'EXCELLENT, NEW AND UNIFORME YN WORK', ST MARY'S NOTTINGHAM, AN ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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SUMMARY   *The late-medieval church of St Mary, Nottingham was built as the civic church for a mercantile city. Its architectural background can be traced in the major 14th-century buildings of the West Midlands. As a building in a single style, however, its building history cannot be determined by architectural analysis alone. Detailed study of the masons' marks shows that it was constructed in three campaigns of close date, and it also provides evidence of the level of skill of the masons involved.*

INTRODUCTION

The parish church of St Mary, Nottingham dominates the city for which it acts as the principal ecclesiastical building (Plate 1). It is sited on a sandstone promontory overlooking the flood-plain of the river Trent in the centre of the Saxon borough of the early-medieval city, and is now surrounded by the buildings constructed as lace-works and textile factories of the more recent past. The city of Nottingham was divided into two boroughs by the Norman Conquest, the French borough around the castle to the west and the English, or Saxon borough to the east.[1] St Mary's was the only parish church in the east, while there were two further parishes with churches in west; a Cluniac priory in the western suburb of Lenton, a Franciscan friary sited in the Broad Marsh below St Mary's, a Carmelite house beneath the castle in the western half of the city, one hospital to the north-east, and possibly three others sited elsewhere. The city had two fairs and a market and was a flourishing trading centre, benefiting from having had a bridge across the river Trent since the 10th century, and having wharfs to unload merchandise from ships sailing down from the river Humber in the north, or from the port of Boston in the east through the Foss Dyke canal from Lincoln.[2]

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH

St Mary's church is a cruciform structure (Plate 2) with an imposing central tower, broad transepts that terminate in massive multi-light windows, long nave with clerestory, a heavily built south porch, and a tall chancel with a low vestry to the north. Its south side was widened to create an aisle to the chancel in the early 20th century. In common with other civic churches of the later medieval period, the interior is spacious, light and little interrupted with massive piers (Plate 3). Instead slender lozenge-shaped piers with continuous mouldings and minor shafts and capitals rise to support the clerestory of paired windows beneath a wood roof and although the transepts lack aisles they too have clerestories on east and west sides. The impact of this was not lost on early commentators and John Leland expressed his admiration, in the early 1540s, that it had 'so many fair wyndowes yn it that no artificier can imagine to set another'.[3]

At the ends of the nave aisles tall stair turrets sited in the angle between the aisle and transept provide access to a loft above a wooden screen that extended across the whole width of the nave and aisles at the west side of the crossing (Plate 4). The turrets continue upwards to give onto the transept roofs and from there allow entry into the tower from the south as there is no actual tower stair. When the chancel (Plate 5) was given its aisle the original side

PLATE 1: Nottingham St Mary from the north-west in the 17th century. Drawing by Wenceslas Hollar.
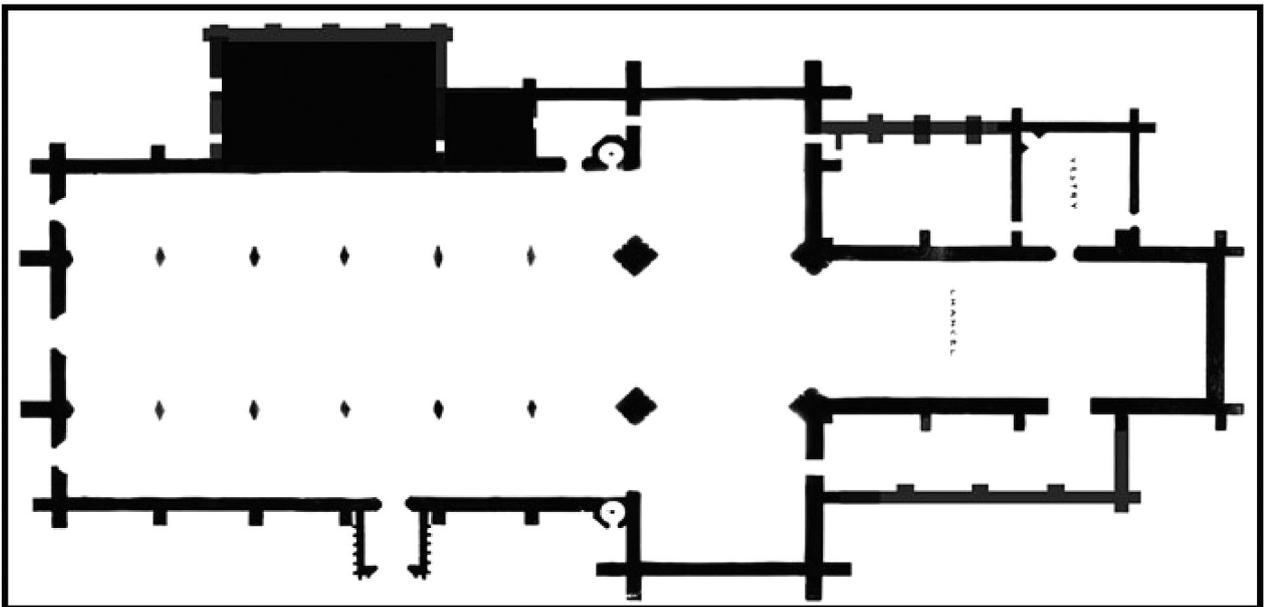

PLATE 2: Sketch plan of St Mary's.

windows were retained and set into the new work. It is a much plainer structure than the nave, with tall windows on all sides, but no ornamentation on the wall surfaces.[4]

Although St Mary's is mentioned in *Domesday Book* of 1086, all the fabric of the current church belongs to the late-Gothic, or Perpendicular, style. The style was used in England between its early inception in the second quarter of the 14th century through to the demise of church building at the Reformation in the 16th century, although it continued to be used beyond that date in particular cases, such as for university college buildings at Oxford.

