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Deerhurst and Armorica

by E. Gilbert
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Deerhurst and Armorica

By EDWARD GILBERT

THE problems raised by the first stone church at Deerhurst are profound and complicated. Discussions and developments over the last three years since the subject was broached,¹ make a review of the evidence desirable.

The main issue, to recapitulate, is whether Deerhurst is the site of the important monastery of which Samson was once Abbot and whether Deerhurst I can be regarded as one of a group of churches of similar type, built by Celtic monks and monk-bishops operating in N.W. Gaul, Britannia and Ireland from IV to VII. This period is roughly that of the Visigothic and Merovingian periods in Gaul, before the Roman revival of VII. It is not difficult to show that some of the buildings discussed in 1968 have features in common and tend to fall in the required period. These buildings were: Monkwearmouth I, Deerhurst I, and the rectangular structure on the cathedral site at Winchester, all in Britannia; Brigit's Church at Kildare as restored in VII; Savennières and Sées I in Gaul. The features which these structures seem to have in common to some extent include a rectangular form of about 3:1 proportions: rubble fabric with cordons of herring-bone work used decoratively rather than structurally: high walls, and numerous windows on the lateral sides. There would be a west entrance, and over it two parallel windows. Obviously no one or two features would be significant in themselves. There needs to be a majority of the recoverable features. Some features also are more significant than others. The 3:1 proportions seem specially significant.

All these structures have some of the required features, and most can be shewn to date from before VIII. What is harder to prove is that the features originally all occurred together, for all these monuments are mutilated or rebuilt in part, and prevent our knowing this. In some cases the date was uncertain (e.g. Sées I) or else disputed. It has moreover been pointed out to me that while most of the features occur in several churches, the rectangular east end does not occur frequently enough, or certainly enough, to prove it a feature of the type. This is true, but the position has been much altered by the discovery of Les Maselles which has all the relevant features together, including the flat east end, at an early date, no doubt in V. Finally it

¹ E. Gilbert. *Trans. BGAS*, 1968, p. 71.

was not easy to prove the connection of the type with early monasticism and the Celtic or Gallic monks. Here again new evidence confirms the earlier view.

The Location of Samson's Monastery

It has been suggested that this might have been in Wales, and not as previously suggested in East Gloucestershire. This view needs consideration, but the reader must be asked for indulgence for a little repetition. First let us hear the relevant passage in the *Life of S. Samson of Dol*, as translated by Canon Taylor.² Samson leaves the monastery:

"So . . . he directed his course to this side of Severn Sea. On his way moreover he goes to see his mother and his aunt . . . : he excommunicates his sister . . . : he sets afoot much good work in these places . . . : he sets free from disease many among them who are sick . . . : with a favourable wind after a happy passage, he arrives at a monastery called Docco . . ." (in Cornwall).

It should be noted that after leaving his monastery Samson first crosses the Severn to the writer's side, next visits his mother and aunt, and third goes to Cornwall. Unless it can be shewn that his mother and aunt, and the writer, were all out of Wales and in the same place, there is no possibility that the monastery was in Wales. Samson's family home was in Gwent, in Wales, and both the aunt, and the mother, whose husband had just left her, would be likely to be there. The writer was Henoc, and he too was a Briton and his home, according to Wade Evans,³ probably at LlanHenoc near Cardiff. The writer could not have been the editor of the *Life of S. Samson*, who was a monk of Dol in Brittany, as in that case the text would mean that Samson went to Brittany on leaving his monastery, which he did not do, and because a Breton would not refer to Brittany as 'this side of Severn Sea'. He would call it, as he does later, 'This side of the Southern Sea', i.e. the English Channel. The monk of Cornwall to whom Henoc 'brought' his stories of Samson is not said to have written anything, but the word 'brought' shows that Henoc did,⁴ and the phrase 'this side of Severn Sea' must have been in his memoir. The statement that he 'brought' these stories to Cornwall shows that they were written in Wales.

It follows that Samson's monastery was on the other side of the Severn from Wales, and this means either in East Gloucestershire or in Somerset or Devon, if the term 'Severn Sea' could refer to the Bristol Channel, which today I doubt very much. Somerset and

² Canon T. Taylor. *The Life of S. Samson of Dol*. S.P.C.K., 1925.

³ A. W. Wade Evans. *Welsh Christian Origins*. Oxford, 1934, p. 207.

⁴ Taylor, *op. cit.*, ch. 2.

Devon can be excluded since Samson has no associations there, and because his patron Dubricius also had no known influence in that area. That Samson worked in East Gloucestershire is suggested by the dedication of the church to him at Cricklade.

Further evidence that Samson's monastery was by the River Severn is given by a collation of the *Life* with Nennius' *Historia Brittonum*. The former tells us that Samson's monastery was founded by a certain Germanus,⁵ probably the bishop of Alet rather than the bishop of Auxerre, though this point is immaterial here. Nennius also refers to a monastery founded by Germanus, or by Vortigern. Both monasteries are suspect of being by the Severn. Neither can be Llantwit. Nennius' source was an early life of this Germanus, probably by Rhun, son of King Urbgen of Rheged, and a famous Briton.⁶ According to Nennius, this life told of a great monastery (magnum locum) founded by Vortigern, or Germanus, or both, on the banks of the river Renis.⁷

'Quartus fuit Faustus, qui illi de filia sua natus est, quem sanctus Germanus baptizavit, enutrivit, atque docuit: & condidit magnum locum super ripam fluminis, quod vocatur Renis (or Reins) (& sibi consecravit) & manet usque hodie: & habuit unam filiam (or Quinta fuit filia . . .).

(The fourth son was Faustus, who was born to him (Vortigern) by his daughter and whom S Germanus brought up and taught: and he founded a great shrine on the banks of the river called Renis (or Reins) (and consecrated it to himself) and it remains to this day: and he had one daughter . . . (or the fifth was a daughter).)

In the main text it is Vortigern who founds the monastery since he must be the subject of 'habuit unam filiam'. In the variant it is Germanus. The two men however represented State and Church respectively. When Germanus quarrelled with the King he followed him round 'with all the British clergy', a phrase making him head of the British Church. A royal monastery would have been in Germanus' hands. Thus the main text implies, and the variant states, that Germanus was the founder of this monastery. The river Renis, on which much ink has been spilt, could be:

⁵ "Apud Habrinam sanctum Samsonem quasi angelum Dei mirifice exeperunt. abbatemque eum in monasterio quod, aiunt, a sancto Germano fuerat constructum, constituerunt." (*Life of Samson*, ch. 24.)

