

The church of St Mary's at Linton near Ross

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Structural assessment and documentary research on the church of Saint Mary, Linton, in Herefordshire and its wider territorial context indicated that it was an important pre-Conquest mother church. This paper describes the historical perspective, the likely phasing of this complex building, the materials used and their probable source.

Introduction

Linton church lies in the south-east of the county near the Gloucestershire border at SO 6601 2532 (HSMR 7309), (Fig 1); at the north end of a Silurian sandstone ridge (Pevsner 1963, 16) called Linton Hill at an Ordnance Datum of 115m. Structural observations were undertaken in 1999 on the medieval church of Saint Mary at Linton near Ross, Herefordshire. The standing building is of sandstone and tufa (RCHM 1932, 119), and consists of a nave, chancel, north and south aisle, west tower and north porch, lying within a semicircular cemetery. The church has only received brief descriptions by the RCHM (1932, 119-121) and Pevsner (1963, 234-235). The 13th - century funeral fittings were catalogued by Lacaille (1933, 1-9). Earlier assessments of the structure have placed no features earlier than the 12th century even though there was almost certainly an 11th century structure on the site, its presence implied by a lack of alignment and the curving boundary of the churchyard.

Context

The known history of the church began in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1983: MS1-1) when a reference implied that the church formerly had a high status. A glebe-land map of 1815 shows the churchyard was then more circular in form (Hereford RO BH80/7-12); no village existed around the church, which, with the rectory, stood otherwise isolated upon the hill, surrounded by approximately 65 acres of glebe-land. Within the churchyard is a yew-tree with a girth of over 30 feet which is reputedly 1200 years old, and Morris (1989, 79) speculates that this tree may be part of a pre-Christian landscape. The antiquity of the tree and its position on the churchyard platform indicate that the height of the platform is of some antiquity.

The place-name, Eccleswall, '*the spring of the church community*', in the parish of Linton, has been interpreted as a reference to a sub-Roman Christian community (Cameron 1987: 1-7): The spring lies in the Rudhall Valley below Linton, and suggests evidence for the possible existence of a church in the vicinity in the sub-Roman period, the location of which is unknown. Eccleswall Castle Chapel was the site of a free chapel in the parish (Duncumb 1812: 399).

The Domesday reference to the church describes attributes generally associated with minster church status churches (Thorn and Thorn 1983, MS1-1): although the church and its priest were held by the Abbey of Corneilles in Normandy, the manor is listed first under the king's ownership. The minster attributes are:

The priest owned land (Blair 1985, 104-142); this is unspecified but may be as much as two hides.

There was a royal manor at Linton (Parsons 1995: 63). The church received dues from further afield than the present parish - Ilbert from Archenfield, an extensive territory in south-west Herefordshire.

The manor was extremely reduced, suggesting that an unspecified number of manors were initially berewicks to Linton.

The church, along with the two neighbouring churches at Much Marcle and Wilton, passed to Lire Abbey, Normandy

Fig1 Location map of Linton-near Ross, Herefordshire. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright NC/01/347

in c 1142 - 1147 (Barrow 1993, MS34), with confirmation in 1148 -1149, 1174 - 1186, 1186 -1198 and 1216 - 1219 (Barrow 1993, MS101, 162, 218, 304, 305). The list of vicars starting in 1301 (Hereford RO BM26/3) contains references to a number of church construction phases which include the building of the church and rebuilding of the north aisle and tower in 1245 (Hereford ROB 80/14). In 1292 Pope Nicholas's valuation recorded Lire's possession of Linton. In 1348-1349 the church was in the hands of the crown as an alien foundation (Duncumb 1812, 390). The list of vicars records a new tower being built 1361 -1382 when the church was again in the hands of the proctor of Lire (Hereford RO BH80/14). In 1382 the church was again in the hands of the crown, which presented it to Shene Priory in 1421 (Duncumb 1812: 390-391). At the dissolution of the monasteries, the advowson passed to Humphrey Coningsby; parish registers were first kept in 1570. Five bells were cast in 1722 and the church was restored by the Reverend Edward Palin in 1876 (Hereford RO BM26/3). There were also minor repairs in the 1950s and 1960s (Hereford RO BH80/14).

The Ross-cum-Linton Parochia

The 1086 reference to a reduced manor implies that a number of manors which were once outliers of Linton had gained some form of independence. In respect to this, Parsons (1995, 63) noted there was a complex relationship between Linton and the manors of Ross-on-Wye and Cleeve with Wilton. This relationship is not easily resolved. The manor of Linton once received dues from Archenfield (Thorn and Thorn 1983: MS1-1, 1-8) as the berewick of Cleeve manor was Wilton, which lay to the west of the Wye, this was probably a reference to Wilton but its full implications are unclear. This manor's tithes like Linton's were held in 1086 by Saint Mary of Cormeilles. Cleeve would seem to have been part of a remaining enclave of a large royal manor and therefore part of the larger manor of Linton. This could imply that the church of Wilton and Cleeve manor (Cooke 1882, 118) originated in areas where Linton once had access to tithes; the situation was complex since there was an agreement between Ross and Wilton churches 1163 - 1186 (Blair 1988, 13, Barrow 1983, MS127) whereby rights to burials at Cleeve were shared by both churches. The chapel at Hom Green, Cleeve, was constructed by Bishop de Vere in the 12th century. This situation is complicated further by Duncumb's (1812, 392) reference to a long standing claim of land at Bridstow/Wilton to provide for lamps at Linton church. The implication here is that the Linton, Ross and Wilton tithe, churchscot, and soulscot are all interrelated and form part of a whole. That Cleeve manor could have been subordinate to Linton is significant because Cleeve lay within the 1305 bounds of Ross-on-Wye parish that included the present parishes of Ross, Ruardean, Walford and Weston-under-

Penyard (Capes 1909: 407). Castle Goodrich and Hope Mansel were possibly parishes linked to Ross at this time.

This arrangement is reflected in other sources:

In 1086 Walford manor was assessed with the manor of Ross and its chapel remained a chapel of Ross until 1671 (Thorn & Thorn 1983h, MS2-23; Harnden 1987, 80, 92).

Ruardean chapel was a chapel of Walford in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 and the *Foxe register* of 1536 (Caley 1817, 25; Bannister 1921, 367, Herbert 1996, 244).

Weston-under-Penyard chapel is recorded as a chapel of Ross in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and the *Foxe register* (Caley 1817, 23; Bannister 1921: 367).