Distinguishing between phases in Perpendicular buildings is not easy as tracery forms and pier designs can retain similarities across long periods or encounter revivals, and where the documentary record is mostly lacking, as is the case here, even providing a date for a late-medieval building is not straightforward. Indeed for the Tudor John Leland, St Mary's seemed 'excellent, new and uniforme yn work' although by that date it had been standing for over one hundred years.[5] St Mary's has been described as 'a magnificent building without precedent in its locality', but it has not been the subject of study since the period of antiquarian interest.[6]

THE DATE OF ST MARY'S

Boniface IX's Indulgence of 1401, which refers to work on St Mary's, '…newly begun, with solemn, wondrous and manifold sumptuous work, towards the consummation of which a multitude of workmen with assiduous toil fervently strive daily',[7] places the start of work on the current church at the end of the 14th century but the completion date, and progress of its construction, remain unknown. The pattern of donations towards the fabric fund support a start date towards the end of the 14th century, and a concentrated period of activity in the first quarter of the 15th. Gifts are first recorded in 1383 but the sums remain modest until 1399 when they increased considerably and stayed high until 1423 when they fell back again although money continued to be

donated until the early 16th century.[8] Earlier writers have proposed a very long building programme, with work started in the early 15th century, but the nave piers not erected until the last quarter of the century and the chancel and tower built after that.[9]

THE 19TH-CENTURY RESTORATION CAMPAIGNS

The church underwent a series of restorations in the 19th century, both to secure the tower, that was threatening the east end of the nave, and to take the west front back to a medieval appearance after the construction of a hybrid classicising facade in 1725. Under Moffat in the 1840s, Scott in the 1870s and Bodley and Garner in the 1880s work on the interior was also undertaken to remove galleries and an internal wall across the chancel entrance, and to replace the roofs and other timber-work. Previously, between 1818–20, William Stretton, a local architect who was closely involved with St Mary's, had carried out a certain amount of restoration work, most of which is undocumented, although the date of 1818 on the top of one of the south transept buttresses confirms the date of its renewal.[10] New tracery was provided for the nave clerestory during the 19th century and matched to that of the transepts, and a great deal of new stone incorporated into the exterior of the building.

THE EARLIER BUILDING

The fabric evidence at St Mary's for anything before the late-medieval building is extremely limited. During the course of the tower underpinning in the 1840s architectural fragments from earlier buildings on the site were recovered and drawn before reburial, including the fragments of a 13th-century pier and a very fine late-Romanesque capital. Further evidence of an earlier church is the collection of 13th- and 14th-century ledger slabs that have been recorded and in some cases reused as part of the wall-bench on the north side of the nave.[11] The earlier pier sections survive re-used as blocks supporting the nave north arcade and consist of lobes with fillets separated by sharp angles rather than hollows; they imply that the earlier

PLATE 3: Nave interior from the south-east.

St Mary's was a grandly-executed 13th-century church of some architectural pretension, and bear close resemblance to pier fragments from Croyland Abbey in Lincolnshire. The closest related design is that of the arcades of Mansfield parish church, it was also used at Warsop, Laxton choir and for one of the pier types at Teversal.[12] The nave of St Peter's, Nottingham, has lobed piers with filleted shafts of a type more widely found in the 13th century.

STYLISTIC ANALYSIS

It was suggested by William Addison, in his study of local style in parish church buildings written in 1982, that the current St Mary's had a strong connection with the churches of South Yorkshire, since he assumes an immediate hinterland for the design sources for parish churches.[13] This fails to take account of two key factors. First, the fact that parish churches are inspired by a range of sources, and architectural stylistic transmission is not necessarily confined to limited geographical boundaries. Second, that architectural inspiration and the construction process are not necessarily both derived from the same source, therefore there may be a variety of factors at play that determine the final appearance of a particular building.

Overall the design of St Mary's Nottingham does not correlate closely with its near neighbours, and has no apparent stylistic relationship with south Yorkshire or indeed Lincolnshire from which it may, historically, have derived much influence. This fact was recognised by Christopher Wilson in 2003, who comments that St Mary's seems conspicuously distinct from the buildings in its immediate hinterland.[14]

Elevations

The concept of paired windows in a clerestory/upper level is usually associated with the wealthy churches of East Anglia, but most examples are later than the date ascribed to St Mary's. The concept has a long history and was a hallmark of many 13th-century great churches, where, before the development of bar tracery designs, lancets were paired. By the early 14th century, large Decorated windows at aisle level replaced the paired lancets, and while clerestories were only built in the grandest of buildings, a number had paired lights, Howden church and those of the mendicant orders, for example. The idea was adopted at Boston St Botolph's by the mid 14th century, perhaps the most aspiring of the urban parish churches. By the time of St Mary's, therefore, the concept was becoming established within the large mendicant buildings and parish churches in towns.

Two significant factors, however, differentiate St Mary's from all of these examples. One is the size of the clerestory windows, the other is the pairing of the windows at the lower, aisle level, the latter unprecedented within the region to the north and east of Nottingham in the 14th century.

One other example of paired tracery windows at aisle level is Holy Trinity in Coventry, a large parish and guild church adjacent to the Benedictine priory, in whose patronage it lay (Plate 6). There is no firm date for the nave, but it is either a precocious design of the mid 14th century or a retrospective one of the 1380s to 90s, although the upper stages are firmly dated to the late 15th century, but in either case it predates St Mary's Nottingham and may have served as a model for it.

The presence of paired windows, and the possibility that Holy Trinity is a retrospective design, raises an important general point about this group of urban mercantile-funded churches. Great urban parish churches are generally considered to be a late-medieval phenomenon, in view of the surviving evidence and the understanding of the economic situation in towns and many East Anglian villages involved in the wool industry in the 14th century and 15th centuries. However, there is considerable evidence that there existed a reasonable number of impressive, large 13th-century churches in towns.

Clear evidence for this can be found in the fabric of, for example, St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and Holy Trinity, Coventry, both of which underwent wholesale replacement in the 14th century on a similar scale. In the case of Holy Trinity it can be suggested that the 14th-century use of paired aisle windows was a conscious reflection of the earlier building, acknowledging its grandeur but in a contemporary and more fashionable idiom. Glasgow cathedral provides a clear example of this, in which the very late 13th-century nave consciously borrows motifs from the early 13th-century chancel in its use of paired windows in the clerestory. Here it provides a sense of visual unity between two parts of the building that were to remain side by side.

Two conspicuous features exist in the elevation of St Mary's elevation nave design. The least conspicuous of the two is the choice of a lozenge shaped pier (Plate 7). Lozenge shaped piers have a long history, however, it is notable that they were found during excavations of the nave of the Whitefriars in Coventry, started in 1342 and by all account an elaborate and expensive set of

buildings.[15] Such lozenge shapes continued to be used in the city's churches, for example in the east end of Holy Trinity, most likely dated to 1391. However the particular relevance of the Whitefriars example is that the pier profile had a dominant roll mounding as its axial feature and subsidiary smaller roll mouldings further back. It has been suggested, based on this find and earlier material, that roll mouldings ran into the arcade arches without the interruption of a capital, and with small capitals on the main elevations. This provides a link with one of the most conspicuous features of St Mary's, the prominent use of roll mouldings articulating the elevation. In Nottingham this created a grid-like form of the heavy roll mouldings which articulate the wall surfaces at each level (Plate 3).

Beyond the supposed relationship with Coventry Whitefriars this feature demonstrates a close connection with a group of extant buildings in the West Midlands. The first of these is the collegiate


PLATE 4: Nave and transept exterior from the south.

