



**Property in Care (PIC) ID:** PIC063

**Designations:** Scheduled Monument (SM90109), Listed Building (LB26361) Conservation Area (CA208)

**Taken into State care:** 1889 (Ownership)

**Last reviewed:** 2011

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# DUNBLANE CATHEDRAL



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# DUNBLANE CATHEDRAL

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## SYNOPSIS

Dunblane, on the east bank of the Allan Water and possibly named after St Blane (died c.590), is believed to have been a religious centre by the 9<sup>th</sup> century. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the bishopric was re-established and a stone cathedral church built. Comprehensive rebuilding took place after 1237, and by the 1300s the cathedral comprised an aisled nave, incorporating the original tower, an aisle-less chancel and an adjoining north range housing sacristy, chapter house and treasury.

After the Protestant Reformation (1560), parochial worship was relocated to the chancel. The neglected nave fast fell into ruin. The chancel and north range were restored by James Gillespie Graham in 1816-19. Major restoration of the nave was undertaken in 1889-93 to a design by Robert Rowand Anderson. Although the cathedral is in state care, it continues as a place of worship by the Church of Scotland. Among the fine furnishings are rare late medieval canopied stalls, considered amongst the finest in Scotland.

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## CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

### Historical Overview:

- 6<sup>th</sup> century AD - St Blane (Blàthan), according to tradition, is born on Bute and buried at Kingarth monastery there (**St Blane's**). His connection with Dunblane, is a mystery (Dunblane means 'fort of Blane'<sup>1</sup> – 'dun' meaning fort). It may come in the 8<sup>th</sup> or early 9<sup>th</sup> century, when Viking raids force the monks of Kingarth to seek safety on the mainland, carrying St Blane's relics with them. The existence of two 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup>-century cross-slabs suggests a Christian settlement here at this date.
- 1155 - Laurence is the first named bishop of Dunblane, though the diocese may already be well established.
- 1233 – Clement, a Dominican friar is appointed bishop and arrives to find the diocese in a state of poverty. Consideration is given to moving the cathedral church to **Muthill** or Inchaffray but opts to remain at Dunblane. Describing the then cathedral church as standing bare and roofless, he has it rebuilt much as we see it today, retaining only the tall bell-tower from the 12<sup>th</sup>-century church. The cathedral chapter consists of four dignitaries, the archdeacon and eleven prebendaries. Twelve choral chaplains are subsequently added to the complement.
- 1304 – Edward I orders that Dunblane be stripped of lead during the Wars of Independence, but decrees that the altars should not be uncovered.
- 1559 - in the build-up to the Protestant Reformation (1560), the earl of Argyll orders that the cathedral be purged of 'monuments of idolatrye'. By 1562, the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gaelicplacenames.org/databasedetails.php?id=787>

cathedral has a reformed minister in post. The nave is abandoned for worship and the congregation relocate to the chancel. By 1622 the nave roof has collapsed.

- 1661 – Robert Leighton becomes bishop of Dunblane. After his death in 1684, his sister founds the Leighton Library in Dunblane using his private collection as the foundation of the collection. It is the oldest purpose-built library in Scotland.
- 1693 - John Slezer's view of Dunblane shows the nave unroofed, apart from the bell-tower and the east bays of the south aisle, by now in use for burials. Slezer also shows a forestair against the east bay of the chancel, indicating the presence of lofts (galleries) therein.
- 1816/19 - James Gillespie Graham carries out alterations to the chancel and north range, including new tracery (the original tracery had evidently been lost by that date) and raised floor levels.
- 1860/62 - Thomas Brown junior, of Brown and Wardrop, renews the roofs over the chancel and north range to a flattened section, and repairs the south chancel parapet.
- 1866/68 - HM Office of Works repair the tower and spire.
- 1873 - the chancel floor levels are restored to their original level and the windows above the chancel arch are re-opened and glazed. During the work, at least one but perhaps two early Christian cross-slabs are discovered beneath the stair at the west end of the north range. A third stone appears to have been found in 1836. There remains some uncertainty as to the precise location and timing of the discovery of the different carved stones.
- 1886 - the capacity of the chancel to house the congregation having been deemed insufficient, the decision is taken to bring the ruined nave back into use, against stiff opposition from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.
- 1889/93 - Robert Rowand Anderson carries out a full-blown restoration of the church, with the agreement of, among others, the Board of Manufactures, by now responsible for the cathedral and grounds on behalf of the Crown. The restored cathedral is thereafter used for regular services, whilst ownership is vested in HM Office of Works (now Historic Scotland).
- 1912/14 - Robert Lorimer designs new canopied stalls and an organ case for the chancel.
- 1934/38 - Reginald Fairlie designs wainscoting and paving for the chapter house and sacristy.
- 1964 - Edith Burnet Hughes fits out the SW nave buttress as the Clement Chapel.
- 1983 – H. M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother visits the cathedral as part of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.
- 1989-90 - the organ is rebuilt by Flentrop Orgelbouw.
- 2000 - a standing stone commemorating those who died in the Dunblane Massacre (13 March 1996) is installed in the south nave aisle.

