How do you start finding out about a building?

Tracing the history of a building is great fun but can be rather like trying to do a jigsaw puzzle with pieces missing and often involves learning the skills of a detective.

USE THE PRIMARY SOURCES.

Start with the building itself.

- Look for dates and architectural styles. Use this timeline **www.lookingatbuildings.org.uk** or the book 'Exploring Churches' to help with identifying the styles and establishing approximate dates.

Look at the churchyard.

- Do a quick survey of the gravestones. What occupations are recorded? Can you pick up any clues as to the town's main industry? Do you have the name of an influential local?
- Choose one, and research the story behind the person recorded. Further gravestones or memorial plaques inside the church may provide some answers. Archive sources including parish registers and the census enumerators' sheets from 1841 onwards, should give more information of the family and wider community.
- Choose another that records a family in the nineteenth century (from 1837 onwards). What can one family's story tell us bout how people lived in the nineteenth century and the problems they faced such as child mortality? How did it reflect society as a whole at the start of the Victorian period?

INVESTIGATE THE SECONDARY SOURCES.

a) Use your nearest large library to find secondary sources such as Pevsner, Victoria County History and locally produced publications in the reference or local studies section.

b) Use local studies or reference library or archives office. Local studies resources will contain example of printed material - many copies may have been produced but few have survived. Also secondary sources, books or articles that have been written about a place or event drawing information from various sources. Archives are traditionally unique documents of handwritten accounts of contemporary events. Modern archive material can be in a variety of formats including film and electronic data.

c) If not deposited here, try a Local Study or Heritage Centre. Look in their subject index for sources on the church and ask if they produce a guide to researching the history of a building using local sources.

Old maps may show your building - narrow down the date as much as possible, noting how the building developed over time. Look for more specific dates in plans, photographs and old newspapers

Photographs - look in detail. What is still the same? What has changed? Do other sources confirm when the photograph dates from? (Consider the difference between things that can be proved using evidence and things that we can only deduce.)

Census enumerator's sheet (from 1841 onwards) - find out about the people associated with the building. Records may instead be kept in a record office or archives department.

Contemporary newspapers

Virginia Simpson, Churches Conservation Trust, 1 West Smithfield, London, EC1A 9EE

03.04.07

The English Parish Church: an Introduction

Anglo-Saxon church, Sompting, Sussex

Parish churches tell the tale of some 1300 years of English history and social change. The humble parish church is an integral part of English social life and culture.

The oldest surviving parish churches in England date to about 670 AD (Brixworth and Escombe). At that time 3 distinct classes of churches were built; "cathedral" churches, "collegiate" churches, and local churches/private chapels built by individual Anglo-Saxon thegns (lords).

Cathedral churches were not cathedrals in the modern sense, but "mother churches" from which the first missionary priests went out to preach Christianity to the pagan inhabitants in a particular region. Collegiate churches, also known as "old minsters" were daughter houses of the cathedral churches; a sort of second level regional missionary church.

Churches, or chapels (only later called "parish churches"), were generally private foundations, established by thegns, bishops, lay societies, or even an association of parishioners.

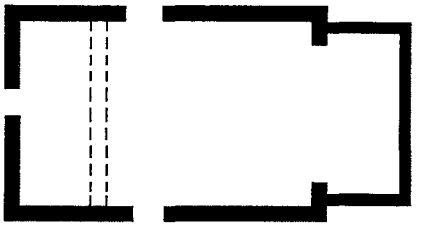
Churches were often located on pre-Christian sites of spiritual significance, taking advantage of people's existing devotion to a particular place. Worship was carried on in the same place, just with a Christian orientation. Speaking of orientation, churches are nearly always oriented so that the main altar is at the east end of the church, facing Jerusalem, and, not coincidentally, the rising sun. Even if the altar end of the church is not literally in the east, it is called the "east end". In theory at least, the east end of an English parish church could face west.

The chancel of the church was the domain of the priest, and the nave "belonged" to the parishioners. Each was responsible for the upkeep of their domain. This helps explain the curious architecture of some early parish churches, particularly in Norfolk and Suffolk, where the chancel is built of carefully squared stone, and the nave of much cheaper flint.

The basic architectural characteristics of parish churches up until the 12th century are: rectangular east end, side entrance (usually on the south side), and a west tower. The distinction between chancel and nave led to the development of rood screens to mark the division between the domain of the priest and that of his parishioners. These screens, usually of wood, but sometimes of stone, became extremely elaborate. Many were destroyed under the Reformation and the later Puritan influence. Only a few of the early screens remain, as at Stanton Harcourt (Oxon), and Bramfield (Suffolk).

One point to remember is that there was no seating in churches at that time. People attending a service stood in the nave. Luckily, it was not until much later that long sermons became popular (see below), so the parishioners did not have to suffer long.

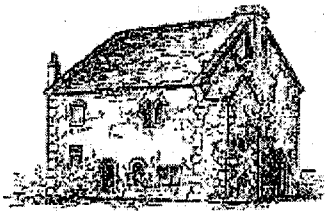
The floor plan of southern Anglo-Saxon churches was based on the traditional Roman basilica, with an eastern apse, no transepts, western entrance, and aisles. Good examples survive at Brixworth (Northants), Wing (Bucks), and Worth (Sussex).



Plan of Boarhunt (Hants) Saxon church

In the north the Celtic influence led to churches that were narrow, tall, and rectangular, with doors on the sides.

Curiously, despite the triumph of the Roman church over the Celtic one, it was the Celtic model that became the norm for parish churches in England. The Normans rebuilt many of the earlier Saxon churches, in the process destroying much of the regional differences in favour of a more unified Norman "look".



West Dean parsonage, 13th century

Early Norman churches were aisless, with a central tower, and built to a cruciform plan (i.e., they were shaped like a cross, or like a small t).

Medieval parish churches were usually plastered inside and out. Vivid picture were painted on the interior plaster to illustrate Biblical scenes for the illiterate popluation. Statuary was also richly painted. Sadly, very little of the original plastering or painting remains today, so it requires a strong imagination to picture how the churches would have looked 1,000 years ago. Before the Black Death of 1348-50 the growing population necessitated more space inside parish churches, so many churches added aisles at this time.

The most notable parish churches of the late medieval period are the so called "wool churches" common to the Cotswolds and East Anglia. These are churches endowed by the newly rich class of local merchants thriving on England's wool trade. Many of these magnificent buildings, such as Thirsk (Yorkshire), Northleach (Gloucestershire), and Lavenham (Suffolk), are like mini-cathedrals, complete with fanciful carvings, elaborate ornamentation and funereal monuments inside the church.

The Tudor era saw one important change; it was under the influence of Elizabeth I that preaching long sermons became popular. And by long, I mean loonnnnng - 2 to 4 hours was not uncommon. This meant that the victims, ... er ...church attendees, needed to sit to listen, so pews became standard in the naves. The preacher needed a lectern, and more often, a pulpit. So the pulpit was added to the nave also. Most of the pulpits you see in parish churches today date from the Tudor period, or later.

The Tudor period saw the end of the great church-building era. Far fewer churches were built from this point to the present day, the most prominent (architecturally speaking) being the Classical motif of the Stuart and Georgian period, and the Gothic Revival of mid-Victorian times.

Some aspects of a parish church

Piscina

In the pre-Reformation parish church, the Mass was celebrated several times a day at altars in the chancel and side chapels. Part of the mass requires the ritual washing of vessels, which meant that most altars had a piscina beside them, which was a basin with a drain set in the wall. Water was poured from a jug over the vessels to wash them; the water drained away into sanctified ground in the churchyard.

Most piscinas were simple affairs, but some were very elaborate with carved hooded mouldings and ogees. Piscinas were usually located on the south side of the church, but there are examples – usually early – of north side piscinas. There are very few piscinas from before 1200, but from the mid 13th century through to the Black Death in the mid 14th century almost every parish church in the country was furnished with a piscina. Piscinas built after 1350 are usually in addition to those already in a church or as a replacement. Some churches built in the 15th century do not have a piscina at all, and some architectural historians have linked the demise in piscina use to a change in social, religious and cultural thinking in the post-Black Death period. Some piscinas fell into complete disuse at the Reformation in England.

In the 19th century, under the influence of the Oxford Movement, an attempt was made to reassert the liturgical integrity of many medieval churches. At this time, piscinas were unblocked, and pressed back into use. Many new ones were constructed in a medieval style.

Some piscinas have a credence shelf set above them in the alcove. Some piscinas have been converted into cupboards, and may be confused with aumbries. Basins set into the wall beside doors are more likely to be holy water stoups. Piscinas are often associated with an adjacent sedilia, where those participating in the Mass would sit when not performing a duty.

Aumbry

An aumbry was a cupboard in the wall of a church or in the vestry, which was used to store chalices and other vessels and which was used also for the reserved sacrament: the consecrated elements from the Mass. Aumbries can be located anywhere in a church, but are usually in the chancel on the north or south walls. Occassionally an aumbry can be a trunk or case, unattached to the church walls. After the Reformation aumbries often fell into disuse or became used for general storage.

Wallpaintings

The Doom or Last Judgement was one of the most commonly painted subjects in the medieval parish church. The standard placing is above the Chancel Arch, because of the symbolism associated with the division between Nave and

Chancel. This division within the Church, (considered both as actual building and as the Body of Christ) separated the priest's domain in the chancel from that of the people in the nave, but it also symbolically marked the greater divide between the Church Militant (here on earth) and the Church Expectant (the souls in Purgatory), from the Church Triumphant in Heaven. But this placing is only standard, not invariable, and many Dooms are elsewhere in medieval churches; West Somerton, represented here, is one such.

The word 'Doom' in this context carries in itself no sense of disaster, or of eternal damnation; it is the 'time of trial', the blinking of an eye between time and eternity in which the individual soul's fate is sealed, irrevocably. The Risen Christ, often showing the Wounds of the Crucifixion, always presides, usually at the centre of the painting. The Virgin Mary is usually present as she was at the Crucifixion - at Christ's right hand and often kneeling in supplication for the souls awaiting their sentence. St. John the Evangelist is commonly found, again often as a kneeling intercessor like the Virgin. There are usually attendant angels, and sometimes Apostles (St. Peter is the most frequently found) and other Saints as well. The Instruments of the Passion - Cross, Scourge, Pillar of the Scourging, Crown of Thorns and so on - sometimes appear, often 'presented' to the onlooker by angels. Below all this, individual souls rise, usually naked, from their graves and are shown entreating Christ and his Intercessors to save them. The long-haired woman beside the trumpeting angel above is shown doing precisely that.

In most cases the aftermath of the Judgement is shown, with groups of souls departing for ever to Heaven (generally on the left [north] or to Hell, on the right [south]). These scenes are often painted on the north & south nave walls immediately before these form a right-angle with the chancel arch wall. Saved souls may appear standing in line to be met by St. Peter before passing into the apartments of Heaven beyond. Conversely, the damned proceed to Hell, assisted by devils and all the paraphernalia of Medieval hell-depictions, including, almost always, the Hell Mouth shown as the literally-painted gaping mouth of a Leviathan-like whale or sea creature.

The Weighing of Souls may be included as an integral part of the Doom, but some Weighings of Souls have either lost their Dooms or were presented as detached, if not actually separate, subjects from the first - Rotherfield, Slapton and South Leigh, (on these pages) are examples. Christ's agent here is St. Michael, holding the scales or balance in which individual souls are weighed against their sins. The Virgin may intervene on behalf of an endangered soul by putting her hand on the balance or her rosary in the scale-pan.

