

RING-GIVERS AND ROMANS:
THE CULTURAL ROOTS OF ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

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By

Catherine E. Hundley, B.A.

Georgetown University
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Catherine E. Hundley, B.A.

Mentor: Stefan Zimmers, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

For at least two hundred years, scholars have debated the architectural influences affecting Anglo-Saxon churches. By recognizing the presence of continental building elements, critics often dismissed pre-Conquest churches as inferior imitations of Roman or Carolingian design. Architectural historians seldom acknowledged potential insular influences on minster architecture, while the integrated culture of Germanic British Christians has never been adequately tied to the architecture of the Anglo-Saxon church. Yet, it is this syncretistic culture that enabled the distinctive design of pre-Conquest churches. This thesis will place Anglo-Saxon church architecture within its broader cultural context.

Evidence for this synthesis was gleaned through site visits to selected Anglo-Saxon churches in southern England, in concert with analysis of surviving decorative arts, literature, and primary source texts. Where appropriate, select secondary sources are also included. The nine churches profiled in this thesis display a variety of floor plans, building materials, and decorative arts, yet they share the cultural aesthetic of localized reinterpretation. Although primary source texts were consulted, few surviving documents are linked to standing churches. This dearth of written material heightens the importance

of the buildings themselves as primary source “documents,” and fuller understanding of these churches will significantly advance the study of Anglo-Saxon religious and cultural history.

These buildings are expressions of a culture that combined Germanic, continental, and insular influences to create a distinctive religious life and architecture. More importantly, no two are exactly alike. Although surviving churches of the Anglo-Saxon era employ a common architectural vocabulary, each church used established elements to create a local architectural expression. This independence is consistent with the decentralized nature of the Anglo-Saxon political and ecclesiastical landscape.

By understanding the endless variations of form within a common architectural vocabulary, it is possible to understand the Anglo-Saxon church as an institution at once in dialogue with the larger Christian world yet focused on its local mission. Reading each building in concert with the literature, political history, and monastic discourse of the era does much to illuminate the broader understanding of the Anglo-Saxon era.

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A thesis is necessarily the product of many conversations, and it is my pleasure to acknowledge those who helped to hone my understanding of Anglo-Saxon churches. First, I must gratefully acknowledge my advisor, Stefan Zimmers, for introducing me to the world of pre-Conquest England. Although I entered the graduate program with the intention of writing a thesis on English Gothic churches, I began to wonder what earlier, perhaps more authentically “English” architectural representations might look like. In discovering that I truly enjoyed the company of the Anglo-Saxons, I began to investigate surviving churches as a way to better understand pre-Conquest culture. The synthesis of architectural, liturgical, political, and cultural influences proved to be a mammoth undertaking, and Dr. Zimmers' patience and encouragement have been instrumental in helping to narrow my focus. Thanks also to my Georgetown instructors Jennifer Paxton, Kelley Wickham-Crowley, and Elizabeth Lipsmeyer for providing a solid grounding in monasticism, pre-Conquest material culture and literature, and sacred architecture, respectively.

The generosity with which the scholarly community has welcomed me is both humbling and encouraging. The seeds of this thesis were sown over the course of two winters in conversation with Esther de Waal at the Cathedral College in Washington, D.C., with further encouragement provided at the end of my site visits. Esther's enthusiasm for sorting through endless questions ranged from early discussions of English Gothic to my fascination with the tenth-century Benedictine reform. Our

kaleidoscopic conversations laid the groundwork for this thesis. Also, special thanks to David Parsons and Michael Hare for sharing unpublished drafts of forthcoming work; to Sheila Bonde for important bibliographic suggestions; and to John Blair for taking the time to confirm or correct my assumptions about the potential minster identity of each profiled church. Thanks, too, to Robin Fleming and colleagues at the 28th International Conference of the Charles Homer Haskins Society for their comments on my paper, “Architecture of Reform: Deerhurst Priory in the Tenth Century.” The paper relied upon research conducted in the course of this thesis, and allowed me to explore the importance accurate building chronology plays in the broader understanding of Anglo-Saxon religious and cultural history.

It is impossible to fully understand the construction phases of these ancient churches without seeing them in person. A brief research trip in September 2009 provided the opportunity to explore the nine churches profiled in this paper. These site visits were greatly enhanced by the church wardens, local historians, and church archivists who so graciously shared their knowledge. Thanks to Rosemary Robinson at All Saints, Wing; Sylvia Woodhead at All Saints, Brixworth; Gerald Sandwell at St. Nicholas, Worth; Joan Langhorne at Holy Trinity, Bosham; Paul Harbord at St. Nicholas, Boarhunt; Tony Light and Gerald Ponting at St. Mary's, Breamore; and Michael Hare at St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Their knowledge of and enthusiasm for these wonderful structures made each visit richly productive.

Most of all, this paper would not have been possible without the support of my

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After subjecting Dr. Zimmers to hundreds of draft pages over the course of the last nine months, I feel that I have only begun to explore the topic of Anglo-Saxon architectural distinctives. This paper feels very much like an interim report, with the promise of future discoveries in the years to come. My thanks to the many colleagues who have helped me to see this far; it goes without saying that I take full responsibility for any errors that may remain.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AAS</i>	<i>Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons</i>
<i>ASA</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Architecture</i>
<i>CASS</i>	<i>The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society</i>
<i>EHD</i>	<i>English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042</i>
<i>ERA</i>	<i>English Romanesque Architecture</i>
<i>GASC</i>	<i>Greater Anglo-Saxon Churches</i>
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
<i>ML</i>	<i>Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England</i>

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Architectural historians have debated the age, use, and architectural influences of the standing churches of pre-Conquest England for more than two centuries. Scholars have credited the churches' design origins to the Romans, Gauls, and Carolingian Franks, with only an occasional acknowledgement of Germanic influences. The stone churches of pre-Conquest England are markedly different from those of their continental contemporaries and Norman successors, yet generations of historians have viewed these differences as inferior attempts to replicate continental forms. While few would argue that the building materials and decorative arts of each church are informed by local influences, it is also clear that the overall composition of each building is a unique architectural statement. The varied design of the surviving churches has hardly escaped notice, yet the reasons for this eclecticism have received little study. More significant than the origin of a particular architectural detail is the way in which the elements combine to create an aesthetic that is unique to each Anglo-Saxon church.¹ This independence of design is consistent with the decentralized nature of the pre-Conquest church, which combined Germanic culture with Roman faith. As Germanic nobles owed allegiance first to their local lord, the church was first and foremost a local institution. As

1. Terms such as a “Anglo-Saxon,” “English,” and “Germanic” can be problematic, but alternative terms obfuscate rather than clarify the discussion. Following the historically accepted use of the terms, “Germanic” here refers to the culture of northern European migrants to Britain before their widespread conversion to Christianity. Celtic Britons likely lived together with these new arrivals throughout the island, though their numbers and locations are matters of debate. The term “Anglo-Saxon” describes the dominant people and culture of south and east Britain, excluding the regions of present-day Wales and Scotland. The term “English” is reserved for use when discussing people of the tenth century and later, in keeping with accepted notions of the evolution of a unified English identity.

insular artisans incorporated Byzantine and Near Eastern designs into “Germanic” portable objects,² pre-Conquest builders combined elements of continental church architecture and Germanic aesthetics to create an architectural statement unique to pre-Conquest Britain.

While charters, saints' *vitae*, and contemporary correspondence offer descriptions of lost pre-Conquest churches, a standing church may serve as a settlement's only surviving primary source “document” of the era. As such, it can offer valuable insight into patterns of noble or royal patronage, artistic trends, and religious use. The confirmation of a church's construction date, therefore, enables the analysis of a building within its fuller liturgical, political, and cultural context.³ Though certain common aesthetics prevailed throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, the use of the building may have changed over time. While a large church from the early pre-Conquest era likely functioned as a monastic minster, a similar church of a later period could have been peopled with secular clerks or even with a heretofore unidentified reform community. Narrowing a building's date range can help to fill gaps in the written historical record, as well as correct or challenge long-held assumptions regarding the site's history. An accurate building chronology is perhaps the most vital component of a church's history, and the ramifications can be significant for scholars across disciplines.

2. Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 125.

3. Richard Gem, “A B C: How Should We Periodize Anglo-Saxon Architecture?” in *Studies in English Pre-Romanesque and Romanesque Architecture, Vol. 1* (London: The Pindar Press, [2004]), 18. Gem is a particularly vocal proponent of multidisciplinary inquiry, though he joins David Parsons, Michael Hare, John Blair, Sarah Foot, and other contemporaries in synthesizing limited data across disciplines in order to obtain a clearer history of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Unfortunately, the best-preserved churches of this era are seldom those with the best documentary evidence. Since Thomas Rickman first identified surviving pre-Conquest churches in the early nineteenth century, scholars have attempted to assign estimated construction dates to each building.⁴ These date ranges have been a primary focus of Anglo-Saxon church scholarship, and these classifications have informed assumptions about each categorized building. While Baldwin Brown and Harold and Joan Taylor suggested culturally neutral periodization (“Period A, B, C”), Alfred Clapham chose to class date ranges according to the political sphere. His “Period of the Heptarchy I” (c. 600-700) and “Period of the Heptarchy II” (700-850) are tied to the political situation in Anglo-Saxon England, yet his “Carolingian” period (850-1066) implies a cultural hegemony over ecclesiastical architecture that simply did not exist.⁵ His choice of historical markers is an unfortunate reinforcement of perceived Carolingian supremacy.

It is clear that the architecture of the Anglo-Saxon church is the product of a unique culture, yet this fact has remained unacknowledged by most historians. Instead, continental antecedents have been sought for each building element and religious tradition, to the point of excluding the mere possibility of Anglo-Saxon innovation. Yet, extant pre-Conquest churches attest to a synthesis of continental and Germanic styles

4. Eric Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 8; Thomas Rickman, with additional text by John Henry Parker, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture from the Conquest to the Reformation*, 6th ed. (Oxford: John Henry and James Parker, 1862), 60-61.

5. Gem, “A B C,” 22, table 1.

unlike anything outside of England. The cultural independence displayed in the religious life, architecture, and decorative arts, of the Anglo-Saxons is best observed in the surviving stone churches of southern England.

Of more than 400 pre-Conquest churches identified by Harold and Joan Taylor, more than two dozen are largely intact Anglo-Saxon structures. The majority of these survivals can be found in southern England, perhaps due to their later construction date, isolated location, or both. Case studies of the churches of Brixworth, Wing, Deerhurst, Worth, Breamore, Bosham, Boarhunt, and Bradford-on-Avon offer proof of the eclectic nature of Anglo-Saxon church design. These churches were chosen for their high level of preservation, as described by Harold and Joan Taylor; for their location in the former Wessex and Mercia; and for their diversity of form within an Anglo-Saxon context.⁶

Though they employ some common building forms, these nine churches are each unique. Defining a typical Anglo-Saxon church is challenging, in part due to the unknown number of lost churches, but primarily due to the obvious stylistic differences exhibited by neighboring, roughly contemporaneous structures. The sites of Bosham and Boarhunt are just over sixteen miles apart, yet they lack commonalities in floor plan, building materials, or decorative scheme: the original use of exterior render and interior plaster seem to be their only shared features.⁷ The remaining West Saxon sites profiled

6. H.M. and Joan Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965-78). Level of preservation was determined by analyzing the Taylors' text descriptions and assigning numerical values to each church based upon its amount of extant fabric. The nine best-preserved churches in southern England were selected for site visits in September 2009.

7. It is possible that Bosham's current Norman nave replaced key Anglo-Saxon features, though there is little in the surviving tower, west wall, or chancel corners to suggest a consistent regional style.

below present a unique combination of plan, materials and decoration, while the three Mercian sites at Brixworth, Deerhurst, and Wing share some common elements. This small sample serves as a microcosm of early English eclecticism.

This lack of regularity in building styles is a direct result of the confident syncretism of the Anglo-Saxons. Like other Germanic peoples, the Angles, Saxons and Jutes adopted Roman stone building methods following their conversion to Christianity. Bede suggests a relationship between orthodox religious fervor and the construction of a proper stone church,⁸ but the English interpretation of the Roman stone church was unique. While the Visigoths of Ravenna adopted stone construction, the form was still recognizably Roman.⁹ The Germanic peoples of Britain, however, approached masonry construction in a wholly unique way. In addition to localized building methods, the Anglo-Saxons incorporated continental building forms on an individualized basis. The stone churches of pre-Conquest England were neither a direct importation nor imitation of Roman styles, but a deconstruction and re-imagining of building forms. The Anglo-Saxons were certainly not the first to employ such methods, but their readiness to integrate the best practices of others with their own cultural norms resulted in a distinctive style.¹⁰

8. Bede, *A History of the English Church and People*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, revised by R.E. Latham (1955; repr., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books: 1978), II.14.

9. Charles McClendon, *The Origins of Medieval Architecture: Building in Europe, A.D. 600-900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 35.

10. Gem, "Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church, 735 to 870: From Archbishop Egberht to Archbishop Ceolnoth," in *Studies*, 104. In his discussion of the church at Repton, Gem notes that "established forms constituted a matrix into which new ideas might be absorbed without overwhelming them." Gem articulates the contributions of Anglo-Saxon builders while acknowledging varied influences.

The very nature of Anglo-Saxon culture informed its adoption of Christianity, which in turn affected the architectural expression of the new faith. Christianization of the island occurred region by region, with little guarantee that the succeeding generation would embrace the faith. In the century after Augustine's arrival, the number of Christian preachers was small compared with the number of potential converts. In this environment, priests and monks worked together to spread the Gospel, eventually joined by laity to minister to the physical needs of their neighbors.¹¹ The nerve-center of this Christian community was the minster, a unique type of mission-church staffed by monks and priests. The minster's outward focus declined by the late eighth century, as Anglo-Saxon aristocrats peopled the monasteries and claimed authority over the community's revenues and daily life.¹² This lay interference and aristocratic laxity were topics of the 747 Council of *Clofesho* and a source of vexation for Bede in the last years of his life.¹³ Yet, the very aristocratic practices described by the Council of *Clofesho* indicate the acceptance of some form of Christianity into Anglo-Saxon society.¹⁴

While Augustine's monks introduced a Roman form of regular life to the island,

11. Sarah Foot, *Monastic Life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4-6.

12. John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 100, 134; Foot, *ML*, 240.

13. Dorothy Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500 –1042* (London: E. Methuen, 1979), 85; Bede, "An Epistle to Bishop Egbert" in *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede* vol. 1, trans. J.A. Giles (London: J. Bohn, 1843), 125-131.

14. Patrick Wormald, "Bede, Beowulf and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy," in *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England: Papers in Honour of the 1300th Anniversary of the Birth of Bede, Given at Cornell University in 1973 and 1974*, ed. Robert T. Farrell (London: British Archaeological Reports, 1978), 57. Wormald's discussion of aristocratic life in the minster emphasizes that Anglo-Saxon culture did not disappear with the conversion to Christianity.

the adoption of a new faith did not require the abandonment of insular Germanic culture. The fealty owed to one's thegn was analogous to the loyalty a monk felt toward his abbot; this localized allegiance, similar to traditional political structures, allowed each minster to operate independently.¹⁵ While occasional federations or twinned monasteries did exist, Celtic-style monastic franchises did not take root among the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁶ This independence was seen in the twinned monasteries of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow. Benedict Biscop, held up by Bede as the paragon of monastic leadership, did not subscribe exclusively to the Rule of Benedict or indeed to any single rule. Benedict Biscop's travels enabled him to observe best practices from seventeen different monasteries, and these observations formed the basis of his *regula mixta*.¹⁷ Though such a mixed rule was practiced by monasteries on the continent until the time of Charlemagne, Anglo-Saxon monks persisted in their localized regularity until at least the time of the tenth-century reform movement.¹⁸

The unique design of Anglo-Saxon stone churches attests to this syncretistic attitude toward religious practice. While Anglo-Saxon monks and nuns chose elements of daily life best suited to their own communities, Anglo-Saxon builders selected

15. Blair, *CASS*, 81.

16. Foot, *ML*, 258, 263. Wilfrid's *parochia* were an unusual example of separate English houses looking to a common founder for continued leadership.

17. Bede, "The Lives of the Holy Abbots of Weremouth [sic] and Jarrow," in *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, trans. J.A. Giles, Everyman's Library 479, (London: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1910), repr. Internet Medieval Sourcebook (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/bede-jarrow.html>), accessed November 15, 2009.

18. Foot, *ML*, 5.

architectural elements to meet the needs of each congregation. Though the Christian faith and stone building techniques were both introduced to the Anglo-Saxons via the Roman world, the early English did not adopt either tradition wholesale. This independence of religious thought and building practice evidences a sophistication seldom credited by architectural historians.

Many components of Anglo-Saxon architecture can be traced to continental origins, causing historians to credit Roman, Gaulish, and Carolingian builders with early English church design. Due to the lack of Anglo-Saxon familiarity with masonry construction, the first masons to construct churches in England after Augustine's arrival were almost certainly from the continent.¹⁹ This is made obvious by the purely Roman design of the earliest churches in Kent, yet, a new style emerged within one hundred years. While Augustine's churches were recognizably Roman apsidal basilicas, Benedict Biscop's stone churches began to define an Anglo-Saxon aesthetic. Despite Bede's assertion that Benedict built “in the Roman style,”²⁰ Monkwearmouth and Jarrow had more in common with Merovingian Gaul and Anglo-Saxon timber halls.²¹ These churches led twentieth-century scholars to describe two essential styles of Anglo-Saxon

19. Fernie, *AAS*, 45.

20. Bede, “The Lives of the Holy Abbots,” [n.p.].

21. McClendon, *Origins*, 35. McClendon suggests that Benedict Biscop's churches were pure interpretations in stone of the Germanic hall, but the height of the “Northumbrian style” is also evident in the baptistry at Poitiers. Unfortunately, too little Merovingian architecture survives to make a full assessment of Gaulish influence on early Anglo-Saxon church architecture.

church design, the Northumbrian and the Kentish.²² This oversimplification neglects the presence of apsidal basilicas outside Kent or the appearance of high-walled churches throughout England. More significantly, the desire to name two broad models overlooks the essential diversity of Anglo-Saxon church buildings. It is the synthesis of varied elements, unique to each church, that perhaps best defines an English ecclesiastical structure of the pre-Conquest era.

Due to the small number of fully extant structures and the diversity of appearance among these survivors, it can be difficult to define an Anglo-Saxon architectural style. Pre-Conquest churches are usually built of salvaged building stone, brick, and rubble, though the church at Bradford-on-Avon offers a rare example of ashlar construction. Floor plans can range from small two-celled churches to apsidal basilicas. *Porticus* are typical features, occupying areas reserved for side aisles, transepts, or apsidioles on continental church plans.²³ Towers, when present, are usually sited in the middle of the west front, though axial towers were also used; western towers often feature rooms overlooking the nave, though this feature is not universal. Some churches feature crypts, though this is the exception rather than the rule. Many Anglo-Saxon churches include pilaster strips and string courses with occasional blind arcading, though architectural sculpture is used sparingly. Windows and arched openings are round-headed, with

22. E.A. Fisher, *An Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Architecture and Sculpture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1959), 31.

23. The untranslated term, *porticus*, most often refers to a side-chapel flanking the nave, choir, or apse of a church. These discreet rooms may have been used as burial chapels, sacristies, or places for private prayer. The term can also be used to describe a western annex, which has led to occasional translation of the word as “porch.” When describing selected churches, the most commonly used term is employed in order to maintain consistency with other studies.

chancel arches tending to run to extreme width or extreme narrowness; doors are sometimes remarkably tall and narrow. Exterior walls were originally rendered, while interior walls were plastered and likely featured a decorative paint scheme.²⁴ The nine churches profiled below each contain some of these components, and it is this lack of uniformity within a common vocabulary that makes Anglo-Saxon churches distinct.

It is perhaps the variation itself that caused historians to struggle to define an Anglo-Saxon architectural aesthetic. Harold and Joan Taylor, for example, loosely defined an Anglo-Saxon feature as one that does not appear in any known Norman building, even if the church was constructed after 1066.²⁵ Though a pre-Conquest church is obviously different in appearance from its Norman successors and from its continental contemporaries, the potential defining characteristics of an Anglo-Saxon church are varied. The diversity of form among surviving pre-Conquest churches has led to centuries of mis-identification of potential Anglo-Saxon churches, coupled with a misunderstanding of their design origins.

Writing in the early nineteenth century, Thomas Rickman identified twenty churches thought to be built before 1000, though the potential survival of such ancient structures was initially met with some skepticism.²⁶ G. Baldwin Brown published the first

24. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA*, I:2, 4, 8-12; Fisher, *Introduction*, 36; Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate*, 60-61.

25. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* I:2. The Taylors emphasize that Anglo-Saxon building did not cease all at once, but continued at least into the later eleventh century.

26. Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate*, 60-61. Pre-Conquest churches were often not identified as such until Victorian restorers had begun the work of reordering church interiors. Revised editions of the text continued to be published long after Rickman's death, with the additions of newly identified Anglo-Saxon churches included in each revision.

comprehensive catalogue of Anglo-Saxon churches in 1903, describing over 200 structures with extant Anglo-Saxon fabric. Brown's compilation was an important contribution, not only for the number of profiled buildings but for his deeper understanding of the context from which these structures emerged. Brown remarked, "To inventory and label so many hundred specimens of Saxon masonry as if they were postage stamps or beetles is not the proper way to deal with them. They have a human and historical as well as an architectural value, and this is not to be measured by the number of stones that make them up."²⁷ Brown's contextual method marked a significant shift in the approach to Anglo-Saxon church studies, though he was unwilling to credit insular builders with any significant degree of innovation.²⁸

This prejudice toward full importation of continental forms was also a strong theme in Alfred Clapham's work. Writing in 1930, Clapham boldly asserted, "We should not be far wrong in assuming that ecclesiastical art and architecture in England from the ninth century to the eve of the Conquest was a direct offshoot of the Carolingian stem."²⁹ Architectural historians of the early twentieth century seemed more than willing to ascribe creative solutions to the Carolingians, while assuming that Anglo-Saxon builders

27. G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England: Ecclesiastical Architecture in England from the Conversion of the Saxons to the Norman Conquest* (London: John Murray, 1903), 73.

28. Ibid., 45 and 275-277. Brown assumed that key architectural features such as pilaster strips, blind arcading, double-splayed windows, and western towers came directly from Germany, though he admitted the possibility that some details may have evolved simultaneously among German and English builders.

29. Alfred Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture Before the Conquest*, 77. The term "Romanesque" was coined by nineteenth-century scholars to describe pre-Gothic design, and Clapham's use of the word to describe Anglo-Saxon structures seems misplaced today. Clapham's volume is a compact and informative work, superseded now by more recent discoveries, but marred by a blindness to English innovation

were mere consumers of church building ideas. These assumptions not only denied the potential of Anglo-Saxon creativity, they seemingly ignored the possibility that early Christian forms could be imported from Rome to England, bypassing France and Germany altogether.

E.A. Fisher and Harold and Joan Taylor finally recognized the uniqueness of Anglo-Saxon design in the middle of the last century.³⁰ The Taylors' three-volume masterwork, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, remains the most comprehensive study of pre-Conquest churches to date. The Taylors' contribution in describing over 400 buildings with extant Anglo-Saxon fabric cannot be overstated. Though subsequent archaeological investigations³¹ have superseded some of their work, the corpus remains the most complete resource for the study of Anglo-Saxon church architecture. The Taylors were very deliberate in presenting evidence before offering conclusions, and their assessment of broader architectural implications was largely deferred until their third volume. Here, Harold Taylor stakes his claim for Anglo-Saxon architectural innovation:

It is my firm belief that certain techniques were developed in England for logical reasons associated with ease of building and strength of the fabric. This in no way precludes the possibility that they were also developed elsewhere, perhaps even at much the same time; but, until there is much more reliable evidence than at present both in England and abroad about the dates of certain crucial buildings, I believe it is a mistake to assume as a sort of general principle that the passage of ideas was always from the continent to England and that the date of our earliest

30. Fisher, *Introduction*, 23. Writing six years before the publication of the Taylors' first volume, Fisher argued that "Saxon architecture evolved into a single national style" distinct from European design, though few scholars rallied to his side.

31. Many of which Harold Taylor led or participated in.

example must be fixed by allowing an appropriate time for the new development to be brought here from abroad.³²

The uniqueness of Anglo-Saxon architecture seems self-evident, though Taylor's statement ran against the grain of contemporary scholarship. Architectural ideas were certainly shared throughout Europe, but the assumption of England's role as a consumer of culture rather than a participant in cultural dialogue prejudiced the analysis of Anglo-Saxon building design for generations. Fisher and the Taylors called this assumption into question; this prejudice has been further eroded by the recent writings of Richard Gem.

While Taylor and Fisher both credited the Anglo-Saxons with architectural innovation, Gem presents the most nuanced case for Anglo-Saxon creativity within the context of cross-cultural dialogue. While readily admitting the influence of Roman and Carolingian motifs, he suggests that Anglo-Saxons may also have influenced Carolingian design.³³ Gem views Anglo-Saxon architecture as part of a larger western Christian discourse, and he has been instrumental in advocating for a multidisciplinary investigation of churches, particularly at the intersection of architecture and liturgy.

The synthesis of architectural analysis, archaeological findings, and documentary evidence enables scholars to understand religious and secular history as two components of a cohesive culture. Archaeological treatment of pre-Conquest Britain has been largely divided between pre-Christian and post-Conversion society. This demarcation is

32. Taylor, *ASA* 3:xix. Volumes 1 and 2 appeared in 1965, shortly after Mrs. Taylor's death. Volume 3 was delayed until 1978, written under the sole authorship of Harold Taylor.

33. Gem, "A B C," 13 and 30. Gem admits that more research is needed to prove this hypothesis, but Alcuin's relationship with Charlemagne makes this type of dialogue highly likely.

encouraged by the appearance of stone churches c. 600 and the disappearance of grave goods within approximately one hundred years.³⁴ This dividing line between “pagan” and “Christian” Anglo-Saxon society not only dismisses a potentially complex religious landscape, but presumes a significant cultural shift as a result of the new faith. Patrick Wormald articulated a holistic view of the Anglo-Saxons, though his viewpoint has not been applied to the study of these unique church buildings themselves.³⁵ By seeing pre- and post-conversion Anglo-Saxon society as a unified culture, it is possible to view church buildings as the architectural equivalent of *Andreas*, one half of a cultural tradition that also included mead halls and *Beowulf*. The disproportionate survival of religious culture makes it easy to forget that the church was one component of the larger Anglo-Saxon society.

Relying upon charter evidence, monastic chroniclers, and material culture, John Blair and Sarah Foot have begun to remedy this imbalance by enabling a broader understanding of English minsters. Both writers emphasize the unique character of English minster life, as a place where monks, priests, and laity worked together to serve the spiritual and physical needs of their neighbors.³⁶ Blair pays particular attention to the role minster buildings played in shaping religious life, though he does not address architectural influences at any length. Though Foot makes excellent use of material

34. C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 4.

35. Wormald, “Bede, Beowulf,” 32-95.

36. Foot, *ML*, 6, 77, 286; Blair, *CASS*, 74, 82.

culture and the built environment in her study, she is unable to tie the unique minster community to a specialized form of architecture. Both Foot and Blair acknowledge the importance of noble involvement in minster life,³⁷ but they stop short of offering a unified theory of Anglo-Saxon culture and the ways in which it could inform minster architecture. By understanding pre-Conquest England as a place of rich religious and cultural influences filtered through a unique aesthetic sensibility, it is possible to see the Anglo-Saxon church as an institution at once in dialogue with and distinct from the larger Christian community.

This dichotomy is evident in the Anglo-Saxon builders' use of recognizable forms in unique combinations. Each of the pre-Conquest churches in southern England is unique in its appearance yet part of a loosely-defined architectural genre. Architectural historians have long noted the lack of uniformity among pre-Conquest churches, but the reasons for this variety have not been fully explored. Instead, scholars have catalogued core characteristics and traced potential origins while seemingly assuming that the lost buildings of the era held the keys to a unified theory of design. Of course, it is difficult to know if surviving buildings are representative or extraordinary, but their obvious eclecticism suggests an independence of thought among local builders. Rather than subscribing to a centrally-defined aesthetic of “proper” church design, the churches of southern England showcase diverse architectural elements. This syncretism is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon culture, as seen in its religious organization, decorative arts, and architectural design.

37. Foot, *ML*, 347-348; Blair, *CASS*, 81.

While current authors such as Gem emphasize the marriage of Anglo-Saxon style and continental influences,³⁸ little attention has been paid to the ways in which the culture of the Anglo-Saxons informed this syncretistic adoption of building styles. While scholars have long noted the architectural diversity among pre-Conquest churches, generalized statements about architectural style presume the wholesale importation of continental forms. Inventories of Anglo-Saxon architectural elements seem to assume that the small number of surviving churches are representative of selected building types, often broadly classed as Northumbrian or Kentish. Rather than assuming that each surviving church represents several buildings of similar design, it is important to view each church as a unique architectural statement within a common Anglo-Saxon aesthetic. Though some similarities may be found among surviving churches of southern Mercia, West Saxon survivals each combine established elements of church architecture in a different way. With the possible exception of simple two-cell churches, most contemporary Anglo-Saxon structures exhibit a number of design differences that are not easily traced to regional influences. The unique design of each church seems to be its identifying characteristic.

Though this study encompasses churches in the former Wessex and Mercia, the theory of localized design is applicable to churches throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Frank Stenton and John Blair have pointed out the essential cultural similarities among

38. Gem, "Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church," 57.

Germanic peoples in Britain,³⁹ and it is this cultural unity within an aesthetic of diversity that offers broad implications for these findings.

39. Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 10; Blair, *CASS*, 6, 140.

CHAPTER 2

ARCHITECTURAL, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

The localized design evident in Anglo-Saxon churches is the result of Germanic, Roman, and continental influences, mixed together in a way that is unique to the Anglo-Saxon culture. The eclectic approach to church building is expressed in the individual design of each church: though drawn from common elements, each structure is a separate architectural statement, specifically suited to the tastes and needs of the church patron and the religious community. The standing churches of southern England are excellent examples of this individualized approach, but the aesthetic was common across the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The individualized design of each church was consistent with the localized loyalties of the region's inhabitants, from the monk's loyalty to his abbot to the thegn's loyalty to his king.¹ Though Germanic Britons were familiar with the aesthetics of the broader continental world, continental styles did not completely dominate the newly Christianized society. The Germanic arrivals to Britain possessed a rich material culture with a demonstrated appreciation for beautiful design, combined with a willingness to adopt and adapt new ideas to best suit their needs. The sophisticated interpretation of the essential architectural vocabulary of the western church resulted in the creation of a unique insular style.

While Anglo-Saxon stone churches represented the first masonry structures built

1. Blair, *CASS*, 80. Blair sees local loyalties and an early “local church,” though he does not tie this independence to the uniqueness of each church building.

in Britain for centuries, they were neither the inaugural example of stone construction nor the first houses of Christian worship to appear on the island. Roman colonizers brought masonry construction to Britain in the first century, A.D., while evidence of Christian adherents in Britain dates to at least the second century.² The widespread existence of Roman-built stone churches in Britain is a matter of debate, though strong archaeological evidence indicates the presence if not the proliferation of such buildings. Roman ruins provided the building blocks of churches in Britain from the time of Augustine through the Conquest, and it is possible that stone from Romano-British churches were used in later construction. The architectural influence of such structures on Anglo-Saxon churches, however, seems to be slight.³

A handful of potential Romano-British church sites have been excavated, but only two offer the possibility of a continuous worship site from the Roman through Anglo-Saxon era.⁴ The church dedicated to the first British martyr, St. Alban, was still standing

2. James Campbell, "The End of Roman Britain," in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. James Campbell, Eric John, and Patrick Wormald (London: Penguin, 1991), 11; C.J. Arnold, *An Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1997), 26; Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 33 and 39. The controversy surrounding the displacement or extermination of Celtic Britons after the arrival of the Germanic tribes is beyond the scope of this paper, but I agree with Arnold that these Britons were likely absorbed by the newly dominant culture as he notes, "present but invisible." The Christian presence in Britain was not extinguished by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, but certainly suffered from attrition. Mayr-Harting blames a lack of post-Roman leadership for the church's decline.

3. Tyler Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures in Early Medieval England* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005), 131.

4. Richard Morris, *The Church in British Archaeology* (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1983), 12-14; Charles Thomas, "Recognizing Christian Origins: an Archaeological-Historical Dilemma," in *The Anglo-Saxon Church: Papers on History, Architecture and Archaeology in Honour of Dr. H.M. Taylor*, ed. L.A.S. Butler and R. K. Morris (London: Council for British Archaeology, 1986), 122; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, 82 and 125. Excavations at Silchester revealed what appear to be nave and apse footings, dated to c. 360; Icklingham boasts foundations of a rectangular and apsidal building, perhaps a church and baptistery, dated c. 350-400; and Rochester shows evidence of a late fourth or early fifth century timber building on stone footings with a hexagonal tiled structure nearby, possibly also a church and baptistery complex.

in in the town of Verulamium (*Verlamacaestir*) in Bede's day,⁵ though nothing now remains of this church.⁶ The lack of a confirmed British church on the site is particularly frustrating, because it may be the only example of a Christian church to remain in use from the Roman through the Anglo-Saxon period.⁷ The church of St. Martin, Canterbury, may also represent a partial survival of Romano-British workmanship.

Though evidence of a continuous Christian community in Kent is difficult to confirm, at least two Christians were worshipping in Canterbury when Augustine arrived in 597. As a condition of her marriage to King Æthelberht, Queen Bertha brought Bishop Liudhard with her from Francia to act as her personal chaplain. Bede notes that King Æthelberht offered an existing Canterbury structure to Queen Bertha for her personal use: “On the east side of the city stood an old church, built in honour of Saint Martin during the Roman occupation of Britain, where the Christian queen of whom I have spoken went to pray.”⁸ The existing St. Martin's church at Canterbury is an ancient structure, but the

Excavations at Caerwent, Verulamium, Flaxengate, and St. Pancras, Canterbury reveal possible Romano-British Christian structures on each site. The short list of possible continuous worship sites also includes Stone-by-Faversham, where a church was known to be built on a Roman tomb; and Lullingstone, where a villa was converted to a church, abandoned by the fifth century, then rebuilt near the ruins in the early medieval period. None of these structures still stand.

5. Bede, *HE*, I:7.

6. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA*, 2:528; Martin Biddle, “Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints in Anglo-Saxon England,” in *The Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. Butler and Morris, 16. The Taylors' investigations in the 1960's provided no evidence of this early church on the site of the extant Norman abbey, while a 1982-84 excavation revealed a Roman cemetery on the site, without evidence of a basilica. Biddle notes that this graveyard was graveled over in the fourth century, suggesting that the site became a high-traffic area such as a marketplace or saint's shrine. Both uses would be consistent with the existence of a neighboring church.

7. Bell, *Religious Reuse*, 131 and 133; Campbell, “The Lost Centuries,” in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. Campbell, John, and Wormald, 40.

8. Bede, *HE*, I:26.

building's construction date and original use are still matters of debate.⁹ With the possible exception of St. Martin's, the lack of masonry buildings in Kent makes it clear that early seventh century churches were almost certainly built by Roman masons.¹⁰ The Canterbury churches of the Augustinian mission are best understood as transitional structures, introducing Roman building techniques without substantial reinterpretations by local artisans. The creation of a distinctive church architecture could not happen without the rise of native church leadership and the acculturation of Christianity throughout the island.

The conversion of Germanic Britain was neither quick nor without setbacks, due in part to the autonomy of the island's kingdoms and the independence of each generation's ruler.¹¹ The adoption of the faith was usually in concert with adoption of masonry construction, likely under the leadership of continental masons. With the conversion of West Sussex c. 635,¹² the last of these transitional churches was built. It

9. Tim Tatton-Brown, "St. Martin's Church in the 6th and 7th Century," in *The Parish of St. Martin and St. Paul, Canterbury: Historical Essays in Memory of James Hobbs*, ed. James Ernest Hobbs and Margaret Sparks (Canterbury: Friends of St. Martin's, 1980), 13-14; Fernie, *AAS*, 38; Taylor & Taylor, *ASA*, 1:143-4; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, 124. The western portion of the chancel may date from the late third century, while the nave could date from the late sixth, seventh, or even eighth century. Alternately, the entire structure may have been built in the years following Augustine's arrival. Yet the architectural style of the building, whether built during the Roman period, renovated by the Frankish Queen Bertha, or built wholesale by Augustine's mission team, was essentially Roman.

10. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:135; Fernie, *AAS*, 45.; Bede, *HE* I:26, I:33. Bede assumes the existence of multiple standing churches in Kent, and specifically notes that Æthelberht's conversion led to a widespread church restoration program. With the questionable exception of St. Martin's, evidence of pre-Augustinian churches in Kent have not been found.

11. Bede, *HE*, II:5. Though the Kentish king Æthelberht and the king of the East Saxons, Sabert, accepted the Christian faith, their sons revived paganism after their deaths.

12. Bede, *HE* III:7.

took nearly a century after Augustine's arrival for the newly Christianized kings to become reliable church patrons, but their full commitment to the faith and its houses of worship enabled the beginning of a new architectural style.

Like the Britons before them, the Germanic settlers did not have a native tradition of building in stone. A typical Anglo-Saxon hall featured sunken posts, wood and wattle walls, and a gabled roof.¹³ Rectangular timber halls in the pre-Christian period could feature an annex at either end of the building, presaging the simple rectangular nave and square chancel design of many Anglo-Saxon stone churches.¹⁴ The new arrivals generally did not take up residence in the abandoned buildings of the Roman Empire, but allowed them to lie fallow.¹⁵ By beginning essentially anew, builders of Anglo-Saxon churches did not simply replicate the Roman churches of earlier Britain, but reinterpreted the designs in light of Germanic building traditions and cultural sensibilities.

Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop may have built the first of these “Anglo-Saxon” churches.¹⁶ Though both churchmen hired continental masons, the resulting churches

13. Arnold, *Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 39, 41, 46. In addition to the rectangular wooden hall, Anglo-Saxons constructed small sunken buildings over rectangular pits, likely used for private residences and workshops.

14. Ibid., 170 and 173. Wooden examples of this type of church have been postulated at Yeavinger, Foxley, and St. Paul-in-the-Bail, though it is difficult to certify that remaining post-holes represent a Christian two-celled church rather than a secular hall with annex.

15. Bell, *Religious Reuse*, 14. Bell argues that the Romano-British buildings were not systematically destroyed by the Germanic arrivals but began to fall into disuse before the Saxon invasions.

16. Blair, *CASS*, 95-96; McClendon, *Origins*, 66-67; Rosemary Cramp, “The Insular Tradition: An Overview,” in *The Insular Tradition*, ed. Catherine E. Karkov, Michael Ryan, and Robert T. Farrell (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 292. I agree with Cramp that Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop ushered in the beginnings of a new architectural style. She specifically notes the unusual use of Roman-style poured concrete at Monkwearmouth, coupled with a characteristically Anglo-Saxon site layout and a building scale similar to that of a Germanic hall. Wilfrid's churches stretched from

were not mere copies of continental designs. Benedict Biscop's Northumbrian churches at Monkwearmouth (dedicated 674) and Jarrow (dedicated 684-5) have been used to define a regional style,¹⁷ but their rectangular shape and large height to width ratio are evident in churches throughout Anglo-Saxon England. Bede describes the origin of these churches:

Benedict crossed the sea into Gaul, and no sooner asked than he obtained and carried back with him some masons to build him a church in the Roman style, which he had always admired ... When the work was drawing to completion, he sent messengers to Gaul to fetch makers of glass, (more properly artificers,) who were at this time unknown in Britain, that they might glaze the windows of his church, with the cloisters and dining-rooms. This was done, and they came, and not only finished the work required, but taught the English nation their handicraft, which was well adapted for enclosing the lanterns of the church, and for the vessels required for various uses. All other things necessary for the service of the church and the altar, the sacred vessels, and the vestments, because they could not be procured in England, he took especial care to buy and bring home from foreign parts.¹⁸

The resulting church was not truly in the “Roman style,”¹⁹ but something that spoke both of Merovingian Gaul and of the Anglo-Saxon hall. Though few examples of Merovingian architecture remain, the Baptistery of Saint-Jean at Poitiers could provide an imperfect analogue to the boxy height of Monkwearmouth or Jarrow. Like Anglo-Saxon England, Merovingian Gaul was ruled by Germanic Christians. Perhaps certain commonalities of

Northumbria into Mercia and Sussex: he is credited with building minsters at Reculver and Ripon and rebuilding structures at York, Hexham, Selsey, and Oundle. McClendon sees Hexham as largely a Roman transplant, but gives Wilfrid credit for improving the crypt traffic flow.

17. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:338 and I:433.

18. Bede, *Lives of the Holy Abbots*, [n.p.].

19. Richard Gem, “Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983): 4. Gem agrees that Benedict Biscop's churches did not look particularly Roman, but he points out that the “Roman manner” of building in stone was a way of acknowledging solidarity with the Roman church.

design are inevitable; Jarrow may well be the Anglo-Saxon variation of a Germanic approach to Roman architecture.²⁰

More significantly, Benedict Biscop's twin monasteries mark the beginning of a sophisticated reinterpretation of continental building styles. Benedict Biscop's Anglo upbringing, Roman travels, and early career at Canterbury make him the ideal candidate to achieve such a design. The resulting style, also seen in the height of the Mercian Deerhurst or the West Saxon Bradford-on-Avon, was widely adopted in subsequent decades, making the tall, narrow, boxy church recognizably “English” regardless of its stylistic origins. Along with the Roman basilica, these forms defined the basic architectural vocabulary of masonry churches in Anglo-Saxon England, and provided a starting point for experimentations in building design and decorative arts.

Though the majority of Anglo-Saxon decorative arts are lost, the furnishings of the early English church were a vital part of the overall aesthetic experience; any consideration of a church's original appearance must take into account its lost textiles, wall paintings, and metalwork. Due to the dearth of surviving examples, the decorative arts of the Anglo-Saxon church have received little attention, compared with earlier secular finds such as the well-known Sutton Hoo hoard and the recently discovered Staffordshire Hoard. The material culture of the conversion period was likely contemporary with a significant portion of St. Martin's church, Canterbury, and less than a century older than the church at Brixworth. While both hoards contain artifacts with

20. McClendon, *Origins*, 35, 82-83. McClendon finds that the Anglo-Saxons, however, are unique. He goes on to postulate that Jarrow and Monkwearmouth are direct descendants of Anglo-Saxon wooden halls, reinterpreted in Roman stone.

