

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 370

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Durham Cathedral and Castle

Location : County of Durham

State Party : United Kingdom

Date : December 23, 1985

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage list on the basis of criteria II, IV and VI.

C) JUSTIFICATION

Located on a rocky butte overlooking a bend in the Wear River, the monumental array constituted by the cathedral and its outbuildings to the south and by the castle which inhibits the main access to the peninsula, to the north, makes up one of the best known cityscapes of medieval Europe. The relatively small size of Durham, which is an episcopal and university town (25,600 inhabitants in 1985) is conducive to the sound conservation of this site which is partly wooded.

The history of Durham is linked to that of the transfer of the body of St. Cuthbert (died in 687), the evangelist of Northumbria who was buried on the island of Lindisfarne (Holy Land). In order to keep his remains safe from Viking raids, the monks transported them first of all to Chester-le-Street then, in 995 to Durham to which was transferred the Lindisfarne bishopric. In 998 the Saxon community of monks in Durham dedicated a stone "White Church" of which there are no remains. In 1022 the sacrist Alfred succeeded in stealing, for the benefit of the Cathedral, the important relics of the Venerable Bede who had remained buried in Jarrow since his death in 735.

After the Norman conquest bishops Walcher of Lorraine and William of Saint-Calais undertook to reform the clergy in Durham. Twenty-three Benedictine monks from Jarrow and Monkwearmouth were called forth in 1083. Thus, Durham became a privileged cathedral in which the northern Christian traditions were revived thanks to a monastic community which grew out of the Benoit Biscop foundation around the relics of Cuthbert and Bede.

The construction of the present cathedral (1093-1133), which is

linked to the banishment of William de Saint-Calais in Normandy and to his return from exile (1088-1091), constitutes one of the high points in the history of medieval architecture. The speed of the progress of the works, which were completed in forty years' time, accounts for the considerable unity in the style of this building, whose original layout has hardly been modified, especially the nave.

The nave is characterized by the alternation of supports - enormous bundle piers and hefty cylindrical columns - combined with an unprecedented vaulting system : double bays, very elongated in the lengthwise direction reigning between the transverse ribs which rest upon bundle piers. They received ribbed vaults marked by an alternation of diamond shapes and triangles whose organisation prefigures that of six-part vaults of early Gothic art. However, the elevation of the nave, with the diminishing proportion of the ground arcades, the galleries and the clerestories, remains close to the Norman models and the system of decoration characterized by the profusion of chevrons and diamond shapes cut, on a very large scale, into the column shafts, by the zigzags of the ribs, by the exclusive use of capitals with gadroons is revealing of traditional Romanesque aesthetics which also marks the sober masses of the harmonious facade which is flanked by two towers which project slightly and which were partially rebuilt during the 13th and 14th centuries.

A series of additions, reconstructions, embellishments and restorations has not substantially altered the structure of Durham Cathedral, where one can still admire, to the west, the Galilee placed in 1170-1175 in front of the Norman facade by Bishop Hugh of Puiset and, at the opposite end, the enormous flat projecting apse resembling a transept (Chapel of the Nine Altars) built in the 13th century (1242-1280) in order to facilitate movement around St. Cuthbert's reliquary. Another bold piece is the lantern tower which was reconstructed in the 15th century and the crossing of the transept which was re-vaulted on this occasion. The monastic buildings, grouped together to the south of the cathedral, comprise few of their pristine elements but make up a diversified and yet coherent ensemble of medieval architecture which 19th century restoration, substantial in the cloister and the chapter house, did not denature.

The architectural evolution of the castle, taking place over eight centuries is even more complex. Of the original Norman foundation, there remains essentially the typical layout comprising a motte to the east, and a large bailey to the west. We know that construction was begun in 1072 by Waltheof, Earl of Northumberland, but that several years later William the Conqueror entrusted the guarding of the castle to Bishop Walcher of Lorraine. The castle remaining under the sway of the successive bishops of Durham for 750 years was both an effective fortress which regularly faced the onslaught of Scottish troops and the seat of the administrative and legal powers exercised on

behalf of the king by the bishops, who became bishop-princes following the Reform. In the 17th century the military role of the castle gave way to a more residential character which was further accentuated when the castle became a part of Durham University in the 19th century.