Churchyards

As with the layout of the church itself Christian burials in the churchyard are usually orientated east-west, although there are a few exceptions. Surveys of churchyards can help to identify patterns in burials, the chronology of use and can help to index different types of gravestone. This is an example of one such survey at Itteringham church in Norfolk, where the churchyard was divided into eight areas, measured and photographs taken of all stones.

Most headstones in churchyards will be post-Reformation in date. During the medieval period burials either had wooden crosses to mark them or nothing at all. Later burials were made over the older burials and so headstones can mark the place of multi-burials over a long time period. Before the 19th century usually only suicides and the unbaptised were buried on the north side of the church. But as space became cluttered this rule was broken. Therefore, most burials on the north side of a church date from after the 1830s.

NONCONFORMIST PLACES OF WORSHIP

From 1640 onwards (especially after Toleration Act of 1689, those wanting to meet and worship outside the established church (non conformists), began to build their own places of worship.

- often called chapels
- often plainer buildings with emphasis on interior provision for prayer, sermons and hymns
- initially small buildings built in remote places, sometimes with a strong vernacular feel (using materials, proportions and features which occur in other local buildings). Later buildings are larger, more elaborate often built on the high street.
- dating easier - often have foundation or date-stones and appear in written records.

Handy hints when looking at churches

Church Lay Out and Orientations

- Most church floor plans are cruciform i.e. shaped like a cross, or small 't'
- The main entrance to the church is usually on the South side at the West end
- The **altar** should be at the East end of the church in the **chancel** and faces Jerusalem
- East windows may show images of Christian hopes e.g. resurrection
- **Doom paintings** of the Last Judgment are found on the West side of the **chancel** arch (see below)
- Christian burials in the churchyard usually orientate East (feet)-West (head) and tend not to have grave goods; priests burials are usually aligned the other way round (head East, feet West) so that on the day of judgment they'll be facing their congregation
- The North side of the church was seen as 'less holy' with the South side having greater favour. This is thought to be because the North side was often in shadow and consequently was where the devil loitered! You often find the burials of unbaptised babies, thieves, villains and suicides on the North side of the graveyard.
- Churches were built from the **chancel** end outwards so changes in building fashion may be seen along the length of the church depending how long it took to build!

Inside the Church

- Look out for fragments of wall paintings surviving from the Medieval period (see below); they often illustrated Biblical scenes for the illiterate population
- Look for evidence on the ceiling of how the roof may previously have been covered; thatched roofs were often fastened with string coated in tar which leaves regular black lines on the rafters; plastered ceilings may also leave stains on the rafters
- The **font** was often positioned near the entrance to symbolize that you were entering the house of God

NAVE

- Where the congregation was seated/stood. It was often seen as necessary to separate the ordinary people from the clergy in the nave as much as possible (see Nave/Chancel below)
- Extra **aisles** were often added prior to the Black Death of 1348-50 as the population was growing significantly and again during the 16th Century for the same reason
- **Pews** and a **pulpit** for the preacher were added in Tudor times as preaching long sermons became popular. You may see a three-decker pulpit (one with an inbuilt clerk's bench) or a two-decker pulpit (without clerk's desk)

CHANCEL

- As the **chancel** of the church was the domain of the priest, the chancel is often better built than the nave where the congregation sat/stood!
- The **Piscina** (a basin with a drain used to wash vessels and the clergy's hands during the celebration of mass) is usually located in the wall on the south side of the chancel (see symbolism above). They were added from the mid 13th century through to the Black Death in the mid 14th century. If 2 piscinas are evident this dates them to the late 14th/early 15th century as at this time a new rule was passed that sacred vessels should not be washed in the same water as the clergy washed their hands in
- **Sedilia** (a seat for the clergy) is usually located in the wall on the south side next to the piscina.
- **Aumbry** (a cupboard used to store chalices and other vessels and for the reserved sacrament: the consecrated elements from the Mass) can be built into the north or south chancel wall.
- Burial spots closest to the altar were reserved for the more prestigious!

PTO

NAVE/CHANCEL

- 'Doom' paintings showing the Last Judgment are often found on the West side of the **chancel arch**. The Risen Christ, often showing the Wounds of the Crucifixion, is shown at the centre of the painting with the Virgin Mary often kneeling in supplication at Christ's right hand pleading for the souls awaiting their sentence. St. John the Evangelist and other attendant angels are also often shown. The Weighing of Souls may be included as an integral part of the Doom. Below Christ individual souls rise from their graves to entreat Christ and his Intercessors to save them. The aftermath of the Judgment is usually shown, with groups of souls departing to Heaven (generally on the left) or to Hell (on the right)
- Look out for evidence for **rood screens** marking the division between the domain of the clergy (chancel) and that of his congregation (nave). They were often destroyed during the Reformation and the later Puritan period due to their depiction of the Virgin Mary and saints
- Look out for **leper windows,** often located opposite the **piscina**, this was so lepers could receive communion without coming into contact with the congregation

NAVE/AISLES/CHAPELS

- Look out for **hatchments**. These are lozenge shaped panels painted with coats of arms etc. They were usually displayed in the family home during the period of mourning them transferred to the church.
- Look out for **war memorials**; the details on these can be further researched at: www.cwgc.org.uk (Commonwealth War Graves Commission) or at www.ukiwm.org.uk (the National Inventory of War memorials)
- Look out for heraldic panels recording the coats of arms for families who owned or patronized churches. The symbolism of these can be researched further (see separate handout for basic ideas)
- Look for clues for wealthy benefactors to the church, these might be found as: a chapel named after the family, plaques, inscriptions, paintings, memorials, charity boards, parish records relating to items such as the provision of pews for the congregation etc

Outside the Church

- **Porches** generally date from the 18th or 19th Century as Medieval churches did not usually have them. Medieval ones tend to have a **stoup** in them for holy water so that the congregation could cross themselves before entering the church
- Look out for **mass dials** carved into the stonework of the South side of the building. They look similar to a sundial but gave the timings of important events such as mass. Warning: they can often be moved from their original positions by later remodelling!
- **Gargoyles** helped drain away roof water but were designed as grotesque figures to ward off evil as well
- Look out for '**sharpening marks**' on walls, stone benches etc. These are from when people used to have to practice archery by law (usually on a Sunday after church) and they would use the building as a whetstone for sharpening arrows

MATERIALS

- Brick became a fashionable building material in the 16th Century, prior to this churches were constructed from stone materials
- Look out for Mason's marks carved into stone; examples of the mason's marks found at Chartres Cathedral in France can be found at: http://vrcoll.fa.pitt.edu/medart/image/france/chartres/chartres-cathedral/Architecture/Interior/Masons-Marks/Chartres-Masons-Marks.html

CHURCHYARD

- Most **headstones** will be post-Reformation in date since earlier burials either had wooden crosses to mark them or nothing at all.
- Lychgates (a roofed gateway where coffins could be rested in) were added from the 19th Century onwards

Useful Church Terms

A fuller list of terms relating to churches can be found in the CBA Practical Handbook 7; Recording a Church: An Illustrated Glossary. Copies are available from the CBA at a special leader price of £5.

Aisle: Space running alongside the **nave**, **choir** or **transept** of a church; separated from the church by columns or piers

Altar: Elevated slab, board or table which is consecrated and used during the communion ceremony

Ambulatory: Continuous aisle around the **sanctuary**

Apse: Semicircular or octagonal end to a **chancel** or **chapel**

Arcade: Series of arches supported by piers or columns

Aumbry: Cupboard in a wall, usually for sacred vessels

Baptistery: Area in church designed to accommodate the font

Bay: Divisions of the internal space created by vertical features such as arches, columns, windows etc

Belfry: Area where bells are hung

Buttress: Masonry or brickwork feature used to give additional strength to walls etc.

Campanile: Free standing bell tower

Chancel: East arm or the part of the East end of the church used by the clergy (which usually meant it was better built!)

Chancel Screen: A screen dividing the clergy in the **chancel** from the congregation in the **nave**; see also **rood screen**

Chantry Chapel: **Chapel** used for the celebration of mass for the founder of the church's soul or for one of its wealthy patrons; often screened off from main church (see **parclose screen** below)

Choir: Where daily services are sung

Commandment Tables: Inscription of the 10 Commandments on a panel, canvas or directly onto the wall. Standard in Anglican churches from the Reformation until the 19th C. Usually accompanied by the Lord's Prayer and Apostles' Creed

Communion/Altar Rails: Low fence of wood, metal or stone around the Communion table

Credence: A shelf within or beside a **piscina** or a table for the sacramental vessels

Crossing: Central space at the junction of the **nave**, **chancel** and **transepts** of a cross shaped church

Crypt: Underground vaulted chamber

Elevation: Any face of a building

Feretory: Wooden or metal container for relics placed behind the **altar**

Flushwork: Flint or dressed stone laid flat to form patterns, tracery, initials etc

Font: Bowl used for consecrated water at baptisms

Gargoyle: Projecting spout to carry rainwater from the roof

Hatchment: Lozenge shaped panel painted with coats of arms etc of a dead person, usually displayed in the home during mourning period and then transferred to the church

Lady Chapel: **Chapel** with an **altar** to the Virgin Mary, often re-used in a different way after the reformation

Lectern: Desk usually used for reading the Scriptures from

Litany Desk: Desk at which the reciter(s) of the Litany knelt

Lychgate: Roofed gateway at the entrance to a churchyard where a coffin could be rested

Misericord: A bracket on the underside of a hinged choir-stall designed to support a standing person during long periods of standing when the seat is upturned

Nave: The main body of a church West of the **crossing** or **chancel**, often flanked by **aisles**; this is where the congregation sat/stood

Parclose Screen: Separates a **chapel** from the rest of the church

Pew: Seat; box pews have high sides and a doorway creating enclosed seating often for a particular family.

Piscina: Stone basin with a drain used for washing sacred vessels; usually located on the South side of the church

Pulpit: Raised and enclosed structure for the preaching of sermons

Putlock/putlog: Holes in the wall where horizontal scaffolding poles where placed during construction of the building

Reredos: A decorated screen fixed behind and above the **altar**. A painting or carving behind an **altar** is called an altarpiece.

