



Address	St Columb's Cathedral
Name	St Columb's Cathedral
Map Reference	C1
Plot Number	1
Listed Building Reference Grade	yes HB01/19/001 A
Conservation Area Reference	yes historic city
Building at Risk Reference	no n/a
Date of Construction	1628-1633
Original Use	cathedral
Present Use	cathedral

Description

1628-1633 Planter Gothic Cathedral. Spire. Chancel and Chapter House added.

'Rising up powerfully above the steps of St Columb's Court where the cathedral comes close to the walls of the court house, it can be seen best as a whole from SW, where its churchyard runs unimpeded by buildings up to the southernmost stretch of the city walls. For all the different dates the materials are the same: rubble schist walls with sandstone trim. The tower and steeple are typical of their date, though more lavish in scale than usual. Four-stage tower with thin clasping buttresses, regular string courses, and octagonal pinnacles that seem to be an early c19 attempt to catch the style of the original c17 church. The spire too has an odd feature in the roll mouldings of the arrises.

Beyond the green gabled projections of Drew's chapter house [Thomas Drew] and vestry – the latter on the site of the original s porch [this statement appears not to be accurate] – the s aisle of 1628 takes over, with late Gothic windows and curious quasi-classical buttresses. The windows are in groups of four lights, cusped, and set within a shallow segmental arch with a segmental hood mould above. In the clerestory they are three-light, and both aisle and clerestory end in crenelated parapets. The ambivalence of the mason Parrott's taste is nicely shown by the contrast of these windows with the regular *cyma recta* base-course moulding on which the whole wall is set, and the classicizing profiles, especially the finials, of the buttresses. The best preserved without restoration is the second on the s aisle.

The original church stopped at the half-round turret towards the E end of the aisle. This is c17, though its crocketed dome finial is by *Ferguson* [J G Ferguson] and the window immediately before it, i.e. on the W side, is also his, as in the original scheme this was a blank wall to a chancel side-chapel. Past the half-round turret everything is *Ferguson* until the corresponding half-round turret is reached on the N side. The foliated tracery of the E window is however *Welland* provided in his restoration of the chancel in 1859, re-erected by *Ferguson* in 1885. It probably preserves the pattern of c17 Planter's Gothic E window. The smaller Dec windows to the side chapels are *Ferguson*'s own design; the originals were low groups of cusped lancets like those in the aisles and clerestory. On the N side note how the aisle windows are only of three lights – not four – and also how the buttresses lack the elaborated finials of the s side. The two-storey arrangement of the windows at the W end of the N aisle dates from the insertion of the galleries in the c18 and records the arrangement of the windows of the aisles at the E end before the Victorian extensions.'

The Buildings of Ireland, North West Ulster, Alistair Rowan, 1979

History

'St Columb's Cathedral was the first Cathedral in the British Isles to have been built after the Reformation and is a fine example of 'Planter's Gothic'. Built from locally quarried stone between 1628 and 1633 by William Parrott and supervised by Sir John Vaughan, Governor of the City. The project was financed by the Honourable the Irish Society and cost £3800 in total. In 1776 the Bishop of Derry (the 4th Earl of Bristol) had constructed a further 21 feet to the tower, and upon this a tall and graceful stone spire, making a total height of 221 feet. After about 20 years this addition to the tower showed signs of giving way and the whole was taken down and rebuilt, the tower being completed in 1802 and the spire being added about 20 years later. The nave remained unchanged until 1825 when the South Porch was removed. In 1827 the eastern turrets were either rebuilt or else surmounted by domes; before this they appear with battlements. In 1862 the interior of the Cathedral was entirely re-modeled, the old square pews were removed, the galleries in the aisles taken away and the present oak work added. The addition of the chancel in 1887 completed the Cathedral on the plan of its founders (the foundations had actually been laid in 1633 and were discovered during building operations). The erection of the Chapter House in 1910 provided improved accommodation for the clergy and choir.

The Cathedral, which is also the parish Church of St Columb, stands on the summit of the Hill of Derry, a site previously unoccupied by any religious structure. The body of this edifice, which has no transepts, is divided into a central and lateral aisles which are separated by pointed arches resting on hexagonal pillars and over each lateral aisle there is a spacious gallery connected with an organ gallery at the west end of the church. On the east gable there is a cross, springing from the central battlement and at the west end is the belfry which is square but has circular towers at two of its angles and is surmounted by a handsome spire. The length of the church, independently of the belfry, is 114 feet, the breadth 66 and the height 46. The spire is 178 feet high from the ground of which the belfry, which is about 32 feet square, measures 89 feet, the battlements included. The central east window is divided by mullions into five lights and has one transom. It is of elegant form and characteristic amplitude. The Cathedral contains accommodation for above 1000 persons. The style of this church as will be seen by the prefixed wood cut copied from Neville's engraved plan of the siege originally approached that known among architectural antiquaries as the perpendicular or Tudor style but it has lost much of its characteristic uniformity by modern fantastic decorations.

For nearly twenty years after the plantation, Derry was without a place of worship capable of accommodating even its then scanty population, a part of the old ruined Church of St Augustine which had been repaired being the only building appropriated to the service of religion. After repeated complaints of the default of the London corporation in this as well as in other articles, a royal commission of inquiry was appointed which, in 1628, reported that although the citizens of London have not hitherto built any church in the city of Londonderry, yet now they have begun to build a fair church there for the perfecting whereof they have contracted with one Parrott to give him £3400 and when the work is finished they have promised that if they shall think he hath deserved more to add an hundred more to that sum Phillips's MS. The erection of the church was completed in 1633 under the superintendence of Sir John Vaughan Knt Alderman and Governor of Derry at an expense of £4000. This event is thus recorded on a tablet which was originally placed over the door of the porch of the old Cathedral but is now over that of the belfry. The smaller tablet inserted in the above contains a Latin inscription the last line of which has not been satisfactorily deciphered. The first of the two following attempts is in monkish rhyme the second is perhaps of purer Latinity.

'In templo verus deus
Est vereque corde mens.'
'In templo verus deus est
vereque Clemens.'