The present castle is a veritable labyrinth of halls and galleries of different periods, and in its north wing it houses various vestiges of the Romanesque epoch : the castral chapel, a tiny room with three groined vaults, is one of the most precious testimonies to Norman architecture, ca. 1080. The decoration of its six capitals is an essential reference in the study of sculpture in England after 1066. Slightly more recent, the Norman Gallery at the east end of which there is a spiral staircase which leads down to the chapel has a series of arches the archivolt of which are decorated with chevrons and zigzags.

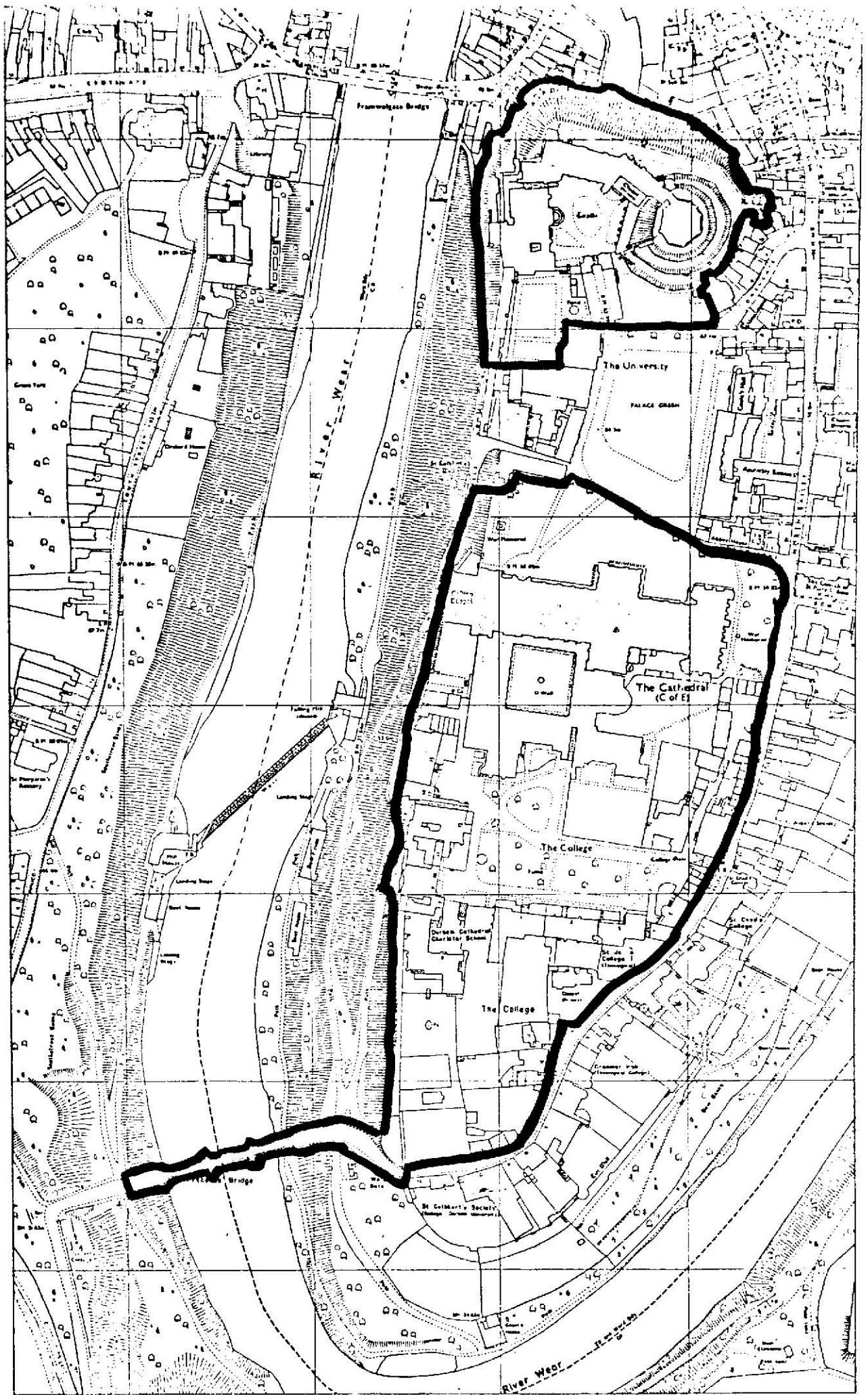
In adopting a favorable position with respect to the inclusion of Durham Cathedral and Castle on the World Heritage List, ICOMOS justifies this proposal essentially on the basis of criteria IV, II and VI.

