Society for Church Archaeology

Society for Church Archaeology Annual Conference 2025

11th – 12th October 2025

Church Archaeology in 2025

Lincoln, Barbican Creative Hub

Saturday 11th October 2025

Walking Tour of Lincoln City Centre Churches on Sunday 12th October

The Society for Church Archaeology is pleased to announce its annual conference for 2025, on the theme of 'Church Archaeology in 2025'. Church archaeology is an increasingly broad field of study, with traditional methods being complemented by new approaches and audiences. Advances in archaeological techniques present new opportunities for studying both upstanding and buried remains, whilst the transformation of ecclesiastical buildings in the 21st century is supported by a wealth of methodologies both in terms of investigating the past and presenting this to a range of audiences. The theme for this year's annual conference reflects this diversity and the conference programme appears below.

Our keynote will be given by Professor David Stocker, who will also be leading the walking tour the following day. Price includes entry to Lincoln cathedral. The conference venue is the Barbican Creative Hub, located directly opposite Lincoln Railway Centre and near to Lincoln Central Bus Station. We are excited to be one of the first events in this brand new venue (opening autumn 2025).

For enquiries about the conference and bookings: churcharchconference@gmail.com

For further details please see: www.churcharchaeology.org/current-conference . A list of accommodation is available through Visit Lincoln and can be found here: https://www.visitlincoln.com/accommodation/

To make a booking:

1. Our preferred booking method is through Eventbrite. We can accept online payments through our Eventbrite page or visit https://www.churcharchaeology.org/current-conference

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2. However, if you are unable to book via Eventbrite AND you are paying by cheque, you may use the printed booking form below. We are unable to accept online payments via the printed booking form. Please use our Eventbrite booking form for online payments.
3. Eventbrite online payments will close on Friday 3 October 2025.
4. All cheque payments need to be received by Friday 13 September 2025. You can notify churcharchconference@gmail.com to expect a printed booking if you wish, but we cannot confirm your place(s) until we have received the form and cheque.
5. Booking will close earlier if all places have been allocated prior to the aforementioned dates.
6. Bookings are registered on a first-come, first-served basis.

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****PLEASE ONLY COMPLETE THIS BOOKING FORM IF YOU CANNOT USE EVENTBRITE ****

Your booking will only be registered once the form has been received by the SCA Treasurer. You will be notified via email with booking confirmation (please include an email in the box below)

Event	**Price**	**Quantity**
Annual Conference + AGM (members)	£30	
Annual Conference (non-members)	£55	
Conference Dinner (limited spaces; please reserve) Pay at venue.	n/a	
Walking Tour of Lincoln Churches (includes entrance to cathedral)	£12	
TOTAL TO PAY		

Name(s) of attendees:

Contact email address (so we can confirm your booking):

If you have not already joined, would you like to be added to the Society's email list?

Yes		**No**	

You can unsubscribe at any time by emailing churcharchaeology@gmail.com

Our GDPR statement is available on our website or directly here: www.churcharchaeology.org/_files/ugd/c2a215_0a9856bb03714c0faccf693af7e15876.pdf

Please make cheques payable to: **The Society for Church Archaeology**

Please print and post your completed booking form with **(a) your cheque (b) the name(s) of attendees being paid for (c) a return postal address** to:

Treasurer SCA, Pandy Treban, Bryngwran, Holyhead, Anglesey, LL65 3YW

Please be aware that your booking will not be confirmed until the cheque has been received (and then a follow-up email is sent by us confirming receipt once it arrives).

Society for Church Archaeology Programme

Saturday, 11th October 2025, Barbican Creative Hub, Lincoln

9.40-10.00	**Registration**
10:00-10.20	***'The Paddock' of Holy Trinity Church, Cookham, Berkshire*** (Nicola Stingelin)
10.20-10.40	***St Mary's Church, Wortham and Theodred's Will*** (Stephen Davis)
10:40-11.00	***Selja – An Anglo-Saxon Church on the West Coast of Norway?*** (Regin Meyer)
11.00-11.20	***Tenth to Twelfth-Century Church Development in Cambridgeshire: reanalysis at Gamlingay and Cherry Hinton*** (Craig Cessford)
11.20-11.30	Q and A with Speakers
11.30-11.45	**Break**
11.45-12.05	***The house of God as a bell foundry. Sola church, Norway, as a Workshop for Bell Casting Around 1400*** (Alf Tore Hommedal)
12.05-12.25	***The Practice, Performance and Experience of Lay Worship in Shared Monastic-Parochial Churches: a case study on Tewkesbury Abbey*** (Ellie March)
12.25-12.45	***A Possible* Crux Gemmata *From Selsey Cathedral*** (David Parsons)
12.45-12.55	Q and A with Speakers
12.55-13.45	**Lunch**
13.45-14.30	**AGM for the Society for Church Archaeology**
14.30-14.50	***A Pamlimpsest of Medieval Masons' Drawings*** (David Freke)
14.50-15.10	***From the Periphery to the Centre: Stained Glass and the English Parish Church*** (Lydia Fisher)
15.10-15.30	***Churchyard Crosses – Unregarded Heritage*** (David Start)
15.30-15.50	***Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future: The Unsung Heroes of Church Conservation in Lincolnshire*** (Matthew Godfrey)
15.50-16.00	Q and A with Speakers
16.00-16.15	**Break**
16.15-17.00	**Keynote Lecture: Prof. David Stocker. *Patterns of Urban Church Foundation, as Understood from the Lincoln Example***
17.00	Closing Remarks
19.00	**Conference Dinner. Venue TBA**