Rood: A cross or crucifix usually on a beam or painted over the entry to the **chancel** and flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist

Rood Screen: A screen below the **rood** which separated the clergy in the **chancel** from the congregation in the **nave**; often removed during the Reformation

Sacristy: Room for storing sacred vessels and vestments

Sanctuary: Area immediately around the **altar**

Sedilia: Seats for the clergy, usually found on South side of the **chancel**

Stall: Fixed seat(s) in the **chancel** for the clergy

Stoup: A receptacle to contain Holy water, often a deeply dished stone set in a niche or on a pillar near a doorway

Spire: Tall pyramidal or conical feature built on a **tower**

Steeple: Tower with a **spire**

Tabernacle: Canopied structure to contain the reserved sacrament or a relic

Tower: Structure taller than it is wide, either freestanding or attached, often where bells are placed

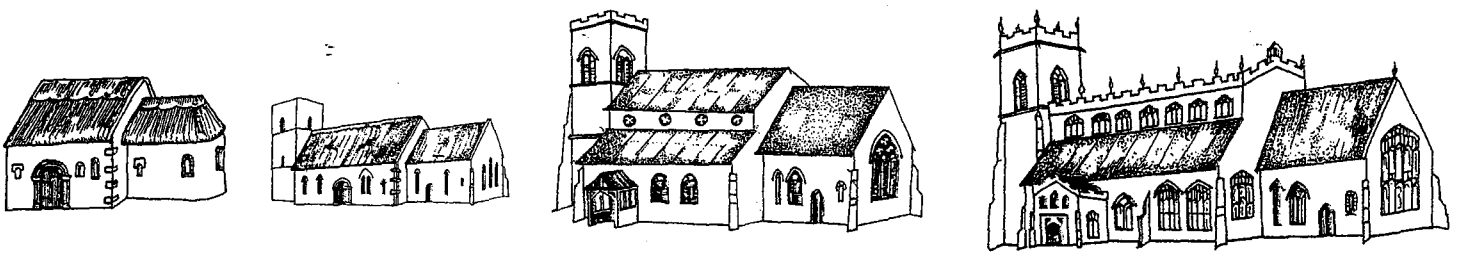
Transept: The ‘arm’ or transverse parts of a cross shaped church

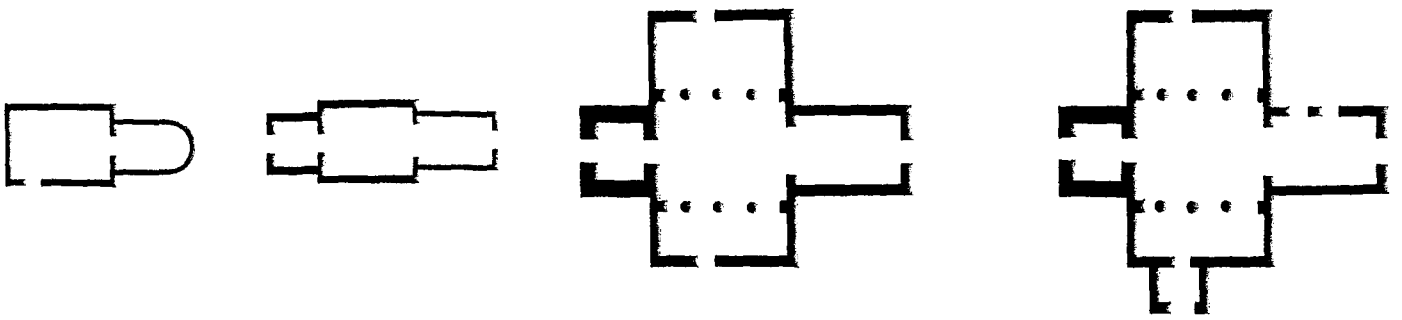
Vestibule: Entrance hall or lobby

Vestry: Where robes are kept and put on

Wicket: A small door set within a large door

SAXON & NORMAN MEDIEVAL TUDOR





Saxon characteristics:
Semi-circular arches
Tall, thin walls
Naturalistic carvings
Double splayed windows

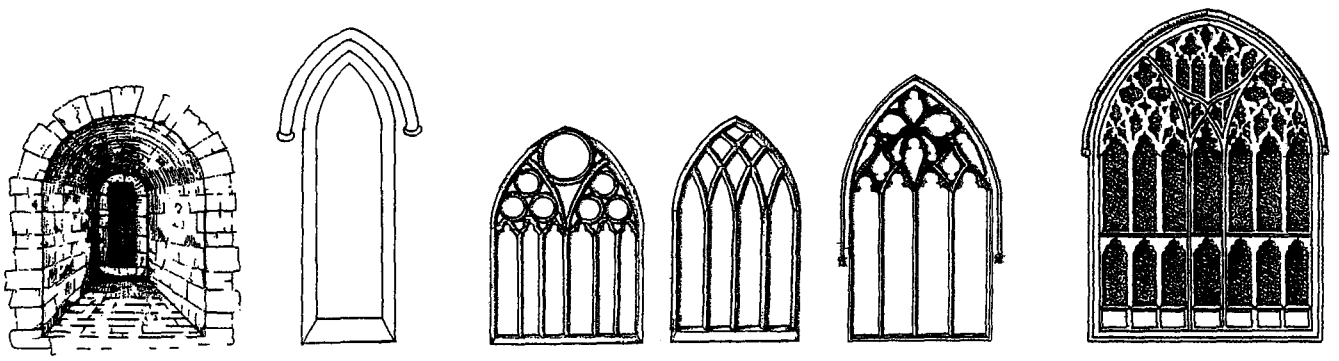
1066 Norman conquest - outburst of parish church building
1086 Domesday Survey - first mention of many churches

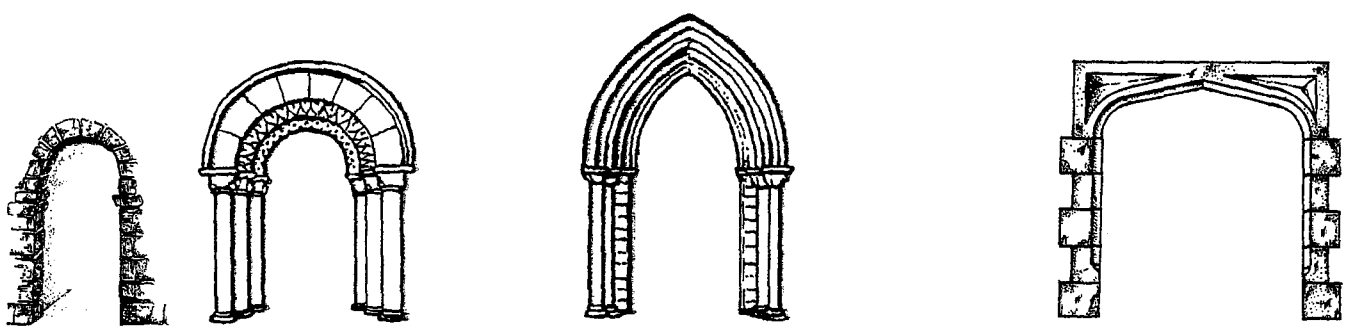
Norman characteristics:
Geometrical carving
Low massive pillars
Heavy round arches
Deeply recessed doorways
Development of pointed arch

Characteristics:
High roofs, spires and towers
Pointed arches
Geometrical large elegant windows with stained glass and bar tracery
Appearance of rood screens and memorial brasses

Few churches built
1534 Split between the English churches and Rome
Start of the Reformation
1536 Henry VIII dissolves monasteries and becomes head of the English Church
Destruction/removal of statues and glass and lime washing of walls
1542-1651 The Civil War

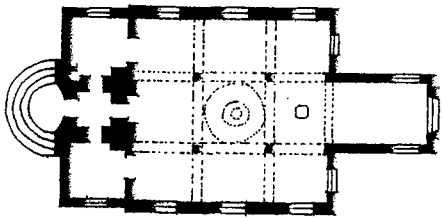
Characteristics:
Wooden furnishings
Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments painted onto walls
Flatter window arches and roofs





1000 1100 1200 1300 1400 1500

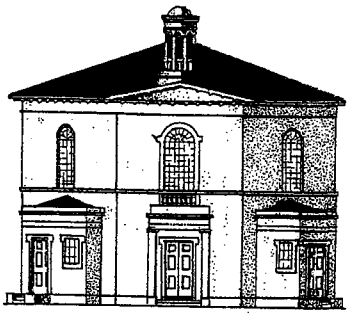
STUART

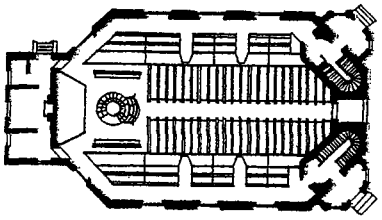


Few churches built
1611 King James' Authorized Version of the Bible

Characteristics:
Flattened arches
Square headed windows
Charity boards, hatchments, Royal Coats of Arms begin to appear

GEORGIAN

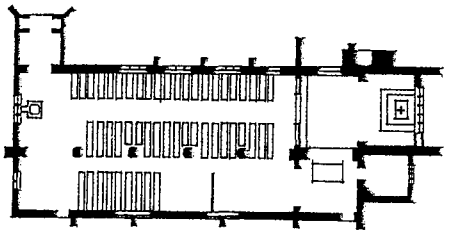




Few churches built

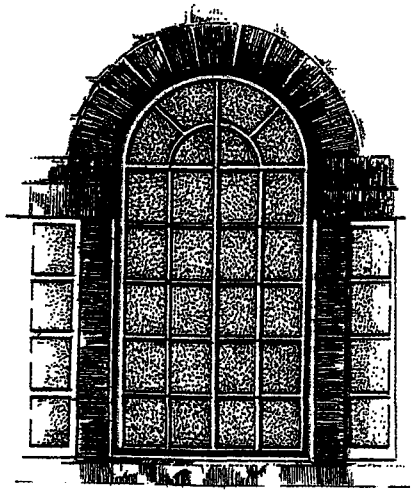
Characteristics:
Elegant, mainly classical interiors
Box-pews and galleries
Magnificent memorials in secular fashion
Three-decker pulpits - emphasis upon preaching
Plain glass windows

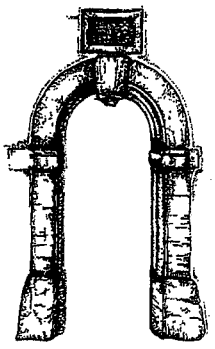
VICTORIAN

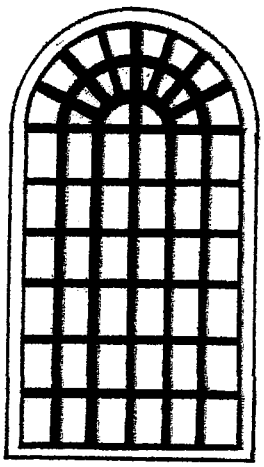


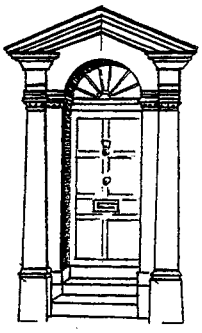
1833 Founding of the 'Oxford Movement'
Existing churches restored/redesigned
Large number of new churches built in the Gothic style

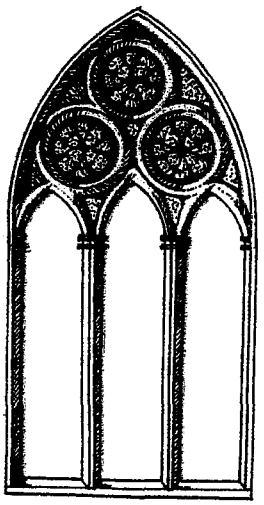
Characteristics:
Benches replace box pews, removal of galleries and three-decker pulpits (emphasis back to the altar)
New stained glass windows