The Cathedral has been kept in repair by parochial assessments, there being no economical fund for the purpose as already stated. In 1683 the Cathedral was much embellished by Bishop Hopkins. Of the state of this edifice both before and after the revolution, the following account is

given in 1690 by Archbishop King in his Visitation Book of the diocese, 'The Cathedral which is likewise the parish church, is a goodly fabric begun by the Londoners in 1622 [1628] but was not finished for many years afterwards. It has an organ, a square steeple and a good ring of six bells. It had formerly a spire of wood, leaded, but it was decayed and taken down before the troubles. The lead was preserved in order to build it again, till the late siege during which it was used for bullets. The church suffered much in the roof from bombs and other accidents. Their majesties allowed £200 pounds towards repairing it and £200 more will not finish the necessary repairs of it.' From an old account of the city annexed to Nevill's plan it appears that the Cathedral was entirely roofed with lead 'being the most uniform church in the kingdome and the onely church that is covered with lead.'

On the night of the 1st of December 1740 the Cathedral took fire from the carelessness of the bell ringers, the flames were however speedily extinguished. A new spire erected by the Earl of Bristol Bishop of Derry was completed on the 13th of July 1778. It was of hewn stone and of an octagonal pyramidal form with open ornamented windows. The top was crowned with a large gilt copper ball over which was placed a handsome vane, also of copper. The old steeple originally 66 feet high was now raised 21 feet. The spire itself measured 130 and the ball vane and ornamented work rose 11 feet above the stone work. The height therefore from the ground of the entire edifice was 228 feet. In 1802 this spire was taken down, the tower which supported it being in a dangerous state, in consequence probably of the storm of that year by which the ball on the summit was loosened. It was soon after rebuilt with the addition of Gothic pinnacles from a fund of £400, of which one half was contributed by the Irish Society, the other by Bishop Knox and the citizens. The present spire is surmounted by a cross which terminates in a gilt pole.'

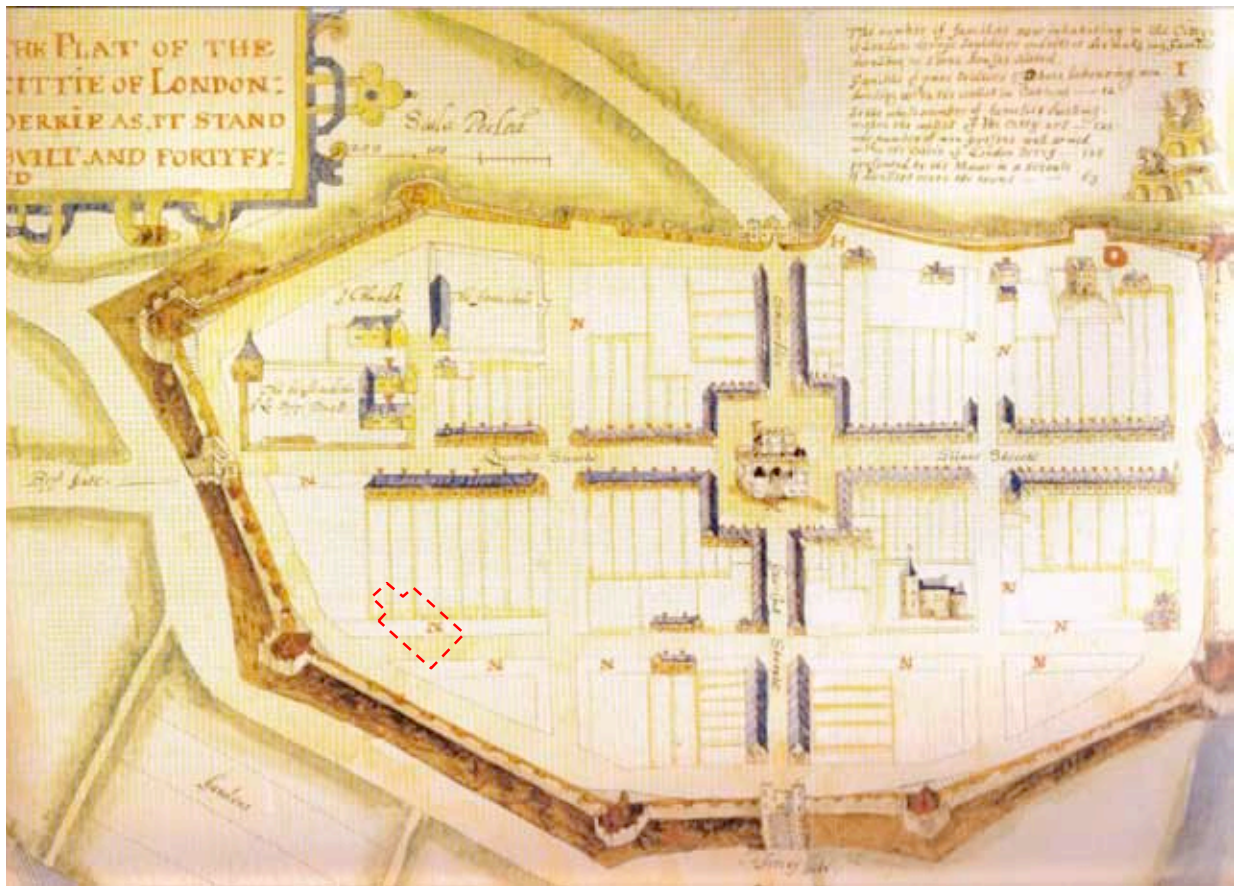
Ordnance Survey of the County of Londonderry, Thomas Colby, 1837

