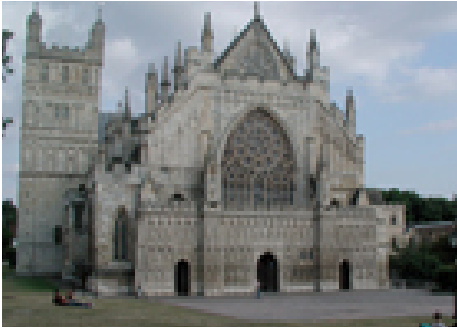


Conservation: 'The Role of the Cathedral Architect' Monday May 9

Exeter Cathedral



In our May webinar, two of the UK's leading cathedral architects, Antony Feltham-King and Camilla Finlay, were invited to speak about their job, which is unbelievably complex and demands an amazingly broad set of knowledge of various skills and including skills involved in formulating major grant applications. Anthony said he would be giving the audience 'a glimpse into our world – what we do and why we do it – what framework we work within'. He explained that the approval system that they work within is a bit unique when it comes to cathedrals, as the control systems within the world of cathedrals are rather different to that of other listed buildings including church buildings. After that, Camilla would share some case studies at Exeter and Worcester and he would discuss a little project at Gloucester as well – the cathedrals where they are involved as cathedral architects.

He explained first why one finds a mixture when it comes to job titles: the role of 'cathedral architect' is open to professional architects or surveyors and so 'cathedral architect', 'surveyor of the fabric' and 'surveyor to the fabric' are interchangeable terms, but they don't denote a professional title. Camilla is 'cathedral architect' at Exeter but 'surveyor' at Worcester and Anthony also stressed that those appointments are personal to the architect, not the practice.

Gloucester ; Tom Denny Ivor Gurney window



He moved on to the conservation management plan put together by a cathedral fabric commission (CFC), which refers to cathedrals as really complex sites with 'long time depth' stretching to 1000 years, and even further if they stand on older sites, and over time changing a lot, with all of those layers add to complexity. Added to this, there are different types of heritage: the building and the archaeology but also art collections, a multiplicity of uses, but primarily a place of worship and mission. Some refer to the tension between the fabric preservation and the demands of the mission of the church but he contests that it's more a matter of balance. The architect must develop an understanding of cathedral/s in their care – not just the building fabric and history, but also its condition and history of repair. They must also, as team leader with responsibility for assessing and prioritizing work of repair, build relationships with maintenance teams and the community – clergy but also laity – and learn from specialists. Key to this is the quinquennial inspection and report, which informs the long-term repair strategy.

The next topic was the application process for windows, and the different building controls applied to Anglican and Roman Catholic (RC) cathedrals, to which listed building regs do not apply. Within the RC world the control framework

is through the historic churches committee (HCC) or committees. Each RC diocese has an HCC and this acts as a one-stop shop for both churches and cathedrals within dioceses. In the Anglican church, the control systems for churches and cathedrals are distinct, and applications are overseen by the GCFC. Each cathedral also has a fabric advisory committee (FAC).

The talk then moved on to other important roles such as the cathedral archeologist, after which some case examples were detailed. Anthony described a problem with rainwater disposal at Gloucester, which was solved by adding new gargoyles carved by their own masons. Camilla took over to detail case studies at Worcester, to deal with loss of paint on the beautiful Hardman glass, and preservation of important medieval glass at Exeter. Finally, Anthony spoke about the importance of siting correctly, using the Ivor Gurney glass by Tom Denny in Gloucester chantry chapel as an example. Gurney, a local poet and composer in the early 20C, loved nature, but had bipolar disorder. The window's narrow lights are episodes from his life, rather poignant shadowy figures moving around the local landscape. In the tiny chapel where they were sited, just 6–8 feet up, accessible so people can come up close to them and see them in great detail, they find a real connection with them and this has become a really special thing. In a different setting, in a large space amongst other windows, such as the Lady Chapel with that fantastic Christopher Whall glass plus the wonderful medieval glass in the big E window, you'd want something a little bit more sort of coherent with its surroundings. In the small Chantry chapel it's in a space in itself and the theme can stand on its own, albeit relating to the medieval fragments above it.. In other situations where there's been a larger cycle of windows that might have been under consideration for new work and an overall theme, then it becomes quite important for individual windows to fit in with that and not detract from it.

To conclude, early-stage discussion is very important, as you need to get a broad church of approval at that early stage, and the more you can consult the better, the more buy-in you get to deliver that project.

Gloucester Cathedral Lady Chapel, 'Adoration', C. Whall

