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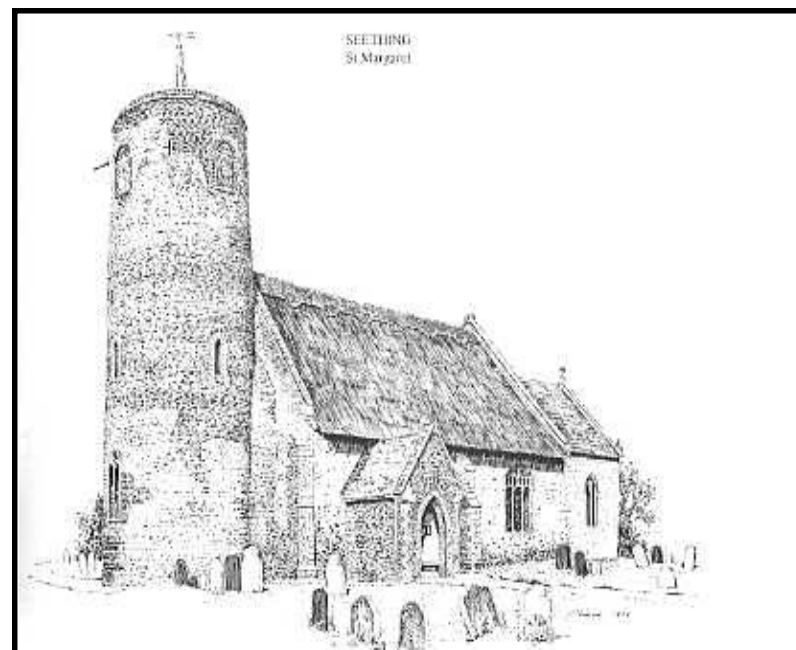
Vol. XXXV1 No. 2 December 2008



# The Round Tower

Vol XXXV1 No 2

December 2008



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earlier period can be seen at the cathedral in Lund built by Knud the Holy. This major church appears to have built on the model of older Anglo-Saxon churches and although evidence is slight, it has been assumed by the director of archaeological excavations undertaken there that it was the work of Danes who had come from England. They had been expelled after the Norman Conquest and, it is conjectured, in this way they had expressed for their longing for the country which had become their home (ref. 3). There is therefore a case for associating the round-towered churches of Skåne which were clearly constructed to protect, if not defend, the city of Lund, and with a proposition that they may have been erected under the influence of the culture of round-towered churches of East Anglia. This is a supportive argument for the suggestion East Anglia was the source of the style of the round-towered church in Scandinavia. The geographical density and total number of churches in East Anglia make the case a pretty convincing one.

#### Footnotes:

Ref. 1: Detached round towers which make use of adjacent buildings that have no organic relationship with the church itself are known. One such example is Vilnius Cathedral, Lithuania where the round bell tower was formerly a bastion in the fortified complex of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania. Similarly, at Signaghi (capital of the Kakhete Region of Kiziki) in the Republic of Georgia, the bell tower of the church is formed by one of the twenty three towers of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century city wall built by Erekle II.

Ref. 2: It is probable that the name of this village “Thorsager” is derived from the Nordic god Thor and that the site of the church was originally a pagan shrine.

Ref. 3: See Olav Olsen, “The English in Denmark”, contribution to “The Vikings in England”, the Anglo-Danish Viking Project London, W1H 7DD, 1981, pp. 171 – 175. Is it conceivable that Morten, assumed stonemason for the four round-towered churches in Skåne, (see our earlier articles in Round Tower Churches magazine), could have been one of these Danes ?