Hugh Williams believed this monastery by the Severn. (*Christianity in Early Britain*. Oxford 1912). So does Geoffrey Ashe. (*From Caesar to Arthur*. London, 1960.) See the discussion on Vortigern.

⁶ Nora Chadwick. *The Early British Church*. C.U.P. 1958, p. 72.

⁷ Nennius. *Historia Brittonum*. ed. F. Lot, Paris 1934. The character of Nennius' Germanus agrees with that of Germanus of Alet, for whom see the Breton or Cornish missal (MSS Bodl. 572, fol. 1) and both disagree radically with that of Germanus of Auxerre.

1. The Renas in Man with the reputed cell of S Germanus at its mouth on S Patrick's Isle (now Peel Island).
2. The Rance in Brittany. Alet, apparently Germanus' headquarters, is on the banks of this river.
3. The Severn. The Welsh name was the Hafren, presumably a corruption of Sabrina. The Renis (or Reins or Rinas) could perhaps be a diminutive of Sabrina, or of Hafren.

Of these possible sites, we must rule out Man and Brittany. So far as we know, Vortigern had no authority there, and Wales can be reached from neither by crossing the Severn. This leaves S Germanus on the banks of the Severn, the lower Severn according to Geoffrey Ashe, who places Germanus' monastery here.

We thus have two monasteries, both founded by Germanus, and both suspect of being by the Severn, on good authority. The likelihood is that they were one and the same monastery. Deerhurst best fits the evidence because of its site by the banks of the Severn: because of the marked Celticism of its sculpture: the absence of any good record of its Saxon foundation: the character of its architecture.⁸

The Early Rectangular Churches

The second thesis, that Deerhurst I was one of a group of rectangular churches built by early monks of IV to VII has been greatly strengthened by the recognition by Jean Hubert and others that the missionary Irish monks on the Continent in VII used rectangular churches.⁹ In that case we should expect their predecessors to do the same. If the one group had a common type of church, so would the other.

New evidence of importance has appeared since 1968 in regard to the relevant structures of the early group, and this new evidence must now be discussed, the reader being referred to the 1968 article for the original discussions.

Sées I

This structure was always important for Deerhurst and has now become much more so. It has the rubble fabric with herring-bone cordons, the rectangular form, the main west entrance and signs of numerous lateral windows, which are features of the type, and is also apparently early. It will be seen from FIG. 1 that the logical reconstruction of the original form, to close the monastic courtyard,

⁸ There is more discussion of these points in my article in this journal in 1968.

⁹ *L'Europe des Invasions*, by Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, and W. F. Volbach. Paris 1967, pp. 64 ff.

gives it an original rectangular form of about 3:1. It is known to have extended further eastwards.

The history of Sées has recently been much enlightened by an article by the Comte du Mesnil du Buisson, and also by further consideration of the site. The Comte assures us very positively that the region was evangelised by Martinian monks from Tours (pp. 3-5).

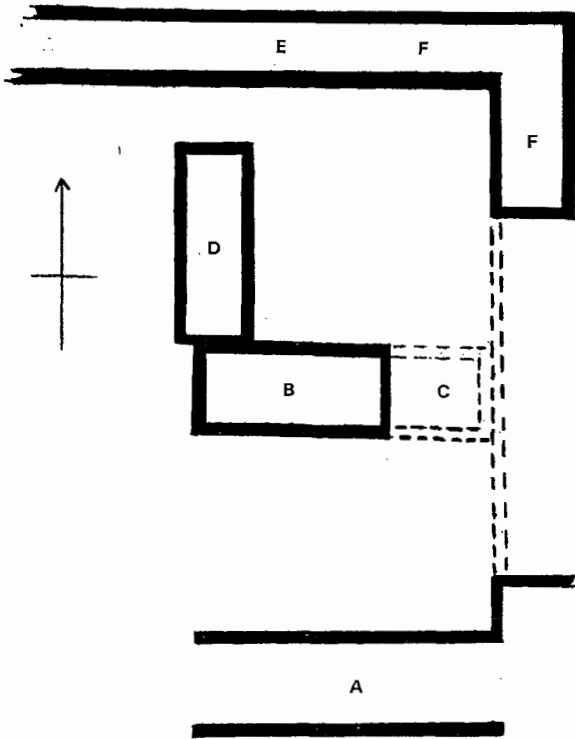
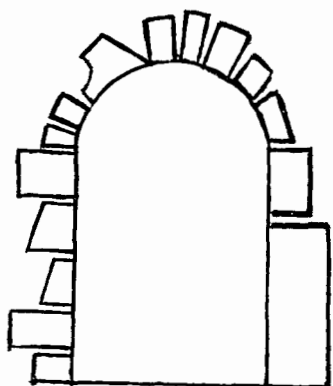
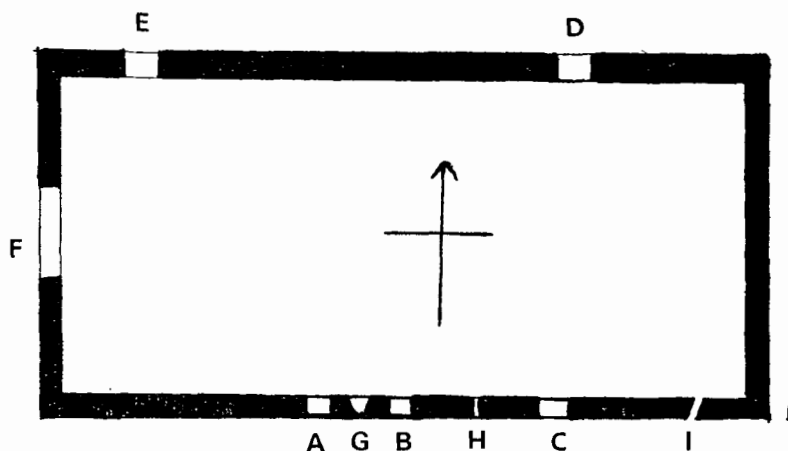


Fig 1. (No scale.)
 The Claustral Area at Sées.
 (No scale.)
 A = Cathedral nave (aisles omitted).
 B = La Chapelle des Chanoines.
 (Sées I.)
 C = Lost East end of Sées I (?).
 D = Now cut up into houses, but
 very ancient walls.
 E = Romanesque cellar,
 traditionally associated with
 Refectory.
 F = Much later houses.

