= St Mary 's Church , Reculver =

 St Mary 's Church , Reculver , was founded in the 7th century as either a minster or a monastery on the site of a Roman fort at Reculver , which was then at the north @-@ eastern extremity of Kent in south @-@ eastern England . In 669 , the site of the fort was given for this purpose by King Ecgberht of Kent to a priest named Bassa , beginning a connection with Kentish kings that led to King Eadberht II of Kent being buried there in the 760s , and the church becoming very wealthy by the beginning of the 9th century . From the early 9th century to the 10th the church was treated as essentially a piece of property , with ownership passing between kings of Mercia and Wessex and the archbishops of Canterbury . Viking attacks may have extinguished the church 's religious community in the 9th century , although an early 11th @-@ century record indicates that the church was then in the hands of a dean accompanied by monks . By the time of Domesday Book , completed in 1086 , St Mary 's was serving as a parish church .
 The original building , which incorporated stone and tiles scavenged from the Roman fort , was a simple one consisting only of a nave and an apsidal chancel , with a small room , or porticus , built out from each of the church 's northern and southern sides where the nave and chancel met . The church was much altered and expanded during the Middle Ages ; the last addition , in the 15th century , was of north and south porches leading into the nave . This expansion coincided with a long period of prosperity for the settlement of Reculver , but its decline led to the church 's decay and , in the face of coastal erosion , its almost complete demolition in 1809 .
 The church 's twin towers were preserved by the intervention of Trinity House , since they had long been important as a landmark for shipping . Some materials from the structure were incorporated into a replacement church , also dedicated to St Mary , built at Hillborough in the same parish . Much of the rest was used for the building of a new harbour wall at Margate , known as Margate Pier . Other remnants of the original 7th @-@ century church apart from those on the site include fragments of a high cross of stone that stood inside the church , and two stone columns that formed part of an arch between the nave and chancel , which were still in place when the church was demolished . These are now kept in Canterbury Cathedral , and are among the features that have led to the church being described as an exemplar of Anglo @-@ Saxon church architecture and sculpture .

= = Origins = =

 The first church known to have existed at Reculver was founded in 669 , when King Ecgberht of Kent gave land there to Bassa the priest for this purpose . The author of the Anglo @-@ Saxon Chronicle " clearly considered this to be a significant event " , and it may be that King Ecgberht 's intention in founding a church at Reculver was to create an ecclesiastical centre with a strong English element , to counterbalance domination of the Canterbury church by Archbishop Theodore , from Tarsus , now in Turkey , Abbot Hadrian of St Augustine 's , from North Africa , probably Cyrenaica , and their equally " non @-@ native followers . " Historians vary over whether to call the church a minster or a monastery ? thus Susan Kelly uses the former term , but Nicholas Brooks uses the latter , commenting that :
 [w] e do not know whether the Kentish monasteries had been founded as communities of monks and nuns dedicated to the service of God [and living in monasteries and nunneries] , or whether the male communities were from the start bodies of secular clergy [operating from minsters] who , like the archiepiscopal familia at Canterbury , accepted a degree of communal (or monastic) discipline and who were responsible for the pastoral care of extensive rural areas . ... [T] he distinction between the regular and secular clergy was blurred from the very beginning in England . Indeed the word monasterium does not necessarily refer to a house of monks in the eighth and ninth centuries , but like its English equivalent , minster ... , was also the normal term for a church served by a body of clergy . ... By the ninth century the communities of the Kentish monasteries were certainly composed of priests , deacons , and clergy in lesser orders , just like the cathedral community at the ' head minster ' , [Canterbury Cathedral] .

The foundation of this church , sited within the remains of the Roman fort of Regulbium , exemplifies the " widespread practice [in Anglo @-@ Saxon England] of re @-@ using Roman walled places for major churches " ; the new church was built " almost completely from demolished Roman structures " . The building formed a nave measuring 37 @.@ 5 feet (11 @.@ 4 m) by 24 feet (7 @.@ 3 m) and an apsidal chancel , which was externally polygonal but internally round , and was entered from the nave through a triple arch formed by two columns made of limestone from Marquise , in the Pas @-@ de @-@ Calais region of northern France . The arches were formed using Roman tiles , but the columns were made for the church rather than being Roman in origin . Around the inside of the apse was a stone bench , and two small rooms , or porticus , forming rudimentary transepts were built out from the north and south sides of the church where the nave met the chancel , from which they could be accessed . The presence of a stone bench around the inside of the apse has been attributed to influence from the Syrian Church , at a time when its followers were being displaced . The walls of the church were rendered inside and out , giving them a plain appearance and hiding the masonry .

