



Durham World Heritage Site Lecture

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A Dean's Dozen: 12 Years living and working in a World Heritage Cathedral

Just over one hundred years ago, in 1912, a book was published with the title *The Story of the Deanery, Durham, 1070-1912*. Its author was George Kitchin. He had been dean since 1894. He was the author of works on, among other things, Francis Bacon, John Ruskin, the history of France, and Winchester where he had been dean before Durham. He was a friend of Lewis Carroll who had photographed his daughter. He was the last Dean of Durham to have oversight of the University, and was its first Chancellor.

His book on the Deanery was his last, and he never lived to see it published. It is a striking, large-format volume with many photographs and drawings, an invaluable record of the Deanery as it was in his day. While well researched, it does not pretend to be a work of scholarship. Rather, it is his tribute to a house he loved. In the preface, he describes himself as a passing hermit-crab who must soon leave this shelter he has enjoyed for rather longer than my own decanal 12 years. He says that he wants to 'express my own thankfulness for being permitted to dwell in this shelter for an old man's last days. The record of the ancient chambers makes the past live again and will, I hope, be an inspiration for all who may hereafter have the good fortune to live in this Deanery.'^[1] So it has proved for this dean. My only regret is that I did not get to revise the book for its centenary in 2012, for there is a great deal about the Deanery that Kitchin did not know about that is now revealed, including the miraculous 15th century wall painting in the entrance hall, what was once the Prior's Chapel.

My subject in this lecture is *Living and Working in a World Heritage Cathedral*. I begin with the Deanery because the 'living' part of the title belongs there, as does much of the 'working' too. It is a relatively little-known part of the World Heritage Site, so I hope you will allow me to say something about my own

experience of living there before I broaden the perspective to take in the more public and visible aspects of my role. In both, I want to try to reflect not on the built heritage itself, wonderful though it is, so much as on its interaction with human buildings, the symbolism and meanings it holds for us. I want to explore how in my experience, heritage functions to enrich and shape not only the lives of the people fortunate enough to inhabit it, but more specifically, the mission of the institution to which this acropolis is home, this Cathedral at the heart of this peninsula.

It is not the first time we have lived in a house that warrants an entry^[2] in Pevsner's *Buildings of England*. In the 1970s we occupied the medieval Hall of the Vicars Choral in Salisbury Close, so we had some experience of the interface between heritage and human living. Indeed, you get to know a building's personality in a unique way when you begin to fill it up with children. Here in Durham, with children having long flown the family nest, we share the historic Deanery with student lodgers in the eyrie upstairs, and Godiva the cat. And, it seems, a visitant. This *genius loci*, whoever he is (and I am reliably informed that it is a 'he'), makes himself known mostly to women on the north side of the house where it looks out on to the Chapter House. He is benign, but even I have known doors close and lights be switched on or off when I have known for certain that I have been alone in the house. Who is to say what guests these old buildings entertain unawares?

The Deanery was short-listed in a *Country Life* article in 2003 as part of a quest to find Britain's oldest continuously inhabited house.^[3] It was reluctantly disqualified on the grounds that before the Reformation, the Prior's Lodging was not strictly speaking a *private* residence. But the evidence of hundreds of years of continuous occupancy is indeed one of its features. When I show visitors round, I tell them that every century from the 11th to the 21st has left its mark on the building. This is not the place to linger on the details which are a lecture in themselves. However, it is worth mentioning the contribution modernity has made to this, one of England's greatest clergy houses. Dean Waddington had converted the medieval library into a Victorian gentleman's study complete with fitted bookcases, tall sash windows and his own heraldic achievement above the great fireplace. For centuries deans still slept in a Tudor tester bed in the famous King James Room, so-called because the Scottish monarch had occupied it during his southward progress on acceding to the English throne in 1603. Kitchin's book has photographs that record the house as it was at the turn of the 20th century with its heavy over-furnished late Victorian and Edwardian interiors. The biggest transformation to happen after his time was Hensley Henson's introduction of the colourful Chinese wallpaper that adorns the solarium, the room in the Deanery that everyone remembers, which Dean Spencer Cowper had converted from medieval solar to fashionable salon in the mid-18th century. The story is that Ella, Henson's wife, found the prospect of living in this vast and dreary Deanery unsupportable without colour. This the solarium abundantly provided. On

sunlit days I doubt there is a more beautiful room in North East England.