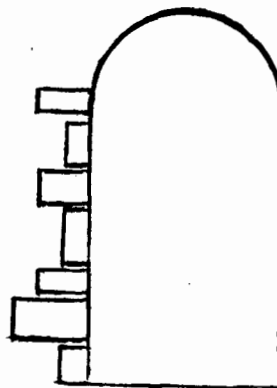
He thinks the dedication of the first monastery at Sées to S Martin proves this. This monastery, of which the church survives, was outside the walls, as is Notre Dame du Vivier, which, the Comte tells us, was the first cathedral of Sées. It is now used as a factory and is about a quarter of a mile from the existing cathedral and on the banks of the Orne. It was usual for the first cathedral to be outside the walls of the city, partly because it was built when Christianity was illegal but also since the first cathedrals were usually built over a martyr's grave in the cemetery. After the disastrous barbarian raids of 406 the cathedrals were often brought within the walls for safety, and often

reconstituted as double cathedrals. This does not mean that there were two cathedrals. It means that the lay church, and the church of the monks or canons serving it, were concentrated into one unit, but not, as today, into one building. Today the one big cathedral houses both churches: that of the clergy at the east, and the lay at the west, separated by a screen. In the double cathedral the two churches were either side by side, or sometimes, in the extreme west, in file.

Fig. 2. Sées I today. Scale 20'=1".
(Modern Portico omitted).



Blocked window at G. No scale.



E Jamb of D. No scale.

The new cathedral at Sées was traditionally built by S Latuin in the years 400 to 440, and the Comte believes that he built a double cathedral, naming the present cathedral of S Gervais and S Protais and Notre Dame du Vivier as the sites of the two churches.¹⁰ These two would make a very abnormal pair, and when on the cathedral site we see today two churches side by side, in the normal manner of a double cathedral, it is hard to deny that such must have existed at Sées, or that the two churches were on the site of the present Cathedral and of Sées I. The cathedra would presumably be in the lay church. It is also very probable that the dedication to S Mary was transferred to it from Notre Dame du Vivier.

The double arrangement must have ceased when Yves de Bellême built his enormous structure on the site of the existing cathedral, if not before. This was in XI, but the process of converting double churches into single cathedrals began in the Carolingian age. Sées I continued as a private church for the monastery or canons, and indeed to this day is known in Sées as the 'Chapelle des Chanoines'.

The authorities at Sées have now, in their official literature, claimed Sées I as one of the early Cathedrals of Sées. If this claim is established, as eventually it is likely to be, it will revolutionise art history both in Gaul and Britain, the latter from the many affinities between Sées I and Deerhurst I. It does not follow that Sées I is the church built by S Latuin. It looks about 100 or 200 years later than that.

The neglect of this structure in the past is not a little surprising. As far as I am aware the first discussion of it in print was in England in 1968.

Les Maselles Thésée

Clearly analogous to Sées I and hardly less important is the ruin known as Les Maselles at Thésée. Thésée is on the Cher, on the site of the old Roman road from Bourges to Tours. In its first form it was a plain rectangle of 130 ft × 43 ft. It is in late Roman technique of small square-faced stones with tile cordons, and has struck almost all critics as late Roman.¹¹ It has however in addition herring-bone cordons in stone, and indeed all the features of the church-type we are discussing, proving that they did all occur together and that very early (PLATE I). The walls were very high: they are still 27 ft high,

¹⁰ Le Comte du Mesnil du Buisson. *Les Origines des Evêchés de Sées et Exmes. Centre Culture et Touristique de l'Orne* II. Flers 1967. For double Cathedrals see J. Hubert. *L'Art Pré-Romane*, Paris 1938. p38f

¹¹ Dr Lesueur. *Le Monument Romain des Maselles à Thésée. Bulletin Monumentale* 86. 1927, p. 129.

and 12 high windows still survive in part on the south side: there was a west entrance, and over it are traces of the two parallel west windows.

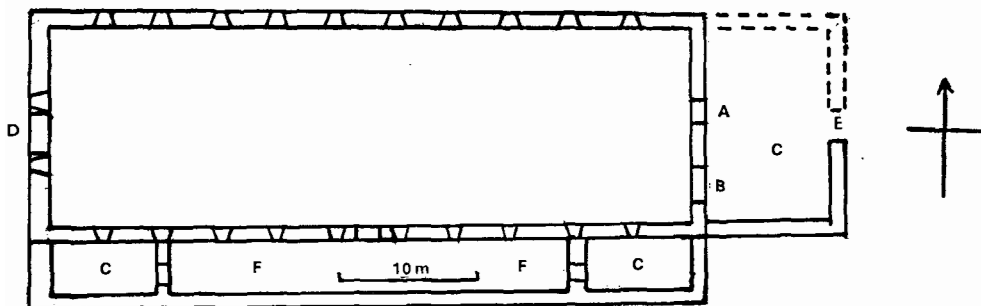


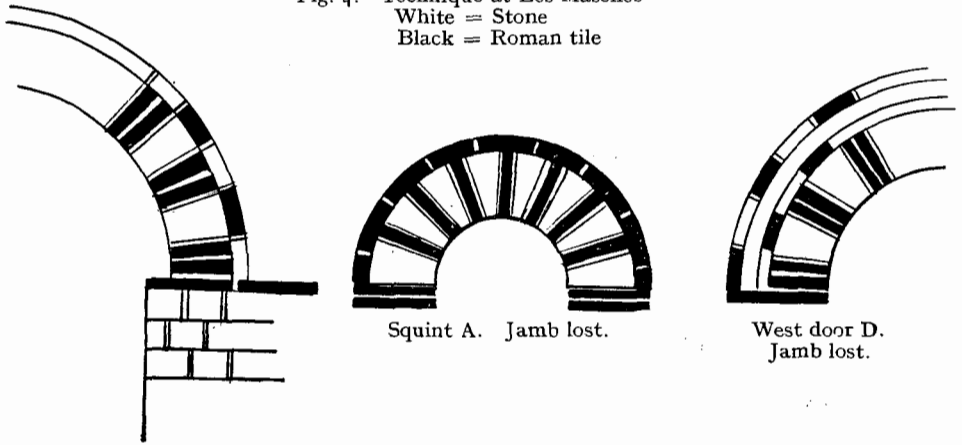
Fig. 3. Les Maselles. Thésée. Plan (based on Lesueur.)

