

**FETCHAM CHURCH**

THREE.ESSAYS ON THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH

by John Mettam

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Author's Note:

These three essays were originally intended to be issued separately, and some people have already had copies of the first one, but for various reasons the survey took much longer to complete than expected. They are therefore offered together.

The first essay considers the evidence for 1000 years of worship in Fetcham Church.

The second essay presents a detailed survey of the ground plan of the church and shows how the obvious crookedness of the building as a structure can be explained.

The final essay discusses the stages of development of the building as a place of worship.

Having been prepared in haste these essays are not definitive statements and it is hoped that further research will produce something more rigorous for formal publication. In the meantime if anyone finds them of value in this year of celebration of the long history of our church I will be satisfied. If however anyone finds errors I would be very glad to hear from them!

I acknowledge with gratitude the help of Mr Lewarne who also provided the drawings from which Figures 4 & 5 are copied, but all errors are mine.

Figures 4 and 5 were copied by kind permission of Dr John H. Harvey whose father, William Harvey, prepared them in connection with the repairs carried out in 1927/8 and had them traced in 1944 as part of the record of historic buildings for repair in case of enemy action.

J.D. Mettam

July 1993

The late John Mettam's fine work on explaining the history of our building has been rather inaccessible as paper copies were the only medium. This is a first effort to create an electronic version which can be distributed more readily.

It is my hope that I have not added any errors in the scanning and character recognition stages. Please let me know if any are found so they can be corrected.

Unfortunately the whereabouts of some of the documents referred to, those possessed by Dr Harvey for example, is currently unknown. If anyone has knowledge of how to contact Dr Harvey please let me know.

I have added the picture on page 22 for the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with the building.

Nigel Hunt July 2008

## ORIGINS OF FETCHAM CHURCH

A thousand years in thy sight..... ?

As we prepare for our Flower Festival it seemed worthwhile to review the evidence for the origins of our church building. Here are the fruits of some reading.

Our local historian, John Lewarne, in the 1956 Church Guide put the construction of the oldest parts of the building (the west wall of the Nave and the south wall with its Saxon window above the later Norman arcade) between 1000 and 1100.

Subsequently a major architectural study (Anglo-Saxon Architecture Vols 1 & 2 by Taylor & Taylor, 1965) gave details of all churches known or claimed to be Anglo-Saxon. The old walls of Fetcham Church were classified as Late Anglo-Saxon with a date range 950-1100.

Volume 3, in 1978, confirmed the classification after detailed analysis but could not reduce the date range. The authors had hoped to show that construction periods could be correlated to the style of features like the details of the Saxon window in the south wall of the Nave of Fetcham Church, or the wall thicknesses and quoin details; but they found that this was not possible.

Although styles and techniques were changing during this period it is not possible to put precise dates even to the main changes from Anglo-Saxon to Norman styles. Thousands of what became parish churches were built in this period, as well as many larger churches; not all would have used the latest techniques and some craftsmen may have changed their methods little during a long working life.

The general pattern of the early development of parish churches is also of interest although again it does not give us precise dates.

We know, as reported in the 1988 History of Leatherhead, that there was a royal vill at Pachenesham, the site of which has yet to be identified, in what is now the northern part of Leatherhead parish. The vill was mentioned in King Alfred's will, 879-888. A minster or missionary church, with a group of clergy, was established there to serve an area which was subsequently to be divided into a number of parishes. For many years it would have been the only place in the area for Christian burial.

During the 10th and 11th centuries changes in land ownership led to the establishment of a number of manorial estates in the surrounding area many of which eventually became our present parishes. Landowners of these estates built lesser (or field) churches to serve their families and others on their estates. These churches were the property of the landowners, a source of income and of family pride. Burial rights were obtained for the

proprietary churches, initially perhaps for the benefit of the family of the landowner. Resulting transfer of revenue led to the gradual decline of the old minsters. Decline of the Pachenesham minster (probably then known as Ledrede) may have been accelerated by the transfer of the royal vill to Ewell.

There appear to be no records to show when the old minster ceased to exist or when Fetcham Church was built.

The most important record of this period is the Domesday survey. This shows that, at the time of the Conquest, Fetcham was divided into three manors. One was owned by Queen Edith, widow of Edward the Confessor and sister to King Harold (it is likely to have formed part of her marriage settlement more than 20 years earlier); by 1086 this manor had passed to the King probably on the death of Queen Edith in 1074. Domesday does not mention the church (only a minority of known churches were listed) but it would appear to have been in this manor, which was subsequently given to the Earls of Warren. Another manor was held in 1066 by Biga from Edward the Confessor; by 1086 it was held from Bishop Odo by Richard who became Earl of Clare and probably received this manor when Bishop Odo's estates were confiscated in 1088. Later names of Bigney's for a field in the northern part of the parish, and Bigney's lane nearby may give a clue to the site of this manor house. By the early 13th century both these manors were acquired by the d'Abernons linking Fetcham to Stoke d'Abernon. They passed by marriage to the Vincents in the late 16th century remaining as a single manor in that family until sold to Lord Effingham about the beginning of the 18th century.

The third, and largest, manor at the Conquest, held by Oswald from Edward the Confessor, was still held by Oswald, from the King, in 1086. This manor, which later passed to the Priory of Merton, became known as the Manor of Canon's Court.

The division of Fetcham into three manors before the Conquest raises the question whether the foundation of Fetcham Church is more likely to date from an earlier period, when the whole area may have constituted a single manor occupied by its owner and his family. This would increase the likelihood that the church is 1000 years old. Perhaps some records may be found to cast some light on this period, in the meantime we may consider some results of archaeological investigations of other churches.

Perhaps the greatest advance recently in our knowledge of the early development of parish churches has come from archaeological studies. Some fascinating details have emerged from careful excavation of a number of redundant churches in the last 20 years or so. Time and again beneath Late Anglo-Saxon or early Norman churches of the 11th century, remains have been revealed of one or more smaller older churches, the first of which may have been built of timber. None have yet been excavated in Surrey but with plenty of timber and little or no easily available stone, except from ruins of old Roman buildings, it is most likely that the Saxons, who brought a tradition of timber building with them to this country, would have used timber initially in this area.

Before the first timber church was built Christian worship on many sites of later churches would have been open-air gatherings at a place marked by a timber cross.

Since the Late Anglo-Saxon nave was the same size as the present nave it would have been large enough to accommodate the whole Domesday population of Fetcham. An earlier smaller church would therefore seem to be a very probable first stage of development, to be followed by the church whose remaining west and south walls we can still see after burial rights were acquired and the old minster at Pachenesham declined.

Returning to the question posed in the title of this note we have to conclude that we do not know when Christian worship commenced on the site of Fetcham Church or when the Anglo-Saxon church whose west and south walls can still be seen was built. On architectural evidence these walls could have been built a 1000 years ago, plus or minus half a century or more, but no date can be assigned. Even if the later date is correct there is however a strong probability that a smaller building would have been built first and that this would have been in use at least a 1000 years ago.

To answer these questions would perhaps only be possible if archaeologists were allowed to dig up the floor of the church (work to replace the floor at Canterbury cathedral is currently providing information on the early developments there). We may however prefer to hope that the condition of the church, and its continued use, will deprive the archaeologists of this opportunity for many years to come.