The *Myllyng register* in 1475 records a dispute between the church of Ross and the chapel of Weston (Bannister 1919, 18).

The parishes were finally separated in 1671 when Weston ceased to be a chapelry (Duncumb 1812, 332; Cooke 1882, 118; Harnden 1987, 80, 92).

The *Swinfield register* records an agreement between Ross church and Cormiell's Newent cell over the tithes of Kingston manor within Weston parish (Capes 1909, 358-359).

Brampton Abbots chapel was recorded as a chapel of Ross in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* and the *Foxe register* (Caley 1817, 23; Bannister 1921, 367; Duncumb 1812, 332; Cooke 1882, 118).

The parish was separated from that of Ross in 1671 (Duncumb 1812, 332; Cooke 1882, 118).

Identification of the boundaries of the medieval Ross parish has implications concerning the relationship between Linton and Ross; there is circumstantial evidence for the foundation of a church at Ross c 1016 (Finberg 1961, MS430; Parsons 1995, 61-62). In 1086 a priest was recorded but he had no separate land holdings (Thorn and Thorn 1983h, 2-24; Barrow 1995, 36). Archaeological excavations at Ross-on-Wye church imply that a 12th-century church stood on the site constructed in the precinct of a Bishop's Palace first recorded c 1166-1167 ((Jones 1991, Buteux 1996, 5).

The church at Linton was a mother church. Two chapels are known to have been built within its parish:

Bishop Foxe's register records a chapel at Eccleswall in 1536.

This was a free chapel in Linton parish, and *Bishop Skipp's Register* associates Brampton Abbots curate with the presentation to this chapel. This implies that Eccleswall chapel could be linked into the ecclesiastical structure of Ross (Bannister 1921, 367; Duncumb 1812, 399).

The chapel at Lea was according to *Bishop Lacy's Register* founded in 1418 when the rector of Linton consented to the petition of the people of Lea for an attached chapelry (Duncumb 1812, 403; Parry and Bannister 1917: 35-40, Marshall *et al* 1928, lxiv, RCHM 1932, 98). It was constructed as an endowed curacy annexed to Linton established under the lords of Aston Ingham manor which

implies that Aston Ingham church may have been founded as a manorial church in Linton's parish as Lea had connections to both manors - although this assumption is far from certain. Reference to Lea chapel's relationship with Linton church were made in 1535 in *the Valor Ecclesiasticus* (Caley 1817, 23), in 1536 in the *Foxe register* (Bannister 1921, 367, 370), and in 1675 by Blount (Reeves ND, 29). In 1735 the *Diocesan Survey of Gloucestershire* listed Lea as a chapel of Longhope (Jones 1983, 139), but in 1779 Rudder (1779, 517) stated that Lea was again annexed to Linton. To the north, **Upton Bishop** and **Much Marcle** were probably wholly or partially included in Linton and Ross's wider territory. Upton Bishop was assessed with the manor of Ross in 1086 (Thorn and Thorn 1983h, MS2-25). The 1839 enclosure map of Upton has a detached enclave in Brampton parish at Overton (Hereford RO S171). The detached parcel of land implies that they both originated as part of a larger unit. Much Marcle also has a detached portion on the northern boundary of Linton parish (Hereford RO L66). It was a royal manor, and its tithes,

priest and church belonged to Saint Mary, Cormeilles (Thorn and Thorn 1983, 1-7), any relationship between Much Marcle and Linton is not known. Much Marcle has two recorded chapels of its own:

Yatton was a chapelry in the *Foxe register* (Bannister 1921, 370).

Kynaston was also a chapelry in the *Foxe register* (Bannister 1921, 370).

Three place-names are significant in understanding this wider territorial pattern; the first two use the name Aston: Aston Ingham and Aston Crews; it is a directional place-name referring to the east estate (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 129); Weston-under-Penyard refers to the west estate (Coplestone-Crow 1989, 27). These directional place-names only make sense when Linton (or the Roman site of *Ariconium*) is recognised as the dominant centre. The position of Weston in Ross parish is another indicator of the territory's relationship to Linton, and enabled the interpretation of the Linton/Ross Hyrnesse in Fig 2. The

Fig 2 Ross-cum-Linton Hyrnesse. Cross = Minster church; Square = Manorial church; Rhombus = chapel; Triangle = indications of tied jurisdiction; Black shapes = good evidence; Open shapes = more suspect but highly likely. Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey map with permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright NC/01/347

complex relationship between Linton and Ross could relate to the initial establishment of a superior church at Linton which was later re-established at Ross.

The Anglo-Saxon chronicle for 915 refers to Cyfeiliog, bishop of Archenfield (Garmonsway 1972, 98-99). The church of Linton receives dues from Archenfield and the name Archenfield is believed to derive from the name *Ariconium* which in turn is associated with the original name of May Hill (Smith 1964, 192). If this assumption is correct then the Archenfield territory originated east of the Wye and was expanded to the west. When the dues for Linton church and the name Eccleswall are considered together they suggest that the original site of the church of the *Ircinga* would be at Linton, and that Ross was a replacement minster for this folk group. The Welsh founded at least one church east of the Wye c700 at Tidenham and there may be others (Finberg 1961, MS7).

Geology and church stone

Two types of stone are discernible in the church: local sandstones and tufa (RCHM 1932, 119). The local sandstone occurs in reds and greens of the Devonian and Silurian periods and outcrops occur along the northern edge of the Forest of Dean and on May Hill, and continue along Crews Hill and Linton Hill (Worssam *et al* 1989, 9-15). The presence of tufa in the church is more problematic Pevsner (1963, 17) and Parsons (1995, 67) associated tufa with the 12th century, and it is believed that the tufa source for Herefordshire churches was Southstone Rock, Shelsley Walsh, Worcestershire (Pevsner 1963, 17) although another source of Tufaceous limestone existed near Dursley,

Gloucestershire (Verey 1976, 68). Tufa distribution and re-used Roman stone are discussed by Yeates (this volume). Excavations by Jack at *Ariconium* in 1922 found the scattered remains of 'a tufa-like material', and this is presumably the source of stones for Linton church (RCHM 1932, 209).

