

Walk 2 - Two cathedrals, Victorian toilets and Nordic culture

The **Echo Arena** is in a place that means any walking tour will involve an extra distance, and in the case of our cathedrals I think it really is wisest to begin with a bus ride. Luckily, the bus you need starts from **Liverpool One bus station** across the river from the **Albert Dock complex**. Leaving the Arena, go towards the Albert Dock and walk along with the Albert Dock on your left and Salthouse Dock on your right. Turn right at the end of Salthouse Dock and cross over the main road towards the **Hilton Hotel**, right next to which is the Liverpool One bus station. You need to get the **79 bus**, over on the right hand of the bus station, at the bus stand nearest the river. The bus will be run by **Arriva Northwest**, and a ticket costs £2.30.

Once aboard the bus, you will begin a tour of the city centre, but when you pass the Adelphi Hotel the bus will turn left into **Brownlow Hill**. It is a fairly steep hill which crosses Rodney Street at a traffic light. You need to alight at the second stop after the traffic light, outside the **Victoria Building**, once part of Liverpool University where many of us took oral examinations in foreign languages. Walk forward in the same direction as the bus, as far as the pedestrian lights. Cross over, rounding the corner into **Mount Pleasant**. You are in the heart of Liverpool University campus now. The Cathedral now looms ahead of you on the right. You can turn right after the priests' house and go up the steps, or go up the winding ramp just beyond that, or go into the underground car park and take the lift or the stairs or walk all the way around to the front of the building - but that involves lots of steps.

Whichever route you choose, you will arrive at the main entrance to the **Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King**. Guides will no doubt be there to offer you booklets in an alarming array of languages, and if there is a service in progress the areas you can access will be limited. I think the best thing is for me to mention various parts of the Cathedral and challenge you to find them. The building is circular, so I suggest choosing whether to head right or left and stopping every few metres to look around, because there are so many things to spot and if it is a normal northern English day the **light** inside will be changing all the time. There are natural stopping points at all the chapels, but they are all so different it can be quite overwhelming - nothing like Saint Peter's in Rome, of course, but nonetheless quite a bewildering variety of themes.

There are **tapestries** on many of the walls, which were once all bare concrete. These have been made under the direction of **Sister Anthony Wilson** SNDdeN, who has a band of dedicated sewers who meet frequently. I have never met a young one, so the group may be in dwindling mode. They have done remarkable work, whether it is to your taste or not. Some of the tapestries hark back to the **National Pastoral Congress**, which took place in Liverpool in May 1980, and to the Mass celebrated on the occasion of the visit to the Cathedral of **Pope John Paul II**, on Pentecost Sunday, 30th May 1982. The diocesan banners of the **Northern Province** are still there, though all the others were removed after the National Pastoral Congress. It was splendid to see them all there at that time.

The **Stations of the Cross** were a gift to **Archbishop Derek Worlock** and were made by **Sean Rice**, who also made the wild statue of **Abraham** which - as far as I know - is on loan, but it has been for decades now. I suspect you will have an opinion on these, one way or another. Archbishop Worlock is the only person buried in the Cathedral, and his tomb is in a chapel that is beautifully decorated with themes from the life and death of **Saint Joseph**, carved and painted by **Stephen Foster**. There is also a stark and striking **Lady Chapel**, with a very tall statue of Our Lady and a much smaller child Jesus, both of which are by **Robert Brumby**. In the **Blessed Sacrament chapel**, which is opposite the main entrance, there is a statue of **the Risen Christ** by **Arthur Dooley**. The **altar crucifix** by **Elisabeth Frink** is two-faced. It is worth looking as closely as you can at it. In the late 1980s I remember pleading with the parish priest of Holy Ghost in Ford, who was about to build a new church and demolish the one we were standing in, not to let the beautiful **mosaic of Pentecost** by the Hungarian **Gjörgy Mayer-Marton** come to any harm; you can see it today in the **Chapel of Unity**. My own favourite is a chapel not far from the main doors which encourages visitors to stop and pray for **children who have no known resting-place**, such as stillborn or miscarried children and so on. A Chinese parishioner where I used to be parish priest paid for this chapel to be decorated

and dedicated; the message of dedication is in Cantonese, with an English translation. The **Union of Catholic Mothers** try to keep the chapel stocked with prayer booklets, and there are 'trees' where people can hang prayers they have written, as well as books of photographs - a moving and utterly silent part of the building.