Owners/Tenants

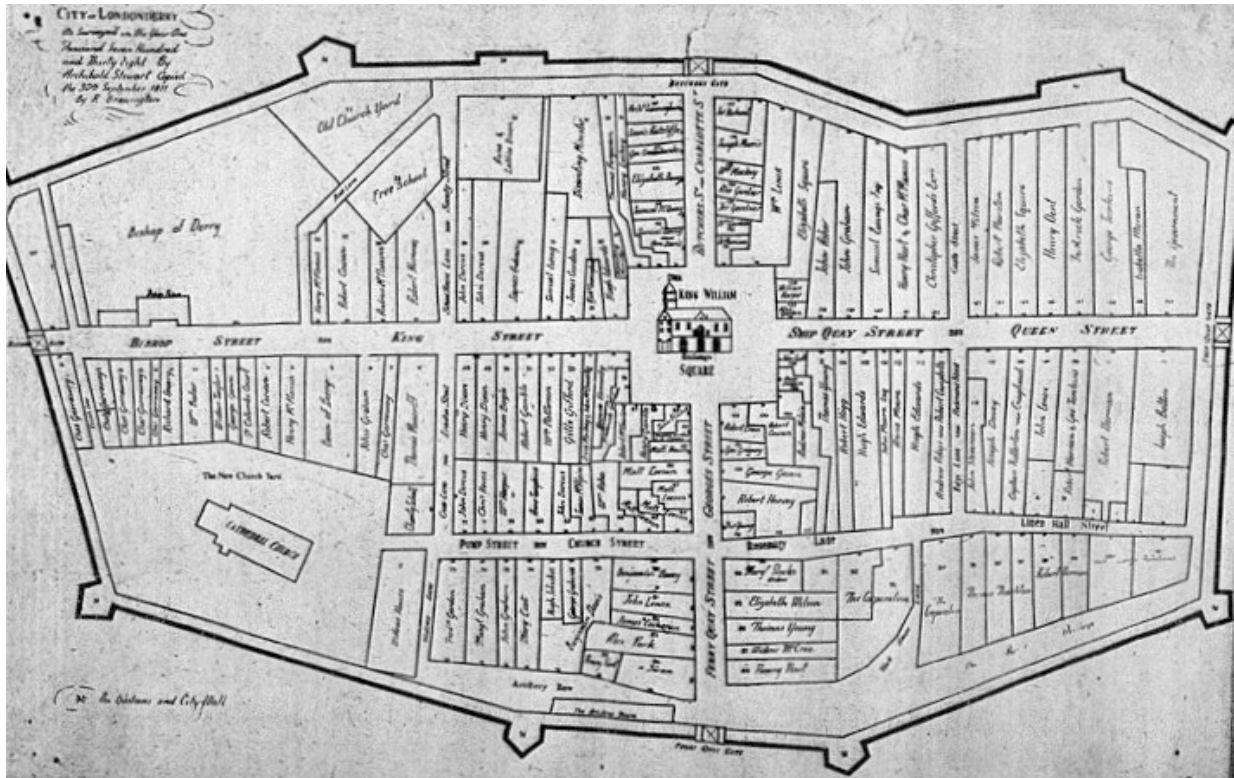
St Columb's Cathedral

1633- St Columb's Cathedral, Church of Ireland
2012 St Columb's Cathedral, Church of Ireland