The imminent arrival in 1974 of Eric Heaton as Durham's first modernising Dean launched large-scale alterations to the Deanery. The Priors' Hall was separated off for use for Cathedral use though it is still legally a part of the house. A new internal staircase halved the time it took to get from one floor to the next. A striking new entrance was created by George Pace with a spiral castellated stairway and a new front door opened up in the west wall of what had once been the Priors' Chapel where there had once before been a door. The magnificent 15th century paintings were uncovered on the north wall of the chapel, together with evidence of 13th and 14th century decoration and an array of medieval graffiti which continue to be recorded and studied today. The tantalising glimpse of the Virgin Mary's skirts at the east end of the series tells us that there are more paintings that have yet to be exposed. In this period the interiors were extensively modernised for 20th century family living. Finally, in 2011, we dedicated the Chapel of the Holy Cross in the 13th century undercroft, a beautiful space with a Cistercian feel to it, lovingly furnished by local Durham woodworker Colin Wilbourn. Hensley Henson had created a chapel there in his day, and the Cathedral choristers famously slept in it during the war because its stone vault offered the best air-raid shelter in the College.

All this gives you a sense of the Deanery's art and architecture. But what is it like to live there? You may not think this is worth lingering on: your home is your home, whether it is a medieval building in a Cathedral precinct, a Victorian vicarage, a 1930s detached house or an Edwardian villa in an elegant suburb – to summarise the clergy houses we have lived in for the past 40 years. However, if you are interested in the interaction between the built environment and human life, how we have configured our surroundings and how they to some extent configure us, then it is worth reflecting on the experience of living in such a remarkable house as the Deanery. Furthermore, because the Deanery is attached to the cloister and therefore to the Cathedral itself, living and working in the Deanery is almost an encapsulation, and maybe also a metaphor, of how I have experienced the Cathedral too.

The first thing to say is that like George Kitchin, I am not sure that even after 12 years I have fully taken in what it is to live in a house such as the Deanery. The experience of putting on hat and coat by the wall-paintings, answering emails in a grand Victorian library under its mellow 15th century ceiling, charring meetings in the King James Room surrounded by portraits of deans from the 16th to the 19th centuries, watching TV against the backdrop of 13th century lancet windows with evidence of Islamic-inspired decoration, walking to evensong along the length of a rococo-gothic corridor created above the space where the original monastic dormitory latrine drains ran, celebrating a family Christmas in front of a big homely fire in the priors' solar – I could go on and on. The chief thing, I know, is never to take any of this for granted. To occupy such surroundings is to realise the need to be more

present to them, pay attention to their artistry, their memory, and indeed their spirituality. You should not live in a house such as this without becoming more of a contemplative, someone who in Thomas Hardy's words 'used to notice such things'. This is part of what I call 'inhabiting' the house.

I do not want to leave you with the impression that it is always straightforward to occupy a part of the nation's heritage. It belongs to many more people than simply the family who live there. A deanery or a vicarage is always to some extent not entirely your own, but you feel the sense of guardianship when it wears its history so palpably on its sleeve. Then there is the price you pay: the easy conveniences of modern living. In winter, we (and I include Godiva the cat in this) scuttle from one warm space to another along long, unheated corridors. The wifi won't penetrate the great medieval walls beyond the office. Mobile phone signal is patchy because of the way the bulk of the Cathedral just yards away vastly distorts the aether like a huge star influencing space-time in general relativity theory. If you forget that your freshly laundered pyjamas are in the airing cupboard in the undercroft, it is 53 steps down and up again from the bedroom. If you burn the toast, the ultra-sensitive smoke alarms go off and the fire brigade is outside before you can say *mea culpa*. When the west wind blows fiercely, bits of sandstone drop off the eroded exterior like meteorites, sometimes outside the front door where people go in and out. I could go on. Life in a medieval deanery is nothing if not eventful.