These are just a few of the features within the building, which has been nicknamed the **Mersey Funnel** or even **Paddy's Wigwam**, because of the shape of the lantern above the altar. The shape of the building is designed to ensure nobody is very far from the altar, but it has led to disappointing acoustics. It becomes a totally different place when it is full of people, such as at the Chrism Mass in Holy Week, or when one of the universities uses it for a degree ceremony. The acoustics can even affect people's enjoyment of concerts, despite the fact that various attempts have been made over the 50 years the Cathedral has been open to sort this out. Having said that, the musical tradition is strong, and the Cathedral now has two choirs - one male, one female.

When you have taken it all in, the best way to leave the building is via the main entrance. You are met straight away with a view down a long flight of steps that was not there for years after the Cathedral was opened, but now people experience the entrance as it was originally intended. From the top of the steps you look along **Hope Street**, which leads to the Anglican Cathedral. The street was not named after the virtue, but after a merchant - but it's a happy fault, I think.

Walking along Hope Street you almost immediately pass the recently refurbished **Everyman Theatre** on the left, and the former **Masonic Hall** on the right. The Freemasons used to hire the Cathedral car park on a Tuesday evening, but now they have moved and these days I think young women fling themselves around learning contemporary dance. Most of the buildings on the right were once part of a teacher training college run by the **Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur**, but now they belong to the **Liverpool John Moores University**. At the first major road junction you will be standing outside an imposing pub called the **Philharmonic**; it is not unusual for coach loads of Japanese tourists - including females - to be shown into the Grade II listed gentlemen's toilets, which are known as some of the finest Victorian toilets in existence. You don't believe me, do you? The pub obviously takes its name from the **Philharmonic Hall** on the other side of the road junction, home to the **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**. Both places are extremely popular!

Moving further along Hope Street, you will have to go around a double statue featuring **Archbishop Derek Worlock and Bishop David Sheppard**, his Anglican opposite number and also a respected cricketer. They became great friends, occasionally going on holiday together, and wrote a book called **Better Together**, really the theme of this unusual monument. It is undeniable that we experience far less enmity than there was when I was a boy in the city, but it is equally true that part of the reason is that we are now far less relevant than we once were. Sorry for the negative gloss, but I feel bound to tell it as I experience it. On balance, we have moved light years in the right direction, but there is still a way to go. If you turn right into **Hope Place**, you will pass the **Unity Theatre**, and will spot that it is next to what was obviously part of a chapel belonging to the Notre Dame Sisters' teacher training set-up. They really occupied most of the land here at one time. If, instead, you stay on Hope Street, you will soon come to an unusual installation on the footpath. It is lots of **cases** piled up, clearly a reference to the number of people who have passed through Liverpool on their way somewhere else over the centuries. Perhaps it is an unappreciated philosophical statement about the impermanence of so much in life, too. On the corner at the end of Hope Street is the sixth form of **LIPA**, the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts, founded by **Sir Paul McCartney**. Whichever route you chose, you are now about to cross the road to the **Anglican Cathedral**.

The Anglican Cathedral's real name is **The Cathedral Church of Christ**. Its foundation stone was laid in 1904 and it was completed in 1978. My secondary school's main gate was opposite a road called **Quarry Street**, which led to the quarry from where all the stone used in this building came. Many people find it easier to see this building as a Cathedral, because it is clearly a much more traditional church building. Curiously the Catholic Cathedral was designed by an Anglican and the Anglican one by a Catholic. Once again, I think it is probably impossible to come out of these

buildings without a clear view one way or another, but that is no bad thing. Different spaces and styles suit different people and communities.