Structural assessment

The church comprises a nave, chancel, north and south aisles, tower and a north porch (Fig 3). Most of the structure is rubble with ashlar blocks used only for quoins; tool marks are scarce on the outside due to weathering. Within the structure are many visible phases, some of which are documented (RCHM 1932, 119-121; Pevsner 1963, 234-235; Hereford RO BM26/3). The north aisle is classified as 12th century and has been interpreted as being all of one phase (Pevsner 1963: 234). There are problems with this interpretation:

There are four variations in the thickness of the north nave wall (Fig 3, plate 1)

There is a butt joint in this wall (Fig 4)

The arches are difficult to date as they have no characteristic mouldings (plate 2)

There are butt joints in the north aisle wall

The north aisle wall, at its west end, contains large stones that could be part of an earlier structure (Fig 5)

On the east wall of the nave and in both aisles there are clear signs of at least two, and possibly three, building phases evident in roof lines, which correspond with the phasing of the north nave wall and north aisle (plates 3 and 4)

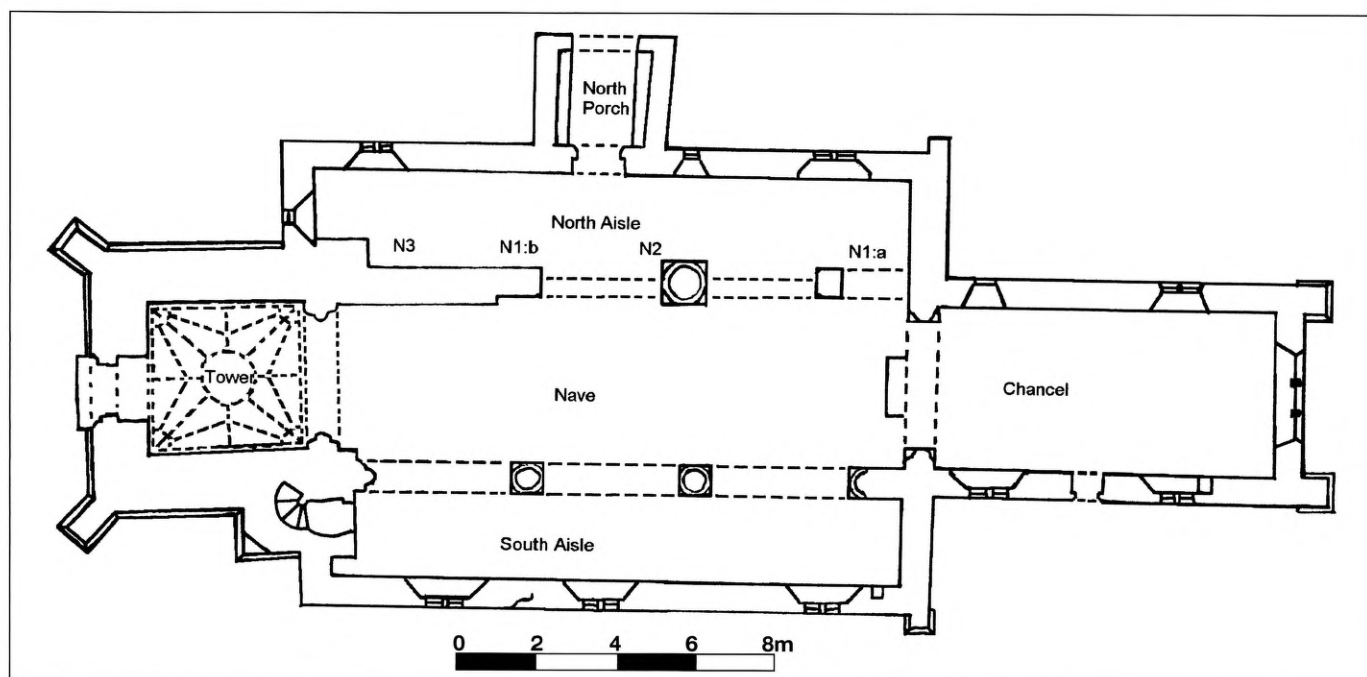


Fig 3A Linton Church: general plan

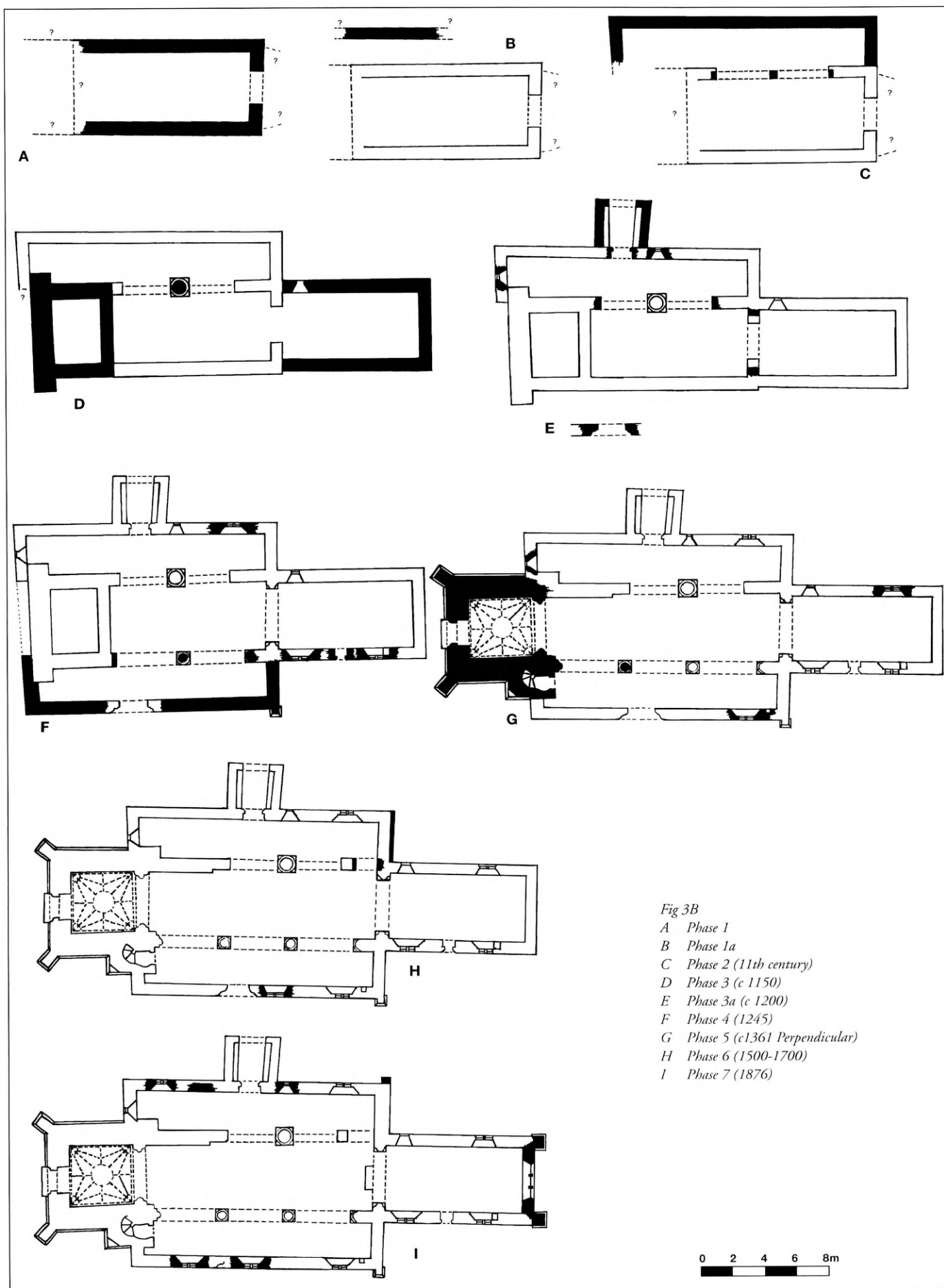


Fig 3B

A Phase 1

B Phase 1a

C Phase 2 (11th century)

D Phase 3 (c 1150)

E Phase 3a (c 1200)

F Phase 4 (1245)

G Phase 5 (c 1361 Perpendicular)

H Phase 6 (1500-1700)

I Phase 7 (1876)

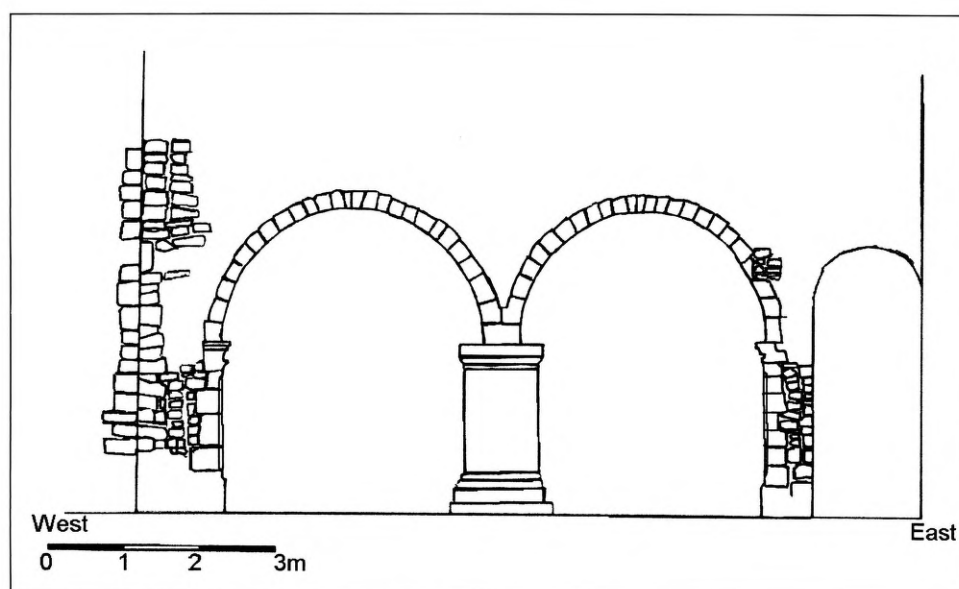


Fig 4 Linton church; north nave wall, south side, selective features

Phase 1: Pre-Conquest (phase plan 1)

The introduction has argued a context with documentation supporting a large pre-Conquest territory centred on *Ariconium* and Linton, which implies that there may have been a pre-conquest structure at Linton. The dating of any feature by typology is not easy but there is the strong probability that the shell of the nave is Anglo-Saxon as indicated by the quoins on the east nave wall (plates 3 and 4). The projected roof line from the east wall quoins cuts through the later lancets suggesting that the basic structure is older than c 1200. The north wall is in four sections and is referred to