#### Archaeological Overview:

- There have been a number of watching briefs associated with ground-breaking works. During works prior to installing the Dunblane Commemoration Stone in

the south nave aisle in 2000, fragments of human bone and glazed floor tile were recovered.

- A number of stone long cists have been found in the graveyard over the years. Two were disturbed in 1928 and 1975 in the course of maintenance works. The 1975 discovery was archaeologically investigated and found to contain the remains of at least one child and two adults; its dimensions and construction accord with cists of known prehistoric date in the area. In 1903 a short cist found in 1903 at the neighbouring Cathedral Hall contained just two human teeth.
- During a recent watching brief in the NE part of the graveyard, a scatter of demolition rubble was identified as representing the remains of buildings formerly fronting onto Kirk Street.

### Architectural/Artistic Overview:

#### Cathedral church

- The continuous base course around the whole of the building, with the exception of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century bell-tower, suggests that the cathedral church was laid out in a single operation, probably after 1237. The sequence of building appears to have been: north range, nave and finally chancel. The slightly different alignment of tower and church may have been due to the presence of boggy ground on the NE of the site.

#### Bell-tower

- The square bell-tower is of six storeys. The lowest four storeys, built of red (almost purple) sandstone, are dated to the second quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century on stylistic grounds. There are no precise parallels for a similar juxtaposition of bell-tower and church, and it presumably resulted from the desire to retain an existing, and free-standing, tower - for reasons of piety perhaps - within the new building. Bishop James Chisholm (1487-1526) had the tower heightened by two ashlar storeys; his arms are on the parapet. The splay-footed spire was extensively renewed in 1866-68.
- The tower is entered from the south nave aisle and the first stage is roofed by a pointed ribbed barrel vault. The arched altar recess in the east wall has lozenge decoration similar to that on a string-course of the tower at **Muthill Old Church**. The broad turnpike stair in the SW corner leads to the fourth stage. The late medieval bell frame survives in the present belfry stage.

#### Nave

- The west front of the cathedral is elegant early Gothic. Its great processional doorway is flanked by decorative blind arches (as also seen at **Inchmahome Priory**), above which are three traceried windows and a vesica in the gable. The principal lay entrance towards the east end of the south aisle would originally have been covered by a porch in the re-entrant angle between aisle and bell-tower. A further two doorways were provided into the nave.
- Internally, the nave's design is relatively simple, with a more or less regular rhythm of arcade arches on each side, above which runs a clearstorey with a mural passage and delicately detailed inner arcade. As first planned, the eight-

bay nave was probably intended to be flanked by low, vaulted aisles. However, after the outer aisle walls had been built it was decided to heighten the arcades and abandon the stone vaulting in favour of timber roofs. The window design was also modified to bar-tracery rather than lancets in the course of building the clearstorey, suggesting that the nave may have been completed in the 1260s or '70s. The clearstorey has a mural passage and an inner arcade. It is not known whether the original intention was to have elevations of two or three storeys, but the result is a highly elegant example of a two-storey composition, which has northern English parallels (eg, St. Augustine's, Hedon, Yorkshire). The nave would originally have had a timber roof, possibly with a wagon ceiling, which must have been higher than the ribbed wagon ceiling of 1889, as it blocks the lower part of the vesica in the west gable.

- There may have been a rood loft beneath the two openings above the chancel arch (indicated by a series of angled slots in the masonry) upon which the great rood (cross) stood. The Lady Chapel was probably located at the east end of the north aisle, where it was lit by a larger window. The two enlarged windows at the west end of the north aisle indicate the likely position of the chapel of St Blaise and the Holy Blood, reconstructed by Bishop William Chisholm I (1526-64). The chamber in the SW nave buttress was fitted out as the Clement Chapel by Edith Burnet Hughes in 1964.

