

# Nomenclature

from vol.1 *The Ark of God*.

The terminology and nomenclature for where a capital may be found has to be specific. Terms are defined in the box opposite. Nomenclature is more complex. Most authors number the bays from one end of the building to the other, and use letters for the cross direction. This means you need the plan of the building in front of you to visualise a location. In some cases it is impossible to know whether the part is to the east or west of the crossing, for the numbering has been arranged continuously down the length of the building. As different ends of most churches have usually been built years apart, this can be very confusing. When we are analysing the history of a building it is most useful to have a system of reference that follows the lay out in a logical way.

When I visualise a building I see myself inside standing in the crossing. This is the centre, not the western doors. The nomenclature for piers and bays and individual capitals should then guide your mind's eye to the exact location without having to turn to another page for a number on a plan. This approach does suit most buildings, as they were usually erected in units abutting the crossing, such as a north arm or a new choir.

In common speech we describe placement as, say, 'the third pier on the west of the north transept'. However, when we work this through in our heads (or even on paper) we tend to process these words backwards to make sense of them – north transept; west side; third pier. The system used here works in this manner: It locates first the arm of the building (such as north transept), then the side of that arm (say, the west) followed by the number of the pier and lastly, the vertical level. In this way the phrase 'the third pier on the west of the north transept' would become NW3. Numbering is counted outwards from the crossing if there is one, or westwards from the first straight bay in the east. Ambulatories and curved walls are counted in to the axis, as in AS2.

This system may be applied consistently, though it must be admitted that some buildings will defy any scheme, and a few inconsistencies will occur. This is how it works in detail:

1. The first letter refers to the arm of the building, 'E' being the east arm, 'N' the north arm and 'X' the narthex.
2. The second letter refers to the side of that arm. Upper case is used for the piers and lower case for walls. Thus 'WS' being a nave south pier and 'Ws' the nave south wall shaft and 'AN2' the second pier south side of the ambulatory. For chapels 'CS2' is the second chapel on the south, and 'CC' is the central or axial chapel.
3. The third item is the bay or pier number that is counted from either the crossing or from the first straight eastern bay, 'En2' being the choir north wall, second shaft to the east of the crossing. The same number is used whether it refers to the pier or to the space of the bay after counting the crossing pier as '1'.
4. Any intermediate row of piers, as in Chartres, has a plus sign, 'AN+3' being the ambulatory north side second or middle row third pier.
5. Where there are no aisles, references are in upper case.
6. For capitals, after the bay number note the stone in which the capital was carved, in lower case. Thus 'SW1ne' is the south transept west crossing pier northeast capital. These may get complex, as in 'WN3ssw' for an intermediate capital.
7. Where there are a number of columns, as in a triforium arcade or round the walls of a chapel, the capitals are marked with letters from the crossing outwards, so 'SE3b(t)' is the second shaft in the triforium arcade in bay SE3. Some simplification is required from time to time, for rather than note a dado capital on the south side of the projecting straight bay of the north chapel in the Laon north transept as 'NE3-e1Sb(d)' I simply referred to it as 'NCSb(d)'.
8. Portals and openings are assumed to lie on the axis of the arm. Thus 'N.e' and 'N.w' are the east and west doors out of the north side of the north transept, and 'W.c' is the central door in the west front of the nave. Where there is a side door it is noted after the bay number, as in "NW3-w" for the west door from the third bay of the north transept.
9. To locate the capital within the portal, the last two letters of 'W.cL3' indicate the third capital on the left of the west central door. Left and right are used from the direction in which the doorway is being viewed.
10. The level is noted by a letter within brackets, so that the triforium is (t) and the gallery or tribune is (g). For example, the north transept capital on the western wall of the third bay of the aisle is 'Nw3(a)'.

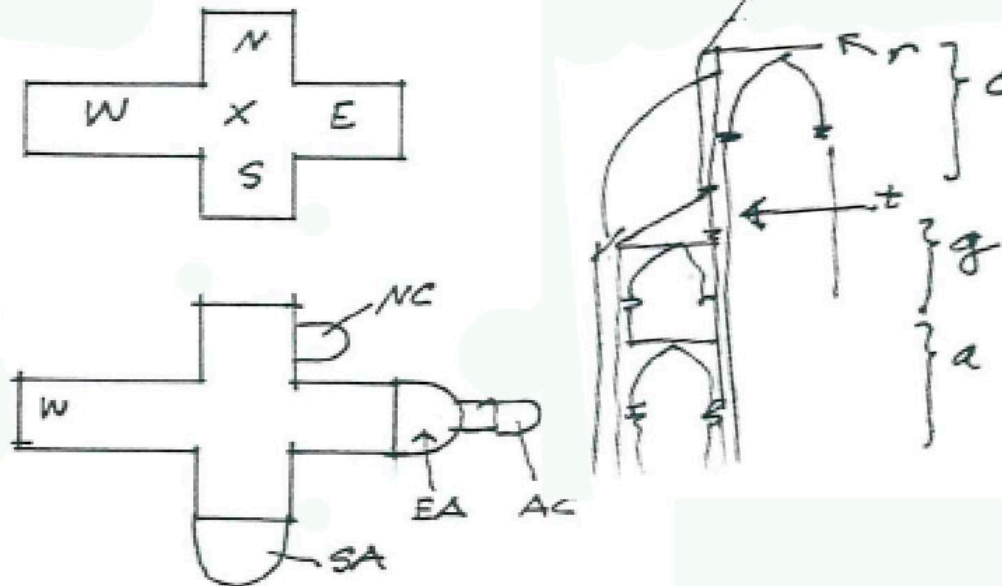
The principal levels are:

- (a) aisle
- (c) clerestory
- (d) dado arcade
- (g) gallery
- (r) roof cornice
- (t) triforium
- (u) undercroft or crypt

Sometimes more precision is needed, as follows:

- (ad) aisle dado
- (at) aisle level triforium
- (aw) aisle window capitals
- (af) aisle formerets
- (a-) (a+) where aisle is on a number of levels
- (gw) gallery window capitals (cf) clerestory formerets
- (cw) clerestory window
- (c-) (c+) where clerestory is on a number of levels

### Location codes, plan and section



Written as Wn1(a) for east wall pier, north side nave.