*H.T. Norris and T.S. Norris*

#### **Membership Subscription**

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To join the Society, please make contact with the Treasurer:-

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#### **Cover drawing: Dot Shreeve**

**Photography:** *St Mary's Church, Eccles on the Sea, reproduced with kind permission of Norfolk County Council Library and Information Service.*

*Thank you to Bernd Jatzwauk for photography of the Saarland and Alsace-Lorraine churches we visited on the tour - see website, [www.roundtowerchurches.de](http://www.roundtowerchurches.de)*

*Additional thanks to Simon Knott at [www.norfolkchurches.co.uk](http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk)*

#### **THE ROUND TOWER**

**The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society**

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**The next issue is March 2009 and the deadline for insertion is Friday 30th January 2009.**

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## ST MARGARET & ST REMIGIUS, SEETHING, NORFOLK

This flint church consists of a round west tower with a small spirelet, a thatched nave, chancel, south porch and north vestry. The nave is about 26'6" wide with 2'9" thick side walls, but the irregular configuration of the nave west wall each side of the tower externally shows that it has been widened by the later building of its side walls a few feet further out than their original alignments. Cracks in the plaster of the west wall internally and the limited extent of the remnants of the original nave west wall outside could be indications that the original nave's internal width was about 21 feet.

When the nave was widened, the western returns of its new walls were not built as thick as the original nave west wall and this difference in thickness shows at set-backs of about 10" where the later west walls join the remnants of the thicker original ones, which measurement has shown were about 3'3" thick. On average, only about a foot or so of the original west wall remains each side of the tower and the original SW and NW quoins have gone, leaving deformed and out-of-plumb angles where the quoins would have been; as these extremities are so out of true and devoid of any material larger than the normal walling flints, they are clearly not former quoins but simply the residual wall from which the quoins have been robbed. The logical presumption therefore is that the original quoins would have been dressed stone, because, had they been flint, it seems unlikely that they would have been robbed as these old corners obviously have been; flint quoins would simply have been left in situ, like on other similarly widened naves, e.g. Titchwell. If the old quoins had been stone as seems likely, that could be evidence for a Norman date for the original nave, on the assumption that stone had not been available in East Anglia before the Conquest. On this conjecture, in conjunction with the Norman evidence of the tower (see right), it seems likely that the tower and original nave were contemporary.



Remnant of the original nave west wall, robbed of its quoins, seen between the later, thinner buttressed west wall of the widened nave on the right and the fillet and the tower on the left

and a reward for their attacks. The metal of the bells was greatly prized for manufacture of arms and, in particular, were supplied to iron smiths who forged the warriors' weapons. Hence, a round church or a round-towered church had to house bells, yet at the same time it had to be sufficiently defensible so as to deter armed intruders. This was an essential factor in the round construction of the building.



Round churches, for example at Thorsager, and particularly those on Bornholm, had to have a campanile frequently detached and isolated from the church itself. On the other hand, a round-towered church is susceptible to providing this facility in its very structure. At a later period, towers were built onto round churches in order to house their bells. We see this in the incongruous example of Thorsager Church (square tower, before 1878 A.D. *see above*); this square tower no longer exists.

It is remarkable that the earliest round-towered churches in East Anglia and those in Skåne share many common features. One explanation maybe that during the reign of Cnut the Great about 1030 A.D., Denmark's first stone-built church was erected in Roskilde by Estrid, the sister of the King with the assistance of English stonemasons in order to execute the construction work. A few years later, a second stone church was built in Roskilde. This building has a portal which is still preserved and is executed in a characteristic style which is known only from then contemporary stone churches that were to be found in Eastern England. It should be noted that expertise was propagated from East Anglia and beyond to Denmark and potentially further to Skåne. Is this significant; feedback would be appreciated?

When this empire collapsed in 1042 A.D., a change in the relationship between England and Denmark occurred. However, a last reminder of this

## Romanesque Round Tower Churches and Round-Towered Churches: a marriage of convenience

Before the 11<sup>th</sup> Century and well into the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Romanesque round churches are a characteristic feature of many parts of Christian Europe and beyond it. They are to be found as far as Norway in the North, for example St Olav's Church of Tønsberg (circa 1100 – 1200 A.D.) and Skørstorp's Church (1100), and Croatia in the South, such as St. Donat's Church (circa 800 A.D.) Zadar, which is Carolingian in style. Likewise, we find comparable churches from Little Maplestead, in Essex, and the Temple Church in London, in the West, to Zwart'nots Church in Armenia (641 – 666 A.D.) and to the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem in the East; the latter church is arguably the ultimate archetype of all these rotunda churches ([ref. 1](#)).