Ten years after the foundation of the church , in 679 , King Hlothhere of Kent granted lands at Sturry , about 6 @.@ 2 miles (10 km) south @-@ west of Reculver , and at Sarre , in the western part of the Isle of Thanet , across the Wantsum Channel to the east , to Abbot Berhtwald and his " monastery " . The grant was made at Reculver , and the charter in which it was recorded was probably written by a Reculver scribe . The grant of Sarre in particular is significant :

Sarre was a highly strategic place , overlooking the confluence of the Wantsum and the Great Stour , [and] directly linked to Canterbury ... In the early 760s it was the site of a toll @-@ station , where the agents of the Kentish kings collected dues on trading ships using the Wantsum route ... The grant of Sarre to Reculver must be regarded as a sign of enormous royal favour to the [church there] ... and it may be that the [church at Reculver] received a share of the royal tolls levied at Sarre .

In the original , 7th @-@ century charter recording this grant , Reculver is referred to as a civitas , or city , but this is probably a reference to either its Roman past or the church 's monastic status , rather than a large population centre . In 692 Reculver 's abbot Berhtwald was elected Archbishop of Canterbury , from which position he probably offered Reculver patronage and support . Bede , writing no more than 40 years later , described Berhtwald as having been well educated in the Bible and experienced in ecclesiastical and monastic affairs , but in terms indicating that Berhtwald was not a scholar .

Further charters show that the monastery at Reculver continued to benefit from Kentish kings in the 8th century , under abbots Heahberht (fl . 748x762) , Deneheah (fl . 760) and Hwitred (fl . 784) , acquiring lands in Higham and Sheldwich and exemption from the toll due on one ship at Fordwich , and King Eadberht II of Kent was buried in the church in the 760s . Properties belonging to Reculver in the 7th and 8th centuries are indicated in passing by otherwise unrelated records , such as the estate at Higham , land probably in the High Weald area of Kent , from which iron may have been sourced for use or sale at or on behalf of Reculver , and an unidentified property named Dunwaling land in the district of Eastry . Such records also provide the names of other abbots of Reculver , namely Æthelmær (fl . 699) , Bære (fl . 761x764) , Æthelheah (fl . 803) , Dudeman (fl . 805) , Beornwine (fl . 811x826) , Baegmund (fl . 832x839) , Daegmund (fl . 825x883) and Beornhelm (fl . 867x905) .

By the early 9th century the monastery had become " extremely wealthy " , but from then on it appears in records as " essentially a piece of property " . For most of the period from 764 to 825 Kent was under the control of kings of Mercia , beginning with Offa (757 ? 96) , who treated Kent as part of his patrimony : he may also have claimed direct control of Reculver , as he did with similar churches in other areas . In 811 control of the monastery appears to have been in the hands of Archbishop Wulfred of Canterbury , who is recorded as having deprived it of some of its land . But by 817 Reculver was in the hands of King Coenwulf of Mercia (796 ? 821) , together with the nunnery at Minster @-@ in @-@ Thanet , through which he would also have had strategically lucrative control of the Wantsum Channel : Coenwulf had by then secured a privilege from Pope Leo III that gave him the right to " dispose of his ... monasteries in [England] at will " . In that year a " monumental showdown " began between Archbishop Wulfred and King Coenwulf over the control of

monasteries , featuring Reculver and Minster @-@ in @-@ Thanet in particular . The dispute over Reculver continued until 821 , when Wulfred " made a humiliating submission to [Coenwulf] " , surrendering to him an estate of 300 hides , possibly at Eynsham in Oxfordshire , and paying a fine of £ 120 , to secure the return of Reculver and Minster @-@ in @-@ Thanet . The record of the dispute indicates that Wulfred continued to be denied control of Reculver and Minster @-@ in @-@ Thanet after 821 by Cwoenthryth , Coenwulf 's heir and abbess of Minster @-@ in @-@ Thanet , until a final settlement was reached at a synod at Clofesho in 825 .

