




Plan of Repton Church Crypt



-  SAXON.
-  NORMAN.
-  EARLY ENGLISH.

J.T.I. }
F.C.H. }

A Note on the most recent Discoveries in Repton Church Crypt.

By F. C. HIPKINS, M.A., F.S.A.

IN Vol. V. of our JOURNAL there is a very interesting article "On the Crypt beneath the Chancel of Repton Church, Derbyshire," by the late J. T. Irvine, Esq., F.S.A., Scot. I am very sorry to write that he died on June 6th, 1900, at the age of seventy-five. All the members of our Society, who had the pleasure of knowing him, or had read his most interesting articles in our JOURNAL, will agree with me that by his death, antiquaries and archæologists have suffered a great loss. He made a special study of Repton Crypt, and when he heard that excavations were about to be made to find out the extent, etc., of the recesses in the Crypt he most kindly sent me his plans, with permission to use them, which I have done—with additions—in the plan opposite. He also attended the expedition our Society made to Repton on June 3rd, 1899, and gave us a most interesting lecture in the Crypt, pointing out its various and unique details. He was most interested in the excavations, and expressed himself as much pleased with the result.

In Vol. LIII. (Dec., 1896) of the Royal Archæological Institute of Great Britain, there is another most interesting article by J. T. Micklethwaite, F.S.A., entitled "Something about Saxon Church Building." Ground plans of about thirty Anglo-Saxon Churches are given, among them two of Repton, one of the Church and another of the Crypt, which he compares

with those at Wing and Brixworth. "The Crypts at Wing and at Repton, and what there is of that at Brixworth, differ considerably in form, but have much in common, and I think they cannot be far apart in date, which the last-named (Brixworth) seems to fix in the seventh century. Each has had *arcosolia* or arched chambers intended to receive tombs . . . of these there were three—towards the east, north, and south—at Repton and Wing; and two—towards the north-east and south-east—at Brixworth." The recesses at Brixworth are only in the thickness of the wall, those at Repton and Wing extend some distance outside. It was in order to find how far they extended at Repton, and what they might contain, that I made excavations in the month of September, 1898. A trench, eight feet deep, was dug on the south side of the Chancel. Starting about three feet from it, the trench was continued in a south-westerly direction for some yards; several skeletons were discovered, but nothing else. Then the earth was excavated towards the Chancel wall. 2 ft. 2 in. from it, 2 ft. 3 in. below the surface of the ground, two blocks of stone were discovered (*see plan*) measuring respectively (1) 1 ft. 10 in. long, 1 ft. 5 in. broad, and 1 ft. 5 in. deep; (2) 2 ft. long, 1 ft. 4 in. broad, and 1 ft. 9 in. deep. Both are chamfered off on the inside. Between them is an opening 2 ft. 2 in. wide. These blocks were the foundations on which were built "triangular arches"—traces of which are to be seen on the surface of the three sides of the Chancel—which served as roofs to the recesses and buttresses to the walls, as at Barnack and Brigstock churches. The two blocks, with the opening between them, extend 6 ft. 2 in. They are supported by a slab of stone. On a level with this stone are two other stones (3) under which was a skeleton; the two stones had originally been one, which had probably been broken when someone had raised it up to see what was underneath it. Nothing was found with the skeleton; perhaps the person who inspected the remains removed what might have been there? Might this have been the remains of the Saxon Prince referred to in Mr. Irvine's article?

The excavations on the east side revealed a set of six stone steps, which had taken the place of the blocks, etc., like those on the south side. The steps are single roughly-hewn stones of varied length, resting on the earth, without mortar. Six more would be required to reach the floor of the Crypt. Dr. Charles Cox, who inspected the excavations, writes (see the *Athenæum*, October 1st, 1890), "These steps are of neither of the Saxon periods, and are probably the work of the Austin Canons who came here in 1172, and whose Priory was (is) immediately to the east of the parish church which they served." They would gain a quicker entrance to the church down the steps.

The recess on the north side was destroyed when the stone steps—with holy water stoup on the western wall—and door were made, probably in the thirteenth century. Although the "finds" were not considerable, they settled one fact, the recesses were rectangular, and not apsidal. Further, they corroborate Mr. Micklethwaite's theory, so well argued out in his article referred to above, that the apsidal owe their origin to Roman influence, represented by that "Roman of Romans," St. Wilfrid, of York, who followed the basilican form of building; and the rectangular owe their origin to Scottish influence, represented by Benedict Biscop, of Northumbria. It was from Northumbria that Diuma, first bishop of the Middle Angles, came, sent by Finan, Bishop of Lindisfarne, to preside over the newly-converted Mercian race, and, if "Feppingum" was one of the names that Repton bore, he "died and was buried among the Middle Angles there."