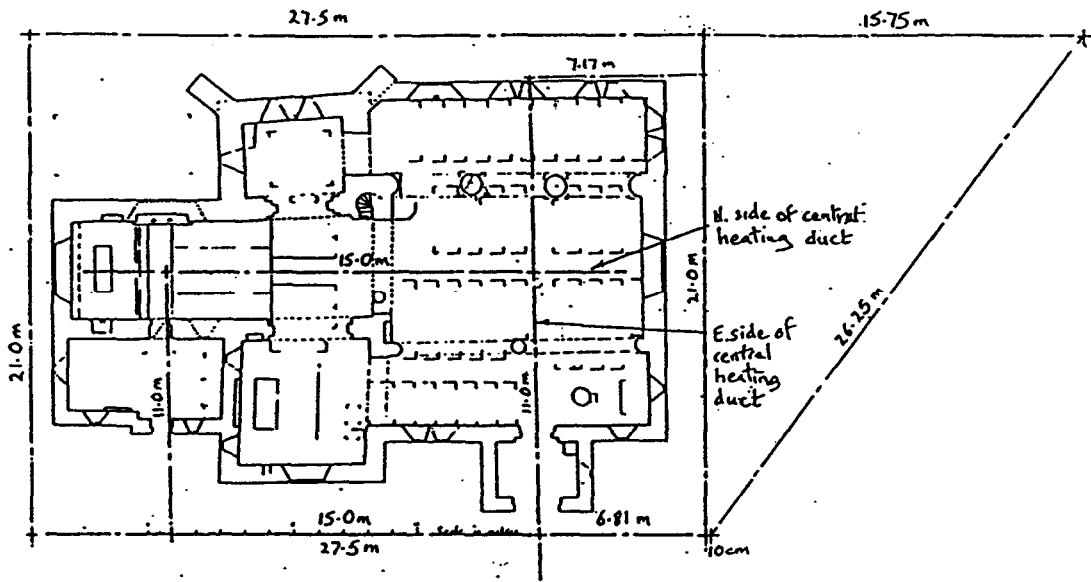


Figure 1 Survey Framework

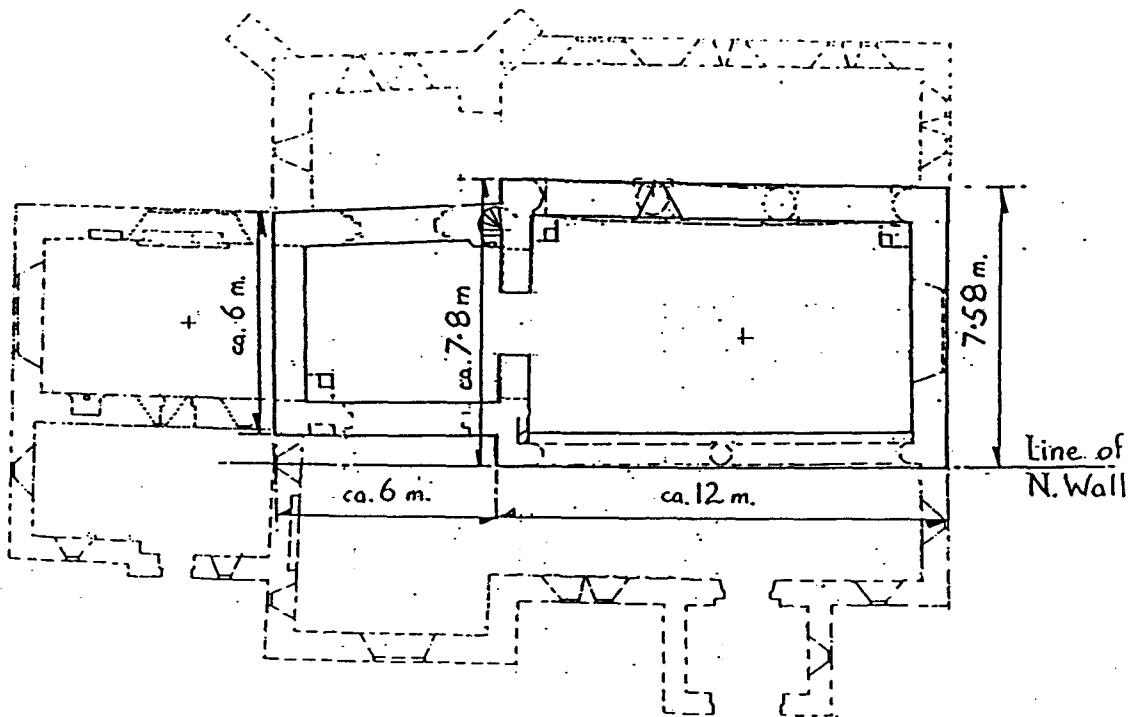


Figure 2 Layout of Late Anglo-Saxon Church

## A SURVEY OF FETCHAM CHURCH

The crooked made straight ..... ?

Everyone who worships in Fetcham Church will have noticed that the Nave and Chancel are not in a straight line. Many will also have become aware that the North Arcade is not parallel to the South Arcade. And the closer one looks the more crookedness appears.

As an engineer my experience has been that odd looking features in old structures can often cast light on their history. There is generally a good reason why something is crooked; carelessness is possible and mistakes are made, but conscientious and careful work (within the constraints of the site and the limits of available technology) is more usual. If this is so in civil engineering it is likely also in construction of a place of worship. Much needed repairs in the 19th Century have covered much of the earlier work but the shape of what we see is still determined by the original builders. For this reason I set out to discover the ground plan of the church, hoping thereby to increase our knowledge in this year of celebration of its long history.

One reason why the crookedness of the Chancel is so conspicuous is that the Victorians who installed the central heating system and the pews took care to make them straight, at least in the Nave. (In the Middle Ages, with no seating and a narrow Chancel Arch it would have been harder to see what was crooked).

As shown in Figure 1 the straight line of the central heating duct was used as the base line for this survey, which was projected up the Chancel. Measurements through the Vestry and the Porch established a parallel line outside the church which was extrapolated so that measurements at each end of the church established a third parallel line to the south. These three lines, and the sides of the two parallelograms which linked them were the basis for measurements to both sides of all the walls to determine the shape of the church. A 3:4:5 triangle in the cemetery outside the West Wall was used to check the shape of the outer parallelogram; measurements through a window in the South Aisle did the same for the inner parallelogram. After plotting the survey the overall shape was also checked against diagonal measurements within the church. These showed agreement within 10 cms (4 inches) which is satisfactory; local irregularities in a flint wall can be about 5 cms, while some of the older walls are out of vertical by more than 10 cms. The Ground Plan is shown on the Plate at the back of this note. This shows that the south side of the Late Anglo-Saxon wall above the Norman Arcade is closely parallel to the survey base-line and the West Wall of the Nave, which is of the same period, is practically at right angles to the base-line. The East end of the Chancel is also at right angles to the base-line and the walls of the 13th Century

Chancel extension are also parallel to the base-line. All the other features diverge by varying amounts.

How can we draw some conclusions from the shape of the church?

It is generally accepted that the late Anglo-Saxon church in Fetcham, like many other parish churches of the same period, consisted of two cells, a rectangular Nave and a roughly square Chancel. Figure 2 shows my interpretation of the most likely layout of these.

[Note: Fig 2 is dimensioned in metres, which would certainly not have been used by the Anglo-Saxons. The most precise record of their measurements is the dimension of 7.58m between old quoins on the West Wall. This corresponds closely to 1h rods, the rod being 15 Roman feet, 5.03m or 16h statute feet. I was tempted to dimension in Roman feet which were used during the Anglo-Saxon period. Most of the other external dimensions are close to round figures in metres, which would be multiples of 3 Roman feet. However 7.58m is also very close to 25 statute feet, 6.0m is effectively 20 statute feet and 12.0m, 40 feet. So either system might have been used; I thought it safer not to choose between them.]