#### Chancel

- The chancel has six narrow bays and no aisles. Its height was increased from that originally intended, with the result that two windows at the east end of the nave, above the chancel arch, were internalised within the heightened roof. The south chancel parapet was reconstructed when the tower was heightened around the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.
- What remained of the medieval window tracery was replaced, first by Gillespie Graham in 1816/19, and again by Rowand Anderson in 1889/93. The two triple 'triforium' openings on the north side and the timber-ribbed wagon ceiling are also of 1889/93. The only original features are the chancel arch, the window arches and the doorway into the north range.

#### North range

- As originally built, the two-storey north range most probably housed the chapter house and sacristy at ground level with a treasury and chapel above. The ground floor is roofed with five bays of quadripartite ribbed vaulting. A doorway in its east end was replaced by a window in 1873. The chapter house was converted to a war memorial c.1918, and the room above now houses the steward's office and access to the organ.

#### Monuments

- Nave: beside the west entrance are two early Christian cross-slabs, possibly found in 1873 in the north range; the larger bears a fine cross on one face, and on the reverse five tiers of decoration, including beasts, a horseman and a figure holding a staff. In the north aisle a double effigy (a knight and lady) of c.1300, believed to represent an earl and countess of Strathearn. In the south aisle is a wall-tomb recess containing a worn effigy of a bishop.
- Choir: In the north wall, an effigy of a bishop, traditionally believed to be that of Bishop Clement (1233-58).

## Furnishings

- Nave: flanking the west entrance are two sets of misericords (canopied choir stalls), thought to have been commissioned by Bishop James Chisholm (1487-1526) as they bear the Chisholm arms. These were originally in the choir and are arguably the finest of their kind in Scotland. At the west end of the south aisle is a carved stone font by Rowand Anderson. By the same architect are the octagonal pulpit and sounding board, and a large brass lectern on an octagonal base decorated with lions, all at the east end of the nave. The great bell (founded 1612, recast 1660 and 1809) and lesser bell (founded 1687, recast 1723) are now displayed in the north aisle; they were removed from the tower in 1908 and replaced by a tenor and eight chiming bells.
- Chancel: The timber screen is by Rowand Anderson. The two banks of choir stalls are by Lorimer 1914, interrupted on the south side by his organ case (enlarged in 1989-90 when the organ was rebuilt by Flentrop Orgelbouw). Upon a step Rowand Anderson's communion table incorporates ogee-headed panels, behind which is Lorimer's reredos screen. At the east end are choir stalls decorated with carved misericords, including a bat, dragon, green man and thistle motifs. Traditionally associated with Bishop Michael Ochiltree (1429-47), on stylistic grounds they may belong to the same set of Chisholm stalls in the nave.
- Stained glass: amongst the fine collection of stained glass are the large west window depicting the Tree of Jesse, by Clayton & Bell (1906); the south nave windows by Douglas Strachan (1926) and Louis Davis (1915); George Webster's Compassion of Christ at the east end of the north aisle (1968); a magnificent six-window complex allegorical artwork by Louis Davis in the chancel (1915), and the great east window by Charles Eamer Kempe (1901).

## Graveyard

- The pointed-arched gateway on the east side, known as Riccarton's Stile, was rebuilt in 1814 by William Stirling. A memorial garden to the victims of the Dunblane Massacre was laid out next to it in 1999. The graveyard contains several interesting 18<sup>th</sup>-century gravestones and the three lantern standards are possibly by Sir Robert Lorimer.

## Social Overview:

- Dunblane Cathedral is the focus of the Society of Friends of Dunblane Cathedral, founded in 1930 and responsible, among other things, for an equally long-running journal.
- The cathedral is associated with Celtic culture, which has associative value for the Scots diaspora, as well as modern era renaissance interest within the country.
- There is no known vandalism problem affecting the cathedral at present though there have been incidents in the past (the windows had to be wire-meshed externally in the 1980s).
- In addition to its prime use as a church (Church of Scotland), the cathedral is the site of many community activities, including as a concert venue and performance space. It is also very popular with visitors from all over the world.