Christian imagery,²¹ the broader artistic tradition predates the arrival of Augustine's missionaries. This expression of Anglo-Saxon culture did not cease with the arrival of a new faith, but informed the aesthetic sensibilities of churchmen for centuries. Textile artists created altar cloths, vestments, wall hangings, and tapestries, the latter of which were also popular in Anglo-Saxon halls.²² Skilled metalworkers doubtless used their craft in service of the church, creating communion vessels, lamps, processional crosses, and countless object of gold, silver, and precious gems.²³ The value and portability of such objects, however, has rendered them exceedingly rare. None of the churches profiled below contain original furnishings, though such vessels were certainly part of the overall aesthetic and worship experience of the Anglo-Saxon church. The paucity of surviving examples requires a reliance upon documentary texts to help imagine the artistic riches of the Anglo-Saxon church and the role they played in the creation of a unique ecclesiastical aesthetic.

Limited documentary evidence by Aldhelm and Alcuin provide some idea of what has been lost. Aldhelm offers a glimpse of a seventh-century West Saxon church in his *Carmina Ecclesiastica III*, a dedicatory poem composed for the Church of St. Mary “built by Bugga.” Though Bugga's identity and the location of her church are not confirmed,

21. Campbell, “Sutton Hoo,” in *The Anglo-Saxons*, 32-33; The Staffordshire Hoard, <http://www.staffordshirehoard.org.uk/> (accessed February 9, 2010).

22. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 129, 132, 141.

23. Ibid., 203-209.

Aldhelm's poem describes the monastic church of a clearly wealthy double house:²⁴

The new church has many ornaments: a golden cloth glistens with its twisted threads and forms a beautiful covering for the sacred altar. And a golden chalice covered with jewels gleams so that it seems to reflect the heavens with their bright stars; and there is a large paten made from silver ... Here glistens the metal of the Cross made from burnished gold and adorned at the same time with silver and jewels. Here too a thurible embossed on all sides hangs suspended from on high, having vaporous openings from which the Sabaeen frankincense emits ambrosia when the priests are asked to perform mass.²⁵

Though these descriptions do not enable an assessment of their style, Aldhelm's catalogue confirms the types of liturgical vessels in use in the early Anglo-Saxon church. His suspended thurible may have been similar to the ninth-century Saxon censer discovered at North Elmham in 1786, now in the possession of the British Museum. This censer features three Saxon animal heads, equipped to hold hanging chains (now lost).²⁶ The continued use of animal motifs beyond Aldhelm's time indicates a strong Anglo-Saxon aesthetic that was not easily subsumed by continental Christian forms.

Writing nearly a century after Aldhelm, Alcuin's description of the altar goods in the north is less specific though seemingly from the same world. He credits King Oswald with building churches:

... providing precious vessels for the office of worship.
He arrayed the altars with silver, gold and jewels,
hanging on the hallowed walls silken tapestries
beautifully picked out with gold leaf; chandeliers

24. Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier, introduction to *Aldhelm, The Poetic Works* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985), 40.

25. Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, 49.

26. Trustees of the British Museum, "Copper-alloy censer," British Museum Web site, http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN00020/AN00020061_001_1.jpg (accessed March 31, 2010).

and lanterns he placed throughout the holy buildings,
there to represent the starry heaven²⁷

Alcuin goes on to chronicle the generosity of royal patrons and the good taste of successive bishops, including Ælberht, who “ordered a large cruet to be made in pure gold and of great weight.”²⁸ The gold cruet may have been a precursor to the extraordinary tenth-century cruet owned by the British Museum, one of the few remaining examples of Anglo-Saxon liturgical vessels.²⁹ Alcuin's litany of treasure indicates that such precious objects were commonplace to his readers, worthy of brief mention as evidence of a bishop's success or a king's generosity, but not such a curiosity as to merit detailed analysis. Not surprisingly, Alcuin's descriptions of golden churches echo the secular halls of *Beowulf*. When the Geats arrive at Heorot:

...	The warriors hastened,
marched in formation	until they could see
the gold-laced hall,	the high timbers,
most splendid building	among earth-dwellers
under the heavens –	the king lived there –
its gold-hammered roofs	shone over the land. ³⁰

The monastic scribe's allusion to majesty may be an allegory for the royal hall of the King of Kings. As God's hall should be built to rival or exceed the impressive structures

27. Alcuin, *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. Peter Godman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), lines 276-281.

28. Alcuin, *Bishops, Kings, Saints*, lines 1495-1506.

29. Trustees of the British Museum, “Jug / cruet,” British Museum Web site, http://www.britishmuseum.org/collectionimages/AN00034/AN00034864_001_1.jpg (accessed March 31, 2010).

30. *Beowulf: A Dual-Language Edition*, trans. Howell D. Chickering (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1977), lines 306-311.

of secular kings, its contents should also be superior. Significantly, Aldhelm, Alcuin, and the author of *Beowulf* spoke the same aesthetic vocabulary.³¹ Just as the tradition of heroic poetry continued to thrive after the conversion, secular decorative arts did not cease with the rise of the church; items of gold and precious gems were highly valued by kings and bishops alike.³² While the adoption of a new religion offered new forms for metalcraft, the Anglo-Saxons' underlying appreciation for beauty remained unchanged;³³ the new faith both shaped and was shaped by the people of Germanic Britain. Understanding the depth of this cultural conversation is vital to understanding the religious and architectural evolution of the English church.

The metalwork of Sutton Hoo, the poetry of *Beowulf*, and the standing churches of southern England all express important facets of a unified Anglo-Saxon culture, yet church architecture is often considered apart from the warrior past of Germanic Britain. In order to fully understand the extant structures, the church must be placed within its broader societal context. While Christians in the former Roman world inherited the systems and affinities of Rome's pre-Christian past, the non-Romanized “barbarians” of Germanic Britain maintained a distinctive world view.³⁴ This worldview informed both

31. Wormald, “Bede, *Beowulf*,” 32-95. Wormald points out the continuity between pre-Christian and Christian Anglo-Saxon culture, even though the conversion period is often viewed as a hard breaking point between two cultures.

32. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 23, 29, 30. Dodwell notes that gold was key to the aesthetic sensibilities of the Anglo-Saxons, and he successfully draws parallels between the gleaming halls of *Beowulf* and descriptions of church décor at Waltham and Winchester.

33. Blair, *CASS*, 136. I agree with Blair, who notes, “Despite the critics, minsters were opulent not because they housed particularly self-indulgent forms of the religious life, but because gold, bright colour, and intricate ornament were integral to the society which bred them.”

34. Wormald, “Bede, *Beowulf*,” 57.

the institution of the Anglo-Saxon church and its unique architecture. The chief architectural expression of this new church, the minster, incorporated evangelism, contemplation, preaching, physical care of neighbors, and the occasional noble feast.³⁵ The home of this monastic and priestly cooperation became a key expression of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

The minster was a new place in Anglo-Saxon society, both spiritually and architecturally. Its stone or brick building materials set it apart in a landscape of wooden structures, and its varied offerings required the building to perform multiple functions.³⁶ By adapting the Roman religion and building styles to fit local sensibilities, English monks, nuns and priests helped insure the longevity of the faith introduced by Augustine. Further success was assured by the absorption of Roman religious traditions by the Germanic aristocracy.³⁷ Aristocratic monks were nothing new; educated members of Roman Christian society formed the backbone of the monastic movement for centuries, and they brought their cultural assumptions to their new roles in the church. For example, a monk trained in classical thought would be primed to see the value in asceticism and restraint. Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, were just as likely to value status, heroism,

35. Foot, *ML*, 240, 286, 292-318.

36. Ancillary buildings must have housed living quarters and domestic structures, though the outward-focus of the minster could also suggest the need for a hospital, alms house, or other ministry center apart from the church. Such auxiliary buildings have not been the focus of most church archaeological investigations, so their layout and complexity are largely unknown. These buildings were likely built of wood, making archaeological evidence even harder to find. For an example of a comprehensive Northumbrian excavation, see Rosemary Cramp et al, *Wearmouth and Jarrow Monastic Sites* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2005).

37. Blair, *CASS*, 5; Foot, *ML*, 240.

and a good feast.³⁸

The details of this distinctly Anglo-Saxon religious life are difficult to discern. As Sarah Foot has noted, surviving texts relating to the Anglo-Saxon church tend to focus on extremes of behavior: *vitae* chronicle the extraordinarily holy actions of the saints, while penitentials describe (or possibly simply proscribe) undesirable behavior.³⁹ Though very few service books survive, even these would offer limited assistance in understanding the culture of the minster. The day-to-day life and cultural influences of the minster were not the focus of surviving writings, and indeed the creation of such prosaic descriptions might never occur to monastic writers. Yet, this absence of written descriptions of minster culture should not be mistaken for a conformity with continental houses. Anglo-Saxon nobles certainly brought their cultural norms to the minster, and the resulting tastes of Germanic aristocracy affected the flavor of minster life throughout the Pre-Conquest era.

Aristocratic tastes were evident at the dedication of Wilfrid's stone church at Ripon, which was attended by kings, nobles and abbots. Wilfrid's biographer relates that the feast following the dedication service lasted “for three days and three nights,” during which the kings “[rejoiced] amid all their people, showing magnanimity towards their enemies and humility towards the servants of God.”⁴⁰ Joyous celebration in the form of a three-day feast was seemingly not in conflict with the norms of the Anglo-Saxon church, but a perfect confluence of sacred and secular observance. As the King of Kings and

38. Wormald, “Bede, Beowulf,” 67.

39. Foot, *ML*, 7.

40. Eddi, “Life of St. Wilfrid,” *EHD*, 754.

chief ring-giver, God would logically be a generous host. Eating and drinking in God's presence, in God's house, was perhaps a way for His followers to show fealty and appreciation. If this enthusiastic display of loyalty led to overindulgence, surviving texts of the Anglo-Saxon period offer few censures.

The otherwise staid Archbishop Theodore did not criticize this cultural norm in his comprehensive penitentials. Theodore was surprisingly tolerant of drunkenness among monks as a result of feasting, advising:

If [the offense is] due to weakness or because he has been a long time abstinent and is not accustomed to drink or eat much; of if it is for gladness at Christmas or Easter or for any festival of a saint, and he then has imbibed no more than is commanded by his seniors, no offense is committed. If a bishop commands it no offense is committed, unless he himself does likewise.⁴¹

Within a century, however, monastic writers lost their tolerance for overindulgence. In his letter to Egbert, Bede complains: “it is noised about concerning some bishops that they have no men of religion or continence near them; but rather such as indulge in laughter and jests, revellings, and drunkenness and other temptations of an idle life, and who rather feed their bodies with carnal food than their minds on the heavenly sacrifice.”⁴² A cultural expression of celebration became synonymous with dissipation, seemingly without regard for motivation behind the revelry. In a contemporary letter to Cuthbert, Boniface also decries drunkenness, which he says:

... is far too common in your parishes and [it is said] that some bishops not only

41. “The Penitential of Theodore,” I:4 in *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal Libri Poenitentiales and Selections from Related Documents*, trans. John T. McNeill and Helena M. Carter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), 184.

42. Bede, “An Epistle to Bishop Egbert,” 113.

do not prohibit it, but themselves drink to the point of intoxication and, by offering very large drinks to others, force them into drunkenness. There can be no doubt that this is a grave offense in any servant of God, for the canons of the fathers order a drunken bishop or priest to reform or be degraded.⁴³

Boniface goes on to claim, “This is an evil peculiar to the heathen and to our race, for neither the Franks, nor the Lombards, nor the Romans, nor the Greeks practice it.”⁴⁴

Boniface's suggestion that the Anglo-Saxons held unique claim to the sin of drunkenness is suspect, but his statement implies that his countrymen's predilection for overindulgence was well-known, if not widespread.

The sin of drunkenness seemingly came to represent all frivolities of the feast, with reform-minded individuals decrying such behavior for centuries. Yet even at the reformed Canterbury during Lanfranc's time, William of Malmesbury relates:

The monks of Canterbury, like all monks at that period, were hardly to be distinguished from lay persons, except by their reluctance to betray their chastity. They wasted time hunting with hounds; they pursued avian prey by setting raptors on them in the empty air; they straddled the back of the foaming steed, shook dice, drank deep; too choosy in their diet and too elaborate in their dress, they did not know the meaning of frugality, and refused to be sparing; and so on – you might, from the size of their staff, have thought them consuls rather than monks.⁴⁵

Over the course of more than four centuries, the essential Anglo-Saxon fondness for drinking deep and eating well had not been extinguished. It is hardly surprising to find parallels in habits of feasting and leisure between secular nobles and their minster-dwelling relatives. These pastimes seem surprising for the average monk, but the Anglo-

43. *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, trans. Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 141.

44. *Letters of Saint Boniface*, 141.

45. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum: The History of the English Bishops*, trans. Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), i.44.1.

Saxon minster-dweller came from a very different culture than his ascetic Roman or Celtic counterparts.⁴⁶ This distinctive culture made room for the sacred and the secular within the same world. Whether viewed as a holistic lifestyle or as bad monasticism, it is clear that Anglo-Saxon monks were not divorced from the larger culture.

This cultural integration caused vexation among hard-line ecclesiastics such as Alcuin, who complained:

It is surely better that Christ's bishop is more praised for his performance in church than for the pomp of his banquets. What kind of praise is it that your table is loaded so high that it can hardly be lifted and yet Christ is starving at the door? ... It is better that the poor should eat at your table than entertainers and persons of extravagant behavior. Avoid those who engage in heavy drinking, as blessed Jerome says, 'like the pit of Hell.' ... Let God's words be read at the episcopal dinner-table. It is right that a reader should be heard, not a harpist, patristic discourse, not pagan song. What has Hiniel [Ingeld] to do with Christ? The house is narrow and has no room for both.⁴⁷

Alcuin's description of this unsatisfactory scene links music, oratory, heroic tales, abundant food, and ample drink in a way that could not be distinguished from the banquets of secular lords. More importantly, Alcuin describes a society in which the sacred and the secular mingled freely. Though Alcuin clearly disapproved of such free discourse, the subjects of his exhortation seemingly lived in a unified world. The bishop “performed in church” while hosting lavish banquets; the Word of God was as well-known as the heroic tales of Ingeld. Despite Alcuin's calls to a single-minded life, the bishops and monks he describes are fully integrated into Anglo-Saxon society. Surviving

46. Foot, *ML*, 347.

47. Alcuin, “What has Ingeld to do with Christ?” trans. Donald A. Bullough, in *Beowulf: A Verse Translation: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticisms*, trans. Seamus Heaney, ed. Daniel Donoghue (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 92.

literary works and ecclesiastical documents confirm the dual nature of Anglo-Saxon church life, while the limited survival of sacred and secular material culture also hints at a balance between the two worlds. Yet, the exclusive survival of church buildings unnaturally sets these structures apart, as if they existed in a separate cultural and architectural universe. Although church buildings are often the only Anglo-Saxon “document” to survive for a particular site, these churches were certainly not built in a vacuum. In order to fully appreciate the cultural, architectural, and liturgical influences on Anglo-Saxon architecture, it is vital to understand these buildings as one expression of a unified culture.

The strength and persistence of the Anglo-Saxons' culture is evident in their assimilation of a new faith.⁴⁸ Just as they accepted a new religion without abandoning their core societal values of honor and mutual obligation, they chose the best architectural practices of their neighbors while maintaining a unique aesthetic. In this way, the Anglo-Saxon culture was not subsumed by the Roman Christian world, but the Christian faith was incorporated into the Germanic society. This attitude toward conversion could be due in part to the lack of effective Romano-British Christian ministry in the years following the Saxons' arrival on the island.⁴⁹ Societies with a persistent Roman influence, such as

48. Wormald, “Bede, Beowulf,” 57. Wormald explains, “When the aristocracies of the barbarian West became Christian, they did not, and they could not, lose their awareness of being aristocracies, and this is as true of churchmen as of laymen. If we start from this point, the abuses denounced by the Church Fathers may, legitimately, be seen as evidence, not of Christianity's failure but of one of its greatest triumphs: it had been successfully assimilated by a warrior nobility, which had no intention of abandoning its culture, or seriously changing its way of life, but which was willing to throw its traditions, customs, tastes and loyalties into the articulation of the new faith, and whose persisting 'secularity' was an important condition of the richness of early English Christian civilization.”

49. Bede, *HE*, I:22.

Gaul, may have followed a more traditional monastic practice, while the syncretistic English established a new institution that was appropriate to their own way of life.

As early English religious fused elements of clerical evangelism, monastic regularity, and aristocratic taste, the builders of the minsters and churches picked and chose selected elements to create a unique architectural whole. While early English monks and priests adopted the Christian faith, they did not adopt the Roman culture from which it was introduced. Similarly, early English church builders adopted the practice of building in stone and even adopted recognizable architectural elements, but the resulting whole was uniquely suited to Germanic Britain. While the borrowing and reinterpretation of architectural elements is not unique to the Anglo-Saxons, their results are distinctive. This lack of an easily definable style among Anglo-Saxon churches remains their most important feature.

Architectural historians have long been vexed by a seeming lack of evolution from early to late Anglo-Saxon architecture, though attempts to date such structures have been part of Anglo-Saxon church studies since the nineteenth century. While historians have long acknowledged the difficulty in dating such buildings, some have imposed a faux regionalism on certain building styles without true regard for the geographic distribution of such churches. The term “Kentish” may erroneously describe a church with a rounded apse, while the “Northumbrian” style is often linked with tall, rectangular structures. When scholars acknowledge geographic inconsistencies, they may create complex itineraries of Northumbrian or Kentish bishops in an attempt to definitively link

a building to the “correct” building style.⁵⁰ While it is possible to connect selected church foundations with particular evangelistic efforts, this attempted provenance ignores a larger issue: Anglo-Saxon churches mixed and matched building elements to suit the needs of each community and the tastes of each patron and builder. This syncretism was not confined to a particular time period or region, but became the pervasive characteristic of stone churches in Britain from the seventh through eleventh centuries. This willingness to combine seemingly disparate elements was typical of Anglo-Saxon culture. The surviving churches of the era are therefore excellent representatives of a society that was at once comfortable with God's minster and the thegn's hall, with apostles and warriors, and with the lordship of earthly and heavenly kings.

50. Clapham, *ERA*, 17; Fisher, *Introduction*, 31; Fernie, *AAS*, 57, 73.

CHAPTER 3

MERCIAN MINSTERS

The discernible patterns among Mercian architecture may be linked to the close organization of the kingdom of Mercia, as distinct from the decentralized political landscape of the West Saxons. While surviving West Saxon churches share design elements with each other and with their Mercian neighbors, a true West Saxon style is impossible to define. However, the three best-preserved church sites of the Mercian kingdom – Brixworth, Wing, and Deerhurst – share several key design similarities. Although the overall architectural expression of each church is highly individualized, these largely extant examples share the unusual distinction of a basilican plan with a polygonal apse.¹ A common plan may indicate a more centralized Mercian ecclesiastical organization than that of its West Saxon neighbor, though each church's unique assembly of architectural elements and decorative arts are entirely consistent with the eclecticism of the greater Anglo-Saxon church. Even within this potentially definitive grouping, each church shows variations in plan, materials, and decoration. For example, the naves at Brixworth and Deerhurst were originally flanked by *porticus*, now lost, while Wing likely featured continuous side aisles. Both Brixworth and Wing featured crypts, though of radically different design, and the west ends of Deerhurst and Brixworth evolved from a west porch or forebuilding to a full western tower with rooms overlooking the nave. The

1. E.A. Fisher, *The Greater Anglo-Saxon Churches: An Architectural-Historical Study* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 181. Fisher and W.H. Knowles agree that the apses of Brixworth, Wing, and Deerhurst should be considered as a group, though they are unable to discern the provenance of the design.

excavated church at Cirencester, of which nothing remains above ground, may be added to this group on account of its basilican plan and flanking *porticus*. Like Brixworth, it included an eastern ring crypt and a western forebuilding. Excavations have revealed a rounded rather than polygonal apse,² though excavations at Brixworth and Deerhurst indicate that both of these churches replaced early rounded apses with those in the polygonal style.³ The small number of surviving Mercian churches makes analysis difficult, but the survival of three major churches and the excavation of a fourth with such similar characteristics make it possible to propose a Mercian minster style that includes a basilican plan with polygonal apse, *porticus*-flanked nave, and eastern crypt. The autonomy with which Anglo-Saxon churches were designed results in an exception to every characteristic, even among this small sample, but the definition of such a template may suggest a Mercian harmony of style quite distinct from the diversity of Wessex. Yet the willingness to adopt or reject building elements, even within a potentially unified regional style, speaks to the independence of each church and its builders.

Investigations by Taylor and Taylor reveal only a dozen extant or partially extant Mercian churches thought to have been built during the time of the kingdom's

2. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 3: 981-982; Gem, "The Anglo-Saxon Church at Cirencester: A Reconstruction and Evaluation," in *Studies*, 128-142. Gem also links Brixworth, Wing, and Cirencester, suggesting that Carolingian influence may be strongest at Cirencester.