Criterion IV. Durham Cathedral is the largest and most perfect monument of "Norman" style architecture in England. The small castral chapel for its part marks a turning point in the evolution of 11th century Romanesque sculpture.

Criterion II. Though some wrongly considered Durham Cathedral to be the first "Gothic" monument (the relationship between it and the churches built in the Ile-de-France region in the 12th century is not obvious), this building, due to the innovative audacity of its vaulting, constitutes -as do Spire and Cluny- a type of experimental model which was far ahead of its time.


Criterion VI. Around the relics of Cuthbert and Bede, Durham crystallized the memory of the evangelizing of Northumbria and of primitive Benedictine monastic life.

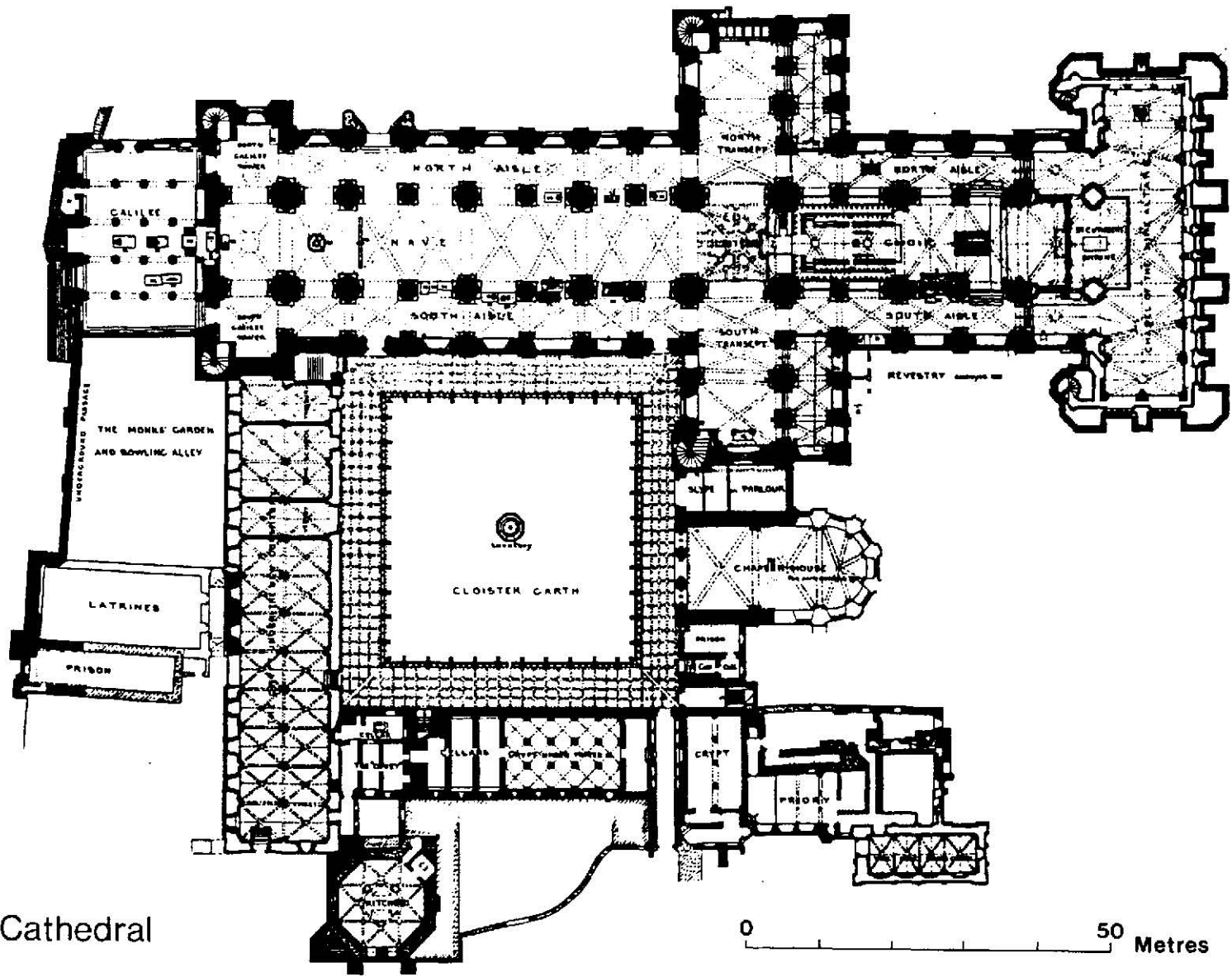
ICOMOS, April 1986.



