

Saint-Leu-d'Esserent

The first church was founded in 1085 and the two remaining western capitals hale from the 1080s, suggesting that the first church was built very quickly, possibly to the same height as the narthex gallery.

The western narthex was the work of the 1110s. Though the lower level has been systematically rebuilt, the upper gallery level has many original capitals with clear connections to at least 8 carvers who can be traced in most of the contemporary buildings of this era.

Eastern foundations from the chapels to the bases of eastern towers had to be built to a considerable height from the fall in the land. At floor level the apse sills are like those in the St-Denis apse, as are the original single-light windows to the chapels, which is why I suggest a date of 1144 for this lower walling.

The thin buttresses to the lower wall are angled to centre, possibly for flyers (as was also possible at one stage in St-Denis). The design for the buttresses was altered near floor level. There may have been a significant delay at the chapel drips. As the capitals around the ambulatory suggest a date well after Saint Denis and even after Senlis, some time in the mid-1160s.

It would be natural to look to the sequesting of monies for the crusade as the cause of such a lengthy delay at this level.

Work continued after the crusade and included the structures for the two towers. The choir gallery and arcade arches were supported on the old church, shown by the fact that the capitals on the gallery jambs are earlier in manner to the ambulatory drums underneath, as in St Remi and Noyon; and as chapel and ambulatory vaults were built together, both would have been built at this time, in the later-60s.

The ambulatory drum capitals were not inserted until the 1180s, also as in St-Remi, and the nave the vaults in the choir in the next decade,