When Edward Maufe designed the cathedral the competition conditions had specified that it should be “in the line of the great English Cathedrals”. How does Guildford’s cathedral reflect this aim, and how does it relate to more contemporary architecture?

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Introduction
The aim has been to look not so much at the cathedral itself, but to consider where Sir Edward Maufe, as architect, may have drawn his inspiration for the architectural design. The Conditions of Final Competition, on which a decision was made in 1932, specified a building “in the line of the great English cathedrals” and “seating of between 1200 and 1500, each with an uninterrupted view of the high altar”\textsuperscript{i} Edward Maufe’s interpretation, as set out in the General Planning Outline, which appear on his plans at the letting of the first construction contract in 1936, also said “that the planning should be modern and functional” and that the layout should be “cruciform yet functional”\textsuperscript{ii}.

Of the five competition drawings submitted by the short-listed architects, three were Gothic in inspiration, one was essentially Romanesque (Thomas and Hubert Worthington), and one had elements of both styles (John Gibbons). Thus Edward Maufe was in company with two other architects (William Palmer-Jones and Arthur Crimp) in choosing a Gothic theme.

Medieval Cathedral Architecture
Looking first at the English cathedrals of the medieval period, we can see use of the simple basilica form – a relatively tall central space supported by lower aisles on either side – with transepts, and often with a semi-circular apse at the east end. This plan form can be seen in the abbey church of St-Etienne in Caen, a forerunner of Lanfranc’s Canterbury, and many of the other post-Conquest Norman cathedrals in England. Subsequent rebuilding in the Gothic period frequently replaced the semicircular apse with a flat east end, itself then often a site for the addition of a Lady Chapel. Wells is an example, where the plan has strong similarities with Guildford.

The predominance, at Guildford, of the use of the pointed arch (rather than the semicircular arch of Norman architecture), indicates the Gothic period, but leave open the question of which among the principal English Gothic styles Edward Maufe had chosen to apply. In his 1966 guide to the cathedral he has compared his Guildford cross-section with that of Lichfield cathedral. In doing so he appears to be drawing attention to the proportionately wider span of the central vessel at Guildford rather than to imply any particular derivation of style from Lichfield. By contrast with Guildford, in the more typical basilica form shown in Lichfield’s cross-section, a relatively narrow central vaulted space relies on wide aisles, accessible through the large arcade arches, to achieve a large circulating space in the nave.

The English medieval cathedrals of the Gothic period offer three principle styles. The Early English form - developed from the initial Gothic architecture brought to Canterbury’s east end by William of Sens in the 1180s. This evolved in the later 1200s and early 1300s into the rich Decorated style. When building was able to restart after the Black Death in 1348, the more measured Perpendicular emerged as the dominant style, and was to remain so for almost 200 years until the Reformation.

Salisbury’s nave gives a fine impression of the Early English style – having relatively tall pointed arches, somewhat constrained stone carving, simple rib vaulting, and tall lancet windows without complex window tracery. The west end of Salisbury’s nave and the east windows the Trinity
Guildford - nave looking west

Salisbury – nave looking west
Chapel display the use of grouped lancet windows, by contrast with the large unified windows of the later styles. The east end at Ely gives another example of this grouping of three lancet windows. Guildford’s west end uses the same combination of three lancet windows. The Early English nave at Wells uses tall windows divided by a single mullion, and those of the Guildford nave take the same form.

Edward Maufe makes use, in a number of other locations, however, of a very broad arch, curving close to ground level – for example in the south east porch portal, the south transept portals, and in the arcade arches of the regimental chapel. Intriguingly, the form appears at Wells in the scissor arches devised in 1338 to brace the structure and take the load of the central crossing tower.