On the N. side of the Nave the present Arcade replaced a wider Anglo-Saxon wall. Tool marks on the masonry of the Niche, which marks the position of a medieval altar, taken in conjunction with the positions, measured on the outside of the West Wall, of the two Anglo-Saxon quoins, show that the three walls of the Nave were the same thickness (90 to 95 cm or 36 inches NOT 30 inches as stated in earlier reports). The North and South Walls were not however quite parallel. The divergence from West to East is about 20cm.

Interestingly the wall between the early Chancel and the N. Transept is parallel to the N. Wall of the Nave, while the wall between the Chancel and Tower converges sharply. This suggests that the Anglo-Saxon builders set out the north side of their church first, accurately. They then made an error in setting out the position of the South Wall. The length of the West Wall appears to have been correctly made 7.58m between quoins but the width between quoins at the Chancel Arch was larger about 7.8m.

The builders appear not have noticed the error. They positioned the Chancel walls by measuring in from the quoins slightly less than the thickness of the walls of the Nave. The North Wall of the Chancel was set out parallel to the North Wall of the Nave and the East Wall was dimensioned to suit the original two cell plan. Closing the South Wall of the Chancel then resulted in a tapered Chancel instead of a square one.

The exact length of the Anglo-Saxon Chancel is not known. However in Figure 2 I have shown what seems to me a very likely arrangement. With the North side of the Chancel approximately 6.0m long, the East Wall drawn at right angles to this lines up with the N.E corner of the Tower (which was built in the 12th

Century before the Chancel was extended). With such an arrangement the East end of the Chancel would have been about 6.0m wide, and, with a wall thickness of 85 cm (about 33 inches), narrower than the walls of the Nave but the same as the wall on the North side of the early Chancel, the S.E corner inside the Anglo-Saxon Chancel coincides with the position of the change of direction of the South Wall of the present Chancel.

Recent literature gives examples of trapezoidal plans as a result of similar errors elsewhere, although none that I have read about shows an error in quite such a vital measurement.

How could such an error have gone unnoticed until it was too late to correct it? Any prudent builder would surely have checked the width halfway along the wall, unless perhaps, there was something to prevent him doing this.

I see two possibilities. One is that construction of the middle of the North Wall had already been commenced while the South Wall foundations were being prepared; scaffolding, and the timber shuttering which would have been used to contain the flint rubble wall construction (like shuttering for modern concrete), would have made measurement difficult. Another possibility is that an earlier structure was in the way. We cannot tell whether either of these explanations is correct. That setting out on the N. side was impeded in some way is, I think, supported by the fact that both the West Wall and the Chancel Arch are more nearly at right angles to the South Wall than to the North Wall, suggesting that it was not practicable to sight along the North Wall when using a square to set out the angles of the West Wall and Chancel Arch.

On completion the Anglo-Saxon church would have been plastered and painted (probably white) both inside and out.

The next parts of the church to be built, ca 1150, were the South Aisle and the Norman Arcade which was cut into the Anglo-Saxon South Wall. We do not know how wide the aisle was, but I have followed the 1956 Church Guide in assuming that it was narrower than the present South Aisle. This work was followed, ca. 1180, by commencement of the Tower which was built as a parallelogram to match the south side of the Anglo-Saxon Chancel, and the Chancel Arch. The match with the Chancel Arch does not look quite exact now but examination of the Niche and the top of the Rood Stairs shows that the line has been slightly changed, probably when the Chancel Arch was widened. (In Figure 2 I have drawn the Anglo-Saxon arch 5ft 6 inches wide corresponding to previous estimates).

Figure 3 shows the layout ca. 1220 at the time of construction of the extension to the Chancel, and the North Transept.

The odd thing about the Chancel extension is that the walls are parallel to my base line (the central heating duct) which, as explained later, is parallel to the South Arcade, and not parallel to the North Wall.

It is not obvious why the walls of the Chancel extension should have been aligned to match the old South wall, which would have been hidden, rather than the North Wall, or the earlier part of the Chancel both of which would have been more accessible for the builders when they were setting out the extension. The theory advanced to explain the changes in orientation of the Chancel at Stoke D'Abernon does not help. There it has been suggested that churches, and more particularly chancels were aligned to the octave of the Easter sunrise at the time of construction. This moved further north throughout the period of use of the Julian calendar. But the main length of the chancel extension at Fetcham was aligned further south than the part built at least two centuries earlier. A different explanation is needed.

The most conspicuous alignment available to the builders of the Chancel would have been the view through the Chancel Arch to the West Window. We do not know the width and position of the Anglo-Saxon Chancel Arch, or the West Window but both would have been fairly narrow so they would have provided a clear sight line. If we assume that both openings were built centrally in the walls as they then existed, the centres can be drawn and projected to the east end of the Chancel. As Figure 3 shows the projected line comes exactly at the mid-point of the end wall. As an engineer I do not think this is a coincidence.

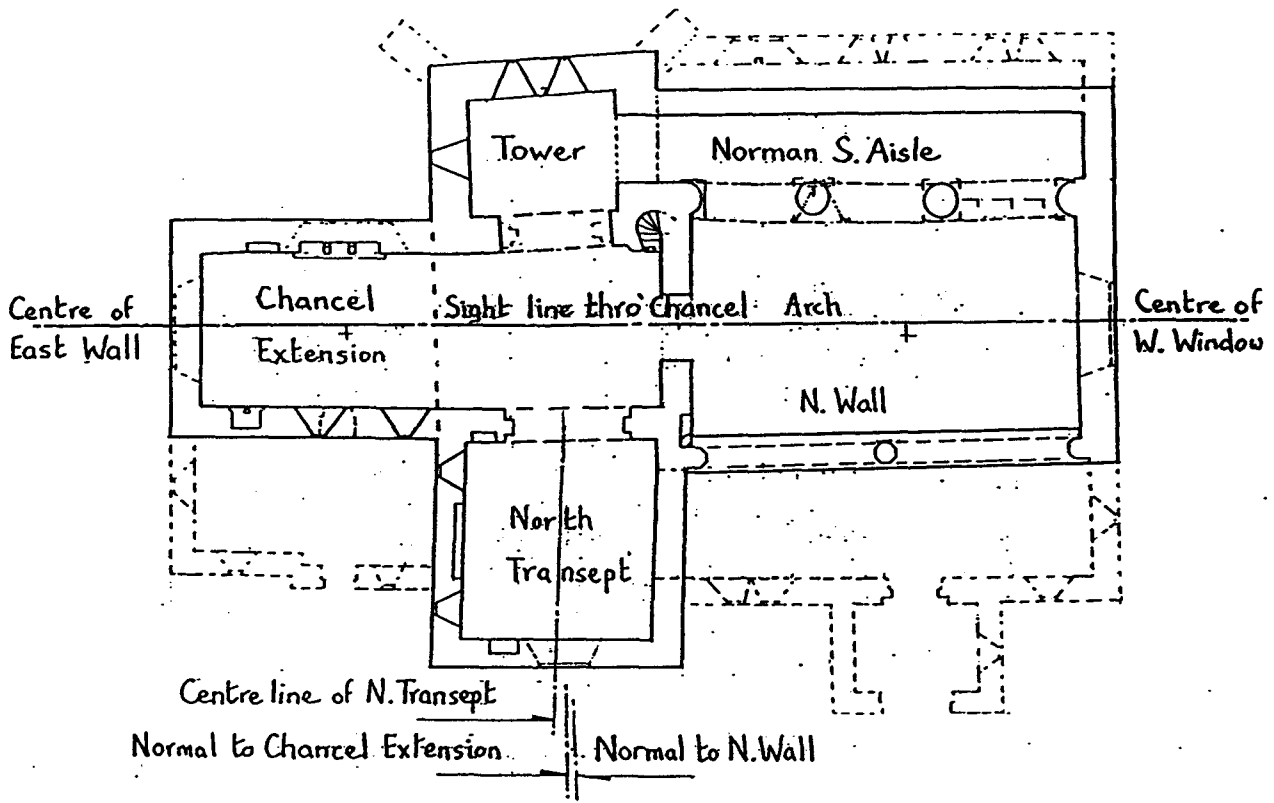
What may however be a coincidence is that, with the end of the Chancel positioned as I have suggested, connecting it to the end of the earlier Chancel resulted in the new Chancel walls being parallel to the South Arcade. It may also be a coincidence that squaring off the end of the Chancel put the East Wall at right angles to the South Arcade and parallel to the West Wall (within a small fraction of a degree). Coincidence or not the layout adopted now looks to be the best possible solution to the problem created by the error in setting out the Late Anglo-Saxon two cell church.