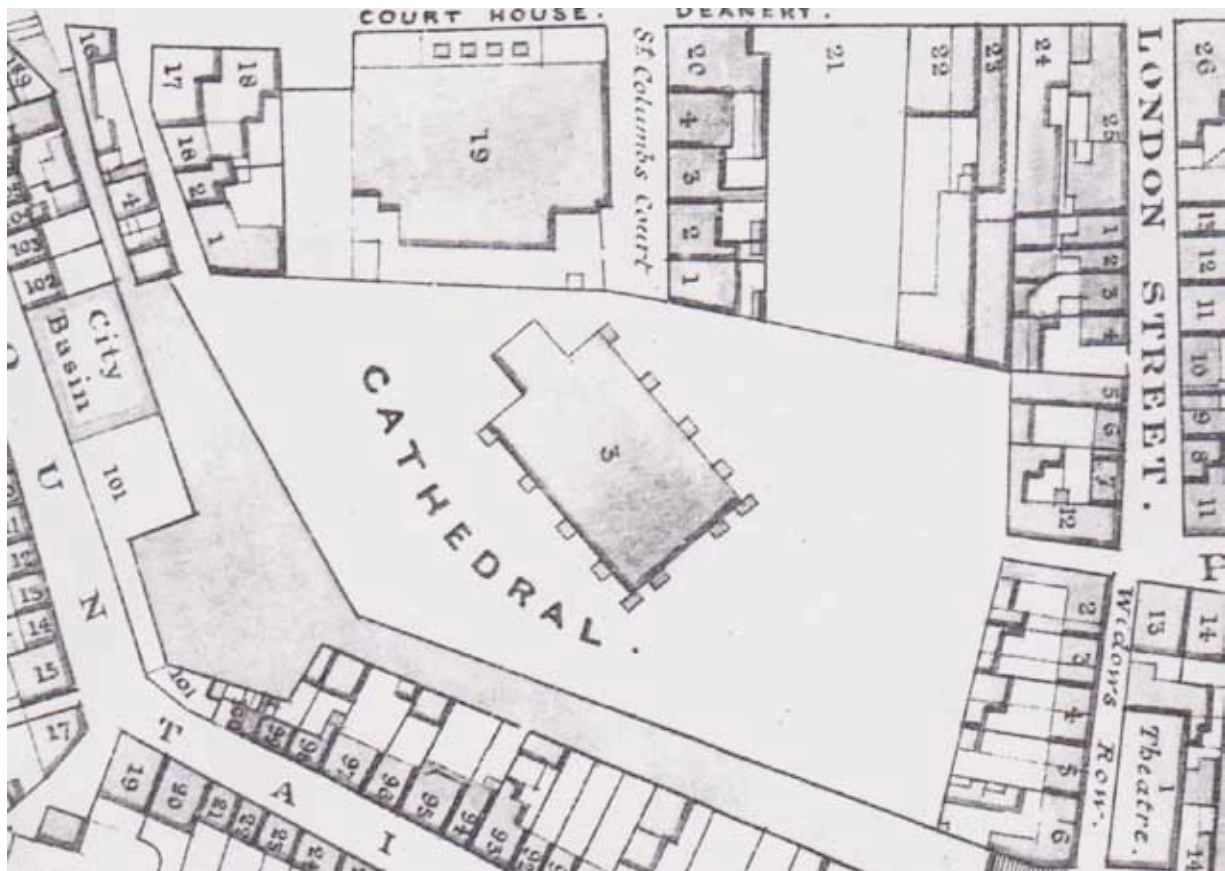
Archive Maps



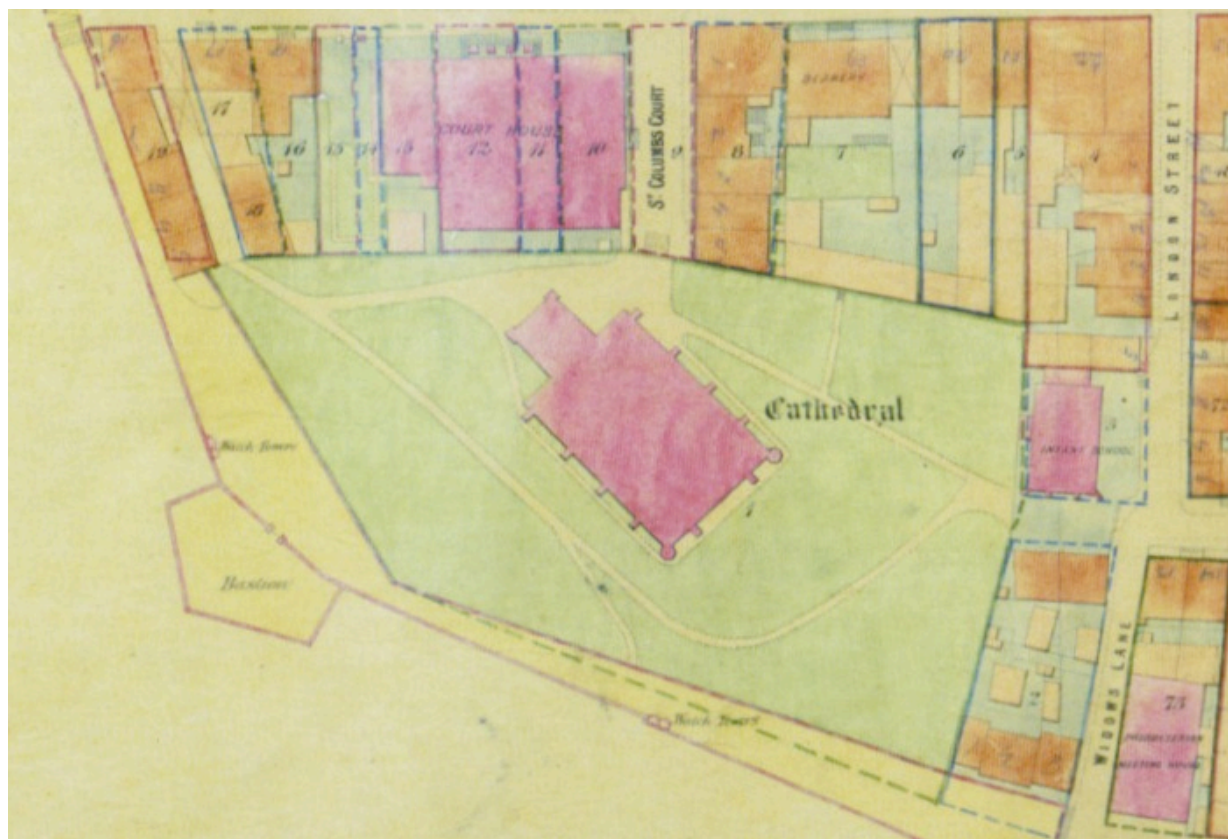
Thomas Raven map, 1622



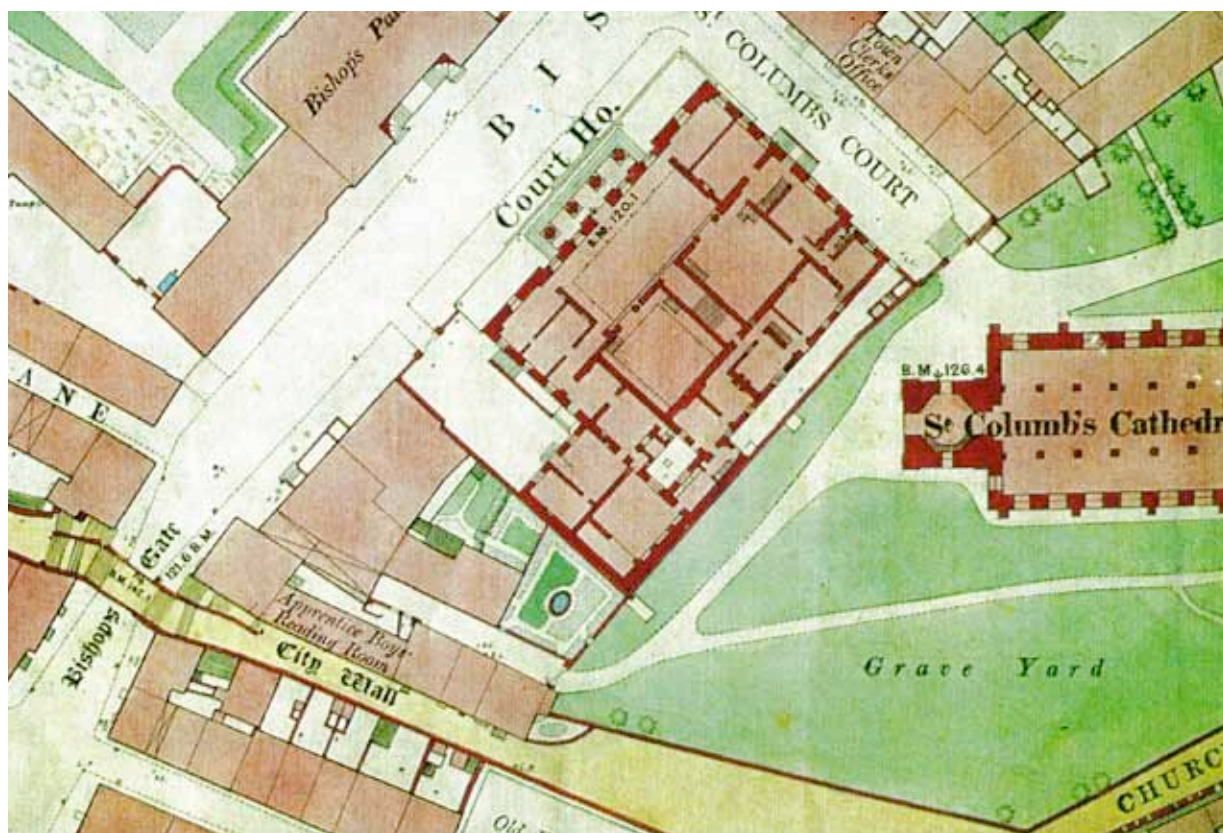
St Columb's Cathedral, 1738



St Columb's Cathedral, Valuation Map, 1834