There is one aspect of life in the Deanery that is almost (not quite) unique in England. This is its physical attachment to the Cathedral itself. When people who don't know Durham ask me where I live, I often reply that it is in an end-of-terrace or semi on the south-east corner of the cloister. This is architecturally the case, despite the Deanery's character as a medieval manor house complete with hall, solar, chapel and library all constituting the required *piano nobile*. This means that the Dean of Durham lives not so much above the shop as in it. This has its convenient aspects: I can be in my stall for matins and evensong in less time than it takes to get to the College gate, let alone to the shops. What is more, I have a dry decanal foul-weather route to prayer while my Chapter colleagues are exposed to wind and rain on the way across the precinct into the cloister. But it also raises questions about where 'work' space ends and 'personal' space begins; inevitably, the boundaries are porous much of the time. The medieval priors who once occupied the house would not have understood the concept of 'personal' or 'private': there was no such thing when a Benedictine community lived together under rule. Every parish priest faces the same dilemmas if his or her house is close to the church and perhaps connected to it by means of a dedicated path through the church yard. So the 'attachment' of the Deanery to the Cathedral symbolises something that is deeply embedded in the concept of vocation: a dean belongs to his or her cathedral in an inalienable way, tied to it by an inviolable umbilical cord.

And this leads me on to what is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the 'living' dimension of my title 'living and working in a World Heritage Site'. This umbilical connection to a sacred space, that is, the Cathedral, has affected the way in which I have felt about the Deanery. In a sacred space, behaviours are modified, calibrated to what is appropriate to a place dedicated to encounter with the divine, this *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* as Rudolph Otto famously called the 'idea' of the holy. To be architecturally, psychologically and ethnographically connected to a shrine like Durham Cathedral poses questions about the meanings attached to this house, the symbolism it carries. It speaks to the soul, fertilises the imagination. But the paradoxes are even sharper than that. For one thing, the north side of the house where benign presences have been felt and reported, stands on or near the site of the place where Cuthbert's coffin may have been placed from 1093 to 1104 when the new shrine, sanctuary and quire of the Romanesque cathedral were being built. If this is right, then plausibly the house holds a memory of being inhabited for a while by a saint, indeed, for the same length of time – a dozen years – of my own occupancy. In its more recent history, the present hallway and PA's office occupy what was once what was once Prior Melsonby's Chapel, as I have mentioned in connection with the wall paintings. It was probably Thomas Comber, the dean installed in 1691 to replace the nonjuring Denis Granville who had been ejected in the Glorious Revolution of 1689, who is said to have 'improved' the Deanery and converted the obsolete chapel into living quarters[4].

So the dean and his family live, not adjacent to a sacred space, but to some extent inside one, or the memory of one. Where the chapel once was, family and guests come in and out. My PA works on her computer and manages the Dean. Upstairs, the family entertain, relax, watch TV, enjoy a late night whisky, shower, bathe, dress, undress and sleep. Too much information, you may say. But it raises interesting questions about the interface between sacred and profane, especially when it comes to the functions associated with a bathroom situated in what was once a place of prayer. Sacred memory and secular reality intersect intriguingly. I don't want to become obsessive about this, but I do believe that an important aspect of heritage is the honouring of memory. How to do this responsibly and well is a question has never been absent from my mind for very long. It's one dimension of living and working in this World Heritage Site.