We have already mentioned such churches in our article "Round Tower Churches of Skåne, Southern Sweden (*Vol. XXXIII No. 2, December 2005 pages 42 to 51*), namely the so-called "Bishop Absalon" rotund and round-towered churches. The most famous amongst these are the four round churches on Bornholm (Østerlars, Nykirke, Nylars, Olsker), and the church at Horne in Funen, and the church of Thorsager ([ref. 2](#)) (1200 A.D.) in Jutland, Denmark. All these churches are built of stone or brick and they share in common a round plan of construction.

Alongside these Danish examples of rotundas are to be found the round-towered churches of Skåne, then part of Denmark, Schleswig Holstein and East Anglia. These churches date from the age of Cnut the Great and the Anglo-Danish era that followed. In all these regions, both round churches and round-towered church were parallel and variant forms of church construction.

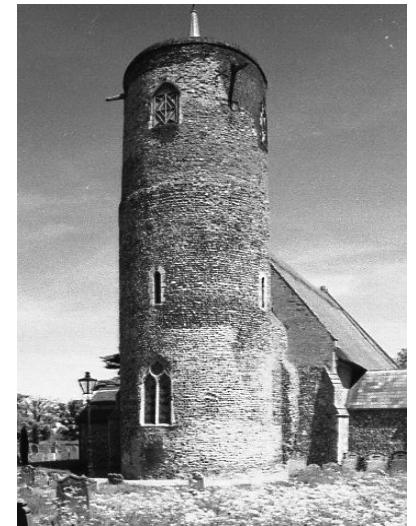
The purpose of at least some of these towers and rotundas was sometimes defensive, although this was by no means the case; for example, it is believed that the round churches of Bornholm were built to defend against attacks from the invading Wends, Lithuanians and other Baltic peoples. The same purpose pertains to one or two of the round-towered churches in Skåne, for example Hammerlöv Church. On the other hand, certain churches, for example Thorsager Church, are not considered to be defensive buildings. It is believed that the upper-most floor of this church may have been used as a place of refuge, even if its defence was not contemplated. We should make a clear distinction between a "refuge" and a "tower built for defence". Bells were essential to call the faithful to worship, albeit, bells were also a major target for raiders and marauders who found such bells to be a valuable target

There are slightly convex fillets between the tower and the remnants of the old nave west wall, and their flintwork seems to course with the tower walling and seemingly also with the old nave west wall remnants, providing further evidence that the tower and original nave west wall were built together.

The widened nave has diagonal buttresses at its corners. The chancel east wall may also have been rebuilt (replacing a Norman apse?) reusing the old nave west quoin stones.

The tower is circular to the top but clearly of two separate stages, differentiated at roughly two-thirds of the tower's height, i.e. at about nave ridge level, by a noticeable off-set in the tower wall profile, above which the walls taper. The lower stage fabric is well-coursed rubble flint but the upper stage flintwork is in a different style and incorporates medieval brick.

The tower has a ground-floor internal diameter of 11'3" and a wall thickness of 4'6". The west window is a later insertion in the Decorated style. At first-floor level in the lower stage there are three narrow round-headed single-splayed windows at south, west and north. They are framed with dressed stone inside and out, and internally the window embrasures are splayed to about 2 ft. wide. Their voussoirs are wedge-shaped, and continuity of the shuttering board marks on the flintwork arch between the inner and outer stone heads shows that the stonework was not inserted later, nor is there any evidence of any disturbance to the fabric inside or outside above the arches which might indicate flintwork reinstatement had they been inserted. On the contrary, the well-coursed flintwork above the arches, particularly internally, is clearly undisturbed original work. These windows and their stonework must therefore have been built with the wall, and they and the lower stage of the tower and its fillets can be confidently dated as Norman. This attribution is supported by the Norman character of the tower arch which is round-headed and has stone dressings to its jambs and arch on both faces of the opening and stone imposts returned on the nave and tower walls. It is 5'9" wide in reveal and 10'7" high to impost level and the



Seething church tower from the south-west

arch is 4'6" thick at the crown, the same thickness as the tower wall measured at the west window. Above the arch, the tower east wall is a flattened curve.