PLATE 5: Chancel exterior from the south showing the medieval windows reset in the early 20th-century aisle.

church of St Mary's Warwick. It was under the patronage of the wealthy and politically prominent earls of Warwick and is dated to after 1364, when it was described as 'currently being rebuilt at great expense'.[16] The chancel was rebuilt between *c*.1369 and 1400, and the nave rebuilt in the 17th century after fire damage. At the east end of the building a chapter house was constructed at the same time as the choir for the dean and canons of the college (Plate 8). This building has prominent roll mouldings that frame each square bay and the window, a tracery design comprising a Y tracery division of units that contain hexagons over four lights, and the responds are supported on distinctive and unusual bases which are also hexagonal in profile (Plate 9). This strongly recalls the elevation and details of St Mary's, Nottingham in all its elements.

A similar approach to an elevation can be seen at the great hall of Kenilworth castle, probably remodelled in 1390–3 for John of Gaunt, a clearly related work (Plate 10), and the tracery design is also seen in the base of the west tower of St Michael's in Coventry, from the 1370s, the second massive parish church in the city, adjacent to Holy Trinity, but wealthier, and also funded by guild patronage.[17]

This combination of features suggests that the designer of St Mary's was acutely aware of the developments in Warwick and Coventry in the two decades preceding its commencement. It is perfectly feasible that the mason came from Coventry having worked on a series of related buildings. One mason, Robert Skillington, is documented as working on the great hall at Kenilworth and has been connected with work on St Michael's tower and parts of St Mary's Warwick. He is also documented at a hospital building, the Newarke, in Leicester which may be closely related to this group of buildings.[18]

to the nave and transepts' use of the moulded grid pattern that articulates the wall surfaces and frames the windows (Plate 12). While this might be attributable to the desire by Lenton Priory, the monastic patrons of the living responsible for the chancel, to avoid undue expense, the chancel needs to be seen within the context of other east end projects underway in the late middle ages. Amongst those later 14th-century churches built without side aisles to the chancel examples like St Mary's, Warwick, provide one model in which the tracery patterns of the windows extend across the wall surfaces between to create a continuous decorative scheme of great richness, but it is not the only type. Boston's chancel from the second half of the 14th century represents an alternative arrangement and displays the same simplified interior as St Mary's Nottingham in which the walling between the windows is kept completely free of architectural enrichment and the windows have no inner hood mouldings (Plate 13). It was to

PLATE 6: Coventry Holy Trinity, nave exterior south.

Ultimately many of these features derive from works at Gloucester cathedral in the period from 1337 to the 1360s, a building under royal patronage that was strongly influential in the West Country and West Midlands in the decades immediately following the completion of its eastern arm. Amongst these are the tracery designs, and the use of the hexagonal bases, the latter used for the pier and respond profiles at St Mary's.[19] One particular feature can be seen in Gloucester's cloister, a structure that was probably started in the 1360s but the campaign was interrupted and the west walk may not have reached until the 1390s. At the time of the construction of this walk a new doorway was constructed to link the cloister to the nave of the church, and it provides a very close parallel for the south transept tomb at St Mary's (Plate 11).

The plain walls and lack of any ornamentation around the windows of the chancel interior at St Mary's, Nottingham are in marked contrast

PLATE 7: Nottingham St Mary, nave pier base.
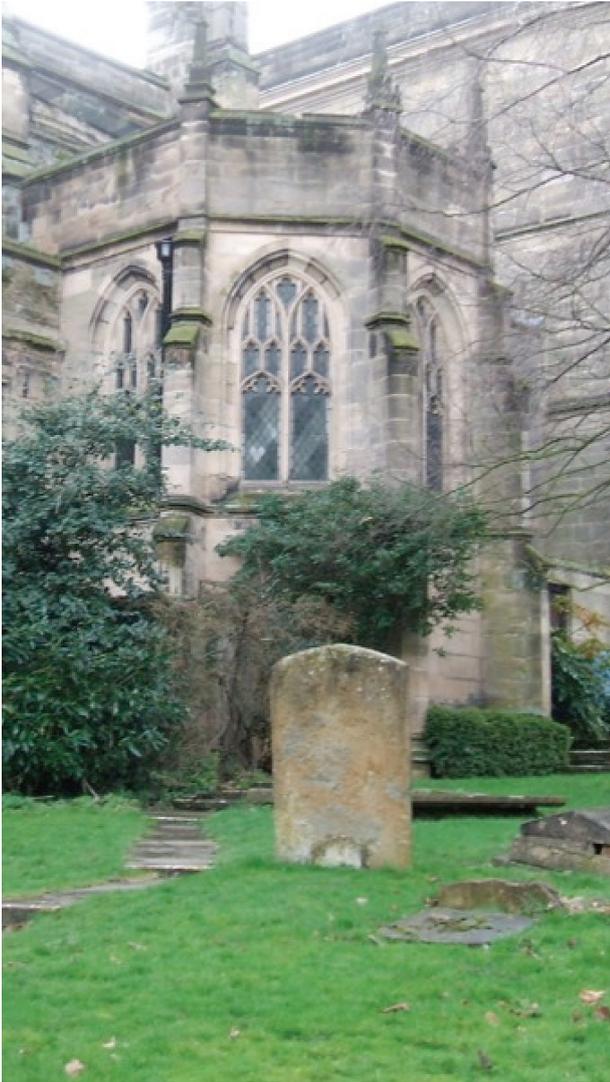
PLATE 8: Warwick St Mary, chapter house exterior.

prove popular with builders in the 15th century as well; the university church of Oxford, St Mary the Virgin, has the same design for its chancel, from the second half of the 15th century, and it was also used for Ashby de la Zouch's castle chapel, built between 1464–83, which is of a similar size to St Mary's chancel. Lord Cromwell's collegiate church at Tattershall, in building from after 1476, which mirrors St Mary's in its expanse of window area, particularly in the transepts, adopted St Mary's grid framework for the nave arcades, and the plain walling of its east end for the un-aisled chancel.

The Late-Medieval Rebuilding Programme

It is not apparent why a total late-medieval rebuilding of St Mary's took place, there is no evidence for, or account of, any collapse or fire that would have required it, and it seems probable that civic pride and a desire to emulate other successful mercantile cities, such as Bristol and Coventry, affected Nottingham, and that the monks were prevailed upon to rebuild their part as well.