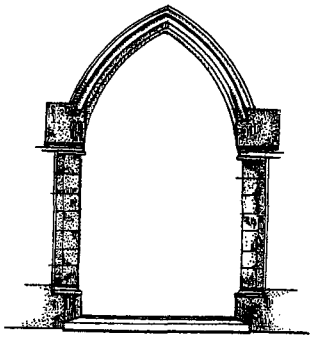












1600 1700 1800 1900 2000

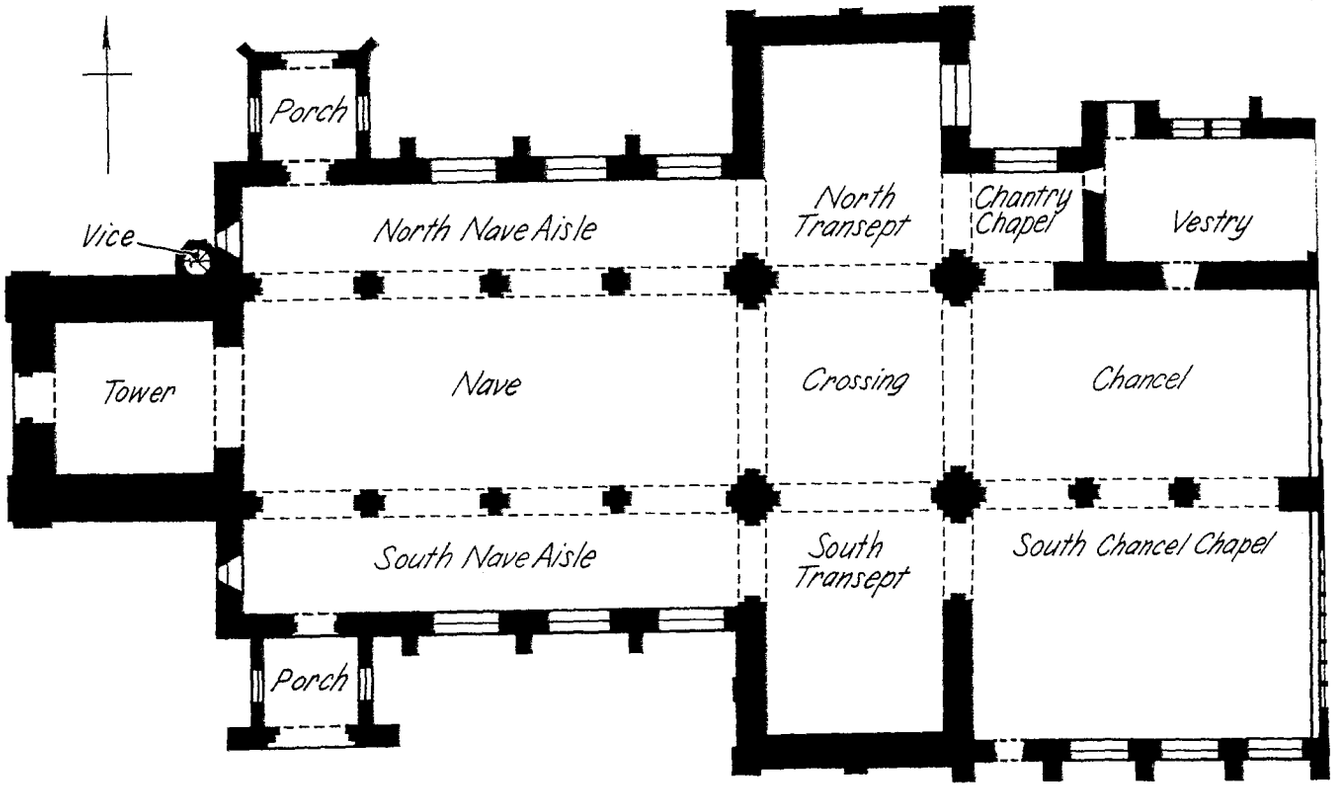


Fig A Parish church plan (after St Mary's, Shrewsbury)

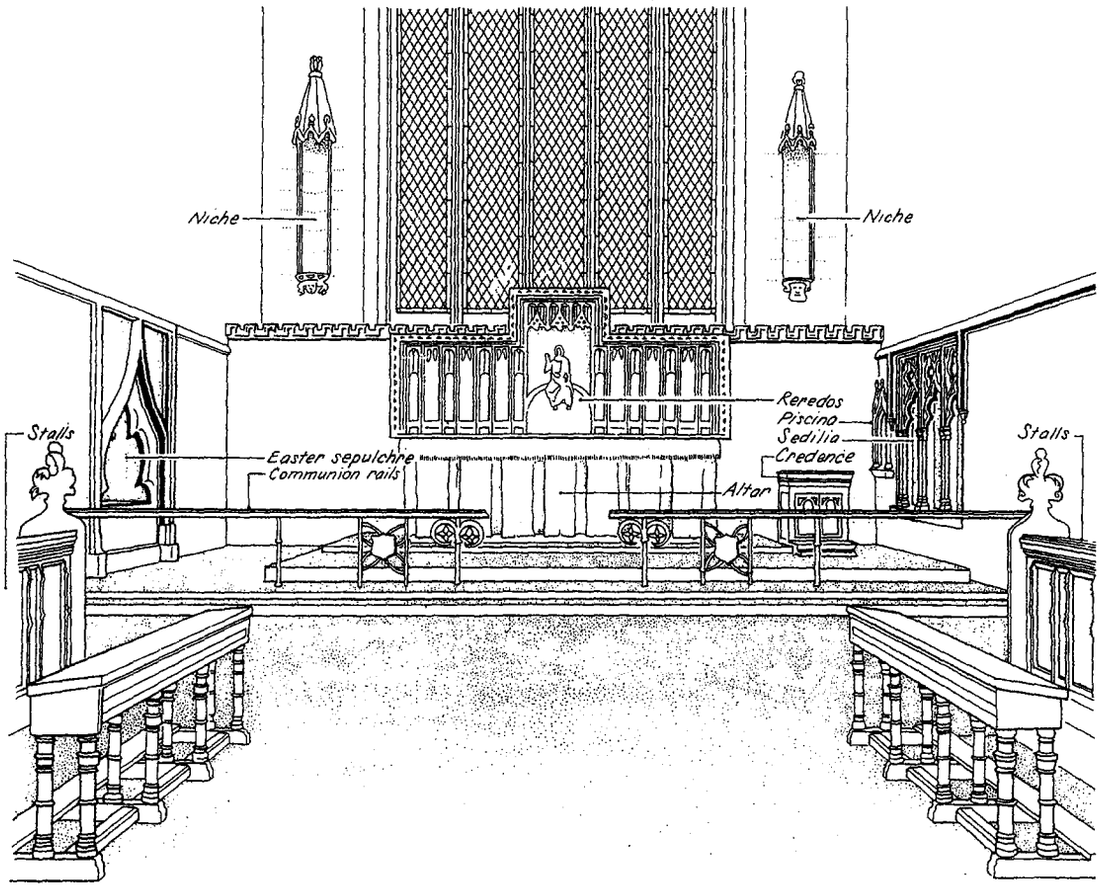
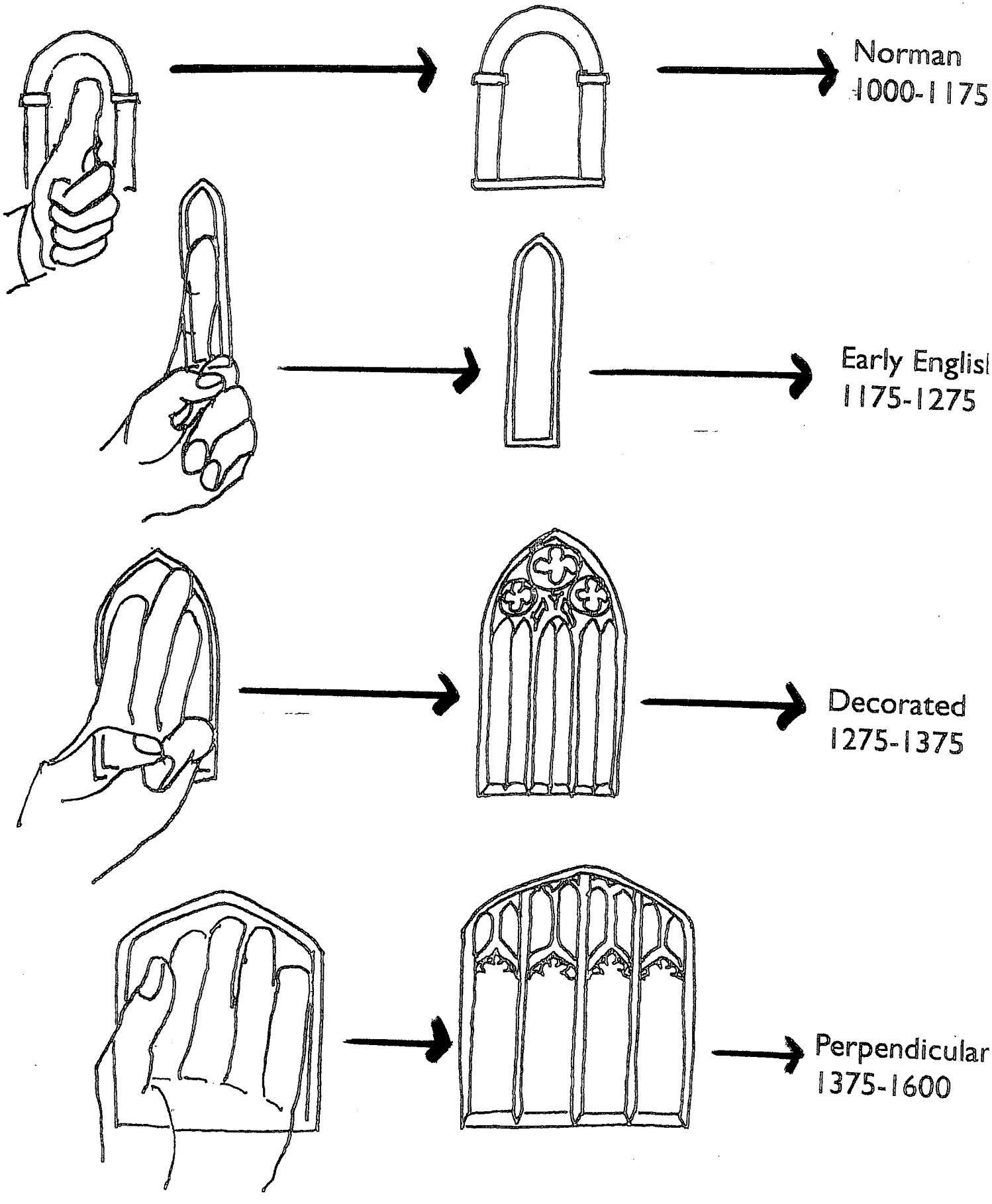


Fig D Chancel interior elevation (after Tideswell)

WINDOWS


Norman
1000-1175
Early English
1175-1275
Decorated
1275-1375
Perpendicular
1375-1600

THINGS TO LOOK FOR INSIDE

A church is used for Christian worship. Do you see this symbol anywhere?

As you walk inside a church, what do you notice first? Is it very quiet and still, or are lots of people around, the sound of traffic outside?