Sunday, 12th October 2025 Walking tour of Lincoln churches, led by David Stocker

Paper Abstracts

Nicola Stingelin: 'The Paddock' of Holy Trinity Church, Cookham, Berkshire

Trial excavations conducted by the University of Reading in 'The Paddock' that lies to the west of Holy Trinity Church, Cookham, Berkshire in August 2021 confirmed the presence of significant Middle Saxon occupation, consistent with its identification as the royal minster of Cookham documented in the 8-9th centuries AD. Since then, Reading University conducts each summer a programme of open-area excavation that is gradually revealing a royal monastery. As the field has been Church property since the monastery's rise and fall, the early medieval monastic archaeology is well preserved, including a burial site containing the remains of early Christians.

The excavation of a site standing on property owned by the church that contains human remains raises a number of questions that must be resolved by considering and applying a web of laws, regulations, codes and guidelines coming from the secular, ecclesiastical, and academic realms. The fact that the Paddock is in a conservation area also raises issues. Maintaining a constructive relationship between the Church as landlord and Reading University as academic research institution requires careful navigation. The presentation will focus on the authors work in unravelling the question how to identify whether ground is consecrated or not, and the concrete repercussions for archaeologists of this classification with particular focus on excavating human remains.

Stephen Davis: St Mary's Church, Wortham and Theodred's will

The church of St Mary's, Wortham, is noted for having the largest round tower in the country. Its diameter of 20 feet is twice the average size of the 162 round towers in East Anglia. A professional archaeological assessment in July 2025 has confirmed it as being of Anglo-Saxon date. But no researcher has ever investigated the reasons for the significant expenditure of labour and resource in its construction. Recent documentary research has linked the tower of St Mary's with one of the most significant of surviving Anglo-Saxon legal documents – the will of Theodred, Bishop of East Anglia and London, credited with leading the revival of Christianity in East Anglia after the Danish invasions.

Stephen Davis's close textual and topographical analysis of the will, dated 942-951AD, argues for Wortham being the home estate of Theodred, scion of a wealthy thegnly family who owned valuable coastal ports and bequeathed wealth equivalent to that of an earl. Re-examination of the massive flint tower of St Mary's and its architecture, long misinterpreted, offers evidence for St Mary's being the most significant survivor of the class of tower-nave churches, with unique features that argue for its being one of the most significant structures surviving from the era of the early church. Funds are being sought for a full archaeological investigation.

Regin Meyer *(Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research)*: Selja – An Anglo-Saxon Church on the West Coast of Norway?

The island Selja was called Sela (=Blessed) and Felicitas (=Luck) in the Middle Ages. It was known for its martyr site, legends of saints and collection of shrines. The composition of three churches, a martyr cave, a healing source, a bishop's see and a monastery, was unique for Norwegian ecclesiastical sites. The legend of an Irish queen St Sunniva, and the dedications to St Alban and St Edmund indicate influences across the North Sea, but the origins are unclear.

Today Selja shows many medieval mural remains. Since 2021 the ruin of St Sunniva church has been conserved together with an archaeological investigation. Discoveries have been made of an unknown single chapel or oratory, constructed before the middle of the 11th century. It features Anglo-Saxon architectural characteristics which have never been seen before in Norway. The question arises, who built a stone chapel at a time when only wooden buildings were constructed? What was the inspiration?

At this early stage two Norwegian Viking kings, Olav Tryggvasson and Olav Haraldsson, played an important role in the development of Selja, in late 10th/early 11th century. Both had similar backgrounds, fighting in Anglo-Saxon England with the Danes but later pledging loyalty to king Æthelred II, before claiming the throne in their home country. Could the expertise of church building have been brought with them across the North Sea? And why was the church built at this crucial stage of Christianization?