The townspeople evidently intended that the interior spaces of their part of the church should be divided up to serve both public and more private use and although access to the nave was freely available, with a south porch and three western doors,[20] access to the transepts was restricted by the presence of the screen placed across the western side of the crossing, instead of across the chancel entrance, and there was no door from the exterior to either transept originally (Plate 2). Screens are more usually sited at the entrance to the chancel since their role was to separate the priest's area, including the high altar, from that of the laity. Although many were lost in the religious upheavals of the Reformation, the openings onto the screen lofts and their access stairs survive better and bear witness to the site of medieval screens at chancel entrances. Screens on the western sides of crossings are much less usual, although Minster Lovell church in Oxfordshire still has the stair and upper opening for one on the west side. The use of the transept space as family mausolea for a powerful magnate at Minster Lovell and for the local wealthy merchants at Nottingham, intended from their inception in both cases, provides an explanation for the screen site. Nottingham's screen was deemed to be in need of replacement in the 17th during a period in which repairs had been made to the church.[21]

Integral to the fabric of the south transept terminal wall at Nottingham is the gabled canopy to a wall-tomb (Plates 14/15). The gable design incorporates a richly cusped and sub-cusped ogee arch, of slightly archaic form, with panelling that is characteristic of the Perpendicular style, and there is further panelling on the soffit of the recess. A larger version of the gable design is seen on the south porch (Plate 16) which must be of similar date. The

projects less far into the transept. It retains a tomb chest, which has alabaster panels characteristic of 15th-century work, topped by a slab of Egglestone marble from which the brasses have been removed. The brass was to a civilian couple, and it was made by the 'London A' workshop in the 1390s.[23]

Neither tomb gable has any heraldry, or inscription to identify the family, and it is likely that neither the tomb chest in the north tomb, nor the figure in the south, actually originated there. The north tomb had achieved its current appearance by the 17th century, by which time the area around it had become the burial site of the Plumptre family whose wealth had been established by the late 14th century and who continued to be buried there until the 18th. The tomb chest, however, may be from the tomb of John Tannesley, who left £10 towards the fabric of the church in 1413 and requested burial in St John's chapel on the north side of the church, and the canopy itself may have been for the tomb

PLATE 9: Chapter house interior.

monument is of a type familiar in later-medieval England in which a gabled canopy enclosed a recess for the memorial effigy, either engraved on a brass, or carved in high relief, and supported by a tomb chest. The tomb chest has been cut away and the figure that is now in the recess, of a civilian in long robes, lies on the floor.[22]

The equivalent tomb in the north transept is later (Plate 17) and has been inserted into the wall, but it is clear that such a tomb was anticipated from the start. The lower part of the wall is blank on the outside, but on the interior the mullions and jambs of the window continue down onto it as panels of blind tracery and the super-mullions extend to the floor exactly as they do in the south transept to frame the tomb there. Masons' marks on the blind panels are the same as those of the rest of the transept and prove that the blind tracery was intended from the start. The tomb itself is also a gabled structure, but it is stylistically later than the south tomb and

PLATE 10: Kenilworth castle, John of Gaunt's hall.

Amyas will have been buried in the previous church and his tomb either made new or, less probably, moved from the previous church and inserted into a tomb recess. Confusingly, the brass matrix under the north tomb canopy is usually described as the Amyas brass, and if that is the case then it is from a new tomb since it is too late to have been from his original one. A second chantry transferred to the new church was to the Virgin Mary and, that too was celebrated in the south transept. It was founded by Robert Ingram in 1326 and also survived until the 16th century. Occasional documentary references suggest that there was also a chantry to St James, but it had disappeared by 1547.[28]

PLATE 11: Gloucester cathedral, nave door to cloister.

of Thomas Thurland who died in 1474, and was another benefactor of the church. The north transept was also the site of All Saints' chapel.[24]

Antiquarian sources record tombs and memorials to the Samon family in the south transept from the 15th century and traces of the letter 'S', painted on the underside of the south tomb's canopy, were visible until 1800 and have since been lost.[25] The transept housed the chapel of St Lawrence, which was the site of the Samon chantry, founded in 1416, and a chantry transferred from the previous church was also celebrated in this chapel. It was founded by William Amyas who was recorded as Nottingham's wealthiest citizen in 1341, was several times mayor of the town, and had died by 1369.[26] The chantry survived until its dissolution in the 16th century, and included a requirement that two large candles be burned around the founder's tomb during the Mass.[27]

PLATE 12: Nottingham St Mary, chancel interior from the west.

next to the screen provided access from the exterior and may have been intended for the use of the chantry priests. The door open inwards and was not originally intended to lead from the church into the low building on the exterior which is visible in the Hollar drawing (Plate 1). The importance of the transepts that is revealed by the evidence for their patronage and use strongly suggests that this part of the church was constructed first.

THE MASONS' MARKS

The building has a series of masons' marks on its ashlar and moulded stone and detailed examination of the sites of the marks provides a means of demonstrating the sequence of construction of the church. The marks now need to be considered and their evidence for the sequence of building examined. There are masons' marks on all parts of the structure, with the exception of the west front

PLATE 13: Boston St Botolph, chancel.

The number of chantries is not particularly large for a civic church, the parish church at Newark in the north of Nottinghamshire, by comparison, had fifteen chantries, but St Mary's Nottingham also had several wealthy trade guilds represented in the church. St Katherine's Guild included a member of the Thurland family amongst its founders and had a chapel at the end of the nave aisle, possibly on the south side. The largest guild was the Trinity Guild with a chapel in the north transept, which had been established in the 1390s, and increased in size during the 15th century. There was also a St Mary's Guild and the Guild of All Saints, both with chapels sited in the transepts. A doorway in the north aisle

PLATE 14: Nottingham St Mary, south transept tomb canopy.

PLATE 15: S transept interior.

on a temporary basis. Two teams will have been necessary, the masons who cut the stone to shape, either at the quarry, which was within the county, or in the lodge on site, and the less-skilled men who used the stone to build the structure, which in the case of St Mary's, did not involve complex stone vaults or sophisticated buttressing systems. The marks are those of the highly skilled stone-cutters and the building masons have left no evidence of their individual presence in the building.

It is clear from the design of the building that it is the result of a single scheme for the nave and transepts with a consistent use of motifs, such as the rectilinear grid made up of heavy roll-mouldings that articulates the wall-surfaces, and a limited number of tracery patterns was used. There are a few anomalies in the building which may suggest

which is entirely of the mid-19th century (Plate 18). Marks can be found on the plain ashlar of the walling stone, on the moulded stone and on the nave piers as well as on the tracery of some of the windows. Both interior and exterior surfaces have marks, although the number of exterior marks is low due to the replacement of large amounts of masonry and to the damage caused by weathering to the surface of any original stone. The marks are small in scale, but decisively cut and can easily be isolated from the background 'noise' of graffiti and casual marks left by visitors. Study of the marks enables the sequence of construction of the church to be laid out and also provides insights into the organisation of a building campaign in a city setting. This will have been a different situation to that found at a major cathedral or abbey church where there will have been a works department operational across a long period of time. Here the master mason will have had to be found and masons recruited, supplies of materials organised, and a works yard set up close by, all

PLATE 16: South porch.

that there were changes of plan as the building progressed, but the clearest distinction is between the appearance of the chancel and the rest of the building. Whether this can be attributed to the different patrons of the two parts, the priory and the city, or to a difference in date is a question that the masons' marks can address.