The upper door in the tower east wall at first floor level, blocked in the nave, has flint jambs and reveals and a semi-circular head formed in flint. At the tower face of the opening, a board supporting 9-inch post-medieval brick infilling up to the arch soffit has been inserted across the head, though its purpose is obscure unless it is simply to 'square' the opening for a doorframe no longer there; the original construction of the opening is unaffected by this minor modification.

There are four single-light belfry openings in the cardinal faces of the upper stage. Those at west, east and north have original stone jambs, but renewed arches comprising a single header course of post-medieval brick forming shallow pointed arch shapes on east and west and a deep segmental curve on the north. The south opening, with a double-ring semi-circular arch, is formed entirely in post-medieval brick within a large area of walling rebuilt in similar brickwork.

Within the tower, at a level estimated to be about the same level as the external profile change, the inner face of the walling of the upper stage is set back a few inches, forming a ledge. Above this level, a difference in the internal fabric is noticeable, and like the outside of this stage, it incorporates medieval brick. In this top stage, as on the outside, there has been much repair in post-medieval brickwork but sufficient original work remains to show that the belfry openings have or originally had medieval bricks in their jambs and arches internally.

In the internal wall at the top of the lower stage, there is evidence of four former openings, now blocked. At SW, NW, NE and SE, pairs of vertical straight joints in the flintwork about 3 ft. apart extend downwards from the ledge for about 4 ft. and are probably the jambs of former openings whose heads were evidently sacrificed in subsequent alterations; a decayed horizontal board between one pair at their lower end suggests that that was the cill level of these openings. The straight joints show that the openings had flint jambs, but as the flintwork used to block the openings is flush with the wall face, it is not possible to tell whether the embrasures were splayed or straight.

With knowledge of the internal blocked openings, examination of the tower at the corresponding positions externally reveals suggestive indications of blocking which, if unsuspected, could easily be overlooked or dismissed as repairs; most convincing is perhaps at the NW where there is quite a large patch of medieval brick.

Cox's measurements for the Tower differ from those of Teasdel's as follows; only half of the circular part stood above the sand dunes (2 metres), and the other 9 metres remained buried in sand. Tower 5.5 metres in diameter with 1.4 metres thick walls.

### 3. Analysis of the building

The elongated plan form with a square end to the chancel suggests a late 13<sup>th</sup> or early 14<sup>th</sup> century date. The nave and chancel had similar flint work suggesting that they were built together. The circular part of the tower had thick walls and single light western openings but they in themselves do not indicate an early date. The eastern side of the tower wall abutted the nave with a flat wall indicating that it was added to an existing nave. Teasdel's plan suggests an overhang over the tower arch would have been needed on the upper eastern side of the tower or that external side of the tower would have been flat. There are a number of late 19<sup>th</sup> century photographs of the tower held in the Local Studies section of the Norwich Public Library. Most are rather indistinct but neither of these features can be seen on them. Near the peak of the nave roof, a large patch of lighter stone or other materials can be seen; perhaps repairs.

The cylindrical and octagonal parts of the tower share the same type of flintwork so they could have been built at the same time. The window and tower arch of the cylindrical part follow the same orientation as the body of the church. The east-west axis leans towards the south-east and north-west respectively. Alternatively the four belfry openings in the upper octagonal part are closer to the cardinal points. The two sets of openings appeared to be out of synch with each other, which supports different dates for the two parts of the tower. The Decorated style of the belfries and battlements is mid 14th century in date unless they were anachronistically late. The local historian, William Cooke who published a reconstruction view of the church in 1908 suggested Y-bars and intersecting tracery for the windows. That may have been true for some of the windows but not the belfries.

The upper part of the tower, the south arcade, the buttressed aisle and porch may have been added about the same time. Chisel marks on the stone buttress quoins suggested a late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century date. The existence of a north porch has been questioned. A photograph of circa 1880 shows two ladies sitting on the stub walls of the chancel. To their immediate right appears to be the east wall of the north porch.

After the sea took away the sand bank, its foundations were battered by the waves. The tower fell between 6-7pm on 23 January 1895. In 1991, a storm scoured the sand from the church's foundations. An archaeological investigation followed and Teasdel's measurements of the church were confirmed.