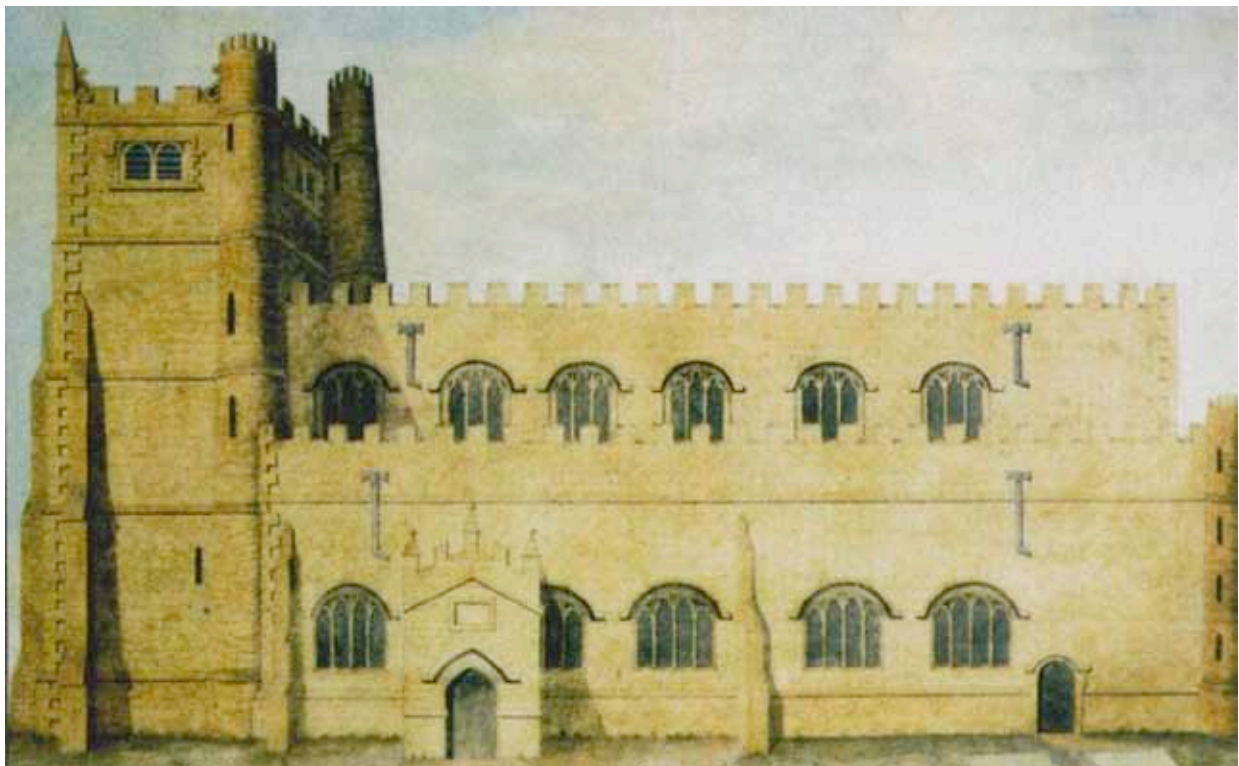


St Columb's Cathedral, The Honourable The Irish Society map, 1857



St Columb's Cathedral and its environs, Ordnance Survey, 1873

Archive Drawings