Looking at some examples of the developed form of window tracery of the Decorated period - Exeter’s west window and the “Bishop’s Eye” window in Lincoln’s south transept for instance – we may feel that the exuberant Decorated style is an unlikely source for Edward Maufe’s designs. But his forms do not seem to be limited only to the Early English style. Guildford’s north transept window, for example, has a developed tracery pattern above vertical panels. These elements are key characteristics of the Perpendicular style – as can be seen in the west window at Winchester.
St Stephen’s chapel at Westminster, on which work started for Edward I in 1292, is credited by some architectural historians with a contribution to the beginning of the Perpendicular style. Surviving prints of St Stephen’s Chapel in Westminster, and later examples such as the aisle windows on Winchester’s west front, have some of the features of Edward Maufe’s windows for the Guildford Lady Chapel, noting however that his design uses a segmental arch - one which is terminated before it can curve down to the vertical.

Another feature of the Perpendicular style worthy of consideration lies in the proportions of the stories in nave elevations. Norman elevations had broadly similar proportions as between the lower arcade, the middle level gallery and the upper level clearstorey. By the time of the Perpendicular Gothic however this had altered radically. At Canterbury and Winchester, where naves were reconstructed in the Perpendicular style in around 1400, we can see that the arcade has become completely dominant, with a minimised clearstorey level. Edward Maufe’s design for Guildford eliminates the middle level and provides a minimal upper level, with tiny clearstorey windows.

Guildford’s tall undecorated piers, and lofty but narrow passage aisles, could call to mind a very different medieval form, seen in some of the early Cistercian architecture. The interior of the abbey church of Alcobaça, in central Portugal, survives in the form in which it was completed in 1252. Its central space of great simplicity, and its tall and narrow passage aisles, convey something of the same feeling evoked in Guildford. It has to be said however that no evidence has been seen in Edward Maufe’s own writings of particular Cistercian architecture forming a source in his designs for Guildford.

One church that we know Edward Maufe did visit however was the Cathedral of Sainte-Cécile in Albi in southern France. Constructed initially between 1282 and the late 1300s, this church has an extraordinary brick exterior with prominent rounded buttresses of fortified appearance. Internally it is heavily frescoed, and overall would seem to be very unlike what we see at Guildford. John Thomas, who has written on the influence of Albi cathedral on British church architecture, believes however that Edward Maufe did draw on Albi. The church does emphasis its central space, having no aisles as such, and its tall lancet nave windows, divided by a single thin central mullion, have a striking correspondence to Guildford’s nave lancets.
Other more detailed features of Edward Maufe’s design include an almond shaped window in the Lady Chapel. The almond shaped medieval mandorla acts as a framing for scenes of Christ in Majesty or of the Virgin Mary in early medieval art – an example is to be seen in the relief work on the tympanum above the Prior’s Door at Ely. Could Edward Maufe have had this link with the Virgin in mind in placing this unusual feature in the Lady Chapel? His use of rectangular windows in an otherwise essentially Gothic context (for example in the regimental chapel) is also somewhat unusual. Their use in medieval great churches is rare but not unknown – examples are to be found high on the west front at Winchester, and in the Chapel of St Mary le Bow in Sherborne Abbey, though in the latter it may be related to domestic use of this part of the church in the sixteenth century.

**Contemporary Cathedral Architecture**

But what contemporary cathedral architecture would have been complete or underway at the time of Edward Maufe’s design work on Guildford? Truro, designed by J L Pearson and built between the 1880s and 1910, had been a product of the Gothic Revival – and it was a new church constructed in a single style – Early English. Westminster’s Roman Catholic cathedral, designed by John Bentley, had been built between 1895 and 1903, and was of Byzantine style, owing much to the church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. In 1930 a design by Edwin Lutyens had been chosen for the Roman Catholic cathedral in Liverpool (the “second cathedral”) – reviving building plans after the abandonment of Edward Pugin’s design in the 1850s. Lutyens’ vast domed structure (on which work was to cease in 1941 with only the crypt complete) was of Byzantine and Romanesque inspiration, with some Renaissance detailing. While this design choice would have been published only a short period ahead of the Guildford design work, as such it does not appear to have deflected Edward Maufe from an essentially Gothic approach for Guildford. It was notable however that the design included a structure inside the west porch, which Lutyens described as a *narthex* – a term traceable back to Byzantine church design and also appearing in many Romanesque church layouts. In his words, this would be “a great space which it is proposed shall be open by day and by night, without let or hindrance, and kept warm – a spiritual sanctuary for those cold and destitute”. Sir Frederick Gibberd’s “fourth cathedral”, completed in 1967, stands above the crypt built for Lutyens’ cathedral.