- A = Original squint.
- B = Modern door. (about 11th century.)
- C = Adjuncts. None communicated with the central structure. All are additions.
- D = West door.
- E = East door.
- F = Probably a Portico or Porticus.

To this structure, still at a sub-Roman date, were added the east and south porticus, of which F, no longer standing, was either a portico or a long porticus. The structure being oriented suggests a church, and its resemblances to Sées I both in form, size and detail, confirm this interpretation. The old idea that it was an Inn, is now largely abandoned. M Gaume indeed, who was excavating at Thésée in 1968, thought the structure anterior to 276, from its similarities to work at Roman Thésée. No doubt these exist, but so do differences, such as the absence of herring-bone cordons at Roman Thésée. This should ensure the later date of Les Maselles. M Gaume thought the structure of one date. On the contrary it seemed to me clear that none of the porticus are in bond with the main rectangle, and that breaks in bonding in the quoins show that the main west wall is a total rebuild, while the south and east walls are original only in the lower courses. It looks as if the first structure was destroyed soon after it was built, then restored with the addition of the porticus almost immediately, and in the original technique, and finally early abandoned, since there are no additions to this early work.

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Fig. 4. Technique at Les Maselles
 White = Stone
 Black = Roman tile



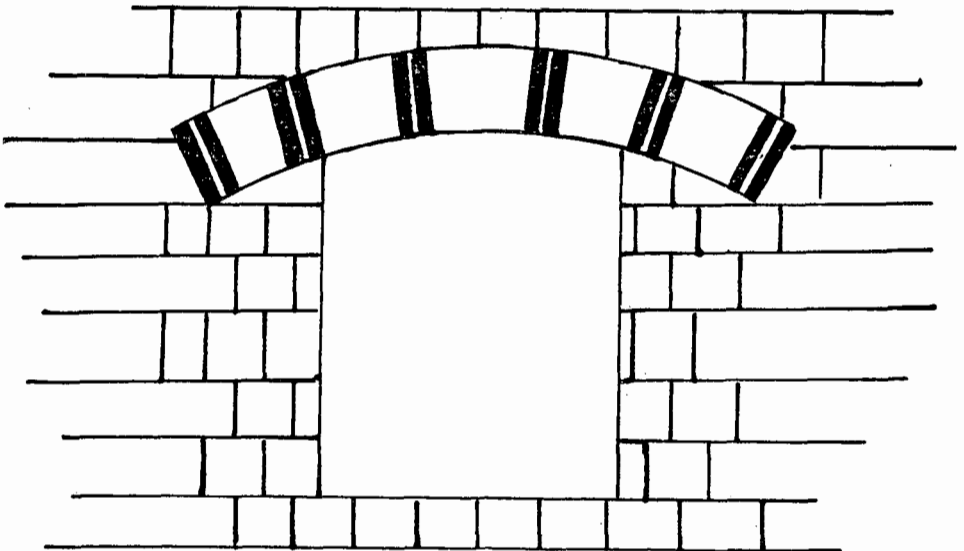
Squint A. Jamb lost.

West door D.
 Jamb lost.

E. Door. E. Adjunct.

The arches are in alternating stone and tile. The only original one is the squint A (FIG. 4) which was not splayed. It was built up during the construction of Maselles II. The arches D and E are more flamboyant, and belong to the rebuild (FIG. 4). The high windows are the most extraordinary of all, and are out of relation to normal west European architectural history. (FIG. 5).

Fig. 5. High window at Les Maselles. South wall.



If Sées I was a cathedral, which now seems to be the case, it can reasonably be assumed that Les Maselles was one also. In that case it was the first cathedral, for it is outside Thésée, and indeed across the river. This would make it earlier than Sées I in origin, as it is in technique. The curious fact of its early abandonment reminds one of the vivid picture of abandoned churches given in a letter of Sidonius Apollinaris as typical of Catholic churches under the Visigoths.¹² Equally, of course, the Franks might have abandoned it if it had been a Visigothic Arian, or a schismatic British structure. Both are possibilities.

What is fairly certain, in view of its position near Tours, is that Thésée would be first evangelised by Martinian monks.

The importance of Les Maselles is partly that it shows that all the features ascribed to the Deerhurst church-type did exist together, at an early date, and that when some of them are missing because of destruction or rebuilds, they can reasonably be assumed. It emphasises, as does Sées I, that these churches were not only obscure village churches but involve an important and forgotten piece of art-history. It confirms that in the earliest phases the church-type was a plain rectangle. When a structural sanctuary first appeared is still unknown.

Savennières

There is little to add about Savennières. It still has the best cordons of them all, and the only ones in Roman tile. The similarity of technique between its west windows and the west door at Les Maselles, both having the double line of tiles outlining the extrados of the arch (FIG. 4) suggests that Gabriel Plat was right in thinking the church at Savennières pre-Carolingian. This would make it Frankish, or Visigothic, or not impossibly Breton, for Savennières was in Breton hands for most of the time from IV to VII, indeed to IX.

The British Churches

The relevant churches on this side of the channel are smaller with the exception of the enigmatic structure at Winchester (FIG. 6). At first sight they appear also technically much inferior, but this is probably due to slapdash repairs and rebuilding. The original cordons at Deerhurst were carefully finished and impressive, while the famous string course is the finest single feature in the whole range of this group of structures. New evidence of importance has not appeared for these structures, but a revision of opinion is necessary in regard to Kildare. The description of the rebuilt church at Kildare of VII, as

¹² Sidonius Apollinaris. Ep. VII, 6.

having one ornate door representing a general style of the time, of which the doors at Fore and Clonamery (both west doors) would be examples, and the statement that Ratass and Clonamery churches have the same composition at the west end, might seem to indicate that Kildare had a west door.¹³ However, as Dr Taylor has kindly pointed out to me, Cogitosus, who described the rebuilt church, refers only to 'sinister' and 'dexter' doors, meaning north and south doors.¹⁴ A west door in view of its common occurrence in Ireland could well have existed unmentioned by Cogitosus, but cannot be assumed. The reason for the N-S doors at Kildare was to provide separate entrances for the male and female virgins. They had a special purpose therefore, and Kildare need not, on that account, be subtracted from the list of possible examples of the Deerhurst-type. It does follow, however, that the conjectured internal arrangements at Deerhurst and Monkwearmouth, as offered in 1968, need revision. All that will be left will be the cross walls which Françoise Henry thought to be inconstases. This wall is certain at Kildare; probable at Monkwearmouth, where it had pictures on it, while at Deerhurst foundations of such a wall exist, later used for a central tower, but possibly antedating that. In each case an internal sanctuary is suggested: that at Deerhurst would have been square, and in view of the square sanctuaries of later churches of Celtic influence, such as Escombe, these internal sanctuaries would be expected to be square. At Kildare the internal sanctuary was divided into three parts by partition walls, while the rest of the church had an axial partition to separate the men and the women.

