

A unique façade in Great Britain: the west front of Holyrood Abbey

J Philip McAleer*

SUMMARY

The early Gothic façade of Holyrood Abbey was originally distinguished by two large towers. Although many large churches built in the British Isles during the previous (12th) century had two western towers, they were generally built over the westernmost bays of the nave aisles. In the case of a few buildings dating to the later 12th and early 13th centuries, the towers flanked the last bays of the aisles, thereby creating a wide 'screen' façade. The position of the towers at Holyrood was distinctly different from either of these types. The towers were placed both outside the line of the aisle walls and in front of the plane of the west wall: they were tangent to the corners of the aisles by only one of their corners. As a result, a shallow open space was created between them, in front of the west portal. In this regard, Holyrood appears to have been exceptional in the British Isles. The closest parallels for this arrangement are found at several churches on the Continent which are widely separated geographically and, as a group, without any obvious connection with each other. The unusual system of passageways within the west front of Holyrood also further contributes to its unique character.

Although the façade of the Augustinian abbey church of Holyrood, Canongate, Edinburgh, is no longer complete, what does remain is of more than routine interest, for it suggests a most unusual arrangement¹. The façade stands adjacent to the much later Palace of Holyroodhouse and, indeed, its integrity was severely compromised by the construction of the existing north range of the Palace. In spite of this encroachment, the complete design of the original façade can be easily visualized from the two thirds that remain: the west wall of the nave and north aisle and the large tower at the north. It is the position of this tower, in relationship to the aisle, nave, and west wall, that is of particular interest. The tower is almost free-standing, but not quite, as it overlaps the north-west corner of the north aisle. Thus, most of its mass projected beyond the face of the north aisle wall and in front of the west wall. If a balancing tower is restored on the south side, the result is a very broad west front, much broader than the actual width of the nave and aisles. The west wall would have been framed by the flanking towers, and a kind of open air porch, or a shallow court, would have been created between them, in front of the west door.

It was not unusual during the century or more preceding the construction of the west front of Holyrood Abbey (following the introduction of monumental architecture into the British Isles as a result of Norman penetration) for large monastic as well as cathedral churches to have had façades featuring two west towers. By c 1200, at least 30 façades of this type had been built, or were in building, including the Augustinian abbeys of Bristol, Bourne, Dunstable, Kirkham, Llanthony

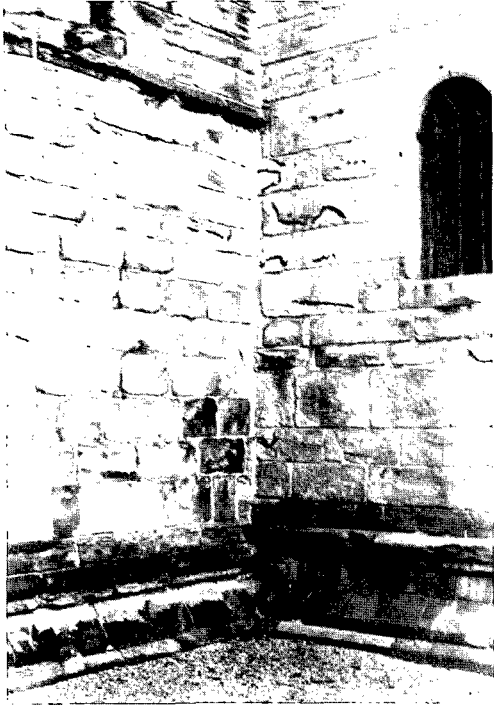
*Faculty of Architecture, Technical University of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Prima, St Germans and Worksop². However, in all these buildings, the towers were placed at the end of the nave aisles, flanking the westernmost bay of the nave, so that a unified façade composition resulted: the west wall of the nave was in the same plane as the west face of the towers. The effect would have been quite different from the façade of Holyrood, as one can see very clearly by looking at the façades of Durham Cathedral or Worksop Priory, to choose two of the normal type that are well preserved³.

It is true that by 1200 another type of two-tower façade had appeared which has a somewhat greater resemblance to Holyrood's. This type is now best exemplified by the west front of Wells Cathedral⁴. There, the towers are located in a position flanking the last bay of the aisles, rather than being placed over them. The result is a façade much wider than the main body of the western arm of the church, as at Holyrood. But a comparison of Wells and Holyrood once again reveals a significant difference in effect, because the west wall of the nave and aisles at Wells is in the same plane as the west face of its towers. At Wells, and at other buildings where there were flanking towers, such as St Botolph's, Colchester (also an Augustinian priory), Earls Colne, West Acre, St Albans (never built), and the then cathedral at Coventry, there is no porch-like space between the towers. The earliest of these façades with flanking towers seems to be that of St Botolph's, traditionally dated c 1160–70, but possibly as early as c 1140–50. Just when it was begun is now impossible to say. It was the earliest Augustinian house in England, as the rule was introduced, c 1095–1107, to a community of secular canons that had been established c 1095. Too little survives of the churches at Earls Colne and West Acre, the latter also Augustinian, to allow a date for them more precise than the late 12th and early 13th centuries, respectively. The building of the towers at St Albans was begun under Abbot John de Cella (1195–1214), but was soon abandoned. The façade of Coventry Cathedral probably was begun in the second quarter of the 13th century, somewhat later than the actual construction of the Wells façade.