 From 825 control of Kent fell to the kings of Wessex , and a compromise was reached between Archbishop Ceolnoth and King Egbert in 838 , confirmed by his son Æthelwulf in 839 , recognising Egbert and Æthelwulf as lay lords and protectors of monasteries and reserving spiritual lordship , particularly over election of abbots and abbesses , to bishops . One copy of the record of this agreement was preserved either at Reculver or at Lyminge . A factor leading to this abandonment of Wulfred 's strict policy may have been the increasing intensity of Viking attacks , which had begun in Kent in the late 8th century and had seen the ravaging of the Isle of Sheppey in 835 . An army of Vikings spent the winter of 851 on the Isle of Thanet and the same occurred on the Isle of Sheppey in 855 . Reculver , like most of the Kentish monasteries , lay in an exposed coastal location , and would have presented an obvious target for Vikings in search of treasure . By the 10th century the monastery at Reculver had ceased to be an important church in Kent and , together with its territory , it was in the hands of the kings of Wessex alone . In a charter of 949 King Eadred of England gave Reculver back to the archbishops of Canterbury , at which time the estate included Hoath and Herne , land at Sarre , in Thanet , and land at Chilmington , about 23 @.@ 5 miles (37 @.@ 8 km) south @-@ west of Reculver .

= = Monastery to parish church = =

 Reculver may have remained home to a religious community into the 10th century , despite its vulnerability to Viking attacks . It is possible that the abbot and community of Reculver took refuge from the Vikings in Canterbury , as the abbess and community of Lyminge did in 804 . A monk of Reculver named Ymar was recorded as a saint in the early 15th century by Thomas Elmham , who found the name in a martyrology , and wrote that Ymar was buried in St John ? s church , Margate : Ymar was probably killed by Vikings in the 10th century , and hence regarded as a martyr . The Church in East Kent seems broadly to have " preserved its primary ... character against all the odds " , but evidence for the monastery at Reculver is lacking : by the 11th century the monastery had " dropped out of sight entirely " . The last abbot is recorded as Wenredus : although it is unknown when he was abbot , it must have been after 890 ? possibly 905 ? when the name of Abbot Beornhelm last appears in Anglo @-@ Saxon charters . The church was last described as a monastery in about 1030 , when it was governed by a dean named Givehard and was home to monks , two of whom are named as Fresnot and Tancrad : these names indicate the presence of a religious community from the European continent , probably Flemings . This may have been nothing more than a temporary " resurgence of communal life at Reculver , at least for a period in the earlier eleventh century . ... [Perhaps] the old minster ... was provided as a refuge for a body of foreign clerics " .

 By 1066 the monastery had become a parish church , with no baptismal function , and its territory had become part of the endowment of the archbishops of Canterbury . Domesday Book records the archbishop 's annual income from Reculver in 1086 as £ 42.7s. (£ 42 @.@ 35) : this value can be compared with , for example , the £ 20 due to him from the manor of Maidstone , and £ 50 from the borough of Sandwich . Included in the Domesday account for Reculver , as well as the church , farmland , a mill , salt pans and a fishery , are 90 villeins and 25 bordars : these numbers can be multiplied four or five times to account for dependents , as they only represent " adult male heads of households " .

 By the 13th century Reculver parish provided an ecclesiastical benefice of " exceptional wealth " , which led to disputes between lay and Church interests . In 1291 the Taxatio of Pope Nicholas IV put the total income due to the rector and vicar of Reculver at about £ 130 . Included in the parish

were chapels of ease at St Nicholas @-@ at @-@ Wade and All Saints ' Church , Shuart , both on the Isle of Thanet , and at Hoath and Herne . The parish was broken up in 1310 by Robert Winchelsey , archbishop of Canterbury from 1294 to 1313 , who created parishes from Reculver 's chapelries at Herne and , on the Isle of Thanet , St Nicholas @-@ at @-@ Wade and Shuart , in response to the difficulties posed by the distance between them and their mother church at Reculver , and a " steady increase in population " . At this time Shuart became part of St Nicholas @-@ at @-@ Wade parish , and its church was later demolished . However , St Mary 's Church , Reculver , continued to receive payments from the parishes of Herne and St Nicholas @-@ at @-@ Wade in the 19th century as a " token of subjection to Reculver " , as well as for the repair of St Mary 's Church , and the parish retained a perpetual curacy at Hoath until 1960 .