The form of the marks

The Nottingham St Mary's masons' marks (Plate 19) are distinct and varied in their designs, and in a number of cases there are slight variations in their execution. There are at least thirty-three different marks at St Mary's, a further group of fourteen marks that appear to be mis-cut versions of those marks, plus another twenty-seven marks that only occur once and are therefore little use for analysing the building's construction. In total around 270 blocks of stone are marked, with some areas having more marks than others. The aisle walls, apart from the east bays on either side, have very few marks, although all the nave piers are marked, whereas the two stair turrets in the nave have a considerable number of marks. Two explanations are possible, either the masons of the aisle walls were paid regular wages, in which case they had no need to mark their output for an overseer, or there was a change in site organisation and masons were required to mark only the bedding planes and joint faces of the stones. Both cases would represent a departure from the arrangements for the rest of the building and this may be the effect of a change in the masons' conditions of work, or be evidence for the work being of a different phase.

As is usually the case, the masons' marks are made up of a series of straight lines, with some curves used as well, but simple designs predominate, and most marks are made up of between two and six lines, with two seven-line marks, one eight-line

PLATE 17: North transept interior.

mark and two more complex ones made of nine lines.

In distinguishing between marks it is clear that the orientation of a mark is not important, the marks can be inverted or reversed and it seems that certain differences are also insignificant. In the case of the mark 6x11, for example, which occurs 19 times, there are two other versions, 4x12 and 5x12, which omit one or more of the end strokes, but each of these is found only once, and in close proximity to

Table 1: Marks which may be mis-cut versions of other marks, with the marks they resemble

|				
2c50 (3c50)	3z2 (3z50)	4c50 (5c50)	4d50 (6d50)	4q20 (6a50)
4w3 (4w1)	4x12 (6x11)	5a50 (6a50)	5d50 (6d50)	5p51 (5p50)
5x12 (6x11)	6a51 (6a50)	6a52 (6a50)	6t50 (7t50)	
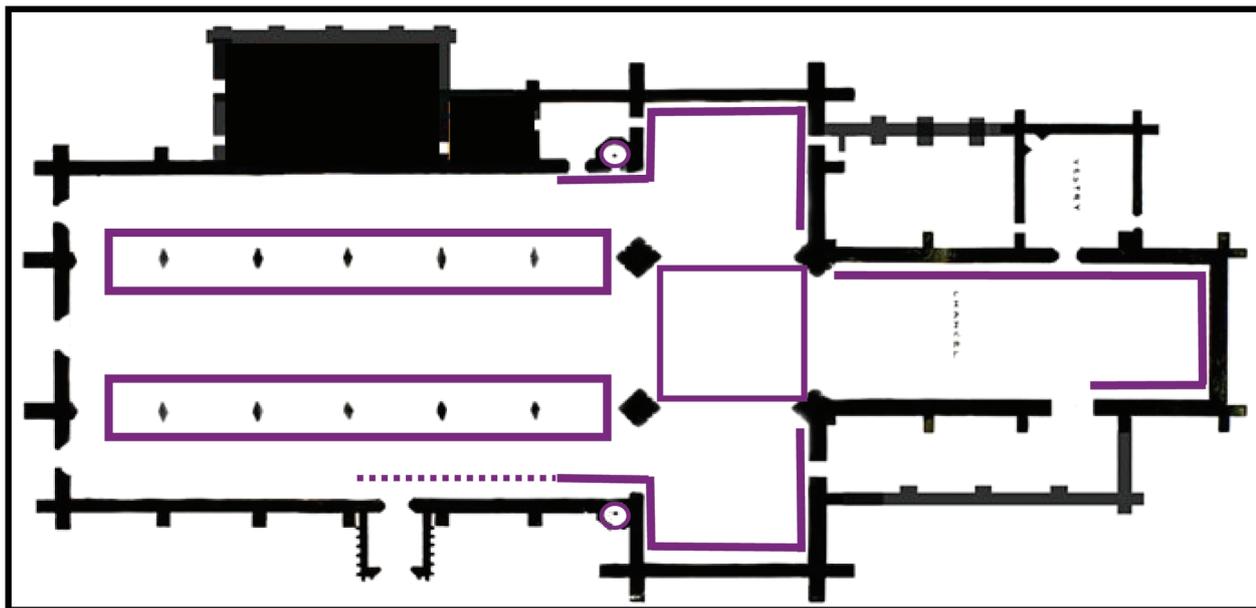
PLATE 18: Sketch plan with areas of masons' marks.

6x11 in the building. Similarly the petal-like form of 6d50, which is found four times, and differs from 4d50 and 5d50 only in the treatment of the end of its long stroke, is almost certainly the same mark more carefully cut.

Medieval and 19th-century marks

It is generally true that marks cannot be dated, and other factors, such as the type of stone used and the finish applied to it, help to distinguish between medieval marks and those put on during a post-Reformation rebuild, although the latter are uncommon.[29] One mark in St Mary's is clearly that of a 19th-century mason, as he has placed it beneath his name and the date, 1871, on a wall in the upper stage of the crossing tower. The mark is 7f50 (Plates 20/21).

Marks derived from letter-forms are amenable to dating and there are six examples here. Marks 3c50, 5c50, 5p50, 7t50, 9t50 and 9x50 (Plate 19) are all based on recognisable pen-scripts, the first four are from the Gothic Lombard script and the last two are derived from the textura, or 'black-letter' script, both of which were in use by scribes, and

for masons' marks, throughout the 14th and 15th centuries. The masons using these particular marks are likely to have come into contact with lettering from being engaged in work cutting inscriptions and as three of the six marks occur on plain ashlar rather than on more complex work, it suggests that these men were not set apart from the rest of the masons' team.[30] The case of a fourth mason, 3c50 is different. His mark is only found on moulded or more complex work that will have involved the use of templates, such as the south transept tomb, and he is likely to have been a more highly-paid and skilled mason. The marks 9t50 and 9x50 are also on moulded stone, but occur only once each.