In 1903 Giles Gilbert Scott, then in his twenties, had won the design competition for Liverpool’s Anglican cathedral. Despite what was to be a very long building history, by 1910 the Lady Chapel had been completed and was providing a viable basis for worship, and by 1931 (when Edward Maufe was at work on Guildford), the eastern part of the main church had been completed and work on the vast central tower had begun. Thus it was perhaps the most visible ongoing architectural project that was directly relevant to Maufe’s designs at the time that Guildford was on his drawing board.
If we look more closely at the Liverpool Anglican cathedral - very much a Gothic design - we see a building constructed in stone – cut, and extensively carved, by essentially traditional methods. Such a structure requires buttresses to brace its vast stone vaults. The opportunity to carve the local sandstone chosen for its construction, had given wide scope for decorative stonework detailing, both inside and on its exterior. If we can look beyond the buttresses - (not needed structurally with the materials which Edward Maufe was to use for Guildford) and decorative stonework (not so easily achieved when using concrete and brick) - how does Guildford compare with Liverpool?

Both have an essentially cruciform plan and a single central tower, albeit that Liverpool has both eastern and western transepts. Both are of basilica form with relatively tall aisles supporting the central spaces. The massing of the supporting structures at the east end has some similarity – and each have a Lady Chapel at the east end - Liverpool’s occupying a flank position (with medieval precedents - Ely’s Lady Chapel is for example on its north east flank).

But it is perhaps some of the architectural detailing that is most interesting. Scott’s west window can be interpreted as three lancets side by side, a form seen in each of Edward Maufe’s west windows. From a different perspective – if one was to take the three lancets from Scott’s great south window and place them at Guildford’s west end, the remaining round window element above could well be placed in its high position at Guildford’s east end.

Not all of Scott’s details conform to this essentially Early English style. His east window has Decorated tracery, with leaf forms akin to the south transept window at Lincoln, the “Bishop’s Eye”. The window tracery and vaulting of the Lady Chapel also strongly suggest Decorated inspiration – forms not obviously evident in Guildford. In the tracery of the great north porch window however, the continuation of vertical mullions to the top of the arch corresponds closely with the Perpendicular style – and as such might be compared with Edward Maufe’s north transept window. Window detailing on the east end at Liverpool corresponds much more closely with Edward Maufe’s Lady Chapel windows than the medieval examples we have considered above, both using segmental arches.
Rectangular windows appear in Liverpool’s south west transept and at the east end, with some resemblance to their use by Edward Maufe, in for example the regimental chapel. Scott’s nave elevation has dominant arcade arches which squeeze the minimised clearstorey upwards toward the vault. Looking to the exterior we can see that light is provided at this clearstorey level by groups of tiny rectangular windows corresponding directly with Edward Maufe’s design for Guildford.
Conclusion

Overall a tentative conclusion might be that both architects have used a mix of medieval English Gothic styles and added a number of flourishes of their own. Giles Gilbert Scott has used all three styles, including the Decorated, while Edward Maufe’s more simplified treatment could be argued to have used both Early English and Perpendicular ideas. Thus while the medieval cathedrals appear to play their part in placing the design for Guildford “in the line of the great English cathedrals”, there is also the possibility that contemporary cathedral architecture, particularly Scott’s work in Liverpool, played its part.

References

3. Christopher Wilson *The Gothic Cathedral* Thames and Hudson 1990 p192
4. John Thomas *Albi Cathedral and British Church Architecture* Ecclesiological Society 2002

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