four important points of improvisation, they suggest that it is generative and thus promotes 'phenomenal forms of culture as experienced by those who live by them or in accord with them' (ibid.). It is relational and thus continually engaging with and reacting to others, as well as being temporal in that it emerges over a duration and is incapable of being reduced down to a single moment. Finally, 'improvisation is *the way we work*' (ibid.: 1, emphasis in the original). Understanding improvisation as a creative process, then, involves viewing the world as 'always in the making' (Jackson 1996: 4).

Creative processes of negotiation and improvisation occur among groups of people that share a building without necessarily sharing the same agenda. This book will, in part, be an examination of how these groups of people – which sometimes come together and sometimes disperse – collaborate or clash as they negotiate and improvise their meeting in a shared building by carving out separate spaces and thereby shaping and being shaped by Durham Cathedral. The image of community within Durham Cathedral is not a neat picture of unity in the worship of God. Rather, it is a messy picture that emerges through continuous processes of change, negotiation and the co-existence of the numerous groups of people and agendas, religious and otherwise, that come together within the shared space of Durham Cathedral. As such, I approach Durham Cathedral as a place of contestation, contradiction and opposition, arguing that this messy process of change and negotiation creates the character and environment of Durham Cathedral today. I present the Cathedral as I found it, a space that encompasses a wide spectrum of life and space-making and not simply a sacred or religious space.

I build my analysis, therefore, upon the assumption that Durham Cathedral as a building – its fabric and its space – is always in motion; it is always in the making. Those who inhabit it and interact with it constantly negotiate its space among each other, as well as negotiating the many possibilities of the building's materiality. Thus, improvisation comes into play when space has to be divided between tourists and worshippers, or when heating has to be managed in order to make the otherwise cold nave habitable and even comfortable.



While we may live in a world of constant motion, in which everything is ‘always in the making’ (Jackson 1996: 4), the subtle fluidity of this change is not always apparent. Looking at Durham Cathedral, unpractised eyes may not see the erosion of the stones or the changes in how spaces are used. They may not notice the bricked-up doorway 12 feet from the ground with no sight of a staircase. The archives, however, quickly reveal that the doorway once offered a route directly from the Monks’ Dormitory straight into the nave so that they would not have to brave the cold winter conditions on their way to the night Offices. Similarly, the archives reveal that the Cathedral library was once the Monks’ Refectory and that the restaurant was once a cool dark storage space for food and drink. Although these spaces may not have changed substantially in my lifetime – the library has been used as such since the seventeenth century and the restaurant has existed since the 1970s – it is important to remember that these spaces bear the marks of their past. Most obviously, they were built for their former uses and are now recommissioned and renegotiated spaces. In the Galilee Chapel, for example, the columns show signs of significant erosion, thought to be the result of the removal of the roof in the eighteenth century and later the burning of coke – a fuel made from coal that burns at higher temperatures – releasing into the relatively small space of the chapel acidic gases that reacted with the polished limestone known as Purbeck marble. Human practices and needs (staying warm, in this case) do not always suit the fabric of the building, which pushes back due to their attributes and so eroding if not treated adequately. If people wish to continue inhabiting the spaces between the Cathedral’s walls, present and future practices must engage with the practices of the past.

As Ian Hodder points out, we often take the things around us for granted, failing to acknowledge their temporal connections and failing to appreciate that things depend on other things and that they are not inert. As such, there is a ‘spatial and temporal forgetting of the unstable connections of things’ (2012: 6). Using a wristwatch as an example, Hodder remarks that the watch has spatial and temporal connections that we ignore:

The wristwatch is also the product of millennia of change in temporal schemes. My watch tells the date. The yearly calendar was first fixed by Julius Caesar – trying to wrest power from religious leaders who controlled a variable time. This Julian calendar was replaced by a Gregorian one – that established our current 12 months and the start of the year on January 1 . . . I am linked to Julius Caesar directly through my watch. And yet for most of the time we ignore these histories. (Ibid.)