## 2. Data list

### Tower:

The circular part about 14 metres high; octagonal part 8 metres; overall height 22.86 metres.

Scaling off Teasdel's drawing, an internal diameter about 3 metres; walls 1.5 metres thick.

Battlements with stone copings, string course and quoins but no flush-work or gargoyles.

Belfry openings, pointed with a quatrefoil and double cusping to twin lights on all four sides.

Tower arch, tall and wide but no stone jambs visible in photographs. On the western side, a single light opening with a cill about 4 metres above ground. Another of similar appearance near the top of the circular section of the tower with jambs and cill of stone. Head arch gone by 1890.

Selected, well coursed flints on both the circular and octagonal parts of the tower. A marked in-step where the octagonal part sits on top of the circular part of the tower.

### Nave:

7.32 by 18.29 metres internally with 90mm thick walls.

South aisle; about 2.5 metres wide with an arcade of four bays. The south side with diagonal and straight buttresses. A south porch was noted in 1862 by William Cooke and a north porch was suggested by Ernest Suffling. There was a step up to the chancel and a chancel arch implied.

At least one burial was recorded in the nave.

### Chancel:

About 6 metres wide by 9.75 metres long internally. Diagonal buttress.

Two priest burials inside the church under stone coffin lids with crosses on them.

The off-set in the tower walls, the difference in the flintwork of the two stages and the inclusion of medieval brick in the upper stage fabric clearly indicate that the upper stage was a later build than the lower, and from the evidence of the headless blocked openings at the top of the lower stage, it seems that the present upper stage replaces an earlier belfry which had been taken down to a level part-way up these openings; they were then built up solid as the base for the present upper stage, which on the evidence of the medieval bricks within its fabric is post-Norman and probably not earlier than late 13th century. The ledge is not, as has been claimed, a Saxon feature but simply defines the level from which a thinner belfry-stage wall was built on the thicker Norman wall below.

The ridge level of the original narrower nave would have been well below the cill level of the four blocked tower openings, so they may well have been the original Norman belfry openings, though their non-cardinal orientation is unusual but not unique. If so, the top of the original tower might have been at about the level of the present belfry cills.

It is of interest that the jambs of the blocked openings are formed with flints, and likewise the upper door, whereas the first floor windows have stone dressings internally. This shows that contemporary Norman openings in this tower used both techniques.

It has been suggested that the tower has been recased. But that is to ignore the fact that the flints in the tower walls course with those in the fillets and that, had the tower been recased, the fillets would have been covered by the recasing! Also, the internal embrasures of the first floor windows show that their outer stonework is unlikely to have been an added skin.

In addition to its architectural history, the church has much of interest internally. Extensive, if faded, wall paintings of the 14<sup>th</sup> century include the Three Living and the Three Dead, St Christopher, the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Coronation of the Virgin, and other subjects. The Seven Sacrament font, circa 1480, is one of Norfolk's thirty of this kind.

### **Suggested Dating**

**C.12:** Original church and tower built. **C.13 or early c.14:** Present belfry replaced original Norman one. Nave widened. Conjecture: East wall of chancel rebuilt reusing quoins from west end - replacing an apse? Chancel windows altered. **C.15:** Perp. windows in nave. South Porch, rebuilt in C.19 **C.18:** Extensive repairs to belfry stage with post-medieval brick.

*Stephen Hart*



## SUMMER TOURS 2008 PART 1

Screaming swifts, harbingers of summer, skimmed above as we gathered in sunshine at Wacton All Saints in May. Here, nave and chancel are under one roof and there are very good 14<sup>th</sup> century windows along the whole length of the building. Decorators had been at work inside but this did not prevent our enjoyment of the 14<sup>th</sup> century three stepped sedilia and piscina under an ogee-foiled canopy.

