

Section 11 Gazetteer

11.1 The section summarizes the information gathered from the detailed survey of the 220 parish churches and church sites in the Archdeaconry of Colchester. Notes on several of the more important chapels and their sites have also been included under Colchester. Space does not permit a detailed discussion of every church, nor a full description, but it is however hoped that few salient points of archaeological concern have escaped mention. Many churches contain features of historic interest upon which detailed discussion is long overdue, and the majority have received only the barest architectural description and have not benefited from a meticulous scrutiny or from a scholarly assessment in the light of current knowledge. Generally the fullest and most accurate account of a church will be found in the relevant volume by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Essex* (vols. i-iv, 1916-23), although this is often inadequate, outdated and in need of revision.

11.2 The gazetteer is arranged alphabetically according to parish, with the details presented in the following order (a concordance table, arranged in order of site numbers, will be found at the end of this section (p. 125).

- a. PARISH; church dedication; church number (in parenthesis) as shown on MAP A; national grid reference (Ordnance Survey); a note on the siting of the church in relation to the ancient settlement pattern of the area (as far as this is known).
- b. RCHM reference and notice of any other major publication (including a note on published church plans).
- c. Brief description and discussion of the condition of the church, graveyard and general environs, together with a note of any exceptional monuments. Assessment of the archaeological needs and potential.
- d. Architectural and archaeological grading (for details of which see 2.13), followed by the Listed Building grade (in parenthesis).

ABBERTON, St Andrew. (62)
TL 9974 1938 Isolated with hall.
RCHM iii, 1 (sketch plan 1:576)
C14 nave; C19 chancel, but with old foundations visible; C16 brick tower (topless). Restored 1884; generally well kept. Ground level very high on N; serious dampness in panelling and floor bricks loose. Major works to floor and walls will soon be inevitable; ground lowering needed. Site of moderate archaeological importance, not so much for the present structure but for the location—at the southern end of the Abberton Dyke, still a major earthwork; the dyke either terminates or changes direction under the churchyard. No opportunity should be lost to investigate this site.
Grading: CIa (not listed)

ALDHAM, St Margaret and St Catherine (81)
TL 9067 2539 Isolated with a farm which is not the Hall.
RCHM iii, 1 (No plan)
Demolished and rebuilt using old materials (including C13 and C14 features) on a new site, in the village, in 1855. The old site is a good candidate for preservation; not threatened at present. Basically nothing is known.
Grading: IIIa (not listed or scheduled)

ALPHAMSTONE, dedication unknown (125)
TL 8788 3545 Isolated at junction of several ancient routes; good position overlooking the Stour.
RCHM iii, 3 (sketch plan 1:576)
Saxon or Norman nave with Roman brick quoins; C14 chancel and S aisle; former west tower demolished. Walls all rendered inside and outside—very poor condition; chancel arch badly cracked and in danger of collapse; moderately damp, particularly in S aisle; C19 open drain on N side of nave and chancel. Churchyard stands as a platform above surrounding fields; has yielded Bronze Age and Iron Age pottery and a Roman villa; many sarsen stones have been gathered to the area and are distributed in and about the churchyard; one large sarsen projects from under the SW corner of the nave. The nave walls

are 0.88 m thick and fairly certainly pre-Conquest; a prime site for an isolated minster. No archaeological investigation or recording has taken place and major opportunities must soon arise. As an archaeological complex, Alphamstone church and graveyard must rank amongst the most important in Essex, with a potential at least as great as Rivenhall.
Grading: BIb (listed B)

ALRESFORD, St Peter (55)
TM 0647 2066 Completely isolated.
RCHM iii, 5 (sketch plan 1:576) *Essex Countryside*, 17 (1968), 35
Usually stated to have been built *c* 1320, but much of the fabric is certainly earlier; nave has Roman brick quoins and walls 0.84 m thick; late Saxon or Saxo-Norman. Gutted by fire, 1971; to be left as a ruin. A valuable object lesson in the number of details which can be hidden by a thorough C19 restoration—remains of several blocked and fragmentary windows and doorways can be seen since the plaster fell away; worthy of a thorough structural investigation before deterioration takes place or well-meaning conservation causes damage; the walls have been crudely capped with cement. The ruin now comprises nave, chancel and C19 S aisle (arcade demolished after fire). Laver reported that the church stood in a 'camp', S ditch of which was filled for churchyard extension: *VCH* iii (1963), 38.
Grading: BIa (listed B)