3. David Parsons, with Diana Sutherland and others, *The Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth, Northamptonshire: Survey, Excavation and Analysis* [provisional title] (Brixworth Archaeological Trust, forthcoming), section 11; Philip Rahtz and Lorna Watts, with the late Harold Taylor and Lawrence Butler, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire: Fieldwork, Excavations and Structural Analysis, 1971-1984* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1997), 190, table IX.

independence.⁴ It is impossible to determine whether the churches at Deerhurst, Brixworth, and Wing have survived because they were unusually grand, unremarkably representative, or simply incredibly lucky. They do however, suggest a regional style. While pre-Conquest polygonal apses have not been found elsewhere on the island, the rounded-apsidal churches of Kent are well known. Flanking *porticus* are an important commonality among the churches at Brixworth, Deerhurst, and Cirencester,⁵ though *porticus* became a characteristic feature of churches in Britain throughout the Anglo-Saxon era. Crypts may also be disproportionately Mercian, with four of the ten extant or excavated crypts of the Anglo-Saxon era found in this kingdom.⁶ In the absence of foundation documents, it is difficult to trace a common ancestry among Brixworth, Wing,

4. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* vol. 1-3; Malcolm Falkus and John Gillingham, eds., *Historical Atlas of Britain* (New York: Continuum, 1981), 37. This number was determined by analyzing all of the Taylors' church descriptions, sorting by modern county, then comparing these county designations against the maximum area thought to have been under Mercian control. Of this small sample, more than a third are in ruins or contain only limited sections of purported original fabric. Yet, the Taylors identified nearly two hundred churches in the former Mercia dating to c. 950-1100. It seems highly likely that at least some of these late Anglo-Saxon buildings were constructed on or near original Mercian church sites, obscuring the original floorplan and giving the mistaken impression of a late foundation. Fisher (*GASC*, 150) only acknowledges such a possibility in passing, while the Taylors do not discuss it at all. There were surely more than a dozen churches in Mercia, though this number does not take into account the few sites that have been excavated but which essentially do not remain above ground, nor churches known through documentary evidence but not yet discovered. Earlier Mercian churches could have been made of wood, or their stones could have been completely dismantled and reused in a later building, thereby obscuring any pre-Viking structures.

5. Taylor, *ASA* 3:999-1000. Taylor groups Brixworth, Canterbury, Cirencester, Jarrow, Deerhurst, Glastonbury, and Reculver as churches with "cellular areal plans," though only the Mercian churches and Reculver evidence *porticus* flanking both sides of a basilican nave. Jarrow exhibits *porticus* only on the south side, while the plans of Canterbury and Glastonbury are so complex that *porticus* are merely ingredients in a much grander scheme. The Kentish church at Reculver, now in ruins, offers an intriguing analogue to Deerhurst, though Reculver has a rounded apse. Comparison of the Reculver ruins with the extant churches of Mercia may reveal much about potential architectural distinctives and commonalities within the broader Anglo-Saxon church.

6. Taylor, *ASA* 3: 1014-1016. The square crypt of the fourth Mercian church at Repton has more in common with the rectangular crypts of the Northumbrian churches at Hexham and Ripon.

Deerhurst, and Cirencester. Their common architectural expressions, however, may define a regional style.

Though foundation dates are undocumented and construction dates often controversial, the first building phases of the minsters at Brixworth, Wing, and Deerhurst are generally thought to date from the eighth century, with significant additions in the ninth century. This date range coincides with that of the Mercian supremacy, an era marked by heightened Mercian political power and artistic output. Diplomatic ties between Mercia and Francia may have led to the transfer of some design inspiration, yet within their great diversity of form, the churches at Brixworth, Wing, and Deerhurst share more in common with one another than with their known contemporaries on the continent. The eclectic assembly of architectural elements built almost entirely from salvaged stone gives the churches of Mercia a distinctive character.

Brixworth

All Saints, Brixworth is the largest surviving Anglo-Saxon church, and one of the best-preserved churches of the pre-Viking era. Its long basilican plan terminating in a polygonal apse places it within the Mercian oeuvre, though its external ring crypt is seemingly unique among Anglo-Saxon churches. The unusual assembly of architectural elements, ranging from nave *porticus* to a western stair turret, make the church at Brixworth a unique architectural statement. Rounded arches of salvaged Roman brick further enhance the church's distinctive appearance. Though design detail may be shared with other structures, it is the unique assembly of components that makes Brixworth and

its peer institutions unusual. Within a defined architectural vocabulary, the possibilities of design were seemingly limited only by the builder's skill and the patron's pocketbook, rather than a centralized directive regarding accepted church forms.

All Saints enormous size in a seemingly isolated location raises intriguing questions about its use, patronage, and architectural influences. The size of the church suggests that it likely served as a large regional minster, possibly sending missionary priests into the surrounding countryside and perhaps even serving as a meeting place for church councils.⁷ In addition to serving the practical needs of a large religious community, the grandeur of the building may have been a political statement. Recent archaeological investigations suggest a construction date c. 790, within the reign of Offa (c. 757-796).⁸ Though the patronage of the church is not documented, construction of such a monument could have served as a powerful illustration of the king's commitment to the faith and his deserving place among key Christian rulers in Western Europe.⁹

Secular patronage made such churches possible, though the lack of documentation for

7. R.H.C. Davis, "Brixworth and *Clofesho*," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 25 (1962): 71; Simon Keynes, *The Councils of Clofesho*, 11th Brixworth Lecture 1993 (Friends of All Saints Church, Brixworth, 1994); David Parsons, *St. Boniface – Clofesho – Brixworth* in *Baukunst des Mittelalters in Europa*, ed. F.J. Much. Reprint. (Stuttgarter Gesellschaft für Kunst und Denkmalpflege, 1998). Davis identified Brixworth with *Clofesho* in this one-page article in 1962. He suggested that the church's size and location add weight to its potential role as the host of a major, recurring council. This is circumstantial evidence, and to date further data has not been found to link the standing church with a series of councils in the eighth and early ninth centuries. Keynes and Parsons have both continued the discussion, though they admit that the matter is currently a matter of speculation. If the currently proposed 790 construction date is correct, and if Brixworth is indeed *Clofesho*, the earliest *Clofesho* councils (716, 752, 747) must have taken place in an earlier building on the site.

8. David Parsons, e-mail message to author, November 22, 2009.

9. Ibid. Parsons notes that the patronage of Brixworth is still a matter of discussion, though Offa remains a strong possibility.

early churches makes it easy to forget the extent to which secular and religious leaders must have worked together to bring these edifices into being.¹⁰ The architectural statement of each church, therefore, offered opportunities to glorify God and the church patron.

Such architectural statements were the result of the creativity and travels of a church's builders, patrons, and religious community. The wide-ranging architectural influences in evidence at All Saints, Brixworth suggests a design team at once familiar with a variety of architectural styles and confident enough to mix and match elements in a wholly new way. The Mercian Brixworth has perhaps a partial claim to a Carolingian lineage, due both to acquaintance between the courts of Offa and Charlemagne and to the church's overall design. The basilican plan, annular crypt, and extraordinary size speak of a potentially Frankish inspiration. Yet, these features are equally traceable to original Roman or even Near Eastern models. Brixworth's unusual polygonal apse, corridor crypt, and multi-room narthex have roots in North Africa, though they were variously adopted throughout Western Europe before their implementation at Brixworth.¹¹ This Mercian interpretation of continental forms is seen in its compartmentalization of space, ad-hoc appropriation of building elements, and occasionally imperfect arch construction. While architectural elements of the church can be traced to earlier structures throughout the

10. Parsons, *St. Boniface – Clofesho – Brixworth*, 377. Parsons joins other scholars in suggesting that Brixworth's original place-name was changed some time before the site's first written mention in the Domesday survey.

11. Edward Gilbert, "Brixworth and the English Basilica," *The Art Bulletin* 47:1 (Mar. 1965): 2.

Christian world, the composition of All Saints, Brixworth is unique. Confirming the church's construction date will enable more accurate analysis of its architectural influence and potential patronage.

Though nineteenth-century antiquarians identified the church at Brixworth as an ancient structure, its presumed chronology remained a matter of debate.¹² Based upon the twelfth-century writings of Hugh Candidus, a foundation date c. 680-690 was long suggested. Candidus claimed that Brixworth was founded as a “daughter house” of Peterborough (formerly *Medeshamstede*) c. 675,¹³ leading twentieth-century writers to credit Cuthbald,¹⁴ Wilfrid¹⁵ or Saxulf¹⁶ as potential founders. These assumptions regarding an early construction date necessarily tied the architectural influences of Brixworth to the first wave of Anglo-Saxon church construction. Recent archaeological

12. C.F. Watkins, *The Basilica; or, Palatial Hall of Justice and Sacred Temple; Its Nature, Origin and Purport: and a Description and History of the Basilican Church of Brixworth, with Lithographic Illustrations* (London: Rivingtons, 1867), 26; Rickman, *An Attempt to Discriminate*, 74. Both Watkins and Rickman argued that the church was built in the late Romano-British era and renovated by the Anglo-Saxons, with Watkins claiming that the structure was a converted secular basilica. Rickman and Watkins were virtually alone in suggesting such an early date. Though these dating assertions were far off the mark, the essentially Roman character of the building was assumed by subsequent architectural historians.

13. David Parsons, *St. Boniface – Clofesho – Brixworth*, 378-379; Diana Sutherland and David Parsons, “The Petrological Contribution to the Survey of All Saints Church Brixworth, Northamptonshire: An Interim Study,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 137 (1984): 52. Parsons dismisses this claim due to evidence gleaned from recent analysis of Brixworth building stones. None of the materials analyzed in the stone-by-stone survey of the church were Barnack stone, which would be very surprising if the Peterborough monks were in fact responsible for construction. The abbey at Peterborough owned the quarry at Barnack, making it likely that they would employ this stone in any sponsored construction. Analysis of Brixworth building materials reveals a probable link with Roman ruins at Leicester.

14. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:108.

15. E. Dudley C. Jackson and Eric G.M. Fletcher, “Excavations at Brixworth, 1958,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 24 (1961):13.

16. Fisher, *GASC*, 201.

investigations place the construction date a century later, c. 790.¹⁷ This revised dating estimate allows for analysis of broader architectural influences. While later Anglo-Saxon architecture has been indiscriminately classed as “Carolingian,” this term may actually be appropriate when describing the church at Brixworth.¹⁸ Yet, Frankish inspiration is but one potential influence on the church's varied design.

Like its Mercian counterparts at Wing and Deerhurst, All Saints, Brixworth is a *porticus*-flanked basilica terminating in a polygonal apse. The 160-foot long church is constructed of salvaged stone and brick, fully coursed. The use of Roman salvage is common to many Anglo-Saxon churches, though the tidy coursework at Brixworth makes this church unusual. This careful work, occasionally interrupted by imperfect arch segments, perhaps indicates that expert masons from abroad worked alongside local builders new to masonry construction (see illus. 1).¹⁹

In addition to skillful construction, the building's floorplan offers evidence of a sophisticated designer at work. Typical of Anglo-Saxon church design, All Saints, Brixworth combines recognizable architectural elements in a unique way. The church

17. Parsons, e-mail message to author, November 22, 2009. Preliminary reports of the Brixworth excavations have suggested a late eighth to early ninth century construction date for the earliest section of the building, but the most recent analysis narrows the date to c. 790. The forthcoming monograph of the Brixworth Archaeological Trust supersedes preliminary reports on a number of points, resulting in a heavy reliance on this reference and personal correspondence with the author. Parsons does not rule out the possibility of an earlier structure on the site, but the earliest portions of the present building date to the late eighth century.

18. Clapham, *ERA*, 77. Clapham uses the term to describe English architecture from the ninth through mid-eleventh centuries.

19. Clapham, *ERA*, 351; Fisher, *GASC*, 208; Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11. Parsons suggests that the irregularity stems from simultaneous construction of multiple arches by different teams of builders, but he does not go so far as to blame the locals for the imperfect results.

consists of a two-story nave with clerestory, discreet choir, and apsidal chancel with exterior ring crypt. The nave was flanked by five *porticus* on the north and south sides, now destroyed, and a western forebuilding that later gave way to a tower.²⁰ All Saints is not merely a Mercian copy of a continental building, but the conglomeration of forms into a distinct architectural expression. Where a continental church might feature side aisles, the church at Brixworth featured sequential *porticus*; while a later Carolingian westwork would include twin western towers, the second phase of construction at Brixworth introduced a lone western tower fronted by an unusual stair turret. Though the design of All Saints, Brixworth does not match that of any known surviving church, the heart of its floorplan predates the Christian era. The apsidal basilica, originally used for secular purposes, became a standard plan for churches in western Europe during the time of Constantine (306-337 A.D.).²¹ The aisled basilica continued to be popular through the Carolingian era and beyond, but the inclusion of *porticus* at Brixworth and throughout pre-Conquest Britain marks the creation of a distinctly Anglo-Saxon style.

Though not a uniquely Anglo-Saxon feature, the square choir separating the nave and apsidal chancel suggests a monastic community of some size (see illus. 2).²² Nothing is known of Anglo-Saxon religious life at the site, but the appearance of a discreet choir space is consistent with the needs of a religious community. This architectural feature

20. Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11, fig. 5.1.

21. McClendon, *Origins*, 4; Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 24.

22. Fisher, *GASC*, 210.

offers a valuable clue to the building's use, particularly in the absence of documentary evidence pertaining to the site. This architectural feature, repeated at Deerhurst and Breamore, informs similar assumptions about each church's original worship life.

Brixworth's polygonal apse is a more unusual feature than the square choir, and this distinctive form may provide a partial provenance to the design of the Mercian minster (see illus. 3).²³ The polygonal apse is less common in England and on the continent than its rounded counterpart,²⁴ but this feature is also evident in the Mercian minsters of Wing and Deerhurst. The Mercian use of a less common variation on an established architectural element indicates a broad familiarity with continental church design and a willingness to combine pieces in a distinctive way. Architectural historians have largely ignored this type of eclecticism, but it is the defining characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the church is its ruined ring crypt, a design that is unique among surviving Anglo-Saxon churches (see illus. 4).²⁵ The external ambulatory was covered by a barrel vault, with access from the north and south sides of

23. The church underwent a comprehensive restoration in the nineteenth century, during which the square medieval chancel was demolished and the polygonal apse rebuilt on its original foundations.

24. Gilbert, "Brixworth and the English Basilica," 2; Fisher, *GASC*, 181. Gilbert traces the polygonal apse from Ravenna to Merovingian Gaul, noting that it was perhaps most popular in Western Europe in the mid to late eighth century, although its use was not widespread. Fisher rejects the claim of Ravenna's influence, which was also put forth by Clapham.

25. Taylor, *ASA* 3: 1017, fig. 741; Fisher, *Introduction*, 61. Only five additional Anglo-Saxon crypts are known: Hexham, Ripon, Repton, Wing, and Sidbury. Unlike Brixworth, these crypts were smaller and had more in common with the *confessio* style. Though Cirencester featured a ring crypt, it was located under the church, west of the chancel. Brixworth's exterior ring crypt is thought to be unique.

the chancel; these doorways are now blocked but visible.²⁶ This external ambulatory crypt may be the only one of its kind from the Anglo-Saxon era,²⁷ though its origins lay further afield. Edward Gilbert traces the invention of the annular crypt to North Africa, though the feature first appeared in Europe c. 600, at Old St. Peter's in Rome.²⁸ The first annular crypt north of the Alps was built at St. Denis c. 775,²⁹ but these crypt ambulatories were usually placed directly under the apse, not outside its walls.³⁰ The crypt at Brixworth is potentially an innovation, and at the least an adoption of an unusual building feature. The choice of such a rare component in a relatively young ecclesiastical landscape evidences a sophistication among the church's builders and patrons. This familiarity with relatively new and unusual architectural forms shows that the builders of the church at Brixworth were aware of the latest architectural designs, while the unique arrangement of elements shows a confidence of expression. The level of influence exerted by builders, patrons, and churchmen is impossible to know, but the eclectic design of the building is consistent with that of churches throughout the Pre-Conquest era.

This appreciation for complex architecture carried over at least two building eras. All Saints was constructed in two major phases, with the first phase resulting in the nave,

26. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:108; Fisher, *GASC*, 202; Parsons, "Past History and Present Research at All Saints Church, Brixworth," *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 6:2 (1979): 65.

27. Parsons, *St. Boniface – Clofesho – Brixworth*, 380; Fisher, *GASC*, 206.

28. Gilbert, "Brixworth and the English Basilica," 2.

29. McClendon, *Origins*, 90.

30. Fisher, *GASC*, 206; Parsons, *Past History*, 65.

north and south *porticus*, choir, clerestory, ground- and first-floor levels of the west forebuilding, and likely the original apse and ambulatory.³¹ Recent archaeological investigations suggest that the west forebuilding was originally a two-story structure consisting of three chambers each separated by a vestibule, for a total of five discreet rooms on the ground floor. The upper floor may have been a continuous chamber the width of the nave, with stairways rising above the northwest and southwest chambers.³² The first floor archway overlooking the nave, now blocked, was thought to lead from the forebuilding to a west gallery (see illus. 5). This annex did not yet have the characteristics of the newly invented Carolingian westwork,³³ but may have incorporated some of its functionality. The uses of this gallery are unknown, but could have been used by choristers or high-status worshipers.³⁴ Similar galleries were thought to exist at Deerhurst, Bosham, and Wing. A large tower and stair turret replaced this annex later in the Anglo-Saxon era (see illus. 6).³⁵ While the date of the first construction phase has been narrowed to the late eighth century, the date of the second construction phase, long attributed to the

31. Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11. Parsons suggests that the original apse may have been rounded, and that the second phase construction could have resulted in a complete rebuilding or a polygonal refacing of the existing apse.

32. Ibid., section 11. At this writing, this speculative reconstruction is not yet finalized.

33. Parsons, e-mail message to author, November 22, 2009. Although evidence now points to a construction date c. 790 for the first phase of the building, Parsons thinks it unlikely that Brixworth would adopt Aachen's innovative westwork so quickly.

34. Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11.

35. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 3:887; Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11. Brixworth is one of four pre-Conquest churches with a separate stone stair turret: other examples are found at Hough, Brigstock, and Broughton. All are located in the former Mercia.

tenth or eleventh century,³⁶ may in fact be earlier.³⁷

Though Brixworth may in some ways lie at the cutting edge of Carolingian design, or even predate some of its peers on the continent,³⁸ its selection of architectural elements is indicative of the stylistic diversity that dominated church design in Anglo-Saxon England. This sophisticated assemblage of a Roman-inspired apsidal basilica with characteristically insular *porticus*, fronted by a continental-style western forebuilding (later, tower with turret), and state-of-the art exterior ring crypt makes Brixworth an excellent example of pre-Conquest eclecticism. Like its peer and successor churches in Mercia and Wessex, Brixworth interpreted known architectural elements in a unique way. This, perhaps more than any other characteristic, informs the aesthetic of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Deerhurst

While Brixworth offers an example of restrained grandeur, its western peer showcases an even wider array of architectural and artistic influences. The western Mercian minster at Deerhurst is perhaps the most eclectic surviving church of the Anglo-Saxon era (see illus. 7). This well-preserved minster is distinguished by its compartmentalization of worship space, wide variety of surviving sculpture, and multi-century construction chronology. The builders at Deerhurst included up-to-the-minute

36. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:108.

37. Parsons, e-mail message to author, November 22, 2009. At this writing, the Brixworth archaeological team is finalizing its dating hypothesis for phase two. Petrological evidence also suggests a modification of the apse around this time.

38. Gilbert, "Brixworth and the English Basilica," 2.

designs such as a delicately carved apse angel, while flanking doorways with traditional Anglo-Saxon beast heads and experimenting with a Byzantine-inspired Virgin with Christ.³⁹ The Virgin and angel carvings reveal sophisticated, selected borrowings from other Christian cultures in Europe. This incredibly diverse set of sculpture, combined with rare examples of pre-Conquest polychrome, give St. Mary's, Deerhurst an appearance that is unique among surviving churches of the period. Traces of paint hint at the bright colors that formerly filled the minster, reminding viewers that whitewashed Victorian plaster does not offer an accurate representation of original minster décor.⁴⁰ The church's size, complexity, multi-century construction timeframe, and truly unique decorative program make it a church of vital importance. Deerhurst offers an excellent example of Anglo-Saxon eclecticism on a grand scale.

St. Mary's, Deerhurst, also offers exciting evidence of an integrated Anglo-Saxon culture. Though not commonplace, sacred sculpture survives in a number of pre-Conquest churches. Rood sculptures, as at Breamore, and angel carvings, as at Bradford-on-Avon, are delightful yet expected components of many church designs. The addition of beast head carvings, however, sets Deerhurst in a class by itself. Though projecting beast heads, or *prokrossoi*, were also thought to be found at Barnack and Alkborough,⁴¹

39. Richard N. Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst*, Deerhurst Lecture 2002 (Deerhurst: Friends of Deerhurst Church, 2005), 9; Maria P. Muñoz de Miguel, "Anglo-Saxon Figure Sculpture at St. Mary's Priory Church, Deerhurst," *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* 115 (1997): 33.

40. Steve Bagshaw, Richard Bryant, and Michael Hare, "The Discovery of an Anglo-Saxon Painted Figure at St Mary's Church, Deerhurst Gloucestershire," *The Antiquaries Journal* 86 (2006): 61.

41. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA*, 1:194.

little more than stubs remain at these sites. *Prokrossoi* at Deerhurst, however, appear twice above the west front and once over the south door (see illus. 8). Though the south carving and the top carving on the west front are broken, it is clear that the lower west beast is round-headed and open-mouthed, with shallow relief eyes and incised cheek and mouth lines on either side of the head. These creatures are reminiscent of stereotypical sea monsters. They are an odd motif for a church, but perhaps predate the gargoyles and grotesques of the later medieval era. It is also possible that they served a similar function to grotesque carvings by diverting water away from the building. Whether functional or purely decorative, beast heads are also featured in arch-mold terminations around the second-floor doorway above the west front and around the former south door.⁴²

More significantly, beast heads appear in the interior of the church at Deerhurst (see illus. 9 and 10). Not only do they frame the archway of the western entrance, but they flank the entrance to the chancel, the holiest area of the church.⁴³ The use of non-Christian iconography in such a sacred place suggests an integration of secular and religious culture that is often overlooked in the study of Anglo-Saxon churches. The beast head carvings at Deerhurst seem to be a strongly Saxon throwback to pre-Christian decorative arts, though they coexist peacefully with Christian iconography. The carvings of the Virgin and Child above the interior west door and the carving of a stylized angel on

42. Richard Gem and Emily Howe, with Richard Bryant, "The Ninth-Century Polychrome Decoration at St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst," *The Antiquaries Journal* 88 (2008): 112.

43. Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst*, 2. The beast heads at the west end of the nave have been relocated, though their original location is unconfirmed. Despite their location just below eye-level at the main entrance, this pair of carvings is very well preserved. Bailey suggests that this pair may have come from a blocked door to the north of the chancel.

the apse integrate artistic statements of the broader Christian world with the localized, pre-Christian imagery of traditional Germanic culture.

Thought to be the earliest Virgin and Child architectural sculpture extant in England, the roughed-out, flat-surfaced carving at the west end of the church depicts the Virgin Mary holding a shield, or *clipeus* thought to portray Christ (see illus. 11).⁴⁴ Fittingly, Mary is set within an architectural frame: a typically Anglo-Saxon round-headed arch with projecting imposts. Though now appearing to be unfinished, the details of this sculpture were originally painted. Recent investigations have revealed traces of red and yellow paint still adhering to the sculpture. Unfortunately, details of the Virgin's face and the shield assumed to contain an image of Christ are no longer visible.⁴⁵ The importation of a potentially Byzantine form shows the degree to which Deerhurst was involved in the broader Christian discourse of the day.⁴⁶ Though the exact method of transmission can not be known, it is clear that this Mercian minster was not isolated from the broader aesthetic dialogue.

The surviving panel of the ruined polygonal apse offers another Christian image of potentially foreign inspiration. This panel features an exquisite angel carving, depicted in relief in an upright rectangular block and framed by a triangular pediment (see illus. 12). Richard Bailey views the angel as part of “a western Mercian version of a late

44. Munoz de Miguel, “Anglo-Saxon Figure Sculpture at St. Mary's,” 29; Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst*, 9.

45. Gem, Howe, & Bryant, “Ninth-Century Polychrome,” 140.

46. Bailey, *Anglo-Saxon Sculptures at Deerhurst*, 10.

eighth / early ninth-century classical revival, no doubt a reflex of the Carolingian renaissance.”⁴⁷ This particular Carolingian influence may be correct, and it is an excellent example of the syncretism with which Anglo-Saxon artisans incorporated ideas from a variety of cultures.

Christian and pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon design influences are well-integrated at Deerhurst, from traditional beast heads to Winchester School paintings above the chancel arch. Evidence for two-dimensional figural painting at Deerhurst is not visible from the ground, but a recent in-depth investigation revealed traces of paint on one of two triangular-headed stone slabs located high above the chancel. The reconstruction suggested by Steve Bagshaw, Richard Bryant and Michael Hare indicates a robed, haloed figure holding a book in his left hand.⁴⁸ The investigators have identified the style of this fragmentary painting with that of the Winchester School of the late tenth century.⁴⁹ If this dating estimate is correct, this painting would date from the last Anglo-Saxon construction phase at Deerhurst.

The church's diversity of design is due in large part to its long construction history. The earliest elements of St. Mary's, Deerhurst may date to the seventh or eighth

47. *Ibid.*, 13.

48. Bagshaw, Bryant, & Hare, “Discovery of An Anglo-Saxon Painted Figure,” 69-73.

49. *Ibid.*, 77, 98. Though it is impossible to contest their assertions from ground level, the research team suggests that an upper floor was actually present in the chapel, enabling the painted figures to be viewed close-up. A connection with the Winchester School would lend weight to the long-accepted but recently-discounted assumption of a Benedictine Reform presence at Deerhurst in the tenth century. Though Bagshaw, Bryant, & Hare do not make such an assertion, see Catherine E. Hundley, “Architecture of Reform: Deerhurst Priory in the Tenth Century” (paper presented at the 28th International Conference of the Charles Homer Haskins Society, Boston, MA, November 7, 2009).

century,⁵⁰ though the church first appears in surviving documentation in 804. At that time, a Hwiccian nobleman by the name of Æthelric donated a large parcel of land to the community at Deerhurst with the understanding that he and his father Æthelmund would receive burial on site, and “on condition that that community carries out their vows as they have promised me.”⁵¹ Æthelric's wording indicates the presence of an established, active community already on the site at the time of his gift; archaeological investigations have confirmed the presence of a “basic rectangle” consisting of a nave and chancel as early as the seventh or possibly eighth century.⁵² Gradual additions over the next century resulted in increased wall height, the addition of a rounded apse and two-celled west porch, and the first *porticus* flanking the choir.⁵³ In the following building phase, builders replaced the rounded apse with a polygonal apse, raised the west porch to become a west tower with rooms overlooking the nave, and undertook the church's sculptural program. By the eve of the Conquest, St. Mary's featured a nave over twenty meters in height flanked by two-story *porticus*, three levels of tower rooms, and a bewildering diversity of architectural sculpture.⁵⁴ The continual growth and renovation of this church over many centuries speaks to a spirit of experimentation among its community, patrons, and builders. Rather than importing a known continental building form and adjusting only in

50. Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 190, table IX.

51. “Will Declared Before the Synod of 'Aclea,’” in *EHD*, 512.

52. Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 156-157.

53. *Ibid.*, 162-163.

54. *Ibid.*, 184 and 190, table IX. St. Mary's became a dependency of Westminster in 1050, and was donated to St. Denis by Edward the Confessor in 1059.

the wake of major structural damage or liturgical change, Deerhurst was seemingly in a state of constant evolution. The quest for a grander, more beautiful, more prestigious building would have been consistent with the culture's status-seeking ethos. The resulting structure's use of discreet space and its interpretation of architectural and sculptural forms from throughout the Christian world represents the Anglo-Saxon conceptualization of worship within its own ethos.

The present church consists of a long, tall nave and square chancel, originally used as a choir or intermediate space between the nave and apse, as at Brixworth (see illus. 13). The polygonal apse is now ruined, resulting in a blocked chancel arch. Formerly flanked by two-story *porticus*, the church now features later medieval side aisles but the remnants of the two-story south *porticus* have been incorporated into the present building fabric. The west tower, raised from an earlier two-chamber west porch, contained three separate floors with east-facing openings (see illus. 14). The addition of squints along the sides of the nave, as well as hypothesized upper floors at the east end and possibly over the entire nave, evidence an active community with complex liturgical needs. Fernie describes St. Mary's as “a veritable machine for worshipping in,” and the potential uses of these discreet spaces continue to generate controversy.⁵⁵

The compartmentalization of space is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon churches,⁵⁶

55. Fernie, *AAS*, 103.

56. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (1956; repr., Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1984), 97-98. Pevsner notes “the English preference [for] the adding of part to part in plan and elevation,” resulting in a series of spaces that are aggregated yet distinct.

though it is often better represented in the written and archaeological record than in standing fabric. The earliest churches of the Augustinian mission featured *porticus*, for use as burial chapels and saints' chapels. The church of Saints Peter and Paul at Canterbury included an altar to St. Gregory in the north *porticus*, and the Old Minster in Winchester, built by King Cenwalh c. 648, included three *porticus* of unknown usage.⁵⁷ The naves of Cirencester and Reculver were also flanked by *porticus*,⁵⁸ much like Brixworth and Deerhurst. At York, Alcuin's church of the *Alma Sophia* featured thirty altars, though archaeological evidence has not revealed whether thirty discreet *porticus* were required to house them. Such a proliferation of *porticus* may have been tied to the rise of the cult of saints in the late eighth century.⁵⁹ A similar rise in cultic activity may have spurred the ongoing building campaign at Deerhurst, though the specific use of these rooms is unknown.

At its height, St. Mary's consisted of at least ten *porticus*, many of which contained two floors. Two-story *porticus* were unusual but not necessarily unique: recent excavations at Brixworth have suggested the possibility of two-story *porticus* flanking the choir space there as well.⁶⁰ *Porticus* flanking the choir contained doorways on both levels (see illus. 15), while nave *porticus* were presumably entered via doors from the

57. Fernie, *AAS*, 39 and 41.

58. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 3:981, 990.

59. Alcuin, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, 121; Fernie, *AAS*, 41; Gem, "Architecture of the Anglo-Saxon Church," 64. Fernie notes the rise of saints' cults and their resulting altars, though he does not specifically tie them to *porticus*. Gem suggests that two-story *porticus* may have been present at *Alma Sophia*.

60. Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11.

nave. Surviving triangular squints overlooking the north and south sides of the nave perhaps allowed coordination of worship activities from second-floor *porticus*.⁶¹ A similar squint can be found next to the now-blocked doorway of the former first-floor tower chamber.⁶² This room may have been used as a chapel, with the later squint allowing visual access to the chancel.⁶³ The second-floor chamber, framed by distinctive triangular-headed openings overlooking the nave, includes an aumbry on either side of the room; Michael Hare has postulated the presence of a three-sided walkway around the tower exterior, possibly for relic display.⁶⁴ This likely chapel allowed access to a nave gallery through the northern triangular opening, while the now-blocked doorway one floor below may also have given access to a first tier of gallery space.⁶⁵ Above the present roof line, a third-floor doorway opened on to a chamber that may have run the length of the nave. Taylor hypothesized that this room served as a monks' dormitory, though the lowering of the roof in the fifteenth century makes confirmation of this theory impossible.⁶⁶

This compartmentalization of space is consistent with the use of *porticus* in other

61. Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 174.

62. To maintain consistency with English sources, “first floor” refers to the floor immediately above ground level.

63. Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 174.

64. Michael Hare, “The 9th-century West Porch of St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire: Form and Function,” *Medieval Archaeology* 53 (2009): 35-93.

65. Michael Hare, pers. comm. This double-triangular opening was thought to have been renovated shortly after construction to allow for a door-height egress on the north side. Both lights of the present double-opening are now at window-height.

66. Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 171 and 185.

Anglo-Saxon churches, though the demarcation of so many discreet spaces at Deerhurst is unique. One surprising omission from this piled-up, cellular understanding of worship space is that of a crypt. As an example of the Mercian style, Deerhurst seemingly “should” possess an eastern crypt, like its contemporaries at Brixworth, Wing, and Cirencester. Deerhurst's location in a flood plain, however, would render such an arrangement impractical.⁶⁷ Rather than the expected apsidal crypt, Deerhurst's ruined apse stands level with the choir (see illus. 16). A recent study by Bagshaw, Bryant and Hare proposed the existence of an upper-level chapel above the chancel, leading to an inner chamber above the apse.⁶⁸ If such a high-level chapel did exist, Bagshaw, Bryant and Hare suggest that it may have served as an upper reliquary above the main altar, substituting the usual crypt reliquary arrangement.⁶⁹ Although the presence of such an upper-level reliquary chapel is not needed to prove St. Mary's distinctive character, it would be consistent with Deerhurst's innovative use of space. This spirit of experimentation, evidenced throughout Deerhurst's long construction phases, shows a willingness on behalf of local builders to break from continental forms.

The combination of a basilican church, polygonal apse, two-story flanking *porticus*, and multi-roomed tower with a decorative scheme crossing boundaries of Carolingian France, Byzantium, and multiple eras of the Anglo-Saxon period makes Deerhurst perhaps the most unusual example within a decidedly unique church canon.

67. Hare, pers. comm.

68. Bagshaw, Bryant, & Hare, “Discovery of an Anglo-Saxon Painted Figure,” 94.

69. Ibid., 99-100.

Yet even within this highly unusual assembly, Deerhurst shares common architectural themes with the church of All Saints, Wing. While both churches share a basilican plan, the many differences between the structures suggests an independence in the interpretation of established architectural components, as well as a willingness to adapt such elements to meet the needs of local builders, patrons, monks, and clergy.

Wing

Approximately forty miles south of Brixworth, the church of All Saints, Wing represents the smallest of the Mercian apsidal basilicas (see illus. 17). Like Deerhurst and Brixworth, All Saints, Wing is constructed of roughly-coursed salvaged stone, originally covered by a rough cast stucco.⁷⁰ Surviving Anglo-Saxon fabric includes the nave and north aisle, chancel arch, polygonal apse, and crypt. The south aisle, porches, and west tower are all later additions, though it is possible that the tower replaced an earlier western porch.⁷¹ Perhaps the most striking feature of the church is its polygonal apse with crypt. This divided crypt is unique among surviving Anglo-Saxon churches and, unlike the ring crypt at Brixworth, the Wing crypt is completely enclosed by the apse (see illus. 18). The polygonal crypt is now entered via an external staircase, though access would originally have been possible through passages in the chancel. The interior plan is complex, and hardly suited to smooth movement of pilgrim traffic. Three large niches are

70. Watkins, *Basilica*, 31; Clapham, *ERA*, pl. 33; Wing Village, “Wing: The Pre-Reformation History,” <http://www.wingvillage.org.uk/thevillage/history/allsaintsprereformation> (accessed September 10, 2009). This exterior render was removed during Victorian-era restorations.

71. Richard Gem, *All Saints Church, Wing* (Much Wenlock: R.J.L. Smith & Associates, 2003), 6. The existence of a western porch has not been confirmed archaeologically.

located on the north, south, and east walls of the crypt, with windows above each niche. The remainder of the crypt is taken up by low rubble vaults supported by stone piers, necessarily restricting the number of worshipers who could gather in the crypt.⁷² This room seems designed for silent repose rather than for veneration of relics; the inconvenience of egress suggests the presence of either a very holy relic or the burial place of an honored patron.⁷³ Unfortunately, the original contents of this crypt are unknown. This complicated, even inconvenient, arrangement speaks to a specialized use and a creative builder.

Local tradition has long associated the final phase of crypt construction with the patronage of Ælfgifu, sister-in-law to King Edgar.⁷⁴ Although Ælfgifu mentions the estate of Wing in her will, the church is not explicitly noted in this document.⁷⁵ This attempt to tie royal patronage to a standing church is unsurprising, though recent studies confirm an earlier construction date for the church. Though some modifications may have been made in Ælfgifu's time, the majority of construction was likely completed before the tenth century. The construction dates of Wing Church have been a matter of debate for decades, though architectural evidence indicates at least two major building phases. The first

72. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 2:668. Taylor & Taylor refer to these open spaces as an ambulatory, but such a term implies a convenience of movement not exhibited by the room itself.

73. Gem, *All Saints*, 4-5. Both are possible. Gem suggests that the original three niches were designed for the founders' burial, while the later central space may have accommodated a relic directly below the altar.

74. Wing Village, "Wing: The Pre-Reformation History," <http://www.wingvillage.org.uk/thevillage/history/allsaintsprereformation> (accessed March 1, 2010). Local historian A. Vere Woodman, active in the 1950's, claimed that Ælfgifu founded the church in 975.

75. Gem, *All Saints*, 3. The will dates to c. 966-975.

phase, probably dating to the eighth century, included the rectangular nave (see illus. 19), original apse, and exterior walls of the crypt, including its three niches.⁷⁶ The present apse was likely a rebuilding from the ninth century, probably part of the construction effort that resulted in the interior walls and vaulting in the crypt.⁷⁷ Both the Brixworth and Deerhurst apses were thought to be rebuilt in the ninth century, possibly replacing original rounded apses.⁷⁸ Assuming that the apse has always matched the shape of the crypt walls below, it appears that the Wing apse was polygonal in its first incarnation. The apse exterior is decorated with blind arcading on each of its seven sides. Triangular pediments can be seen above the rounded arcades, with blocked, round-headed windows on alternate sides. The triangular pediments are similar to the triangular frame surrounding the carved angel on Deerhurst's sole surviving apse panel,⁷⁹ though no evidence of a sculptural program survives at Wing.

Wing's similarities with Deerhurst and Brixworth make it easy to extrapolate an

76. H.M. Taylor, "The Anglo-Saxon Church at Wing in Buckinghamshire," *Archaeological Journal* 136 for 1979 (1980): 43; Gem, *All Saints*, 3-4.

77. Gem, *All Saints*, 4-5.

78. Parsons, *Anglo-Saxon Church at Brixworth*, section 11; Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*, 190, table IX.

79. Taylor & Taylor noted the similarities between the apses at Wing and Deerhurst (*ASA* 2:667), but a feature-by-feature comparison of the two Mercian minsters has not been published. If the comprehensive Rahtz & Watts Deerhurst excavation report (Rahtz & Watts, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst*) is correct in its description of porticus development, western gallery, and upper-level dormitory, this structural development should be tested against All Saints, Wing. Based upon Gem's assertion that Wing began as a rectangular nave with flanking chapels, it would be worthwhile to excavate along the north aisle to determine if the aisle was constructed as a continuous chamber or if it evolved as a series of *porticus*. Taylor's hypothesis of a two-story aisle with staircases to the west gallery is more problematic, but may be traceable by removing a portion of north aisle plaster. The nave ridge line is more difficult to identify, though plaster removal may give clues to the probability of floor supports versus original roof line.

architectural history for Wing based upon the recent investigations of the larger Mercian minsters. Though this exercise is potentially illuminating, the differences reflected in the three structures should urge caution. Virtually nothing is known of its foundation history, though scholars suggest that Wing was likely a minster church from its foundations.⁸⁰ The involvement of Edgar's family with the area if not with the church itself begs the question of reform involvement in the tenth century, though no surviving documents suggest a reform presence. There is no reason to assume that the religious community at Wing was less involved with their noble neighbors than other peer institutions, though the lack of documentation and decorative arts make it impossible to definitively prove such a cultural unity. Further investigation of the building fabric itself may yield additional clues to religious and even secular life at Wing.

The emergence of a regional building style among the churches at Brixworth, Deerhurst, and Wing may be consistent with the centralized political authority of the “Mercian supremacy.” In the absence of documentary evidence, it is impossible to link potential patrons with standing buildings. Yet, the buildings' diverse details within a similar floorplan may be indicative of a common aesthetic sensibility, perhaps disseminated by unified political and ecclesiastical systems. Such similarities do not exist among the surviving churches of Wessex, though the common Anglo-Saxon preference for mixing established building forms achieves its full maturity in the late West Saxon kingdom.

80. Gem, *All Saints*, 3.

CHAPTER 4

WEST SAXON ECLECTICISM

While the Mercian churches at Deerhurst, Brixworth, and Wing suggest a regional style, surviving West Saxon churches share architectural components yet demonstrate a wide variety of building forms. This diversity reflects the breadth of Christian worship life in the late Anglo-Saxon period. Due to their size, the long, cruciform church at Breamore and the towered church at Bosham seem well-suited to established religious communities, while the original roles of the wide, apsidal church at Worth and the four-cell church of St. Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon are still matters of debate. The thegn's churches at Boarhunt and Deerhurst share a two-cell plan, but their construction styles are very different. The coexistence of these diverse forms in the religious landscape of the late Anglo-Saxon era not only speaks to a transition from regional minster to local church,¹ but to a change in the very concept of what a church should look like. The appropriation of architectural forms described in eighth- and ninth-century Mercia continued with the rise of Wessex, as builders continued their experimentation with building materials and architectural sculpture. Whether each building was originally envisioned as a proto-parish church, saint's chapel, or monastic minster, it is significant that larger churches in rural areas, such as Worth and Breamore, remained active even as

1. Blair, *CASS*, 505.

small stone churches became more prevalent.² Examples of such churches are found at St. Nicholas, Boarhunt and Odda's Chapel, Deerhurst. Despite its location in the former Mercia, the latter is included among Wessex structures due to the date of its construction.

While a Mercian style may be defined by its three best-preserved minsters, the architecture of the Mercian church was not at all foreign to its neighbors in Wessex. Direct comparison is challenging, however, due to the disparate amount of surviving eighth-century church fabric in Wessex. The Taylors were unable to identify any substantially complete pre-Viking churches in Wessex. Although Bede describes the proliferation of churches throughout Britain in the seventh and eighth centuries, very few remain.³ Though debates continue regarding the extent of Danish destruction, the decline of minster life is evident in the dearth of early building fabric. Through much of the twentieth century, scholars tended to ascribe a typical life cycle to most English minsters: early foundation, followed by Viking destruction, ending with reform and / or rebuilding in the late Anglo-Saxon era.⁴ These assumptions did not allow for non-Danish sources of decline, or for the potential continuation of a house in reduced circumstances.⁵ Viking

2. Blair, *CASS*, 456-7. Blair points out that the construction of local stone churches made monumental architecture available on a small scale, thereby breaking the claim to architectural superiority previously enjoyed by large minsters.