Monkwearmouth

It has been questioned whether Monkwearmouth Church had decorative herring-bone cordons originally. It is true that the traces of these cordons are but slight. Signs of two exist, both in the lowest 15 feet of the west wall. Only the west wall survives however of Biscop's church, and not all of that. If a figure of the quoins is consulted it will be seen that only the ten bottom stones are original, giving a wall height of about 15 feet.¹⁵ Two cordons in this walling implies about six in the whole façade which is the same number as at Savennières. The degraded condition of the cordons is paralleled by many at Deerhurst, where one fragment or original work yet survives as part of a finished decorative cordon. (PLATE 2). The degree of

¹³ Françoise Henry. *Irish Art*. 2nd Edit. 1947, p. 48.

¹⁴ Cogitosus. Migne *Patrologie Latine*. LXXII, p. 788.

¹⁵ E. Gilbert. *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 1947, p. 144, Fig. 1.

degradation induced by perfunctory repairs is probably always greatly underestimated. The original cordons at Monkwearmouth could have been as good as those at Deerhurst.

Winchester (FIG. 6)

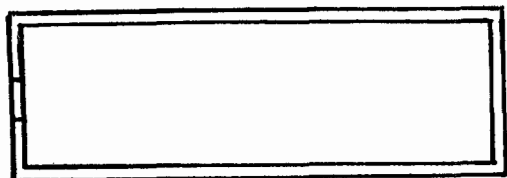
The rectangular structure on the Cathedral site at Winchester measures about 150 ft × 50 ft and was therefore somewhat larger even than Les Maselles. It is typologically much older than the New Minster and if a church, as the excavator thought it might be in 1964, reflects an older plan.¹⁶ The excavator in 1964 reported that it lay 2 ft above the Roman levels, and had no pottery in its lowest floor levels, other than Roman. Both facts suggest an early origin. The excavator nevertheless supposes it built in X. If so, it would be expected to be a rebuild. The reasons given for the date in X do not seem conclusive, however. They are firstly that the structure lies axially east of the New Minster; secondly that the construction of the foundations and the colour of the mortar of the two structures is identical. In regard to the first point the excavator's own plans show that the building was as much axially east of the Saxon Cathedral as of the New Minster, and could equally well be related to the former. In regard to the other points the nature of the identity is not specified. If the identity of construction refers to the fabric of flint rubble, the Cathedral and buildings of all dates uses this fabric. Alone it proves little. Mortar is also a dangerous form of evidence to use. Coloured mortars were in use in England roughly from VI to IX, We have also to allow for the practice of repointing. Furthermore it is hard to see how the rectangular structure could be related to the New Minster. Claustral structures do not lie axially east of the main church, and a double Cathedral would be an anachronism in X. It could, however, have formed a double cathedral with one of the predecessors of the Saxon Cathedral. The rectangular structure has been re-excavated in 1970. Later pottery has been found, but everything must depend on exactly at what level. All we can really do at the moment is to await the final report.

Origins of the Deerhurst Church-type

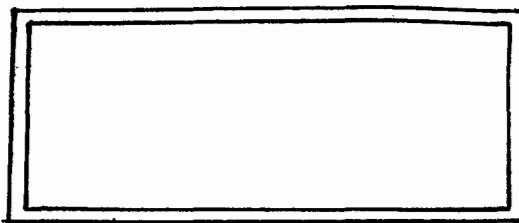
If the Irish monks of VII built rectangular churches on the Continent, the earlier rectangles would be expected to be the work of earlier Celtic monks or their Gallic cousins. The location of the structures discussed in N.W. Gaul clearly suggests Tours as the

¹⁶ M. Biddle. *Winchester Cathedral Records*. 1964, p. 18. See also *The Antiquaries Journal*, xiv 1964, Vol. II, p. 182-219 see pp. 207 and 210.

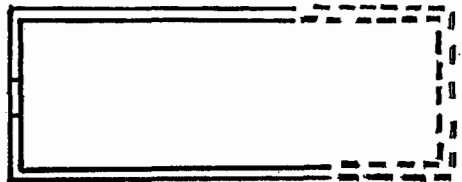
Fig. 6. Diagrammatic Plans. Rectangular structures of Early Date.



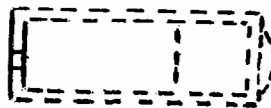
(a) Les Maselles Thésée Original Structure.



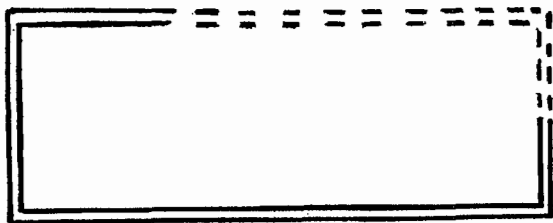
(d) The Old Temple Jerusalem. Size and Shape very approx. as size of cubit not certain.



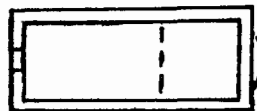
(b) Sées I.



(e) Monkwearmouth I (conjectural).



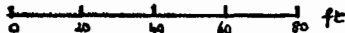
(c) Winchester Cathedral site. East of Saxon Cathedral.



(f) Deerhurst I.



(g) S. Patrick's Chapel. I.O.M.



art-centre from which the church-type spread. One would moreover then expect an origin earlier than 470, about which date Perpet built a very different type of transeptal church at Tours. The techniques at Les Maselles also favour an origin for the type before that date.