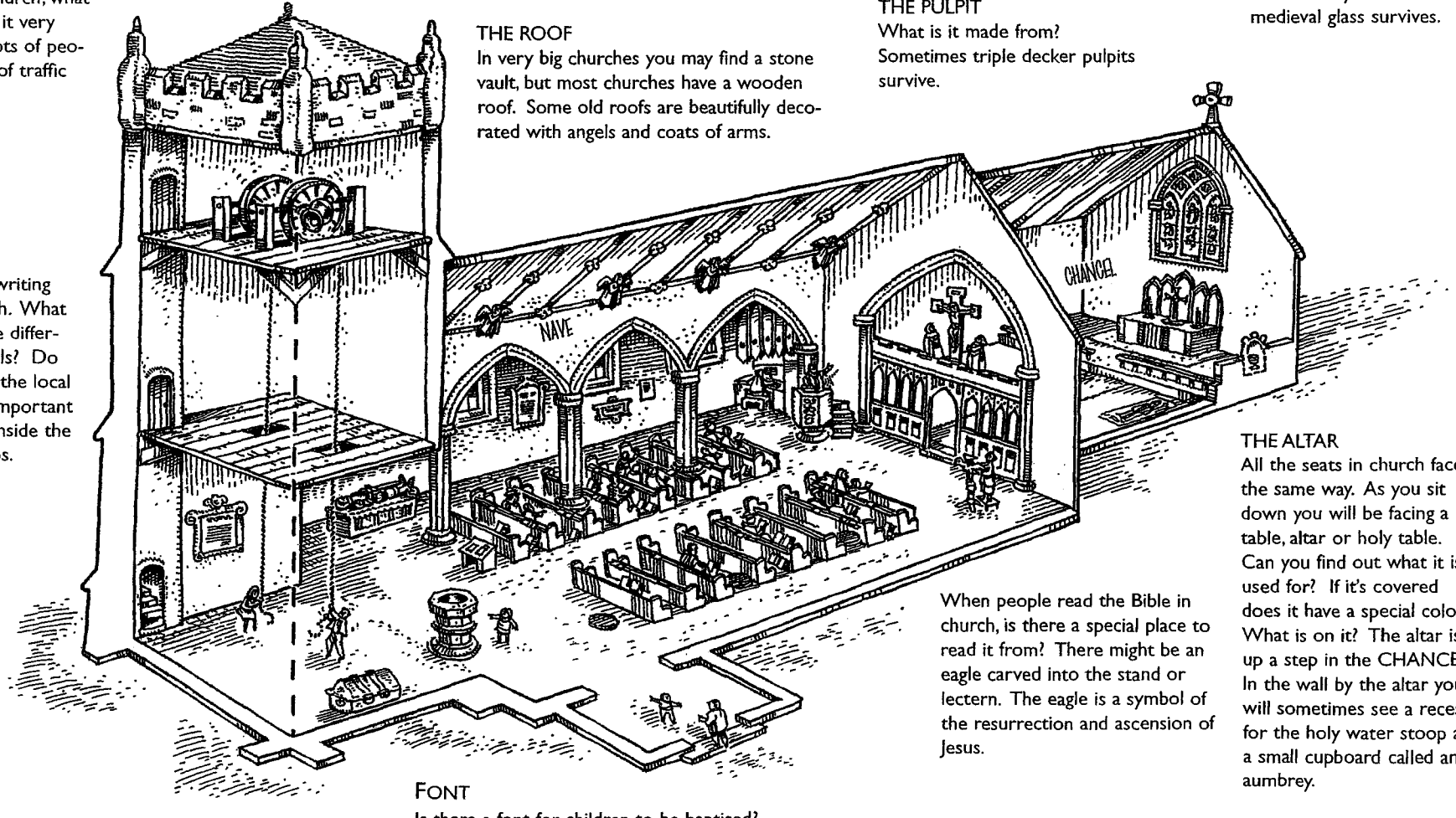
THE ARCHES
Have a look at the arches. Round headed arches are usually older than pointed ones. What shapes are the pillars? Are the capitals plain or decorated?

MUSIC
When people sing in this church, do they have an organ or a piano to help them?

GLASS
Are the windows full of clear glass or stained glass? Can you tell whether the stained glass is very modern or Victorian? Occasionally some medieval glass survives.

THE ROOF
In very big churches you may find a stone vault, but most churches have a wooden roof. Some old roofs are beautifully decorated with angels and coats of arms.

THE PULPIT
What is it made from? Sometimes triple decker pulpits survive.



MEMORIALS
There may be some writing on walls of the church. What is it about? Are there different kinds of memorials? Do you recognize any of the local names? Sometimes important people were buried inside the church in cared tombs.

THE BELLS
The bells are rung to summon people to services. Can you see where they are hung? How are they rung?

When people read the Bible in church, is there a special place to read it from? There might be an eagle carved into the stand or lectern. The eagle is a symbol of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

THE ALTAR
All the seats in church face the same way. As you sit down you will be facing a table, altar or holy table. Can you find out what it is used for? If it's covered does it have a special colour? What is on it? The altar is up a step in the CHANCEL. In the wall by the altar you will sometimes see a recess for the holy water stoop and a small cupboard called an aumbrey.

PARISH CHEST
Is there an old wooden chest in the church? This is the Parish Chest in which documents used to be kept. It usually had three locks. The vicar and churchwardens each kept a key and they all had to be present to open the chest. Why do you think there were three keys?

FONT
Is there a font for children to be baptised? Originally the font was placed near the church entrance. Do you know why this was? The font may have a lid. Can you guess why? The water used to be blessed on Easter day and then left for later use. This holy water had to be protected from dirt and also from theft for use in charms and magical rituals.

SEATS
Where are people meant to sit? Are there wooden pews, or individual chairs? The seats are usually in the NAVE. Some churches still have very old pews with doors, known as box pews.

Symbolism

Common gravestone/memorial symbols

Dove	symbolising peace and the Holy Spirit
Pelican	symbolising atonement
Willow tree	symbolising grief and mourning
Ivy	symbolising immortality and friendship
Empty cross	symbolising that Jesus rose again
Hour glass/scythe	symbolising that time/life has passed
Angel	symbolising a guardian
Skull and crossbones	symbolising mortality
Poppies	symbolising remembrance
Broken column	symbolising loss of the head of the family
Laurel leaves	symbolising fame
Open book	symbolising faith
Clasped hands	symbolising a farewell
Heart	symbolising love and devotion
Anchor	a disguised cross also symbolising hope, rest or stability
Rocks	symbolising reliability
Torch/ Upturned torch	symbolising immortality/ a life extinguished
Chi Rho	taken from the Greek letters that begin the word Christ
Fish	taken from the Greek words 'Jesus Christ, God's son, Saviour' which spell icthus, the Greek word for fish
INRI	which stands for 'Iesus Nazareus Rex Iudea' meaning 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews'
IHS	the first letters of the Greek words for Jesus Christ
Alpha and Omega	these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet; the bible refers to Jesus as 'the alpha and omega, the first and the last'
Star of David/Triangles	symbolising the 6 days of creation and the 3 parts of the Holy Trinity

Symbolism of church colours

The colour of the altar cloth, flowers and priest's robes all have symbolism attached to them and change throughout the course of the church year.

Purple	used at times of fasting such as Lent, Advent, Maundy Thursday, Holy Week Symbolises: penitence, royalty, preparation, mourning, humiliation and passion
White	used for major festival; Easter, Christmas and Ascension Day Symbolises: light, purity, innocence, joy, virginity and purification
Red	used during Holy Week and Whitsun (Pentecost) and on some Saint's and martyr's days Symbolises: love, fervour, holy zeal, youth, blood and martyrdom
Green	used at all other times Symbolises: growth, life, hope, fidelity, immortality

Symbols of the Saints and important people

Andrew	man being crucified on an X shaped cross, fishing net, fish
Bartholomew	elderly man holding a tanner's knife and human skin, branch from a fig tree **NB**: Not often depicted in stained glass windows
James	sword, scallop shells
John	eagle or man with a book, chalice, serpent or cauldron
John the Baptist	man wearing a camel hair tunic, leather belt and a locust, also symbolised by a lamb
Judas Iscariot	blank yellow shield (why we associate the colour yellow with cowardice), 30 pieces of silver, a piece of rope
Jude	man with a flame above his head or boat, pen, book, axe, knotted club
Luke	ox or man with a book or artist's brush or palette
Mark	lion or man holding a book near a lion
Matthew	winged angel or man holding either pen, inkwell, bag of coins, money box, purse, spear, sword or lance
Paul	man shown near 3 springs of water with a sword and/or book, phoenix, palm tree, snake, scourge
Peter	man holding keys (1 silver and 1 gold represents Heaven and Earth) or being crucified upside down, cowslips, fish, oars, rooster
Phillip	elderly man holding a basket of loaves and a cross, builder's square
Simon	a man being sawn in 2 longitudinally or oar, saw, 2 fish, lance, fish hook
Thomas	a man with a spear or T square, arrows, stones
Virgin Mary	the colour blue, roses, violets, strawberries, cedar tree, pomegranate, moon, 12 stars, scallop shell, heart

NB: For more information about the stories behind the symbols and useful drawings of the symbols for each Saint see: http://www.christiansymbols.net/index.php

Heraldic Design

In Medieval times coats of arms were very important as the symbols had different meanings that told people about the characteristics of the family using that particular design. Families spent along time designing their heraldic 'badge' and there were rules about what items people could show. Oldest sons inherited their family's coat of arms whereas younger sons would add an extra image to identify them. When a woman married, her coat of arms was often added to her husbands, often put side by side. Heraldic banners and shields with coats of arms on were used in battle so people could identify who it was they were fighting on the battlefield!

Common animals

Lion
Bear
Boar
Eagle
Horse
Dragon
Griffin

The position in which the animal was shown was also important. The common ways they could be shown were:

rampant - standing on hind legs
rampant guardant - standing on hind legs, face turned toward viewer
passant - walking
couchant - lying down
sejant - sitting

Colours

There were rules about which colours could go with which. Individual colours were supposed to be separated by a metal colour and not touch each other!

Gules = Bright red
Azure = Royal or sky blue
Vert = Emerald green
Purpure = Royal purple
Sable = Black

Metal colours
Or = Gold/yellow
Argent = Silver/white

Symbols

Puns on names were often used in heraldry. For example the Wheatley family might add a sheaf of wheat to their coat of arms. A red cross on a coat of arms usually meant someone in the family had been part of the crusades.

Designing your own heraldic coat of arms

Using the information above and the blank shield outline, design a coat of arms for your family. Think carefully about what colours, animals and symbols you pick. Try to think of things that are connected to you and your family. You might want to try drawing it out on a piece of paper first and then transferring it to your best copy.

Brasses and Brass Rubbing Guidelines

A new style of artwork arose in 12th century Europe – the wealthy began to commission artists to represent their likeness in brass, to reflect their high status. These brasses showed knights in armour, ladies in their finest clothes, religious ceremony and other costumes that represented wealthy occupation. These memorial plates were placed in churches and continued to be made for 500 years. Unfortunately, many were destroyed during later times of religious and civil upheaval.

