THE DERBYSHIRE TRENT AND ITS EARLY CHURCHES.

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THE main purpose of this paper is to examine in more or less detail the remains, in many cases unfortunately scanty, which are still visible to us of the early churches built along the valley of the Trent in its journey through Derbyshire — with some comments on the valley itself.

"Early" churches are defined as those dating from the pre-Gothic, or Romanesque, era, or at the latest from the borderland wherein round arch and pointed meet. Where no concrete traces can be seen to-day on these early sites we shall fall back on the evidence from historical sources.

It is an assumption most would accept that all Romanesque work still existing in the valley had an ecclesiastical origin. But to this assumption it is possible to suggest one solitary exception. St. Brides Farm, in the parish of Stanton-by-Bridge, has never to the writer's knowledge been carefully inspected and reported upon by a competent architect or archæologist. Dr. Cox supposes that the place may have been a grange or monastic farm connected with Burton Abbey.

Such a steading would comprise the usual farmhouse and buildings with probably a small chapel attached. One of the stone outbuildings standing there to-day strongly suggests Norman workmanship, and if it could authoritatively be ascribed to the pre-Gothic period it would represent the only work of that age in the valley which was built to serve a secular purpose.

England has had several waves of invaders, and some have utilised the River Trent to enable them to reach the

heart of the country. Few, however, are the traces of these early peoples left to-day in the Derbyshire part of the valley. Pagan Anglian cemeteries have been found at Stapenhill and King's Newton, and there are considerable remains of ecclesiastical building erected by the Angles at Repton after their conversion to Christianity.

Of the Danes who followed them in the ninth century only two indisputable traces have so far been discovered; an extensive pagan cemetery in the parish of Ingleby, and a Viking axehead, now preserved in the museum at Repton School, which came to light during excavation work outside the chancel of Repton church.

These are all remains visible to the eye. But the valley teems with intangible evidence of the Angle and the Dane. Practically all the villages and hamlets established along the river were named by one or other of these races, and this holds good also of many of the fields, homesteads, lanes, brooks and other natural features.

It was, however, the last invaders of English soil, the Normans, who left such an unmistakeable and permanent impress of their first settlement in the valley that one cannot go for a ramble there to-day without being reminded of them at every turn by the plain stone churches they erected at almost every place of habitation along the river. William the Conqueror's nobles and knights, who dispossessed the Anglian, or English, landowners of their estates, were dissatisfied with the lowly churches of timber they found on so many of their new manors, and proceeded to replace them by buildings in stone. And all along the valley these stone churches, or what remains of them, keep the mark and the tradition of the Norman constantly in the mind.

As Christianity spread the English landowners had built churches on their estates for the use of their tenants and their retainers, and provided priests to take the services. This gradual process had covered some centuries, and before the Conquest practically the whole of England was laid out in ecclesiastical parishes, many of them, it may be surmised, coterminous with the township or estate of the local thane.

These Anglo-Saxon churches, together with their Norman successors, comprised the pre-Gothic, or Romanesque, style of church architecture in England. Briefly, the style divides itself into two epochs of very unequal duration. The Anglo-Saxons (we use this term to denote the tribes of Angles and of Saxons who jointly populated most of England, because of its popularity. For a similar reason the comprehensive term ''Saxon'' is used to indicate the whole of the architecture of that period, although obviously much of it was the work of the Angles) were erecting round-arched Romanesque churches in many parts of the country from early in the seventh century, under the influence of Augustine, to the middle of the eleventh or even later.

At the Conquest the Normans brought with them an architectural style, still Romanesque, but differing considerably from that of the Saxons in plan and detail. This Norman Romanesque held sway for about a century, until it was superseded by the much more logical and coherent methods of the Gothic builder, whose pointed arches and concentration of thrusts on to buttressed points simplified many problems, particularly of vaulting, which had troubled his Norman predecessor.