A grassy rutted lane approaches Shimpling St George, which is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. The tower has an octagonal belfry stage topped by a lead covered spire. Builder's mesh fencing surrounded the tower, but it was possible to see that the coursed rubble flint incorporated some medieval brick and the quoins of the octagon are of similar material. The stair turret is also an interesting feature. Timber-framed construction in churches is unusual in East Anglia proper, but here the 16<sup>th</sup> century porch is a good example. On the glass in the nave windows angels play various late medieval instruments. The great surprise, however, is the chance to view 15<sup>th</sup> century tiles about a foot and a half below present floor level. On lifting a trapdoor in the floor, one can see the tiles, which have a running deer pattern.

Gissing St Mary has a splendid tower, with flints in even layers and circular double splayed openings framed with flint. The stone framed double belfry openings have round heads of the Norman period and both north and south doorways are also Norman. The north door is plainer but the south has scalloped capitals and zigzags around the arch. The north porch has notable 15<sup>th</sup> century flushwork. Inside, the double hammer beam roof is a dramatic spectacle with many angels. As so often, one wonders at the skill of the medieval craftsmen. The profusion of Kemp memorials reflects the family's long period as Lords of the Manor from the 14<sup>th</sup> until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On a far from "flaming June" day our first call was Norton Subcourse St Mary. Many had wisely come prepared with rubber boots. From the outside, the building gives the impression of great length, with nave and chancel under one roof. Indeed together, they measure just over 100 feet. Inside the church, the white plastered ceiling helps to give a

and west. Further west the Chase 'Estuary' covered a large area before it silted up. Even if part of that was included in Eccles as well as a large area of foreshore, it is difficult to see how the parish was ever more than 340 acres. That figure would still allow the first church to be over 500 metres from the later one.

An early 14<sup>th</sup> century date for the church is supported by the accumulation of archaeological finds recovered from the 15 wells, cottages, tracks etc found on the site in 1991, which were predominately of the same period or later.

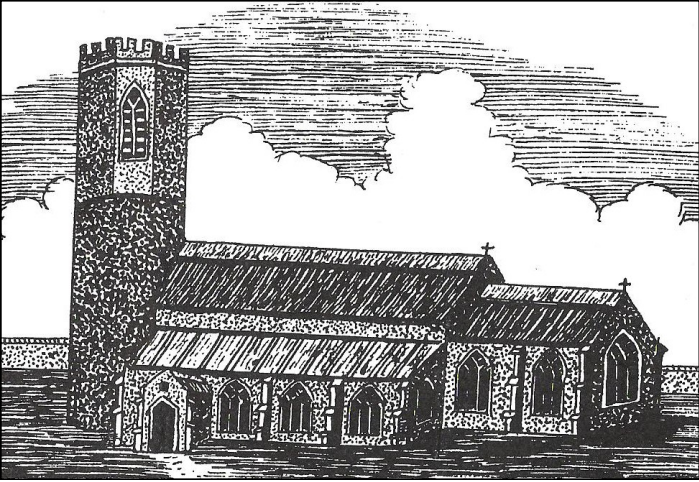
A survey of the coast made in 1592 stated that Eccles and Caister were the only places between Yarmouth and Cromer where large boats could be beached and refloated at high tide. Trade, fishing and the right to claim wreck ships and cargo, were the staples of Eccles's moderate prosperity in the Middle Ages. They help to explain why such a small village could afford to build and enlarge a church with such a tall tower; endow it with the means of worship and support three chantries within it. Between 1370 – 1550, 15 bequests were made to the church in Wills. In 1390 money was left for two bells and reparations to the fabric. Further bequests were made in 1470 and the early 1500s. These had tailed off by 1552 when the 'Church Goods Survey' was made. It was noted that the church was already out of repair – perhaps the thatched roofs had begun to fail. Eccles was not included in Bishop Redman's itinerary of 1597 when he toured the churches of the neighbourhood. In 1601 the sea defences of Eccles were breached during storms and the area was flooded. A notable inhabitant of Eccles died in 1603, stating that he wished to be buried in Hempstead rather than his home parish. The petition of 1605 (see left) stated that Eccles Church was in ruins. By 1643 only the tower remained visible. Its circular part was buried up to a third of its height in the sand banks. This helped to preserve it for the next 350 years. The Yarmouth architect, James Teasdel drew a measured plan of the church in 1893.