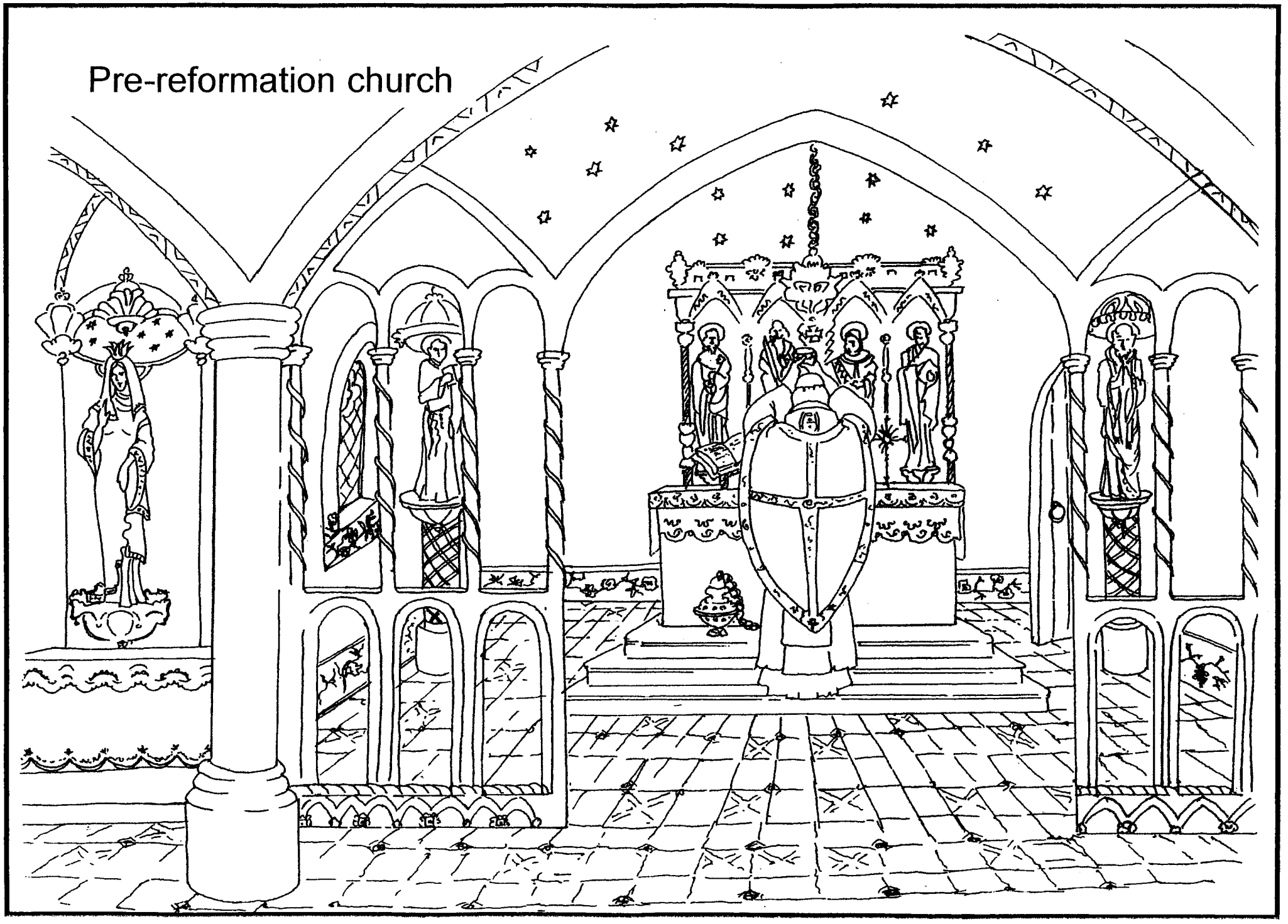
Guidelines

Brass rubbing does not harm a brass if it is competently carried out and the brass is securely fixed.

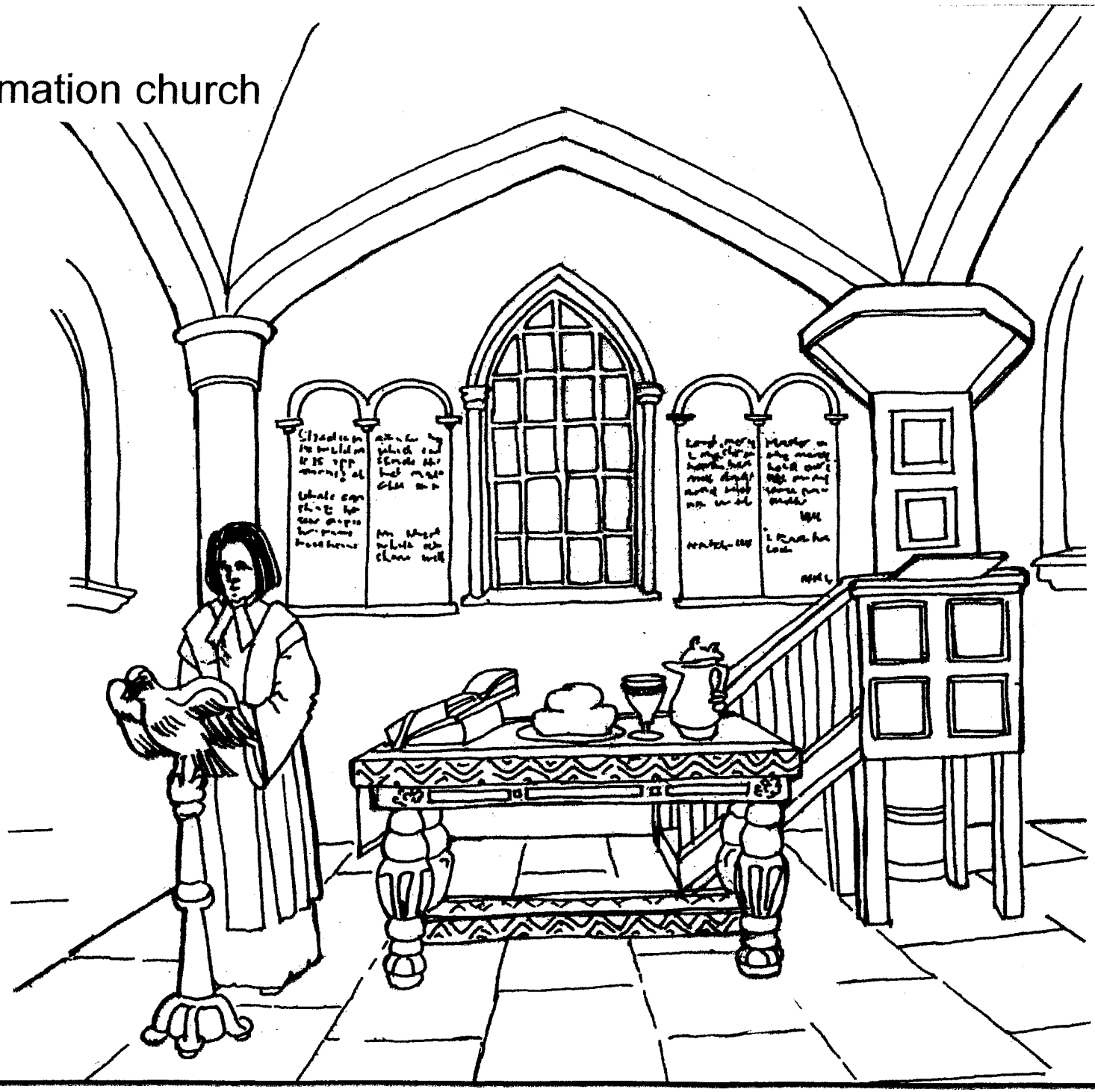
- Wipe off any dust with a dry cloth
- Avoid kneeling or resting on the brass
- Cut paper slightly bigger than the area to be rubbed and secure the edges of the paper with masking tape
- Feel around the edges of the brass, creasing the outline as you go
- Using the flat side of the wax, go round the edges on the crease to pick out the outline in wax
- Using the flat side of the wax, run lightly over the whole figure to pick up the detail

See inside your Skills Training pack for details of where you can buy specialist brass rubbing paper and crayons.

Virginia Simpson, Churches Conservation Trust, 1 West Smithfield, London, EC1A 9EE
02.04.07


Pre-reformation church

Reformation church



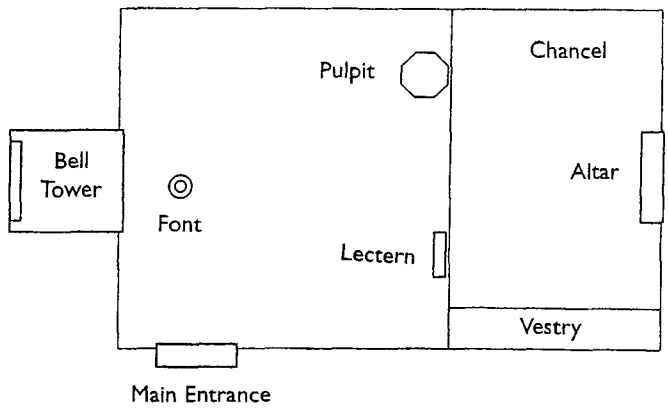
COMPARING PLACES OF WORSHIP

Looking at places of worship and their layouts is a really good starting point for looking at different religions. Pupils can look for similarities, and then explore the differences. This will lead on naturally to discussion of

- customs, such as washing, covering the head, separating sexes and giving offerings
- form of worship
- central beliefs.

Many religions have had to adapt places of worship from existing buildings, so some of the general rules, such as direction of alignment may not apply.

Key to drawing: Christian Church
Tower, for the bells
Font, used for baptisms, the ceremony which welcomes new members to the church, and symbolically near the main entrance.
Nave, for the congregation
Main entrance
Pulpit, used for preaching from
Lectern, from which the Holy Book (Bible) is read aloud
Chancel, for the priest
Altar, to hold the cross
Vestry, for the priest to dress for the service

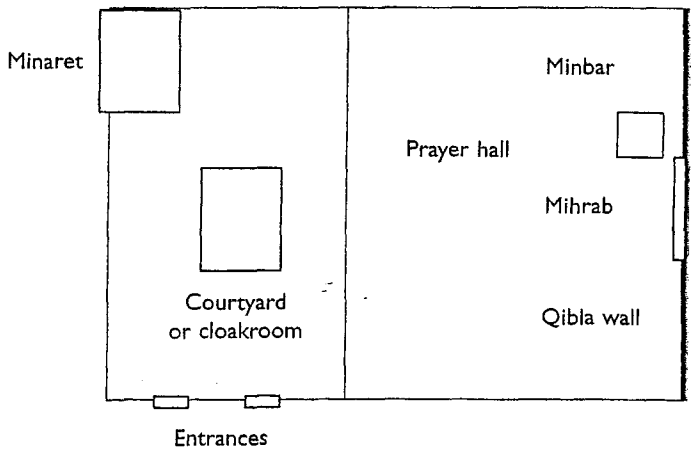


A CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Worshippers face the direction in which the sun rises, as a symbol that God is the Light of the World. The result is an east-west alignment in nearly all churches.

Christians believe in one God, who sent His son, Jesus Christ to help people to believe in Him. Jesus died on a cross to show how much he loved His people, and the cross is the major Christian symbol. Church services can be any or every day but are generally on Sundays. Bells, rung from towers, call people to church. Extracts from their Holy Book, the Bible, are read. They make offerings of money to the church, and men remove their hats when they enter church.