The timber church, according to Sir Alfred Clapham, persisted throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Its perishable nature, and the Norman preference for a stone building, militated against the survival of specimens, and the only one now standing is at Greenstead in Essex. Even the stone churches of the Saxons were much inferior to Norman church-building. The Saxon was fond of tall narrow buildings with thin walls, and his liking for stones of a megalithic character, particularly in doorways, is very evident.

The more practical mind of the Norman manifested itself in compact buildings of lesser height and with thicker walls, and the rough irregular masonry of the Saxon was replaced by a general use of small handy cubical blocks of stone.

In the seventh century Christianity came to the Mercians, and in that part of the Trent valley we have under review arose their first great religious foundation

at Repton. From that time, or at least from the days of Theodore of Tarsus, parishes began slowly to take shape along the river valley and in the adjacent country-side. As the itinerant missionaries spread the faith the Anglian thanes would feel it incumbent on them to erect places of worship near their halls for the use of the people.

It is possible to picture the Trent valley in Derbyshire, before the arrival of the Normans, as a cleared and settled region of agricultural communities engaged in subsistence farming, the predominant race the Angles, but with a not inconsiderable admixture of Danes. The boundaries of the parishes would conform to the necessities of the township economy. Each would contain within its limits the three types of land essential for the functioning of the community — water meadows for the production of hay, ploughland for the grain crops, and open common for the grazing of the animals.

Stanton-by-Bridge may be cited as an ideal example of this rural economy. The low-lying river meadows to west and east of Swarkeston Bridge would provide the hay crop, the higher land on which the village itself stands would comprise the arable, and the still higher ground to the south, rising to four hundred feet in the vicinity of St. Brides, would form an extensive common pasturage for sheep and cattle.

Let us now take a geographical survey of our area. The Trent forms a boundary line for twenty-two parishes along its Derbyshire course. On the left bank, proceed-ing from left to right on the map, we have, in this succession, Egginton, Willington, Findern, Twyford, Barrow-on-Trent, Swarkeston, Weston-on-Trent, Aston, Shardlow, Sawley, and Long Eaton. On the right bank are Catton, Walton-on-Trent, Drakelowe, Stapenhill, Winshill, Newton Solney, Repton, Foremark, Ingleby, Stanton-by-Bridge, and Melbourne.

Four of these parishes can conveniently be eliminated as not being germane to our purpose, i.e. a survey of the pre-Gothic sites in our defined region. Shardlow at the time of the Domesday Survey was a berewick in the royal manor of Weston-on-Trent. The church is modern and we have no knowledge of a predecessor, if any.

Winshill was until recently a township in the parish of Burton-on-Trent.

Foremark and Ingleby are both mentioned as chapelries of Repton in the confirmation charters of 1271 and 1279. There is apparently no evidence to tell us when these chapelries were founded. A font-shaped vessel now preserved in the gardens of Ingleby Hill House is possibly, or even probably, a relic from the vanished Ingleby chapel, the actual site of which is well known. Although the present Foremark church dates only from the middle years of the seventeenth century it houses a font dating almost certainly from the thirteenth century.

Of the remaining eighteen Trentside parishes, in no less than thirteen of them can still be seen, in varying degrees, architectural evidence of pre-Gothic work in their churches — say, twelfth century or earlier. Not one of the remainder can now shew a scrap of Romanesque workmanship, but from historical sources churches of that date at Drakelowe, Stapenhill, Barrow-on-Trent, Weston-on-Trent, and Egginton can be fully authenticated.

It is, therefore, a reasonable inference that at the time of the Domesday Survey the parishes along the Derbyshire Trent were all in being with their boundaries fixed pretty well as we find them to-day.

It will probably be generally agreed that the only undoubted Saxon building now to be found in the valley is at Repton, although Stanton-by-Bridge church, if not pre-Conquest in date, certainly has features identifying it with the Saxon technique. Many churches were built in the eleventh century to Saxon design and with definite Saxon detail, but the presence also of Norman features dates them as post-Conquest.

