



Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

Ἰερόθεῖον

Cathedral of SS Peter, Paul and Andrew

Grid ref TL 194 986

Church fabric

Carvings

Notes

First monastery founded by Peada, first Christian King of Mercia, in AD 655. Builder and first abbot was Saxulf, later Bishop of Mercia AD 675-691. Uncertain whether original church of stone or wood, but stone church evidently erected at an early date, probably C7. It was destroyed by the Danes in 870 and Abbot Hedda and all monks slain. Monastery in ruins for nearly a century till re-established by Æpelwold, Bishop of Winchester, and church rebuilt about 966-972. Abbot Kenwulf, 992-1005, built wall around monastery, making it a "burh" and changed name to "burh", later "Petri burh". Church pillaged by Hereward of Bourne in 1070, by French robbers in 1102 and finally burnt in 1116. Present Norman cathedral, begun in 1117, built over it.

Parts of foundations and a few courses of wall of transepts and choir of second Anglo-Saxon church found in 1884 under S transept and nave of present cathedral, vaulted over and presently accessible to visitors.

The Anglo-Saxon nave has not been excavated and it is not known whether it was aisled or not.

No traces found of transeptal arches leading into a crossing. Irvine thought there was no possibility of central tower. Anglo-Saxon chronicle states that tower consecrated 1059, but this may have been at W end.

Fragments of two walls running S from S transept must have belonged to E range of Anglo-Saxon cloister.

W wall of present Norman S transept runs along and above middle of Anglo-Saxon S transept. S wall of Anglo-Saxon transept is just S of S wall of present transept, so close that vertical face of exterior Norman ashlar in same plane as interior plaster of Anglo-Saxon wall below.

N wall of Anglo-Saxon N transept is a few feet to N of present SW crossing pier. "This crossing pillar and sleeper walls were merely begun on the surface of Anglo-Saxon plaster flooring which, though sunk down and crushed by the enormous weight, yet so remained that it crushed surface could be washed to find whether painting or

incising had existed, neither of which appeared" (J. T. Irvine). Anglo-Saxon foundations were indeed good if they were good enough for enormously greater load of Norman church. (EAF [churches]). Floor of church was below exterior ground level. Characteristic Anglo-Saxon floor, plastered, and remains of interior walling about three courses high with some plaster on it. Some stones from an earlier building used in walls of both transepts as indicated by the fact that they still retain pieces of hard grey plaster from earlier building, suggesting that present remains are from C10 church and that the church immediately preceding it was also of stone.

Evidence given by Irvine indicates choir was short and almost definitely square-ended; 23'3" interior, walls 2'8" thick, floor 2-3 steps above that of nave. N transept had internal length 31'8", width 34'8". S transept had same dimensions as N, walls 2'8½" thick.

Total interior length across transepts 91'11".

First length of N wall of choir deflected to S by about 3'.

Few remaining courses of SE quoins of large stone sections suggest probable Roman buildings at Roman town belonging to the monastery known as The Castles, between Alwalton and Water Newton. No trace found of great stones referred to by Hugh White (Hugo Candidus), C12 monk of Peterborough in his history of the monastery.

Exterior space to N and E of walls was monastic cemetery. Stone coffins found of Norman date only. Flat, monumental Anglo-Saxon slabs found practically paving the ancient level of monks cemetery, but no stone coffins beneath - bodies buried in earth only.

Fragments and carvings

Wrought stones built into protruding bottom courses of Norman foundations. Two fragments of rudely pillared jamb stones or responds to an arch, slightly reminiscent of chancel arch at WITTERING, a daughter house.

Several fragments of double shafts, roughly shaped, coated with very thin coat of finest and hardest

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Anglo-Saxon plaster to a smooth, round surface. Possibly from cloister; no corresponding capitals or bases found.

Fragments of moulded string courses and one fragment of string course ornamented with interlace, top and bottom plain. Some fragments showed traces of 1116 fire.

Tympanum from over square-head doorway suggest work done in overlap period: tympani are rare in Anglo-Saxon period.

One fine example of "long" stone from long-and-short pilaster-strip indicates that the church was probably in characteristic, Anglo-Saxon, Carolingian style.

Holy water basin of stone, one side straight, other three-quarter-round.

Two fragments of ordinary mid-wall slab with opening round outside for half-round roll, one piece of which retained holes for metal fastenings of window shutter.

Parts of end of ornamental, perforated mid-wall light slab (*c.f.* slabs remaining in upper lights at BARNACK).

Badly burned tile from 1116 fire found in situ in S transept floor. Fragments of tiles with ornament in relief found below SE angle of S transept.

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Μεδερхамστέδε

Museum

Artifacts

Grid ref unknown

Open

12am-5pm

Tuesday-Saturday

Archæological Assistant Martin
Howe.

(information correct 1978)



*Gilt bronze disc brooch from
Upton, 6.3 cm diam.*