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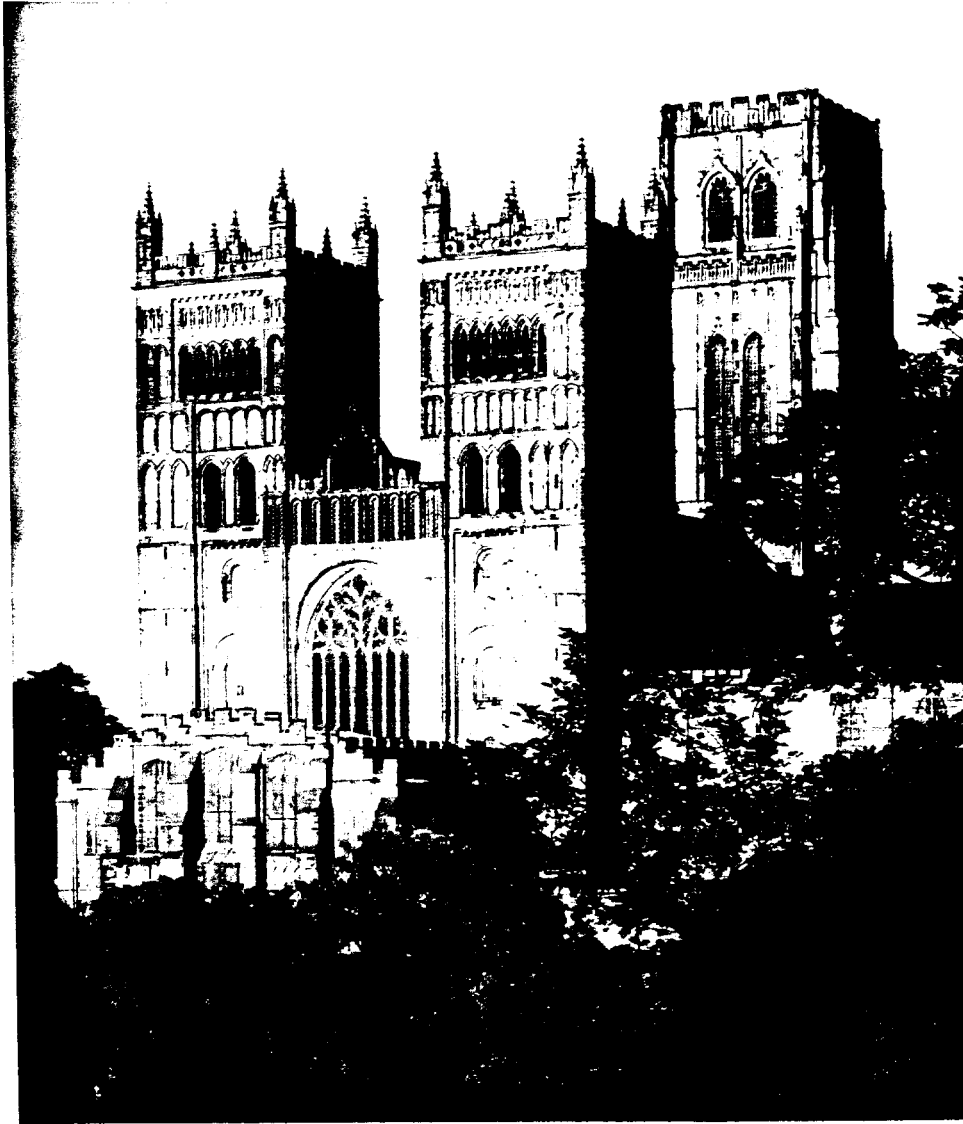
DURHAM Castle & Cathedral