This is the phase which the late Professor Baldwin Brown termed the "Saxo-Norman overlap", and he instances many examples, such as Branston, Lincs., Dunham Magna, Norfolk, and Herringfleet, Suffolk. It may be that Stanton-by-Bridge should fall into this category, and if Dr. Cox did actually find "long-and-short" work in the now rebuilt south window-opening of the early church at Long Eaton, it would seem that building may also warrant inclusion in the "overlap".

In this picture of Saxons and Normans working side

by side on the same buildings it is something to the point
to speculate on the social and economic relations which
existed between the conquered and their conquerors.
There seems reason to believe that on the whole the two
peoples settled down fairly amicably together. Many
churches of the "overlap", betraying the hands of both
Saxon and Norman workmen, can hardly be supposed
the joint productions of men not labouring together in
accord.

Sir Frank Stenton writes that what little we know of
the personal relations of Normans and Englishmen is
enough to shew that soon after the Conquest they began
to settle down into an orderly civil association with one
another. Ordericus Vitalis, who was born in England
in 1075, tells us that: "The English and the Normans
were living together as fellow-citizens in the castles and
camps and towns, and were forming nuptial alliances the
ones with the others."

So far as can be judged from the scanty evidence avail-
able and by reasonable surmise, many of the early
churches which came into being in our valley would prob-
ably be towerless structures consisting of a simple
rectangular nave with a small square-ended chancel
tacked on to it; replicas in stone, perhaps, of the still
earlier timber buildings. To go outside the valley for a
moment we find this design, in its perfection, in the small
church of Caldwell in South Derbyshire. Stanton-by-
Bridge, unaltered in essentials during nine centuries ex-
cept for the addition of a north aisle, is another example.
Twyford also, although here a small unbuttressed western
tower was added at the very beginning of the Gothic
period. It is more than likely that this simple plan of
two plain rectangles was followed also in the first stone-
built churches at Walton-on-Trent, Willington, Findern,
Swarkeston and elsewhere.

This Trent valley towerless type contrasts with that
found in what may be termed the Dovedale area in West
Derbyshire. In that region many of the churches of
eleventh and twelfth century date possess the distinctive
feature of a low massive tower at the west end of the
nave as part of the original design. Examples occur at

Tissington, Thorpe, Bradbourne, Brassington, Kirk Ireton, and probably Parwich. In the Trent valley the only Norman western tower is at Aston. To hazard any suggestion as to why two differing group-types were being followed in such close proximity about the same date is to venture into uncharted fields of pure speculation.

Additions to the first simple buildings in the shape of towers, aisles, chapels and porches came about gradually as the exigencies of an increasing population made themselves felt, and when there was the necessary money forthcoming. Medieval church-building and extensions were, one imagines, governed largely by the income of the local lord or other benefactor from whom came the bulk of the funds.

In those early days he had no invested fluid capital on which he could draw at short notice. His land was his wealth, but if he was loath to borrow on the security of his acres the amount he could afford to spend on church-work in any one year depended on his income for that year from his estates. A series of bad harvests might hold up indefinitely the addition of a tower or an aisle.

Some such reason as this may explain, for example, the fact that to a mid-twelfth century nave at Twyford the small western tower was not added until the end of the century or the beginning of the following. A tower may have been part of the original design at Twyford, but cash was short and it had to wait.

These small valley churches, which were to become the focal points in the lives of those whose ancestors began founding the string of farming communities along Trent's banks some twelve centuries ago, still mark the sites of the early settlements. Their presence augments the effect of intensive and continuous habitation we see in what is left of the ancient field systems, still to be recognised under the veneer with which the Enclosures largely obscured them.

The churches erected in the second half of the eleventh century present complexities of dating. This is the period of Baldwin Brown's "overlap". During this half century the Saxon builders may in many parts have clung dourly to their own cherished traditions, and may even

to some extent have influenced the ideas of the immigrant Normans. Sir Frank Stenton states that Saxon work in the north of England survived the impact of the Norman Romanesque for as much as two generations.