Craig Cessford *(Cambridge Archaeological Unit)*: Tenth to Twelfth-Century Church Development in Cambridgeshire: reanalysis at Gamlingay and Cherry Hinton

Abstract: historic excavations of medieval burial grounds in Cambridgeshire have been subject to re-assessment by the After the Plague project, including reanalysis of human skeletal remains supported by a reconsideration of the archaeological and documentary evidence for associated buildings and radiocarbon dating. Two sites are of considerable significance to the study of tenth to twelfth century church development. Radiocarbon dating indicates that an unusual cemetery at Station Road Gamlingay with no nearby church dates to the tenth–eleventh-century, going against the general pattern of the period. The unpublished tenth–twelfth-century timber church, cemetery and settlement at Church End Cherry Hinton has also been subject to radiocarbon dating and reanalysis, plus further development related excavation of the associated settlement and publication of the sculpture from the site. This renewed work makes Cherry Hinton one of the best contextualised Late Saxon to Early Norman church sites.

Alf Tore Hommedal *(University of Bergen)*: The House of God as a Bell Foundry. Sola Church, Norway, as a Workshop for Bell Casting Around 1400.

The paper presents and discusses an archaeological documented bell foundry inside Sola church, outside Stavanger in Norway. The stone church was built during the early part of the 12th century and remained in use until 1842. The casting event, which took place in the decades before or after 1400, and which then interrupted the liturgical function of the church, probably lasted no more than a few weeks or months. The function as a parish church was then reestablished. The archaeological documented casting pit (1986) was located to the opening connecting the nave and western tower of the church.

The church at Sola was thus used as a parish church for several hundred years both before and after this short disruption caused by the bell casting. Why did they at Sola make the church into a casting place requiring the floor to be removed; causing digging in the ground inside the church disturbing both graves and the building's fundament; and bringing extreme heath from the bronze melting process into the building and thus running a risk for fire or masonry damage in the church? Why was it so important to have the workshop at this very spot and inside a still-functioning church? And what does this temporary workshop tell us about traveling craftsmen, some of the bell casters in Norway documented to come from England?

Ellie March *(Honorary Research Fellow, University of Exeter)*: The Practice, Performance and Experience of Lay Worship in Shared Monastic-Parochial Churches: a case study on Tewkesbury Abbey (Glos.)

Shared churches were a common feature of the religious landscape of medieval England and Wales. Typically though, discussions of these sites have centred around conflict, with the well-rehearsed setlist of case studies including Sherborne (Dors.), Dunster (Soms.), Wymondham (Norf.) and Hatfield Regis (Ess.) presenting this as an inevitable consequence of two communities occupying such close quarters. While attention has been given to the division of space between religious and parish communities – especially the form and arrangement of screens – little attention has been given to the physical manifestation and experience of parochial worship beyond this.

Tewkesbury Abbey (Glos.) was one of the foremost Benedictine institutions in the country. In the tradition of monastic and church archaeology though, studies of the church have routinely focused upon its architectural development, especially around the east end, and its establishment as a grand mausoleum for its patrons. In contrast, consideration of the nave and the parish community who inhabited this space has been relatively neglected.

Drawing upon research from my recently completed doctoral thesis, this paper redresses this imbalance. While the surviving fabric of the building inevitably features at the heart of this discussion, a particular spotlight is shone upon the results of a systematic study of testamentary evidence which has for the first time repopulated this space with otherwise lost fixtures, fittings and devotional elements of the parish church. In so doing, it not only invites broader consideration of parochial religious experience but also contributes to wider discussions concerning lay engagement with monastic sites.

David Parsons: A Possible *Crux Gemmata* from Selsey Cathedral

In or about 1536 Lambert Barnard, who was a craftsman and painter commissioned by the then Bishop of Chichester, produced a number of painted panels now mounted on the interior transept walls of Chichester Cathedral. Those in the south transept purport to show two occasions of royal patronage of the Diocese, the first of these the grant of land to St Wilfrid in order to establish a bishopric based on Selsey in the late 7th century; the see was transferred to Chichester in the 11th. This relationship has recently been explored in detail by Dr Michael Shapland (Sussex Archaeological Collections, 161 (2023), 117–135). Shapland's figure 8 reproduces a detail from the panel in which one of St Wilfrid's attendant monks carries a processional cross, gold or gilt with small areas of red pigment suggestive of jewelled settings. This is unlike the type of cross current towards the end of the pre-Reformation period, represented by the surviving Bosworth and Lamport crosses, which Barnard seems to have ignored in the interests of historical verisimilitude, which is attested more generally in the panel paintings. It is suggested that this is a rare representation of a crux gemmata of early medieval type and that Barnard may have taken as his model an actual example transferred to Chichester when the see was moved from Selsey and still surviving there in the early 16th century.

David Freke: A Pamlimpsest of Medieval Masons' Drawings.