= = Enlargement and decline = =

= = = Enlargement = = =

 The church building was considerably enlarged over time . The outer walls of the north and south porticus were extended to enclose the nave in the 8th century , forming a series of rooms , including chapels on both northern and southern sides , and a porch across the western side . The towers were added as part of an extension with a new west front in the late 12th century , when the internal walls of the rooms added in the 8th century were demolished , creating aisles on the north and south sides of the nave . In the 13th century the original apse was demolished and the chancel more than doubled in size , incorporating a triple east window with columns of Purbeck Marble , and in the 15th century north and south porches were added to the nave . A chantry in the church was endowed in 1354 in memory of Alicia de Brouke , and two more were endowed in 1371 by Thomas Niewe , a former vicar of Reculver . These chantries were suppressed in the reign of Edward VI , in 1548 or very early in 1549 . The towers were topped with spires by 1414 , since they are shown in an illustrated map drawn by Thomas Elmham in or before that year , and the north tower held a ring of bells . The addition of the towers , " an extraordinary investment ... for a parish church " , and the extent to which the church was enlarged in the Middle Ages , suggest that " a thriving township must have developed nearby . " Despite all the building work , the church retained many prominent Anglo @-@ Saxon features , and one in particular roused John Leland to " an enthusiasm which he seldom displayed " when he visited Reculver in 1540 :
 Yn the enteryng of the quyer ys one of the fayrest and the most auncyent crosse that ever I saw , a ix footes , as I ges , yn highte . It standeth lyke a fayr columne . The base greate stone ys not wrought . The second stone being rownd hath curiously wrought and paynted the images of Christ , Peter , Paule , John and James , as I remember . Christ sayeth [I am the Alpha and the Omega] . Peter sayeth , [You are Christ , son of the living God] . The saing of the other iij when painted [was in Roman capitals] but now obliterated . The second stone is of the Passion . The third conteineth the xii Apostles . The iiii hath the image of Christ hanging and fastened with iiii nayles and [a support beneath the feet] . the hiest part of the pyller hath the figure of a crosse .
 The high cross Leland is describing had been removed from the church by 1784 . Archaeologists examined what was believed to be the base of a 7th @-@ century cross in 1878 and the 1920s , and it has been suggested that the monastery at Reculver was originally built around it . The Reculver cross has been compared with the Anglo @-@ Saxon Ruthwell Cross ? an open @-@ air preaching cross in Dumfries and Galloway , Scotland ? and traces of paint on fragments of the Reculver cross show that its details were once multicoloured . Later , stylistic assessments indicate that the cross , carved from a re @-@ used Roman column , probably dates from the 8th century or the 9th , and that the stone believed to have been the base may have been the foundation for the original , 7th @-@ century altar . Leland also reported a wall painting of an unidentified bishop , on the north side of the church under an arch . Another Anglo @-@ Saxon item Leland found in the church was a gospel book : this was
 'a very auncient boke of the Evangelyes [in Roman capital letters] and in the bordes thereof ys a

christal stone thus inscribid : CLAUDIA . ATEPICCUS ' . A gospel book written in ' Roman majuscules ' is unlikely to have been later than the early ninth century : perhaps it was an Italian import , such as the celebrated sixth @-@ century manuscript known as the ' Gospels of St Augustine ' (CCCC 286) , but it could also have been a native product , of the seventh to ninth century , written in uncial or half @-@ uncial , such as the ' Royal Gospels ' from St Augustine 's (BL Royal I E VI) . It appears to have had a lavish binding decorated with a Roman cameo .

In its final form , the church consisted of a nave 67 feet (20 @.@ 4 m) long by 24 feet (7 @.@ 3 m) wide , with north and south aisles of the same length and 11 feet (3 @.@ 4 m) wide , and a chancel 46 feet (14 m) long by 23 feet (7 m) wide . Including the spires , the towers were 106 feet (32 @.@ 3 m) high , the surviving towers alone reaching 63 feet (19 @.@ 2 m) . The towers measure 12 feet (3 @.@ 7 m) square internally , and are connected internally by a gallery which was about 25 feet (7 @.@ 6 m) above the floor of the nave . The overall length of the church was 120 feet (36 @.@ 6 m) , and the breadth of the west front , which also survives , is 64 feet (19 @.@ 5 m) .