We will now look with more particularity at the eighteen churches or church sites under review, and see what architectural remains (in some cases) and historical evidence (in others) have to tell us about those sacred buildings put up by our forefathers, before the dawn of the Gothic era, in the parishes aligned along the Derbyshire Trent.

The parishes are taken in the order set out in an earlier paragraph. Our observations on the buildings will not necessarily be restricted to a mere tabulation of their pre-Gothic features, establishing their right, as it were, to a place in our survey. A less formal and more elastic line is adopted.

Latitude is taken to comment on anything which may be considered of some special interest in their later architectural development.

EGGINTON: Dr. J. C. Cox writes that at the time of the Domesday Survey (1087) the manor of Egginton was held by Geoffrey Alselin. It is recorded that it then possessed a priest and a church. "There is apparently no trace left in the fabric of the old Norman church," he concludes, "that doubtless stood on this site."

WILLINGTON: There is no reference to a church here at the time of the Domesday Survey, although this, in itself, is no proof of the absence of a church. In fact, there must have been one at the time of the Survey or soon afterwards, because William the Conqueror's bestowal of Willington church on the Abbey of Burton was confirmed by the Pope in 1185 (Dugdale's *Monasticon*).

Although the architectural evidence for a pre-Gothic church is scanty it is sufficient. The round-headed south doorway is Norman, and has a tympanum partly carved in squares with intersecting lines. Much of the rough masonry in the south wall seems to be of a date with the doorway. Dr. Cox writes: "The arch between the

nave and chancel has probably been a plain Norman one, but was encased in 1824.''

FINDERN: The medieval church which stood here was completely swept away in 1862. Fortunately a Norman tympanum, which presumably filled the arch of the south doorway, was preserved, and is now built into the interior of the north wall. It is carved in a chequered pattern, and has a cross formée in the centre.

Mr. R. R. Rawlins' description of the church in 1818 mentions a plain round-headed priest's doorway in the chancel, probably another Norman feature. He refers also to a small single-light window in the chancel with an angular head. The typical Saxon straight-sided arch was sometimes carried into early Norman work. Finally, Mr. Rawlins tells us there was a Norman corbel-table at the west end carved with the billet enrichment.

TWYFORD: Although the church standing here to-day is mainly of 13th and 14th century workmanship, there is no doubt as to a Norman predecessor. Between nave and chancel stands an arch of 12th century date boldly carved with the chevron or zigzag enrichment. It is of unusually squat proportions, measuring 7 ft. 9 ins. between the jambs and just over 5 ft. to the top of the imposts.

Dr. Cox states there used to be a plain old Norman font in the church which has now disappeared. Perhaps a diligent search in the neighbouring farmyards might prove fruitful.

BARROW-ON-TRENT: At the time the Domesday Survey was compiled the manor of Barrow formed part of the estates of Ralph Fitzhubert, and it is recorded that it possessed a priest and a church.

''There are no remains of the fabric of Norman date,'' states Dr. Cox, and the writer has not been able to find any.

SWARKESTON: In 1876 the entire church was rebuilt with the exception of the western tower and the Harpur mortuary chapel. Mr. Rawlins (c. 1820) writes of a semi-circular Norman chancel arch ornamented with the chevron enrichment. In the head of the south doorway

was a Norman tympanum, the lower part carved with an arcade of nine arches and the upper part with two monstrous quadrupeds trampling on a serpent. It is more than possible that this most interesting piece of sculpture may now be doing duty, face downwards, as a doorstep in the buildings of some local farmhouse. Several stones bearing Norman enrichment are built into the interior walls of the church. The plain circular bowl of the font looks good Norman work.