ARDLEIGH: St Mary the Virgin (25)
TM 0539 2955 In village, at crossroads.
RCHM iii, 6 (sketch plan 1:576)
C14 nave, largely rebuilt; fine C15 tower and S porch; chancel and aisles rebuilt 1885, a typically thorough job by Wm Butterfield. C19 paintings in chancel are the most important aspect of the interior; externally, the tower and porch are of high merit, illustrating the late medieval art of using stone, brick and flint in attractive combination. Archaeological potential unknown; few Roman bricks in tower; the whole area abounds with prehistoric and Roman sites. Principal potential would be internal excavation to elucidate the structural sequence; no current threats. It would be interesting to discover the foundation period of the church, since the parish has the appearance of being cut out from Colchester Borough Liberty, Dedham and Lawford at a very early date. The church existed by *c* 1087 (Hart, 1957b, 12).
Grading: AIIb (listed B)

ARKESDEN, St Mary the Virgin (alternatively St Margaret) (203)
TL 4824 3459 In village, at road junction.
RCHM i, 1 (sketch plan 1:576)
Nave, chancel and aisles probably all C13; major restoration 1855, when E end was reconstructed and ruined; medieval tower replaced by a new one at the same time; foundations of a former circular tower were reported (cf Birchanger). C19 total refacing of walls and replacement of stone dressings; the church is now of no real merit; better is the C19 stained glass and the fine monuments of 1592 and 1692. The earlier is a canopied tomb which has recently been inexpertly recoloured, to its visual ruin. Archaeological potential is unknown and cannot be guessed; C19 drainage operations have caused moderate disturbance; internal excavation is the only viable possibility; no current threat, apart from recommended ground lowering on E side of porch. There are some very fine and important C18 tombstones in the graveyard, which must be cared for *in situ*; also a vast puddingstone, and a sarsen just outside the boundary; another sarsen protrudes from under the SW corner of the chancel.
Grading: CIIIc (listed B)

ASHDON, All Saints (193)
TL 5810 4150 Isolated with hall; the village is a separate nucleus.
RCHM i, 5 (sketch plan 1:576) *TEAS* (ns) 4 (1893), 5-10.
Nave, chancel, tower, aisles and two chapels built at various times during C14 and C15. A good late medieval interior,

but the interior is masked by rendering and pebble-dash (which has especially ruined the once decoratively-banded tower). The bases of the chancel arch responds and the arcade piers are elevated on curious square plinths 0.8 m high; much effort has been expended on their attempted explanation, without conclusion. It seems that they are either the utilized remnants of earlier walls or were added to support the pier bases when the nave floor was lowered (but *was* it lowered—when and why?) Historically and archaeologically, Ashdon is of the utmost importance and deserves the fullest attention. It has been argued convincingly that Ashdon is the site of the battle of *Assandun*, 1016 (Hart, 1968). but attempts to wring Cnut's minster out of the present structure have failed. However, a large number of north-south orientated graves, 'rude weapons' and pottery were found in the field E of the church, c 1830; the remains of a smaller church were found inside the present structure during restoration in 1886. The graves are undated but are possibly of the Anglo-Saxon period; the smaller church is undated too and there is no reason to propose it was a minster. Nor is it necessarily the immediate predecessor of the C14 edifice, both on account of the unexplained pier bases and various irregularities in the standing walls which include, for example, some evidence for the heightening of the nave. The present church may, possibly, be an adaptation of a Saxon or Norman building, which in turn was the successor to the 'smaller' church. A grant of 1096 mentions a church at Ashdon (Hart, 1957b, 16), but without details. Part of a Norman font was incorporated in a doorstep and there are reused dressed stones in the aisles. Areas of the church are affected by excessive dampness and the ground level is high on the S side. Any opportunity to undertake archaeological investigations internally must not be missed, both below the floors (note wood blocks are beginning to loosen) and on the fabric, should any plaster repairs be undertaken (note the plaster is mainly ancient and traces of wall-paintings are known). There is an important collection of C18 headstones in the graveyard
Grading: BIa (listed B)

ASHEN, dedication unknown (since 1853, St Augustine) (145)
TL 7473 4232 In village.
RCHM i, 9 (sketch plan 1:576)
C13 nave; tower c 1400; chancel 1857, when a former chancel and apse were demolished as 'ruinous'; nave lengthened eastwards at the same time. Presumably the apse belonged to the Saxon or Norman church mentioned in a grant of c 1090 (Hart, 1957b, 14). The windows undoubtedly belie the true age of the nave fabric; S wall externally refaced; N wall rendered—poor condition. The only visible features of significance are the curiously braced roof and the remarkable C13 peg-jointed S door (Hewett, 1974, fig. 73). A fine wall monument of 1610 is in a poor state. Ground level is high and the church damp at the W end. Opportunities should arise for fabric study and the recovery of the lost E end, by excavation, would be valuable since, if it belongs to the first church on the site, it can be confidently dated to *ante* 1090.
Grading: CIIB (listed B)

