



# Chris Butler MCIfA Archaeological Services Ltd

## Appendix 3



Report on St. Andrew's Church,  
Bishopstone,  
East Sussex.

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 St Andrew's Church is situated in the village of Bishopstone, East Sussex, (TQ 47240099), situated to the northwest of Seaford. The settlement originated with the foundation of an Anglo-Saxon minster at Bishopstone in the later 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD, and the church probably dates from the 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>1</sup>, although an earlier date has been suggested.
- 1.2 Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by the PCC of Bishopstone Church to undertake an analysis of the west wall of the north aisle and the north wall of the tower, with a view to establishing dating and phasing, in connection with a potential planning application for a new toilet extension.
- 1.3 The Nave and Porch are the oldest surviving parts of the church (Fig. 1) and form the nave and south porticus of the cellular transverse original Saxon church<sup>2</sup>. There would probably have been an original entrance at the west end, and a north porticus and a chancel, although no evidence for these survive. In the Norman period, probably the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the tower was added, together with a choir, and the north aisle was built along the north side of the nave and choir. The sanctuary was added in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

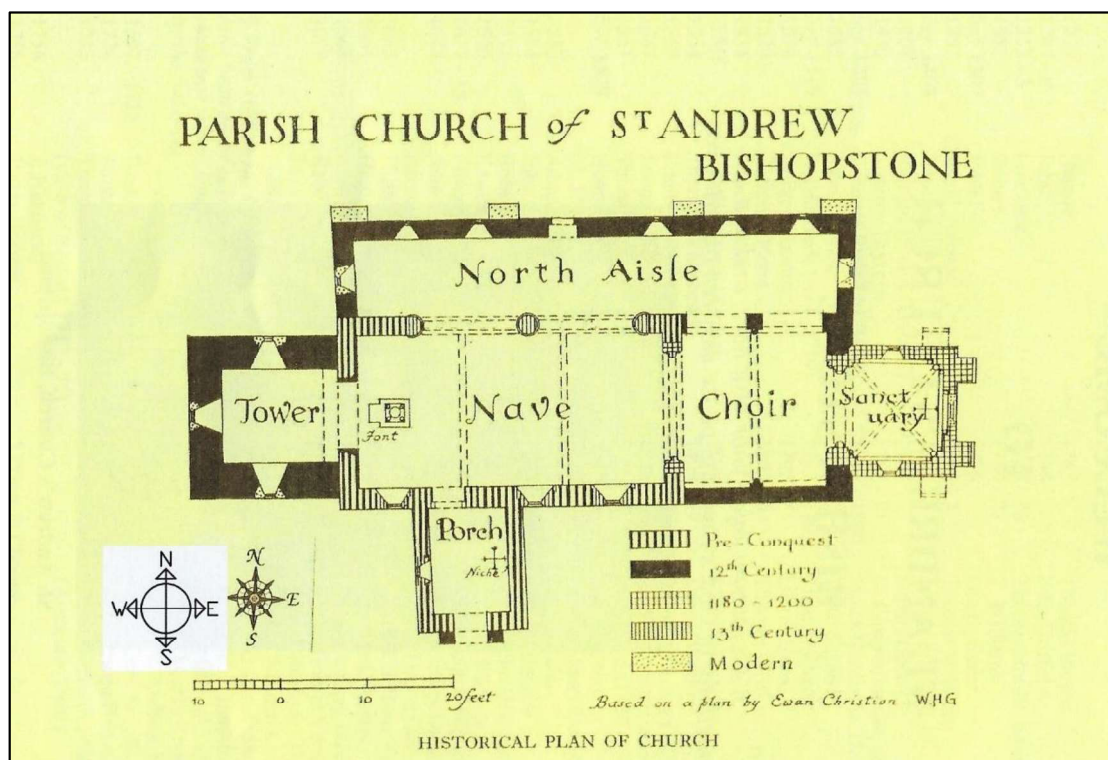


Fig. 1: Plan of current church from Church Guide

<sup>1</sup> Blair, J. 'The Anglo-Saxon church building' in Thomas, G. 2010 *The Later Anglo-Saxon settlement at Bishopstone: A downland manor in the making*. CBA Research Report 163.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

1.4 Restoration work was undertaken at the church c1849 and again in 1885<sup>3</sup>, whilst the most recent restoration in 2006 rediscovered previously hidden features<sup>4</sup>. It was not possible to locate any historic drawings or photographs of the west elevation of the church, although the plan and south elevation (Fig. 2) were published in 1849<sup>5</sup>, and there is a drawing viewed from the southwest dated c1856, but this was not informative. Sources used in this report are listed below (Section 5).