The similarities between the four small 12th century churches of Willington, Findern, Twyford and Swarkeston are too significant to be overlooked. In early 19th century drawings of Willington and Findern bell-turrets appear over the west gable, pointing to a plain rectangular west end without a tower. Stanton-by-Bridge shews such a west end unaltered during the last nine centuries. Willington, Twyford and Swarkeston all appear to have had chancel arches of Norman date, and at Willington, Findern and Swarkeston there were decorated tympana in the heads of the south doorways.

These churches could not have been of a particularly early Norman date. The chevron is the main decoration used, and Sir Alfred Clapham gives A.D. 1110 as the approximate date for the first appearance of this enrichment.

All four churches were apparently built about the same date, and quite possibly under the direction of one master-craftsman.

WESTON-ON-TRENT: The inference that a pre-Gothic church once stood here is a safe one, although there are no remains of either Saxon or Norman work to be seen to-day.

Weston was a royal manor at the time of the Domesday Survey, and two churches are mentioned as being on this manor; without doubt Weston and Aston.

ASTON-ON-TRENT: There is no need here to go to Domesday Book for historical evidence of an early church. Work of the Norman Romanesque style is found in the plain semi-circular arch which separates the tower from the nave. This arch is of goodly proportions, the

distance between the jambs being 11 ft. 2 ins. and the height to the imposts 9 ft. It is in two orders, but is not recessed, i.e. each order extends the full thickness of the wall. The imposts are decorated with the star and the lozenge enrichments.

In the north, south and west walls of the tower are Norman windows with nook-shafts in the jambs and bands of chevron round the arches. Although Dr. Cox states that the tower arch is early Norman, this description can hardly be applied to the second storey with its enriched Norman windows. It may be that the first storey was erected sometime in the second half of the eleventh century, but that a wait of forty years or so occurred before means were forthcoming to add the second storey, by which time a more lavish style of building was being practised.

At some date in the fifteenth century or later the walls of the tower have been re-cased with fine smooth ashlar and the great diagonal buttresses added. The stones of buttresses and tower walls bond together.

Re-casing of earlier work, such as we see at Aston, was not uncommon. It can sometimes puzzle anyone attempting to work out the architectural development of a church, although usually some significant factor will shew up to give the necessary clue. In this case a glance at the interior walls of the tower will suffice to dispel any doubts.

SAWLEY: This has been from early times a place of considerable ecclesiastical importance. There is evidence that a fine church stood here in the eleventh century. A semi-circular arch of noble proportions separates chancel from nave. It has a width of 14 ft. 2 ins. and the height to the crown of the arch is approximately 16 ft. Dr. Cox has no hesitation in calling this archway "undoubtedly Saxon", particularly as in the walling above it a small patch of "herring-bone" masonry can be seen.

There are two objections which might be lodged against Dr. Cox's confident assertion on the question of date. Firstly, the voussoirs of the arch are not "through-stones"; from both wall-faces they apparently butt up

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against a central rubble core which seems much more characteristic of Norman technique.

Secondly, Dr. Cox's belief that herring-bone masonry necessarily connotes a Saxon date is not held to-day. Sir Alfred Clapham calls it a common feature of eleventh century rough or rubble walling which was largely abandoned by the beginning of the twelfth century. F. E. Howard writes that Herring-bone work is found in late pre-Conquest and early Norman building, but most frequently in the latter.

It would be safer to date Sawley chancel arch and the rough chancel walling as early Norman.

LONG EATON: The present south aisle of this church is the nave of the original building, and what was the chancel of the latter now forms a south aisle to the present modern chancel. Dr. Cox describes the chancel arch of the old building as "Saxon", but the voussoirs are not through-stones as at Stanton-by-Bridge, and we see evidence of the same exposed rubble core round the intrados of the arch that we noticed at Sawley.

Dr. Cox also states that the embrasure of the round-headed window in the south wall displays "long-and-short" work. It may have done so in his day, but since then it has been entirely rebuilt. If he was right on this point the fact would tend to class Long Eaton with Stanton-by-Bridge as being in Baldwin Brown's Saxo-Norman overlap", i.e. Saxon and Norman features existing side by side in the same building.