Remains of tower



## ST MARY'S CHURCH, ECCLES-ON-THE-SEA



A drawing by William Cooke of his impression of St Mary's Church, Eccles before its destruction by the sea .

### 1. Historical background.

'Eccles' is a place-name signifying an early missionary church. The 1086 Great Survey recorded only two small farm estates in the parish so this was a fishing rather than an agricultural village. An early Anglo-Saxon church would probably have been built in the village on the coast. Considerable amounts of land have been lost to the parish due to sea erosion so its location is now far out to sea. The story of Eccles parallels that of the church in Shipden (later called Cromer) some 15 kms further north-west along the coast. Both were hit hard by severe storms in the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both parishes were granted permission to rebuild their churches in 1338/39. Shipden's new church was relocated 500 metres further inland from the old one. The same thing probably happened in Eccles.

The retreat of the shoreline since the early Saxon period and the distance between the two churches (old and new) can be estimated from claims made by Eccles Parish to the Norwich authorities for a tax rebate:

1605, they claimed the parish had been reduced from 1300 to 300 acres; from 80 people to 14 households.

1643, the parish had been reduced from 2000 to 100 acres.

The wide variation between the early figures for the two dates suggest they were exaggerated and are unreliable. The 1886 Ordnance Survey shows the parish boundaries shared with Sea Palling to the east; Hempstead to the south

light atmosphere. Features include a good early 13<sup>th</sup> century Purbeck marble font, a fine 14<sup>th</sup> century east window, a double piscina and matching graduated sedilia, with ogee arches also 14<sup>th</sup> century.

At Thorpe next Haddiscoe St Matthias, there was some discussion on the date of the tower with its decorative flint pilasters and double light belfry openings – Saxo-Norman seemed an acceptable compromise. The nave is thatched and the porch appears to be 14<sup>th</sup> century, while the chancel is a rather unfortunate late 1830 construction of red brick. Entering by the narrow Norman south doorway and stepping down into the nave, the Purbeck marble font catches the eye. To the left, in the southwest corner of the nave, is a double aumbry with the remains of an oak shelf.

Haddiscoe St Mary, much admired by our late founder, has long been one of my favourite churches, since first seen from the window of a bus heading for Yarmouth on a childhood Sunday School treat. Set high in the landscape, its tower, with regular string courses, stone framed double triangular headed windows and a later chequered parapet section, is magnificent – the Queen of the Round Towers. The south doorway is fine Norman work, with an exquisite carving above of a priest in chasuble, perhaps a representation of the Lord in Majesty. The door has been described as “covered with splendidly barbaric ironwork of an early date”. To me it is a thing of wonder. Inside, fragments of wall paintings survive, including a St Christopher. In the nave is a black grave slab, engraved in Dutch, to a long ago drainer of the marshes in these parts. The memorial to William Salter, formerly in the churchyard wall, now inside the church, lies to the north of the tower arch, the churchyard wall being in a state of partial collapse. Salter was the Yarmouth Stagecoach driver killed in an accident nearby during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The inscription in rhyme tells of him ‘Elijah like driving up to heaven’. Perhaps one day the wall may be restored and the stone put back. A memorial window to Mrs Arnesby Brown shows the church so often painted by her husband John Arnesby Brown R.A. This church draws artists to it; in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was an inspiration for John Sell Cotman and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century Leonard Squirrel.

*Stuart Bowell*

## ROUND TOWER NEWS

*Joseph Biddulph writes after reading the reprinted article on Mass Sundials featured in the September 2008 issue (XXXVI No.1).*

‘Seeing ‘Lyn Stilgoe’s item and having recently revisited the particularly fine sundial at Bishopstone—not far from the three round tower churches of Sussex—I looked up the correspondence I had in 2005 with Mr David Scott of New Milton, Hants., who seems to divide the dials into two groups:



1. The Anglo-Saxon dials carefully carved on a separate piece of stone. The one marked EADRIC at Bishopstone (left) is a particularly fine example, and it is over the south door, partly obscured by a Norman porch.

2. Norman and later ‘Scratch dials’ incised directly into the structure of the building. The multiplicity of these, even on the same building, may have been because of the need for different readings at different seasons.