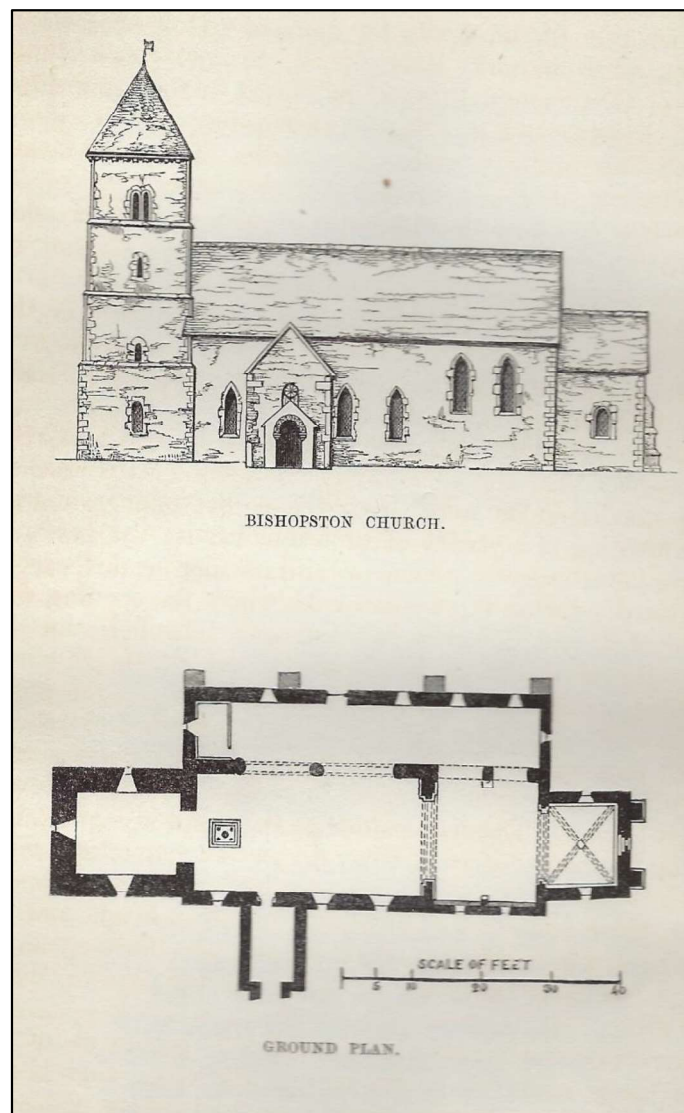


Fig. 2: Figg's plan & south elevation of Bishopstone Church 1849

1.5 A site visit was carried out by the authors on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2023, and access was possible to all areas both the inside and outside of the church. The survey was non-intrusive and carried out from ground level.

<sup>3</sup> Church Guide

<sup>4</sup> Beresford, G. 2007 *The Minster Church of St. Andrew, Bishopstone*

<sup>5</sup> Figg, W. 1849 'On Bishopstone Church, with some general remarks on the churches of East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 2



## 2. Description of west wall of north aisle

- 2.1 The north aisle was added in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (c1175) and is accessed from the nave through two arches pierced through the north wall of the nave<sup>6</sup>. There were originally six windows in the north and west walls of the north aisle, and Figg records that they were all blocked before 1849<sup>7</sup> at which time five were re-opened (Fig. 3) and provided with internal splays. The buttresses are shown in the 1849 plan (Fig. 2) so must have been present by this date but are likely to be of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date.