For these reasons Martin himself must be regarded as a possible author of the type, especially as all the continental examples can be assumed to be on sites evangelised by Martinian monks. We have recently learnt something of Martin's churchbuilding from the efforts of Dom Coquet at Ligugé.¹⁷ Here he has found the foundations of Martin's first church there, built between 361 and 371. (FIG. 7). This structure had an unaisled nave ending in an apse with possibly a triple arcade of entrance. The structure measured about 3:1, more if the apse is counted into the length (14.75 m × 4.5 m) and rather less if the nave only is considered (12.0 m × 4.5 m). The newel staircases at the west suggest high walls and an upper storey, for the church was only 5 feet down on the contemporary levels, and one does not build twin newels merely to descend five feet. Both at Deerhurst and Monkwearmouth upper storeys have been suggested in relation to the high walls,¹⁸ and churches of three storeys existed in Ireland in VIII or IX.¹⁹ The excavator says nothing of the fabric but it would be expected to be similar to that of the other work claimed to be of IV on the site, and this is of rubble. Thus although the apse suggests Italian influences which are markedly absent from the Deerhurst church-type, there are suggestions of an approach to it. In 371 Martin went to Tours and shortly afterwards founded his abbey at Marmoutier. Nothing of his date survives there, but it seems clear that his abbey was run in a spirit very different to the spirit of the classical world, and that the older Martin grew, the further he diverged from that world.

The suggestion is that a movement towards the Deerhurst church-type had set in by Martin's day, but that the full development came between his death in 399 and Perpet's basilica of 470. During some or all of this period the Bretons seem to have controlled territory on both sides of the Loire.²⁰ A friendly letter of Sidonius Apollinaris speaks of the Britons situated on the Loire, of which the addressee, a chief named Riothamus, was one.²¹ It is in Berry that the Bretons are first heard of when an army of 12,000 Bretons under a chief of similar name, called a King by the Gothic historian Jordanes,

¹⁷ Dom Coquet. *L'Interet des Fouilles de Ligugé*, 1968, Fig. 1.

¹⁸ Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 150 and *Trans. BGAS*, 1954, p. 83.

¹⁹ F. Henry. *op. cit.*, p. 99. Also H. G. Leask. *Irish Churches*. I. Dublin, 1955, p. 33.

²⁰ For Brittany see H. Waquet. *Histoire de la Bretagne*. Paris 1964.

²¹ Sidonius Apollinaris. *Ep. III* 9. According to Jack Lindsay, in his excellent book, *Armorica* included not only Tours, but Orleans, and even at times Auxerre. (Jack Lindsay, *Arthur*. London 1966. p. 110.)

DEERHURST AND ARMORICA

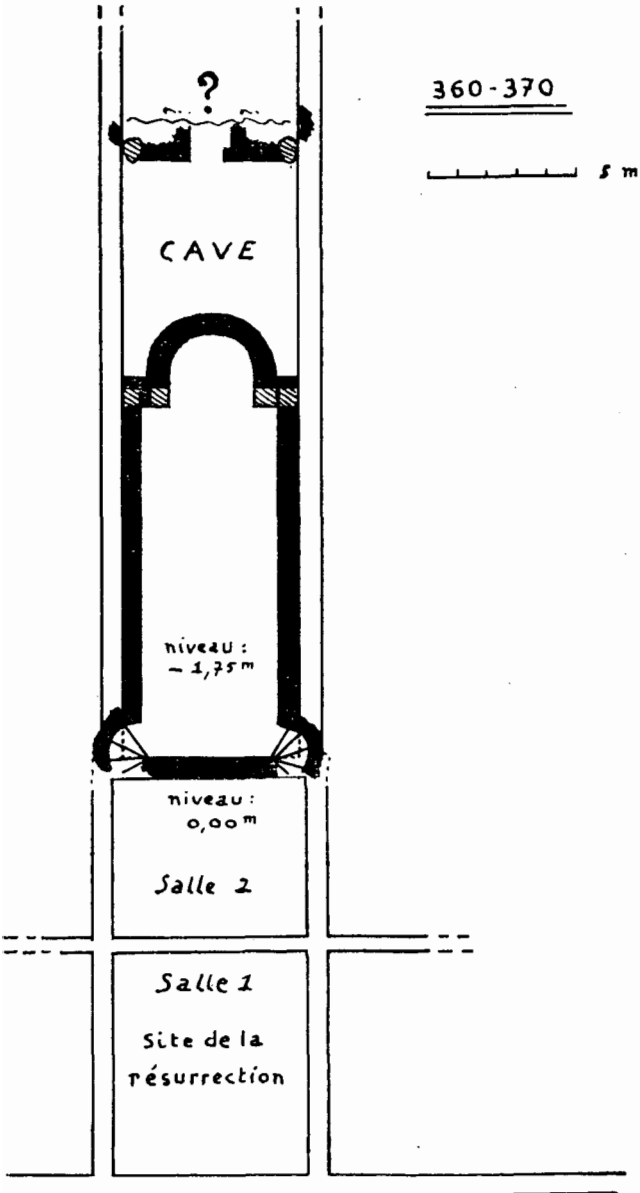


Fig. 7. S. Martin Ligugé. (Courtesy Dom Coquet)

tried, on behalf of the Romans, to stop the advance of the Visigoths to the Loire. The Bretons were presumably acting in their own interests also. They were however, beaten, in battle by Euric at Déols near Chateauroux, after which they could hardly have held their territories south of the Loire. It seems fairly clear, however, that Tours was for much of V a Breton city, and very possibly Bourges also. Savennières and Sées were clearly Breton cities during this century. In fact the sister site to Sées, Exmes, is supposed to conceal the name of a Breton tribe, the Osismiens. Thésée would in all likelihood also be a Breton city during this century, before 470. After that date Thésée would be expected to pass to the Visigoths, but Sées and Savennières would have remained Breton. The Breton historian H. Waquet sees no reason to doubt that the Bretons were evangelised by Martinian monks. (p. 13).

The thesis that the Deerhurst church-type originated from Tours in Brittany in V is therefore a good one.²² As the Comte du Buisson notes, the dedications at Tours (S Gervais and Protais, and S Mary) are reflected at Sées. Such an origin would make Deerhurst I a Breton church, and the natural channel of influence would be none other than Germanus, bishop of Alet. According to Waquet, Alet was one of the bishoprics of Brittany in V. It is perhaps not entirely accidental that the new type of church at Tours, built by Perpet, immediately follows the British defeat at Déols.