BARDFIELD, GREAT. St Mary the Virgin (161)
TL 6782 3036 With hall, just away from village.
RCHM i, 105 (sketch plan 1:576)
Virtually all of the late C14; stone chancel screen and matching aisle arcades lend the interior an air of refined architectural unity, scarcely matched elsewhere in Essex. Pevsner is wrong in dating the tower similarly; it is the survivor of an earlier building and is late C12 or early C13; it contains a few fragments of Roman tile. There is a chevron-ornamented block from a Norman arch reused in the S aisle. External ground level is rather high and there is a brick gutter all round; dampness is causing some internal damage. The churchyard is heavily buried in. A medieval stone coffin with decorated lid lies discarded and broken, amongst rubbish, to N of nave; a second lid rests on a window sill and has been limewashed. These items, presumably found during a restoration, need taking into the care of a museum. An earlier church, at least of Norman date, awaits elucidation; no current threats. Roman pottery and a Greek bronze coin found just NW of church; two large sarsens project from under the NE and SE corners of the chancel and are

possibly indicative of a date anterior to the C14 for the laying of the foundations.

Grading: AIIb (listed A)

BARDFIELD, LITTLE, St Katharine (162)

TL 6556 3073 Isolated with hall; the two stand very close together, on the same east-west axis.

RCHM i, 170 (differential plan 1:300). Taylor, 1965, 37 (plan c 1: 165)

A very remarkable building and one of the few outstanding pieces of Anglo-Saxon architecture in Essex: carefully described by Taylor. Saxon nave and west tower; C19 chancel and a vast organ chamber which has ruined the aesthetic proportions of the church. The Saxon work is totally formed in flint (plus one or two scraps of Roman brick), including all quoins, plinths and string courses; an important demonstration of the Anglo-Saxons' ability to build entirely without the use of stone or brick dressings. There are many problems which need tackling archaeologically: is the trapezoidal-plan tower of one build with the nave? (Note the thin W wall of the nave and its marked skew, whereas the E end appears to be regular—cf a similar arrangement at Hadstock). The tower, which is pointed with C19 black cement, was stated in the 1971 quinquennial survey to be in need of 'major restoration'—this is an important task and needs to be accompanied by careful archaeological examination. The medieval battlements have been removed, to the enhancement of the Saxon work, and would be better not replaced. There is a good C18 clock (not working) in the tower and it is alarming to read in the survey, 'the remains of the clock face should be removed and the wall repaired'. Such wanton destruction must be checked. Ground level on the S side is high and the interior is seriously damp; where wall-plaster is peeling traces of painting are appearing; these need investigation. Drainage works are necessary but should only be permitted after archaeological excavation—indeed this is a good example where archaeology alone could cure the dampness problem. The timber floor on the S side of the nave is rotting and sinking, and its repair will soon present an important opportunity for internal work here. Nothing is known of the Saxon chancel, but it is likely that the C19 structure rests on its foundations; external investigation would probably settle the point. The Victorian chancel interior fittings are very fine and the organ by Renatus Harris is the most important in the Diocese. E of the chancel is a row of excellent C18 tombstones. There are finds of Roman pottery from in and around the churchyard. The Little Bardfield Hall-Church complex must be regarded as potentially one of the most important architectural and archaeological units in the Diocese.
Grading: AIIa (listed A)

BARNSTON, dedication unknown (169)

TL 6525 1961 Isolated with hall.

RCHM ii, 11 (sketch plan 1:576)

A rather unattractive building set in a very open graveyard. C12 nave; C13 chancel; timber bell-turret 'converted from medieval to something hardly recognisable' (Hewett, 1974, 117). It is impossible to assess the building, since it is covered with cement (opportunity recently lost when this was replaced) and most of the dressed stonework was renewed in C19. The heavily restored remains of the Norman S doorway are curious: the outer order of the arch appears to have been dressed back, to remove an ornamental moulding, possibly a chevron. The capital are noteworthy. Repairs undertaken 1967-71 included the digging of a shingle-filled drain around the walls. Clearly several opportunities to elucidate this difficult structure have been lost. The early C19 Livermore monuments are the principal feature of the churchyard: burial continues near church. Iron Age pottery found nearby.
Grading: CIIIB (listed B)

BEAUMONT (-cum-MOZE), St Leonard (37A)

TM 1801 2464 Isolated with hall.

