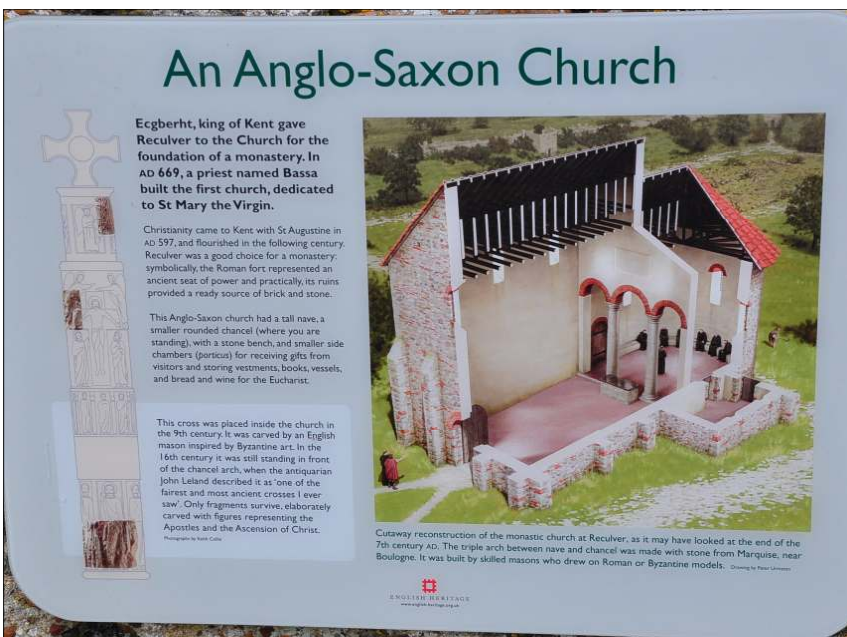


The church of St Mary, Reculver, Kent.

The wanton demolition in 1805 of St. Mary's church, on the north coast of Kent between Herne Bay and Margate, was an act of vandalism for which there can be few parallels even in the blackest records of the nineteenth century. So wrote H. Taylor in his book (vol II. page 503) "Anglo-Saxon Architecture". The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records that in 669 King Egbert of Kent gave Reculver to Bassa the priest to build a minster there. Leland stated, in about 1540, that the sea was a quarter of a mile or so to the north. The houses and village street within the Roman fort have now gone and the church in places stands barely a few yards away from the cliff edge. Mr. Nailor, the vicar, was persuaded by his mother to take the church down (1805). The two (Norman) west towers remain, with much walling of various heights despite the nave walls with its associated Transitional arcading having in the main vanished. Importantly, the two columns and capitals of the triple chancel arch (arcade) remain, safely housed in the crypt in Canterbury cathedral, having been rescued from an orchard near Canterbury by a Mr. Sheppard in 1860. More detail can be found on the page entitled "The Syrians & Kentish Churches".

All photos these pages are described viewed clockwise from top left.

1. The information plaque for visitors to the site.
2. The church seen from the south-west.
3. Inside the church looking eastwards. Note the foundations of the nave in outline on the ground.
4. Looking westwards, the run of the south 'aisle' to the left with the nave and chancel wall standing higher to the right. In the distance the two west towers seen rising, with the their fine Transitional arches.



The church of St Mary, Reculver.

All photos these pages are described viewed clockwise from top left.

5. The walling at the junction of chancel and nave, viewed from the north.

6. The two columns, which each consist of nine cylindrical stones, belonging to the triple chancel arcade, now situate in the crypt of Canterbury cathedral. The capitals each consist of a triple fillet beneath three superimposed bevelled members. The columns taper in diameter from 2 ft 3 in. at the base to 1 ft 11 in. at the top.

7. The base of the left hand column seen in picture 6. Note the three boldly projecting rings of intricate cable moulding, and again a ring repeating below the 'squared' design running round nearer the base.

Of the great cross, described by Leland, "*entering the quyer ys one of the fairest, and the most auntyent crosse that I ever saw, a ix footes, as I ges, yn highte. It standeth like a fayr columnne*". Little now remains, Peers in 1928 described 5 stones preserved in the new church at Hillborough, he gave a reasoned argument for accepting them as parts of the fair and ancient cross seen by Leland (and including 2 stones also discovered in the old church); see picture 1 for the reconstruction of the cross.



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The church of St Mary, Reculver.

All photos these pages are described viewed clockwise from top left.

- 8. The two columns shown on previous page; the capitals, as described in previously.
- 9. An old print showing the demolition of the church and in particular the triple arcade.
- 10. An illustrated plaque on site with view of the church showing the apse, side aisles and roof cut-away to show the triple arcade.

The careful excavation in 1927 by Peers showed a rectangular nave and an apsidal chancel from which doorways led to small rectangular north and south porticus. The similarity of plan and of workmanship to that of other early Kentish churches convinced Peers that this was indeed the church erected by Bassa in 669. The nave had external doorways in its west, north, and south walls; and, as was known from the picture published by Mr.C.R.Smith, it was divided from the chancel by an arcade of 3 round columns. Peers confirmed Dowker's earlier report of the sleeper wall which supported these columns and of the square responds of walling which carried the outer ends of the arches. On excavating the apse he found it was polygonal, of seven sides, and internally semi-circular, the inner face having a low stone bench running along most of its length. The doorways accessing the chancel from the porticus were thought to have had their jambs originally lined with upright stone slabs (the device of lining the jambs with slabs of stone may be compared with the existing work at Britford in Wiltshire). The porticus were soon lengthened by carrying their external walls to the west and beyond the west wall of the nave and returning them so as to enclose the nave on the north, south and west within a line of flanking chambers while at

the same time forming a porch over the west door. The fabric of these later additions differs from the original work by being of coursed blocks of stone. Peers reported that much of the original flooring remained in the nave and porticus, and a little in the apse. He confirmed it was very strong and about 10 in. thick, made of mortar set on a foundation of rough flints, and covered with a red polished surface of cement and pounded brick; all this flooring is now covered by turf.

So wrote Taylor in Vol II of “Anglo-Saxon Architecture” (see pages 503-509).



RECVLVER (KENT).

Tombs of kings and archbishops

Anglo-Saxon kings and early archbishops were buried here, including St Augustine himself.

The brick foundations in front of you are the only visible remains of Augustine's first church, built some 400 years after AD 597. You are facing the Porticus of St Gregory's church on the north side of the church which held the tomb of Augustine. Its location is marked by a commemorative stone on the left. The Porticus of St Martin is on the right side of the church, which held the tombs of the early kings of Kent, including Æthelbert who gave Augustine this land.

The wider sections of wall you can see are the bases of the tombs of archbishops Laurence (d. 619), Mellitus (d. 624) and Justus (d. 626). These were Augustine's successors as archbishops of Canterbury. Augustine had founded the first archbishop when Pope Gregory I gave him the title and authority. To this day the archbishop of Canterbury remains the head of the church in England.

This area was excavated in 1911-12. The modern roof structure was put up to allow the long-range view of the church to remain unobstructed.

This plate marked the coffin of an Anglo-Saxon king called Wulfred. He died in AD 725. This is written in Roman numerals on the last line: D = 500, C = 100, X = 10, and V = 5.

A pair of Anglo-Saxon stone pillars. The red band and capitals are made of stone. The rest is made of brick.

A reconstruction drawing of the church, showing the Porticus and the triple arcade. The church was built by Augustine.