

SOUTHWELL MINSTER

The Cathedral & Parish Church
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

GUILD of STEWARDS

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Saxon Churches in the British Isles . Chris Brooke

The study of pre-Conquest architecture is difficult compared with later, because it is hard to define styles: windows, doorways + arches are recognisable, but if altered later this can disguise the fabric. It is a myth that nearly every medieval church has A-S remains: only 450 so far recognised, excluding Celtic ones - tho' more are gradually coming to light. Only one standing A-S secular building: Prior's Hall, Widdington, Essex.

Most A-S building was in timber: only one such building still stands: Greensted Church, Essex (see below for details). Others lost, not only because timber less durable, but Normans brought more advanced stone-building techniques, + religious fervour to rebuild. Excavation of redundant churches shows A-S foundations + sometimes nearby Roman site. Saxons sometimes built on or near Christian chapels in villas - eg. Southwell?

Celtic Period 410-597 A.D.

Departure of Roman forces + Anglo-Saxon invasions led to Christianity being driven to N+W Britain: ∴ earliest churches in Celtic fringe.

1. 5th Cent: Ardwell Is. off Galloway
Remains of chapel + cemetery below ground level incl. Christian tombstone



name also written in Irish script.


2. 6th-7th Cent: Whithorn monastery
A-S remains under 13th cent. church. Gravestones in distinctive style, crosses formed from arcs. Also, nearby



"cave of St Ninian": natural cave with carvings + limbs inside.

• Rhins of Galloway: under Victorian cemetery, gravestones found with A + Ω, XP. carved on them.

nr. Annan: magnificent Ruthwell Cross

3. 7th-8th cent: Dingle: drystone beehive cell: -  Skellaig Michael + other sites in Inner Hebrides + Orkneys.

Anglo-Saxon Period c. 597 - 1066 A.D.

1. Timber: Greensted, Essex

Split oak logs used for nave walls.

Removed + replaced, on new foundation, in 19th cent.



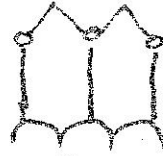
2. Stone: Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts: characteristic very high nave + short chancel. Originally monastic building with 2 storeys?

Barton-on-Humber

Tower with 3 storeys, 3 styles of window:

Characteristic large stone quoins at corners; pilaster strips ornamental, not functional, imitating timber work.

Large heavy stones going right thro' thickness of wall.



Triangular arch of doorway, Barrel-shaped shaft:



- circa 1040



- 9th cent.



- earliest

Excavation showed 2 apses.

Escoub, Co. Durham: short, thin, but very tall: originally 2 storeys?

2 small windows with single stone heads:



Also typical long/short quoins: →



Jarrow: (Bede's monastery church) Present church a mish-mash of styles, but slim tower A-S, also chancel walls. Earlier church had glass windows.

Monkwearmouth: 8th cent. tower originally a 2-storey porch. Heightened 10th.

Heysham, Lancs: single stone window head: -

Padstow, Essex: early 11th cent. doorway with original door.

St. Gregory's Minster, Kirkdale, N. Yks: 10th cent. church dated by inscription on A-S sundial, mentioning King Edward + Earl Tosti.

quoins: →



Jeddington, Northants: Norman arcade cut thro' A-S window.

Bacholm, Lincs: A-S doorway next to later door + porch.

Brixworth, Northants: Almost entire church dates from 7th-8th cent. except top of tower + spire. Portico chapels instead of aisles; ring-crypt for relics round apse but of only 5 such surviving; triple window: →

A-S spiral staircase, built of rubble with steps inserted.



Repton, Derbys: ring-crypt for St. Wystan's tomb (very elaborate) made from earlier royal mausoleum.

Hough-on-the-Hill, Lincs (nr. Newark): round tower with staircase attached to 13th cent. tower, has pothole + other shaped windows, each made from single stone. Staircase of different construction from Norman ones.

Broughton-on-Humber side similar; also round tower in E. Anglia.

Other churches with A-S parts:

Notts: Culton-in-Lindrick - A-S tower; Norman doorway moved there 1835!

East Bridgford: excavation evidence only (not now visible)

Farndon: doorway 1050, + contemp. herringbone masonry.

Averham: A-S tower, + A-S doorway (blocked up) in ringing chamber.

Lincs: Corringham nr. Gainsborough; Elentworth; Marlton; + Stow (v. fine)

Leics: Breedon-on-the-Hill: carvings only, v. interesting.

Yorks: Bardsey + Leasham nr. Leeds; Hovingham nr. York.

N.B. All these churches were made with very primitive tools.

Authorities: Charles Rickman, devised name for church architecture styles, + first identified many A-S churches.

Harold Taylor, leading light in A-S studies.