RCHM iii, 7 (no plan)

Chancel, possibly Norman, but now showing only late medieval features: nave and N aisle rebuilt 1854. The chancel is covered by pebble-dash and is heavily restored; E wall rebuilt 1950; chancel arch is cracked. C19 floors are sinking and will require relaying in a few years, providing an opportunity for internal excavation—the only form of worthwhile investigation here. Note: Roman coin found

just S of church; prehistoric and Roman pottery found close to hall.

Grading: DIIIb (not listed)

BELCHAMP OTTEN, St Ethelbert and All Saints (? not original) (139A)

TL 8033 4175 In loosely defined village.

RCHM i, 14 (sketch plan 1:576)

C12 nave; C13 chancel; W bell-turret raised on well carved C17 posts. Norman S doorway is very elaborate and needs careful restoration; it has been taken apart at some time and reconstructed wrongly. The church is important as a simple rural building which largely escaped C19 restoration; it retains box pews and the exceptional 'squire's pew'. The rendering now falling off the N wall of the chancel covers the only area of rubble-work not refaced—study needed. Ground level is high and has fortunately escaped major disturbance by drains; undamaged original wall faces probably survive for study, just above the foundations. Restoration in 1965 was generally good, but the digging out and relaying of all the floors was an archaeological tragedy; a major opportunity to examine the whole interior, which had probably suffered little or no C19 disturbance, was lost. Worse still, a stone coffin, covered by the best-preserved ornamental lid in the Archdeaconry, was discovered in the nave. It was at a depth of 10 inches, which means that not only was the contemporary Norman floor level intact, but also probably several later floors above. To have recovered this coffin in its stratigraphic relationship to the building would have been a valuable archaeological achievement, since all other medieval coffin lids which survive in the county were summarily extracted in the C19. Most are now heavily abraded or broken, but the Belchamp lid is pristine Barnack, with superb tooling marks. Not only has much archaeological data been lost, including the coffin and skeleton, but the lid itself cannot be properly studied since it has suffered the usual fate of being concreted into the chancel floor, where in a century's time it will be as scuffed and damaged as are now the lids which the Victorians similarly embedded. This lid and its coffin should be a prime exhibit in an ecclesiastical museum.

Grading: BIIIc (would previously have been BIIa) (listed B)

BELCHAMP ST ETHELBERT, St Ethelbert (139B)

TL 8052 4326 Totally isolated.

Long since demolished, nothing known of the structure; now in Belchamp Otten parish. Site under plough; Mrs E E Sellers has collected Roman bricks and a quern fragment from field scatter. Possibly the site of a lost settlement; presumably heavily disturbed.

Grading: IIIc

BELCHAMP ST PAUL'S, St Andrew (138)

TL 7984 4345 Isolated with hall.

RCHM i, 16 (sketch plan 1:576; E end inaccurately shown)

Nave, chancel, W tower, N aisle, N transept and S porch all of C15; a large building with many good architectural features, spoilt by limewash over all dressings, including the arcade. Major internal cleaning and redecoration needed, including removal of eyesores. Nothing is known of the church's predecessor, except a Norman chevron voussoir and other reused stones in the tower, and a few Roman bricks. A masonry wall under W hedge of churchyard may be Roman. There is good potential for archaeological investigation both inside and out, above and below ground. No obvious disturbances; ground level concrete gutter around walls, but these are still seriously damp. The graveyard has been devastated and is now a characterless expanse of grass.

Grading: BIIa (listed B)

BELCHAMP WALTER, St Mary the Virgin (132)

TL 8274 4068 Isolated with hall.

RCHM i, 19 (sketch plan 1:576)

C14 large nave; C13 small chancel; C15 W tower; C19 rebuild of E end of nave, shifting chancel arch a little to E. Nothing known of earlier church, except the fine Norman font. A highly ornate C14 arch in the N wall of the nave once gave access into a chantry chapel—now gone but could be found by excavation. The wall plaster in the nave is all ancient and is decorated with extensive C14 paintings, uncovered in recent years. Externally, the walls are much refaced, or rendered