3. Bede, *HE* II:3, II:14, III:23, et al. Even if Bede's purposes were well-served by a long list of foundations, standing and excavated sites indicate that his church profiles were selective, not exhaustive.

4. John Godfrey, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 304-5, 308, 478; Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:203 and 205.

5. Blair, *CASS*, 292-297.

destruction, lax rule, and noble meddling all contributed to the decline of minster life.⁶

Without external interference, the Anglo-Saxon church landscape may have changed gradually to allow for fewer minsters and more local churches. The Vikings doubtless wreaked havoc on many minsters, yet destruction was not total. While focusing on the need to import monks to populate King Alfred's foundation at Athelney, Asser reveals that not all of the Anglo-Saxon minsters had been obliterated:

In this monastery he gathered monks of various nationalities from every quarter, and assembled them there ... even though quite a number of monasteries which had been built in that area still remain but do not maintain the rule of monastic life in any consistent way. I am not sure why: either it is because of the depredations of foreign enemies whose attacks by land and sea are very frequent and savage, or else because of the people's enormous abundance of riches of every kind, as a result of which (I suspect) this kind of monastic life came all the more into disrespect.⁷

Though monastic life was not thriving, neither was it dead. Asser's passage suggests that monasticism was no longer a popular career path, but that many of the buildings were still in use. The ninth-century minster was reduced but not abandoned, ripe for reform but not necessarily in need of complete rebuilding.

The tenth-century Benedictine Reform, based in Wessex and led by Dunstan, Æthelwold, and Oswald, had the potential to transform the architecture of the English church. Yet, based upon the small number of structures credited to the reform movement,

6. Foot, *ML*, 125. The problems of secular overlordship were perhaps inevitable, considering that the majority of monks, nuns and clerics were of noble birth. A minster was usually considered the property of its founder, with hereditary abbacies passing through the founder's family.

7. Asser, "Life of King Alfred," in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (London: Penguin, 1983), 92-93. Though Asser focuses on the woeful state of the church, he undermines his case with this admission that some signs of life remain.

their effect was seemingly limited. Though the reformers came close to meeting King Edgar's goal of founding forty new monasteries, none of the original foundations survive.⁸ Excavated examples include the mega-church at Glastonbury, piled with new *porticus* and a dome, but lacking any cohesive design, and the New Minster, Winchester. The latter would seem a likely place to experiment with new form, but its retro-Carolingian design was neither fashionable on the continent nor influential in England.⁹ This apparent lack of influence may also be traced to the essentially foreign nature of the reform. Though reform has become synonymous with the popular religious history of tenth-century England, the vast majority of religious institutions existed outside of the reform machinery. By the end of the tenth century, fewer than ten percent of the religious houses in England had embraced the Benedictine Reform.¹⁰ The reform was a continental import, and by its nature not open to syncretistic adoption. Even the “golden age” of Anglo-Saxon religious life extolled by the reformers did not feature a truly Benedictine monasticism. Benedict Biscop, abbot of Jarrow and Monkwearmouth and hero to the tenth-century reformers, practiced a *regular mixta* that included best practices from seventeen different monasteries.¹¹ This localized regularity was not a feature of tenth-

8. Of the refounded monasteries, the crypt at Repton remains. Long assumed to be a reformed refoundation, Deerhurst's potential reform involvement is now a matter of debate. See Hundley, “Architecture of Reform.”

9. Gem, “The Pre-Romanesque Facade in England,” in Gem, *Studies*, 192.

10. Blair, *CASS*, 351.

11. David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of Its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940-1216*, 2nd ed. (1963; repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 23.

century Benedictinism, and the continued eclecticism of the church is reflected in its architecture through the end of the Anglo-Saxon era.

Though the architectural contribution of the reformers was limited, their revival of education and associated production of manuscripts had wide-ranging effects on the visual culture of the Anglo-Saxon church. The sculpted angels at Bradford-on-Avon and painted remnants at Deerhurst and Nether Wallop have all been attributed to the Winchester School.¹² This growth of an acknowledged “English” artistic style was roughly coeval with the beginnings of an idealized English political identity, though the churches of late Anglo-Saxon England continued to display a diversity of form. While Winchester became a leader in the production of manuscripts, they were unable to dictate the style of church buildings. While the production of portable art could be centralized and its influences widespread, itinerant builders and an ever-growing architectural repertoire ensured that the eclectic nature of Anglo-Saxon church construction continued.

While Mercia boasts three largely intact examples from the eighth and ninth centuries, the best-preserved churches in Wessex date from the later Anglo-Saxon period. If eighth-century Mercian churches could be defined by unique appropriation of common architectural forms, the churches of later Wessex were distinguished by their utter lack of architectural standardization. This variety stems from the less centralized political nature of early Wessex, culminating in the more diverse needs of an expanding and evolving

12. Harold M. Taylor, “The Anglo-Saxon Chapel at Bradford-on-Avon,” *Archaeological Journal* 130 for 1973 (1974): 158; Bagshaw, Bryant, & Hare, “Discovery of An Anglo-Saxon Painted Figure,” 77; Richard Gem and Pamela Tudor-Craig, “A ‘Winchester School’ Wall-Painting at Nether Wallop, Hampshire,” in *Anglo-Saxon England* 9, ed. Peter Clemoes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 115.

late Anglo-Saxon church. While the small, two-celled church remained popular throughout pre-Conquest Britain, the later churches of Wessex made free use of an expanded architectural vocabulary. Chancels could be square or apsidal, with or without an intermediate choir space separating the nave. *Porticus* could appear as proto-transepts or as simple adjuncts, and western annexes may have risen to full western towers. Like their predecessors in Mercia, these towers could include rooms overlooking the nave. Central and axial towers were also known though not common. Building materials also evidence greater diversity in later Wessex, as local flints and even cut masonry joined Roman rubble in the builder's catalogue.

This increased diversity of building materials may be due to the necessary use of local stone as Romano-British ruins dwindled, and to a growing masonry trade as the pre-Conquest era progressed. The diversity of form, however, may be traced to changes in the organization of the church. While earlier churches were often large minsters catering to a wide circle of surrounding communities, the small, local church began to emerge near the end of the Anglo-Saxon era.

The history of early minsters is obscure, but Æthelred's Ecclesiastical Code (VIII Æthelred) describes a variety of church types in the early eleventh century. The document, dated 1014, assigns penalties for violation of a church's sanctuary based upon the size of the building: "Violation of the sanctuary of a chief minster, in case of a crime which admits of compensation, is to be atoned for at the rate of (the breach of) the king's protection, namely with five pounds, in English law; and that of a rather small minster

with 120 shillings, that is, at the rate of the king's fine; and that of one still smaller, with 60 shillings; and that of a field-church with 30 shillings.”¹³ Of the early cathedrals, or head minsters, nothing remains.¹⁴ This late Anglo-Saxon code obviously reflects a mature church organization, but the coexistence of four defined types of church buildings, classed by scale, illustrates the diversity of form among roughly contemporary churches. Though bishop's minsters no longer stand, it is remarkable to imagine that the more than 100-foot long church at Breamore¹⁵ may have been “a rather small minster.” Though these minsters seem uniquely large, it is impossible to know how many lesser (possibly wooden) churches may have been built to supplement the ministries of other second-tier minsters elsewhere in the country. These forms do not point toward a regional style, save for their eclecticism. In an era of nascent English identity and centralized royal authority under the West Saxon line, the church remained a local institution. This independence is evident in the unique design of churches across Wessex, throughout the later Anglo-Saxon era.

13. “An Ecclesiastical Code of King Æthelred (VIII Æthelred),” in *Councils and Synods With Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 1, pt. 1., ed. Dorothy Whitelock, M. Brett, C.N.L. Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 390. Dr. Blair believes that this is little more than a bureaucratic categorization, rather than a careful definition of discreet church types. (John Blair, pers. comm.) If so, the types of later Anglo-Saxon churches may be more varied than Æthelred's code suggests.

14. Fisher, *GASC*, 30.

15. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:96. The current church measures ninety feet, though its demolished west annex would have extended the church to an unknown length.

Worth

The church of St. Nicholas, Worth, displays such independence in its floorplan and architectural details. St. Nicholas incorporates an elliptical apse, unusual among surviving Wessex churches of the post-Viking era,¹⁶ and transeptal *porticus*, not wide enough to be full transepts but on the cusp of this style. This plan, along with stout windows and perplexingly tall, narrow doorways give St. Nicholas, Worth, a distinctive character. The quality of construction, particularly evident in the neatly cut chancel and *porticus* arches, suggests not only the presence of skilled artisans but the patronage required to employ them. This sophisticated design and exemplary craftsmanship is all the more surprising in such an isolated location.

Though now located a few miles from Gatwick Airport, the church of St. Nicholas, Worth once lay among the forest of Anderida. Part of its original setting remains in the avenue of ten ancient lime trees flanking the entrance path. The forest setting of this church may offer clues to its original use and community, though no pre-Conquest documentation survives.¹⁷ Comparable in size to All Saints, Wing,¹⁸ St.

16. Taylor, *ASA* 3:976-995. Excavations have revealed rounded apses at Winchester's Old Minster, and a rounded apse is postulated but not confirmed at the rebuilt church of St. Mary the Virgin at Sherborne.

17. Foot, *ML*, 77; *Worth Church, Sussex* (Crawley: Worth Publishing, 1988), [4]. Earlier mission-minsters were often accessible to yet set slightly apart from population centers, or the sites eventually grew to include a lay community centered around the minster. Neither scenario applies to Worth, though Foot notes that isolated minsters could still serve a missionary purpose. According to the church guide, St. Nicholas, Worth was so isolated that it served a larger geographic area than any other church in England in the years following the Conquest. Owing to its late construction date, such a remote forest church may have served primarily as a monastic retreat, secondarily as a place of pastoral care.

18. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 2: 671 and 692. All Saints, Wing is 81 feet long by approximately 21 feet wide, with a wall height of 35 feet. The church at Worth measures over 94 feet long by 26 and a half feet wide, with a wall height of approximately 30 feet.

Nicholas, Worth offers evidence of significant patronage in its careful stonework, sophisticated design combinations, and large size in a seemingly isolated location. Two possible scenarios could fit the foundation of St. Nicholas. Local tradition¹⁹ credits Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) with the foundation of the church, claiming that he built the site for his personal use when in residence at the neighboring royal hunting lodge.²⁰ Limited archaeological investigations indicate a single pre-Conquest construction phase roughly contemporary with Edward, though further study is warranted.²¹ Edward's potential involvement is bolstered by his history of generous church patronage and the church's location within the boundaries of a royal manor.²² The construction of such a large and impressive church as an adjunct to the king's vacation home, however, seems unlikely. Kingly patronage may have been necessary to employ the obviously skilled artisans who constructed the church, but the resulting building may have primarily served as a late monastic minster. Neither documentary nor archaeological evidence offer clues to the identity of the religious community at Worth, rendering analysis of the church building and its original setting all the more important. The church's location in the forest

19. Local traditions are repeated here with some caution, though the absence of written documentation and in-depth archaeological investigation makes these stories particularly valuable. At the very least, they provide a framework for thinking about potential construction scenarios. At best, they offer insight into a community's understanding of itself and its place in history.

20. Gerald Sandwell, church warden of St. Nicholas, Worth, pers. comm.

21. Fred G. Aldsworth, "Observations on the Church of St. Nicholas, Worth," *Sussex Archaeological Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of the County* 129 (1991): 39-44; Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 2:688. Taylor & Taylor date to the church to c. 1050-1100 or earlier, while Aldsworth does not hazard a specific date range.

22. *Worth Church, Sussex*, [2]; *St. Nicholas Church, Worth, West Sussex* (2007), 2.

would fulfill the monastic desire to retreat to the wilderness., bolstering the theory of a monastic presence at Worth. While earlier minster dwellers were missionary-monks, the divide between ministering clerics and contemplative monks became more pronounced by the late Anglo-Saxon era.²³ A kingly patron would have been a welcome guest in such a community, lending partial credence to the legend of King Edward's hunting lodge church. The key assumption within this proposed history is the close relationship between the royal patron and the church community. Noble or royal involvement was important to the success of church communities throughout the Anglo-Saxon period and beyond, and local legends of King Edward's association with Worth aid in understanding the building's context within the broader society.

Local assumptions regarding the church's role within a warrior culture can be seen in the longstanding legends that seek to explain the purpose behind selected architectural elements. The overall effect of the building is one of solidity and perhaps refuge, in an isolated locale. The exterior walls feature a string course and pilaster strips made from massive cut stone, set amidst walling of medium-sized sandstone rubble, roughly coursed.²⁴ Windows are small and high-set, with very thick baluster shafts (see illus. 20). The size and placement of these windows has caused some to ascribe a defensive purpose to their design,²⁵ though the height may simply have been chosen to capture the greatest

23. Foot, *ML*, 286.

24. Rather than the rubble typically salvaged from Roman ruins, at least some of the stone for this building may have been cut from a nearby quarry. (Sandwell, per. comm.)

25. *St. Nicholas Worth*, 7. A fourth pair of windows probably occupied part of the area filled by a much larger Gothic window.

amount of light in a heavily wooded area. The small window openings were likely intended to minimize the use of glass, rather than to discourage entry by invaders. Entry to the church was gained through one of two extraordinarily tall and narrow doorways, facing each other on the north and south nave walls (see illus. 21).²⁶ Each door measures 14 feet in height, with an external width of about three and a quarter feet.²⁷ The extraordinary height of these doors has caused creative speculation: over the years, traditions emerged suggesting that the tall, narrow doors originally served liturgical or even military purposes.²⁸ Though their use is unconfirmed, these unusual doorways and windows, along with proto-transeptal *porticus* and an elliptical apse, give Worth a unique character.

The scarcity of full transepts in Anglo-Saxon England, despite fourth-century Roman adoption of the design, offers further evidence of Anglo-Saxon aesthetic independence. St. Nicholas' cruciform plan with narrow arms is consistent with a late

26. David Parsons, "The Saxon Doorway of the Church of St. Nicholas, Worth," *Sussex Archaeological Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of the County* 107 (1969): 12. While the current south doors are later medieval insertions, Parsons suggests that they may have replaced a single round-headed door similar to the arrangement illustrated in the Tower of Babel scene in Ælfric's paraphrase of the *Pentateuch*. See Cotton Claudius B.iv.

27. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 2, 692.

28. Local tradition attributes the height of these doors to the dubious practice of allowing warriors on horseback to ride through the south door, receive a blessing, then gallop through the north door and on into the forest without dismounting. (Sandwell, pers. comm.) The narrow width of the doorway would be a very tight fit for a horse and rider. The Taylors have suggested that the extraordinary height of some Saxon doors allowed tall processional crosses to pass through the doorway unimpeded. (Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:382.) Though the story of the holy horsemen is clearly fanciful, neither explanation is satisfactory: it would be much more sensible for a processional cross to be lowered for entry or even fabricated to fit through a doorway rather than constructing the doorway to accommodate a portable object. Tall, narrow doorways are common features of Anglo-Saxon churches, but they are not a definitive characteristic. The stories that have arisen regarding the small windows and tall doors at St. Nicholas provide excellent examples of the frustrated attempts to match form with function in Anglo-Saxon churches.

Saxon date, indicating a transitional period from the almost self-contained *porticus* to the full transepts of the Norman era.²⁹ These proto-transeptal *porticus* offer an example of independent Anglo-Saxon architectural evolution (see illus. 22). The survival of both *porticus* enables a fuller understanding of the relationship of side-chapels to the nave. Though wide arches give the *porticus* the appearance of transepts, the side chapels and chancel are narrower than the space defined by the crossing square (see illus. 23). While fully-formed transepts were evident in Rome as early as the fourth century, they did not appear in England until the late Anglo-Saxon era.

The architectural distinctives of St. Nicholas, Worth are not repeated as a group in any surviving church, but they offer strong examples of the broad architectural vocabulary available to the builders of the late Anglo-Saxon era. Details such as a tall, narrow doorway³⁰ have been cited as confirmation that a structure dates to the pre-Conquest era, yet the surviving examples of such elements are limited. Churches with transeptal *porticus* are found primarily in Wessex in the later Anglo-Saxon era,³¹ with examples at Worth, Dover, Milborne Port, Stoughton, Breamore, and other sites.³² St. Mary's, Breamore may be only slightly older than the church at Worth, though their only similarity lies in their use of transeptal *porticus*. This variety of architectural elements, building materials, and decorative programs employed by two such churches in late

29. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 2:692.

30. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:10.

31. Fisher, *Introduction*, 57.

32. Taylor, *ASA* 3:976-995.

Anglo-Saxon Wessex make the definition of a regional style next to impossible.

Breamore

The church of St. Mary's, Breamore, is distinctive for its size, its materials, and the extraordinary survival of its figural sculpture and Anglo-Saxon inscription. Breamore seemingly owes much to the Anglo-Saxon wooden hall, from its height and impressive length to its use of east and west adjuncts.³³ Such heavy Germanic influence in a late Anglo-Saxon building attests to the perseverance of native building forms, long after the introduction of continental styles and construction methods. The monumental nature of the church and its location suggest its original use as a minster. While Worth was built in a seemingly isolated area, St. Mary's, Breamore occupied the typical site of an Anglo-Saxon minster. Foot has noted that minsters were often built near royal settlements, yet “topographically somewhat distant from the lay habitations, set in their own lands and within a distinct enclosure.”³⁴ Set apart from the tiny village of Breamore, the church sits within a boundary ditch³⁵ on a slight hill, visible to neighboring farmland through a copse. Though an Elizabethan manor house stands nearby, the site of a presumed royal manor of the pre-Conquest era has not yet been discovered. Æthelred II (978-1016) is popularly credited with the foundation of the church, with the assumption that he held a

33. Arnold, *Archaeology of the Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 173. Anglo-Saxon timber halls often featured a square annex at the east end, west end, or both.

34. Foot, *ML*, 78.

35. Evidence of this boundary ditch was only recently discovered, according to local historian Anthony Light.

neighboring estate.³⁶ The dates of Æthelred's reign fall within the construction range postulated by recent architectural historians,³⁷ though no documentation of the church survives from the pre-Conquest era. As at Worth, local tradition links royal patronage to a grand ecclesiastical building on little more than circumstantial evidence. Yet, some form of noble or royal patronage was certainly required to construct such a large, well-built minster church.

The church at Breamore was seemingly built for a community and congregation of some size, though the building itself serves as the only surviving “document” of the era (see illus. 24). This tall, boxy church, measuring more than ninety feet in length,³⁸ features a rectangular nave and chancel, separated by a square choir. One of two transeptal *porticus* survives; a two-staged timber tower rises above the choir. A typically Anglo-Saxon west annex, now demolished, would have extended the already impressive nave.³⁹ The existence of a separate choir between the nave and chancel echoes arrangements at Deerhurst and Brixworth, indicating the presence of a monastic community, though the form of religious life during the Anglo-Saxon era is unknown (see

36. Anthony Light and Gerald Ponting, *The Saxon Church of St. Mary's Breamore: A Short History, Plan and Walk-Around Guide* (Charlewood Press, 2004), 5. Light and Ponting suggest that such an estate could have been built near the former Roman settlement at Rockbourne.

37. Fernie, *AAS*, 113; Fisher, *GASC*, 389; Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:94. Fernie, Fisher, and the Taylors all suggest a date in the late 10th or early 11th century.

38. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:96.

39. The north transeptal *porticus* and western annex were thought to have been demolished in the fifteenth century. The bad economic conditions following years of plague may have necessitated demolition of some of the four hundred year-old building fabric, in order to maintain the larger portion of the church. (Anthony Light, pers. comm.)

illus. 25). A separate choir, western annex, and *porticus* are features shared by early and late churches, though Breamore's multi-stage timber tower is the only surviving example from any period within the Anglo-Saxon era.⁴⁰ The tower originally had an intermediate floor for use as a ringing chamber,⁴¹ but the space is now open from the choir floor to the tower rafters.

The surviving *porticus*, which features a rare inscription in Old English, further displays the strong Anglo-Saxon character of the building (see illus. 26). Incised into the curve of the arch, the Anglo-Saxon verse is translated, "Here is made manifest the covenant to you."⁴² A fragmentary "DES" appears above the chancel arch, raising the question of a continuous inscription along the north *porticus* arch, chancel arch, and south *porticus* arch.⁴³ The inscription is joined by a cable molding on the south *porticus* arch, running along the interior and south side of the east impost as well as the interior side of the west impost. This detail is noteworthy because it mimics the actual bell ropes

40. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:95; E.A. Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Towers: An Architectural and Historical Study* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1969), 57; Light & Ponting, *Saxon Church of St. Mary's*, 5. Similar structures were known to have existed at Winchester and Chichester. Fisher suggests that the timber belfry of the crossing tower at St.-Riquier (c.790-800) may have inspired similar designs in England. The Breamore guidebook includes a speculative reconstruction of the tower featuring four stages, which may be closer to the towers of the cathedrals mentioned above.

