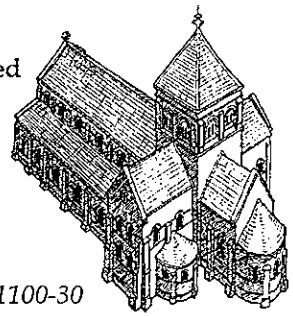
# The History of the Parish Church of St Mary de Haura, New Shoreham

This church was founded by Philip de Braose, whose father, William, had fought with William the Conqueror at Hastings in 1066. As a young Norman baron, Philip probably campaigned in the First Crusade (1096-99) in Jerusalem. It is recorded that he had returned to England by 1103, when he presented the church to the Abbey of St Florent, at Saumur (north-west France). In the 15th century, the patronage passed to Magdalen College, Oxford.

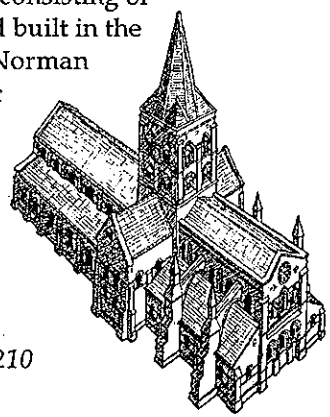
The original Norman church of about 1100–30 probably consisted of a nave, transepts, the lower stage of the tower, and a chancel with an apsidal (semicircular) end.



*Original Norman church of about 1100-30*

In the second half of the 12th century, the Norman chancel was taken down and replaced by the one we see today.

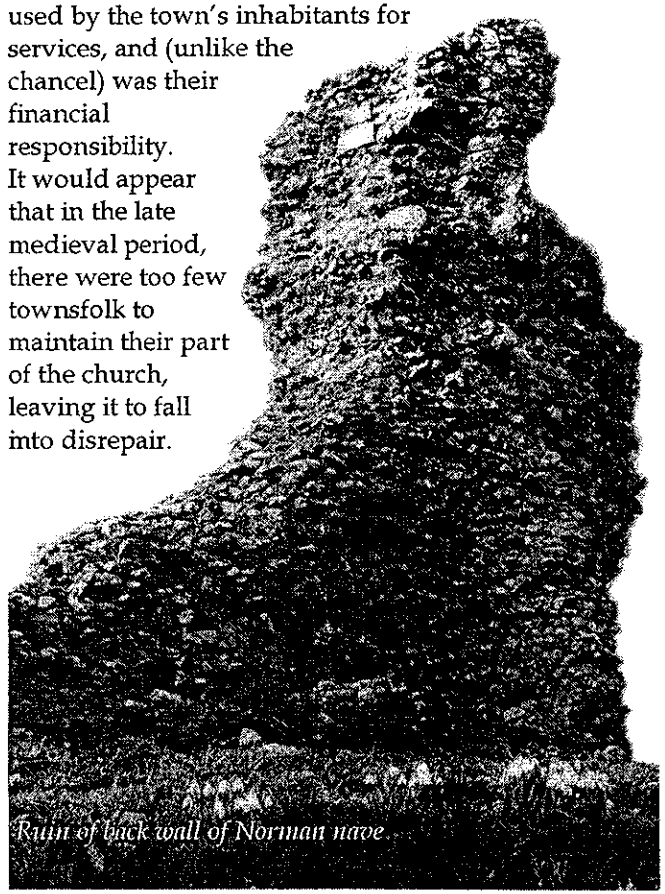
This chancel is much larger, consisting of five bays on three levels, and built in the Transitional style, between Norman (rounded arches) and Gothic (pointed arches). Both the chancel and its aisles are vaulted in stone, supported by flying buttresses. These features are most unusual for a parish church.



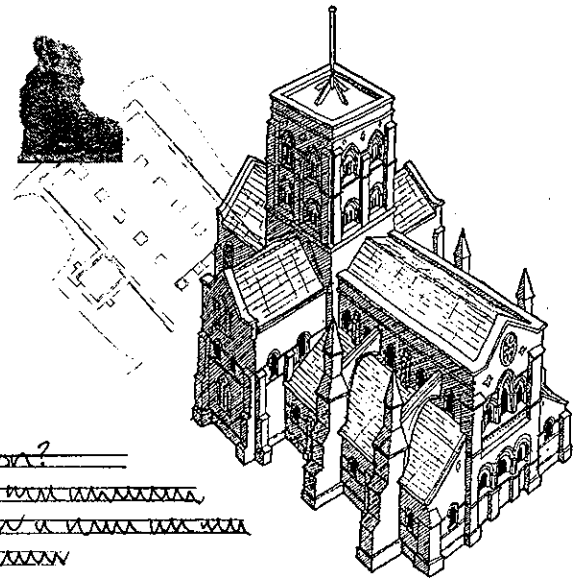
*Church enlarged about 1180-1210*

Between the 15th and 17th centuries, the town of New Shoreham diminished both in size and wealth. At this time, the sea advanced so far inland that more than half of the medieval town was swallowed up and destroyed. The River Adur was also becoming heavily silted, preventing trade vessels from arriving or departing from the port.

The ruin you see in front of you is all that remains of the back wall of the nave. This part of the church was used by the town's inhabitants for services, and (unlike the chancel) was their financial responsibility. It would appear that in the late medieval period, there were too few townsfolk to maintain their part of the church, leaving it to fall into disrepair.

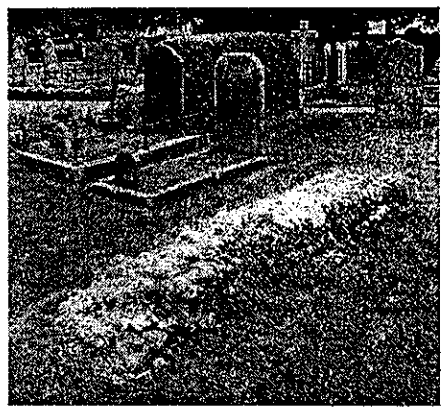


*Ruin of back wall of Norman nave*



Caption?

You may be able to trace the outline of the nave walls amongst the graves and grass in the churchyard around you.



*Ruined nave walls in the churchyard*

Documents tell us that by the later 17th century a large part of the nave had collapsed. In 1677, emergency repair work was carried out, but by the early 18th century, more permanent action was taken. No longer safe for services, and with funds limited, it appears that the remaining nave was demolished and some of the surviving building materials were used to patch up the present entrance behind you.