The Abbey of Holyrood had been founded in 1128, by King David I of Scotland. Traces of the first church built after that date have been found in excavations: it was a small aisleless structure, with transept and flat-ended chancel. This little building was replaced, beginning later in the century, and it is the remains of this second building that survive today. Of the successor to the first church, only parts of the nave still stand. Its building history, as it has been reconstructed (RCAMS 1951, 130), is somewhat unusual, even if not unique. Construction appears to have begun with the north aisle wall and proceeded westwards to include the west wall. Then the nave piers were begun, as well as the south aisle. This order was adopted, instead of building the full width of the nave and aisles bay by bay from east to west, because the first church was retained in use for as long as possible: its nave underlies at least the four east bays of the existing south aisle, and part of the parallel space of the nave. The later builders were working around the early nave by beginning on the north and working west and then over to the south and back east. This new work seems to have been begun about 1190. The north aisle wall was built up to the line of the string course below the aisle windows, the ground courses of the north-west tower were laid and the west wall was carried as far as its south arcade respond. By the beginning of the 13th century, the north wall had been carried up to its full height, the west wall was being raised, and the south aisle had been begun. The nave arcades were started about 1220 and by c 1250 the triforium level had been reached. The west towers and west wall had also been carried up to the same level by that time.

This reconstruction of the building sequence, based primarily on stylistic analysis, does appear to be correct in its broad outlines. However, a close examination of the fabric, especially at the west end of the north aisle, does suggest the possibility of other minor building breaks or campaigns, and the alteration of intentions. Some of the discontinuities in the masonry to be described have been dismissed as constituting any 'real break' in construction, or a 'significant pause' in building, and



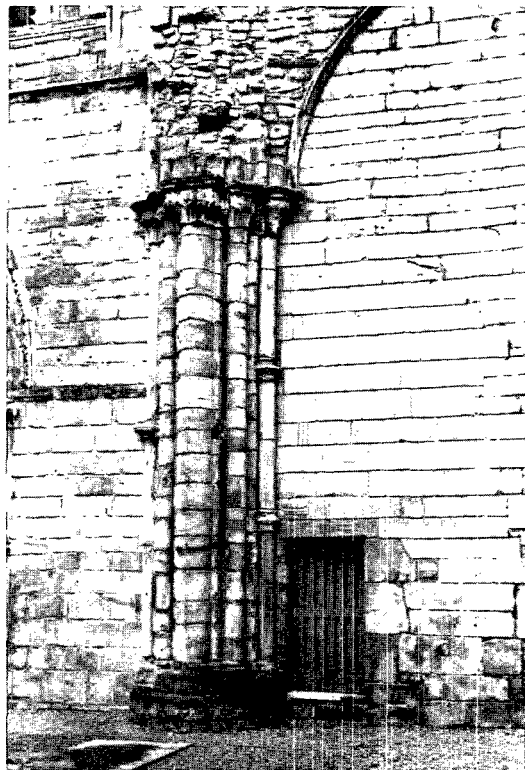
ILLUS 1 Holyrood Abbey: exterior, junction of north aisle wall (left) and east wall of tower (right) (photo: author)



ILLUS 2 Holyrood Abbey: interior, junction of north aisle wall (right) and east wall of tower (left) (photo: author)

instead it has been suggested that they are evidence that a new master-mason took over whose 'activities must have been confined to the W wall of the nave and the W front . . .' (Wilson *in* Gifford *et al* 1984, 133–4).

On the exterior, there is a definite break in coursing in the angle between the west end of the lower part of the north aisle wall and the east face of the tower (illus 1). At the same time, it should be observed that the moulding profiles of the base of the aisle wall are the same as those of the base of the tower, on which they are continued one course higher. On the interior, there is a similar break in coursing at the north-west corner of the aisle, although it is less emphatic (illus 2). It follows just after a change in the intersecting arcading of the aisle wall dado to a final bay of a simply moulded pointed arch. The courses of the north arcade respond are also not continuous with the west wall of the aisle, nor with the adjoining wall of the nave (illus 3). On the other hand, the coursing appears to be continuous across the south arcade respond from the nave west wall to the south aisle. To return to the exterior, it may be observed that the base mouldings of the tower and the west wall of the aisle do not continue under the jambs of the portal; there is a complete change in profiles. And, in spite of the fact that the aisle wall and the north shaft of the portal bond for four courses above the base mouldings, there is no further bond until the sill of the west window is reached. Above this level there is a narrow buttress which appears as if it could have preceded the construction of the west window.



ILLUS 3 Holyrood Abbey: interior, west respond of north nave arcade (photo: author)

The position of the breaks in the horizontal continuity of the coursing at the end of the north aisle does suggest that there could have been a change in the type of façade that was to be constructed at this point; that is, it might then have been decided to construct a towered façade, instead of a sectional façade. The nature of the constructional irregularities, however else they may be interpreted, does make it clear, none the less, that the odd position of the towers was not the result of their being an addition to a completed design. The breaks in coursing at the end of the north aisle come at a point at which it would have been possible, if western towers had not been thought of when the east end of the north aisle was begun, to have constructed the towers, either in the line of the aisles over the westmost bay, or to have placed them in a flanking position. As the base of the north tower and the adjoining section of the west wall do not reveal any sign of preparations for another design, the present arrangement must indicate the original intentions, at least at the time the west end of the aisle was reached: the towers were built as planned, and were planned on a model that did not follow either the older scheme of a twin-tower façade, or the 'new' scheme where the flanking towers formed part of a screen façade.

