

Bosham, Sussex

Bojanham

Church of the Holy Trinity, original dedication unknown.

Grid refSU 804 039

Church fabric

Date

Anglo Saxon tower, much of nave, W third of chancel.

Fisher

Main fabric consisting of W tower, nave, chancel arch, W part of chancel walls – period C3.

Taylor

Dated to reign of Edward the Confessor by Baldwin Brown, but could be earlier, or replacement of earlier A/S ch. on same site .

No evidence for suggested Romano-British basilica on this site.

Church and Harold Godwinsson's departure from it depicted on Bayeux tapestry.

Very rich church – Domesday book records that in Edward's time it was worth £300 and owned 116 hides land (usual church endowment recorded in D.B. about 1 hide).

Plan

Church set out in Anglo-Saxon manner: no corner is right angle, no two walls parallel or of equal length and (lengthened) chancel diverges to S of nave axis by 3' 4½".

Walls thin and reg. thickness 2' 6": large rubble with wide joints.

Tower

rQ. irregularly sized up-&-flat slabs: one upright in SW quoin more than 3' tall and has rough tooling, probably by axe, not chisel. Flats run far into wall, at least one for about 3' 7" another for 5' 9". No plinth.

Four stages with string-course between lower three. Wooden steeple not original. W wall 20' 4½" wide on exterior. Interior width approximately 15' 4" at W end and about 16' at E end. Approximately 3' longer E – W than N – S might suggest a porch tower but no evidence for this – there are Anglo-Saxon non-porch towers with longer axes E-W (c.f. LEDSHAM, MIDDLETON-BY-PICKERING WHARRAM-LE-STREET) though it is unusual. Ground stage has round-head double-splayed window in N & S walls: each head of 7 voussoirs. Jambs are of 3 slabs each – flat, upright, flat with

top flat serving as impost. No V doorway or other opening in W wall of this stage.

Second stage has single round-head windows in N, W & S walls, similar to but taller and narrower than those below.

3rd stage W wall has single tall, blocked round-head window, very worn – on S and N were original double round-head openings of usual Anglo-Saxon belfry type with heads of 10 real voussoirs, each with centre voussoir common to both heads. Each jamb of 3 flats and 2 very tall uprights, the top flats serving as imposts. The original belfry openings now blocked and modern neo-Gothic double windows inserted in blockings.

Fourth stage. In W is original double opening of belfry type, with round-head of 4 voussoirs to each half-central straight shaft with capital brought to roughly circular form below by means of chamfered edges: plain necking below capital. Central and jamb imposts are thin, square slabs. The base to shaft-like capital is reversed and stands on thin, square stone, like impost above. Jambs of roughly square slabs in no particular arrangement. Openings in N, S and B walls modern neo-Gothic.

Tower arch. Fine: 6' 11" wide × 8' 8" to lower side of imposts. Head of voussoirs in 2 rings with rubble filling between rings: lowest three arch stones each side are not voussoirs, but flat stones running further into walls than very even voussoirs above and cut to appropriate shape on soffit ends. The sloping of joints to a common centre begins at the fourth stone above the imposts. Arch-head slightly horse-shoed and set back slightly behind jamb soffit faces. Jambs of 6 uprights and very long flats each, top flat immediately below impost. Uprights are through stones, flats are three per course. Imposts are hollow, chamfered on soffit ends only and not returned along the walls.

Above the tower arch about 18' above the floor is a large gable-head opening cut straight through the wall, i.e. with no splay. It now contains glass but is original doorway opening from the second stage of the tower to a gallery across W end of nave as similar opening at DEERHURST. The gallery was removed in mid-C19. The doorway was possibly originally for gallery but more probably intended as means of ingress to second stage of tower,

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possibly by ladder from nave (many other examples).

To the S of this doorway is a small rectangular opening made of a massive monolithic lintel and sill and two thinner upright stones as jambs.

Above and slightly to the N of the gable-head doorway is fairly large round-head opening with no dressings: sill 29' above floor, level with top of nave walls, probably giving ingress to an inter-roof space or chamber above nave.

Nave

56' long × about 23' wide, and high, 29' to the eaves.

Quoins different to tower quoins: square, large slabs in no particular arrangement. Three circular, single-splayed, original windows high up in N wall. Small grave at E end near chancel steps traditionally said to be of young daughter of Canute: opened 04/08/1865 by Rev. H. Mitchel. It contained the skeleton of a young girl of about 8 years of age, but no grave clothes or object to provide positive identification.

Chancel

Nearly as high as nave and about 18' wide: diverges to S of nave axis by 3' 4½".

Only the W third is Anglo-Saxon. The next third is Norman. The E third late C12. The three parts are evident on the interior through differences in walling. The Norman section has some herring-bone.

The Anglo-Saxon and Norman parts are stated to have had apse.

In N wall of the Anglo-Saxon part are the remains of an original single-splayed window with round-head of selected stones, not voussoirs: jambs also of selected rubble with no imposts.

Chancel Arch

Very fine – one of the finest in the country.

Distance between plinths 9' 5": plinths protrude from walls about 2' 6", so width of opening behind dressings is about 14' 5". Height 20' to square abaci. Centrally placed in chancel W wall and therefore a little S of centre viewed from nave.

It is taller and wider than the tower arch, late Anglo-Saxon design and not necessarily of the same date as the main fabric.

Soffit rolls and normal angle shafts running up jambs and around head. Bases and caps.

complicated and alike, but the members of the capitals are thinner than those of the bases.