from east to west as section NN1a, NN2, NN1b, and NN3 (Fig 3). Pevsner described only two sections, apparently ignoring much of this variation (1963, 234). Wall sections NN1a and NN1b are of the same width and presumably of the same date, and it is likely that these two sections represent the remains of the original nave wall. The other indicator is the narrowness of the nave wall since the earliest parts are probably the areas to the east and west of the arcade where it is some 0.73m thick: narrow walls are often a characteristic feature of Anglo-Saxon structures, eg Harrold, Bedfordshire where the wall is 0.74m (Hare 1971, 38). The position of the west end of the nave is unclear: it is either at the present end of the nave or at the east end of section NN3. Red sandstone quoins above the chancel suggest a contrasting stone construction pattern as the north nave wall is built of tufa and pale green sandstone; contrasting stone quoins are found on Aymestry church which has recognised early features, and where tufa is used for the quoins (Parsons 1995, 68).

Phase 1a: Possible Pre-conquest

The west end of the north wall of the north aisle is unusual in character. Norman stonework is usually constructed of

easy to handle small stone blocks, but the base of the wall is constructed with monoliths which are not placed randomly but in an homogenous unit (Fig 5). One block is a large slab deliberately cut against the bedding plain of the stone, suggesting reuse. The origin of these blocks could be *Ariconium* as worked stones of considerable size where found there in c 1805 (RCHM 1932, 209; Taylor 1998, 19; HSMR 842). One solution is that the stones represent the remains of a low wall with an upper wooden structure, a type of wall construction that has been noted in excavations at the Saxon church of Saint Mary de Lode, Gloucester (Bryant 1980, 4-12). If a structure on the north-west corner of the church was built the nearest parallel would be the north-west *porticus* identified by excavation at Deerhurst and dated to the late 8th or early 9th century; although this does not clarify dates or structure at Linton there could be a similar sequence of design (Rahtz *et al* 1997, 166-175).