As I have shown already in this introduction, the body of St Cuthbert, buried in Durham Cathedral, links the community and the building back to the island of Lindisfarne and is often referenced by the clergy and community, illustrating the importance of acknowledging the temporal connections that exist within the environment. Furthermore, decisions made in relation to the building nowadays also explore these connections to the past. An example of this would be the question of charging an entrance fee, as many other cathedrals do. The decision not to introduce a fee was made, in part, because of the core Benedictine value that all visitors should be welcomed as if welcoming Jesus (chapter 53 of the Rule of St Benedict). Although the Cathedral is no longer a Benedictine priory, it is still partially informed by its spatial and temporal connections. Whilst these are but two examples of the building's connections with the past, there are many such connections that are evident throughout cathedral life.

Acknowledging the role of the past is also important as the past is inscribed into the fabric of the building, not only as a result of past human activities but also as a result of past environmental changes as the wind and rain constantly erode the walls. Life with Durham Cathedral depends on the negotiation of these spatial and temporal influences on the building, both human and environmental. The running of the Cathedral costs more than £1 million a year. This money funds, among other things, the changing of eroded stones – Durham sandstone is particularly porous and so erodes at a faster rate than other, less porous forms of sandstone – the replacement of rotten wood, and heating, so visitors feel comfortable, all of which are processes of negotiation with the past. Similarly, the finding of alternative funding methods to charging an entrance fee has been informed by the Cathedral's past. Since these temporal connections have agency in daily life within Durham Cathedral, it is important to recognize that they, too, are ongoing negotiations of the past, aiding the forming of the present, and that they are constantly referring back to the imagined past of the community of monks who once inhabited the building.

## Book Structure

This book is organized into three main parts. The first part, 'Life in Durham Cathedral', explores the community directly through the narratives of members of various parts of Durham Cathedral's community. I discuss not only what 'community' is in the context of the Cathedral, but also the difficulties in negotiating between different parts of the community, as well as dealing with both a changing building and dynamic and shifting identities. Thus, the complexity of 'value' within community begins to emerge.

Chapter 2 examines the role that religion plays, not in the day-to-day services provided for the congregation but in the wider context of life within Durham Cathedral. Religion is particularly intriguing in the context of a world and a building that are seemingly becoming increasingly secular, with religion being seen as less and less meaningful in life. Chapter 3 explores the dynamic that exists between tourism and pilgrimage. As the clergy at the Cathedral are at pains to see all visitors as pilgrims, I question the value and impact of doing so. The chapters in this first part reveal the changing dynamic of cathedral life, which is slowly opening up to the diverse ways in which the building can be, and is, experienced by a wide range of individuals, with space being provided to allow for negotiation between various intentions and needs.

The second part, ‘Experiencing Durham Cathedral’, examines daily life in the building in relation to sound, light, time and space. Chapter 4 considers the role played by sound – for example, its role in religious services – and how sound informs and reveals aspects of the relationship between the building and the community. In chapter 5, I turn my attention towards the role that light plays in this relationship, again exploring its role in religious services and in how we experience the building and its architecture. The final chapter in this part considers the role of both time and space in Durham Cathedral. I consider how the community organizes itself over time and ultimately how the building helps to accommodate the various groups of people who use the building at the same time for very different purposes, highlighting the constant negotiation of space and time that occurs in the ever-changing environment.

In the final part of this book, entitled ‘The Living Cathedral’, I shift the focus to the building itself, considering its continually changing body. Each of the chapters in this final section emerges from the previous chapter as they, in turn, explore the processes of building, dwelling in and changing Durham Cathedral. Chapter 7 examines the building of a cathedral, considering the parallels with the construction of a scale replica of Durham Cathedral in LEGO during my fieldwork. I explore the processes of building that intrinsically tie communities to the building, as well as the role of templates as building tools for both LEGO and stone cathedrals. Chapter 8 moves on to the dwelling process, in which attention shifts from construction to the tending to and caring for that emerge as key elements of the dwelling process. Again, I draw on the construction of the LEGO Cathedral. In the last chapter of Part III, I explore the role heritage plays in the continuous process of change in Durham Cathedral, examining how conservation has impacted the flow of life in the building, so that it may be preserved for future generations, and highlighting the important role played by negotiation and the community in this process.

Finally, in the coda of this book I make the argument that historically important buildings such as Durham Cathedral cannot be seen as backdrops to life in which the buildings' material value is cherished above all else. Rather, I contend that life does not happen *in* Durham Cathedral but *with* Durham Cathedral as the building and community form a symbiotic organism of dwelling.