

Sens cathedral, Saint-Etienne

The size and consistency of the bases for the walls and piers shows all of them were laid down at the one time, from east to the penultimate pier 13 in the west. This huge operation included the lateral chapels. In later years the average rate of construction on whichever part of the site they were working on seems to have been in the order of 5 courses per year. The earlier programs concentrated on the eastern bays with some work being continued in the west.

The capitals in the dado and in the aisle walls indicate that the work began around 1130, while the clerestory flyers and cornice are the work of the later 60s. Severens would like the commencement to be ten years later from stylistic comparisons with Burgundy and the Loire, whereas the carving mannerisms of the masons who worked on the choir dado capitals clearly indicate the early 30s.

What facts do we have? Two documents tell us that work was begun by Henry Sanglier who was bishop between 1122 and 1144, and that the stalls were nearing completion when Henry died. After that we read of a consecration in 1164 and that "the greater part remains incomplete. The evidence of the capitals is quite clear, that nothing was built in the gallery level before the Second Crusade. Above this in the east, and at much lower levels to the west, work was delayed for some years by the financial demands of the both during and after the Crusade.

By working backwards from a possible *terminus ante quem* dedication of 1164 at a rate of 5 courses per year showed that work would have recommenced in the choir around 1153 after a delay of nine years, presumably caused by financial limitations from the crusade. This accords well with the style of the capitals that come from ten or more years later than those in the ambulatory. Building the stalls before the choir had been finished points to a decision to open the choir to services under a temporary roof. This would relieve pressure on having to complete the whole of the choir first and allow funds to be concentrated on extending the work into the central bays of the nave. Therefore a temporary roof would have been erected prior to 1144 to protect the stalls and providentially the tomb of Bishop Henry.

On resumption some time in the 1150s the choir aisles that had been designed for groin vaults were adapted to support ribs, and work proceeded in the eastern bays of the gallery and after that into the clerestory with the first supports for flyers being installed in the later-60s.

See my "Evidence for flying buttresses before 1180", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, li 1992, 261-287.

The capitals in the middle section of the northern gallery have connections to Canterbury, as does the walling in the upper part of the choir roof cornice.

The responds for the rondpoint vault shows the high vault was intended to be set much lower against the wall. The roof would have been erected at this time over the as-yet-unvaulted choir. Some decades later when they came to insert the high vaults over the choir the form was changed and all the clerestory windows around the cathedral were enlarged with bar tracery.

The western bay with the portals and enlarged elements to support the towers were begun in the 70s, followed by the last 4 bays of the aisle vaults. Work moved slowly from here on until the uppermost western bays of the nave clerestory and the vaulted rooms in the tower that may be dated to 1214.