St Columb's Cathedral, 1633



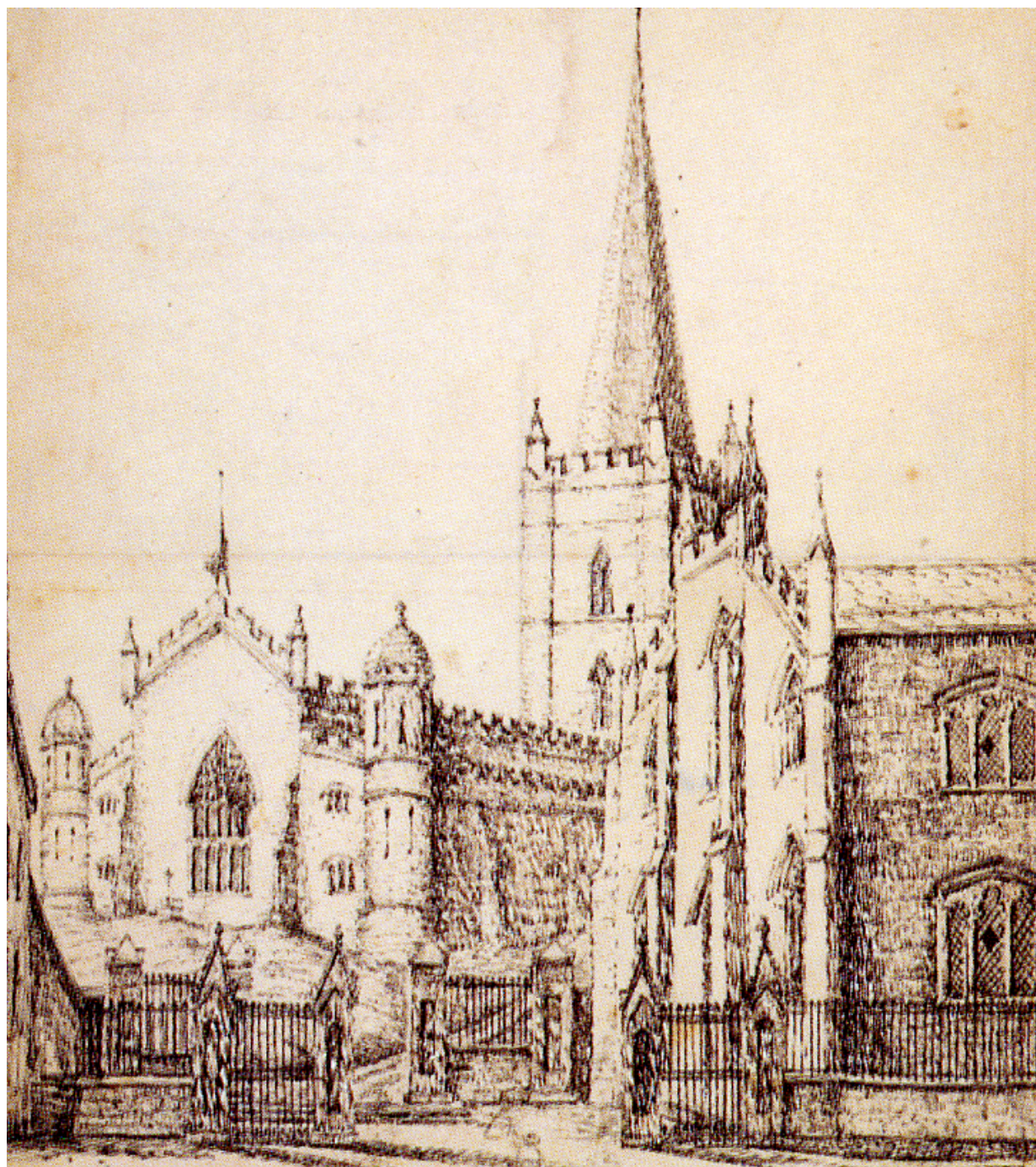
St Columb's Cathedral, 1633



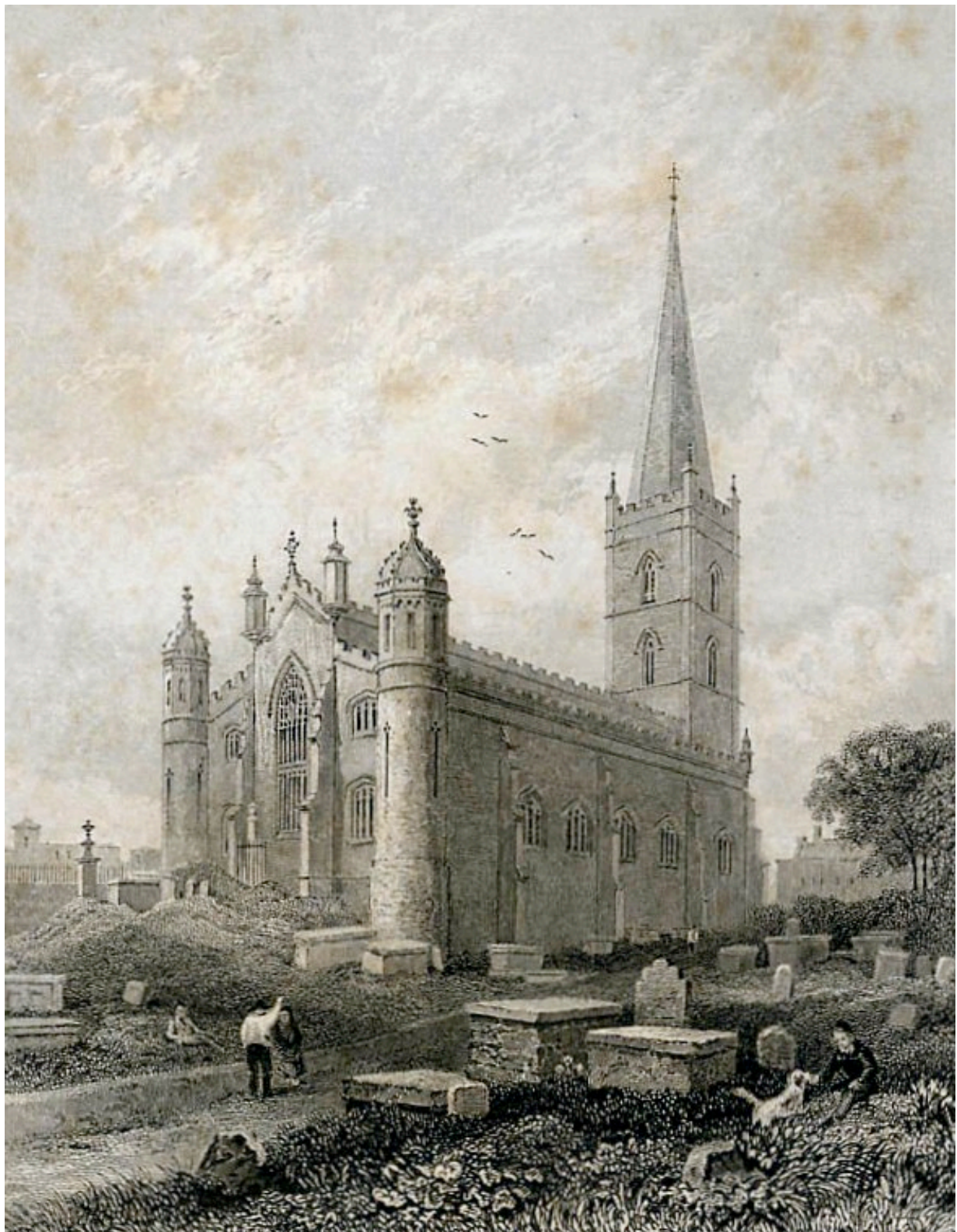
Paul Sandby, RA 1730-1809, etching & engraving, engraved by James Fittler A R A, 1781