These two chancel arches (Sawley and Long Eaton) may very well have been put up by Saxon masons, but they were masons working under Norman direction and had assimilated much of the Norman building technique.

The thickness of the wall in which the arches are set is 2 ft. 11 ins. at Long Eaton and 3 ft. 3 ins. at Sawley. Both may be taken to approximate to Norman measurements rather than Saxon, as it was unusual for a Saxon wall to exceed 2 ft. 6 ins.

There is what looks like a rather remarkable coincidence between the measurements of the chancel arches at Long Eaton and Stanton-by-Bridge; it might well carry some special significance in the matter of how and by

whom these early churches along the Trent were built. In each case the arches are 12 ft. 2 ins. between the jambs, and in each case the depth of the wall in which they are set is 2 ft. 11 ins. Stanton measures 7 ft. from the floor to the impost; Long Eaton is 9 ins. less, but alterations in floor level at one or both buildings could account for this small difference.

If the same team of masons was responsible for both archways it may be a pointer to a rather later date than has been assigned to the Stanton arch. Possibly the master-mason in charge at Long Eaton had imbibed ideas a little in advance of his compeer at Stanton, or he may have been working under more forceful Norman direction.

Part of a Norman arch and a fragment of the chevron enrichment are built into the new south wall of the original chancel. The south doorway is a noble specimen of late Norman work, with three orders all elaborately sculptured.

CATTON: In the Domesday Survey there is no reference to a church at Catton. But Nigel de Albini, who held the manor, must have built one, for about the year 1100 he granted the church of Catton, with its tithe and appurtenances, to the Priory of Tutbury (Dugdale's *Monasticon*). The point is, therefore, historically established that a Norman church once existed here.

In addition, however, to the historical evidence, there is further proof of a more concrete nature. In 1892 Mrs. Anson-Horton erected a brick and terra-cotta chapel behind the Hall. In this building rests the massive round bowl of a Norman font which is doubtless contemporary with the church built by Nigel de Albini. It was rescued from the bed of the nearby Trent in recent years.

WALTON-ON-TRENT: It is a fair assumption from the architectural evidence now existing here that an aisleless, and probably towerless, nave and chancel were erected some time in the second half of the eleventh century. Round about a century later, say 1175, an aisle was thrown out to the south. The sturdy round columns of this arcade are of Norman proportions, and although the massive arches are pointed the inner order

of each shews the square section one usually associates
with Norman work.   Several of the capitals are em-
bellished with severely stiff-leaved foliage, and one has
a curious design which may be likened to an upside-down
version of the fifteenth century cresting known as
"brattishing".   This arcade may be described as a
transition-Norman piece of work — Gothic, shall we say,
with a definite Norman hangover.

A relic of the eleventh century church is seen in the
spandrel between the two westernmost arches of the
arcade.   Here a ring of arch-stones built into the wall
represents an elevated window-head of the old Norman
nave.   The exterior of this head shews on the other side
of the wall, i.e. the side looking into the aisle.   This
window would have a wide interior splay, and is of the
type parallelled in the north wall at Caldwell, the west
wall at Stanton-by-Bridge, and the south wall at King's
Bromley, Staffs.

The early Norman church is further represented by a
tall narrow round-headed doorway in the north wall.   It
is of a severely plain character, has no imposts, and
measures 2 ft. 8 ins. wide and approximately 8 ft. high
to the crown of the arch.

Dr. Cox refers to this doorway as being built up.   It
is now open and leads to a modern vestry.   Apparently
the church interior was so smothered in stucco at the time
of his visit that he did not see the early window in the
south nave wall or appreciate the character and date of
the arcade.

