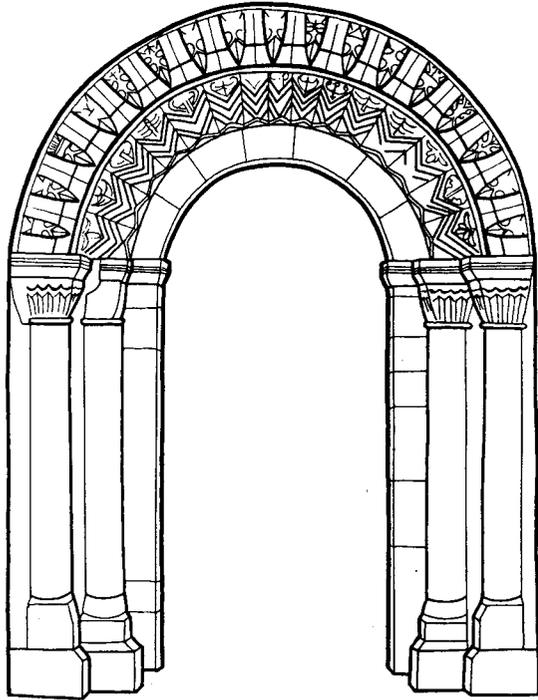


Historic Churches of West Yorkshire

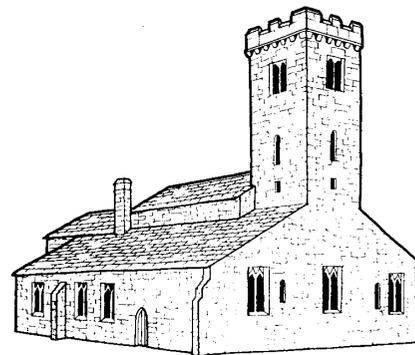
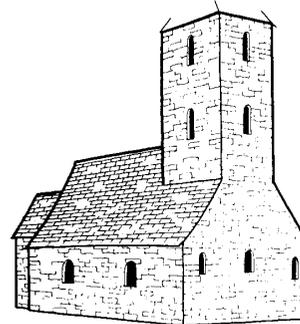
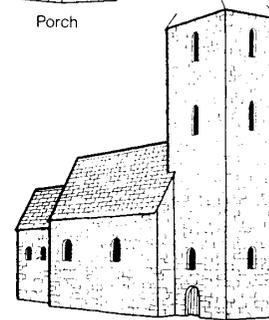
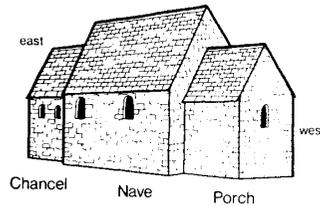
Bardsey Church



near Leeds, contains one of the best surviving Anglo-Saxon buildings in West Yorkshire. The core of the present church was built over a thousand years ago. Some centuries later it was furnished with an elaborate Norman doorway, illustrated above. This leaflet is designed to help visitors see what the church looked like when first built, how it changed later, and what survives from these earliest times in the present structure. A more general guide can be obtained at the church, which is normally open to visitors. Further information on this and other series of guides to historic buildings and monuments in the county can be obtained from West Yorkshire Archaeology Service.

Bardsey Church

Time
Scale



Then and now

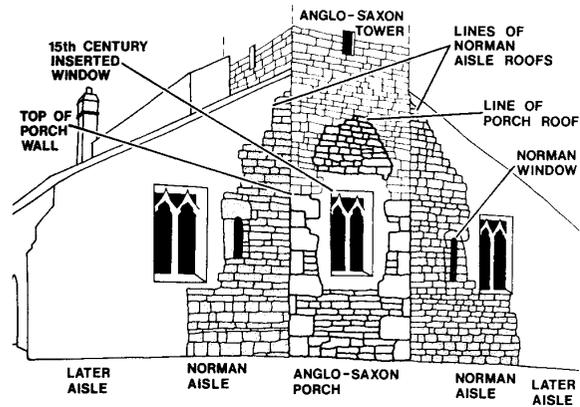
The first stone church at Bardsey was built over a thousand years ago. As the drawing on the left shows, it was a tall, narrow building consisting of three parts: a nave with two high windows on each side, a small chancel and a porch. The porch probably had a doorway in its south wall.

At about the time of the Norman Conquest the porch was partly rebuilt and extended upwards, to form the tower which survives today. The tower was provided with new windows, the largest ones being on the south side. It was also given a second doorway; the original doorway was probably rebuilt at the same time. Like many other early churches in Yorkshire, Bardsey church failed to get a mention in the Domesday book. But a priest recorded as living in East Rigton nearby probably served Bardsey.

In Norman times the nave was widened in two stages, by cutting through the side walls and inserting pillars and arches. The different styles and shapes of the pillars and arches show that the arcades were inserted at different times. New outer walls formed narrow aisles. The archway between the tower and nave was enlarged, and a richly-carved doorway was added to the south side, to replace the tower doorways which were now entirely inside the church.