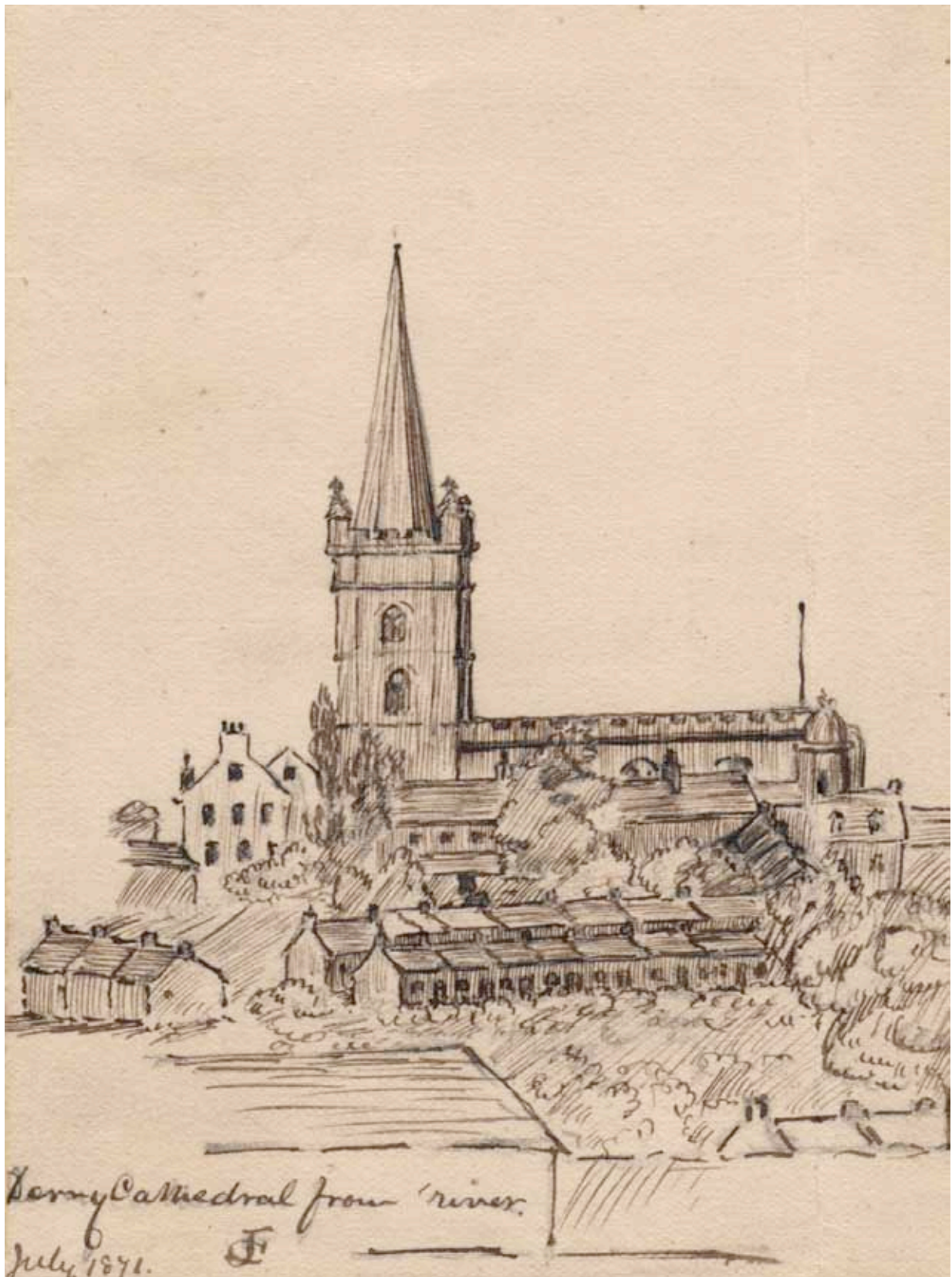
Original spire erected by Bishop Hervey, circa 1781



St Columb's Cathedral and School drawing from Pump Street, circa 1830



St Columb's Cathedral engraving from graveyard, circa 1842



St Columb's Cathedral sketch from river, 1871

Archive Images



St Columb's Cathedral, from Pump Street, before the addition of the chancel, circa 1885