There are thousands of inscribed marks on a 15th-century plastered panel, 1.78m wide by 0.98m high, in the domestic apartments of Gloucester cathedral. The panel, previously described as a displaced fragment, is complete and in situ, making its location important for understanding its function. In her 2000 study of the cathedral's domestic apartments Rochelle Rowell linked a design on the panel to a moulding in the cathedral's 15th -century Lady Chapel recorded by John Harvey, and there are several other previously unrecorded moulding designs buried amongst the mass of

marks. The designs are repeated with variations, but most of the inscriptions do not appear to contribute directly to architectural moulding designs. There has been no published study of these background marks and little attention given to similar marks on other medieval drawing surfaces. The panel could be a useful focus for the study of such inscriptions because it was used by masons probably for a brief period, it is small, in situ and appears to be complete, albeit worn. It offers an opportunity to interrogate the intentions of the inscribers. The paper considers why masons would make such marks. Some current theoretical geometrical analyses of medieval architectural designs are compared with the evidence on the panel. The study hopes to direct scholars' attention to other examples of background inscriptions on medieval tracing surfaces and contribute to the debate about the theories and working practices of medieval architects.

Lydia Fisher *(Honorary Research Fellow, University of Exeter)*: From the Periphery to the Centre: stained glass and the English parish church

Stained-glass windows were a universal feature of the medieval parish church building and a prominent part of everyday visual culture. Despite this, scholarship has traditionally privileged the innovative and coherent programmes of stained-glass windows situated in 'great' ecclesiastical monuments with powerful institutional status, such as Canterbury Cathedral or York Minster, that can more readily be studied in relation to conventional lines of art-historical enquiry, such as the significance of style and the identification of workshops. Compared to these magnificent survivals, the scanty pieces, fragments and isolated panels of glass that more commonly exist in ordinary parish churches seem minor and insignificant. This is compounded by the methodological and interpretive challenges of their study in the form of access, legibility and supporting documentary evidence. Over the past two decades, the summary catalogues produced by *the Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* have greatly enriched knowledge of smaller and displaced manifestations of glass situated within a wide range of building types. This has provided powerful impetus for further research into the meanings and functions of parochial glazing in light of late medieval spirituality.

This paper spotlights extant stained-glass schemes and fragments found in parish churches across the South-West of England, here encompassing the counties of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. The region hosts over 230 sites that possess varying degrees of extant glazing or documentation of lost glass, providing valuable insight into the intersection of art and religious practice in the locality. They constitute a vital source of information on medieval worship that has yet to be interrogated to its fullest potential. To date, research into south-western glazing is surprising lacking, despite it hosting a diverse body of evidence from the famous windows of St Neot (Cornwall) and Doddiscombsleigh (Devon) to the lesser-known collections of glass at Bampton (Devon) or Langport (Somerset). Focussing on a selection of key case studies, this paper explores the place and purpose of stained glass in parish church settings towards the end of the Middle Ages. In doing so, it demonstrates the vibrancy of quotidian engagement in glazing and the unique position of stained glass to comment upon the lived experience of religion in the English parish.

David Start: Churchyard Crosses: unregarded heritage.

Most, if not all, English medieval churchyards once contained one or more standing crosses of stone or timber to mark the hallowed ground containing the mortal remains of its parishioners. These monuments also served as stations for religious processional routes around the village and as sites for public penance and piety. However, with the coming of Reformation, all such things were deemed idolatrous and the majority of medieval standing crosses were decapitated or destroyed during the brief reign of Edward VI (1547 – 1553). Those few that survived were enthusiastically

demolished in the English Civil war as popish remnants. Usually all that remains is, at best, a short stump of shaft set in a square socket stone.

Architectural historians and church archaeologists have tended to ignore these humble remains, and it is true they can be hard to spot among a mass of more-modern gravestones. Yet, they are often the oldest feature to survive at a church. The remains of about 200 later medieval standing stone crosses survive in Lincolnshire – many of these were recorded first by Revd D S Davies (1863-1946) and more were later researched and photographed by Lincolnshire archaeologist Hilary Healey (1935-2013). It was Hilary's aim to publish a gazetteer of Medieval Standing Crosses in Lincolnshire and this has recently been achieved by her co-worker Dave Start – but not in print. A website: Medieval Standing Crosses of Lincolnshire, has recently been launched to present the history and data of all the known standing cross remains in the county.

Matthew Godfrey: Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future: the unsung heroes of church conservation in Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire is a hidden gem when it comes to church buildings. However, these buildings and the parishioners and communities who care for them face huge challenges in terms of funding for repairs and maintenance, local capacity and availability of local crafts people. Yet despite these and other challenges many parishes manage to keep their churches going and available for the local and wider community to use and enjoy. This talk will examine notable success stories of churches across the county and demonstrate that by nurturing an interest in archaeology, architecture or history almost anything is possible. The talk will be illustrated by case studies that include a church written about by John Betjeman, a church adjacent the birthplace of Henry IV and one where the incumbent was successfully prosecuted in the early 17th century for failure to maintain the chancel.