
Boreham, Essex

Bopham

Church of St Andrew

Church fabric

Grid refTL 755 096

Date

Norman tower, probably on Anglo-Saxon chancel with vestiges of original chancel arch – probably period C

Taylor

Guidebook

“The appearance from the street is most curious – more curious than beautiful”.

Pevsner: The Buildings of England: Essex: 1954.

St Andrew's, Boreham has many beautiful corners in it, and there are many places outside which afford beautiful views of it, but Professor Pevsner's description, quoted above, is certainly true. The reason for this oddness is the development of the Church from a simple two-roomed building of Saxon times, to the complexity of the six or seven rooms of the present building, including a central tower.

There is a fair amount of information in Domesday Book about Boreham, but no mention of a church. This is often the case in that survey, even of places where we have certain knowledge that there was a church in Saxon times. There may have been a timber church in Boreham, there certainly was a stone one.

Remains of the Saxon Church are still to be seen in the quoins of Roman bricks forming the east end of the nave, north and south. There are also to be seen Roman brick quoins forming the north and south corners of the Chancel (the present Tower). Inside there is a more notable Saxon feature in the great Chancel Arch, 20' high and 10' across, largely constructed of Roman brick. Another Saxon arch is the niche, again of Roman brick, to the north of the Chancel Arch. There is probably another to the south. These were all built in the latest Saxon period, that is, in the early part of C11.

The Normans appear to have enlarged the Church. They thickened the walls of the Saxon Chancel and raised them to form a Tower. Inside, the doorway to the Ringing Chamber, now sealed, is through a Norman Arch. They also cut through the east wall of the Saxon Chancel, extending the Church some unknown distance to the east. There is a simple Norman Arch in this wall. Over the present

Chancel Arch can be seen a second small Norman doorway. There is another in the east wall, not visible inside the Church. The windows on the ground floor of the Tower are very likely the original Saxon work.

In the early C13 the present Nave was built, inside the Saxon wall. It is 60' long and 17' wide. ...

In 1911 extensive restoration was carried out. The roof of the Nave was entirely reconstructed. It was at this time that the great Saxon Chancel Arch was discovered, and the smaller Saxon arch to the north of it. In this latter is built a stone cap from which the Chancel Arch sprang, and a C15 piscina, or perhaps rather, niche or little cupboard.

The original foundation of the north wall of the Nave, probably the Saxon one, was discovered in 1969. It was 3'3" deep and 2'6" wide (at least). It is outside the present line of arches and pillars. At this time too the Saxon arch was completely uncovered.

*From William J. T. Smith:
More Curious than Beautiful,
A history-guide to Boreham, St. Andrew, Essex:
Home Words, 9 City Garden Row,
N1, 1969.*