The North Transept is another odd shape. The east and west walls are parallel but they are not at right angles to the line of the North Arcade or the South Arcade. The effect is as if the builders had realised that the South Arcade and the wall between North Transept and Chancel were out of line with the extension to the Chancel and tried to correct for this, but over-corrected. If this is what happened the correction applied to the east and west walls of the Transept was slightly more than twice the required amount. This is indicated in Figure 3.

The alignment of the North Wall of the Transept is similar to the alignment of South Arcade and the walls at the east end of Chancel, which I think adds some credence to the suggestion that the builders were trying to correct the misalignment of previous work, albeit unsuccessfully.

The next phase of construction was the North Aisle ca. 1250. This is not aligned to the nearby North Arcade, which appears to be exactly parallel to the North Wall of the original Nave, instead it is aligned to match the South Arcade and the extension

to the Chancel, not quite precisely but close enough to show that this was probably the intention.



**Figure 3 Chancel Extension and N. Transept**

The Norman South Aisle collapsed in the 18th Century and was not replaced until about 1877 after extensive repairs of the remainder of the church had been completed. The Victorian South Aisle is aligned more closely parallel to the North Aisle than to my survey base line from which it diverges slightly (only 910cms). It is therefore not exactly at right angles to the West Wall. Perhaps this is not very significant, it may have merely resulted from a desire to avoid having the outer face of the wall meet the South West buttress of the Tower right at its corner. Nonetheless, it is of interest that the south side of the Anglo-Saxon South Wall of the Nave is almost straight and is more closely parallel to my base line than the walls of the aisles are.

In contrast the north side of the Anglo-Saxon wall, above the Norman Arcade, bulges towards the Nave. This may result from replastering to cover inequalities when the Norman Arcade was built as the Roman tiles exposed above the Saxon Window are set back from the present face showing that this side of the wall was straighter when first built. The central heating duct could not have been set out from this side of the Anglo-Saxon wall.

A related feature which puzzles me is the crooked placing of the two heavy Norman columns of the South Arcade. The builders of the arches which carry the weight of the Anglo-Saxon wall down

on to these columns will have required considerable skill to insert them without damage to the wall. But the supporting columns are of different sizes, are not centrally placed in the walls and have crooked capitals and plinths. Perhaps they were actually built by different people. The lime mortar of that period (and the rubble filling within the stone facings of the columns would have contained as much as 30% of mortar) would probably have required a year to harden sufficiently to carry load. The whole operation could have taken a number of years with different people working at each stage and the position of the original wall obscured by scaffolding. Whatever the explanation the central heating duct could not have been set out by aligning it to the bases of these columns.

So why was the central heating duct apparently constructed parallel to the inaccessible outer face of the Anglo Saxon wall? Figures 4 and 5 suggest an answer. Figure 4 shows the pew arrangement in 1857 just before some major repairs during which the pews were reconstructed. Figure 5 is one of a set of drawings prepared in 1872 and used (possibly with some additions) for a contract signed in 1877 for reconstruction of the South Aisle. The pew arrangement shown in Figure 5 is most probably what was built in 1857 to replace the earlier arrangement.

After the earlier Norman aisle collapsed the Norman South Arcade was blocked by walls about half the thickness of the upper wall. Pews were installed butting up to those walls between the columns, so that their south ends were about halfway under the arcade as shown in Figure 5. This is exactly where the present pews finish and it appears that they (or many of them) are the same as those installed in 1857, in the same positions except for some re-arrangement to allow access to the South Aisle. (Some pews may even have been re-used from before 1857). Placing the central heating duct parallel to the ends of the pews provided us with a survey base-line which is parallel to the opposite side of one of the oldest features of the church.

So what can we conclude?

My view is that all the crooked features in Fetcham Church (apart from the Norman columns) stem from a single dimensional error in setting out the Late Anglo-Saxon church ten centuries ago. One possible contributory cause of the error might have been an earlier building in the area of the Nave, but this can only be conjecture.

During subsequent phases of construction successive attempts to make the best of the resulting problem have led to a change of dominant alignment, from the alignment of the Anglo-Saxon North Wall to that of the Anglo-Saxon South Wall, but both alignments remain in the Nave and, with the other crooked features discussed above, add to the character of the church. None of this has affected the development of the church to meet the changing patterns of worship, but that is another story which is discussed in the following note.