The distribution of the marks and the three building campaigns

By analysing the distribution patterns of the marks it is possible to identify three teams of masons who between them constructed the chancel, tower and eastern parts of the church. Although there was a certain amount of movement between the teams, clear distinctions can be made between the three parts of the building, sufficient to suggest that the building campaigns were separate (Plate 22). The

2c40	2c50	2c51	2h3	2t3	2t8
2t10	2v1	2x5	2y3	3a4	3a6
3a15	3a17	3a50	3a65	3a66	3b1
3b50	3c50	3f3	3n1	3q1	3s10
3t50	3z2	3z50	4b1	4c50	4c55
4d50	4h50	4n50	4n51	4q1	4q20
4q50	4s1	4t5	4w1	4w3	4x12
5a50	5c50	5d50	5f50	5f55	5h50
5p50	5p51	5q1	5t50	5t55	5v50
5w2	5x12	6a50	6a51	6a52	6d50
6m50	6t10	6t50	6x11	6x50	6x55
7f50	7t50	8h50	9t50	9x50	

PLATE 19: Table of masons' marks codes for St Mary's. Not to scale.

chancel has nine different marks on the ashlar, and none on its moulded stone, although since this is confined to the windows it is possible that any marked stones may have been lost to restoration. Of the nine marks, only one is also found in the nave, but none from the transepts, and four others are also present amongst the twenty marks on the tower. The tower shares three further marks with the nave, and one of those marks is also in the transept. The tower marks are all on the ashlar, and not on the moulded stone. The marks are mostly found in the corners with only a few present on the other sections of the walls, there are none, however, on the east wall, apart from those in the corners. This may be due to repair work on the tower, which as the tallest structure in the city, would have been vulnerable to
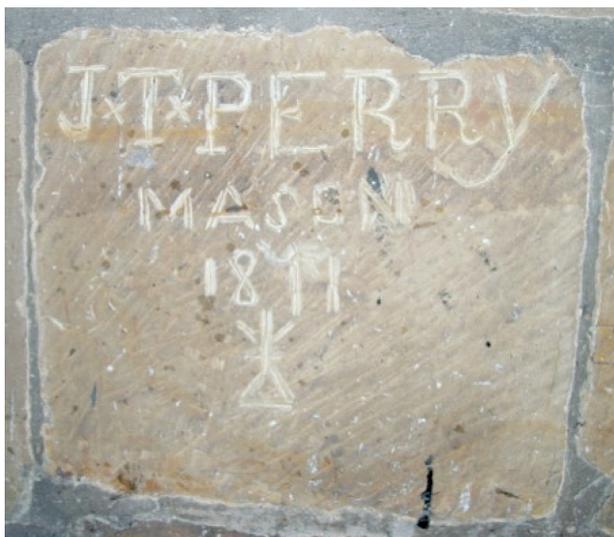
PLATE 20: 19th-century mark in the tower.

damage from the elements.[31] The tower marks show some consistency between the four corners and indicate that the tower was constructed in a single campaign.

Table 2: Chancel and tower marks. The shared marks are shown thus **2t3**

Chancel marks	Tower NE marks	Tower W/NW marks	Tower S/SE marks
2t3	**2t3**	**3a4**	2h3
2t10	**2v1**	3a50	**2v1**
2v1	**3a4**	3a65	2x5
3a4	3s10	3n1	**3a4**
3b50	**4b1**	3s10	3b1
3f3	4w1	**4b1**	3s10
4b1	7f50	4h50	3z2
5q1		5w2	**4b1**
5t55		6x55	4w1
			5d50
			5w2
			6x50

The three parts of the church can therefore be regarded as separate building campaigns, although not necessarily very different in date (Plate 23). The tracery pattern of the belfry lights on the tower (Plate 21), which is the level at which the masons' marks are found, resembles both the tracery of the lower windows in the transepts, and of the chancel lateral windows (Plate 5). It is only the chancel east window itself that does not belong to this group, and that may not have been installed until later (Plate 12). The tower must have been constructed after the nave and transepts with the chancel started during its construction, to provide the abutment for its east side, but not completed until after the upper stages of the tower had been raised. Problems with the stability of the tower were soon evident in the nave, where the piers lean, and in the east walls of both transepts which have been distorted by its weight. The marks that are shared between the tower and chancel are not confined to the west end of the chancel but are found on the east and north walls as well, and this suggests that some of the masons' team from the tower was retained to work on the chancel. It also indicates that the involvement of the priory in the work was purely financial and the monks did not insist on hiring their own masons.

The nave and transept marks

The marks demonstrate close connections between the nave (Plate 3) and transepts (Plates 15/17) with a number of masons cutting stone for both areas, although work on the transepts started first. Of the twenty masons who cut stone for the transepts, twelve also worked on stone for the nave, which represents 60 percent of the team. The nave team was larger however, and the transept masons constituted less than a third of its number overall. It is conspicuous that, with the exception of 6x11, none of the shared transept marks found in the nave occurs after the first bay, and in a number of cases the marks are very close together in the building. 5w2, a mark found seventeen times for example, is mostly on a restricted area around both sides of the crossing and is not seen after the first bay of the nave.

The more specialised masons

By looking at the type of stone that has marks it is possible to comment on the type of mason employed for the city's part of the church and to contrast this with the tower and chancel projects. In terms of number of marks recorded in the western

parts, most have been found on the ashlar blocks of the main walls, but only five masons worked exclusively on those, while the others combined this with more complex work. The most prolific mason, 2t8, whose mark occurs thirty-six times, cut stone for windows, piers and other mouldings and also occasionally cut ashlar. Certain masons clearly were specialists as their marks are only found on moulded or carved stone, 6a50, for example, only worked on the moulded stone of the nave piers while other masons, such as 4q50 and 8h50 occasionally cut ashlar although their marks are mostly found on the more complex work. Conversely mason 5p50, who used one of the lettering-type marks, worked predominantly on ashlar, but was given one piece of template work for the south transept. A group of three specialist masons, 3c50, (another who had a lettering-type mark), 3z50, and 5f50 worked together on the south transept tomb and 5f50's work is not found elsewhere in the building. It is possible that he was brought in especially to work on the tomb whereas the other two formed part of the established masons' team.

A picture is emerging of a highly-skilled team of experienced masons working on shaping the complex blocks of stone for the nave and transepts from templates supplied by the master mason. It is not the case that there were a few masons in the team capable of doing this work while most of the others only cut ashlar, which while it is a skill that requires considerable training to achieve, is less demanding than working from the intricacies of a moulding template. It seems that a team of masons capable of the higher-level work was especially brought together for the nave and transept campaign, with only a small contingent of less-skilled men.