Phase 2: Possible Pre-conquest, 11th Century

This phase saw the insertion of the north nave arcade and the first north aisle. Section NN2, (Figs 3 and 4) comprises two bays of the north nave; the arches have no characteristic dates but there are no clear signs of insertion - the narrow wall above the arches has been rebuilt (RCHM 1932, 120). This rebuilding would explain the variation in width: rebuilding is implied by a butt joint high up on the west end of this nave wall. This central wall is tall and thin and measures only 0.53m in width; examples of narrow Anglo-Saxon walls can be found at Ampney Crucis, Diddlebury and Hackness where mid-11th - century dates are likely (Taylor and Taylor 1965, 27, 211-214, 268-269).

The arcade (RCHM 1932, 120; plate 5) has arches that are plain and simple without mouldings and of a

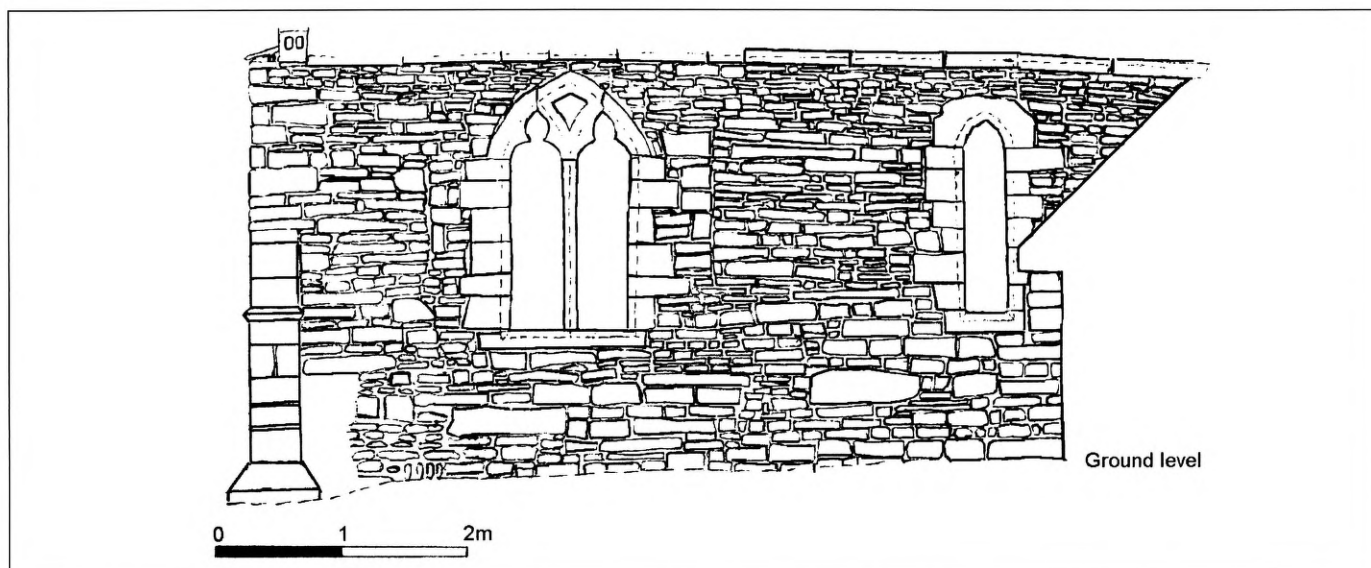


Fig 5A North aisle wall, external; large stones of a possible earlier structure in the west end of the north aisle wall

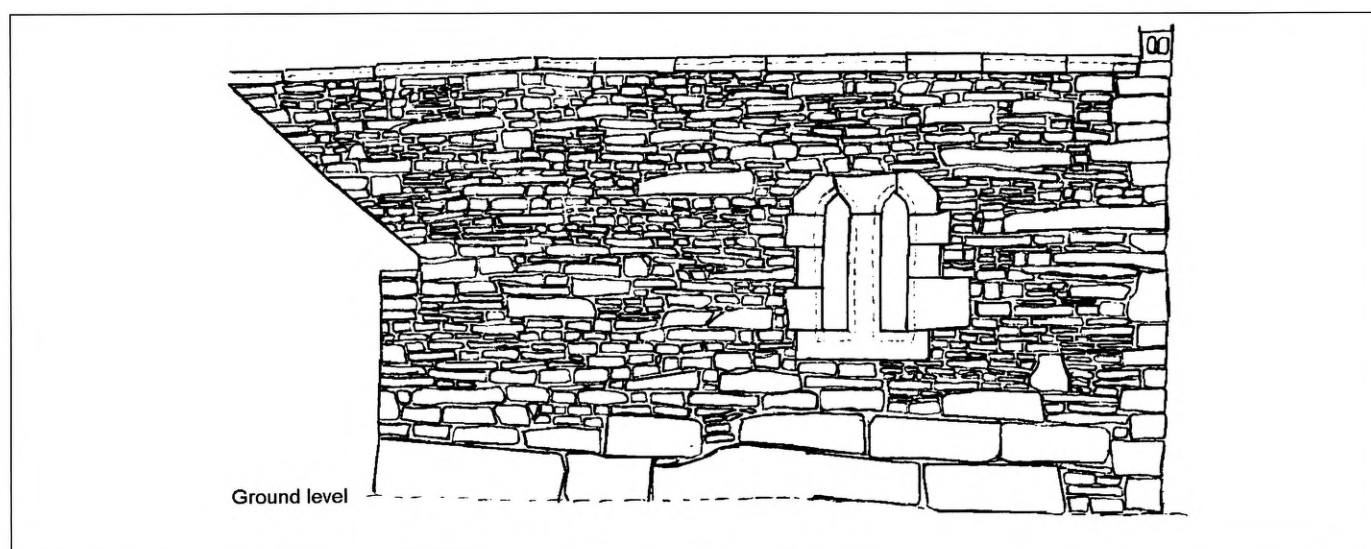


Fig 5B North aisle wall, west section

Romanesque style. Due to the misalignment between the springing and central pier, it is tempting to surmise that the pier and arches are of different dates and sources, adding to the speculations raised over the narrow nature of the wall. Arches using dressed stone voussoirs with no mouldings set flush to the wall are found at Deerhurst and similar arcades can be found in an 18th - century drawing of Jarrow Church's north wall and at Ickleton (Fernie 1983, 50-51; (Rahtz *et al* 1997, E16-18, 21; Taylor and Taylor 1965, 330-333). Through stones are characteristic of Anglo-Saxon work, and there are three such stones at Linton, but not an essential diagnostic (eg Lyminster Taylor and Taylor 1965 409-411). All of the arch voussoirs, apart from two, are cut from tufa, the exceptions being of Pennant Sandstone and positioned as the lowest voussoir above the central column and the lowest voussoir at the western end of the arcade. The

moulding on the west pier of the west arch shows signs that the arches may be of at least two different phases; here there is evidence of a butt joint which suggests that the arches have been inserted. The arches are intriguing and the dominance of tufa reinforces the theory that stone is re-used from *Ariconium* (RCHM 1932, 209; Taylor 1998, 19; HSMR 842). There is a possibility that the arches may have been reset and would explain the variation in wall width and the rebuilding of the wall above, but this is difficult to prove.