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, circa 1890



St Columb's Cathedral from City Wall, circa 1890



St Columb's Cathedral nave and chancel, circa 1890



St Columb's Cathedral nave and organ circa 1890



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, after 1900



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, after 1900



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, circa 1975

Archive Postcards



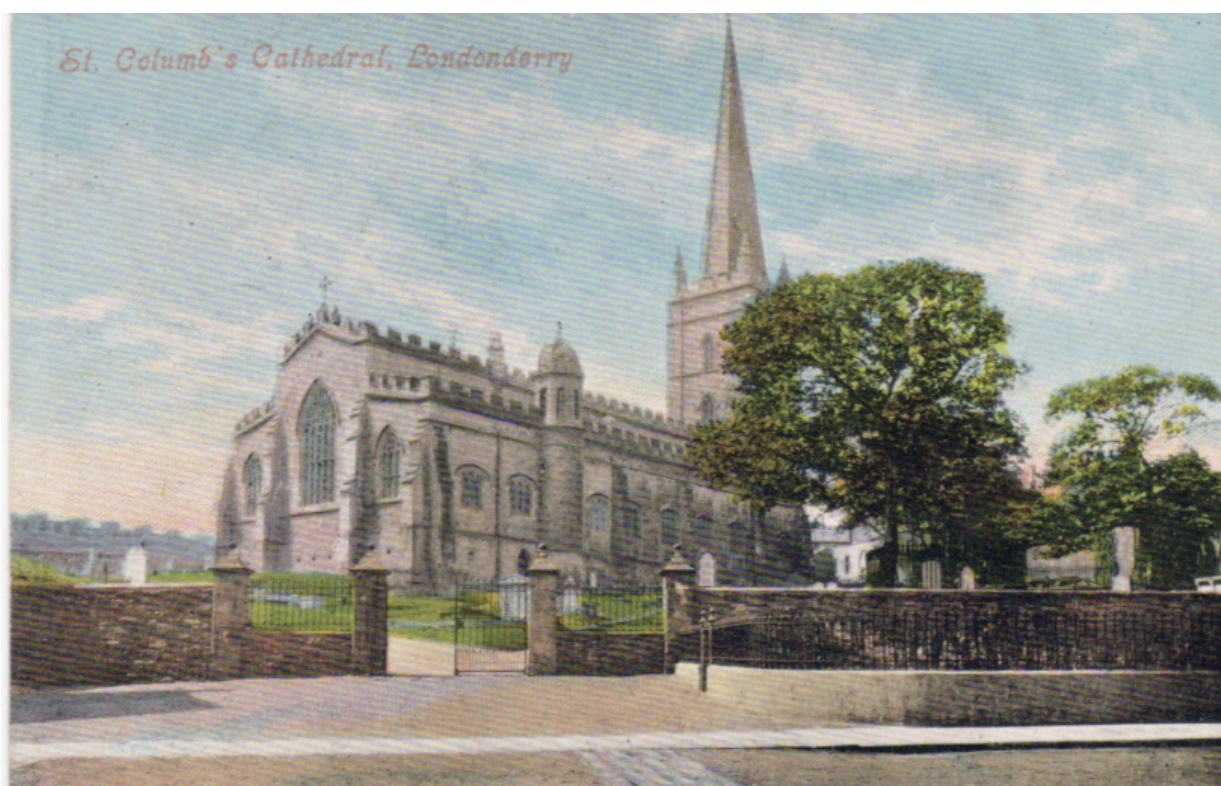
St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard dated 1906



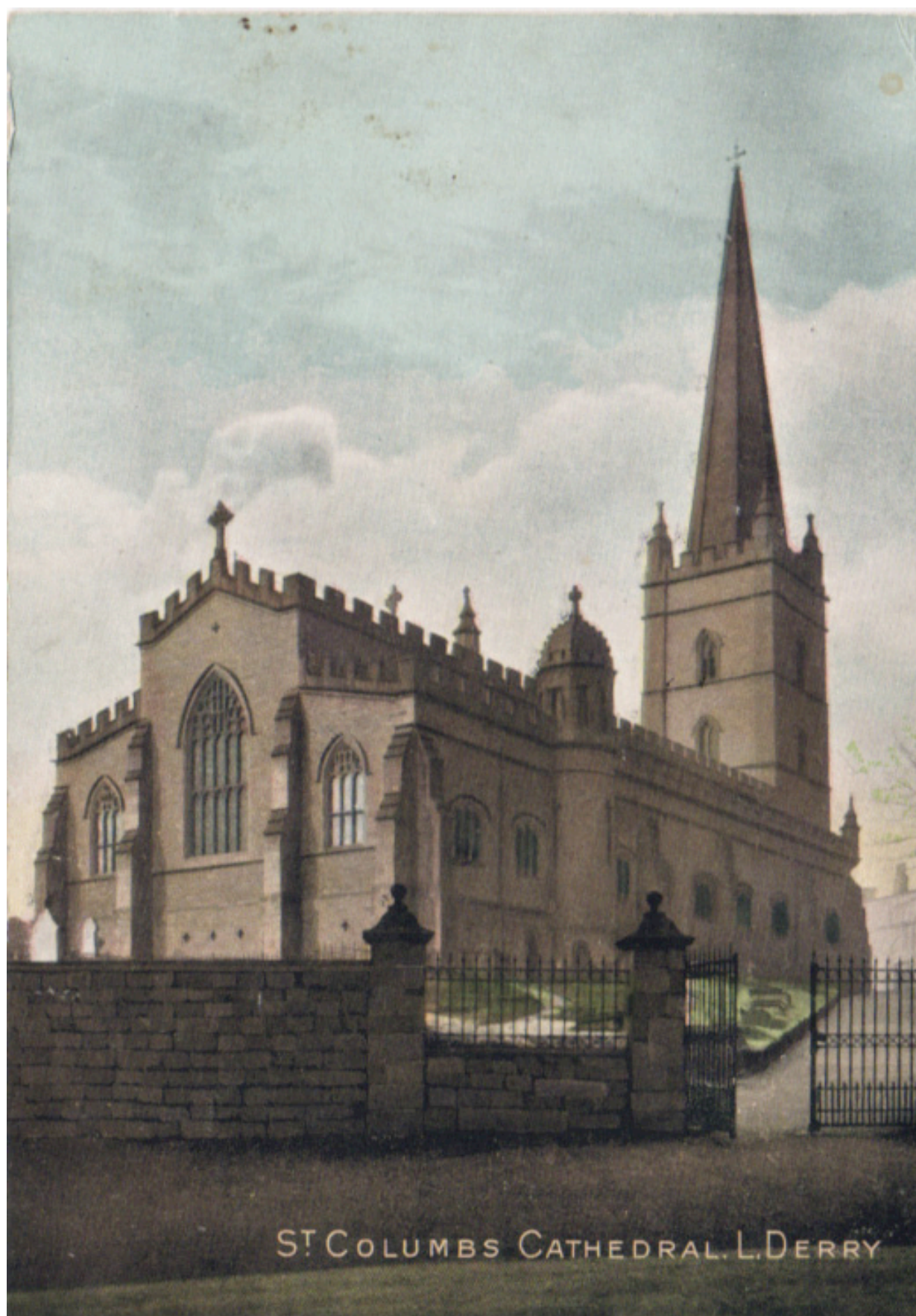
St Columb's Cathedral nave and chancel, postcard before 1910



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard dated 1919



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard date unknown



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard date unknown



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard dated 1921



St Columb's Cathedral from Pump Street, postcard dated 1960