The nave pier marks

The nave piers are of a uniform design and all have marks, with the masons mostly drawn from the existing team. It is not the case that a completely new team cut the stone for the piers, which would have happened if there had been a delay of about 70 years before the piers were built. Marks are shared between the piers, but the eastern pair of piers, those nearest the crossing, were cut by a different
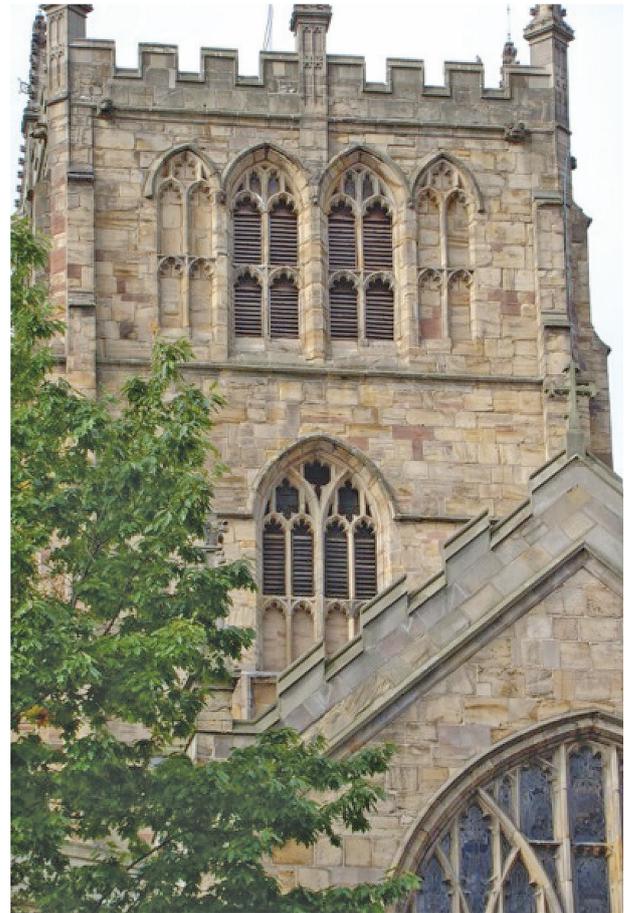

PLATE 21: East face of St Mary's tower.

team from the masons who were responsible for the rest. The specialist pier-mason, 6a50, only appears in piers 2–5, and masons such as 6x11, whose work occurs in other parts of the church, is also only found from pier two westwards. There are close links between the eastern piers and the arches into the transepts, but fewer marks are shared between these and the western piers. In the case of 6x11 it seems that he was not available for work on the pier courses until after the arches into the transepts had been finished. Mason 5w2 disappears after working on the first pier on the south side, having completed work in the transept and was either moved onto the tower work, or brought back later for it. It is possible that the change of design above the south piers westwards of this point, from a design derived from panelling to the plainer form of the north

Table 3: Marks on the nave piers, numbered from the east

P1N	P1S	P2N	P2S	P3N	P3S	P4N	P4S	P5N	P5S
2t8	2t8	5a50	4q20	4q50	6x11	2y3	4q50	6a50	6a50
3a15	3c50	6x11	6a51			6x11	6a50		
4t5	3z50		6t10						
	5w2		6x11						
	6m50								

arcade may be connected with the departure of mason 5w2.

Connections between the nave and transepts

It is significant that the marks 3c50 and 3z50, which occur on the south transept tomb, are also present on one of the nave piers, as well as on the north aisle door in the case of 3c50, since this proves conclusively that the south transept, widely recognised as being the starting point of the building work, is of the same period as the nave and there cannot have been a long delay between the construction of the two structures. Further masons' mark connections between the transepts and nave show that there was a continuity between the work, with perhaps a slight delay between the first nave piers and the rest of the arcade. Most of the masons were not laid off at this point, although one or two were, and masons who had worked on the transepts were called back to the team.

A more important change occurs in the nave aisles, at the point where the masons' marks cease to appear. This happens at different places on the north and
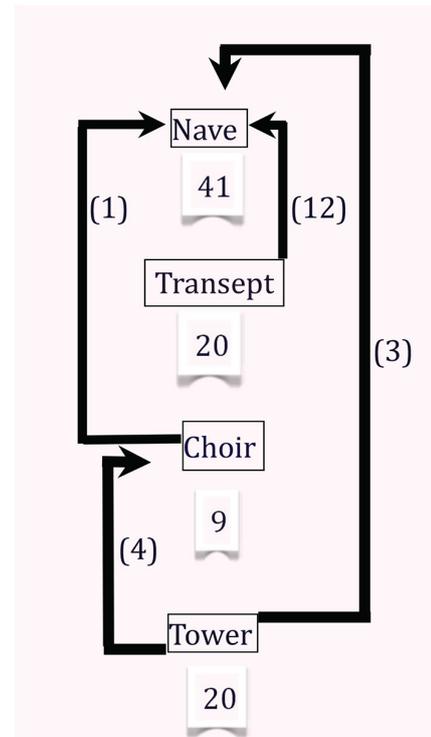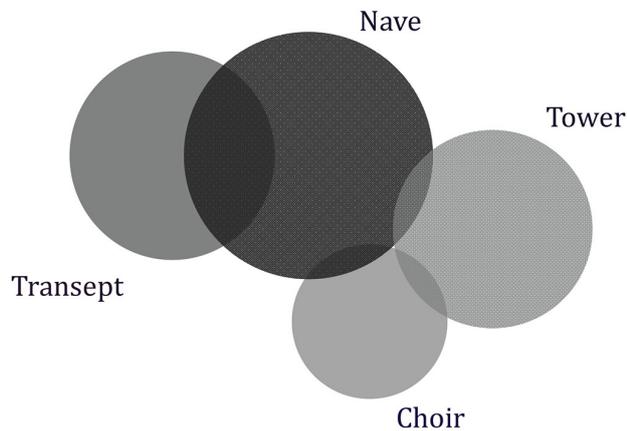
Number of marks on tiles, shared marks in brackets

PLATE 22: Diagram to show the relationships between the marks on the main sections of the church.
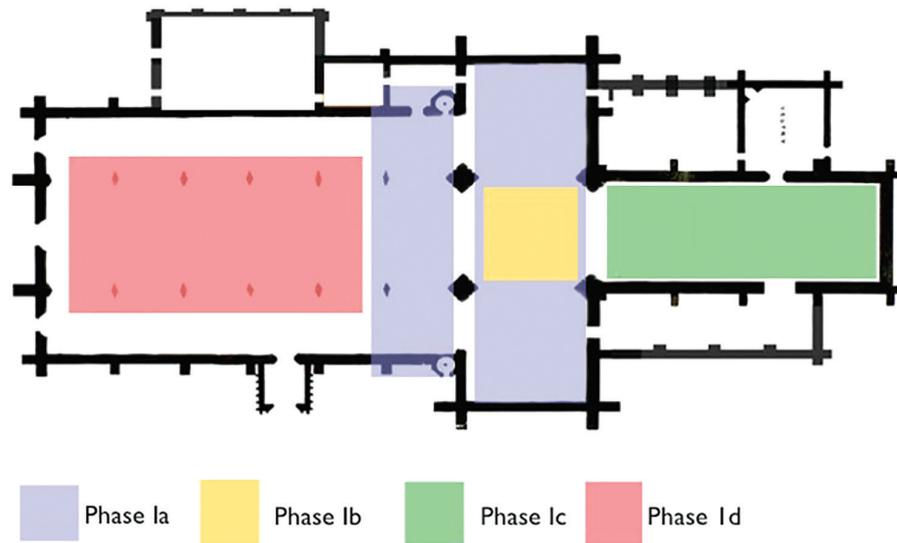
PLATE 23: Phasing of St Mary's based on the masons' marks.