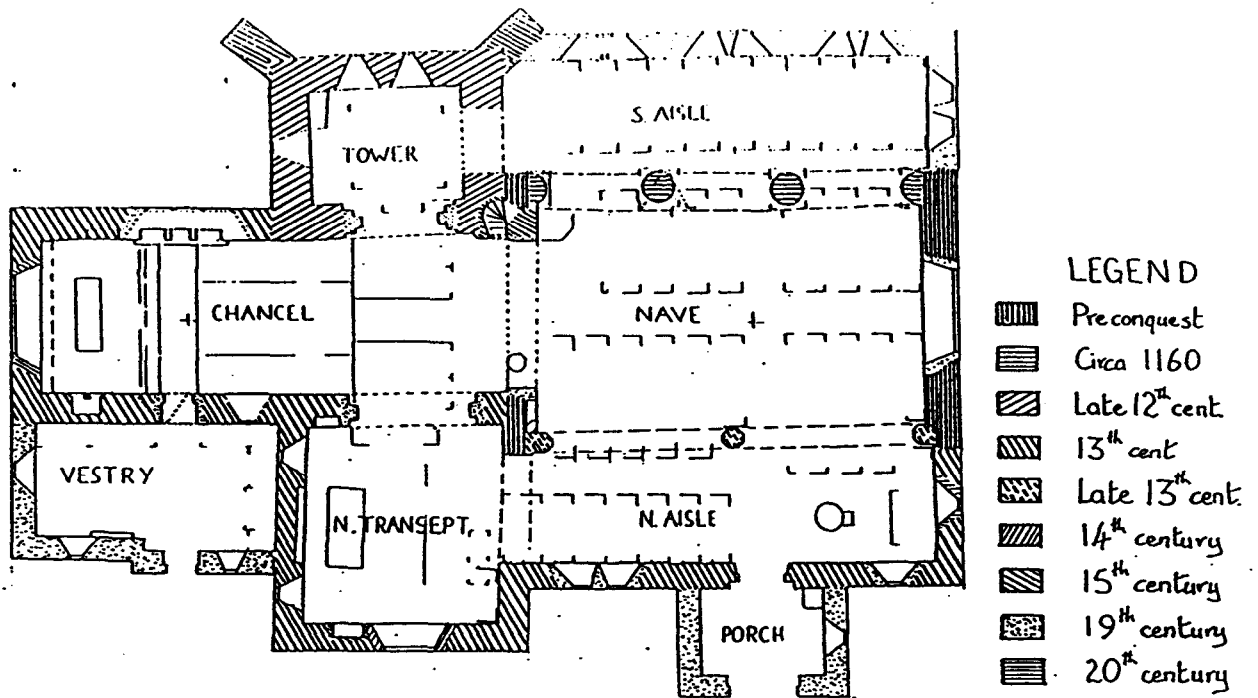


Figure 6 Dating in Victoria County History

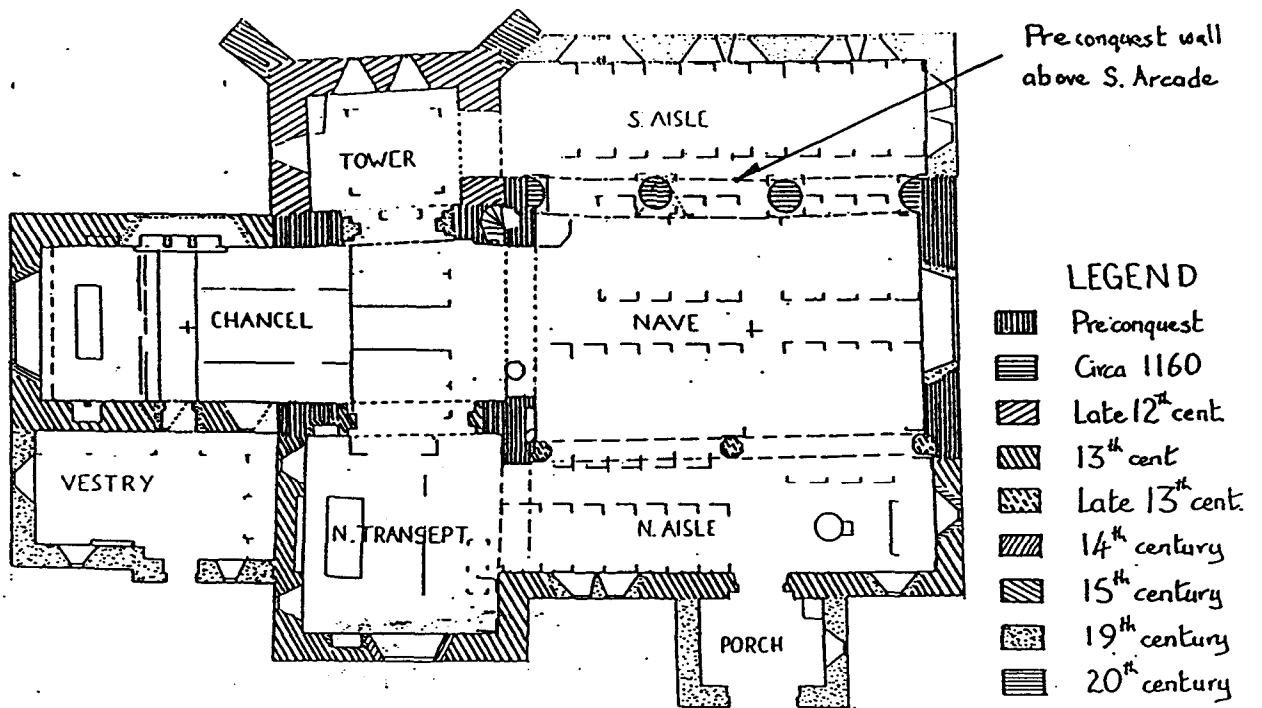


Figure 7 Suggested dating of present fabric

## DEVELOPMENT OF FETCHAM CHURCH

An House surely built..... ?

The recent survey of the church has provided some insights into the stages of development over the last ten centuries. These will be used to review previous estimates of the age of different parts of the present fabric.

The population of Fetcham in 1086 can be deduced, from the Domesday records, as exceeding 200 and is thought to have been only about 400 from about 1500 to the middle of the 19th century. Why did the population change so little after the 11th century? Fetcham is known to have been one of the earliest areas of Anglo-Saxon settlement. The name suggests settlement during the 5th Century and Fetcham has an important Anglo-Saxon pagan burial site of 6th Century. There is evidence from field boundaries in Ashtead of possibly continuous use from Roman times and there must be a possibility of little or no gap in occupation of Fetcham. The varied soils and good water supply from springs (following the line of the Lower Road) and a number of watermills would have made it very attractive land for the type of cultivation practiced by the Anglo-Saxons so that full development of the agricultural potential could have been achieved in the centuries before the construction of the Late Anglo-Saxon church. Other areas in Surrey were still being cleared for cultivation in the centuries after Domesday, but there would have been little scope for further clearance and increased production here until the common field system was replaced by enclosures, which did not require an increase of labour force.

We do not know who built this Late Anglo-Saxon church but it is likely to have been built by a prosperous landowner of a mature estate. It probably replaced a smaller stone or timber church which needed expansion to accommodate all the population of what is now Fetcham parish, and perhaps as a consequence of obtaining burial rights which made it unnecessary to continue to go to the minster church at Pachenesham (north of Leatherhead).

If the church did not have to be further extended to serve large increases in numbers the purpose of each stage of development must be related largely to liturgical changes; I am not qualified to write in any detail on these but will try to present a general picture of the main trends.

The most probable sequence of development is shown in Figure 9. This may be read in conjunction with Figures 6 & 7.

Figure 6 is taken from a very detailed review of the age of different parts of the fabric from the Victoria County History of 1911. I have amended it only to separate the many 19th Century developments from the one minor change of 20th Century, the replacement of the west window of the North Aisle (the last remaining original window of this aisle) shortly after

publication of VCH. The VCH authors made confident judgments based on architectural style, some of which might now be disputed (but I am not qualified to do so) at least partly because it is now known that changes in style did not occur as uniformly as had sometimes been assumed. My suggestions for reclassifying the ages of some parts of the fabric, shown in Figure 7, are based more on questioning as an engineer (although not a church builder or a stonemason) the probable solutions to construction problems at certain stages.