= = = Decline = = =

When Leland visited Reculver in 1540 , he noted that the coastline to the north had receded to within little more than a quarter of a mile (402 m) of the " Towne [which] at this tyme [was] but Village lyke " . Soon after , in 1576 , William Lambarde described Reculver as " poore and simple " . In 1588 there were 165 communicants ? people in Reculver parish taking part in services of holy communion at the church ? and in 1640 there were 169 , but a map of about 1630 shows that the church then stood only about 500 feet (152 m) from the shore . In January 1658 the local justices of the peace were petitioned concerning " encroachments of the sea ... [which had] since Michaelmas last [29 September 1657] encroached on the land near six rods [99 feet (30 m)] , and will doubtless do more harm " . The village 's failure to support two " beer shops " in the 1660s points clearly to a declining population , and the village was mostly abandoned around the end of the 18th century , its residents moving to Hillborough , about 1 @.@ 25 miles (2 km) south @-@ west of Reculver but within Reculver parish .

The decline of the settlement led to the decline of the church . In 1776 Thomas Philipot described it as " full of solitude , and languished into decay " . In 1787 John Pridden noticed that the roofline of the nave must have been lowered at some time , judging by the tops of the east and west walls , and the fact that the tops of the two windows over the west door were at that time filled in with brick ; he also noted that the roof had been repaired in 1775 by A. Sayer , churchwarden , these details appearing embossed on replacement lead . But he described the church as " a weather @-@ beaten building ... mouldering away by the fury of the elements " , and a letter to The Gentleman 's Magazine in 1809 said that it was then somewhat dilapidated , with " trifling ... repairs such as have only tended to obliterate its once @-@ harmonizing beauties . "

= = Destruction = =

In the autumn of 1807 a northerly storm combined with a high tide to bring erosion of the cliff on which the church stood to within the churchyard , destroying " ten yards [9 @.@ 1 m] of the wall around the churchyard , not ten yards from the foundation of the church " . Sea defences had been in place since at least 1783 , but although they had been costly to build their design had led to further undermining of the cliff . Two further schemes were devised by Sir Thomas Page and John Rennie to preserve the cliff by means of new sea defences , Rennie 's being estimated to cost £ 8 @,@ 277 . Instead , at a vestry meeting on 12 January 1808 , and at the instigation of the vicar , Christopher Naylor , it was decided that the church should be demolished . The decision was reached by vote among eight of the leading residents of Reculver and Hoath , including the vicar : the votes were evenly split , so the vicar used his casting vote in favour of demolition . Naylor applied to the Archbishop of Canterbury , Charles Manners @-@ Sutton , for permission to demolish , arguing that " in all human probability the parishionsers [would] shortly be deprived of a place for

the interment of their dead . " The archbishop commissioned neighbouring clergy and landowners to assess the situation , and they reported in March 1809 that the church should be demolished " to save the materials for the erection of another church . "

Demolition was begun in September 1809 using gunpowder , in what has been described as " an act of vandalism for which there can be few parallels even in the blackest records of the nineteenth century " :

the young clergyman of the parish , urged on by his Philistine mother , rashly besought his parishioners to demolish this shrine of early Christendom . This they duly did and all save the western towers , which still act as a landmark for shipping , was razed to the ground .

The demolition of this " shrine of early Christendom " , and exemplar of Anglo @-@ Saxon church architecture and sculpture , was otherwise thorough , and it is now represented only by the ruins on the site , material incorporated into a replacement parish church at Hillborough , fragments of the cross , and the two stone columns which had been part of the church 's triple arch . The columns and fragments of the cross are on display in Canterbury Cathedral . Two thousand tons of stone from the demolished church were sold and incorporated into the harbour wall at Margate , known as Margate Pier , which was completed in 1815 , and more than 40 tons of lead was stripped from the church and sold for £ 900 . Trinity House bought what was left of the structure from the parish for £ 100 , to ensure that the towers were preserved as a navigational aid , and built the first groynes , designed to protect the cliff on which the ruins stand . The spires had both been destroyed by storms by 1819 , when Trinity House replaced them with similarly shaped , open structures , topped by wind vanes . These structures remained until they were removed some time after 1928 . The ruins of the church , and the site of the Roman fort within which it was built , are now in the care of English Heritage , and the sea defences protecting the church continue to be maintained by Trinity House .