Let me turn now to the Cathedral itself. Here again, as with the Deanery, I want to reflect on the personal experience of 'living and working' in Durham Cathedral and how my own *persona* has been to a great extent shaped during these dozen Durham years.

I have been fortunate in the ecclesiastical buildings I have worked in over four decades of public ministry. I was ordained 40 years ago this June beneath the

Romanesque chancel arch of St Andrew's, Headington in Oxford. Then followed six years in the Close at Salisbury where, in addition to lecturing in Old Testament studies, I was an honorary vicar choral at the peerless 13th century Cathedral. After this came five years as Vicar of Alnwick in Northumberland, a sturdy late-gothic building near the Castle, complete with ducal emblems on the capitals of the elaborate chancel, and a mini-bastle above the sanctuary, a look-out against Scots raids from the north. I then enjoyed eight years at Coventry Cathedral as Precentor and Vice-Provost, followed by another eight as Dean of Sheffield. Thence to Durham. All fine buildings of many different epochs and styles. If you know your geology you will recognise in this list more than 30 years of sandstone of various hues, from the lovely pink-red of Warwickshire to the blackened millstone grit of South Yorkshire, and the golden but friable sandstones of Northumberland and County Durham. When it comes to cathedrals, I am wholly a sandstone dean. I have a distant memory of finely-wrought limestones in the south. But I am now a habitué of the north of England's rougher-hewn sandstones: always beautiful to look at, always responsive to the changing seasons and the shifting light, always lovable; but there is no denying the conservation challenges they pose. More of this towards the end.

I first visited Durham in 1966 as a schoolboy applying to read maths here. Out of the recent experience of having been baptised a Christian, I was awed by the Cathedral, even on that bleak November day under the kind of sullen, steely sky the North East does so well. Could I have even entertained the thought that my future lay here? Hardly, given that on that first ever visit, I managed somehow to walk right round the Cathedral without discovering St Cuthbert's shrine. Perhaps after 12 years here it is time to own up to this extraordinary and shameful omission. But in my defence, there is something 'apart' about the feretory, like a little Farne Island set in the great sea that is the 13th century Chapel of the Nine Altars. In 2003, I asked to be installed on St Cuthbert's Day, and perhaps this went some way towards saying sorry to our saint.

As we know, the Cathedral, the city, the University would not be here were it not for the travels of Cuthbert's Saxon community who arrived on this rock in 995 and erected the first shrine to house the relics of their saint. In my book about the Christian heritage of this part of England, I described the Cathedral as the 'mystic heart' of the North East.^[5] I believe this to be true as a matter both of history and of what I have called sacred geography. On reflection, there is another more personal level of meaning in this phrase in that I have discovered how the Cathedral is the 'mystic heart' of my own spirituality and Christian identity. I don't mean this to sound like the kind of purple prose clergy resort to in the pulpit. I mean that any great building has the propensity to mould and shape the people whose life and work is intensely focused on it or in it. When the building is a sacred space like a cathedral, church, mosque, temple or synagogue, then its symbolism, history, memory and a great deal

else becomes enfolded in those people's worship and prayer. Some of it is conscious, as in the worthy if undistinguished hymn 'We love the place O God / wherein thine honour dwells'. Much more, I suspect, is subliminal, unconscious. A lot of it has to do with our psyche, the Jungian 'soul' where the archetypes reside and which is the seat of our projections and transferences. A cathedral is heavily freighted with symbolism for everyone in a thousand different ways. When it is Durham Cathedral, and when the core of the job entails being present at the twice-daily prayers in addition to the countless other engagements in and around the building every day brings, you will see why I use this elevated language. And living as I do in a Deanery whose northward, westward and eastward prospects are all dominated by the huge bulk of this immensely powerful presence, it is understandable that it comes to shape the life of the person who is the head of its foundation.