### Spiritual Overview:

- Dunblane Cathedral has links reaching back to the early Christian Church. The place-name suggests that the early clergy and congregation venerated the 6<sup>th</sup>-century St Blane. However, it is possible an ecclesiastical settlement existed here long before the first mention of Dunblane in documentary sources and that the name was changed as local interest in Blane's cult grew.
- The cathedral was the seat of the bishops of Strathearn for centuries, and was thus one of the power-centres of the medieval Scottish Church. This would have been reflected in the liturgies used by the cathedral chapter and the fixtures and treasures kept here.
- The foundation (probable re-foundation) of the bishopric in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was likely a deliberate act by the Scottish Crown to legitimise its activities by offering a level of continuity between past and present.
- The cathedral building largely survived the momentous events of the Protestant Reformation (unlike **St Andrews Cathedral**, for example) by continuing in use as the parish church. Protestant worship was confined to the chancel, the area previously reserved to the clergy in medieval times. Dunblane Cathedral has witnessed almost seven centuries of unbroken parochial worship.
- Dunblane Cathedral continues in use as a parish church for the Church of Scotland (CoS). The 1889/93 restoration was driven by the spirit of ecclesiological revival within the then 'high church' wing of the CoS, and thus the present building, perhaps somewhat awkwardly, accommodates the Reformed tradition (with its focus on the word of God) in a pseudo-Catholic setting (where the emphasis was on the eucharist and mass).
- Local spiritual associations are strong. The memorial stone erected to the victims of the 1996 Dunblane Massacre in the south nave aisle in 2000 will have high significance for the families, the local community and in the wider public consciousness. The other memorials inside and out will be significant to descendants, many of whom will still live locally.

### Aesthetic Overview:

- The cathedral is an impressive building, externally and internally. The exterior has an undoubted presence, though it is not ornate and lacks sculptural elaboration. Only the lofty bell-tower and west front stand out from the restrained ensemble.
- The interior is 'high church' in style, with intricately-carved woodwork and colourful stained glass.
- The cathedral dominates its immediate surroundings. It sits within its graveyard and is bounded to the west by the Allan Water, to the south by the 1903 Cathedral Hall by Rowand Anderson and the outermost sides of Kirk Street (the west side has been demolished) and Haining, and to the east by the rising ground of Holme Hill. Notable buildings in the immediate vicinity include the 17<sup>th</sup>-century harled Cathedral Museum (formerly the Dean's House), the



Leighton Library (1687) and 1829 coach-house (now manse), which together provide a harmonious and appropriate setting for the cathedral.

- The cathedral city grew up around the ecclesiastical foundation which owed its location to the sole crossing point of the Allan Water on the main road north from Glasgow to Perth. Its medieval street layout has survived, though not its buildings, other than the cathedral itself. Sir Robert Sibbald described Dunblane c.1700 as 'a pleasant little town on the banks of the river Allan, where the ruins of the Bishops and regular Canons houses are to be seen'.
- The B8033 dual carriageway by-passes the historic centre when approached from the south; however the bell-tower is still visible on the west side. The cathedral dominates the view from the west bank of the Allan Water if the approach is made from the north trunk roads.

#### What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What was the nature and extent of the early Christian ecclesiastical foundation?
- What form did the 12<sup>th</sup>-century cathedral church take?
- What was the form and extent of the cathedral precinct, and the location and nature of the associated canons' manses?

#### ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

##### Key Points

- The cathedral is most remarkable for the surviving 12<sup>th</sup>-century tower and for the 13<sup>th</sup>-century fabric of the main building. The juxtaposition of the two (tower and church) is unique in Scotland.
- The 1889/93 restoration by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson, Scotland's most notable late Victorian/Edwardian architect, is a fine example of an ambitious yet, for its time, relatively sensitive restoration. The internal additions by Sir Robert Lorimer, another great Scottish architect and designer, are also of importance.
- The cathedral is notable for the quality and variety of its internal fixtures and fittings, including especially the rare, late-medieval choir stalls.

#### ADDENDA

##### Associated Properties:

*(other locally related sites)* – Cathedral Hall; Cathedral Museum; **Inchmahome Priory**; Leighton Library; **Muthill Church**

*(other Scottish Cathedrals)* - **Brechin; Dunkeld; Elgin; Fortrose; Glasgow;** Kirkwall; Lismore; **St Andrews; St Machar's, Aberdeen;, Whithorn.**

*(other 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>-century free-standing bell-towers)* – **Cambuskenneth Abbey;** Lindores Abbey; **Muthill Old Church (?)**

(some other early Christian cross-slabs) – **Aberlemno Stones; Dunfallandy Stone; Elgin Cathedral; Meigle Museum; St Andrews Cathedral; St Vigean's Museum.**

Keywords:

ecclesiastical; cross-slab; cathedral; tower; medieval; Romanesque

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