

## Durham Castle

In the year 995, monks from Chester-le-Street brought St. Cuthber's body here to protect it from the Danes. They chose the naturally fortified site within an incised loop of the River Wear as the setting for their new cathedral. As late as 1075 it rebuffed a Danish attack. The only landward approach to the promontory is guarded by Durham Castle, which was established by William the Conqueror in 1072 but was soon given to Bishop Welcher. The castle remained the chief seat of the bishops of Durham until 1836, when Bishop Van Mildert gave it to the newly founded university. It now serves as University College.

As seen from across the Wear, castle and cathedral form a magnificent spectacle. It is the cathedral which dominates, but this can only be expected of England's celebrated Norman church. Above the river the castle presents a purely residential façade, the domestic buildings protruding from the great hall to the edge of the precipice. Clearly, the steep drop was considered protection enough. Whereas Durham Cathedral is still essentially a Norman building, the castle exhibits architecture of every century from the eleventh to the nineteenth, reflecting the changing tastes of the bishops, and is memorable as a palace rather than a fortress. In outline, however, the castle is still a Norman stronghold, comprising a triangular bailey overlooked by a large motte.

The promontory within the loop of the Wear was given a stone enclosure wall for extra protection under Bishop Flambard in the early twelfth century. Much of this wall remains in a featureless condition, particularly on the west side beyond the cathedral building. Near the southern apex is the Water Gate, rebuilt in 1778. The short gap between the castle motte and the eastern arm of the river was closed by a stronger wall and ditch.