The only earlier façade in the British Isles which may have borne any resemblance to that of Holyrood was the two-tower structure added to the Augustinian priory at Kirkham in Yorkshire (East Riding, formerly). Beginning about 1180, the nave of the small aisleless church, whose plan was similar to the first church of Holyrood, was lengthened and a new ambitious façade structure was

built. Surprisingly, this included two west towers, which were placed to either side of the nave walls. The result, according to one interpretation of the ruins (Peers 1932, 6–7), was rather curious: as the ground sloped rapidly away at the west, there was no west portal. Instead, part of the space between the towers, the width of the nave, was formed into a vestibule approached only from the inside, from the nave. From the exterior, the centre of the façade would have been recessed and the west wall of the vestibule raised above a series of stepped plinth courses. If this interpretation of the rather meagre remains is correct, the effect of this façade structure must have been decidedly unusual, especially as the base of the south-west tower, which is the only part preserved above ground, served as a two-bay, ribbed vaulted passageway to the cloisters.

However, the remains of the west façade and towers have been reconstructed differently and more conventionally (Pevsner 1972, 298–301, esp 298 [with J Hutchinson]). It has been suggested that there was a vestibule between the towers, reached from the west by a flight of steps. The remains of shafting in the south-west corner of the nave are presumed to have formed part of a west arch to the vestibule. In this case, a small aisleless nave would have been rendered more grand by the addition of a façade type that implied the presence of aisles.

During the Gothic period following the construction of the west front at Holyrood, there do not seem to have been any imitations in the British Isles⁵. It is true that in Scotland, the cathedral of St Mungo in Glasgow (MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 2, 160–203; Gomme & Walker 1968, 19–39; Radford 1970) did once possess two projecting towers, but their disposition and the resulting effect were rather different from that at Holyrood because they were placed at the ends of the aisles, leaving a narrow open space between them only equal to the width of the nave (Eyre 1896; Waddell 1921). The towers were not a matched pair; indeed, they were quite unsymmetrical and, furthermore, it may be questioned if the southern one was intended to be a tower at all (Waddell 1921, 62). The north tower, square internally, had thick walls with a buttress in the middle of each exterior face which rose for less than half its height. Pairs of lancet windows in the west and south walls lit the ground stage. Prominent base mouldings were not continuous with those of the north side aisle (Waddell 1921, 61). The tower was entered from the north aisle only and extended well beyond the line of the north aisle wall. The existence of base mouldings, buttress, and windows on the south face can be taken as firm evidence that when this tower was built there was no intention of constructing a conventional twin-tower façade, or even an approximation, with some kind of a vestibule between it and a south tower. The south structure, which was internally rectangular, had thinner walls, buttresses at the western angles and in the middle of the west face; it lacked any base mouldings and possessed a large projecting stairvice at the southeast angle. It too was entered from the aisle only and there was a big two-light window in the south wall. This structure rose to a height about equal to the buttressed section of the north tower and, in its final form, was terminated by a transverse gable roof – possibly the product of the 17th century (Waddell 1921, 76). The upper, unbuttressed half of the north tower was very likely built in the 15th century (Waddell 1921, 62, 73).

These western structures were pulled down in the mid 19th century (south-west, 1847; north-west, 1848: Eyre 1896, 264); consequently, it is now nearly impossible to resolve many of the uncertainties about their building history⁶. None the less, it does appear to be certain that the north-west tower was constructed after the nave was completed in the 14th century, as an addition against the aisle west wall (Eyre 1896, 255; Waddell 1921, 58–60). Furthermore, the character of the west front, as it existed until 1847–8, was clearly not the product of a unified and coherent design, nor of a single plan carried out in successive building phases. The *ad hoc*, additive process of the building history is evident from the incoherent results which do not correspond to the logically integrated and consistent design of the west front of Holyrood, except in a most superficial way. Rather, it would seem more likely that the construction of the north-west bell tower at St Mungo's relates to an

idiosyncratic Scottish 'tradition' – or occasional habit – of constructing a single west tower at the end of the north aisle, as at Brechin and Dunkeld Cathedrals⁷.

The façades which bear the closest resemblance to the west front of Holyrood Abbey are found on the Continent. Even so, the examples of a similar disposition of façade towers are few, geographically disparate, and roughly contemporary or later in date.

Perhaps the most famous building on the Continent to have towers in the same position as Holyrood's is the great pilgrimage church and cathedral of Santiago de Compostela where building began in 1078⁸. The west front was probably begun c 1105–17, during the first stage of work at the west end, although it was still incomplete in the 1130s, and the north tower was never actually finished. Its massive western towers stand outside the aisles, and in front of the west wall. Their massively thick walls contain staircases that lead up to the galleries found over the continuous aisle which ran all around the church. Later in the century, 1168–88, when the west portal (*Portico de la Gloria*) received its sculpture by Master Matthew, a porch open to the exterior with a room over it was built between the towers, giving it the effective appearance of a 'normal' twin-tower façade. Work on the alterations to the façade may have continued to 1211.