That phrase 'mystic heart' focuses on what Christian discourse calls 'spiritual formation'. In this building that is beyond words when we try to capture what we love about it, this formational dimension of the cathedral is one of its charisms, a gift of grace. It touches all of us for whom it is our place of work. For example, when I sit down as I always do with the cohort of choristers who are leaving us at the end of their time in the choir, I ask them what effect the building has had on them. What comes across is that it has become something extraordinarily precious to them. There is much that is hard for them to leave behind at the summer choir farewell service, but the prospect of losing the easy familiarity with a great building that they have come to feel at home in is one of the aspects of this, and of course it symbolises so much else that this rite of passage represents for them. For me as dean, this 'mystic heart' has shaped my practice and language of prayer in the ways that have been prominent in the long spiritual history of Durham: the intense discipline of Saxon Christianity as embodied by Aidan, Cuthbert and Bede; the ordering and patterning of human life according to the Rule of St Benedict that was followed here throughout the monastic centuries; and the catholic Anglicanism of the post-Reformation settlement especially as it was lived out by Durham's greatest bishop, John Cosin. It is not that these aspects of spiritual 'character' were not already present when I came here as dean. But they have all become a lot more explicit, better understood, and I hope more intelligently integrated into this particular person's life as a Christian and a priest of the 21st century.

I want to say something about liturgy in Durham Cathedral. As in all great Romanesque cathedrals, you find in Durham a sense of 'massive enclosure and strong verticality'.^[6] Whereas the gothic cathedral, inspired by the Abbé Suger's vision at Saint Denis and embodied in the Chapel of the Nine Altars, is a casket of light that embodies heaven itself^[7], Romanesque suggests the fortress, a place safe from the assaults of demonic principalities and powers. In some places, Romanesque churches provided a safe place where people could gather for protection against threats posed by a human enemy closer at

hand: 'half church of God, half castle 'gainst the Scot'. The ancient right of sanctuary at Durham was an example of this protective function. This 'defensive' character of Durham serves to demarcate its sacred space with particular clarity. This is why, I think, the Chapter of Durham has always been careful to protect the church from inappropriate use: the idea of the sacred may be more generously defined now than in the middle ages, but it always carries the danger of violating it, consciously or unconsciously. To the Chapter, charging visitors for admission would imply such a compromise. This is why, in my time, we have not wavered in our resolve to maintain free access to what is not, after all, *our* space but God's.

Worship is a kind of theatre, a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total art form' in which dramatic action, words, silence, music, colour, space and audience interact in a way that is always unique to a particular time and place. If you asked people why they worship at the Cathedral, many would speak about the character of the building itself as the setting for liturgy. 'The place is almost as much the thing as is the play' says one writer on theatre design. He is wholly correct but for the word 'almost'[8]. The Cathedral was built by Benedictines whose central vows focused on the words *stability*, *obedience* and *conversion of life*. You would expect their church, constructed when English Romanesque had reached its maturity, to embody those values. So the sense of solid enclosure echoes the change of attitude and aspiration implied by crossing the threshold into the sacred space; the hierarchical structure of the west-east axis from Galilee and font to bishop's throne, high altar and saint's shrine speak of obedience; and the huge drum piers and stone vault of stability and permanence. This, at least, is the way I have come to 'read' the church not as an architectural masterpiece so much as a building replete with many layers of spiritual value and significance.

It's impossible for me to do justice to the ways these insights have touched me personally. But here are a few themes. First must come the divine office, celebrated twice daily in the monastic quire every day in the year. We occupy Bishop Cosin's stalls each weekday morning and evening, just as the Priory monks gathered in the same place during the Benedictine centuries. In the evening the office is sung by the Cathedral choir. I can't stress enough the significance of this thousand year continuity of prayer. It has been broken only once, when there was no Cathedral foundation during the Commonwealth. People sometimes ask me what I think is the most important thing I do as Dean. My answer is always: the lead the Chapter and community in its rule of daily prayer as the head of the Foundation. And if there is one gift that I can barely contemplate living without after these decades of cathedral ministry in four different places, it is choral evensong.

