

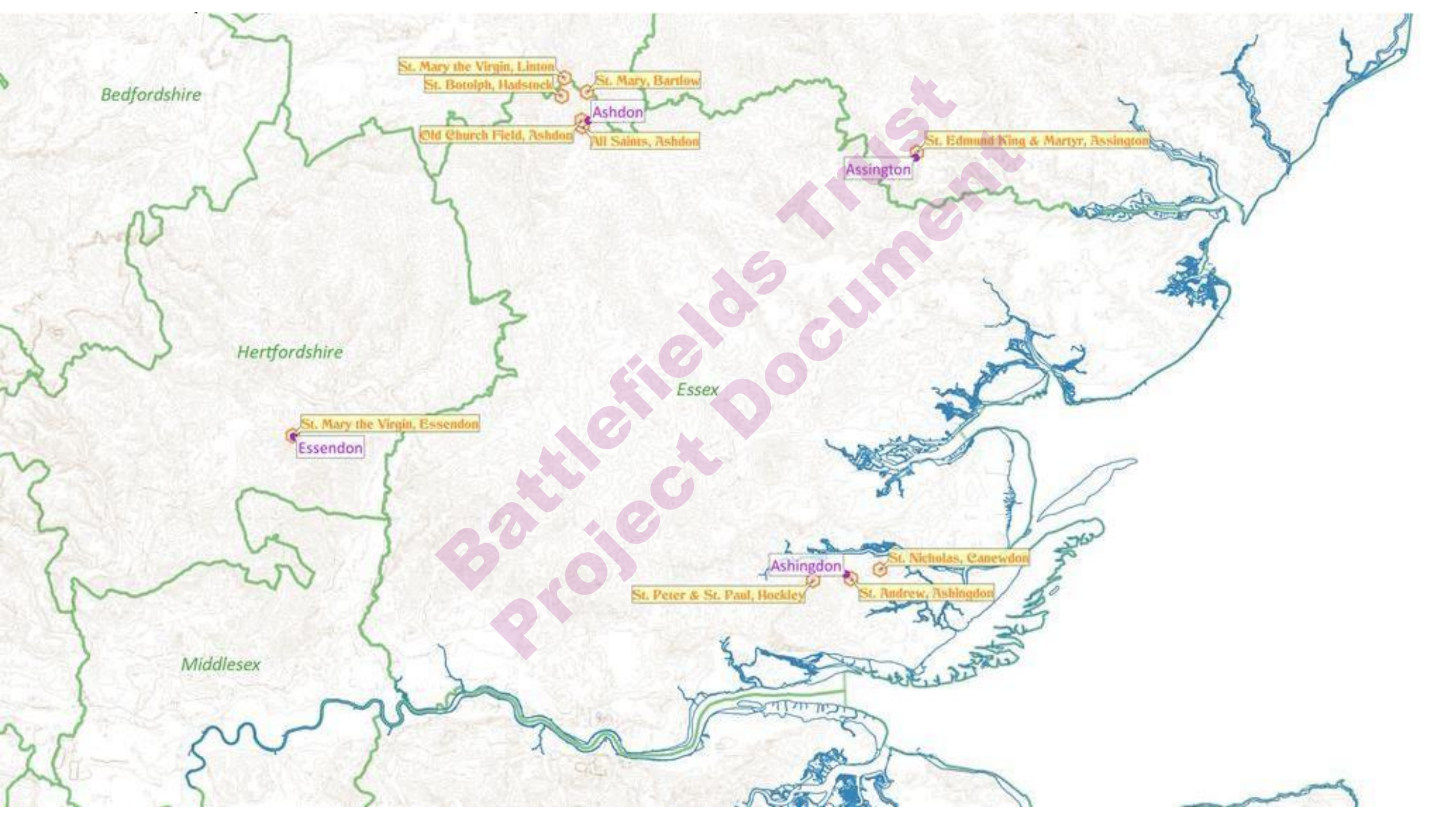
Cnut's Minster Church

Candidates for the Minster

Battlefields Trust
Project Document

Background

- A minster “of stone and lime” built 1020
- Cnut present at the dedication ceremony
- What is a minster?
- Not enough information pre-16th century to say where the minster might have been
- The general location of the minster is inseparable from, and dependent upon, the location of the battle
- The battle was fought “at Assandun” and the minster was built “at Assandun”, but does that mean on the battle site or at a distance from it?
- Minster should be easier to find than the battle site
- The first time specific candidate buildings for the minster are named is in the 18th century
- Comparisons with other Cnut churches elsewhere



Bedfordshire

Hertfordshire

Middlesex

Essex

St. Mary the Virgin, Linton
St. Botolph, Hadstock

St. Mary, Bardow

Ashdon

Old Church Field, Ashdon

All Saints, Ashdon

St. Edmund King & Martyr, Assington

Assington

St. Mary the Virgin, Essendon

Essendon

Ashingdon

St. Nicholas, Canewdon

St. Peter & St. Paul, Hockley

St. Andrew, Ashingdon



NORTH-WEST ESSEX

St Mary the Virgin
Linton ★

St Botolph
Hadstock ★

St Mary
Bartlow ★

Old Church Field
Ashdon ★

Church
★
All Saints
Ashdon

500 m
2000 ft

Map source = <https://en-gb.topographic-map.com/maps/b9/England/>

St Botolph, Hadstock, Essex

First suggested by RCHM 1923

Dedication to a Saxon saint who has connections with Scandinavia

Detailed excavations in 1974

Eight phases of building work, including three from the Anglo-Saxon period, the first of them being pre-Danish

Phase 3 was the building of a church with a central tower and “a structure of minster proportions”

Pre-Conquest building with cruciform plan

Large church in small parish

Connections with Ely Abbey

Royal patronage, though “no hint of a connection with Cnut”

Existing church site

HIGH PROBABILITY



All Saints, Ashdon, Essex

First suggested 1893 by local rector

Medieval village site adjacent to east end of churchyard

Skeletons found in the 1830s in medieval village

Tall skeletons found in churchyard in 1922

Foundations of a smaller church discovered inside it during C19 work

Many phases of development

Proprietary church not minster

“In terms of probability, Ashdon must be seen as the most serious contender for the site of Cnut’s church of 1020.”