Possibly somewhat less famous is the cathedral of Cefalù in Sicily (Conant 1973, 219–20, fig 54 [plan], pl 127; Di Stefano 1955, 35–40, pls 66 [fig 106], 75 [figs 118, 119]). The choir containing the well-known mosaics and the transept were built between 1131 and 1148; the nave followed more slowly, and was mostly constructed between 1180 and 1200. At its west end are two towers exactly in the same position as those at Holyrood⁹. They are entered from narrow corridors, involving a right-angle bend, from the ends of the aisles. The walls are massively thick like the other walls of the cathedral, and, unlike Santiago, do not contain any stair passages. The interior space of the towers is much smaller than at Holyrood, in spite of the exterior appearance of equal size. In 1471 a loggia of three bays by Ambrogio da Como was inserted between the towers, thereby forming a porch of a height equal to about half that of the west wall. Above its roof rises an arcaded screen wall that masks the sectional profile of the basilican structure behind. It belongs to the last phase of construction, 1230–40. A very similar façade was constructed at the cathedral of Monreale, Sta Maria la Nuova (Conant 1973, 221; Di Stefano 1955, 48–51, pl 94 [figs 148, 149]; Krönig 1965, 33–4. The bronze doors of Bonannus Pisano were installed in 1186.). Although not begun until 1174, the construction of the church was pushed forward very rapidly and was substantially complete by 1183. Its façade, too, has an arcaded porch between the towers, but this porch dates to 1770. The towers were also not carried up as far as they were at Cefalù, where they were probably actually constructed later than those at Monreale. Once again, at Monreale, an arcaded wall ran the full width between the towers; rising to a height above the nave eaves, it thus screened the lower side aisles under a single broad gable.

These two cathedrals may have been preceded at an earlier date by the cathedral at Mazara, also in Sicily, begun c 1086/88–93, of which little now remains owing to its having been pulled down in 1694 (Di Stefano 1955, 8–9, pl 11 [fig 20]; Krönig 1965, 143–6). There appear to have been two west towers in front of the west wall, overlapping most of the aisles, beyond which they extended; there may have been a porch of three bays in between. It has sometimes been assumed that the later porches of Cefalù and particularly that of Monreale replaced earlier, original ones (Krönig 1965, 33), following the model of Mazara. But the existence of an earlier porch at Cefalù is hard to prove and it has been doubted that there was one originally (Di Stefano 1960, 26–8)¹⁰.

A less formally coherent design than the Sicilian ones, and a more problematic example, is found at one of the major churches of Apulia. The asymmetrical towers of S Nicola at Bari, begun before 1089, are rectangular in plan and do not project equally beyond the plane of the west façade (Conant 1973, 215–16, fig 53 [plan], pl 122A; Schettini 1967, 20–4, 41–9). They are the result either of a protracted building campaign, in which case the towers may not have both belonged to the first

design¹¹, or of the extensive remodelling of an earlier non-ecclesiastical structure¹². Work on the building dragged on until a dedication in 1196.

An apparent fifth surviving example is represented by the cathedral of Parma, Sta Maria Assunta, in the Emilia, where rebuilding was begun, possibly before 1092, certainly after an earthquake in 1117 (Conant 1973, 246, fig 61 [on p 245, plan], pl 140A; Decker 1958, 75, pl 235; Ricci 1925, p VIII, pl 54). The great nave was vaulted in 1162. The façade forms one sweeping wall, with a single gable, and is augmented by two towers. The towers are actually placed at a short distance from the façade, their east walls in the line of the west wall and were entered from the outside. Owing to the vast width of the façade, and the fact the north tower was only ever carried up half a stage, the space between them does not have any sense of enclosure as it did at Holyrood. While it has been suggested that flanking towers at Parma were meant as a systemization of the flanking belfries or other types of towers, often built at different periods and characteristic of a number of Italian churches, such as one sees at Sant' Ambrogio in Milan, where the towers date to the 10th century (south: 'Monks' Tower') and to the 12th (north: 'Canons' Tower': 1123–8, 1181 and after) (Conant 1973, 242–3, fig 59 [plan]; Ricci 1925, XII), the towers at Parma are not a matched pair and were not part of the original façade design (Quintavalle 1974, 281–4, pls XLV, LIII; also Tassi 1966, 36–43). The south bell tower (*campanile*) at Parma was constructed 1284–94, following upon renovations of the façade wall proper, c 1281, which included the addition of the double storeyed projecting portal. The north tower was probably begun at the same time. As its walls are only 1m thick – 80 cm thinner than those of the south tower – it has been suggested it was not meant to be as tall (Quintavalle 1974, 284–5).

Another example, of about the same period as Holyrood and the Sicilian buildings, is found in France, at the cathedral of St-Pierre in Poitiers (Frankl 1962, 60; Aubert & Goubet 1958, 330, 460, 471 [plan], pl 457; Bouralière 1903, 11–15; Rhein 1912, 252–69, esp 263–7). It was actually begun in 1162, well before the rebuilding of Holyrood Abbey; by 1199 the high altar was consecrated, presumably marking the completion of the eastern bays. Thereafter, during the 13th century, building proceeded very slowly and the lower levels of the façade, including the three portals, were only achieved by the end of the century. Construction of the upper levels of the façade, and especially of the upper stages of the towers, continued intermittently until as late as the 16th century.

The cathedral of Poitiers is a hall church with nave and aisles of the same height, their vaults covered by one vast roof. The west façade wall (illus 4), rather more justifiably than in the case of the Sicilian buildings, is a horizontal screen with, however, the centre of the gable appearing above – and behind – it. It was erected between 1242 and 1271 under the patronage of Alphonse de Poitiers, brother of King (Saint) Louis IX¹³. The three portals are covered by shallow gabled porches of four orders with widely splayed jambs. They do not project more than one quarter the depth of the towers, so an open space, rather like that at Holyrood, is left between the towers.

In spite of the protracted building history, the projecting façade towers appear to belong to an early phase of construction. The two aisle walls are decorated with blind arcading with semicircular arches for their entire length and the bases of the towers lack any detail except a long narrow window in the middle of each face, with a semicircular arch and a label with horizontal ends. The aisle walls and tower bases, therefore, appear to belong to the campaign of construction at the very beginning of the 13th century, after the consecration of 1199, when the foundations of the entire nave were laid out and built upon up to the intended level of the aisle windows. By 1271 the two west bays of the nave were still incomplete, although the west towers had been carried up to the top of the second stage (Bouralière 1903, 11; Rhein 1912, 253, 266). The towers, however, are not symmetrical: the south tower is much larger than the north one which has very heavy walls and relatively little interior space¹⁴.

