

Vaults at St.Etienne, Auxerre

Phase 2: 1220s

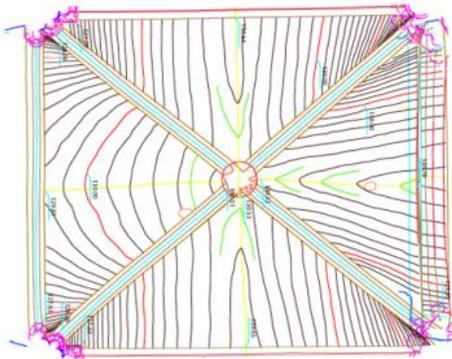
Bays 8S, 9S, 10S, 11S

Bays 8N, 9N, 10N, 11N

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Vaulting Phase 2 includes the side aisle vaults of the four straight bays of the chevet. This group of vaults is significantly different from its ambulatory vault neighbors of Phase 1. The most notable difference is that their inner voutains are ramped upward to meet the summits of the choir arcade, which are higher than the summits of the outer aisle walls. Therefore, the highest point in each of these eight vaults is the point where the inner voutain meets the main arcade arch. However, there is variety; the highest point in bays 11N, 11S, 10S, 9S and 8S is 15-20 cm lower than those in bays 10N, 9N and 8N, which may point to a construction sub-group.

Vault 10S, a typical chevet aisle vault in phase 2 (S-N, ramped voutain on right).



I have argued elsewhere¹ that these vaults were ramped toward the interior as part of a search for greater height in the elevation during a second campaign of construction in the chevet. These vaults are not terribly different from the ambulatory vaults, except for the ramping on the inner voutain. On the exterior of each vault there are round-headed wall arches, as in the ambulatory. Thus the summits of the exterior voutain are noticeably lower than the rest of the vault. These exterior voutains have the most consistent profiles of any in the chevet program.

Thus, the chevet aisle vaults fall into two phases in the 1220s; ambulatory and axial chapel first, and straight bay vaults later, with slight changes as the program moved west and north.

A factor in the analysis of these two phases is their false-joint painting program. Because the vaults are painted, their actual masonry character is not uniformly visible. However, here and there the painted surface has been worn or washed away, permitting some discussion of masons' practices. For example, in the outer voutain of bay 8S a three course *tas-de-charge* is visible. Above this level the visible coursing is relatively regular, but not uniform in width. The crown does not include the very slim courses discussed in the section on the "normative" bay 6N, which implies that vaulting technique at the point in the 13th century was more assured than it became in the 14th century. Similar details are visible in bays 9N and 10N. The slim coursing

¹ Harry B. Titus "The Auxerre Cathedral Chevet and Burgundian Gothic Architecture," *JSAH*, XLVII, 1 (March 1988), 45-56.

does appear in the small lateral voutains in the turning bays, which because of their smaller size have a steeper pitch and narrower crowns.