DRAKELOWE: Dugdale's *Monasticon* tells us that
Drakelowe was originally in the parish of Stapenhill; that
it had its own chapel which, together with the mother
church of Stapenhill, was confirmed to Burton Abbey in
1185 by Pope Lucius III.

On this historical evidence we can assume the exist-
ence of a Norman chapel here, although not a vestige
now remains to indicate where it stood.

STAPENHILL: The church of Stapenhill, according
to Dugdale, was given to Burton Abbey by Briteric (1026-

1050), the second abbot of that monastery.   This would, of course, be a Saxon building.

The present church, with its beautiful lofty western tower, was built in the early 1880's.   Of previous buildings little seems to be known with any certainty.   Mr. Rawlins has left a drawing of the church which stood here in 1822.   It shews a round-headed priest's doorway in the chancel, and Mr. Rawlins refers to a "circular" font and a round-headed arch between nave and chancel.   Whether these features belonged to a pre-Gothic fabric or no it is not easy to determine now.

In which local farmyard is Mr. Rawlins' "circular" font now serving some use for which it was not intended?

NEWTON SOLNEY: There is more than sufficient proof here for the existence of a Norman church.   Built into the exterior north wall of the tower is a number of fragments of characteristic Norman workmanship, including the capital of a shaft and the spring of an arch shewing a roll moulding surrounded by a ring of zigzag.   In the exterior east wall of the chancel is a moulded stone decorated with a double chevron pattern that may have formed part of a chancel arch.

Dr. Cox describes the round-headed doorway in the north aisle (built up in his day) as being of plain Norman character of the 12th century.   There are one or two features about this doorway which incline one to think that he pre-dated it.   The doorway lacks the nook-shafts with capitals supporting each order of the arch in the usual Norman fashion, and the mouldings run without break along jamb and arch, generally regarded as a late feature.

Again, the north aisle is lighted by very plain early-looking lancets, and as the stones of the aisle-wall bond in perfectly with the jambs of the doorway one can hardly escape the conclusion that aisle wall, lancets, and doorway are all of one date.   The pointed arch was well established by c. 1180, and this is probably the date of the whole aisle, doorway included.

The writer's attention has since been drawn to some notes on Newton Solney church in Vol. I of this Journal.

There Mr. Robinson suggests, after careful examination of various mouldings and jointings, that the stonework of the north doorway and north window may be restorations of a later time, possibly of the fourteenth century when the north chapel was added.

REPTON: If Melbourne is the grandest architecturally of our Trent valley churches there can be no doubt that Repton takes the palm historically and archæologically. Dr. Cox describes the famous Saxon crypt as "the most remarkable structure, on the most interesting site, that English Christendom yet possesses."

According to Professor Baldwin Brown there are probably three periods of Saxon building represented in this complex and puzzling east end, the crypt and the chancel above it. The lower part of the crypt walling, he concludes, is probably all that now remains of the monastery established here in the seventh century. To the second half of the tenth century belongs the church of red stone which was built above the crypt. The cream-coloured upper walling of the chancel with its pilaster strips and the vaulting of the crypt are still later work, but all three periods fall within the Saxon era.

At the time of writing (1951) the south-west passage leading from the crypt to the body of the church has just been opened up, and as a result of discoveries being made under the present floor level of the south transept, it is likely that further light will be shed on the original plan of the central space of this early cruciform building. Ancient masonry has been uncovered which may materially alter our present ideas on this point.

The seventh century monastery was doubtless the earliest of the missionary mother-churches, from which issued the religious men who converted the pagan Saxons in this part of the country, to be established in the north midlands. It appears to have been the headquarters of Diuma, the first bishop, the *English Chronicle* tells us, of the Mercians and Middle Angles. The see was shortly afterwards transferred to Lichfield by St. Chad, but it is a pleasant thought for Derbyshire people that Repton can lay some solid claim to having first spread the Faith in this part of England.

STANTON-BY-BRIDGE: Chronologically this building is as puzzling as any of our Trent valley churches. It appears to be our one definite example of Baldwin Brown's "overlap", as it seems to exhibit typically Saxon and Norman work of the same date of erection.