Daily prayer on weekdays is often an intimate occasion. You may be surprised to think that prayer as an intimate community of laity and clergy is possible in a great cathedral, but it is. And intimacy is a word I use to describe how I have

become more familiar with it, even at large-scale acts of worship. For example, I have got to know the 14th century Neville Screen that separates the sanctuary from the shrine quite well through presiding at the high altar at close proximity. It is likely that the greatest of high medieval architects Henry de Yvele built it: for the Nevilles, only the best would do. There are angels carved into the Caen limestone that were spared the destructiveness of the 16th and 17th centuries. One in particular, right in the centre, has a seraphic smile that I have come to love. I love the way the light plays on the nave vaults in midwinter at the Sunday eucharist, and the pillar above the Precentor's stall that glows with a golden light at matins on sunny solstice days. I love the symmetries of the Cathedral that are palpable when you stand at the nave altar at the intersection of all three axes in the crossing and sense that you are at the still centre of an extraordinarily dynamic building. I love the great liturgical processions up the central nave aisle, particularly at Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and Easter, or at the Miners' Gala Service and Matins for the Courts of Justice, when the piers and high vaults suggest a noble avenue of great trees with their canopy spread out above. I love the screens that mark thresholds that we cross on our long march from west to east, the journey that recalls the pilgrimage to the shrine and that speaks of the spiritual journey from our beginnings at the font to the vision of God at the high altar and shrine. I could rhapsodise about stained glass and floors and textiles and sculpture and much else. I think you will get my meaning.

However, there is a shadow side to everything. When your work is almost wholly bound up in an institution with a high public profile, when its building is emblematic (I do not say *iconic*) to millions of people across the world, I can experience the Cathedral as demand as well as gift. I think every dean will say the same, but not all deans live in umbilical connection with their cathedral I have talked about, or are faced with its profile rearing massively and sometimes darkly up just outside the kitchen window. I need to analyse what I am and am not saying about how this 'mystic heart' exercises a pull on this dean that he does not always welcome. It is to do with its *thereness*. It never goes away. Its requirements are never ending: it is insatiably greedy in its hunger for money, resources, time, energy, engagement. Your commitment to it has to be all or nothing. I say to myself: this is like Christian discipleship itself. If it is worth giving yourself to it, you don't hold anything back. It is for life. It *is* life.

The history of Durham tells us that this mighty Romanesque cathedral was not always welcomed as a benign presence. To the Saxons, it represented the naked power of the invader, erected as it was in the brutal aftermath of the Conquest. Its defensive position next to the Castle reinforced the message of political hegemony, a Northern clash of civilisations. The hitching of St Cuthbert's ensign to this mighty Norman battleship was a shrewd political move and in time had the desired effect of winning over the Saxons to accept the new regime. But I doubt that the Saxons ever *loved* it. We can confidently

say, given Cuthbert's reported unwillingness to be buried even on Lindisfarne, that he would have been baffled if not profoundly dismayed at the idea that he would be entombed in the Norman Cathedral. What it later became for the Counts Palatine (as we should call the Prince-Bishops) simply reinforced the distance Christianity in the north had travelled from its simple beginnings on Iona and then Lindisfarne.

To my mind, this history of ambivalence is a necessary corrective to an unduly romanticised notion of Durham Cathedral. Necessary, because we are not true to buildings, including cathedrals, if we do not acknowledge the less endearing features of their history and name their darker aspects. To the Saxons, the Cathedral represented a power and control which there was no negotiating. In the high middle ages and well into the industrial period, the Cathedral's enormous wealth was perceived as alienating and even corrupting. To the Scottish prisoners incarcerated inside it in the winter of 1650-51, left there by Cromwell's troops to make do without food, drink, fuel or even rudimentary sanitation, it was a terrible place of hunger, disease and death. I am not saying that these memories should unduly colour our perceptions today. But when William Blake said, famously, that 'joy and woe are woven fine', this is as true of places and buildings as it is of human life. There are tears in things as well as joy. And sometimes, the Cathedral can seem to re-exert a more primitive kind of power, a more insistent and uncompromising demand, over us who inhabit it than our millions of visitors and pilgrims perhaps imagine. It is especially important that we who worship and work in cathedrals should not collude with rose-hued fantasies about them. Whatever else it is, Durham Cathedral must be a place of truth. Without personifying it, I believe that only when we are in an entirely honest relationship with it can it perform this heart-work of shaping human and Christian character.