Fig. 3: The north aisle (note blocked window to left of western buttress)

- 2.2 The west end of the north aisle is used as a vestry with a wooden half height partition and door separating it from the remainder of the north aisle. This probably accounts for the western window in the north wall remaining blocked. The separate vestry existed in 1849, although Figg's plan suggests it was slightly smaller than the current vestry.



Fig. 4: Window in west wall of aisle interior

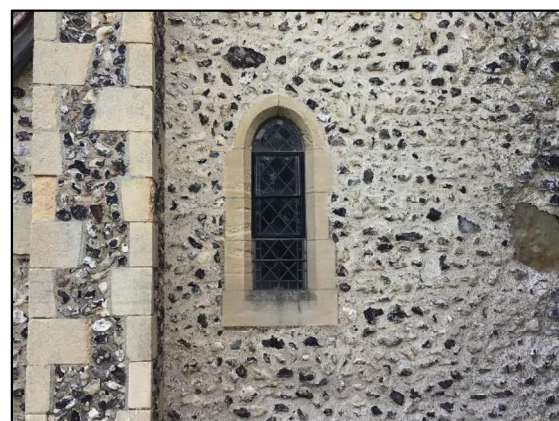


Fig 5: Window exterior west wall of aisle

<sup>6</sup> Beresford, G. 2007 *The Minster Church of St. Andrew, Bishopstone*

<sup>7</sup> Figg, W. 1849 'On Bishopstone Church, with some general remarks on the churches of East Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 2

- 2.3** The window in the west wall of the north aisle has clearly been replaced after 1849, and it is possible that the wall was thickened on the interior at the same time to accommodate the wide splayed design (Fig. 4), although it is of similar thickness to the north wall. Externally the stonework forming the window surround is unworn, and relatively fresh looking, consistent with a 19<sup>th</sup> century date (Fig. 5 & Fig. 7 (D)). The upper part of the wall inside is much thinner, and probably the original wall (Fig. 6). The interior of the lower west wall is covered in plaster and the upper part is whitewashed so it was not possible to investigate this wall any further from the inside. It should be noted that the east wall of the aisle, which also had its window replaced after 1849, is noticeably thinner than both west and north walls.

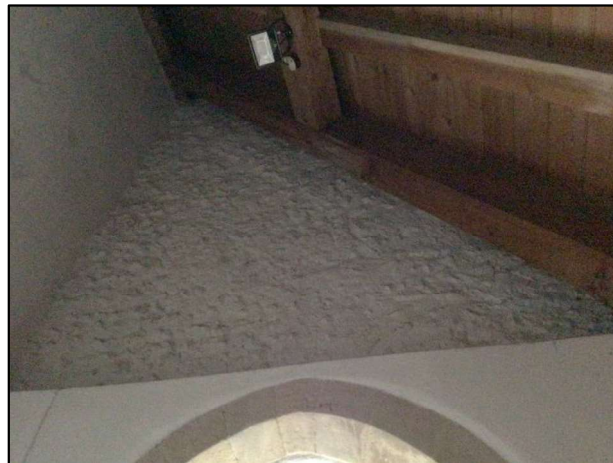


Fig. 6: Upper part of internal west wall of aisle

- 2.4** On the exterior of the west wall of the aisle the different phases of construction and alteration can be seen. The earliest evidence is the northwest corner quoin of the Saxon nave; a number of large stone pieces making up the long and short work of the quoin are exposed (Fig. 7 (A)). The flint wall between the quoin and tower wall is irregularly coursed, typical of early flint rubble wall construction. Part of the quoin has been covered with a flint facing in a lime mortar using predominantly knapped flint pieces, something that began in the later 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>.
- 2.5** Between the quoin and the chimney the wall is formed of regular flint courses (Fig. 7 (B)). The presence of some knapped flint and a fresh unworn lime mortar, suggests that this part of the wall has been re-faced, in part or completely, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, probably at the same time the window was replaced. The evidence confirms that this window was replaced and was not a new insertion. The core of the original 12<sup>th</sup> century wall is likely to survive behind this re-facing. The flint coursing in the lower part of the wall (Fig. 7 (C)) is more irregular, although the mortar is the same as in the wall above, and may be the original 12<sup>th</sup> century wall repointed.

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<sup>8</sup> Dawson, B. 1998 *Flint Buildings in West Sussex*, WSCC.