The aisle may initially have been of wood which could explain the larger stones in the base of the north aisle wall mentioned above, eg Marton, Cheshire Pevsner and Hubbard 1971, 278-279. There is a smaller crude arch at the east end of the north aisle, but no typological date can safely be offered on this, although later it will be argued that this is 16th or 17th century.

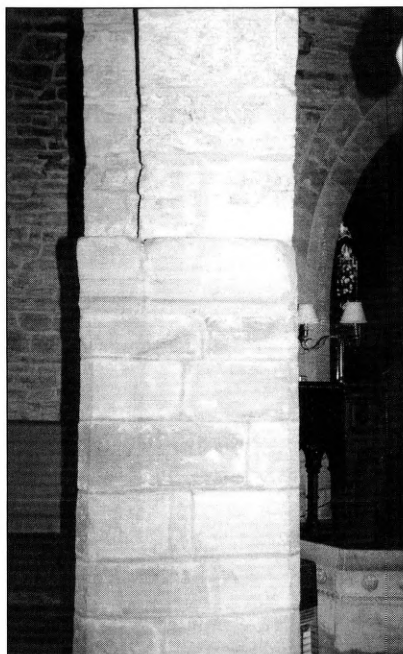


Plate 1 Variations in the north nave wall thickness between wall parts NN1a and NN2



Plate 2 Arch of the north arcade with no characteristic mouldings



Plate 3 Roof lines on the east wall of the nave showing two or three building phases corresponding with the phasing of the north nave wall and north aisle; north side

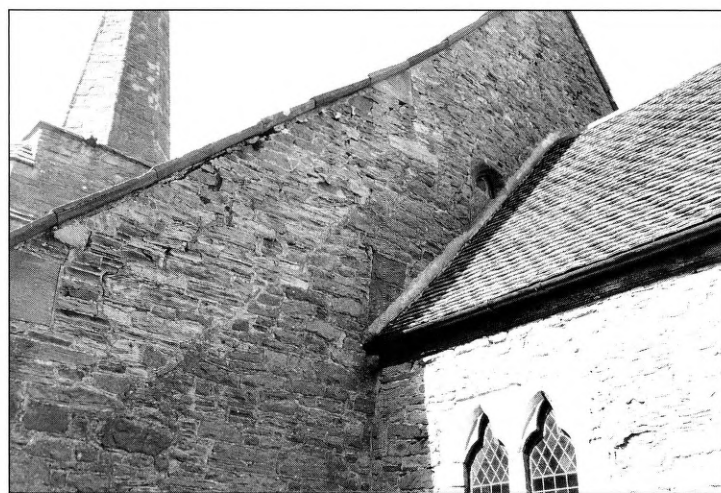


Plate 4 Roof lines on the east wall of the nave showing two or three building phases corresponding with the phasing of the north nave wall and north aisle; south side

Phase 3: Norman, c 1150

Three features probably constructed in the mid-12th century have classic Norman characteristics. The first of these is the central column of the north arcade which is built of a mixture of tufa and green sandstone; the diagnostic scalloped capital, chamfered abacus and the moulded base are in sandstone. The central stones of the column are tufa; the column is in the west Midland Norman tradition and is the earliest example in the region; comparable columns occur in the nave at Hereford Cathedral, c 1140 at Leominster Priory, c 1130 and at Worcester Cathedral, where a half drum column has been dated as late 11th century (Pevsner 1963, 155-156, 223; Guy 1994, 59-60). The date of c 1090-1150 for the work at Linton is within the documented range for work at larger west Midland churches. The proximity of Linton to the Gloucestershire border may mean that this church was more susceptible to earlier influences from the Severn valley.

Wall NN3 at the west end of the nave and the remains of a tower are over a metre thick which emphasises the variation in wall thickness. On the south side are corbels and a blocked splayed window; on the north side is a string course ornamented with chevrons that terminates at the east end below a quoined angle (RCHM 1932, 120). There is a large buttress set within the aisle. The chevron work could be dated to as late as 1180, and is similar to the decoration on the chancel arch at Bredon (Keyser 1912, 3). Plates 3 and 4 show that the first north aisle roof line was matched by a similar south aisle, and that

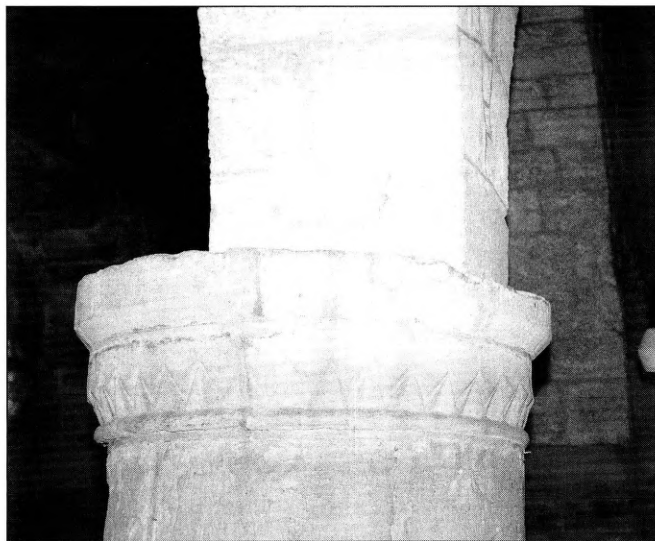


Plate 5 Misalignment of the central column in the north arcade

the stone aisles probably predate the typological features of c 1150-1200 and 1245. From the phase 4 plan it is evident that the remaining west walls of both aisles align at an unusual angle to the body of the church. The quoins at both ends of the south aisle and the west end of the north aisle are similar in character: each has at least two stones that key about a metre into the rest of the wall; this is not evident on the east end of the north aisle where the wall has received later strengthening. The position of the Norman tower and its buttress as an insertion in an already existing rectangular body of the church is likely.