This experience of living and working in a World Heritage Site has helped to shape my thinking about the place of heritage in today's world. A dean has to give a great deal of time and effort to his or her Cathedral as part of the nation's heritage. You have to love your cathedral for its fabric, architecture and art as well as for its community, its liturgy, its music, its outreach and everything else it represents. If you don't relish this task, if you don't care for ancient buildings, if you see them as a distraction from the church's mission, don't become a dean. Trust me.

In Durham, I have wanted to lead the Chapter and community in asking the question, how can we make much more of the outstanding heritage we have in this cathedral, whether its medieval buildings and spaces, its incomparable library and collections, its music and arts, and, intangibly, its history and significance in the development of Christianity in the North East? During the past 12 years, we have, I believe, added to the 'legacy' in ways that I hope will

prove not only important but enduring. In terms of the 'heritage' you can see, I should highlight the Paula Rego painting of Queen Margaret of Scotland that stands by her altar; the window given by the Friends in memory of Bishop Michael Ramsey, representing the transfiguration of the Lord; the *Pietà* by Fenwick Lawson which, although it has been in the Cathedral for many years, has now been bought for us, thanks to the Friends; the *Lama Sabachthani* crucifix in the north quire aisle by Kirill Sokolov, the Deanery Undercoft Chapel of the Holy Cross, the nave choir stalls, the *Laus Deo* organ and the Lenten and 'New Creation' hangings and vestments. All these are motivated by the belief that the church needs to speak to today's and tomorrow's generations in the discourse of the present as well as the past.

Meanwhile, conservation of the fabric has continued throughout this time, and will increase significantly in pace as we follow through the latest quinquennial inspection report by the Cathedral architect. As every dean will tell you, it is like painting the Forth Bridge. The job is never done. I could say much about that; and I could also speak about less tangible heritage that has added to the Cathedral's mission: the girls' top line in the choir, commissions for new choral music, putting Cuthbert back into the legal title of the Cathedral five and a half centuries after Henry VIII had summarily excised it, the return to the library of medieval manuscripts and early printed books that had been lost at the Dissolution. There has also been a spate of books and writings about the Cathedral culminating in the great volume just published that will be the definitive survey of its heritage for decades, *Durham Cathedral: history, fabric and culture*.

But one development has dwarfed all the others. It was with the prospect of the Lindisfarne Gospel Book visiting Durham in 2013 that we embarked on the development we have called *Open Treasure*. The aim has not been simply to open up the marvellous claustral buildings and display some of the best artefacts we have to exhibit. It has been to try to say something significant about what it has meant to be Durham Cathedral in past generations, and in the present. In an era that is increasingly distanced from organised religion, baffled and often alienated by what it represents, and not well informed about even the simplest aspects of Christian belief, we need to present ourselves as more than simply a place of heritage. We could put it this way: the challenge is to identify and interpret the 'intangible assets' of this piece of Christian heritage, the values which are to do with the religious character of the Cathedral as a living, working, breathing building: who and what this community of faith has been, and is now, and aspires to be in the future. This, briefly, is *Open Treasure*. We have already reconfigured the beautiful undercrofts where the restaurant and shop are housed. The monastic dormitory, the great kitchen and a new gallery linking them are being transfigured as we speak into exhibition spaces that will take our guests along a timeline that will present our heritage as best we know how. You will see for yourselves when they open to the public in 2016.