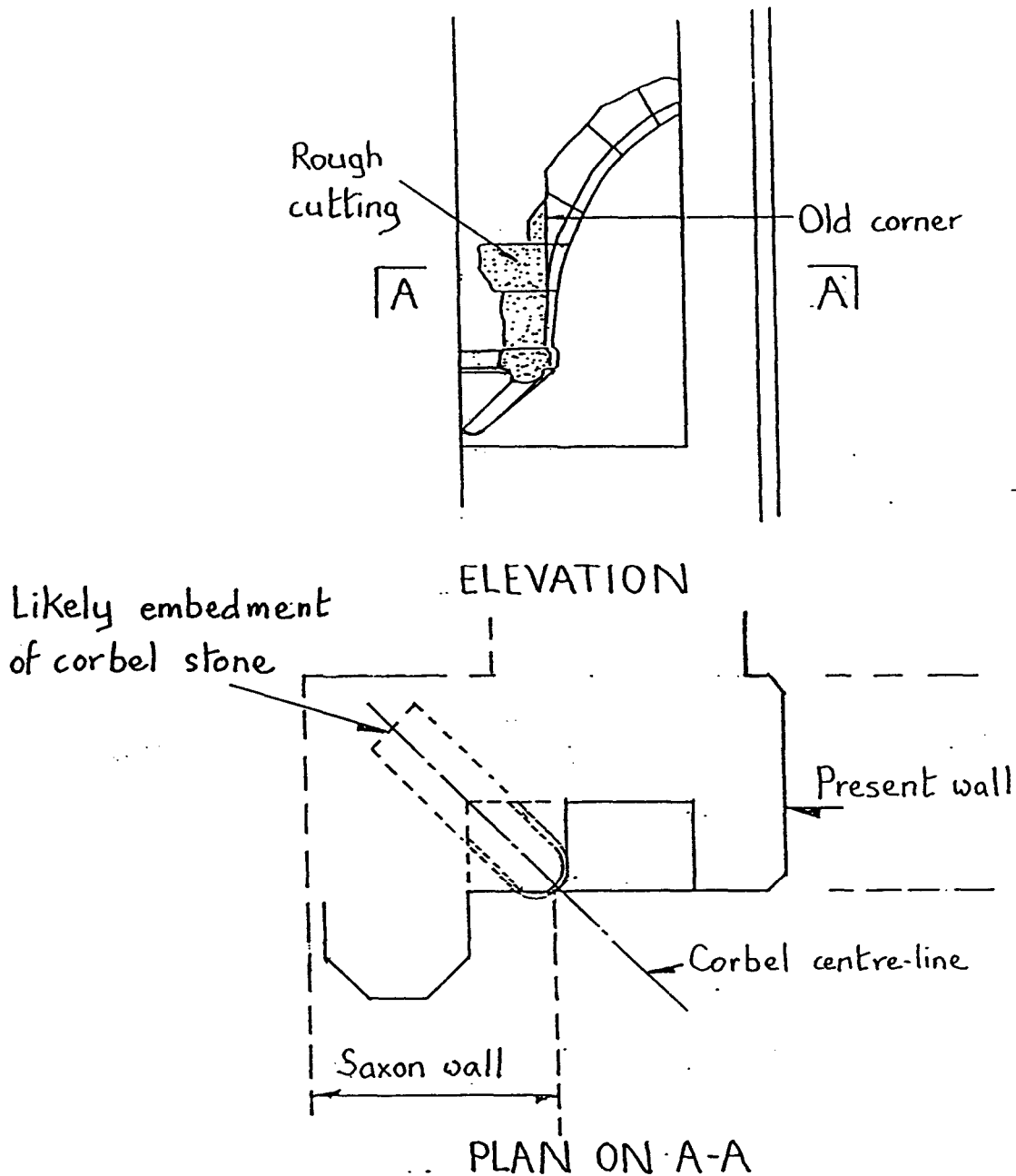
Starting with the Late Anglo-Saxon two cell church, shown in Diagram (i), circa 1000, in Figure 9, I have two main suggestions.

First that the altar recesses on each side of the Chancel Arch may have been constructed in this stage. We can only see half of one of these recesses, the Niche which our Flower Arrangers use to such good effect. However it is probable there was a matching recess on the other side of the Chancel Arch. It has been generally assumed that these were built at a much later date. However, tool marks on the masonry of the Niche show, as concluded in VCH, that a similar recess existed in the adjacent North Wall of the Nave. This must have preceded the North Arcade, but by how long? As shown in Figure 8 the arch over the Niche springs from a corbel stone which projects at an angle of 45° from the corner of the two walls. This corbel stone would have been relatively easy to set into the junction of these walls when they were first built but difficult, and rather dangerous, to place later when it would have been necessary to cut right through the quoin to insert the corbel stone and then fix it in position. There are easier ways in which these arches could have been supported if the recesses were cut into the corner of existing walls.

The corbel stone itself is of great interest. It is very carefully carved (except where it was cut back roughly at a later date) and was the most sophisticated masonry in the church until the N. Arcade was built. But its shape does not quite match its function as it does not fully support the arch which springs from it. My conviction is that the corbel stone came from a nearby Roman villa. Further research may provide proof of this.

A second suggestion, put to me by a visitor some years ago is that the stairs on the south side of the Chancel Arch were built into the Anglo-Saxon church to provide access to a musicians' gallery, rather than being cut out (as at Stoke D'Abernon) at a much later date to give access to the Rood beam. This possibility requires further research to enable a judgment to be made, but I think it may repay research as I am not convinced that cutting these stairs through the masonry at the corner of the Tower would have been the most obvious solution to the problem of providing access to the Rood beam at a later stage.

(Broken lines are used in Figure 9 to show the recesses and the stairs to indicate the controversial nature of dating them so early).



**Figure 8 The Niche**

If the above suggestions are both correct this was a very fine church indeed ten centuries ago and more of the Late Anglo-Saxon, or Pre-Conquest, church remains than was assumed in the Victoria County History. Figure 7 reflects this. None of the records of Late Anglo-Saxon churches show recesses beside the chancel arch but many earlier Anglo-Saxon churches had a triple arcade between nave and chancel allowing a view of the chancel, but marking the division from the nave.

Broken lines are also used in Figure 9 for the door and all except one of the windows as we have no evidence of the exact

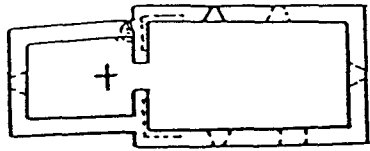
arrangement. I have shown single lancet windows at each end of the church but double or triple lancets could have been provided. I have shown the door in the North Wall on a similar line to the present Porch. This is not the commonest position for church doors, which were more often at the west end, but it is the most likely here in view of the position of the village nucleus in the nearest part of The Street. The Street itself then extended across the line of the Lower Road (which may mark an earlier Roman road) passing east of the church, and continuing roughly parallel to the very much later Ridgeway, to join the path which still leads to Fetcham Downs from near the top of Young Street. The manor house was probably beside this road, north-east of the Church. The natural access from both village and manor house to the Church would therefore have been to the North Wall.

Diagram (ii) in Figure 9 shows the church at the end of the 12th Century. By then, first, the South Aisle and Norman South Arcade and, then, the Tower (or at least its base) had been built. It is likely that the South Aisle was built primarily to provide for processions from the Chancel to altars or other stations around the Nave. The congregation for Mass would still have stood or kneeled in the Nave, or leant against the walls! The positioning of a tower south of the Chancel is not very common but it would have had the advantage of providing a processional route to the new aisle. The tower would also, with a bell, have been a prestigious addition to the building.

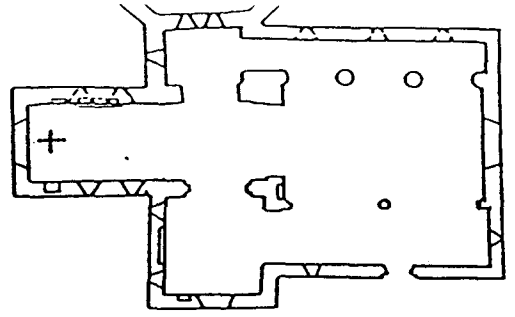
Diagram (iii) in Figure 9 shows the additions made during the 13th Century. By this period Fetcham Manor had been acquired by the D'Abernons. Their main seat was at Stoke but the family provided some of our earliest known Rectors (one of whom was appointed under age), and Fetcham may also have been the residence of other members of this wealthy family. Development of the Chancel would have been the responsibility of the Rector while the parishioners would have been responsible for the Nave and Aisles. Extension of the Chancel early in the 13th Century would have allowed the High Altar to be moved further east from its earlier position just east of the Chancel Arch (or, even earlier, possibly just inside the Nave) making the celebration of Mass more remote from the congregation. It would also have allowed more space for a deacon and sub-deacon to assist the priest. The sedilia on the South Wall of the Chancel probably dates from this period although it was rebuilt in the 19th Century.