(rendering falling off tower). There appear to have been major disturbances around the walls, in connection with drain laying; probably much archaeological damage done; the church is still damp inside and a chemical damp-course has been recommended. Dampness has caused many floor tiles to become detached from their bedding—relaying must come in due course and will present an opportunity for investigation. Likewise structural work may become necessary as a result of wall cracks (all tell-tales broken). Archaeological potential is uncertain: small quantity of Roman brick in walls (including flue tiles); also some possible medieval bricks. There are sarsens by the roadside opposite the church and a remarkable collection of reused medieval stonework in the walls and gate pillars of the hall and a house N of the church. These items might repay detailed investigation. A pleasant graveyard containing some good C18 tombstones—it would have been even better had it not been 'tidied' and the 1964 faculty for moving headstones not granted. The S door is an important piece of C14 carpentry and the industrial archaeology of the church is noteworthy: there is an early C18 striking tower clock; the 'Tortoise' stove (threatened) is one of the two or three good survivors in the Archdeaconry and should be protected; there is a peal of eight bells in their original frame declare 'unsafe' in 1923; this must be protected from the depredations of speculating bell-founders.

Grading: AIIb (listed B)

BENTLEY, GREAT, St Mary the Virgin (48)

TM 1090 2164 Just off the 42 acre green around which the village is built.

RCHM iii, 107 (differential plan 1:300)

Fine, large two-celled Norman church, with C14 chancel extension and W tower. Herringbone work coursed in ironstone is especially noteworthy, although incompetent pointing has ruined parts of it. Ground cut down and landscaped against N wall, presumably resulting in some archaeological damage. More problematical is the interior, which has been totally refloored in concrete slabs and wooden blocks, but it would appear that no damp-proof membrane was inserted, with serious results. If the floors were not dug out, but simply relaid, then little archaeological damage was probably committed. There is a C13 coffin lid set in the nave floor and a series of rare C16 inlaid tiles which are disintegrating rapidly. N and S doorways are both fine Norman works and the S door itself is of similar date; clearly this was once the principal entrance (a porch is known to have been removed), although it makes no sense in the present topographical arrangement. This appears to be a one-build Norman church and it would be valuable to check archaeologically that the doorways are contemporary with the fabric, and to check the form of the original E end; otherwise, archaeological potential is unknown. It has already been noted that the recent wholesale clearance of what was once an interesting graveyard constitutes one of the most graphic acts of churchyard vandalism in the Diocese (9.75).

Grading: AIIb (listed A)

BENTLEY, LITTLE, St Mary the Virgin (49)

TM 1226 2495 Isolated, some distance from hall.

RCHM iii, 160 (sketch plan 1:576)

Nave and chancel with Roman brick quoins are at least of Norman date, but are good candidates for Saxon work; various later medieval alterations and additions, including N aisle, NE chapel and W tower. Wall scars show there was once a N porch (or site of priest's house). The church has great charm and character and the tower is a good example of ornamental flint- and brickwork; the nave has a fine hammerbeam roof. Ground level externally is high; ancient drainage works are now ineffective; internal walls very damp behind panelling and the brick floors all need rebedding; the chapel floor is particularly bad. Some timber flooring has been replaced in recent years and concrete plinths have been cast under the arcade piers. RCHM refers to ancient painting in N aisle; this is no longer visible; interior has been redecorated but work is needed on the floors. Externally much has to be done, especially with regard to drainage. Clumsy cement pointing in the S wall needs removing. The church is potentially a very interesting structure of early, but unknown date, with forthcoming opportunities for major investigations.

Grading: AAIIb (listed B)

BERDEN, St Nicholas (182)

TL 4678 2962 Close to hall on edge of village.

RCHM i, 21 (plan 1:300)

Small, unaisled transeptal church of great archaeological, but only modest architectural interest. RCHM ascribes the nave to C12, but it could easily be several centuries earlier; it has been shortened at the W end by the building of a tower which is alleged to be of C15 date, but is unbuttressed, slightly trapezoidal in plan and could possibly be a much-altered Norman structure. The so-called 'long and short work' at the NW and SW comers of the nave is wrongly described and is probably of later medieval date. The transepts are problematical and although ascribed to separate C13 dates, are possibly rebuilds of earlier structures. The chancel is difficult to understand: it has been lengthened east wards (1868) and contains some delicate C13 work, heavily restored, and possibly reset. Berden holds great promise as an Anglo-Saxon church (note nave walls only 0.76 m thick) and is just possibly a major building of minster proportions; its problems can only be elucidated by large-scale archaeological investigation. It is to be lamented that there is a brick-lined open drain all round; recent external pointing has used too much cement; all stone dressings inside are limewashed. A C19 underfloor heating system has partially disturbed the interior. Original coloured plan for 1868 restoration hangs in the church (published descriptions do not entirely agree). Two medieval coffin lids found; a few fragments of glazed floor tiles built into S transept walls.