“Weighing all the evidence leads us back to Ashdon, most plausibly for the battle site, but less certainly for the pursuit of Cnut’s minster church.”

HIGH PROBABILITY



Old Church Field, Ashdon, Essex

First suggested in 1993

Name dates from at least 1552

Close to rectory and its manorial lands

Old Church-field or Old-church Field?

1923 eyewitness account of ghostly fighting in the area

The Calendar of Close Rolls 1313 references St Andrew, Ashdon – where was this?

A 1700 map shows a parish church at “Terrells” (now Walton’s) – what was this?

HIGH PROBABILITY



St Mary the Virgin, Linton, Cambridgeshire

Cropped up in project discussions

Close to Roman road

South aisle c.1200 and part of a
cruciform church

Not in Essex and not on a hill – but
does it have to be?

No serious academic discussion

LOW PROBABILITY



St Mary, Bartlow, Cambridgeshire

First suggested in 1768

Round tower = “the Danish way of
building”

Not in Essex and not on a hill

Current building post-dates 1020 but
there may have been an earlier
building on the site

No serious academic discussion

“A red herring”

UNLIKELY



SOUTH-EAST ESSEX

St Peter & St Paul
Hockley

St Andrew
(formerly St Michael)
Ashington

St Nicholas
Canewdon

500 m
1000 ft

St Andrew, Ashingdon, Essex

First suggested in 1867

“The present stone church originated as a two-celled building in the eleventh century. The plan and proportions are consistent with a Saxo-Norman proprietary church of average size.”

Chancel potentially C11 and contains Roman brick – plan and proportions consistent with medieval origin but ground instability led to shortening and rebuilding of east wall

Originally the nave? Lost eastern extension = original chancel?

Rest of building mostly C14

Older foundations uncovered 1920s during erection of the vestry

Nearby Ashingdon Road is probably Roman

Delegation from Denmark visited in 1951 and funded repairs, but “fund-raising zeal has far outstripped academic integrity”

Small church whose “plan and form least resemble anything like an eleventh-century minster church”

“It can be stated with almost total confidence that Ashingdon church was not an Anglo-Scandinavian minster.”

HIGH PROBABILITY



St Nicholas, Canewdon, Essex

First suggested 1925

Large, complex church in a rural area

“Late-medieval form [predominantly C14/C15] could conceal a major Anglo-Saxon construction”

Measurements, including door positions, bear comparison with St James the Less in Hadleigh (Essex, 1140) and with the late-Saxon church of Breamore in Hampshire

Royal patronage and Henry II’s chaplain was vicar there

“The plan of Canewdon church owes its origin to a substantial early medieval building of greater pretension than is normally encountered in the proprietary churches of the locality.”

“No evidence for significant pre-Conquest ecclesiastical [land]holding at Canewdon, or for a pattern of glebe which would suggest anything other than a noble proprietary origin for the church.”

Limited academic support

HIGH PROBABILITY



St Peter & St Paul, Hockley, Essex

First suggested in 1789

- Barrows, but they are in Woodham Mortimer
- Hockley name derivation wrongly identified as “slaughter”
- Battlesbridge is from the “Bataille” family not a battle

Church post-dates 1020 but there may have been an earlier building on the site

Royal patronage

No serious academic discussion

UNLIKELY



ASSINGTON

St Edmund King & Martyr
Assington



St Edmund King & Martyr, Assington, Suffolk

First suggested in 2012 by the Heritage Gateway – this also suggests Ashdon, Ashingdon and Daneshill in Sussex though

Documentary sources refer to a monastery close to the church and the monks there praying for the souls of those lost in battle

Roman road a mile to the west of the church

Medieval village site next to church

3+ miles into Suffolk

No serious academic discussion

UNLIKELY



ESSENDON

St Mary the Virgin
Essendon



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Project's Document

St Mary the Virgin, Essendon, Hertfordshire

Proposed by momentousbritain.co.uk

Not in Essex but “East Seaxan”

Approx. seven miles from the Essex border

Largely rebuilt in 1883 – C12 “Norman fragments” found

Rectors’ list begins in 1213

Tower = oldest surviving part: pre-1539?

No serious academic discussion

UNLIKELY



Conclusions

High Probability

- All Saints, Ashdon
- Old Church Field, Ashdon
- St Botolph, Hadstock

- St Andrew, Ashingdon
- St Nicholas, Canewdon

Low Probability

- St Mary the Virgin, Linton

Unlikely

- St Mary, Bartlow
- St Peter & St Paul, Hockley
- St Edmund King & Martyr, Assington
- St Mary the Virgin, Essendon

Questions?

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A photograph of a Viking longship on a lake at sunset. The ship is dark and filled with people, moving across the water. The background features rolling mountains under a sky with soft, colorful clouds. The text is overlaid on the image.

And finally, some thoughts on
our future plans....

Steve Davey