The North Transept may have been built as a Lady Chapel or to provide an additional altar at a time when every priest was required to celebrate Mass daily but each altar could only be used once or it may have been for use by members of the D' Abernon family. The North Aisle built at about the same period would have provided processional access to the North Transept.

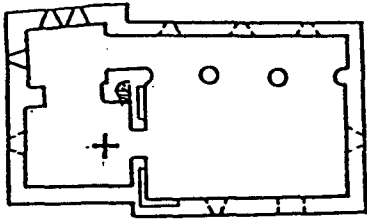
Another contentious question is the date of construction of the very unusual, and elegant, North Arcade. This arcade, and particularly the moulding (or label) above the arches on the Nave



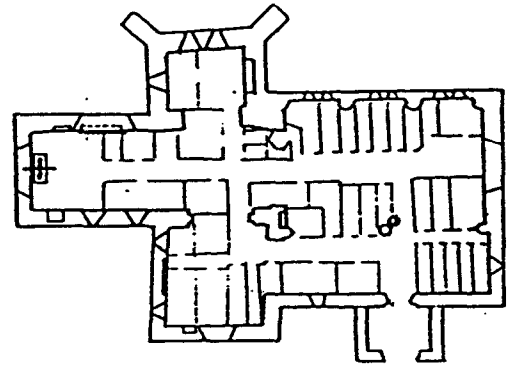
(i) Ca. 1000



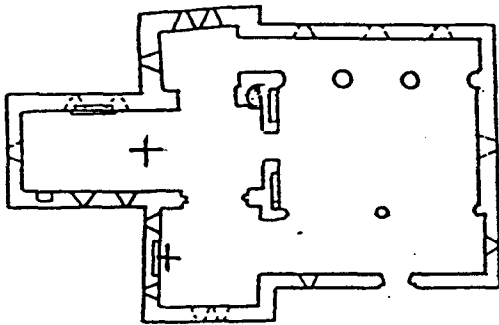
(v) 17<sup>th</sup> Century ?



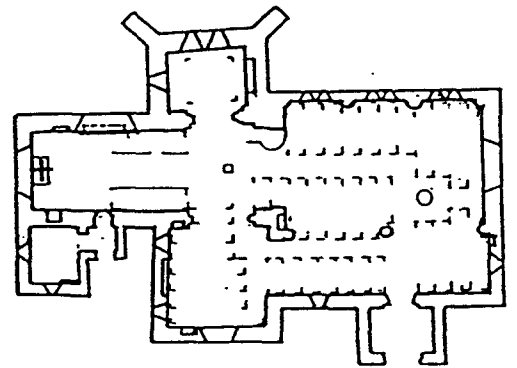
(ii) Ca. 1200



(vi) Up to 1857



(iii) Ca. 1300



(vii) 1872/7

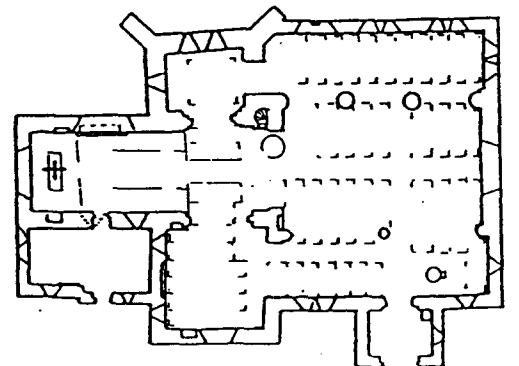
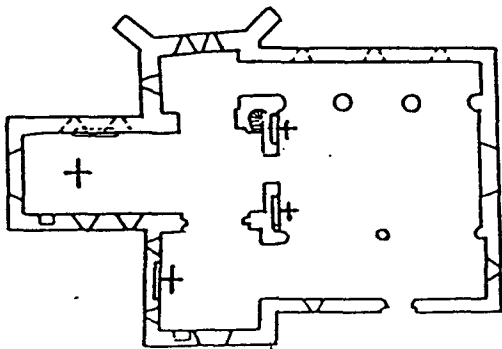


Figure 9 Development Stages

side, is still the most sophisticated architectural feature of our church. Was it contemporary with the North Aisle and North Transept or were the authors of Victoria County History right to suggest that it was an early 14th Century replacement of some simpler access between Nave and North Aisle? It is certainly arguable that it represents more than a century's progress from the heavy style of the Norman South Arcade.

Diagram (iv) in Figure 9, Ca. 1500, shows the church in the period before the Reformation. Mr Lewarne in the 1956 Guide gives details from a Will of 1535, shortly before the break with Rome and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the following year which marked the beginning of the Reformation in England. That Will makes it clear that there were then four altars; the High Altar, which may by then have been moved further east, an altar to the Virgin Mary, which must have been in the N. Transept and altars to St Blaise and St Katheryne which must surely then have been in the recesses on each side of the Chancel Arch. The Chancel Arch will still have been narrow, and the Mass was still a ritual in Latin, understood only by the clergy and the small proportion of laymen who had attended grammar schools. The main change from the previous stage of development will have been the enlargement of the main windows to let in more light to allow people to appreciate fully the paintings and other decorations in the church, which would have been at their richest before the Reformation. The North window of the North Transept survives from this period.

The West Window of the Nave was replaced about 1870, but a photograph taken shortly before that date shows a three-light window of similar pattern to, and perhaps contemporary with, the two-light North window of the North Transept. The East Window is in 15th Century style, but it must at least have been rebuilt during the Victorian restorations so we cannot tell what was provided to replace the original lancet window(s).

In Diagram (iv) of Figure 9 I have followed VCH in adding buttresses to the Tower, but they gave no evidence for this. I know no reason for assigning this date for features which could have been included in the original construction in 12th Century or have been part of the repairs in 17th and 18th Centuries.

After the Reformation, the next major structural change was the opening up of the Chancel Arch. This is indicated in Diagram (v), which has been titled "17th Century?", but the date is not known. We do know, from a note on the 1857 drawing (Figure 4) that this had been done before 1800. It is also recorded that a new pulpit was placed on the N. side of the Chancel in 1761; this would not have served its purpose if the original narrow Chancel Arch had still been in place. So when between the Reformation and 1761 was the arch opened up?

During the reign of King Edward VI inventories were taken of the valuables in every church (1549 & 1553). It has been shown that some church wardens in wealthy churches anticipated these inventories and sold off valuables, using the proceeds to carry

out building work required for the new style of worship. The inventories for Fetcham show no great wealth so perhaps, if there had been any valuables, they had already been sold and the Chancel Arch opened up. Removal of Roods was ordered in 1548. They were restored during Queen Mary's reign before being removed again during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (Some ornaments were removed during this period. Many remaining ornaments will have been destroyed in the 17th Century during the Commonwealth, but three wall paintings in the North Transept survived until the 1852 restoration and part of a painting in the altar recess which I have referred to as The Niche, was only painted over by error in the middle of this century) . Provision of pulpits was ordered in 1603. But these dates could all have been anticipated.