The chancel arch is built of "through-stones", i.e. stones as long as the thickness of the wall, a peculiarly Saxon device. The fact is obscured by the false mortar joints which have been camouflaged across them in recent years, but a close examination will reveal that the running of the grain in these voussoirs ignores the alleged joints. Another typical late Saxon feature is found in the "long-and-short" quoin at the south-east angle of the nave, and there is a suspicion of the same thing at the foot of the north-east and south-east corners of the chancel.

On the other hand there is a characteristic early Norman window, widely splayed on the inside only, high up in the west wall of the nave. The masonry of this west wall and that of the south wall are so similar in the size and irregular shapes of the stones, and in their colour and texture, that one can hardly escape the conclusion that west and south walls are part of the original stone church — one displaying a window of early Norman technique and the other a late Saxon "long-and-short" quoin.

Dr. Cox believes the original stonebuilt church dates from the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century. Probably a more likely date would be the eve of the Conquest or possibly after it. Building techniques must have been slow to change in remote rural backwaters like Stanton.

A stone shield built into the exterior east wall tells us that in 1682 Rector Augustine Jackson "rebuilt and beautyfyed" the chancel. Such rebuildings were far from uncommon, and one cannot help wondering whether in his rebuilding and beautifying Rector Jackson might have destroyed some feature or features which would hold inestimable significance for us to-day.

MELBOURNE: This is unquestionably the gem of our Trent valley churches. Domesday Book records a

church at Melbourne, but it was not the building we see
to-day. Dr. Cox tells us that in 1133 Henry I founded
the bishopric of Carlisle, and that one of the first of its
endowments was the church of Melbourne.

As we know that the fourth bishop of Carlisle, Walter
Mauclerc, erected a palace at Melbourne, and also
obtained leave to hold ordinations in the church of Mel-
bourne when Border warfare made Carlisle an unhealthy
spot, we have either to conclude that for some reason far
from obvious a most exceptional church was built here
in the first quarter of the twelfth century and taken over
by the first bishop, or that it was erected by him after
1133 with a view to its serving, when occasion required,
as a kind of deputy to the cathedral at Carlisle.

If, however, this building was put up before 1133 we
are hard driven to find a reason for the magnificent scale
on which it was designed.   What is the explanation of
a cruciform church with a central and two western towers,
a stone-vaulted western narthex, a double-storeyed
chancel, a combined triforium clear-storey with a pro-
cessional path running round the church at that height?

It is difficult to credit that a building on such a grand
scale and with such exceptional parts was erected to serve
purely as a parish church, and there is no suggestion that
it was a collegiate or monastic foundation.   Its affinities
in plan with several of the great churches of Normandy
have been often commented upon. This does little
to explain the mystery of its conception.

The study of local style in regional groups of churches
is a facet of ecclesiology which has been receiving
increasing attention in recent years.   It appeared, there-
fore, to be a worthwhile task to look at the characteristics
of the congeries of pre-Gothic churches which arose in
such a well-defined and homogeneous tract of territory
as has been chosen.   The area is extensive enough to
afford scope for that examination of the likenesses and
differences in plan and detail which form the basis of this
fascinating study.

In the late Dr. J. C. Cox Derbyshire was fortunate to
possess one of the greatest of county ecclesiologists and
historians, and his famous work on the churches of

Derbyshire remains as a monument to his genius and is the *vade mecum* for all students of the county's ecclesiastical architecture.

When the work was published in the 1870's Dr. Cox had learned to question some of the statements of earlier writers in this field, to whom, for instance, all buildings with round-headed arches were "Saxon". But time moves on, and as fresh facts come to light and further knowledge is gained, we in turn are driven on occasion to question some of Dr. Cox's own conclusions. Many a day will pass, of course, before the final word is written on many of Derbyshire's ancient churches.