The chancel is also mid-12th century. An original splayed window with a round headed arch forms the surround of the west window on the north wall, and is clearly Norman, although altered so that from the outside the window is an Early English lancet, transitional between the Norman and Gothic.

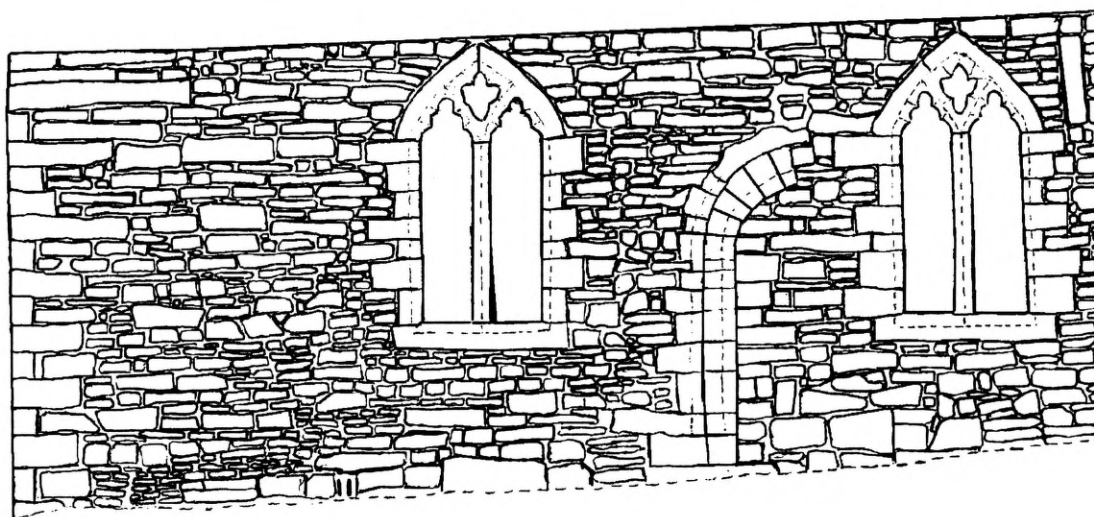


Fig 6A South aisle wall, external; remains of a door in the south wall of the south aisle, west end

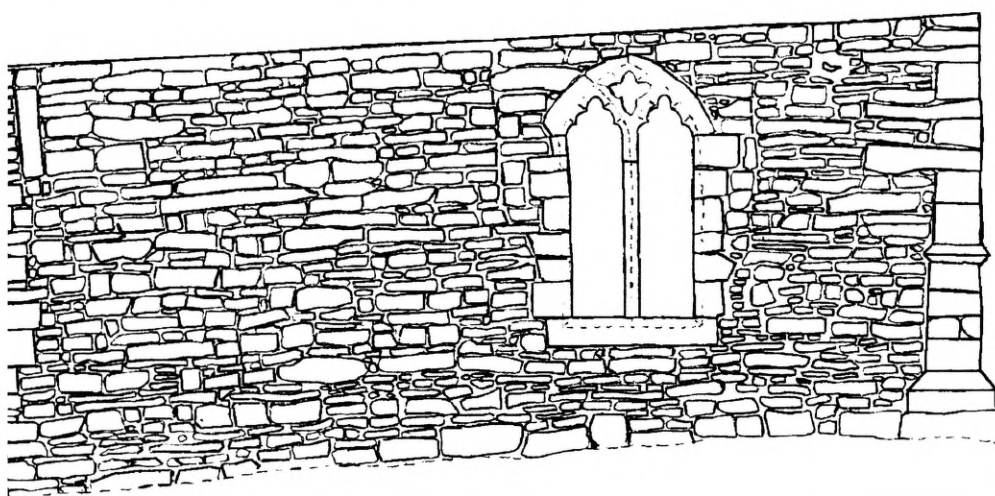


Fig 6B South aisle wall, east end

Phase 3a: c 1200, Early English transition

In the south wall of the south aisle are the remains of a door with a fat roll moulding which may be contemporary with the south aisle, or a porch, or may have been reset (Pevsner 1963, 234; Fig 6). One reason for taking the view that the aisle was contemporary is that the quoins at both ends of the south aisle match the quoins at the west end of the north aisle. The door may date to 1190-1200 since it is similar to the sacristy chapel door at Lichfield Cathedral (Rodwell 1993, 26-29). The outer order may indicate a slightly later date as this contains a simple chamfer. The adaptation of the chancel window from a Norman to an Early English lancet provides a distinctive example of the move to Gothic style. There are other lancet windows in the nave and north aisle: two blocked lancets above the chancel arch that are visible in plates 3 and 4. The lancet in the north aisle is at the west end but there is evidence that this may have been re-set. The chancel arch is a 13th century, two-centre arch, with continuous chamfers (RCHM 1932, 120). The rectangular pier to the east, and the wall to the west of the north arcade have moulded impostes and chamfered abaci, features that are later stylistically than the arcade and central column, as chamfers came into use in the 13th century (Morris 1992, 12). The butt joint on the western wall shows that this is a later insertion. On the eastern pier the three top stones of the chamfered moulding align and are not properly keyed, suggesting a later insert. The upper moulding is made of two stones, one the width of the narrow wall.

The insertion of the north door and the building of the north porch was probably started before the re-building of the south aisle. The two arches are two-centred with one chamfer (RCHM 1932, 120); this construction sequence would have allowed access to the church when the rest of the church underwent alterations. The porch shows signs of more than one possible building stage as butt joints are visible on the external side of the east and west walls. There are stone benches within the porch, and the roof is of a collar beam type.

Phase 4: c 1250, Late Early English

The Victorian list of vicars (Hereford RO BM26/3) states that the church was built at this date, and that there was a rebuilding of the tower and north aisle, indicating that certain parts of the church belong to Phase 4. The south chancel wall contains two windows with two centred arches, trefoiled lights and soffit-cusping (RCHM 1932, 120); both windows show signs of restoration, and the while the eastern-most window is set above the *sedilla* and *piscine*, the western has signs of possible insertion. The priest door shows features typical of this date.

The south arcade of the aisle has three bays and is predominantly 13th century. The two eastern arches are two centred with a two chamfered order and the eastern half

column and eastern column have Early English water-holding moulded bases and Early English capitals (RCHM 1932, 120). The re-working of the north aisle consists of the insertion of the eastern window in the north wall, a two-centred arch with two trefoiled lights and soffit-cusping. The roof line of the aisles may date to this period as the chamfer is similar to that of other features of this phase. The butt joint in the north aisle wall, although unusual in its vertical appearance, can be considered to be little more than the remains of the inserted later window.