41. Anthony Light, pers. comm. The tower has been rebuilt, though some original timbers are thought to remain.

42. Richard and Fiona Gameson, "The Anglo-Saxon Inscription at St. Mary's Church, Breamore, Hampshire," in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 6, ed. William Filmer-Sankey (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1993), 2. This text has alternately been attributed to Genesis 9:9 and Titus 1:3, though Genesis is a stronger contender. The Gamesons point out that this inscription existed in the "clerical" portion of the church, and its vernacular language may serve as evidence for the lack of Latin fluency among clergy in the late Anglo-Saxon era. Though this theory would seem to fit Alfred's lament of the previous century, evidence of vernacular literacy need not exclude proficiency in Latin, at least among the clerical or monastic community.

43. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:96.

hanging nearby. The Breamore central tower has been a belfry from its earliest days, and this carving may have seemed an appropriate addition to the functional space. Boarhunt's wheat shafts near the Eucharistic center of the church and Breamore's rope moldings below the belfry evidence a subtlety among late Anglo-Saxon carvers. These craftsmen were seemingly comfortable enough with their stone-craft to embellish structural elements in ways that were iconographically appropriate, yet perhaps outside the realm of clergy or patron input required for a large, figural work.

Such a work can also be found at Breamore. The Breamore rood is one of only a handful of surviving examples, thought to be contemporaneous with that at Headbourne Worthy.⁴⁴ “Surviving” is perhaps a generous term, for all surface details of this sculpture were obliterated in the 1560's.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the remaining carving is a valuable example of Anglo-Saxon decorative sculpture (see illus. 27). The approximately five-foot tall cross⁴⁶ is carved in deep relief, framing the shallow relief of Christ. Christ is portrayed in a contorted position, his head surrounded by a nimbus⁴⁷ and angled to the

44. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:96; Fisher, *GASC*, 393. Additional examples can be found at Romsey, New Alesford, Langford, Daglingworth, and Wormington.

45. Light & Ponting, *Saxon Church of St. Mary's*, 7; Warwick J. Rodwell and E. Clive Rouse, “The Anglo-Saxon Rood and Other Features in the South Porch of St. Mary's Church, Breamore Hampshire,” *The Antiquaries Journal* 64:2 (1984): 312. Rodwell & Rouse blame Bishop Horne of Winchester for the defacement.

46. Rodwell & Rouse, “The Anglo-Saxon Rood,” 308.

47. *Ibid.*, 309-310. A recent investigation of the sculpture revealed small drill holes, one of which contained a wooden peg fragment with a green stain, thought to be from a copper alloy. Rodwell & Rouse interpreted this evidence to mean that the sculpture originally featured an attached nimbus, likely of gilded bronze. Small holes also appear near Christ's arms, possibly designed to secure metal bindings. These hypotheses are based on very slight evidence, but they are not outside the realm of possibility.

left, his body angled to the right. The *Manus Dei* reaches down from the clouds, and the sun and moon flank the cross. Mary is stationed on the right of the cross, John on the left; both figures appear to have had a nimbus framing their heads. Originally installed within the west annex, above the entrance to the nave, the rood scene was moved to the south exterior wall when the west annex was demolished in the fifteenth century.⁴⁸ The removal of the Breamore rood from its original position is not unusual, though such adjustments complicate our understanding of these sculptures' place in the daily life of the Anglo-Saxon church. Despite the demolition of the west annex and north *porticus*, the church at Breamore is a remarkably intact example of a late Anglo-Saxon minster.

The transeptal church of St. Mary's, Breamore marks a type of plan, but its components are too varied to define a regional style. Its whole flints are employed at Boarhunt and the sculpted rood is one of several survivals, yet the central belfry and Anglo-Saxon inscription are unique. The church of St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon, seemingly shares little with this building. Yet, the four-cell church is reminiscent of Breamore's transeptal plan, and surviving sculpted angels may once have flanked a rood. The similarities end there, however, with the lofty ashlar chapel in the midst of a bustling town.

Bradford-on-Avon

St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon, is a rare Anglo-Saxon example of a fully-coursed ashlar church (see illus. 28). The tall, four-cell church features exterior blind

48. Rodwell & Rouse, "The Anglo-Saxon Rood," 306; Light & Ponting, *Saxon Church of St. Mary's*, 6-7.

arcading, combining the height and compartmentalization of earlier Anglo-Saxon churches with decorative masonry more typically seen on the continent. The small church originally consisted of a nave, square chancel, and north and south *porticus*. Though the south *porticus* no longer survives, the discovery in 2000 of a possible south *porticus* crypt puts the chapel of St. Laurence in a class by itself. Such a crypt is apparently unique when compared with peer churches in England or on the continent, with the possible exception of Spain.⁴⁹ This singular church plan is evidence of English creativity, with a typical amalgamation of styles and inventions assembled in a unique way.

The church of St. Laurence is astonishingly tall for its footprint, rising 25 feet 3 inches in height with a nave measuring 25 feet 2 inches in length by 13 feet 2 inches in height (see illus. 29).⁵⁰ This height-width ratio of 1.9 is similar to Deerhurst,⁵¹ though the effect is more overwhelming in such a compact space. The original purpose of the chapel is a matter of debate, though it is clear that the tiny nave and tinier chancel would have served a small congregation, whether lay or monastic. All doorways in the building are narrow, and the exterior north door measures just over two feet in width.⁵² Though a procession would not be impossible through such a door, the narrow archways suggest a lower-traffic use for the site (see illus. 31). A temporary home for the relics of Edward

49. David A. Hinton, "The Missing South Porticus," St. Laurence's Chapel Bradford-on-Avon, <http://ay-avebury.soton.ac.uk/research/bradford/interpretations/missing.html> (accessed September 30, 2009).

50. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:89.

51. Taylor, "Anglo-Saxon Chapel at Bradford-on-Avon," 156.

52. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:89.

the Martyr, rather than a parish church or simple nunnery chapel, has been suggested.⁵³

The origins of the church of St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon, have been the subject of debate since its rediscovery in the mid-nineteenth century.⁵⁴ A foundation at Bradford was traditionally credited to Aldhelm, and William of Malmesbury assumed that the structure still standing in the twelfth century was in fact the same church, though his identification of the site is equivocal.⁵⁵ The destruction of Aldhelm's foundation at Bradford is not documented, and little is known of the site's history between the time of Aldhelm's ascension to the bishopric of Sherborne in 705 and its subsequent appearance in the documentary record in 1001. In that year, Æthelred II offered the monastery at Bradford to the nuns of Shaftesbury as a place of refuge for themselves and the relics of Edward the Martyr.⁵⁶ Such refuge could certainly have been offered in a three hundred year-old church, but the 1001 date has captured the imagination of recent architectural historians.

53. Edward Gilbert, "The Church of St. Laurence Bradford-on-Avon," *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* 62 (1967): 38-50.

54. W.H. Jones, *An Account of the Saxon Church of St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon* (Bath: William Lewis, 1878), 6. Jones was Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Bradford-on-Avon. The modern scholarly history of this little church does much to illustrate the progression of Anglo-Saxon church study. When Canon W.H. Jones "rediscovered" this church in 1857, it was in use as a school house and school master's residence, hidden beneath unsympathetic renovations and additions. Canon Jones' account of his "discovery" conveniently omits the fact that the chapel of St. Laurence is sited literally steps away from his own parish church, Holy Trinity (dedicated 1150). The fact that an Anglo-Saxon church could hide in plain sight for untold years is indicative of the broad assumptions regarding Saxon church survival.

55. William of Malmesbury, *GP*, v.198:2.

56. Kelley Wickham-Crowley, "Bradford," in *Medieval England: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, M. Teresa Tavormina, and Joel T. Rosenthal (New York: Garland, 1998), 141; Æthelred 32.S899 Granting Monastery to Shaftesbury," in *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk/pase/apps/Sources/CreateSourceFrames.jsp?sourceKey=1638> (accessed March 8, 2010). PASE translates the charter description as "King Æthelred to Shaftesbury Abbey; grant of the cenobium of Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts., with land at Bradford."

The sculptural style of the angel carvings supports a construction date c. 970, though they could be later additions (see illus. 32). Harold Taylor and Esther Jackson have each liked the angels to manuscript illustrations of the Winchester School, and it is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon church for such a demonstrably English style of decorative sculpture to coexist with blind arcading common to both Carolingian France and fourth-century Ravenna.⁵⁷ Such syncretistic adoption of decorative stonework, combined with a typically Anglo-Saxon height, twin *porticus*, and possibly a *porticus* crypt makes this building one of a kind. This lost *porticus* may provide the most essential clue to the building's original use.

In 2000, a team from the University of Southampton conducted an excavation of the south *porticus* footing in order to determine the likelihood of a crypt under this former side-chapel. J.T. Irvine suggested the possibility of such a crypt as early as 1864,⁵⁸ and excavations in 2000 confirmed the existence of dressed, coursed stone to a standing depth, indicating that the south *porticus* originally had a lower level.⁵⁹ The purpose of this lower level is a matter of conjecture, though it could have served as a secondary

57. Taylor, "Anglo-Saxon Chapel at Bradford-on-Avon," 158; Esther Jackson, *Art of the Anglo-Saxon Age: An Illustrated Study of England's Churches and Sculpture, A.D. 597-1066* (Peterborough, N.H.: R.R. Smith, 1964), 102. Taylor likens the carvings to illustrations found in the *Benedictional of St. Æthelwold*, while Jackson specifically links them to "King Edgar's Foundation Charter."

58. Hinton, "What was the excavation hoping to find?" St. Laurence's Chapel, <http://ay-avebury.soton.ac.uk/research/bradford/excavation/find.html> (accessed September 30, 2009). Irving advised on the restoration of the church.

59. Hinton, "How Far Down?" St. Laurence's Chapel, <http://ay-avebury.soton.ac.uk/research/bradford/excavation/down.html> (accessed September 30, 2009). This otherwise excellent web report neglects to note the measurement of the lower wall. Photographs suggest that the chamber was at least six feet in height.

shrine to Edward the Martyr, or home to other relics. If this lower-level chamber served as a *porticus* crypt, it is the only known example of the Anglo-Saxon era.⁶⁰ The University of Southampton's exciting discovery merits response by religious historians, both in terms of analogous crypt spaces and in terms of potential usage for such lower-level chambers. The results could have bearing on the use of multi-level *porticus* at Deerhurst and elsewhere.⁶¹

Like its peers, the chapel of St. Laurence can claim a unique aesthetic within a defined architectural vocabulary. More significantly, it may be the only surviving martyrial chapel of the Anglo-Saxon era. Matching lost form to lost function in a partially surviving church is a frustrating exercise, yet recent archaeological investigations indicate that much still remains to be discovered. Perhaps the most mysterious architectural component of the late Anglo-Saxon church is the west tower room, in evidence at Brixworth, Deerhurst, Bosham, and over thirty other contemporaneous churches.⁶² Western tower rooms and doorways may have served entirely religious uses, or they may have provided special seating for royal or noble patrons, as at Aachen. Though their use remains a matter of debate, the existence of multiple western rooms in the surviving tower at Bosham may speak to the church's complex liturgical life,

60. Hinton, "The Interior of the South *Porticus*," St. Laurence's Chapel, <http://ay-avebury.soton.ac.uk/research/bradford/interpretations/interior.html> (accessed September 30, 2009). Edward's own relics likely rested in a place of honor in the nave.

61. Ibid. Hinton notes parallels between the two-level *porticus* at Bradford and Deerhurst, but does not explicitly suggest that the Bradford structure may simply be a two-story *porticus*, half-buried. Considering the significant slope of the Bradford site, this should be reserved as a possibility.

62. Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Towers*, 94.

demanding patron, or both.

Bosham

Well known as the chapel of Harold Godwinson, the church of the Holy Trinity, Bosham, has undergone significant renovations since its commemoration in the Bayeux Tapestry.⁶³ Though the church of Holy Trinity, Bosham is a partial survival of the Anglo-Saxon era, it is important for its essential floorplan and its well-preserved, multi-chambered west tower. Only the west tower and westernmost portion of the chancel are early eleventh-century work, but the later medieval nave occupies essentially the same plan as its predecessor, with the addition of side aisles.⁶⁴ The surviving western tower simultaneously suggests religious, aristocratic, and defensive uses, perhaps common to other church towers in late Anglo-Saxon England.

Church towers were unknown in England until after the Viking invasions, though bell towers are known in Italy and France in the ninth and tenth centuries, respectively.⁶⁵

63. ArtStor, www.artstor.org (accessed December 2, 2009). Though the church depicted on the tapestry is certainly stylized, it may offer clues to the church's pre-Conquest appearance. The image of *Bosham Ecclesia* features a rounded archway with internally-projecting imposts, similar to the surviving west tower arch. The entrance is flanked by what appear to be turrets; nine round-headed windows appear over the arched entrance. The church is covered by a tiled roof, topped with two crosses. Surprisingly, Bosham's tower is not referenced at all. Though the surviving building fabric makes it unclear whether turrets, tiles, or roof crosses were present at the actual Bosham church, the tapestry offers a possible version of the church's pre-Conquest appearance. It is also possible that the tapestry artisan intended to represent a generic church rather than document the specific architectural features at Bosham.

64. Tim Tatton-Brown, "A New Survey of the Fabric of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Bosham, West Sussex," in *The Church of the Holy Trinity, Bosham: Recent Historical Surveys, 1990-2006* (King's Lynn, Norfolk: Heritage Marketing & Publications Ltd., 2007), 52. Tatton-Brown assumes that the church was aisle-less and featured a square chancel, though these details have not been confirmed archaeologically.

65. Fernie, *AAS*, 135.

Though historians have long assumed that England was a mere consumer of continental architectural trends, the surviving towers of the Anglo-Saxon era have a distinctive appearance. Neither the Italian freestanding belltower nor the twin western tower, common to Carolingian France, are represented in surviving Anglo-Saxon churches. Single towers, however, are featured in approximately one hundred such structures.⁶⁶ Within this group, over 30 feature upper-level western tower openings facing the nave.⁶⁷ The single western tower may therefore be the most common defining characteristic of a post-Viking era English church. The appearance of tower-nave openings in at least a third of the surviving examples may mark an architectural sub-genre, though a consensus has not yet emerged regarding the use of these rooms.⁶⁸ These tower openings are found throughout late Anglo-Saxon England, yet their appearance has not been correlated to a church's status as a monastic house, local church, or house of secular clergy.

Reminiscent of the western tower at Deerhurst, Bosham features a large ground-floor arch, first floor chamber with triangular-headed opening and adjacent squint, and second floor chamber with a round-headed opening (see illus. 34). Of more than thirty surviving western towers with upper-level nave openings, only two are located in Sussex. Bosham and Singleton, less than nine miles apart, are the only late Anglo-Saxon churches

66. Taylor, *ASA* 3:887. Taylor counts 99 extant towers, of which 83 are sited at the west end.

67. Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Towers*, 94; Taylor, *ASA* 3:827.

68. Taylor, *ASA* 3:827; Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Towers*, 88-91. Taylor has tentatively identified tower rooms as chapels, scriptoria, treasuries, libraries, or dormitories; Fisher suggests that they could include a sacristan's dwelling if a space exists between the ringing chamber and the ground floor. The current state of the rooms makes it impossible to confirm their intended function.

outside the former Mercia and Northumbria to include this feature. More specifically, only Bosham and Deerhurst have openings at more than one level.⁶⁹ This seemingly Mercian style in a Sussex church may be the result of a common builder or, more likely, reveals the extent to which builders throughout Britain adopted useful styles regardless of provenance. As at Deerhurst, the ground floor and first floor segments of the Bosham tower likely date to an earlier construction phase than that of the upper floors. Michael Hare describes this first construction phase at Bosham not as a tower but as a two-story western *porticus*; the upper chamber likely contained a chapel.⁷⁰ At the first floor level, the triangular-headed door originally led to a timber gallery supported by wooden columns, perhaps originally used by dignitaries such as Godwin.⁷¹ The adjacent rectangular squint may be a later insertion,⁷² though the appearance of a squint next to a larger tower opening recalls the arrangement at Deerhurst.

69. Taylor, *ASA* 3:826, table 22. Though Brixworth shows evidence of a blocked arch between the ground-level doorway and the triple-arched room, these rooms were not in simultaneous use: once the tower was raised, the original first-floor room was no longer required.

70. Michael Hare, "Tower & Spire," *Bosham Life* March, April, May 1973 [n.p.]; Fred G. Aldsworth, "Recent Observations on the Tower of Holy Trinity Church, Bosham" in *Sussex Archaeological Collections Relating to the History and Antiquities of the County* 128 (1990): 57. Aldsworth is skeptical of Hare's *porticus* assertion, though he does acknowledge a change in building materials from stone to flint at approximately this level. Following Deerhurst's example, a two-story western *porticus* seems a likely possibility.

71. Joan Langhorne, Bosham church archivist, pers. comm. Godwin was lord of the secular manor of Bosham, which was separate from the ecclesiastical manor of Bosham. The gallery was removed in the mid-nineteenth century.

72. Aldsworth, "Recent Observations on the Tower of Holy Trinity," 62. Aldsworth dates this opening to the later medieval period.

Bosham's fortress-like tower presiding over an active waterfront suggests a defensive use, though exact functions of Anglo-Saxon architectural features are incredibly difficult to prove (see illus. 35). The appearance of the western tower in England in the tenth century, after a period of war and destruction, suggests a defensive function for this architectural element. However, Fisher, Taylor, and Fernie point out that the typical wooden floors between each stage of an Anglo-Saxon tower would result in a “death trap” for those seeking refuge.⁷³ Sited overlooking the quay, Bosham's tower may have served as the perfect look-out for ships entering Bosham Channel, even if the structure was intended primarily for religious use.

Though used as a college of canons from the early twelfth century, Holy Trinity was initially built as a church for use by the local population.⁷⁴ The exact foundation date is unknown, though the most recent survey of the fabric assigns a construction date in the early- to mid-eleventh century. This date makes Godwin the most likely patron of the late Anglo-Saxon church, and key patronage was doubtless the reason for the church's size and substantial tower.⁷⁵ This building may have replaced an earlier church credited to Wilfrid, which in turn may have replaced an unsuccessful mission attempted by Dicul.⁷⁶

73. Fisher, *Anglo-Saxon Towers*, 85; Fernie, *AAS*, 132 (citing Taylor).

74. Langhorne, pers. comm.

75. Tatton-Brown, “A New Survey,” 52.

76. Bede, *HE* IV:13. While in exile, Wilfrid preached to the South Saxons. Bede notes that these people were unfamiliar with Christianity, despite the efforts of “a Scots monk named Dicul, who had a very small monastery at a place called Bosanham, surrounded by woods and sea, where five or six brothers served the Lord in a life of humility and poverty: but none of the natives was willing to follow their way or life or listen to their teaching.”

Unfortunately, evidence of neither structure has been discovered.⁷⁷ If Wilfrid's churches at Ripon and Hexham are predictive of his church design efforts at Bosham, the original stone church on the site may have included an elaborate crypt. Yet, Bosham's in-depth vertical study has not been matched by below-ground excavation. A complete excavation of the Bosham church site could do much to answer questions regarding the continuity of Christian life from the early through late Anglo-Saxon era. Dicul's Celtic mission site and Wilfrid's presumably grander church are known only from Bede, and the destruction of the latter is unrecorded. The probability of Danish attack on an accessible quayside church is high, though the level of destruction may not have been complete. Post-Viking patronage was clearly responsible for the standing fabric, but the chronology of construction, partial or full destruction, and rebuilding can best be known through in-depth excavation. The surviving fabric is a testament to lordly patronage, likely building upon an established foundation. The presumed patronage of Godwin toward this large minster church was part of a long tradition of minster support by top nobles; by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, Bosham was one of the wealthiest minsters in England.⁷⁸ Yet, Godwin's large-scale generosity had contemporary, smaller-scale analogues. By the late Anglo-Saxon era, lesser nobles were able to afford sponsorship of stone churches for use by their household and surrounding community. These local churches incorporated

77. Tatton-Brown, "A New Survey," 41. Tatton-Brown makes the suggestion that Dicul's monastery was likely constructed of timber but says little about Wilfrid's church, likely built c. 681. Tatton-Brown admits that very little is known of the site until the mid-eleventh century.

78. Richard Gem, "Holy Trinity Church, Bosham," *The Archaeological Journal* 142 (1985): 33. Gem notes that the Domesday Book values Bosham at 147 hides, though he suggests that the minster's true worth could have been even higher.

established architectural elements on a small scale, continuing the tradition of Anglo-Saxon eclecticism and local adaptation.

Boarhunt

St. Nicholas, Boarhunt is a classic two-cell field church of the late Anglo-Saxon era (see illus. 36). The simple floor plan echoes the possible Romano-British example of St. Martin's, Canterbury, as well as the early Anglo-Saxon church at Escomb. The shape of the church is not revolutionary, but its appearance on a thegn's land marks the beginning of a new era for the Anglo-Saxon church. The church of St. Nicholas, Boarhunt, seems a commonplace example of the two-cell Anglo-Saxon church, but its use of local building materials and subtle decorative carving sets it apart from its contemporaries.

