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Summary Article: **Salisbury Cathedral**

from *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Cathedral in Salisbury, Wiltshire, England. With the exception of its crowning tower and spire, it is a building of uniform Early English design, built to one plan between 1220 and 1258 (unlike any other English cathedral except Exeter). The cathedral was dedicated to the Virgin Mary on completion. Its 123-m/404-ft spire is the tallest in England.

History A cathedral church for the see of Salisbury, commenced at Old Sarum by Bishop Herman (d. 1078), and completed by St Osmund in 1092, was destroyed by fire. The bishopric of Wessex was originally established at Sherborne, but for various reasons the see was transferred to New Sarum (Salisbury), where in 1220 Bishop Richard Poore commenced the erection of the present cathedral; it was finished by Bishop Giles of Bridport in 1258. Its designer is unknown, though he may have been a churchman, Elias de Derham.

Features The unity and perfect proportions of its style and restrained but most beautiful enrichments are perhaps its leading features. The cloisters and octagonal chapter-house were added between 1270 and 1300, and the upper part of the tower and the spire from 1334 to 1360. Christopher Wren surveyed the building in 1668, and took measures to prevent further settlement of the tower, which was causing the spire to lean slightly. Extensive alterations were carried out in the 18th century, including the removal of a bell-tower, and large sums of money have been spent on the repair of the fabric in later years.

It is built in the form of a double cross and measures 137 m/449 ft in length, about 60 m/197 ft at its greatest width, the principal transept, and has an area of 1,680 sq m/18,083 sq ft. At the intersection of the nave with the principal transept rises the spire, which is 123 m/404 ft in height from the pavement. It was repaired and its summit rebuilt in 1950–51. There are many interesting monuments, including the base of the shrine of St Osmund with foramina for the sick. The cloisters, on the south side, are the finest example in England of the late 13th-century style.

Grounds The **cathedral close** is surrounded on three sides by a great wall, built partly of stone from the cathedral church of Old Sarum; the River Avon completes the boundary. The close is entered by the four old gates: the High Street, St Ann's Gate, Harnham Gate, and the private gate to the bishop's palace. It contains several colleges and some beautiful houses, including the college of matrons, provided by Bishop Seth Ward in 1682 for the widows of priests of the diocese.

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