It would appear that it was at Santiago de Compostela that western towers were first placed in



ILLUS 4 Poitiers Cathedral: west façade, c 1200 to after 1500
(photo: courtesy of Courtauld Institute of Art)

the advanced flanking position, although already before the new work at Holyrood had started, the façade arrangement at Santiago was being converted into a more usual design by the construction of the narthex between the towers. The façade of the rather small cathedral at Mazara, a considerable distance from Santiago, may have been contemporary. Begun approximately 10 to 15 years after Santiago, its façade must have been in construction at much the same period, the beginning of the 12th century. If Mazara did, indeed, have its west towers in the advanced flanking position, it obviously was the model, later in the century, for the cathedrals of Cefalù and Monreale, the façades of which were most likely constructed immediately prior to that of Holyrood, c 1200. The foundations of the towers of the façade of Poitiers also belong to the same years, although, as usual, there is no way of telling if west towers in the advanced flanking position were intended when work began in 1162.

Just how any of these buildings with façades of a similar type¹⁵ to Holyrood's might relate to it is a problem – regardless of their exact chronology. Rather geographically distant, if not even remote, they have no obvious connection and seem to share no other features in common, in terms of plan types or the basic structure and design of their interior or exterior elevations. Within the context of the Romanesque tradition and the developing Gothic style in Britain, there is one aspect of the

exterior design of the tower(s) at Holyrood that deserves mention. The exterior surfaces of the tower walls are all in one plane; that is, there are no buttresses at the angles. The lower stage of the tower is also solid, there being only small windows in the north and east faces. Interestingly enough, the towers of Mazara, Cefalù, Monreale, and Poitiers all share similar characteristics. They are unbuttressed and solid appearing, with, at most, tiny apertures in the lowest stage. While the lack of buttresses is not an uncommon feature in Italy, and especially in Sicily, most particularly as it affects towers, the absence of buttresses is an unusual feature in Britain and France c 1200¹⁶. Could this, then, be taken as an indication of the influence of the Sicilian buildings on the northern ones of Holyrood and Poitiers¹⁷? Unlike Cefalù and Monreale, and the hall church of Poitiers, the west wall between the towers at Holyrood does not seem to have been extended upwards to form a large screen spanned by a single gable. Although the wall between the inner angle of the tower and the line of the nave arcade was raised higher than the slope of the aisle roof behind, it did not rise far enough to continue the slope of the gable at the end of the nave. Rather, in a traditional way, the staircases at the ends of the nave arcades were vigorously expressed as turrets framing the nave proper, the turrets of a curious 24 sided polygonal shape (Gifford *et al* 1984, 136 [reconstruction drawing], 138–9).

In addition to the placement of the towers, and the lack of buttresses, there are other aspects of the abbey's façade which are of considerable interest, one of which may also be unique, and which appropriately should be emphasized here. As the façade had been described in considerable detail elsewhere (RCAMS 1951, 132, 134), only those features primarily relating to its circulation system will be reiterated here, because of their rather unusual character.

The north tower is one large shaft of space, lacking any division into stages by vaults or any access by an integral staircase. The tower was apparently divided into stages by a wooden floor at the level of the aisle vaults: two small corbels remain on both the west and east walls. The interior of the tower is roughly finished, lit at ground level only by one small window in the north and east walls. The ground stage of the tower was entered directly and only by a doorway from the west corner of the north aisle. The second level was reached from a passage off the north staircase: the archway is visible from inside the tower. A small portal just to the north of the north nave arcade led to this north staircase that rose up to exit into the roof space behind the triforium; it also continued up to the clerestory level. From this same staircase, before the aisle roof space was reached, there also was access to an interior passage across the west front, the passageway shielded from the nave by a tall, rather open, parapet formed by an arcade of trefoil arches. The inner passage continued across to the staircase on the south side, which started at this level and went up to the clerestory. Traces of blocked openings higher up in the jambs of the windows suggest there was a passage at the clerestory level that could only have connected across the window by temporary planks¹⁸.

In spite of its position in advance of the façade, and the consequent difference in planes between the west face of the tower and the west wall of the nave and aisles, the decoration of the west and south faces of the tower with two tiers of arcading which carry over on to the end of the aisle, tends to flatten out the design, especially because there are no angle buttresses to the tower. The end wall of the nave proper is completely filled by the west portal, with its widely splayed jambs of six orders. As noted above, there is a constructional break or pause at the north edge which could allow speculation as to whether the portal was increased in width, when it was actually built, over that anticipated at the end of the earlier campaign. Tympanum and archivolt, steeply pitched, raise the portal to a height almost equal to the top of the second tier of arcading on the aisle end wall and the tower. The remainder of the upper elevation is occupied by a pair of large west windows. Although much altered by the restoration work initiated in 1633 by Charles I for his coronation in the Abbey (RCAMS 1951, 131), the basic arrangement is still reasonably clear¹⁹. The tracery of the windows was apparently in two planes: between the planes ran a wall passage, parallel to, but at a higher level than the interior one.