- 2.6** The chimney (Fig. 7 E)) does not appear on the 1849 plan, so seems likely to have been added in the later 19<sup>th</sup> or more likely in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the boiler room was added.

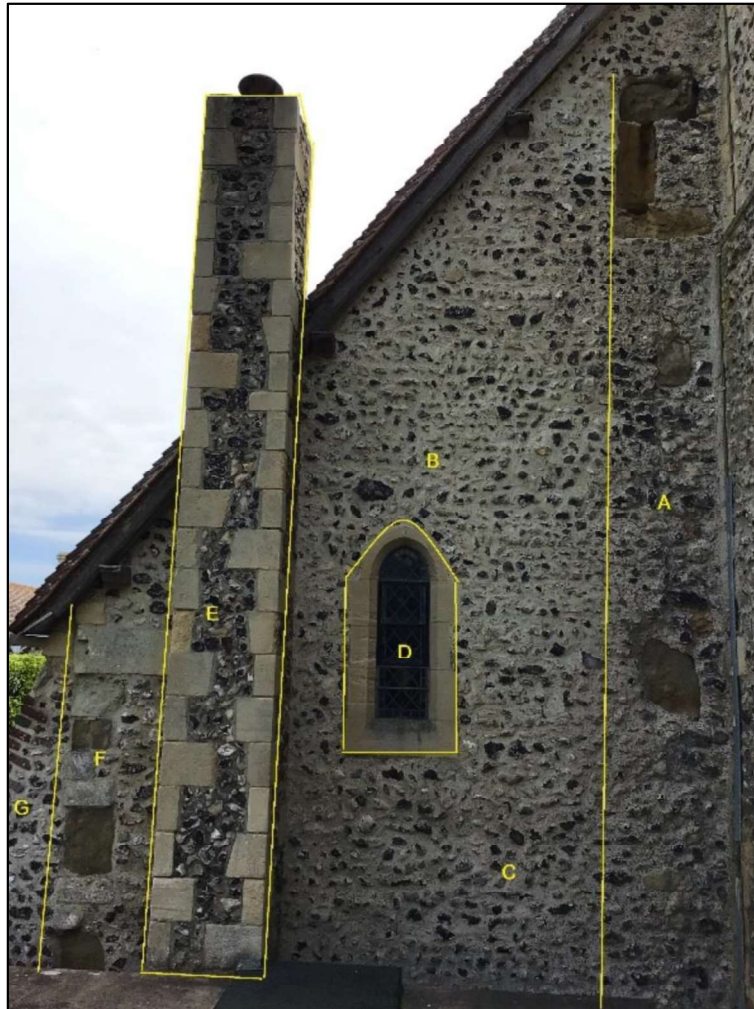


Fig. 7: West wall of aisle exterior

- 2.7** The northwest corner of the north aisle (Fig. 7 (F)) has a stonework quoin consistent with the 12<sup>th</sup> century date of the aisle, and possibly re-using stonework from the original Saxon structure. The exposed flint wall between the quoin and chimney is formed of irregular flint courses and is similar to that along the north wall of the aisle, again consistent with its 12<sup>th</sup> century date. The buttress against the north wall at the west end (Fig. 7 (G)) is formed of different materials, including stone, flint and bricks and is probably of 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century date.



### 3. Description of north wall of Tower

- 3.1 The tower was built in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>9</sup> and probably replaced an original Saxon entrance into the west end of the nave. The tower is built in four receding stages, separated by string courses, with the walls built of flint in rough courses, but of a more regular form than their Saxon predecessors in the nave. The quoins are of Caen stone.