Key to drawing: Islamic Mosque
Minaret, tall tower to call people to prayer (can be in any position)
Courtyard or cloakroom with washing facilities (shoes are removed at the entrance)
Entrances (can be in any position)
Prayer hall (usually), with a dome over it
Mihrab, alcove in Qibla wall, showing in which direction to face and pray
Minbar, raised pulpit
Qibla wall, wall nearest Makkah

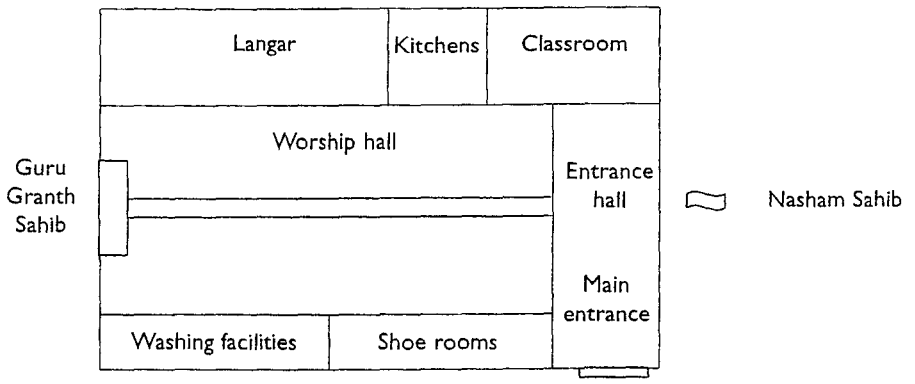


AN ISLAMIC MOSQUE

Muslims face towards Makkah (also spelt Mecca), in Saudi Arabia to pray, so worship is directed to south-east.

Muslims believe in one God, Allah. The Prophet Muhammad, was God's final prophet or messenger, so great honour is given to him. Muslims pray five times a day wherever they are, but like to pray together at mosques on Fridays. They wash before praying, and women are either separated off by a screen, or pray at home. Both men and women cover their heads. Their spiritual leaders call them to church from the minarets. Extracts from the Qu'ran, the Holy Book, are read.

Key to drawing: Sikh Gurdwara
Holy Book, Guru Granth Sahib, displayed on a canopied platform
Worship hall, with carpet down middle for worshippers to approach Guru Granth Sahib platform
Washing facilities
Shoe rooms
Langar, dining hall
Kitchen
Classroom
Entrance hall
Main entrance
Nasham Sahib, Sikh flag

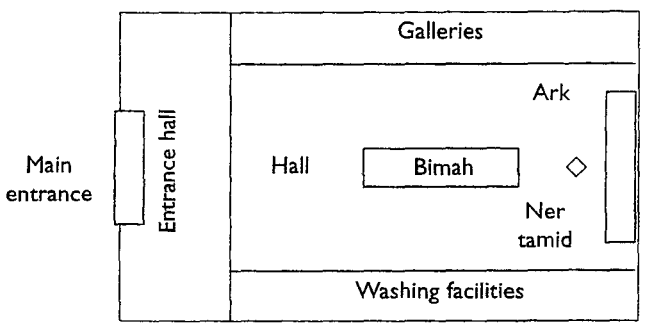


A SIKH GURDWARA

There is no specific geographical alignment for the Gurdwara, and the rooms can be in any location in relation to each other.

Sikhs go to Gurdwaras to help them to remember God, and they pay their respects to their Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib. They go anytime, but most often at weekends in Great Britain. Offerings of money are made to the upkeep of the Gurdwara. Everyone sits on the floor but men and women sit separately. Everyone, Sikhs and non-Sikhs, is offered food.

Key to drawing: Jewish Synagogue
Main entrance
Entrance hall
Hall for men
Bimah, platform from which extracts from the Torah are read aloud
Galleries for women
Ark, where the Holy Book, the Torah is kept
The Torah is written on scrolls
Ner tamid, light which never goes out

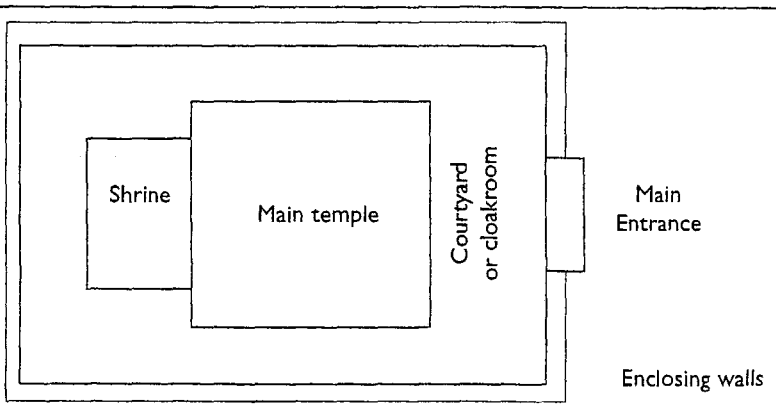


A JEWISH SYNAGOGUE

Jewish people face towards Jerusalem to worship, so synagogues are aligned towards the south-east.

Jewish people worship one God, and their holiest day is Sabbat, which is from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Men and women both cover their heads but worship separately (in orthodox synagogues) or together (in liberal synagogues). Extracts from their Holy Book, the Torah, are read.

Key to drawing: Hindu Temple
Shrine for main image, sometimes with a walk-way all round it, and with a tall tower over it
Main temple, containing images of many gods and goddesses
Courtyard or cloakroom with washing facilities
Main entrance
Enclosing walls



A HINDU TEMPLE

The main entrance faces in the direction of the rising sun. Hindus worship many gods and godesses as facets of the Supreme Being, and temples (mandirs) contain many images of them, but one image will be selected for special reverence.

There is no set day for worship. Shoes are removed on entering the mandir. Everyone brings gifts of money, flowers and sweets to put on the shrines - these gifts are given back to them to share with their families, or poorer people. Their foreheads are marked at the same time with a red spot. Women cover their heads.

How to make a simple sketch plan of your churchyard

Equipment
2x 20m tape measures
A1 or A2 drawing board
A1 or A2 drawing film or tracing paper
Ruler
Sharp pencil
Eraser

A simple sketch plan is a rewarding and interesting project best carried out by no less than three people in a group. The plan you will produce is very useful in location individual stones, but also in uncovering patterns in burial that can inform us of periods of clearance, family plots and areas of boggy ground that were avoided.

Follow this simple method for trouble-free sketching:

- Measure the size of you burial ground. If it is very large, break the ground into sections, using any chapel, church or mortuary structures as the reference point for each section
- Use the largest piece of paper you can manage. Work out your scale- keep it simple- use multiples of 10. Take care that you don't fall off the edge of your paper. Make a note of your chosen scale at the top of your sheet.
- Fix a baseline. This usually runs along the longest edge of the burial ground or section. Secure the tape along this edge, using stones. This tape will not move and is the line along which your other measurements will be taken. Sometimes this is called a datum line.
- Draw a line on the bottom of your plan to represent the baseline. Mark your scale along this line. Make sure that the starting point of your line is clearly marked by a small, neat cross and that you do not record any elements to the left of this point. If this happens, you have begun recording in the wrong place and should adjust your baseline accordingly.
- Begin recording from left to right. Take the other tape by the end marked '0' and locate the corner of the monument to be recorded. Stretch the tape towards the baseline. You need to take TWO measurements, a vertical and a horizontal.
- Begin with the vertical. Make sure that tape is taut and reasonably straight. Draw he tape across the baseline while keeping a close eye on the scale on the vertical tape. You want to record this distance when it is at right-angles with the baseline. You can tell when this is the case as the vertical measurement is at its smallest. Move the vertical tape from side to side to see the measurement reach its smallest point. Read out this measurement to the person making the sketch.
- Place your finger on the baseline on the point where the vertical tape is at right angles. Read out this measurement to the person making the sketch.
- To mark the point on the plan, measure along the baseline (to scale) the baseline measurement and mark this. Then measure up (to scale) the vertical measurement using the set square. Mark this point with a small x.
- Continue the plan by plotting each corner of each monument. Join each corner together to form a small line. Mark the identification number above this line.
- Take some time to draw significant features to the plan. This is crucial in helping people to locate exactly where the plan refers to.
- Using a compass, mark the direction of north on the plan.

Monument sketch record sheet

Graveyard name	**Main Face.** Mark orientation of face 
Location	
Grid Ref:	
Recorder Name	
Date	
Gravestone ID Number	
Stone type	
Stone type sketch- number faces	
Face 2- Mark orientation of face 	**Face 3-** Mark orientation of face 
	Face 4- Mark orientation of face 

Further Project Work

Historical records for churchyards are usually found in the local studies library or archives. These include records of births, marriages and deaths registered at the parish church. The local incumbent rarely has access to this information. These parish records contain lots of information about families and can help us understand how a community changed over time. We can construct family relationships, see changes in fortunes of families, learn about people's professions or see social changes that leave marks on the lives of a past community. Parish records are very useful when looking at gravestones. They can help us understand how common or rare it was to be commemorated with a stone by comparing the number of entries without a gravestone and those with a gravestone. We can find all sorts of explanations for why this might be so- many of these ideas present opportunities for further projects that can be investigated at other times.

Archives and local studies libraries also hold copies of census returns, which provide valuable information about households, such as their employment, place of birth and relationships. The census was taken every decade, beginning in 1841. Local and family history societies often have access to such records and some offer copies for sale at a small cost. Births, Marriage and Death certificates can be obtained from the office of the local registrar (PRO, Public Records Office), although these records only stretch back to 1837. These offer invaluable information on family relationships and are essential in trying to trace family history. They also contain information on professions and causes of death, which can help us understand things like local monument traditions, epidemics and industrial diseases.

A recording project offers many opportunities for further research to build up a detailed picture of a community. Many of these activities can take place indoors, which is very useful in inclement weather. Some suggestions for further work include:

- Plotting the numbers of gravestones erected in each decade- this helps to elucidate trends in the popularity of erecting monuments but also more subtle data such as survival of the stones in local weather conditions, and clearance patterns that may have happened at various times throughout history. These patterns can also highlight the changing fortunes of a community or even point to increased rates in mortality due to disease.

- Plotting the numbers of deaths per month to build up a demographic of the community. Looking at the numbers of people dying at different times is very interesting. For example, we know that old people are more likely to die in winter and the young in summer. So in the hot summer months we would expect to see more children dying. We can look at the patterns of death and see what sort of infectious diseases and from where they originate. This presents a fascinating snapshot of life in a small community.

- Using the death records to plot the causes of death in the community. Making a graph of the ages and numbers of people that died each month creates a picture of mortality in the community. From this graph it is possible to trace the types of diseases that might have spread through a community. Using other research into epidemiology and demography, it is possible to locate major disease events in the burial registers such as epidemics of cholera. It is then possible, because we know where people lived to work out how the disease was transmitted through the population and what was the original point of infection. This can stimulate a great deal of work on living and working conditions, public health, child mortality and life expectancy. These projects can successfully use old and modern photographs, maps and other pieces of historical research. It is possible to create a very detailed history of a community in this manner.

- Using the census and parish records to plot professions. This is a very interesting way to understand a community. Usually, there are a few dominant professions that characterise

a community, such as farming or cutlery making. From 1841 the census was taken each year. An enumerator visited each house in the country on the same day in April. They made a note of the address, the names of all the people in the house (including visitors), their ages, gender, marital status, profession and birthplace. It is possible to use this information alongside a graveyard survey to learn more about local traditions in monument design. The research possibilities of the census are almost endless!