The exterior of the church is partially rendered, and evidence of original flint construction can be found along the north and south walls, where sections of render have been lost. The effect of the exposed flint is striking, and provides a regional variation on the simple two-cell church (see illus. 37). Flints are plentiful in southern England, and are still unearthed when land in the area is cleared.⁷⁹ Other exterior details of note include a single string course and pilaster strip at the east end, and one remaining double-splayed Anglo-Saxon window, now blocked (see illus. 38 and 39). This window is cut from a single slab of stone, resulting in a small aperture and almost overwhelming solidity. If

79. Paul Harbord, Boarhunt church warden, pers. comm.

this window contained glass, it would have been placed in the center of the opening, at the smallest point of the double-splay.⁸⁰ Though the window is blocked, its carved wheat ornamentation survives.⁸¹ This carving, perhaps referencing the bread of the Eucharist, echoes the locationally appropriate rope carving below Breamore's belfry. This iconographic treatment of St. Nicholas' only surviving pre-Conquest window indicates a high level of craftsmanship and care, even in a small and isolated thegn's church.

Though the exact foundation date is unconfirmed, St. Nicholas, Boarhunt clearly represents a noble's field church of the pre-Conquest era. In fact, it is one of only three churches in England still operating as a donative peculiar. In this arrangement, the squire of the manor directly appoints the vicar: the local bishop does not have authority over this church. The church building, village, and thousands of acres surrounding the settlement are all owned and managed by the squire, resulting in a rare modern version of the Anglo-Saxon thegn's church.⁸²

The proliferation of small churches may be traced to the division of estates into smaller manors. As a church became a symbol of the upwardly-mobile noble, every thegn wanted one.⁸³ In fact, by the eleventh century, a ceorl could be promoted to a thegn by

80. J.T. Irvine, "Description of the Saxon Church of Boarhunt, in Hampshire," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 33 (1877): 374.

81. The church guidebook (*St. Nicholas' Church, South Boarhunt, Hampshire*, 2) echoes Irvine ("Description of the Saxon Church of Boarhunt," 379) in describing this carving as cable-moulding or braided work, but it bears a much closer resemblance to shafts of wheat. Considering its location in the chancel, such a communion motif would not be out of place. Taylor & Taylor agree with this interpretation (Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:77).

82. Paul Harbord, pers. comm.

83. Blair, *CASS*, 370.

possession of five hides of land, a church, a bell-house, a kitchen, and a seat in the king's hall.⁸⁴ This adoption of the estate church trailed similar practices on the continent by centuries, suggesting that the English felt free to dismiss continental trends if they did not suit local needs. Bertha's private chapel at Canterbury, for example, would have been a common sight in her native Francia in the late sixth century, yet the private oratory remained rare in England for over two hundred years.⁸⁵ The late Anglo-Saxon era featured a proliferation of local churches, as well as the rebuilding of earlier timber field churches in stone.⁸⁶ With the rise of lesser nobility in the late Anglo-Saxon era, a thegn wishing to make his mark might order the construction of a manor church in stone. He would then appoint the priest, creating a permanent worship site for use by the thegn's family and tenants.⁸⁷ A modified use continues today, as St. Nicholas remains an active worship site for the surrounding community under patronage of the local squire.

Odda's Chapel

Odda's Chapel, Deerhurst, is also a two-celled example of a late Anglo-Saxon thegn's church. Included among Wessex ecclesiastic examples due to its construction date, this small church was built on land subdivided from the minster domain of St. Mary's, Deerhurst. The small church is significant for its patron's appropriation of half the

84. "A Compilation on Status," in *EHD*, 468.

85. Blair, *CASS*, 71, 75, 149, 152. The local, estate-based oratories popular in Francia and Ireland were not adopted by the English in the early Christian period.

86. Blair, *CASS*, 456.

87. Blair, *CASS*, 385-395. Blair suggests that stone manor churches do not appear in any numbers until the eleventh century, which is consistent with Boarhunt's reputed late Anglo-Saxon date.

land of the established minster, and for its association of God's house with a “royal hall.” Dedicated in 1056, it is one of the few Anglo-Saxon churches with a confirmed foundation date, known as a result of an inscription discovered in an adjacent orchard in the late seventeenth century (see illus. 40). The tablet reads: “Earl Odda had this royal hall built and dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity for the soul of his brother Ælfric which left the body in this place. Bishop Ealdred dedicated it on the second of the Ides of April in the fourteenth year of the reign of Edward King of the English.”⁸⁸ As John Higgitt notes, “royal hall” likely refers to heavenly kingship rather than to a secular group of buildings with a church.⁸⁹ Yet, this understanding of God as a high king with a worthy hall marks a continuity of culture from the early through the late Anglo-Saxon periods. Odda's Chapel is at once an exercise in noble status-building and acknowledgement of God's status as the chief ring-giver and King of Kings.

By the end of the Anglo-Saxon era, not only had the minster at Deerhurst lost a large portion of land, but the new landowner had supervised construction of his very own stone church. This architectural progression indicates a religious shift away from the regional minster toward the local church. This shift also marked the accessibility of masonry architecture to more worshipers.⁹⁰ Yet within this growth remained an architectural conservatism. The late Anglo-Saxon two-celled churches at Boarhunt and

88. Taylor & Taylor, *ASA* 1:209. Translated from the original Latin.

89. John Higgitt, *Odda, Orm and Others: Patrons and Inscriptions in Later Anglo-Saxon England*, Deerhurst Lecture 1999 (Friends of Deerhurst Church, 2004), 3-5.

90. Blair, *CASS*, 457. Blair suggests that these appealing new buildings helped draw worshipers away from minsters.

Deerhurst share a floorplan with early churches at Escomb and Kirk Hammerton, while the essential design came to define the small, local church of the late Anglo-Saxon era.⁹¹ Within the established architectural vocabulary of Anglo-Saxon builders, these small churches were a return to origins. Perhaps, without the Norman upheaval, these small churches would have begun the cycle anew, adding rounded or polygonal apses, flanking *porticus*, crypts, or even multi-room towers. The Conquest, however, made these little churches an architectural coda. The Norman churches and their emerging parish landscape introduced new architectural forms and new sculptural innovations within a centralized church hierarchy. The eclecticism of the Anglo-Saxon church had been reigned in at last.

91. Taylor, *ASA* 3:982-993. Taylor identifies over twenty churches with a confirmed two-cell plan, though many more may remain unexcavated or hidden beneath later additions.

CONCLUSION

The essential uniqueness of each Anglo-Saxon church is a reflection of its culture's initial political decentralization, lack of institutional religious identity, and its willingness to deconstruct and appropriate useful forms regardless of their source. This synthesis, coupled with a holistic approach to the secular and the sacred, gives Anglo-Saxon churches a unique character. This character was a result of the deliberate acceptance or rejection of selected elements of the Christian tradition and its associated architecture, according to the needs of the Anglo-Saxon converts.

This selective approach to conversion and monastic tradition vitally informed the construction of Anglo-Saxon churches. As a ring-giving lord must live in a sumptuous hall, the life-giving Lord must dwell in a truly unique structure. In a society where descent from the gods and personal honor were prime qualifiers for leadership,¹ the person of Christ was well-placed to demand respect. Yet, even Christ and his disciples were remade in the image of the Germanic peoples. The twelve are recast in *Andreas* as “thanes of God ... heroes foremost on earth ... brave-hearted leaders ... bold in strife.”² The disciples are not Roman imports, but reinvented warriors designed to inspire the poem's listeners. Similarly, Anglo-Saxon builders, patrons, and religious leaders appropriated continental building forms in ways which were unique and suited to their

1. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 37.

2. *Andreas*, in *Early English Christian Poetry*, trans. Charles W. Kennedy (New York: Galaxy, 1963), lines 3-7. A similar portrayal can be found in the continental Saxon Gospel, *The Heliand*.

own culture. The Anglo-Saxons did not assume the supremacy of Roman culture, but seemingly viewed it as a peer society from which to adapt usable ideas.

As Christ secured his place as the high king above the *Bretwaldas*, church builders naturally made distinctions for his worship space. Charles McClendon is one of many scholars who describe the use of stone construction as a legitimizing measure among Germanic peoples,³ but the use of masonry construction may have been more an acknowledgement of God's need for a superior royal hall than any attempt to align the church with Roman orthodoxy. Though not all early English churches were made of stone, there are no surviving stone secular buildings from the Anglo-Saxon era. This reluctance to usurp God's building materials for secular use is unique to the Germanic peoples. The Apostle Peter's description of Christ as the rejected building stone⁴ must have taken on particular resonance for the author of the *Advent Lyrics*:

Thou art the wall-stone	the workers rejected
Of old from the work.	It befits thee well
That thou shouldst be Head	of the glorious hall
Locking together	the lengthy walls,
The flint unbroken,	in a firm embrace,
That ever on earth	the eyes of all
May look in wonder	on the Lord of glory. ⁵

The special status of stone church buildings is reflected in this poem. Although many churches were built of wood, the lack of stone secular structures emphasizes the

3. McClendon, *Origins*, 35.

4. 1 Peter 2:7.

5. *Advent*, in *Early English Christian Poetry*, lines 1-7.

importance of stone as a material reserved for the house of God. Stone building methods, introduced by the Romans, became identified with the highest-status King on the island.

Anglo-Saxon church buildings are the architectural expression of a society that incorporated elements of neighboring cultures while reinterpreting them in sophisticated ways. The syncretistic culture of the Anglo-Saxons not only enabled them to appropriate building forms from Roman and Germanic sources, it encouraged local experimentation with architectural elements. While it is possible to recognize this common aesthetic, the definition of an Anglo-Saxon building style is often thwarted by a failure to view architecture within its complete cultural context. Although Romans, Carolingians, and Anglo-Saxons all built stone churches, the cultural heritage of each society necessarily informed a building's significance.

APPENDIX: ILLUSTRATIONS



Illustration 1. All Saints, Brixworth. South elevation. The large arches, composed of reused Roman brick, originally led to porticus extending into today's church yard.



Illustration 2. All Saints, Brixworth. View of nave, choir, and chancel. Incense from a recent service still hangs in the air.



Illustration 3. All Saints, Brixworth. North elevation of apse, with view of ring crypt.



Illustration 4. All Saints, Brixworth. Ruined ring crypt with purported burial niche.



Illustration 5. All Saints, Brixworth. Interior view, nave and west tower.



Illustration 6. All Saints, Brixworth. West tower and stair turret.



Illustration 7. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. South elevation.



Illustration 8. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Beast head, or prokrossus, above west front door.



Illustration 9. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Beast-head carving on the north side of the west interior door. Note traces of polychrome along the mouth.

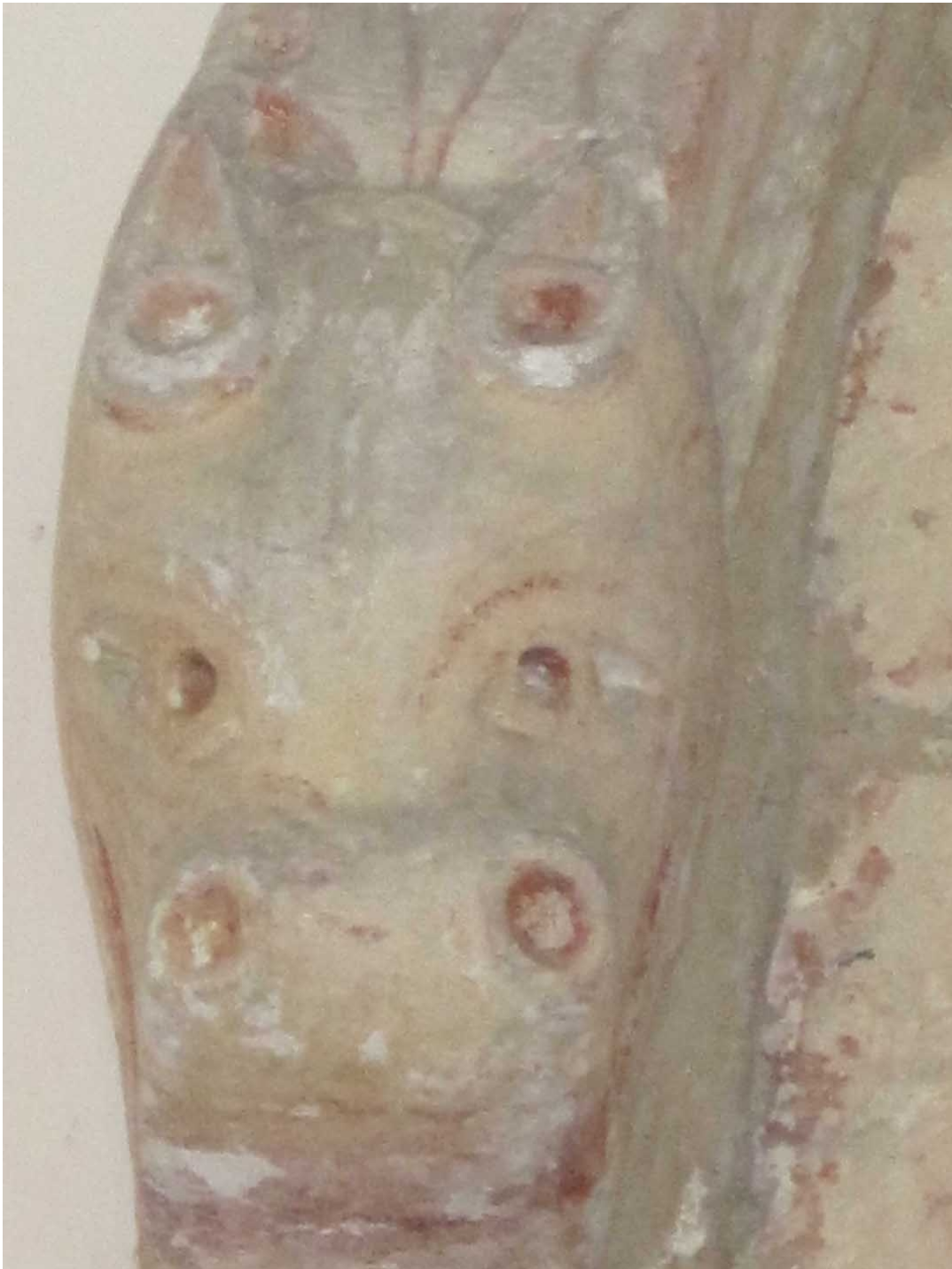


Illustration 10. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. North beast head, chancel arch. Note excellent level of paint preservation on the creature's face.



Illustration 11. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Virgin and child carving above nave entrance.



Illustration 12. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Angel carving on the sole surviving side of the polygonal apse.



Illustration 13. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Looking east toward former choir, which now serves as the chancel. Note blocked chancel arch with beast head label mold terminations. First-floor porticus doorways remain to the north and south of the choir (chancel), and triangular squints overlook the nave. The pointed arches and eastern window are later medieval insertions.



Illustration 14. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. West tower openings, from the nave. The blocked first-floor doorway probably led to a nave gallery, while the adjacent squint may have aided in synchronization of worship activities. The triangular-headed opening fronts a likely second-floor chapel, no longer in use.



Illustration 15. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Surviving doorways of the two-story north porticus. The lower doorway is blocked and shortened by later chancel benches.



Illustration 16. St. Mary's, Deerhurst. Ruined apse.



Illustration 17. All Saints, Wing. Apse from the east. Note the blind arcading, with triangular pediments above.



Illustration 18. All Saints, Wing. Crypt interior with rubble vaulting.



Illustration 19. All Saints, Wing. Chancel arch with round-headed Saxon windows, above. Note the plaster offset at the clerestory level, suggesting the possibility of a later building stage or perhaps an intermediate floor below the nave roof.



Illustration 20. St. Nicholas, Worth. Double windows on the north nave, with massive baluster shafts. Note also the outline of the former doorway, immediately opposite the surviving tall, narrow doorway on the south wall.



Illustration 21. St. Nicholas, Worth. South doorway with later medieval door.



Illustration 22. St. Nicholas, Wing. Chancel arch and flanking porticus arches.



Illustration 23. St. Nicholas, Worth. View from south porticus looking into north porticus. Note that these transeptal arms define discreet spaces, unlike later transepts which converge in the crossing square.



Illustration 24. St. Mary's, Breamore. View from the southeast.



Illustration 25. St. Mary's, Breamore. View from the nave, looking east into the choir and chancel.



Illustration 26. St. Mary's, Breamore. South porticus arch with Old English inscription and cable molding.



Illustration 27. St. Mary's, Breamore. Anglo-Saxon rood sculpture, mutilated during the Reformation.



Illustration 28. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. South elevation. A scar indicates the location of the roofline of the former south porticus.



Illustration 29. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. Nave looking east toward chancel. The walls rise more than 25 feet in height, while the nave is only 13 feet wide.



Illustration 30. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. Looking east through chancel arch.



Illustration 31. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. View from nave through north porticus.



Illustration 32. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. North angel carving.



Illustration 33. St. Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon. Southeast elevation with pilaster strips, string courses, and blind arcading.



Illustration 34. Holy Trinity, Bosham. West tower from the nave. Note two levels of tower rooms overlooking the nave.



Illustration 35. Holy Trinity, Bosham. Tower, north elevation. Note the modern exterior render, approximating the original exterior finish.



Illustration 36. St. Nicholas, Boarhunt. Southeast elevation.



Illustration 37. St. Nicholas, Boarhunt. Detail of knapped flints.



Illustration 38. St. Nicholas, Boarhunt. East end, featuring string course and pilaster strip.



Illustration 39. St. Nicholas, Boarhunt. Blocked chancel window. Note the delicate wheat carving.

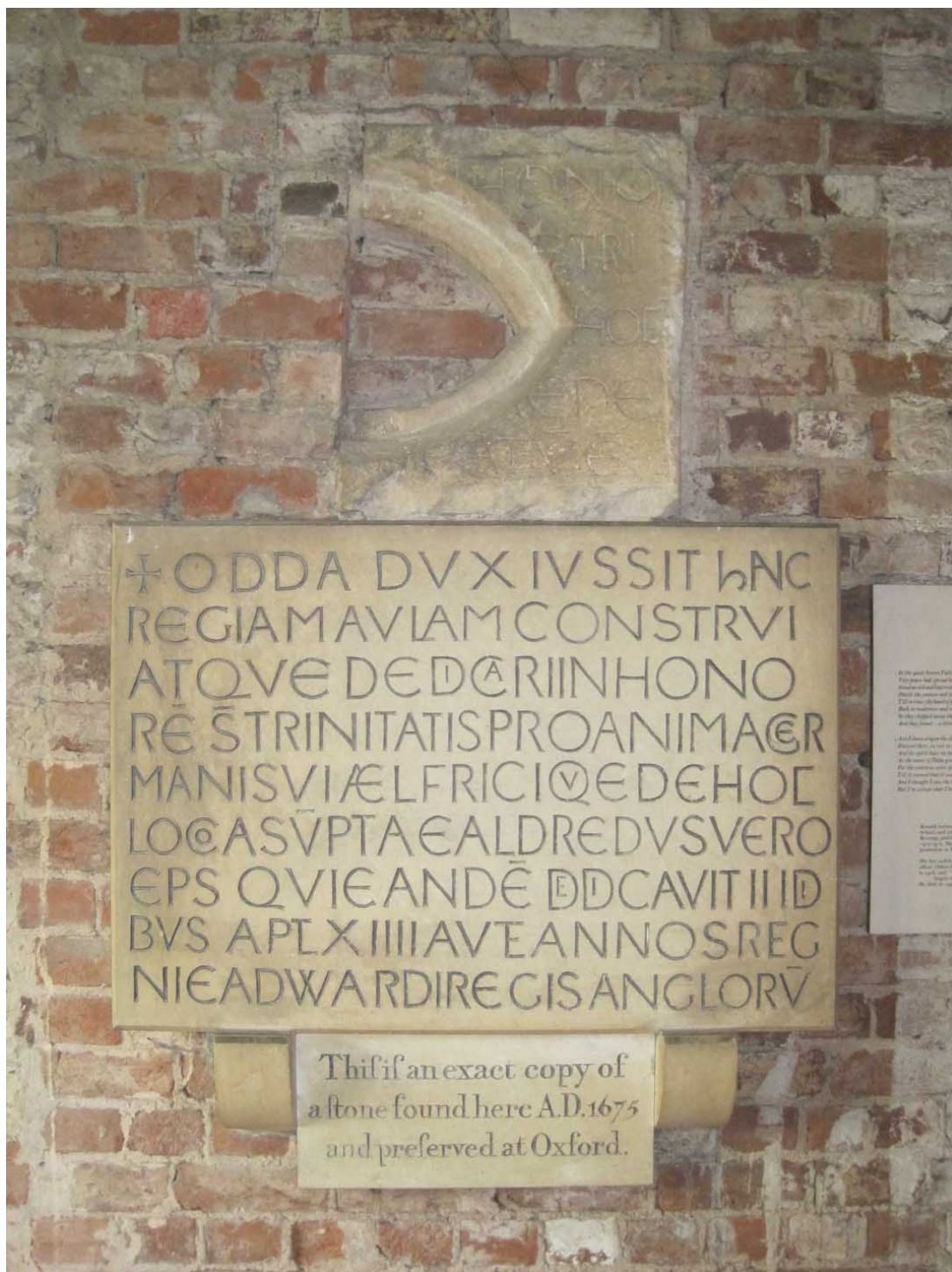


Illustration 40. Odde's Chapel, Deerhurst. Replica of dedication inscription.



Illustration 41. Odda's Chapel, Deerhurst. Chancel arch. Floor joists of the later domestic addition are visible in the former chancel.

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