The lower part of the three light tracery in each exterior (unglazed) window was treated as a low arcade of pointed arches, echoing the screening parapet on the lower interior passage, which was not associated with tracery. The outer passage, at about the level of the roof space and reached from the north stairvice, did not connect with the south stairvice. Similar passages opening to the exterior survive in a few Romanesque west façades such as those of Lindisfarne Priory, and Colchester St Botolph's. At a later period passages have been identified at the cathedrals of Salisbury and Wells for purposes similar to those ascribed to the passages at Holyrood (RCAMS 1951, 132), the positioning of canons or choirboys to sing the hymn, *Glory, Laud and Honour*, on Palm Sunday. However, in the other examples the passageway and its occupants were invisible from the exterior²⁰. Although passageways across the west front are common in British Romanesque and Gothic, often at two levels, the parallel passages of Holyrood are, I believe, also unique²¹.

NOTES

- 1 MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 53–73; west front, 66–71; RCAMS 1951, 129–31 ('Holyrood Abbey'), detailed description of the abbey church, 131–6; and Gifford *et al* 1984, 130–41 (description by C Wilson). The site and abbey ruins also are described in Richardson, J S 1936, *The Abbey and Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh* (Ministry of Works Official Guidebook, Edinburgh; 3 ed, 1950; rev ed, 1958; 4 ed, 1978, as *Holyroodhouse, Abbey and Palace, Lothian* [=Dept Envir Official Guidebook]).
- 2 For the type in general see McAleer 1963/1984, 33–119 and, for specific examples, Appendix I, 330–1, and individual catalogue entries. See also McAleer, J P 'Romanesque England and the Development of the *Façade harmonique*', *Gesta*, 23, 2 (1984), 87–105.
- 3 Durham was begun in 1093 and the façade was completed by the time the nave was vaulted in 1128–33. The upper stages of the towers were not built until the early 13th century in the Early English Gothic style: VCH: *County Durham*, 3 (1928), 93–123; Pevsner, N & Williamson, E 1983 (rev), *The Buildings of England: County Durham*, 2 ed, Harmondsworth, 174–5.
Workshop was founded c 1120; the nave and façade are usually dated c 1170–80; the façade is the least altered of its type, as not even the west window was rebuilt; Pevsner, N & Williamson, E 1979 (rev), *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire*, 2 ed, Harmondsworth, 387.
- 4 For this façade type, see McAleer 1963/1984, 291–311 and, for individual examples, the catalogue. Also McAleer, J P, 'Romanesque antecedents for the English Gothic screen façade', in Dale, W S A (ed) 1985 *Trans Third Canadian Conf Mediev Art Hist*, London, Ont, 39–49.
For Wells in particular see Harvey, J H 'The building of Wells Cathedral, I: 1175–1307', in Colchester, L S 1982 (ed) *Wells Cathedral: a history*, Shepton Mallet, 55–6, 59. Interestingly, but quite inappropriately, Harvey mentions Parma, Cefalù (1120 and 1131 onwards) and Santiago de Compostela (1168–88), as Continental parallels: as will be evident in the discussion to follow, these buildings are all more correctly grouped with Holyrood, not Wells.
- 5 Among non ecclesiastical buildings, a prominent example of a façade with projecting towers, at a later date, is found at Westminster Palace. Henry Yevele's design of the north front (1397–9) of Richard II's Great Hall (1394–1400), with its projecting towers flanking a gabled end wall – dominated by a huge Perpendicular window set over a portal porch, is remarkably ecclesiastical in appearance. See Harvey, J 1978 *The Perpendicular Style, 1330–1485*, London, 130, 107, pl 86; also Barker, F & Jackson, P 1974 *London: 2000 Years of a city and its people*, London, 33, fig 33–1.
- 6 Indeed, even the building history and dating of the nave still appear to be unresolved. The earlier view that it was begun in the early 13th century, that its construction was abandoned by Bishop Bondington in order to rebuild the east end (1233–58), and that it was not completed until the 14th century, has now been augmented by two other possibilities. Radford, C A R & Stones, E L G, 1964 'The Remains of the Cathedral of Bishop Jocelin at Glasgow (c 1197)', *Antiq J*, 44 (1964), 221, and Radford (1970, 20–1) proposed that the nave had been built in the early 13th century and was later 'gutted' and rebuilt in the 14th, c 1340–60. Gomme & Walker (1968, 23) suggested that the early 13th century nave was remodelled in the 14th.

Although Radford (1970, 23) felt it likely that the western structures were the completion of

towers begun in the early 13th century, on 'analogy' with other churches of the type, there is no archaeological evidence to suggest a twin-tower façade was intended at that time, and the towers' asymmetrical plan argues against their having been the completion of early 13th-century ones. Limited excavation along the north foundation of the north tower failed to find evidence for its date, but did suggest the possibility of two phases of construction (14th and 15th centuries?): Talbot, E J 1975 'An Excavation at the site of the NW tower of St Mungo's Cathedral, Glasgow', *Innes Rev*, 26 (1975), 43–9.

The existing west façade of the cathedral is greatly the product of 19th-century restoration following the removal of the western structures, and may be due to Edward Blore: Stones, E L G 1970, 'Notes on Glasgow Cathedral', *Innes Rev*, 21 (1970), 140–52.

- 7 At Brechin Cathedral (Angus), a single façade tower was begun in the 13th century, with construction of the existing tower dating primarily to the 14th (MacGibbon & Ross 1897, 2, 212). It was placed against the end of the north aisle, and in spite of its early 13th century beginning, it appears as an addition to the slightly earlier façade wall: Thoms, D B 1960, *A guide to Brechin Cathedral*, Arbroath, esp 9, 10 (photographs). Richardson has suggested that it was the original intention to erect two west towers, enclosing 'a deeply recessed portal', and incorporating the early round tower into the southern one as its staircase (Richardson, J S 'Note on Brechin Cathedral' *Trans Scot Eccles Soc*, 14, 4 (1954), 17–18). If this were true, Brechin might have anticipated the final result at Glasgow Cathedral; but this thesis tends to ignore the total archaeology of the west wall, which, admittedly, needs to be re-examined.