- Drawing family trees. Using the parish registers and census returns, it is possible to reconstruct families and look at how their fortunes changed over time. Each community has a few characteristic surnames that almost form the backbone of the community. Some will be poor, one or two could be fairly wealthy. The parish registers often characterise people in terms of others- particularly women, so much more information can be found than a simple event of birth, marriage or death. The parents of bride and groom are commonly recorded, revealing two generations. Always work backwards from the most sound piece of information. In 1837, the state began to require that events of birth, marriage and death were recorded centrally by a registrar. It is very interesting to find the birth, marriage or death certificates, as they often contain more information that parish records.

The ideas for further research are endless and only limited by time, energy and imagination. Enjoy!

Using Records Related to Churches

LOOKING AT CONTEMPORARY MAPS, ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- Arrange in chronological order
- Find the church and examine how it has been depicted. Can you see any changes over time?
- Consider how the surrounding area has developed
- Compare with a modern OS map

LOOKING AT CONTEMPORARY PARISH RECORDS

Making a graph of the ages and numbers of people that died each month creates a picture of mortality in the community.

- Select the burials for a year
- Plot the number of deaths per month. Does it show any distinct patterns? For instance, older people are more likely to die in the winter and younger people in the summer. Is there evidence for infectious diseases in the community or even major disease events such as epidemics of cholera?
- Consider the total number of male and female burials.
- Total up deaths in one year for those: Under 1, 1-5, 6-10, 11– 5, 16–20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, over 50. What do you notice?
- Are the causes of death listed?

Virginia Simpson, Churches Conservation Trust, 1 West Smithfield, London, EC1A 9EE
01.05.07

NB: See also the Handouts on ‘Further Research’ highlighting what can be done after a graveyard survey and ‘Accessing your PRO’

USING YOUR LOCAL RECORDS OFFICE

Types of Record

A really good website to look at for background regarding what types of records are held, where, when they date from and what they record for each of the countries making up the UK is: www.familyrecords.gov.uk

As a guide the Public Records office will hold Birth, Marriage and Death certificates from 1837 onwards as well as other public records such as maps, documents relating to buildings etc. Prior to 1837 the records may still be with the church and you should contact the local clergy person for advice. A useful site for locating parish records is: www.genuki.org.uk or www.a2a.org.uk

In advance

'Phone to book slot in Reading Room (suggest minimum of 1 hour).

If likely to be using maps, specifically book Map Table.

On the day

Take pencils. Digital camera if required.

You will need proof of address e.g. utility bill in your name to obtain your Reader's Ticket.

Reader's ticket is free, lasts for 4 years and can be used at any Public Records Office.

Leave any bags at reception.

There will be an index, but I suggest that you ask a member of staff for their assistance in locating any relevant materials. These may include early and OS maps, Parish Records (often transcribed), photographs, letters etc. Staff will bring you the originals which you may want to photograph and will also take orders for photocopying.

A good starting place is with the maps. Use to build up a timeline of the development of your building and area.

Look up the same year in the Parish Records – for births, marriages and burials.

Investigate any years that show a particularly high number of burials – is there evidence of an outbreak of disease locally?

Be aware that other relevant material may be archived at another institution.

Charges

Free to use facilities.

Charges for staff to photocopy materials or for you to photograph. (e.g. Cambridge – 40p/ A4 photocopy and £5 for half day camera permit)

Virginia Simpson, Churches Conservation Trust, 1 West Smithfield, London, EC1A 9EE

01.03.07

The Census

What is a census?

The first census for Britain was taken in 1801, and taken every decade since. Virtually no records survive before the 1841 census. The early censuses were taken to establish the size of a growing population so the government of the day could plan for the future. The full census returns were destroyed once the population statistics were compiled. Some of these population figures can be found in the Victoria County history series of books, and some population figures can be found in Trades Directories.

From 1841, the census was taken on behalf of the Registrar General by enumerators,- local men who walked around their neighbourhood, calling at each house in turn to collect the census returns of each household. The enumerator would copy out the returns into large books, and it is these copies that have survived for us to study today.

What information do they record?

The returns contain the number or name of each house, the street name, the parish or township, and whether the house was inhabited or lay empty. The returns contain the names of each inhabitant (beginning with the head of each household), their age, gender, place of birth, occupation, relationship with the head of household, place of birth and whether the person had any disability. (The 1841 census does not record the relationship with head of household or place of birth). Institutions such as hospitals, workhouses and schools were treated in much the same way as a household in terms of the relationship with the head of household. For example, a person in hospital will be recorded as a patient in the relationships column.

Censuses are very useful and easy to use!

Points that may be useful

There are a few discrepancies with the returns. For example, a person aged over 15 years could have their age rounded down to the nearest five years. So don't worry if exact ages do not match up when all the other information does. From 1851, the returns provide more detailed information. People who worked nightshifts (who had previously been at work when the enumerator called) were now recorded the following day. People who worked in the fields, particularly at harvest time were also not recorded. Because quite significant numbers of people could be missed out, it was decided that the census should be taken on a Sunday in spring when the most people would be at home. From 1851, the returns would contain a more exact age and place of birth, but there are still a few inaccuracies.

The Census in Ireland and Scotland

Censuses were also taken in Ireland and Scotland from 1821. they contain slightly different information than heir English and Welsh counterparts. They record how much land a house had with it, and the number o storeys the house had. The Irish returns were largely destroyed although a few fragments survive.

Dates the Census was taken

1841- 6 June	1871- 2 April	
1851- 30 March	1881- 3 April	
1861- 7 April	1891- 5 April	1901- 31 March

Summary

Census returns can help us find out where someone lived, how old they were, who their family members were, what they did for a living, and where they were born. The place of birth can help us track down where the baptism took place, and the ***parish registers*** can tell us who the parents were. If a person disappears from the following census, this information can help narrow down the search for a ***death certificate*** or prompt a search of immigration records. The age of the eldest child can narrow down the search for a ***marriage certificate***. For more information see David Hey's book, the Oxford Companion to Family History.

Parish Registers

What are Parish registers?

In 1538, archbishop Thomas Cromwell ordered each parish to keep a record of every baptism, marriage and burial that took place. Early pages of records kept getting lost so it was ordered that the event were to be recorded in a book. This book, or register, was to be copied and sent to the bishop. These copies are called Bishop's Transcripts.

Early Registers- what do they record?

For early parish registers, no standard form was used and there is a great variation in the sort of information recorded. Some contain very full information about professions and addresses. Others simply record the date of the event and the names of the people involved.

Early registers- what do they mean?

Early registers are written in Latin - but don't panic! There are only a few standard phrases and they are easy to recognise and remember:
Baptised= baptizatus erat
Married= nupti erat (as in nuptials)
Buried= sepultus erat (as in sepulchre, a name for a tomb)
Some first names are also Latinised but surnames remain in their English forms.

Points that may be useful

There are sometimes gaps in the registers because the priest or parish clerk didn't fill them in at the time and forgot to record the event. Another complication with early registers is that they didn't start a new year on January 1st. The new register year was taken from Lady Day (25 March), so any entry from 1 January to 25 March will be in the register for the previous year. This way of recording events was abandoned in 1752 when Britain adopted the European calendar, which was 11 days shorter than the British one. This meant that the calendar year in 1752 had the 3 September followed by the 14th! This was so the calendars could be brought into line. The old British calendar was called the Julian calendar and the new European calendar is called the Gregorian calendar- the one we use today.

Baptism Registers

Early baptisms were usually held on the day of, or the day after birth. As time went by, two or three days could go by before the child was baptised. Early registers contain the date of baptism but an act of parliament was needed to standardise what was recorded. Parliament decided that a person should be elected to fill in the books- he was called the register- that is where the term parish register comes from. In practice, the books were still filled in by the parish priest or clerk. From 1814 standardised printed books recorded the name of child, date of baptism, names of parents, address and father's occupation.

Marriage registers

In the 17th ad 18th centuries (1600s-1700s), acts of parliament came into force to standardise marriage registers. This was done to improve the quality of the records and prevent clandestine marriages. The new register had to be signed by bride and groom and their witnesses. The registers were standardised and bound into printed volumes in 1814. They contain the names of bride and groom, their parishes, date, and name of witnesses.

Burial Registers

Burial usually took place a day or two after death. However, particularly in the 19th century, four days could elapse before burial. This time could be even longer - 12 days or more in some cases- in order to transport the body home or to allow the family time to raise the money to pat for the funeral and the burial fees. Burial registers contain the name of the deceased, age, address, and sometimes the date of death. If a person has a gravestone it

usually features the date of death. The date of death and the date of burial can be compared to find out how many days elapsed from death to burial.

Non Church of England registers

Any religion that is not Church of England (also called Anglican) is known as a nonconformist. This is because they did not conform to the statutes and services of the Church of England and did not take services from the Book of Common Prayer, the standard service of the Church of England. Nonconformists include Roman Catholics, Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Quakers, Unitarians to name but a few. Nonconformity grew in popularity in the 18th and 19th centuries, particularly the Methodists, Wesleyans and associated faiths. Some nonconformists such as the Quakers rejected some ceremonies such as baptism, but most groups accepted the Church of England marriage and burial service. This means that many nonconformist services were carried out and registered in Anglican churches. Most kept their own registers and contain much the same information as their Anglican counterparts.

Civil Registration- birth, marriage and death certificates

From 1 July 1837, the state took over the responsibility for recording births, marriages Civil registration in Scotland took Place from 1855, and from 18864 in Ireland. The system is the same one we use today when we register a birth, marriage or death with the registrar at the register office.

The registers are arranged by date, with the year divided into quarters labelled March, June, September and December. Indexes (known as the GRO index) are available at Sheffield archives and the family records centre in London. The indexes are arranged alphabetically for each quarter by surname, and give the first names, the name of the registration district where the event was recorded. Rotherham was divided into four registration districts- Kimberworth, Wath, Maltby and Beighton. A reference code gives the location of the full birth, marriage or death certificate. This code enables you to order the full certificate from the registry office but they can be quite expensive. The information on the certificates can considerably narrow down searches of parish registers and census returns.

Birth Certificates

These give the date of birth, the place of birth (varying from the name of the village or just the name of a street in a town), the name and sex of the child, the parents names and the mother's maiden name, occupation of father and the name, address and occupation of the person who registers the birth. The date of the registration and the signature of the registrar are also recorded.

Marriage Certificates

Contain the name of the church, chapel or registry office, the date, names of both partners and their ages, and the condition of the partners. The condition is their status as spinster, bachelor, widow/er. Their rank or profession and the names, addresses and profession of their fathers was also recorded, along with the names of the witnesses. From 1912, the woman's maiden name was included in the indexes.

Death Certificates

A death certificate contains the name, place of death, sex, profession and cause of death of the deceased. From 1866 they also contained the age of the deceased at death. The name, signature address and description of the person who registers the death is also recorded.

The People Recording Form

Fill this out at home or in the records office

*Where the source of the information is from documents e.g. burial register/census etc. please give the source in brackets.

Name of Graveyard	
Name of Recorder	
Location	
Location number on sketch plan	
Person Identity Number (unique number for each person)	
Stone Identity Number	
Surname	
Forename(s)	
Order Number (are they the first, 2nd,3rd person commemorated on the gravestone?)	
Names of their relations (e.g. Mother: Ann)	
Date of Birth	
Date of Death	
Date of Burial	
Age	
Address	
Profession	
Cause of Death	
Biography	