As you enter the Cathedral, you pass under a statue of 'The Welcoming Christ' by **Elisabeth Frink**, who made the crucifix on the altar of the Metropolitan Cathedral. The Anglican Cathedral has some striking art works inside, sometimes in quite obscure locations. A controversial one is a neon statement by **Tracey Emin**, 'For You', 2008 - ***I Felt You and I Knew You Loved me***. This you see when you have gone past the well at the west door and look back. Other artists whose work is here include **Adrian Wiszniewski** (The Good Samaritan), **Christopher Le Brun** (The Prodigal Son), **Cristi Paslaru** (Hospitality of Abraham), **Giovanni della Robbia** (Kneeling Madonna) and **Josefina de Vasconcellos** (Holy Family). A nice feature is a **Children's Chapel**, designed partly by the children who come here, and a **Lady Chapel**, which really appealed to an Italian group I was showing around recently; they felt much happier there than in the Metropolitan Cathedral! The **Chapter House** was furnished, according to a plaque inside it, by the **West Lancashire Freemasons**. I suspect the best thing to do would be to hunt down a few of these things and just soak up the atmosphere. While the Catholic Cathedral has a coffee shop at the bottom of the main steps outside, here there is a book/gift shop and restaurant in the Cathedral. You may be interested to know that, 10 years ago, the Dean of the Cathedral was an Anglican priest called Justin Welby.

When you come out, I suggest leaving the site at the other end from where you came in, in other words into a little service road called Saint James Road, which brings you to **Upper Parliament Street**. Turn right and head down in the direction of the river. Cross the major road at the traffic lights and continue towards the river until you come to another traffic light, with Grafton Street on the left and Jamaica Street on the right. Turn right into **Jamaica Street**. You are now in the **Baltic Triangle**, and along this street you will find some great shops and eating places. A particularly good place for a warm drink and cake or bread is the **Baltic Bakehouse**. Their bread is superb.

Further along you join Park Lane, and about 200 metres along you will come to the **Nordic Church and Cultural Centre**. We used to call it by another name, but that is what it is currently called. It stands out for two reasons: it is one of very few octagonal churches in the country and it has stepped gable ends, something very common in Denmark and Sweden, although the people who use this church are mainly Swedish and Norwegian. It was originally a **seamen's church** which also served thousands of Scandinavian migrants heading for America, but now it is used by a much smaller group. The weekend you are here there does not seem to be anything organised Friday, but there is a Craft Café on Saturday morning and a music evening at 7.30. On Sunday there is a Communion service at 11.30. I mention these because it is not easy to get into the church unless it is being used.

Beyond the Nordic church you can either head into **Liverpool One** and visit the **Quakers' Friends' Meeting House** in School Lane or turn left into Liver Street and go past the Ibis Hotel to cross back over the main road to return to the Arena.

If you have plenty of energy left, you could head from Park Lane to Chinatown and Seel Street and join the last section of Walk 1, as below:

If you backtrack a few paces, you will find you are at the top of **Seel Street**. It is worth walking down here for many reasons, but two in particular. You will see a building that looks like a church, because it was! It was **Saint Peter's** church, staffed for years by Benedictines, and later used by Polish Catholics, but now it is a club and restaurant called **Alma de Cuba**. If you are sensitive about such things, don't go in, because the main painting is still there, surmounted by "TU ES PETRUS" (you are Peter), and the goings on at the table where the altar should be are not what you would expect in a church. To the right of the former sanctuary are memorial tablets to priests who remained in their parishes in the midst of poverty and diseases like typhus. When you recover, next door you will find the **Missionaries of Charity** (Mother Teresa's sisters), who offer care to some of Liverpool's poorest and unwanted rejects. They have an army of volunteers to help them, and I'm sure they will be around when you pass by. Be warned! If you call in you may get a job.

Not too far now! At the bottom of Seel Street you should turn left into Hanover Street. Just off to the left in School Lane you will find the ***Friends' Meeting House***, the home to Liverpool's Quaker community and the location of the ecumenical officer for Merseyside and Region. Head down Hanover Street, through the Liverpool One bus station and across the river. In front of you is the Albert Dock complex and the Arena is over to the left.

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