Nominated Areas 

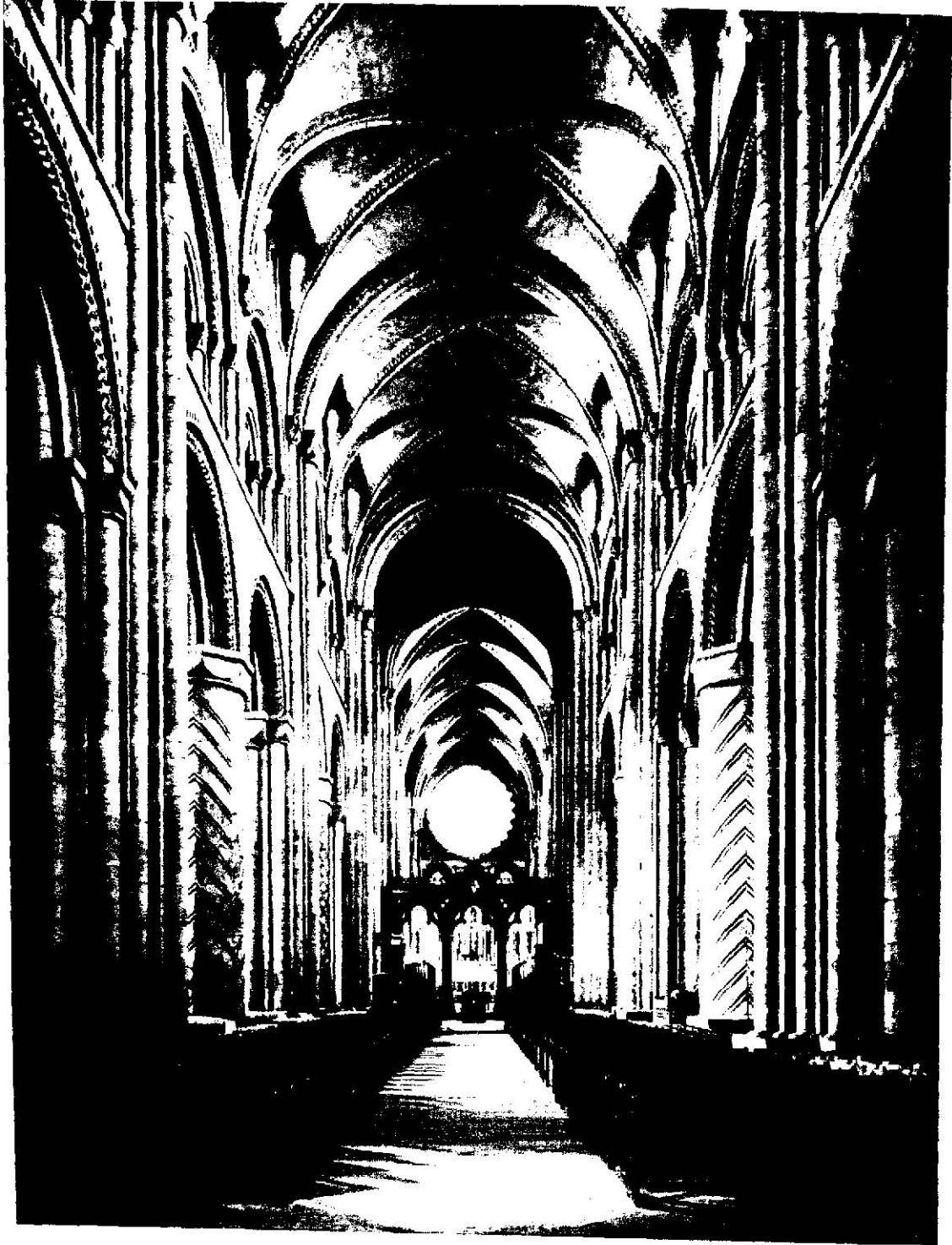


Durham Cathedral





DURHAM : Cathédrale vue de l'ouest.



DURHAM : nef de la cathédrale.



The Norman Chapel