Certainly with the introduction of the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549, if not before, the new emphasis on bible reading (using the exciting new English translations) and preaching, and with much less frequent taking of Holy Communion, major changes were required. These may have included opening the Chancel Arch; alternatively, the Chancel may, for some years, have been used for Communion and the Nave used for all other services, an arrangement which can still be seen in at least one church.

Another important change was the provision of seating. As sermons became longer, there would have been increasing numbers of private pews. These pews would have been built individually but by the end of the 17th Century a uniform arrangement would probably have been adopted, still privately owned but belonging not to a person or land but to a house. We have no information about pews or other church furniture until 1857 when, happily, a record drawing, reproduced as Figure 4, was made showing the layout just before the pews were all replaced that summer when major repairs were being carried out to the structure which had deteriorated seriously.

The arrangement up to 1857 is indicated in Diagram (vi) of Figure 9 as well as in Figure 4. These show how, after collapse of the South Aisle, every space was needed for pews, which are provided in the North Transept, in the Chancel and even into the Tower Arch (the Tower also held the Vestry) . The old, 1632, stone font appears beside the central column of the North Arcade. An organ was provided beneath the West Window. The pulpit and reading desk are on the south side of the Chancel, so if a new pulpit was built on the north side of the Chancel in 1761 the 1857 layout belongs to a later date.

Figure 5, and Diagram (vii) in Figure 9, show the arrangement in 1872 when the restoration of the Chancel was completed (with, possibly, some changes up to 1877 when the drawings were used for the contract for reconstruction of the South Aisle) . The pew layout was probably adopted in 1857 when a contribution of £20 towards the cost was provided by the Incorporated Society for Building.... Churches, on condition that 108 seats were provided for the poor inhabitants of the parish. The Victorian font of 1868 had by then replaced the 1632 font but it was not yet in its present position just inside the door. In 1877, the

reconstruction of the South Aisle was the main item remaining to complete the extensive repairs which had been required to restore the church.

The final diagram on Fig 9 shows the arrangement of the church early in the 20th Century including the work carried out in 1877 and the completion of the Vestry. The seating layout, inferred from a photograph of the period, combines the cross-seating in the North Transept with the present pew arrangement throughout the rest of the church. This includes the choir stalls separated then by a screen from the Chancel. The surpliced choir, which we now tend to think of as an old tradition would have been a Victorian introduction accounting no doubt for the extension of the Vestry, so soon after it had been built to make room under the Tower for the Father Willis organ which still accompanies our services. Pulpit and lectern were under the Chancel Arch close to the old Rood Stairs. At this period the church was rather heavily decorated in the Victorian taste. This has now been changed to suit current taste and the Lady Chapel re-established but the major repairs carried out by the Moon and Hankey families in the Victorian period have served us well.

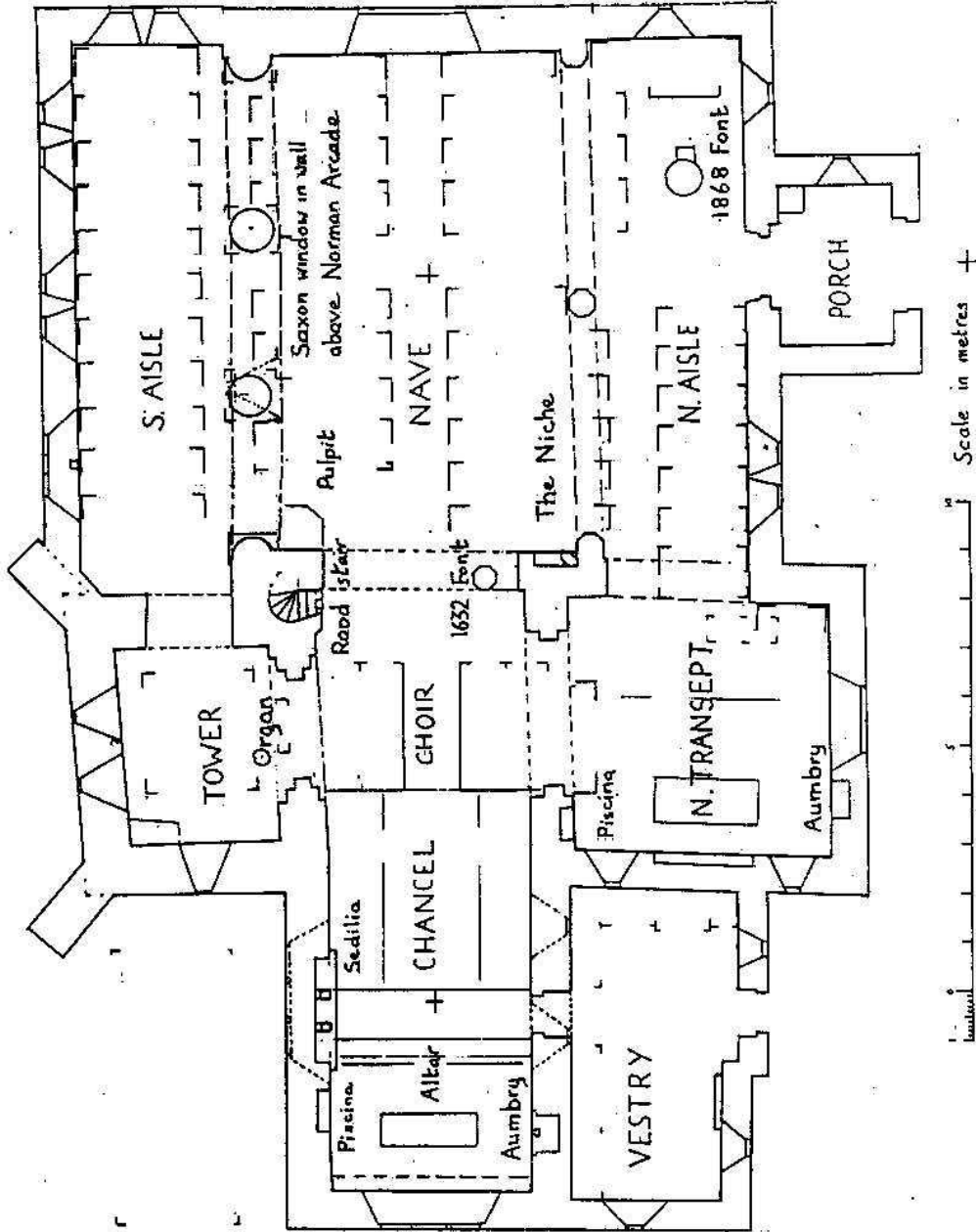
All the changes through-out the last ten centuries of development leave us now with a church of great beauty and interest well suited to carry on a long tradition of worship in Fetcham. We must not however, as we celebrate ten centuries of worship, forget that further changes will be required in future to accommodate changes in patterns of worship including, we may hope, an increase in church attendance. The Psalmist tells us that God does not change, but it is clear that Man's idea of how best to worship God continues to change. Understanding what we have inherited from our predecessors and how we have reached the present state may perhaps help us ensure that future generations have equal pleasure in worshipping in the church which they will inherit.



St Mary's July 2008

Surveyed by Roy Frenstee and John Mettam Autumn 1992 and Spring 1993 with kind permission of The Reverend R. I. Barber.

Wall positions are shown above the levels of piers. In some places they could only be conjectured from the positions of piers etc, are only indicated in dot-line, also some windows shown diagrammatically.



GROUND PLAN

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FETCHAM CHURCH

Rev 12.7.93