A third possible origin for the Deerhurst church-type would be in Ireland, but this is not a good thesis. There are no traceable churches of this type associated with Patrick in Ireland in V. The only structure even legendarily associated with Patrick and still partly extant, is on his island in Man (now Peel Island) (FIG. 6). Curiously enough it is a rectangle of *ca.* 3:1 measuring *ca.* 57 ft × 18 ft, and built of rubble with herring-bone cordons. The upper levels are lost. There was a west entrance. In short, it has considerable resemblances to the Deerhurst church-type. Owing to the herring-bone cordons it has been dated to XI, but this is an error as herring-bone cordons do not prove a date in XI.

²² The main difficulty in the thesis is the implication of a greater Brittany in V, including Tours. It is, however, admitted that the history of Tours is virtually unknown in V, but that it was for part of the time a member of an Armorican federation. The text of Sidonius (Ep. III, 9) is quite explicit that the Bretons were then living on the Loire 'super Ligerim sitos' and this is the decisive and indeed only evidence for the character of the Armorican federation. Certainly we do not find the word 'Brittany' used by French authors before about 590. This proves little as no authors dealt with the area before that. The term *Armorica* included Tours. It also indirectly included Tours in Frankish days. Tours remained, in the eyes of the Catholics, the metropolis of Brittany, but the Bretons did not accept this, and eventually established their own metropolitan at Dol. Any connection between Tours and Ireland is likely to be before 511, and that brings us to the age of Brigit who lived in late V and early VI. If the original influence for Kildare came from the Touraine, so may the original influence at Deerhurst.

None of the other monastic settlements in the west, of V, seem to have relevance to the Deerhurst church-type. The supposedly earliest structures in Ireland, such as Gallerus, belong to a different tradition and so does the work of the monks in Provence such as Cassian of Marseilles and Honoratus of Lérins.

Later Churches

A few later churches, especially in Bernicia, show traces of residual influence from the Deerhurst church-type. Such is the church at Escombe, which has a nave of proportions 3:1 and had once high walls.²³ On the other hand, there are no herring-bone cordons; the fabric is not of rubble: the main entrance is the south one: there is above all a structural sanctuary. Co. Durham, where Escombe is, was much exposed to British influence from the neighbouring British kingdom of Rheged, which is now thought to have been absorbed into Bernicia by marriage rather than by conquest. The point is made by K. H. Jackson, 'On the North British Section in Nennius', in *Celt and Saxon*, edited Nora Chadwick. Oxford 1963. See the discussion of the genealogies.

The Model

The question arises as to what was the model for the Deerhurst church-type. It is unlikely to have been a provincial church, even one so important as Les Maselles. On the above analysis it could have been S Gervais and S Protais at Tours. Even if it was, this does not explain why a model so unlike the Roman churches of V was chosen. Partly, it may be, the type is an archaic use of earlier models, such as that at the early Cathedral at Trier, but it may be that a more precise model was behind these churches. After the peace of the Church in early IV, the Church was invaded by numerous pagans, wishing to jump on the new bandwagon. Reactions were provoked in several directions one of which was a revival of Judaic Christianity. According to G. de Plinval, this began seriously to affect the Church in IV.²⁴ Some of the monks were specially affected by this development and began to call themselves 'Israelites' and their opponents 'Gentiles'. At the same time, in the West, appeared a revolt against Roman society and culture. Martin took a lead in this. He believed that the only true Christian status was poverty and the only literature acceptable to a genuine Christian was the Bible.²⁵ Against him were

²³ J. F. Hodgson. The Churches of Escombe, Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, *T. Durham Northumbria. A.A.S.* 6. (1906-11) pp. 109-87.

²⁴ G. de Plinval. *Pelage*. Lausanne. 1943.

²⁵ Secular literature was not allowed in his monastery, and when he died he, at his own request, was buried in the cemetery of the poor.

most of the Gallic bishops, and behind them such figures as Ambrose and Augustine. The monks used the O.T. a good deal in their propaganda. Martin wrote nothing, but we have two of Patrick's works in V²⁶ and some work of Gildas in VI,²⁷ both of whom used the O.T. extensively and classical literature not at all. The O.T. was also much quoted in Ireland during this period.²⁸ Not till VII do the Irish monks, such as Columbanus, come to terms again with classical literature. In other words the revolt against classical society and literature corresponds in date to the suggested period of the Deerhurst church-type.

This revolt against the moral values of Roman society could easily lead to a sympathy with Judaic Christianity. There are indeed signs of this sympathy in the Life of Samson. Thus Samson believed himself to have been ordained bishop by SS Peter, James, and John. The second, according to Canon Taylor,²⁹ means the brother of Jesus, the first patriarch of Jerusalem and the leader of Judaic Christianity. Samson is said to have dreamt this. This no doubt means that he had a vision, and like S Paul, he would have believed his vision to represent reality. Similarly S David is said to have been ordained by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and again surely in a vision.³⁰

With a background like this it is obvious what could have been the ideal model of the Martinian monks. It could have been not any Italian basilica, but the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem, which they would find interpreted in I Kings 2. Curiously enough it was a rectangle with proportions of 3:1 (60 cubits \times 20 cubits) and with very high walls. (30 cubits, about 65 feet.) It is interpreted to have had many high windows in the sides, though none in the end containing the Holy of Holies.³¹ This latter was an internal sanctuary 20 cubits square on plan, an arrangement similar to that suggested at Kildare, Monkwearmouth and Deerhurst. In size the Temple must have been very close to Les Maselles, depending on the exact size of the cubit, which is not known. A further relation in measurement between the Temple and the Deerhurst type of church is the actual figures of 60 ft \times 20 ft, in cubits, at the Temple, in feet at Deerhurst and

²⁶ i.e. the *Confessions* and the *Letter to Coroticus*. For translations see L. Bieler, *The Works of Patrick*, London, 1953.

²⁷ For Gildas see Migne. *Pat. Cursus Completus*, 69, 1844. There is a translation by Wade Evans, 1938.

²⁸ L. Bieler. *Ireland*. Oxford. 1963.

²⁹ Taylor. *op. cit.*, ch. 43.

³⁰ Rhygefarch. *Life of S. David*, Ed. Ernest Rhys, Gregynog Press. 1927.

³¹ For plan and elevation see Cecil Roth. *Jewish Art*. London. 1961. p. 82. See also Nathan Anshel. *A Pictorial History of the Jewish People*. New York. 1953. Very significantly S Wilfrid built at Ripon c. 660 'according to the wisdom of Solomon'.