Fig. 8: North wall of tower

- 3.2 The exterior of the north wall of the tower (Fig. 8) appears to be original, although it may have been repointed with new mortar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There is a suggestion that originally the external walls may have been covered with coat of plaster which was removed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup>. The window in the lower stage is 19<sup>th</sup> century, those in the upper stages are original, although with some recent stonework replacement/repairs.
- 3.3 Inside the tower the decayed 19<sup>th</sup> century plaster was removed during the 2006 renovation to expose the north flint wall of the first stage (Fig. 9). An unusual feature was revealed comprising a column of roughly dressed blocks of Caen stone towards the east end of the north and south walls of the tower, rising from the floor to the top of the first stage (Figs. 9 & 10). This feature is only visible internally, and does not extend

<sup>9</sup> Beresford, G. 2007 *The Minster Church of St. Andrew, Bishopstone*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

through to the exterior face of the walls. It has been suggested that it was intended as a brace inserted during construction of the tower to throw the weight of the tower away from the thinner Saxon walls of the nave<sup>11</sup>.

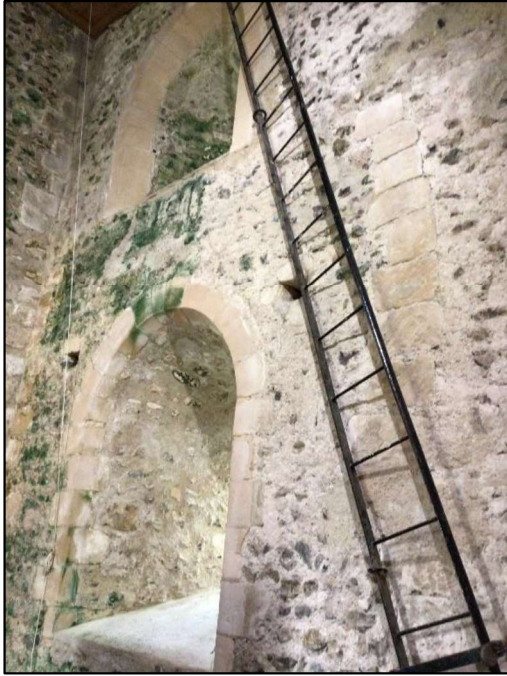


Fig. 9 North tower wall interior lower stage

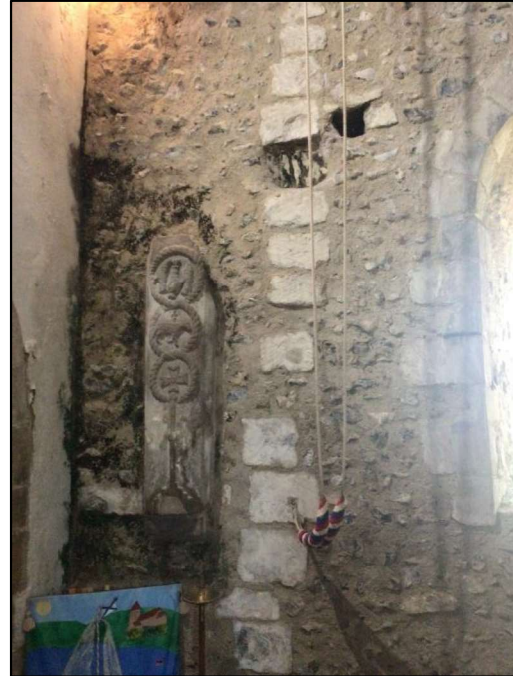


Fig. 10: Tower south wall

**3.4** There were no other features of note either internally or externally on the north wall of the tower.

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<sup>11</sup> Beresford, G. 2007 *The Minster Church of St. Andrew, Bishopstone*



#### **4. Conclusion.**

- 4.1** The west wall of the north aisle is essentially of 12<sup>th</sup> century date and incorporates the surviving northwest quoin of the Saxon nave. A chimney has been added in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the window was re-modelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, being enlarged and with a new surround. At the same time it appears the lower part of the wall was thickened internally, probably to take the enlarged internal splay. The external face of the wall also appears to have been re-faced at this time, although the lower part of the wall appears original.
- 4.2** The exterior of the north wall of the tower appears to be original, although it may have been repointed with new mortar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the plaster coating was removed. The window in the lower stage is of 19<sup>th</sup> century date.
- 4.3** A below ground boiler room exists in the external angle between the west wall of the aisle and north wall of the tower (Fig. 8) with steps down. This was inspected and found to be of 20<sup>th</sup> century construction. It is separate from the church structure and has had no impact on either wall or the foundations, although its chimney abuts the west wall.

## 5. Sources

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