Similarly, a single projecting tower was added to the north aisle at Dunkeld Cathedral in the 15th century. Once again the tower was slightly later than the sectional façade to which it was attached: Simpson, Margaret E B 1950 *Dunkeld Cathedral, Perthshire (Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, Ministry of Works Official Guide)* Edinburgh, 16–17 and fold out plan. Neither of these buildings had crossing towers. Thus, it is possible to speculate that the single projecting façade tower was a substitute for that lack.

Glasgow Cathedral did not possess a crossing until the late 13th century (Radford 1970, 30). It is not agreed as to whether it supported a wooden or stone tower of any great height (cf Radford 1970, 27; Gomme & Walker 1968, 23; Durkan, J 1975 'The great fire at Glasgow Cathedral', *Innes Rev*, 26 (1975), 89). It did receive a wooden steeple which was struck by lightning in the time of Bishop Glendinning (1387–1408). Bishop Lauder (1408–26) has been credited with the building of a new tower (MacGibbon & Ross 1896–7, 2, 161) or only with the building of the parapet (Durkan *op cit* this note). It is possible that the north-west tower was begun or built in the 14th century in order to serve as a belfry in place of a wooden or low stone central tower. Thus, Glasgow might have been 'intermediate' *vis à vis* Brechin and Dunkeld for instance. The entire question of western towers in Scotland needs further study. (Detached western belfry towers were also found: eg Cambuskenneth and Lindores Abbeys.)

The possibility that the north-west tower was built as a consistory court also exists; historically it did serve this purpose before the court was moved to the south-west structure in the 17th century: Durkan, J 1970 'Notes on Glasgow Cathedral', *Innes Rev*, 21 (1970), 46, 73–5.

- 8 The Romanesque façade is now covered by the 'Obradorio', a work in the Churrigueresque style by Fernando Casas y Novoa, erected in 1738–50. See Conant, K J 1926 *The early architectural history of Santiago de Compostela*, Cambridge, Mass, 18, 23–4, and esp 30–2, fig 20; also Conant 1973, 99–103, 94, fig 28.5 (plan), and esp pl IVB: in neither work did he discuss the façade type nor the placement of the towers. The façade is not considered in Whitehill, W M 1941 *Spanish Romanesque architecture of the Eleventh Century*, London.
- 9 The chronology is debated, but the towers were probably begun with the lower parts of the aisle walls, before the death of William I in 1166 (Di Stefano 1960, 26–32; Krönig 1965, 155–61). Whether or not the present form represents the original intentions is also a problem: Di Stefano (1960, 32, n 19) commented, in regard to the lower stages of the towers, that various elements (unspecified) make one think of *una diversa sistemazione originaria e soprattutto ad un diverso rapporto tra le torri e la facciata della chiesa*.
- 10 The position of the towers in these Sicilian Norman buildings, flanking and in advance of the west wall, is not discussed in the literature. Several authorities have erroneously regarded them as a northern European or Norman feature, disregarding the difference in their location compared to the 'normal' position of two towers in northern Europe; at the same time, the style of the towers has been

described as Islamic (Di Stefano 1960, 32, n 19; Krönig, W 1963 *Cefalù. Der Sizilische Normannendom*, Kassel, 13–14).