Phase 5: c 1350, Perpendicular

The roof of the chancel is 13th or 14th century in date; this later date seems to be more appropriate because of the roof line crossing the blocked lancet windows. The roof is a braced collar beam type with central purlin; the north-east window of the chancel is also an insertion of this date (RCHM 1932: 120). The west tower is offset from the church's main axis and replaced the earlier Norman tower; there are three stages, all from this phase (RCHM 1932, 120). The towers features include a moulded plinth, a parapet spire with moulded ribs, and diagonal buttresses; the tower arch is two centred with a three chamfered order. The west door splays contain draw bar holes, and the west window is perpendicular, with a two-centred arch with three lights. The lower stage contains a rib vault forming a *tierceron* star with central bell opening which springs from corbels with human and animal motifs. The Victorian List of Vicars provides a date of 1361-1382 for this construction (Hereford RO BM26/3). The north and west walls of the second stage contain windows with cinquefoiled lights; the third stage bell chamber has lights on all sides. Those in the north and south wall are open with two trefoiled ogee lights and blind tracery; the east wall has two trefoiled lights with blind tracery, the west window open bar tracery.

The west bay of the south arcade of the nave is contemporary with the tower and is perpendicular in style; a butt joint can be seen over the eastern haunch of the west arch associated with the earlier tower (RCHM 1932, 120). In the south aisle the eastern window has Y-tracery with two cinquefoiled lights and a quatrefoil in its original position as indicated by the stonework. Within the south aisle is an aumbry with a small cusped arch. The chantry chapel is documented as '*Cantaria Beatae Mariae*', and was suppressed under Edward VI (Duncumb 1812, 392). Marks are evident on the columns to suggest the former presence of a screen.

Phase 6: 16th or 17th century

The south aisle shows the remains of a jamb, of a window removed in a later restoration, believed to be 16th or 17th century, (RCHM 1932, 120). The north aisle east wall has been strengthened, its upper line cutting across the earliest aisle roof line; this may have occurred when the eastern arch of the north arcade was inserted and a buttress added to the

north wall of the aisle. There is little to provide a date for this work, but the stone-work is not comparable to the Victorian restoration. These alterations may have been for the insertion of stairs to a documented rood gallery removed by the Victorians; the gallery was probably fixed into the north nave wall above the eastern arch of the early arcade (Hereford RO BL81/1).

Phase 7: 1876

Victorian alterations took place at the instigation of Reverend Edward Palin and included taking down and rebuilding the east chancel wall; the insertion or replacement of a single lancet window, and a double lancet in the north aisle; the insertion of two Y-tracery windows to match the 14th century window in the south aisle (Hereford RO BL81/1). The chimney above the north aisle, is presumably of this date. Alterations to the tower included the insertion of mouldings around the west door; the floor level seems to have been dropped as the butt joint of the blocked door in the south aisle stops above the present floor level (RCHM 1932: 120). Non-structural alterations included the removal of box pews and seats in a gallery, chancel screen, pulpit, reading desk and font, and the insertion of open pews (Hereford RO BL81/1). A path was constructed around the church with the removal of some tombs (Hereford RO BL81/2).

Phase 7a, 7b, 7c and 7d: 1900-1970

Since the major rebuilding of the chancel in 1876 only minor alterations have taken place and these have been classed as sub-phases as they entail no major structural alterations. **Phase 7a** of 1904 entailed repairs to the spire (RCHM 1932: 120);

Phase 7b in 1913 also entailed spire repairs (RCHM 1932: 120);

Phase 7c concerned a series of repairs documented 1954-1959, including the replacement of broken stone tiles with clay tiles (Hereford RO BH80/14). The bells were repaired and re-hung, and further repairs were carried out on the spire.

Phase 7d occurred in 1967 and included the removal of a reredos and two steps in the chancel, with the dropping of the floor and resurfacing (Hereford RO BL81/4), and the removal of the panelling in the vestry.

Conclusion

There is clear documentary evidence that Linton was the site of an important early church, probably a royal church at the centre of a large estate; documentation and territorial analysis provided evidence of earlier construction phases, interpreted as follows;

Phases 1 and 1a

The construction of a church on the site of an important

royal Anglo-Saxon manor or Welsh *Ariconium* /Archenfield bishopric, since the name Archenfield is considered to be derived from *Ariconium* there is a plausible local connection (Garmonsway 1972, 98-99; Smith 1964, 192). The narrow nave wall implies an Anglo-Saxon origin for the nave shell. The construction of a possible structure on the north side of the church is acknowledged as being hypothetical. This church may contain the oldest known instance of Anglo-Saxon masonry in Herefordshire. The re-use of Roman stone from *Ariconium* may be significant and may mean that a re-dating of 12th century church structures in tufa is necessary (Yeates forthcoming).

Phase 2

The construction of the north arcade and reconstruction of a narrow wall above may date to the 11th century. The diagnostic features below are later inserts. An aisle must have been constructed at this time, but the earliest windows of the aisle are later. There may have been an accompanying south aisle.

Phase 3

The insertion of the Norman column dates to c 1090-1150 and the tower is probably contemporary as is the present chancel. The absence of the rich and elaborate decorations of the Hereford School may strengthen the suggestion that we are dealing with the adaptation of an already existing fabric.

Phase 3a, c 1200

Lancet windows were inserted in the east nave wall and the north aisle is now evident as a stone structure.

Phase 4, c 1250

Phase 4 saw the rebuilding of the church, and reconstruction of the tower; this probably included the two eastern bays of the south aisle, the redevelopment of the chancel, and insertion of a window in the north aisle.

Phase 5

The present tower was built c1350 and windows were inserted in the chancel and south aisle.

Phase 6

The 16th or 17th century inserted windows removed and the insertion of a rood gallery and access.

Phase 7; renovation of 1876

Phases 7a, 7b, 7c, and 7d all represent no real alterations to the church structure.

The church has undergone a complex series of alterations. The early phases in the north aisle are complex, and Phase 1a is strictly hypothetical and has been treated as a sub-phase. The church is characterised by constant alteration which has produced a mixture of styles that may owe

something to its earlier position as a superior church of the region, an importance recognised by its parishioners, but with the division of its territory in circa 1016, high status could not be maintained.

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