Monkwearmouth (roughly). Could it be that the British monks thought the cubit was a foot?

It is an interesting fact that it is precisely those aspects of the Temple which are recorded in I Kings 2, which are reproduced in the Deerhurst type of church, while other features such as the ashlar fabric, which are not there recorded, are not reproduced. Thus the Deerhurst type of church might be regarded as an interpretation in local technique of the Temple of Solomon. There is some direct evidence that this was so. This is in the drawing of the Temple in the Book of Kells.³² This gives us a rendering of the temptation of Christ to throw himself down from the Temple. The structure is represented in local, here Irish, idiom, but it has several affinities with the Deerhurst type of church. It is meant to be rectangular and has high walls, for three storeys are represented, as is said to have been the case with the Temple. The enrichment includes horizontal bands probably intended to be string courses. It is clearly an externally enriched church as was the Deerhurst type. The Temple in the book of Kells has a flat headed doorway apparently to the second stage, and no doubt on the west, as Deerhurst still has to the third stage, though this doorway is not usually considered original.

CONCLUSION

Admitting for the sake of argument that Deerhurst I was one of a series of British monuments of IV to VII, it is still difficult to place it in this series. Typically these churches use cordons and not string courses decoratively. Such cordons are supposed to have replaced the Roman string courses. The Deerhurst string course, fully discussed in 1964,³³ is very like a Roman string course, and has been thought to be such. Hence it might be argued that Deerhurst was very early in the series, before string courses had given way to cordons, in which case it would probably be the work of Germanus about 460. On the

³² The local techniques would include the herring-bone cordons. That multiple cordons were a local decorative feature in late Roman days is the opinion of Dr Jocelyn Toynbee, who reconstructs S Severin Koln with this feature, both in 300 and 400 A.D. (Christianity in Roman Britain. *Journal of the British Arch. Ass.* xvi. 1953, Plate I). She gives eleven cordons in the façade and seven in the side walls. The numbers are presumably conjectural, but compare interestingly with six in the façade and four in the side walls at Savennières. She gives the cordons in Roman tiles, which must have been their original form. The herring-bone may have come in with V, and multiple string courses, as at S Jean Poitiers and Bradford-on-Avon in VI or VII.

Another feature of Roman Britain is relevant. This is the Icklingham tub, a cylinder of radius 16 inches found in a villa. Dr Toynbee says eight are known, of which three have the Chi-Rho monogram including this one. This has a band round it near the top, with triple bedded herring-bone, a decorative feature similar to the herring-bone cordons on the Deerhurst church-type. This feature therefore existed decoratively in late Roman days, probably in V. There was little country Christianity before V in Britain. (Plate 2b.)

³³ E. Gilbert. *Trans. BGAS.* 1964, p. 49.

other hand a revival of the string course may have taken place in Britain and Ireland near the very end of the series. In this case the church would be dated in early VII and be regarded as a product of Anglo-Saxon initiative and a British architect. Either thesis involves an upgrading of British achievement. To most archaeologists this still seems unlikely, but historians know well that British achievements and influence on the Saxon kingdoms has been under-rated in the past.

(The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the Russell Trust and Edinburgh University in assessing the French evidence, but for any novel opinions he is himself entirely responsible.)

Addendum

Since this article was written (in 1970) the apse at Deerhurst has been excavated. This took place in early 1971 and is reported in the same year.³⁵ By the courtesy of Mr Rahtz of Birmingham University, who conducted the excavations, I was taken round them and have seen the interim note on the excavations.

My wish here is to relate the main findings of the excavation to the discussion above. Clearly the most important result for that discussion was to prove that Deerhurst I was indeed a plain rectangle for some years before the addition of the first apse, presumably in early 8th century. It existed as a rectangle plainly for some considerable time, though this was difficult to determine exactly. It has also become clear that there were two apses successively, as architectural historians have supposed. The lower one, a stilted semicircle, would suit very well the date of the Kentish churches of the 7th century, while the upper one, a much more lordly affair was later, though not Romanesque in character.

The rectangular form of the first stone church greatly strengthens the case for seeing this feature as typical of the churches discussed above, and affects in particular the possibility that the first church at Monkwearmouth was likewise constructed. The plan is of course that of the so-called 'Old Church' at Glastonbury, and so is the size. The Old Church was of unknown antiquity, but pre-Saxon on any historical count. Indeed there is no real difficulty in the local claim that it was founded in the 5th century. In view of the sharp contrast between this plan and that of the Kentish churches of VII there must now be a balance of evidence in favour of the pre-Saxon date of Deerhurst I. A somewhat similar conclusion is suggested by the curious fact that the walls have no proper foundations, but are simply laid on the marl

³⁴ See K. Jackson. *The British Section in Nennius*. In *Celt and Saxon*. ed. Nora Chadwick, C.U.P. 1963.

³⁵ Philip Rahtz. *Trans. BGAS*. 1971.

in a way very difficult to parallel in a certain Saxon church. Another important fact pointing in the same direction is that in the lowest levels no pottery was found except Roman or Romano-British sherds. It looks as if there is an increasing possibility that the first stone church at Deerhurst was a Romano-British structure built when the British Church was still in contact with Armorica.

The later history of Deerhurst is also affected by the excavation. It becomes clear that there was good reason for the conclusion of 1954 that, excluding the added tower, there were three main building dates at Deerhurst in Saxon days.³⁶ How the carved work was related to them is even now a matter of opinion. So too the long dispute over the form of the easternmost added porticus is affected. The narrower porticus favoured by Knowles³⁷ have been shown to be subsequent to the first apse. As this can hardly be true of the entrance to the northern of these porticus, which is very primitive in form, and closely resembles Northumbrian work of the late 7th or early 8th century, it does seem as if Knowles' porticus and the wider porticus envisaged by Butterworth,³⁸ existed in succession, as Dr Taylor maintained.³⁹

The full report will be awaited with interest. It is most interesting to see how much even a relatively small excavation can reveal.

³⁶ Edward Gilbert. *Deerhurst Priory Church Revisited*. *Trans. BGAS*. 1954. p. 73.

³⁷ W. H. Knowles. *Deerhurst Priory Church*. *Archaeologia*. 77. 1927. p. 141.

³⁸ George Butterworth. *Deerhurst*. Tewkesbury 1861. See Plan opp. p. 39.

³⁹ H. M. and Joan Taylor. *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*. Cambridge. 1965. p. 203.