south sides. Marks are not found after the first bay on the north, that is after the stair turret and exterior door have been built, whereas marks occur as far as bay three on the south. The numbers of marks after south bay one are small, and two of them are new marks, but one is from the existing team, 6x11, and so the work cannot be much later than the eastern part of the nave. Bay three on the south is the site of the south porch, which closely resembles the south transept tomb, and must have been built soon after it. The rest of the nave was constructed by masons whose marks are not visible and in this case it is logical to suggest that a new system of payment had been introduced which did not require the masons to record their output directly onto the stone, rather than a hiatus in the building operation. The design of the aisle outside walls is consistent along their lengths, even if the two aisles do not share the same window tracery, and there is no other evidence, in the type of moulding used, for example, to suggest a difference in date between the east and west ends. It is possible that this coincides with the increase in the fabric fund donations in the first quarter of the 15th century and that the masons were paid regular weekly wages. Either way, the ending of the sequence of masons' marks deprives us of the means of analysing the western part of the church.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is now possible to demonstrate that the church of St Mary, Nottingham, a monument to late-medieval piety and civic prestige, was commenced at some point between 1386 and 1401. It is likely to have been ongoing in the 1450s, but there is no evidence that it stretched as late as the 16th century. The architectural comparisons confirm that the most likely date for the design of the building is *c*. 1390–1400, and the masons' marks evidence show that it was constructed in three distinct campaigns.

The design of the church has been shown to have no architectural precedent in its locality, and a number of factors may contribute towards this: first, the great churches to the north and east are largely expressions of the earlier 14th-century Decorated style at its best; for the *latest* in architectural thinking, Coventry and the West Midlands region was apparently cutting edge, providing a means of applying the new style of Perpendicular to a variety of building forms, demonstrating its adaptability. Coventry was a wealthy city which may have attracted the guilds of Nottingham to emulate its architectural expression of that wealth and status.

The works carried out by Robery Skillington the mason would have been high profile and it is possible that he, or someone working closely with him, was called, on the basis of the designs just being completed in and around Coventry, to create the excellent new and uniform work of Nottingham's most impressive parish church.

The building was started in the transepts, since this was to be the site most used by the city's wealthy merchants, with the nave following straight after and for which the existing masons' team was expanded. The crossing piers will have been built with their respective walls, and it is to be regretted that the antiquarians did not record any marks on the piers before they were replaced, but the tower was not raised until slightly later. This cannot have been more than a few years after the nave as a few of the masons were retained and worked on both structures. It may be significant that two of the shared marks appear in slightly different versions in the tower, 3z2 is a looser version of 3z50, and 5d50 is the very distinctive mark 6d50 with a stroke missing, although another version, 4d50, is found with 6d50 in the nave. The tower only has marks on the ashlar, and not on the moulded stone, and so a less-skilled team was involved, but joined by 6d50, and other more skilled men from the nave. At the same time as the tower was being built, the chancel was under construction and some of the same masons were involved in both projects. Again, this work mostly involved plain ashlar work and one nave mason moved from template work on to this, joining a team of new masons who had not previously worked at St Mary's. The whole programme of work was probably completed within two lifetimes, and although the generation of merchants who supported the start of the building work financially, and doubtless in other ways too, were unable to see their work completed their descendants have benefited greatly from it ever since.

Acknowledgements

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1   D. Roffe, (2006, 24–42).

2   T. Foulds (2006, 72–83).

3   Toulmin Smith (1964, I, 94).

4   It is hard to find the evidence for the claim made by Orange (1840, 511, note) that the chancel was taken down and rebuilt using new stone in the reign of Elizabeth.

5   C. Wilson, (2003, 98).

6   C. Wilson, (2003, 113).

7   A. du Boulay Hill, (1916, 47–61). Minor references in the borough records to disputes with masons in the last decade of the 14th century support this date, see, for example, W. Stevenson, (1883, 274).

8   F. A. Wadsworth, (1917, 47–83).

9   H. Gill, (1916, 62–88).

10   A. du Boulay Hill (1916, 56–8).

11   Drawings of the 12th-century capital and base, and of a selection of slabs is in the Stretton manuscript, Robertson (1910, 139–40 and pl. 1).

12   For a discussion of the varieties of piers in the county see L. Hoey (1998).

13   Addison, W. *Local Styles of the English Parish Church* (1982), p. 139.

14   Wilson 2003

15   C. Woodfield, *The Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and some conventual buildings at the Whitefriars Coventry*, BAR British Series 389 (2005), 134 and illustrated on 150, figure 76.

16   C. Fonge (2004 , xlvii).

17   The most recent survey of the great hall at Kenilworth is R.K. Morris (2011). For St Michael's, Coventry, see L. Monckton (2011).

18   Goodall 2011

19   Morris 1986

20   Visible in Wenceslas Hollar's 17th-century drawing (Plate 1) which shows the medieval appearance of the exterior of the church, although he has given the north transept an extra bay.

21   *Chancery Act Book,* acts of the Chancery Court, for 19 June 1635 reports a note from the parish clerk of St Peter's Nottingham that he handed in a certificate that the repairs to St Mary's had been completed, given to him by the churchwarden of St Mary's. 3 Sept 1637 the Chancellor gave order that: 1. '…they are to cause the particion betweene the Chancell and bodie of the Church and the loft, and all the stalls and other things placed upon the same to be taken quite away, and to cause the king's armes to be made in a table to be placed over the skreene, and the Clocke to be removed from the place where it standeth, and to be set else where conveniently, which being done, they are to cause a decent skreen to be placed for a distinction betweene the Chancell and the Church as formerly and anciently hath beene'. The certificate handed in on 16 Feb 1637/8 revealed that all had been done except for the screen since they had problems getting the wood, and they were given until Lammas to make it, Acts of the Archbishop's Visitor (Chancellor William Easdall), serial no. R.VI.A.24, f.514. R.A. Marchant, (1961).

22   This may be the figure described in the late 18th century as being in a recess on the south wall and illustrated in J. Throsby (1790, 83).

23   Information from Sally Badham.

24   J. Throsby (1790, 82).

25   J.C.F. Hood, (1910, 20).

26   T. Foulds, (2006, 74).

27   A. H. Thompson (1913, 99–101).

28   J. Throsby (1790, 75).

29   One such example is on the east cloister wall of Lincoln Cathedral which was entirely rebuilt in the late 19th century, see Jennifer S. Alexander (2006, 222–48).

30   Jennifer S. Alexander (2001, 211–22).

31   There are several reports of a fierce storms affecting the city during the post-medieval period, and one in particular in 1558 damaged church towers in the city so that 'the bells were cast to the outside of the churchyards', H. Field (1884, 104). The chancel was also in described as being in 'gret decaye and wyndows unglased' in 1559 according to H. Gill (1916, 86), which suggests damage from the collapsed east side of the tower.