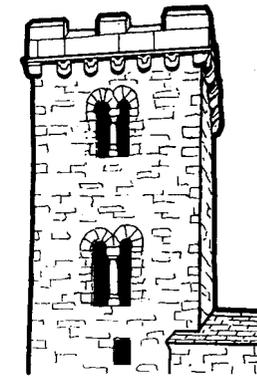
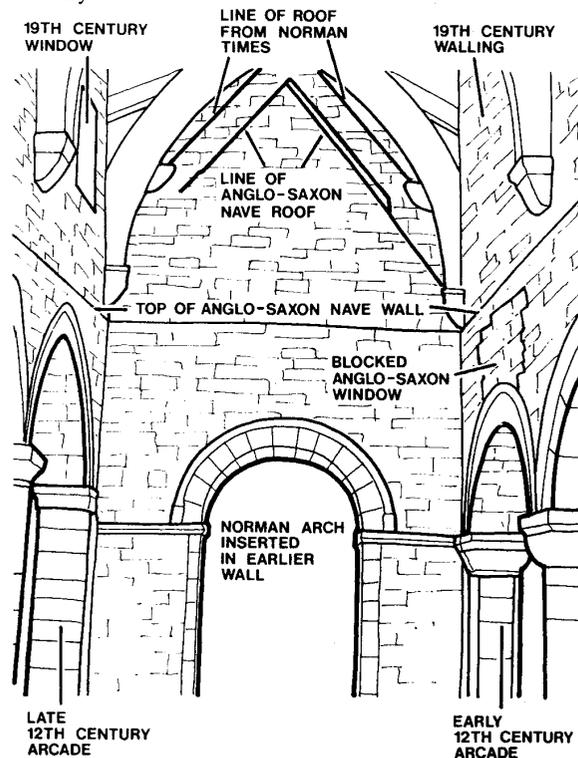
In the early 14th century the chancel, probably still the original one, was demolished and replaced by another almost twice its length. The next major change to the nave and tower came about two centuries after this when the Norman Aisles were demolished and replaced by much wider ones. The Norman doorway was repositioned in the new south wall. The tower was given a battlemented top, and provided with new, bigger windows on two sides, to match the windows on the new aisles. A chapel was built in the south aisle in the 18th century, and in the 19th century the nave walls were heightened to support a new roof.

Views of the church

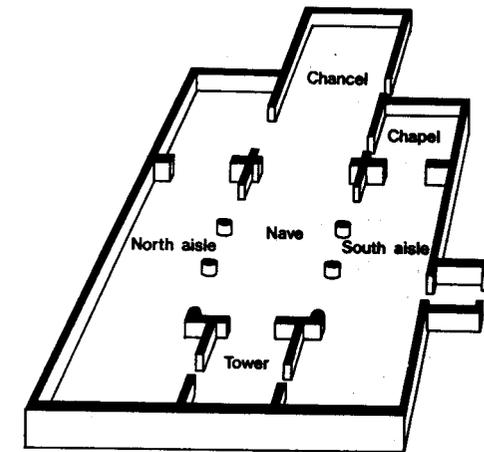


The visitor can best understand the church's development by looking at the west (tower) end of the building from the graveyard. The view above shows the original Anglo-Saxon porch, marked by massive corner stones set on edge; a scar in the wall above outlines the top of the gable wall, before the porch was built up into a tower. The porch is thought to have been erected in the 9th or early 10th century, and converted into a tower in the 11th century. The next major event to be seen in this view was the addition of the two aisles at different times in the Norman period. Both were provided with narrow windows in their west end walls, and the windows survive. Scars in the masonry mark the lines of the aisle roofs, and the ragged breaks in the stonework show where the side walls were taken out when the aisles were greatly enlarged, in the 15th or early 16th century. Some of the large corner stones were re-set in the new walls, as can be seen below window level on the left-hand side. New, larger windows in Perpendicular style were placed in the west walls of the new aisles; a third, identical one was inserted in the west face of the original Anglo-Saxon porch. This may have replaced an Anglo-Saxon window, or it may have been cut through a previously blank wall. A careful inspection of the walling, particularly on the left-hand side, will show that some apparent joints between stones are, in fact, horizontal grooves which were cut across the faces of the large stones and then filled with mortar. This was done to make the west wall look much neater, and to mask the fascinating jumble of work of different centuries.

Standing in the centre of the church, looking towards the west (tower) end, the visitor can get some idea of what the original nave was like by imagining that the pillars and arches on each side are solid walls - as they originally were. The end wall, in front of the tower, is largely Anglo-Saxon except that the large Norman archway replaces the smaller original opening. Above, two early roof lines can be seen as Λ -shaped grooves. The lower one marks the line of the Anglo-Saxon roof, and shows that the side walls were not as high as they are now. A jumbled area of stonework above the far right arch marks an Anglo-Saxon window, blocked up when the Norman arches were cut through the wall. These low, rough arches with squat pillars were cut through the wall in the early 12th century; the taller, pointed arches and more slender columns on the left are of the later 12th century. It was probably at that time when the walls were heightened and the roof raised to the upper Λ -shaped mark. Further heightening took place in the 19th century.



The style and construction of the windows in the south face of the tower (left) are typical of the late Anglo-Saxon period. Although from a distance they might look rather like the windows of Norman church towers, their details and methods of construction are quite different; they indicate that the whole of the tower, apart from the battlements, was built in the 11th century.



Plan of church, viewed from the west

