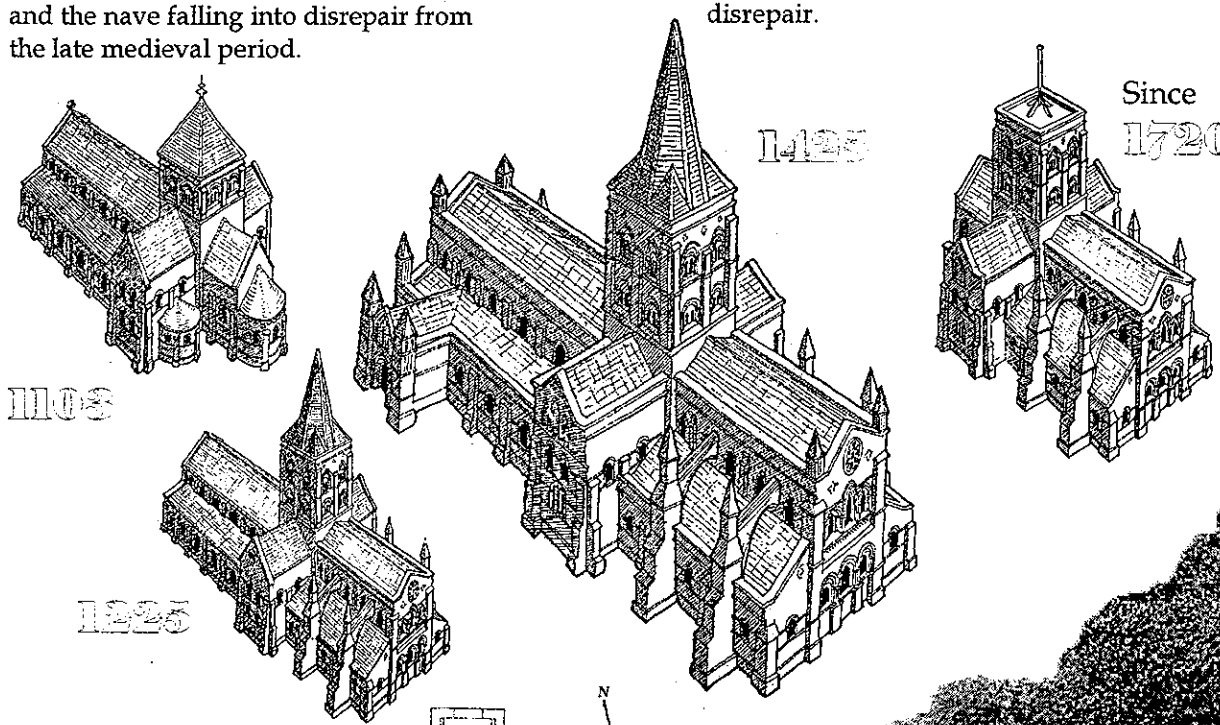
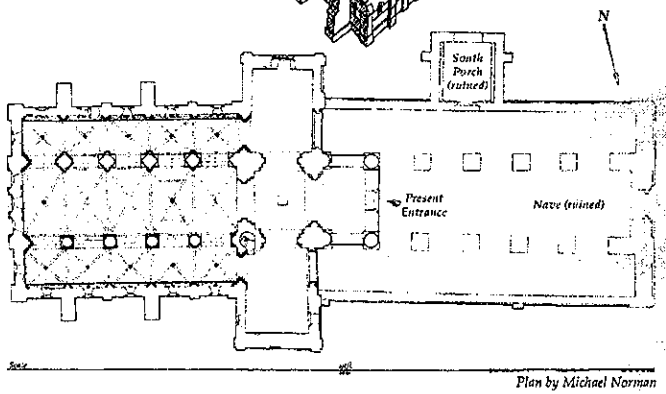
St Mary de Haura, New Shoreham

The original Norman church of *c.* 1100 probably consisted of the lower stage of the tower, the transepts, an aisleless nave, and a chancel with an apsidal (semi-circular) end. Around 1130-40 the nave was enlarged by the addition of aisles. Of this original building, the tower and transepts have survived intact, the choir having been redesigned by the end of the 12th century and the nave falling into disrepair from the late medieval period.

The ruin you see in front of you is all that remains of the back wall of St Mary's Norman nave. This part of the church was used by the town's inhabitants at services, and (unlike the choir) 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.





Plan by Michael Norman

From the ruin towards the church entrance, you may be able to trace the outline of the nave wall nearest to you – it appears as a long strip of raised ground. Halfway along this wall stood a large south porch, built in the 14th century. It most likely collapsed with the nave around the 17th century and is almost entirely invisible today (it extends under the Hospitallers' Garden). The porch was excavated in 1915, when medieval floor tiles were discovered.

Documents in the later 17th century record that a large part of the nave had collapsed. In 1677, emergency repair work was carried out on the nave by the two church-wardens, Richard Herring and William Harfill.

By the early 18th century, more permanent action was taken. No longer safe for services, and with limited funds, it appears that the remaining nave was demolished and some of the surviving stone, flint, brick and tile used to 'patch up' the present entrance. The four round columns near this entrance remain in place from the original nave (though now outside), but the carved pointed doorway appears to have been moved from either the south porch or the original west end.