Grading: BB1c (listed B)

BERECHURCH (or West Donyland), St Michael (15)

TL 9928 2189 Isolated, near hall; now outskirts of Colchester and within the Borough Liberties.

RCHM iii, 46 (sketch plan 1:576). Morant ii (1748), 29.

Nave, chancel and W tower of brick, c. 1500; N chapel slightly later. Heavy restoration of 1872 involving much rebuilding. Tower is quite good but needs repair, while the interior of the Audley chapel is superb, although gently deteriorating; Hewett described the hammerbeam roof as 'sumptuous'. Whole church is very damp; all drains choked and useless; deep open drain on N side of nave. Much work is needed to put this building in order: declared redundant 1974; to be vested in the Redundant Churches Fund. Were it not for the interest of the chapel, Berechurch would have been best sold for conversion to a residence, most of the building is without merit. Berechurch was a manor in C11, but only a chapel-of-ease to Holy Trinity, Colchester, until it became a separate parish in 1536; thus it remains within the Borough Liberty. It seems a likely candidate for having originally been a private chapel founded for Berechurch Hall, if the interior of the church has to be refloored it would be worth an advance excavation to find, and hopefully to date, the original chapel.

Grading: BIIIb (listed B)

BERGHOLT, WEST, St Mary (19)

TL 9530 2808 Isolated with hall.

RCHM iii, 227 (sketch plan 1:576)

Nave, chancel and S aisle exhibit C14 work, but the fabric of the first two elements is probably older; W bell-turret of uncertain date. There is nothing of interest here apart from, perhaps, the timber W gallery, C18. Archaeologically, however, the church may be of value, but the walls are covered by a hotch-potch of rendering and all dressed stonework is limewashed, (note Roman brick used in walls and buttresses). The RCHM description of 1922 is still apt: 'Condition—poor, very damp'. Ground level is very high and there are tombs close to the S wall; the floor bricks are loose and need relaying. The church has recently been declared redundant and will be taken over by the Redundant Churches Fund—this is difficult to understand since there are worthier causes for permanent preservation and, although conversion to a dwelling would not be easy, it is by no means impossible. Whatever transpired, a vast amount of work is necessary to put the church in order and a major archaeological investigation should be mounted since there is an obvious opportunity here to undertake a total internal excavation, accompanied at least by limited plaster stripping and structural study. At the same time the stripping of external rendering and excavation around the walls could take place. Thus, although nothing is known of the history or archaeological potential of Bergholt, it must provide an opportunity, under rescue conditions, for near-total

investigation, and such an opportunity should certainly be seized; there is unlikely to be much C19 disturbance, since the main restoration was in the C18, and apparently not drastic. The graveyard is important for its table-tombs, C18 headstones and the earthwork which forms its N boundary; all these must be preserved intact.

Grading: CIIIa (listed B)

BIRCH, GREAT, St Peter (and St Paul) (75A)

TL 9435 1990 In village. Not in RCHM. Useful guidebook by T B Millatt, *The Churches of Birch and Layer Breton* (1963). *TEAS* (ns) 20 (1931), 291-5.

A large, solid Victorian church erected on the site of the medieval one, which was demolished in 1849. It comprised a nave, chancel, bell-turret and S porch; said to be Norman, and a sketch of 1849 shows round-headed and C14 windows.

The site is of interest for its prominent position, but grave-digging of C19-20 must have destroyed much of the archaeology of the churchyard. The foundations of the C19 church are likely to be massive and have probably destroyed most of the medieval church. Internal excavation is the only hope, although not a great one, for the recovery of information. Birch is a monument to senseless Victorian ecclesiastical vandalism; the replacement church is of little merit in its own class.

Grading: DIIIc (unlisted)

BIRCH, LITTLE, St Mary the Virgin (75B)

TL 9501 2078 Isolated with hall (the latter demolished, late 1950s).