So why this extraordinarily costly investment into heritage? In a perceptive essay, the former Dean of Christ Church Oxford considers the relationship between religious faith and heritage.[9] He warns against three abuses of heritage. First, heritage can be used to tell a story selectively, editing out those aspects of it that are ambiguous or with which contemporary concerns and attitudes are out of sympathy. This has been a particular challenge to us at Durham where we have tried to interpret our remarkable religious heritage intelligently in a secular age and persuade (successfully) the Heritage Lottery Fund and other agencies to support us. Then heritage can obscure the 'sheer pastness of history' so as to make it accessible and marketable. It can be presented in a nostalgic way that may reassure the public but which also obscures its truth. What I have learned at Durham is that the past is indeed another country where they do things differently. The Benedictine period, and still more the Saxon era of St Cuthbert, are worlds that it takes a great deal of intellectual effort and spiritual imagination to envisage. We should not cut corners, nor think that in all respects these pasts are to be imitated by us today. Thirdly, Lewis warns against the innate conservatism of attitudes to heritage that require it to be for ever fixed in the form in which we inherited it or imagine it once to have been. The presumption against change, especially in a heritage asset as prominent and universally loved as Durham Cathedral, is a complex matter when the building also represents a faith that is always renewing itself, as the history of the building itself evidences.

A sacred building is of course very much more than a physical edifice. It is a rich cluster of symbols, metaphors, meanings, transferences and projections. It holds value for people who may never worship there or anywhere, yet who are responsive to its complex human, aesthetic and spiritual texture. It is, in the proper use of the word, 'iconic', a physical entity that is 'written' into not only a particular landscape and cultural environment but on to the hearts and souls of human beings. It is a sacramental quality, a 'mystery better articulated by poetry than rational argument.' [10] And as John Inge says, this can never be fully described or analysed: 'places have a "personality" as a result of people's interaction with them.... As with a human personality, [it] will defy analysis.'

The opportunity, for all of us who care for our spiritual heritage, is to cherish this uniquely precious symbol that is not only extraordinarily beautiful, and not only indispensable to the history of the North East, but is, as I have said, its mystic heart. It is not the building and its environment, but the inhabited entity and the experience of the people who come here that make it a living part of our heritage. It belongs to us all. And when the time comes for me as dean to move on from this hermit-crab's shell I have occupied for a dozen years, it will not belong to me any less than it does now. If I have learned one thing in my time here, it is that the World Heritage Site is a gift for life to treasure, to honour and to love, and to go on 'inhabiting', if not in the way I have been

privileged to during these wonderful twelve years, then always, till I die, in memory, imagination and thankfulness.

- [1] Kitchin, G. W., *The Story of the Deanery, Durham, 1070-1912*, Durham 1912, 9-11.
- [2] Pevsner, N., revised Williamson, E., *The Buildings of England: County Durham*, London 1985, 206f.
- [3] Goodall, John, 'As Old as the Halls', *Country Life*, 28 August 2003, 38ff.
- [4] Hussey, Christopher, 'The Deanery, Durham', *Country Life* 26 November 1938, 526ff.
- [5] Sadgrove, Michael, *Landscapes of Faith: the Christian heritage of North East England*, London 2013, 61.
- [6] Seasoltz, R. Kevin, *A Sense of the Sacred: theological foundations of Christian architecture and art*, London 2006, 120.
- [7] Male, Émile, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art In France Of The Thirteenth Century* 1899, ri New York 1958.
- [8] MacKintosh, Iain, *Architecture, Actor and Audience*, London 1993, 4.
- [9] Lewis, Christopher, 'Christianity as Heritage', *Theology* CVII/835, 2004, 30ff.
- [10] Inge, John, *A Christian Theology of Place*, Aldershot 2007, 85-6.