

## *Welcome to this Abbey Church !*

This is the burial place of William the Conqueror and an exceptional heritage site, but it is first and foremost the House of the Lord, a place of prayer and recollection. Discover the unique elements of its architecture, walk up to the grave of William the Conqueror, admire the chapels, the furniture, the works of art and the great Cavallé-Coll organ. Enjoy its magnificent liturgy and immerse yourself in the beauty and the peace of this sanctuary.

## **The Abbey Church of Saint-Etienne**

Founded by William the Conqueror in 1063, its construction spanned 600 years from the 11th to the 17th century. It is the burial place of William the Conqueror. The Abbey Church is a unique and exceptional masterpiece of both Romanesque and Gothic architecture.

### **Contact:**

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### **Mass times:**

Daily: 7pm ♦ Sunday: 9.30am, 11am, 7pm



Tour guides are available for guided tours or to give you further information:

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- aster - All Saints Day: daily 2pm-5.30pm
- All Saints Day - Easter: Saturday and Sunday afternoons

<http://www.guides-st-etienne-caen.fr>

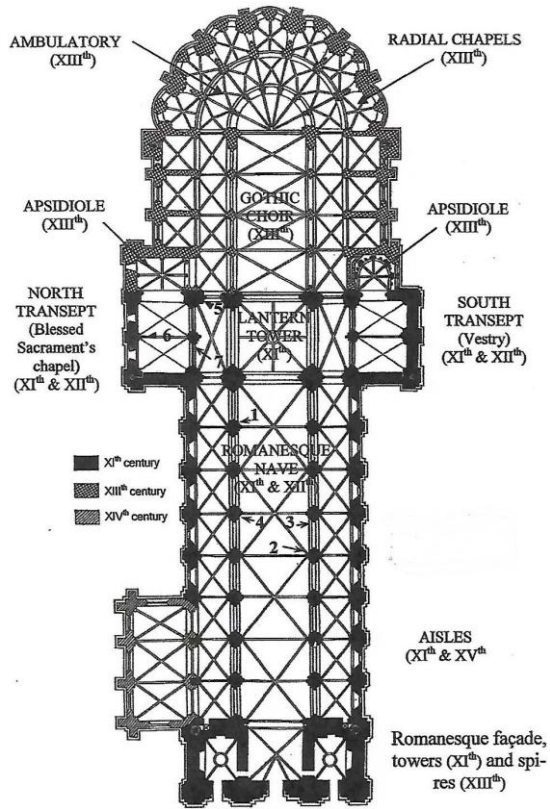
This flyer was compiled thanks to the work of the **Society of Friends of the Abbey Church of Saint-Etienne** - [www.abbaye-aux-hommes.fr](http://www.abbaye-aux-hommes.fr) - who compiled a **comprehensive booklet** on the history and exceptional architecture of the Abbey Church. It is **available for purchase near the Vestry (€2)**.



## *The Abbey Church of Saint-Etienne*



*The Abbey Church of the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, Caen*



Plan of the Abbey Church



Grave of William the Conqueror

### A few historical milestones:

1063: the Abbaye-aux-Hommes, or Men's Abbey, was founded by William, Duke of Normandy

1065: construction began

1077: the Abbey was inaugurated in the presence of Lanfranc of Pavia, former prior of Le Bec Hellouin Abbey, Archbishop of Canterbury and first abbot of Saint-Etienne

1087: William the Conqueror died ; he was buried in the transept and the only remaining relic - a thighbone - was later transferred to the choir

13th century: the Gothic choir was built with an ambulatory and side chapels. It replaced a former Romanesque sanctuary

1562-63: the Abbey Church suffered extensive damage and plundering at the hands of Protestants (furniture, stained-glass windows, archives)

1566: the Lantern Tower (crossing tower) fell over the choir. The Abbey Church was unfit for use for 60 years. Reconstruction work began in 1606

17th century: the Abbey Church was furnished with stalls and pulpit

18th century: the high altar, lectern and Paschal candle stand were added

1790: the monks were expelled from the Abbey and the Abbey Church became a parish church in 1802

1880: the great Cavaillé-Coll organ was installed

1925-28: the choir rail was put in at the bequest of Mgr Des Hameaux who was then the parish priest

1944: the Abbey Church served as a refuge for just under 1500 people during the June and July air raids. It emerged from the bombings unscathed.