RCHM iii, 8 (sketch plan 1:576)

Nave, Saxon or Norman; C14 chancel; W tower, C14 lower stages with C16 third stage and stair turret. Now a roofless ruin, heavily overgrown and deteriorating rapidly. Has suffered several periods of ruin and repair since the early C17; made redundant by act of Parliament in 1816 and transferred to private ownership; the parish was combined with Great Birch. The nave is particularly important and matches very closely in its planning the Saxon church of Hardham, Sussex; the same architect may have been at work on both. The nave quoins at Birch are of Roman brick and there are unexplained pilaster buttresses at the NE and SE corners. Could they be associated with the support of an original central tower, which was removed when the present chancel was constructed? A major structural study is needed of the above ground remains, in conjunction with a carefully supervised programme of consolidation. C14 piscina and C15 quatrefoil light to the rood stair have been ripped out and stolen recently. Action is needed immediately—there are but three church ruins of any consequence in the Diocese, and this is the most important; public guardianship would not be inappropriate.

Grading: BIa (listed grade II)

BIRCHANGER, St Mary the Virgin (173)

TL 5073 2278 On edge of loosely ordered village.

RCHM i, 26 (sketch plan 1:576). Taylor, 1965, 70. *TEAS* (ns) 9 (1906), 417-9. An unlovely building with a lugubrious interior, all caused by clumsy C19 restoration. Saxon or Saxo-Norman nave with two very fine doorways; C13 chancel largely intact but restored; N aisle of 1898. A Saxon double-splayed window was destroyed when the aisle was built and a round tower (presumably at the W end) is said to have been demolished in the C18. Pevsner is wrong in asserting that the W doorway is reset and removed from the N side; whether either doorway is original to the fabric of the walls is another matter, which needs archaeological investigation. The walls are of various thicknesses and there is an arched recess in the S wall at the E end of the nave; there was once one in the N wall, too. They are difficult features to explain, except as openings to *porticus* or transepts. An acoustic jar, presumably now lost, was found in the wall over the S doorway. In all, Birchanger is a building full of potential interest, especially for the investigation of a closely tied series of Saxon, Norman and early English features; this must have been a most attractive church before Blomfield set about it. The S doorway had been buried beneath C19 accretions and was only rediscovered c 1930; it is now largely obscured by a shed, an oil tank and a pile of rubbish. Ground level around the church is high and unfortunately there is an open drainage trench with a brick gutter in the base; the external walls suffered C19 blanket refacing. In spite of all the damage and destruction, this church is still worthy of

investigation, both above and below ground, should the opportunity arise. Innumerable questions remain to be answered. Grading: A1c (listed B)

BIRDBROOK, St Augustine (146)

TL 7067 4113 With hall, on edge of village.

RCHM i, 27 (differentiated plan 1:300)

Large, two-celled Norman church, made even larger in C13 by extending the chancel eastwards and the nave westwards. Of the original fabric only part of the N wall of the nave and chancel remains visible, displaying herringbone work in Roman brick (recently repointed, very clumsily), there is much Roman brick reset elsewhere in the church; undoubtedly it was also employed in the quoins. The S side is now characterless due to blanket refacing in C19. Ground level is high and a concrete-lined trench has been constructed. Internally, the floors have been renewed, with imitation stone tiles, in recent years, undoubtedly involving the total, or near-total destruction of the below-ground archaeology. A major legacy enabled the pressure of restoration, begun in the C19 to continue steadily to the present day, with the result that the unwritten history of this interesting church has now been largely obliterated for all time. Nor has the churchyard survived—it has been thoroughly devastated and an incongruous rockery has been constructed out of gravestones; these include some particularly fine C19 examples, now disintegrating through frost action. Historically and archaeologically a write-off, although architecturally valuable for some good early C13 work. Grading: BBIIIc (listed B)

BOCKING, St Mary the Virgin (118)

TL 7570 2569 Centre of village, with hall, at road junction.

RCHM i, 30 (sketch plan 1:576)

A large, aisled church, with chancel chapels and W tower; impressive externally. The C13 S door is important, as are the C15 roofs; C19 stained glass is good; otherwise a mediocre late medieval church with no great archaeological potential, except internally, below the floors; for here, somewhere, there must be at least one earlier church, the importance of which lies in the fact that 997 is probably the date of the initial construction. There are no obvious threats to the existing floors, but should the opportunity arise, the chance of discovering a dated C10 church should not be missed. It is unlikely that any part of it survives in the present structure, which has, in any case, suffered a C19 blanket refacing. Internally, there must be many disturbances due to vaults and the C19 heating system, which would demand a large-scale excavation to obtain worthwhile results. The churchyard has been blighted with almost total clearance; amongst the headstones now around the boundary are some good C18 examples; and there is an elegant iron-railed tomb of similar date on the S side of the chancel; this is a valuable piece of wrought iron and needs urgent repair. The brick and stone boundary wall around part of the churchyard is an interesting construction, with several builds of C17 and C18 date; it needs both statutory listing and immediate repair. Little is known of the archaeology of the area around Bocking church, apart from the discovery of a Roman coin and a perforated Bronze Age axehead on adjacent sites. Grading: BB1c (listed B)

BORLEY, dedication unknown (141)

TL 8475 4307 Isolated with Borley Place (hall and village elsewhere, separately).

