

Appendix I – Site Chronology

Anglo Saxon period:

Archaeological evaluation of four trial trenches took place in July and August 2002 and recorded ecclesiastical use of the site predating the Norman Priory founded in 1107. Evidence was found of an earlier church beneath the extant church indicating a Late Saxon or Early Norman date. Human remains lying beneath the foundations of this earlier church suggest that an even earlier (probably timber built) Anglo Saxon church almost certainly existed on site (Norfolk Archaeological Unit No. 775).

1107:

Wymondham Priory was founded as a community of Benedictine monks. The founder was William D'Albini, Chief Butler to King Henry I and nephew of Richard D'Albini, Abbot of St Albans. The Priory Church was built of stone from Caen in Normandy and the original nave, greatly influenced by the nave of Norwich Cathedral, was twelve bays long. The Church was cruciform, with a central tower and twin towers at the west end. It had aisles and transepts and the monastic choir extended two bays westward into the nave. The east end terminated in the apse echelon manner with apsidal chapels. The monastic buildings lay on the south side of the Church. The buildings seem to have been completed by 1130, when Nigel was appointed the first Prior. An unusual feature of the foundation was D'Albini's intention that the Church should be used by the Benedictine community and also the townspeople as their Parish Church.

1221 – 1260:

A number of disputes concerning the parishioners' rights in the church were registered in various courts. As a result the parish church was defined to consist of the largest part of the nave and the north aisle of the building. A description of the arrangements made in 1249 makes it clear that there was no structural division.

c1280 – 1300:

The parishioners, having secured rights over the nave and north aisle of the church, rebuilt the north aisle. The new aisle was considerably wider than the original, presumably to make up for the area conceded to the Priory who gained the south aisle.

c1375 – c1410:

The weakness of the crossing tower was detected and the decision taken to build a new tower west of the old one, although actual work did not start until 1446. A solid wall, pierced only by two small doors, was allowed to separate the Parish Church from the conventual church. Two bays of the nave immediately west of the cross wall continued as the Parish Chancel.

c1430:

The nave clerestory was probably under reconstruction at this time. Heraldry on the exterior as well as on the internal corbels supporting the roof suggests a building campaign in the second quarter of the 15th Century. The west wall of the nave must have been raised to take the new roof line, before the west tower was built.

1446:

The Prior of Wymondham obtained a pardon against paying tax because parts of the Priory had been destroyed by fire. Evidence of the fire suggests that the nave may have been damaged and this implies that the present timber hammerbeam roof was built after 1446.

1446 – c1480:

The parish (west) tower was under construction during this period. A charter granting the site for the west tower on land belonging to the Priory was sealed in 1446. In 1448 the monastic house became an Abbey, independent of St Albans. Evidence suggests that the North Porch was probably built in about 1460.

1480 – 1530:

An intensive campaign was in progress involving furnishing the nave, completing the west tower (c1490) and refurbishing the North Aisle, including the widening of nine of the eleven windows and construction of its hammerbeam roof. The north aisle had become the parish Lady Chapel in which the Gild of Our Lady's Light had its altar. The terracotta tomb of the last abbot was constructed (c1530).

1538:

The Abbey was dissolved and the parishioners were granted a strip of ground immediately south of the nave upon which to build a new south aisle. This must have contained the original south aisle and a part of the Cloister.

1544 – 1560:

Details of building work on the south aisle appear in churchwarden's accounts 1544 – 1560.

1573:

The parish chancel was repaired by the Crown and initials on a buttress outside record the work.

1584 – 1585:

Remodelling work was carried out to the shafting of the nave columns, including encasing them, to conform to the work done in the chancel in 1573.

1826:

The line of Becketswell Road (then Cavick Road) was altered by diverting the highway away from the immediate neighbourhood of the church.

1717:

A faculty was issued for a new gallery to be built in the west tower.

1833 – 1834:

The strip of land on the south side of the church was added to the churchyard (by Revd Papillon), separated from the meadowland by a ha-ha, to provide extra burying space.

1901 – 1905:

The nave achieved its present appearance as a result of the restoration carried out by the architects, Hicks and Charlewood. The wooden gallery, erected in the 18th Century at the west end of the nave for the organ, was dismantled, and the tower arch, previously blocked, was opened up. A stone-fronted organ gallery was constructed and a new floor laid. At the east end, the chancel floor was raised and given a marble pavement, together with new choir stalls and communion rails.

1913 – 1934:

In 1913 the then Vicar invited J Ninian Comper to prepare a design for the bare east wall behind the High Altar. Comper designed a great reredos stretching across the whole space, with a Tester

and Rood above it. Owing to the First World War, the work was delayed until 1919 and whilst the ensemble had reached its present state by 1927, the gilding and painting was not completed until 1934.

1991:

A triptych, designed by E P Warren and incorporating plaster panels by R Anning Bell and paintings by W Dacres Adam and made in 1904, was brought to Wymondham in 1991 and affixed to the east wall of the north aisle (Lady Chapel).