- Fundamental to the studies cited above is: Schwarz, H M 1946 'Die Baukunst Kalabriens und Siziliens im Zeitalter der Normannen, Pt I. Die lateinischen Kirchengründungen des 11. Jahrhunderts und der Dom in Cefalù', *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 6 (1942–4), 1–112; he associated the façades of Mazara (*ibid*, 46–7) and Cefalu (*ibid*, 106) with the English, Anglo Norman, or northern tradition of two western towers; Mazara was accepted as the earliest two tower façade in Italy and the specific model for Cefalù which in turn was the direct source for Monreale (*ibid*, 108).
- 11 Krautheimer, R 1934 'San Nicola in Bari und die Apulische Architektur des 12. Jahrhunderts', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, 9 (1934), 5–42. According to Krautheimer, the north tower belonged to the earliest phase, the south tower to the latest (6 [fig 1], 9 [figs 2–4], 28–9).
 - 12 Schettini (1967, 41–3) *contra* Krautheimer, proposed that the church is the result of the transformation, carried out between 1087 and 1196, of the much earlier *Palazzo del Catapano*; he dated (*ibid*, 28) the south tower to the eighth or ninth century and the north tower and façade to the end of the ninth century. He also suggested a similar transformation for Cefalù (*ibid*, 87–9 n 108).
 - 13 Aubert & Goubet 1958, 330: cf Kraus, H 1979 *Gold was the Mortar*, London, 156, 159–60, and esp 163; he contended little was done under the appanage of Alphonse and that the last two bays of the nave and two lower registers of the façade date from the end of the 13th century.
 - 14 The particular placement of the towers is not discussed in any of those works cited above, nor are any reasons for their different dimensions mentioned.
 - 15 The aisled narthex which was added to the great church at Cluny ('III'), beginning about 1142, eventually ended up with two massive western towers (Conant 1973, 122, fig 31, pl 65A). They were much wider than the aisles in front of which they stood, and the area between them, about the width of the nave of the narthex, was left open. Construction of the narthex dragged on until c 1120–5, and the west towers were not completed until 1324–42. But even though the towers were placed in front of the narthex façade, and did not form a unified structure in the manner of a twin-tower façade, they do not really belong with the buildings discussed above, because they were not flanking the narthex.
 - 16 There does appear to be a tendency in early Gothic in Britain to eliminate buttresses and return to a flat wall relieved and given a plastic character only by bands of arcading. Examples are the façades of Bourne Abbey (Lincolnshire), Dunstable Priory (Bedfordshire), both Augustinian, and Lichfield Cathedral (Staffordshire): all originally had two west towers, which are not expressed at the lower levels.
 - 17 Wilson, in Gifford *et al* (1984, 135–6), advanced the façades of Lindisfarne Priory (c 1140) and Rochester Cathedral (c 1160), as earlier parallels or prototypes, rather incorrectly, I believe. The structures at the outer angles of those façades are out-sized turrets rather than towers of a scale like those of Holyrood or the twin towers of that type. At both, they are completely filled by generously-sized stairwells, so they are in effect stair towers like those at St-Nicolas at Caen. They are also *not* placed flanking the aisle walls nor in advance of the west wall. Thus, neither typologically, nor in terms of position, are they related to Holyrood. They do seem to be related to the screen façade of Malmesbury Abbey and partly to anticipate the stair towers of the façade of Salisbury Cathedral (see above note 4). Their relatively small size explains the absence of buttresses.
 - 18 Similar clerestory-level passages that ran into the jambs of tall west windows are found earlier at Worksop Priory (the only major Romanesque church to retain its original west window) and Kelso Abbey, and later at York Minster. The author of the RCAMS *Inventory* article suggests (1951, 134) such plankways were used for the repair of glazing.
 - 19 See the reconstruction drawings in Gifford *et al* (1984, 136 (original state), 137 (after repairs of 1633)).
 - 20 See Blum, P Z 1978 *The Salisbury Chapter House and its Old Testament cycle: an archaeological and iconographic study*, PhD Thesis, Yale University, New Haven, Chap III, n 19 (332–4), and, more specifically, 'Liturgical influences on the design of the west front at Wells and Salisbury', a paper she delivered at the 18th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1983.
 - 21 In Gifford *et al* (1984, 138, 138*), it is incorrectly stated by Wilson that the west front of Lindisfarne is a precedent for the double wall-passage. There was only a single wall-passage at Lindisfarne, at one level, which appears to have given on to a small chamber enclosed by the gable of the west porch. See my forthcoming study, 'The reconstruction of the west Portal-porch of Lindisfarne Priory', *Durham Archaeol J*.

REFERENCES

- Aubert, M & Goubet, S 1958 *Cathédrales et trésors gothiques de France*. Paris.
- Bouralière, A de la 1903 'Guide archéologique: La cathédrale', *Congrès archéologique*, 70 (Poitiers, 1903), 11–15.
- Conant, K J 1973 *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture, 800–1200*, 3 ed. Harmondsworth. (= *The Pelican History of Art*.)
- Decker, H 1958 *Romanesque Art in Italy*. London.
- Di Stefano, G 1955 *Monumenti della Sicilia normanna*. Palermo. (2 ed, Krönig, W (ed) 1979)
- Di Stefano, G 1960 *Il duomo di Cefalù, biografia di una cattedrale incompiuta*. Palermo.
- Eyre, C 1896 'Notes on the old western towers of Glasgow Cathedral', *Trans Glasgow Archaeol Soc*, n ser, 2 (1896), 253–70.
- Frankl, P 1962 *Gothic Architecture*. Harmondsworth. (= *The Pelican History of Art*.)
- Gifford, J, McWilliam, C, & Walker, D 1984 *The Buildings of Scotland: Edinburgh*. Edinburgh.
- Gomme, A & Walker, D 1968 *The architecture of Glasgow*. London.
- Krönig, W 1965 *Il duomo di Monreale e l'architettura normanna in Sicilia/The Cathedral of Monreale*. Palermo.
- MacGibbon, D & Ross, T 1897 *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, 3 vols. Edinburgh.
- McAleer, J P 1963/1984 *The Romanesque Church Façade in Britain*. PhD Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. (Pub: *Outstanding Theses from the Courtauld Institute of Art*. New York and London.)
- Peers, C R 1932 *Kirkham Priory, Yorkshire (Ministry of Works Pamphlet Guide)*. (Reprinted at later dates.)
- Pevsner, N 1972 *The Buildings of England: Yorkshire: York and the East Riding*. Harmondsworth.
- Quintavalle, A C 1974 *La cattedrale di Parma e il Romanico europeo*. Parma.
- Radford, C A R 1970 *Glasgow Cathedral (Official Guide)*. Edinburgh.
- RCAMS 1951 Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *The City of Edinburgh*. Edinburgh.
- Rhein, A 1912 'Poitiers: Cathédrale St-Pierre', *Congrès archéologique*, 79 (Poitiers, 1912), i, 252–9.
- Ricci, C 1925 *Romanische Baukunst in Italien*. Stuttgart.
- Schettini, F 1967 *La basilica di San Nicola de Bari*. Bari.
- Tassi, R 1966 *Il duomo di Parma, I. Il tempo romanico*. Parma.
- Waddell, J J 1921 'The western towers of Glasgow Cathedral', *Trans Scot Eccles Soc*, 6 (1918–21), 58–65.
- VCH *Victoria History of the Counties of England*.