RCHM i, 41 (sketch plan 1:576)

Late C15 chancel and W tower; the nave is problematical in that its S wall is exceptionally thick and at the SW corner is one of the rare examples of long-and-short quoining in Essex. The significance of this seems to have been generally overlooked, yet it is very fine. Furthermore, two blocked windows can be detected through the plaster, also in the S wall. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Borley is at least partly an Anglo-Saxon building, albeit undatable. The walls are all cement rendered, unfortunately, but a foundation offset can be detected on the N side of the nave. A few fragments of Roman brick can be seen. The two magnificent Waldegrave monuments (1598, 1599) are in a sorry state and need expert attention. Although Borley is outwardly a rather dull little

medieval church, it obviously hides a great deal and would well repay study, above and below ground; the settlement morphology of the village is evocative of interest. There has been an unrecorded excavation in the chancel (4.6 ii). Although hardly archaeological, the topiary should be mentioned since it is unique in the archdeaconry. Grading: Clb (listed B)

BOXTED, St Peter (22)

TL 9984 3323 In village, removed from hall.

RCHM iii, 9 (sketch plan 1:576)

A most interesting and well-kept church, set in a pleasant graveyard. The building comprises an aisled nave, chancel and W tower. The lower part of the tower is Norman and has windows formed-in Roman brick: it may be an addition to an earlier nave, which is undated, except that it is no later than C12; the walls, however, are scarcely over 2 ft (0.60 m) thick. They contain the remains of round-headed windows, cut away when crude pointed arcades were pierced through in the C13 or C14, and the aisles built. The chancel arch is C12, but the chancel itself is a late medieval rebuild. The nave arcades are exceptionally interesting for their crudeness, being cut straight through the walls without the formation of imposts or the use of stone dressings. The wall-plaster is largely ancient and there is every possibility that paintings may be found. External ground level is very high and a deep trench has been dug along the north side; the walls are much refaced and were heavily pointed in the C19. The floors in the chancel and E end of the nave were repaved in 1935; the brick-paved aisles need relaying, when a valuable opportunity for archaeological investigation will arise. Lamentably, the base of the tower has recently been concreted and the opportunity to demonstrate its relationship to the nave lost. Boxted should rank high on the archaeological priority list, if and when opportunities to investigate arise; we cannot afford to lose any more information here (note C19 underfloor heating ducts). Grading: AA1b (listed B)

BRADFIELD, St Lawrence (29)

TM 1442 3078 In village, at road junction (well removed from hall)

RCHM iii, 11 (sketch plan 1:576). T D S Bayley, *Bradfield Church, Essex* (1962).

A heavily mutilated building of uncertain age; nave and chancel show C13 features; the tower may be of similar date, but much repaired; it is remarkably out of angle with the nave and the walls are unusually thin. A foundation, possibly parallel to the tower, was reported under the chancel floor, just E of the arch. The church was much altered in 1840 by the addition of transepts, Vestry and organ chamber; internally the walls are cement-rendered, with all stone dressings obscured by plaster or limewash; the exterior is a thorough mess of quasi-rendering. Assessment is impossible, but clearly there are early remains to be found, perhaps in the fabric as well as below the floors. Ground level is high all round; there is chronic dampness in the walls and timber Floors are beginning to give way; wall panelling is rotting and there is severe efflorescence in the plaster. Clearly a major opportunity for archaeological investigation must soon arise. Nothing is known of the local archaeology. Grading: CIIb (listed B)

BRADWELL-juxta-COGGESHALL, Holy Trinity (112)

TL 8180 2214 Isolated with hall.

RCHM iii, 12 (sketch plan 1:576)

Single-celled Norman building, the fabric of which survives in a remarkably complete state, although several C14 and C15 windows have been added. The church is of the utmost importance since it is the only substantial example of Norman brick-building in England. When the RCHM visited, the church was fully rendered, but upon the removal of cement, all quoins and dressings to windows and doorways were found to be of Norman brick, of the type produced at the nearby Coggeshall Abbey. Although blocked, the original window positions can be seen at the E end and the whole architectural arrangement of this one-period church reconstructed (apart from the W windows). Full study and publication are needed, which will involve some revision of