= = Archaeology = =

The first archaeological report on the then demolished church of St Mary was published by George Dowker in 1878 . He described finding the foundations of the apsidal chancel and of the columns that formed part of the triple chancel arch , and noted that the original floor of the church was of concrete , or opus signinum , more than 6 inches (15 cm) thick . The floor had previously been described in 1782 , prior to the church 's demolition , as polished smooth and finished in red , a sample having been taken with difficulty using a pickaxe . Within the floor Dowker also found what he believed were the foundations for the stone cross described by Leland , and noted that the concrete floor appeared to have been laid around them . The floor of the chancel appeared to have been raised by about 10 @.@ 5 inches (26 @.@ 7 cm) when the chancel was extended in the Early English period , and had been covered with encaustic tiles . Dowker also reported hearing from a Mr Holmans about the existence of a large , circular burial vault at the east end of the chancel , containing coffins arranged in a circle .

Further excavations were undertaken in the 1920s by C. R. Peers , who found that the nave of the original church had external doors on the north , south and west sides , and that the chancel had doors leading into the north and south porticus , which in turn had external doors on their eastern sides . Regarding the floor described by Dowker , Peers noted that the surface consisted of a thin layer of pounded brick , and believed that it was of the same date as the stone which Dowker described as the foundations for the stone cross . Excavations also revealed steps leading down to the burial vault reported by Dowker , although Peers did not refer to either the steps or the vault in his report . Extensions of the porticus to the west and around the original west front were dated to no more than 100 years after the church was first built , and Peers observed that these extensions had been given the same type of floor as the original church . Drawing comparisons with the 7th @-@ century chapel of St Peter @-@ on @-@ the @-@ Wall at Bradwell @-@ on @-@ Sea , in Essex , and the abbey of St Augustine at Canterbury , Peers suggested that the original church at Reculver probably had windows set high in the northern and southern walls of the nave . Areas of wall found by archaeologists but now missing above ground are marked on the site by strips of

concrete edged with flint .

  The church was found to have been free @-@ standing , so any other monastic buildings must have stood apart . In 1966 , archaeologists discovered the foundations of what they identified as probably a medieval building , rectangular and on an east @-@ west axis , with its eastern wall aligned with that of the church precinct , which it pre @-@ dated . Extending over and in contact with the western end of a Roman bath house , it stood a few yards east of the south @-@ eastern corner of the 13th @-@ century chancel . This building was not recorded by William Boys , who drew a plan of the Roman fort and the church in 1781 . Otherwise no such buildings have been found , but they may all have been in the area to the north of the church , which has been lost to the sea . In this connection Peers noted that the cloisters of the early Canterbury churches of St Augustine 's and Christ Church were both on their northern sides . A building that stood west @-@ northwest of the church may have had an Anglo @-@ Saxon doorway and the dimensions of an Anglo @-@ Saxon church , and had " the appearance of having been part of some monastic erection " . It was demolished after the sea weakened its foundations during storms in the winter of 1782 . Leland reported another building outside the churchyard , where it was believed that a parish church had stood while the main church at Reculver was still a monastery : this building , formerly a chapel dedicated to St James , was later known as the " chapel @-@ house " , and stood in the north @-@ eastern corner of the fort until it collapsed into the sea on 13 October 1802 . Peers noted further that it seems to have had brick arches .

= = St John 's Cathedral , Parramatta = =

  The design of the twin towers , spires and west front of St John 's Cathedral , Parramatta , in Sydney , Australia , which were added in 1817 ? 1819 , is based on those of St Mary 's Church at Reculver . Efforts to save St Mary 's Church were still under way when Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his wife Elizabeth left England for Australia in 1809 . Elizabeth Macquarie asked John Watts , the governor 's aide @-@ de @-@ camp from 1814 to 1819 , to design the towers for St John 's Cathedral , and these , together with its west front , are the oldest remaining parts of an Anglican church in Australia , and are on the oldest site of continuous Christian worship there . In 1990 a stone from Reculver was presented to St John 's Cathedral by the Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England , now English Heritage .