The jambs stand on two huge plinths, of which the lower one is square-cut, measures 4' E-W, rather less N-S and is 8" thick. The upper one is a circular disc 3' 6" in diameter, 8" high with jamb round edge: stated to be re-used Roman stones but there is no evidence for this origin, and Baldwin Brown considered them characteristically Anglo-Saxon. On the plinth stands the actual base of the column: a tall, circular, chamfered base, 8" high with two quirks. Above that is a flat faced band (kind of wide necking) 6" high, chamfered above and below between two quirks.

The capitals are similar to the bases reversed. Sc. similar round-edge disc and square-cut abacus above.

Segmental strip-work hood-mould round arch-head on both E and W faces: unusually both faces are similar.

Note: QUIRK = Acute hollow between convex part of a moulding and the soffit or fillet. C.O.D.

Church Guide Book

The church of Dicul, of King Canute, of Earl Godwin, of King Harold, of the Domesday Book, and of the Bayeux Tapestry. The "oldest site of Christianity in Sussex". Here men have worshipped God through Jesus Christ for over 1600 years. When St Wilfrid came down from Yorkshire to convert Sussex to Christianity in 681 he found an Irish monk called Dicul and five others already here. The site of this little missionary monastery was possibly our crypt. There grew out of Dicul's little church a larger building, and about 1020 Canute began the existing church. He probably built our present tower and the rectangular building outlined by our present nave (the aisles were added later). The chancel was then about one-third its present length.

Here is a Saxon church, on Roman and British foundations. Kneel for a moment and pray with the invisible host. And may the peace of God rule in your heart.

The Great Chancel Arch.

Saxon. At the foot are the stones of the original Roman basilica (AD 350) and Roman tiles and bricks may be seen in the walls. The arch is shown in the Bayeux Tapestry with King Harold entering before his voyage to Normandy. Immediately below the pavement at the centre lie two great stone coffins.

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(uncovered when the present floor was laid in 1954). One, a magnificent apsidal headed coffin containing the bones of a strong man: the other, a 7" thick coffin of a child traditionally believed to be a daughter of King Canute buried here in 1020.

The Rev. H. Mitchell wrote: "On 4 August 1865, I directed the masons who were at work on the church to sound the spot which tradition states was the site of the child's grave. The iron bar at once struck upon a stone and on our removing the mould which covered it, a stone coffin was presented to our delighted gaze. When the lid was raised, the remains of the child were distinctly visible. From the size of the body the child must have been as handed down by tradition, about 8 years old."

To the right is the commemorative tablet with the black raven of Denmark, Canute's badge.

The Chancel

One-third Saxon, one-third Norman (herring-bone masonry).

The Tower.

Saxon, c. 1000. Built as a defence against the Danes. The Saxon look-out overlooks all the approaching waterways. During Danish raids the

women and children were taken up the tower for safety. Note the triangular headed window, once a doorway leading to a gallery (removed c. 1840) thought to be the family pew of Earl Godwin and his son King Harold. Note (from the outside) the double Saxon window.

The Font

Late Norman. ...Some claim that the bowl is much older.

The Crypt

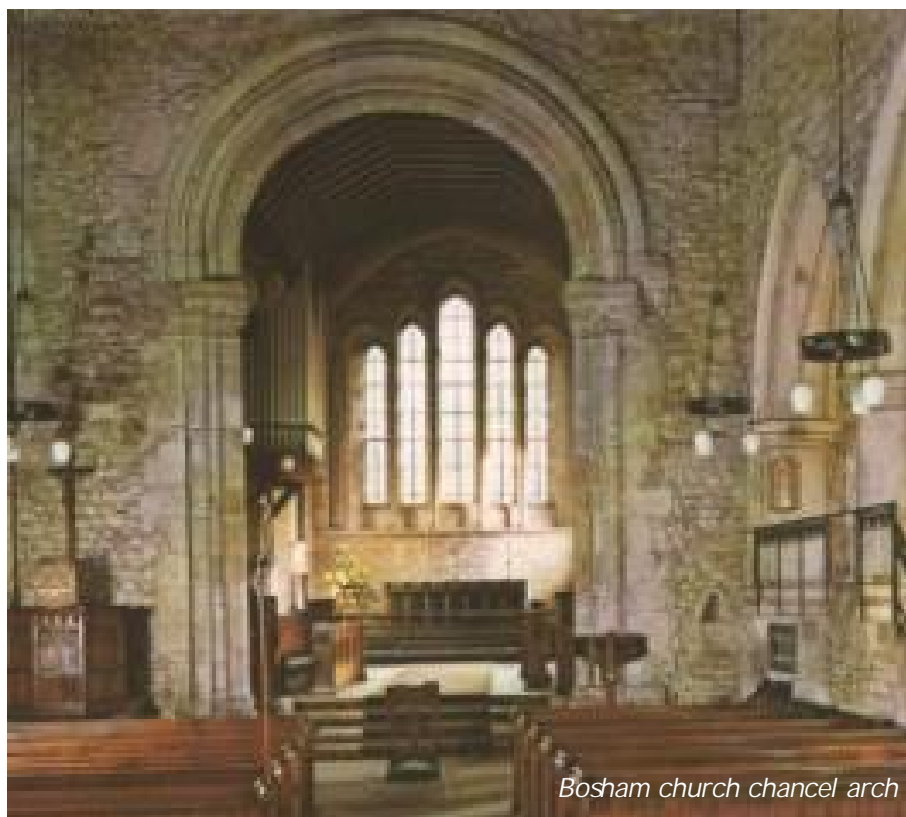
Now furnished and cared for by our servers and choristers guild, is thought to be built over the cell of Dicul the monk where he and five other brethren "served the Lord".

The Show Case

Contains ... part of the stone coffin of Canute's daughter, and Roman pottery.

From A walk round a Saxon Church:

*Pell (Brighton) Ltd.,
18/19 Tichborne Street,
Brighton BN1 1UR*



Bosham church chancel arch