In a rather obscure passage, the Anglo-Saxon text of *Byrhtferth’s Enchiridion* (pages 112 & 113 Early English Text Society/Oxford University Press 1995) suggests that sundials were well known and were used by ordinary parish priests as clocks: Four *puncti* (marks) make one hour in the sun’s course, and the point is so called because the sun advances point by point on the sundial.

It is said that the EADRIC dial at Bishopstone is from the 9th century and is made of limestone from Quarr in the Isle of Wight: most of the structure at Bishopstone is of flint.

What puzzles me is, how did the makers manage to place their dials at exactly the right angle and position for their latitude? As the research for my recent book, *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Studies* demonstrated, any Anglo-Saxon who was literate had access to the works in Latin that brought with them so much of the culture of the Mediterranean world. It might seem pure folly to try and tell the Hours this way in our overcast climate, but if the learned authors gave them enough mathematics to tackle the job, I suppose the dial would also in itself have been a symbol of book-learning and civilisation.

If I may use the pun, I feel we have scarcely begun to scratch the surface of this interesting subject.

*Further reading - Christopher St. J. H. Daniel, Sundials, Shire Publications, 2004*



Weyer

Another church, another mayor, French this time (putting Bernd’s translating skills more to the test) who had kindly waited for us after our leisurely lunch. Weyer’s tower was built in the 11th/12th century along with others as part of a common defence line. A nave was attached late 14th/early 15th century but only a bricked in door and window with gothic tracery remain.



Metting

Our final stop was the church in the village of Metting, with its slightly leaning tower. Unfortunately it was locked, and Bernd had been unable to find a key holder, but we did manage to walk around the outside and look at the memorial stones.



We crammed so much into two days that we all felt we had been away longer. Our introduction to the churches of this area were a real joy as we encountered so much variety. In addition, we experienced the warmth and interest of the local congregations who kept the interiors, with all their treasures, in such good condition. We all enjoyed the tour and would like to especially thank Bernd who worked so hard—not just in the preparation but with his interpreting skills. In addition, all the

guides who gave up their weekend and made the tour complete—a visit to a church without the mayor turning up will never be the same! We have already started a list for the next tour so if you would like to participate please let me know... Susan





Farschviller



Heckenransbach



Berg

Standing in a prominent position overlooking the edge of the village and fields beyond only the tower of Farschviller survives. Monsieur Christophe Muller, the local mayor, gave us another warm welcome and called for a ladder to be brought so that some of us could climb the 12th/13th century tower. A lot of pigeon guano awaited us but we had a good view over the churchyard and countryside. On the ground floor there is a small chapel with a statue of Mary. A local legend suggests that whilst the tower bells were being transported by oxen to hide them during the war, the animals stopped in the woods and would go no further. The bells were left where they were and eventually lost. A walk on Easter Day in the woods may now be accompanied by the sound of bells ringing.

Clustered on a small hill in the centre of a horseshoe of houses stands Heckenransbach with its very unusual tower. The upper part of the tower looks like a small house and in this rectangular chamber the villagers would seek refuge if the village was under attack. The key keeper allowed us a quick look inside but we were told in no uncertain terms that we could not climb the tower!

High on a ridge we could discern a white tower with a tapered roof and our next stop turned out to be the delightful small chapel of Berg. The nave had just a single row of benches and a simple wooden ceiling. However the position was idyllic and the view from the tower to the valley below quite stunning. Next door is a restaurant which serves the local speciality of Flammkuchen. A thin dough (like a pizza) is covered with crème fraîche, onions and bacon and cooked in a wood oven. They continue to cook until you have had enough! We left space for apple and rhubarb tart—and enjoyed the local wine. A leisurely stroll down the hill to walk off lunch and the opportunity to look back up at this remarkable little chapel was most welcome.

## Sponsored Bike Ride

‘It is with great pleasure that I can tell you that I raised exactly £300 on this year’s ride, half of which of course will go towards re-thatching West Somerton’s church. I have never before reached £300 and this was largely due to YOUR generosity as you contributed £194 for which I and the parishioners of West Somerton are most grateful.’  
*John Scales*

## From the archive....THE HOLE IN THE WALL

Viewers of John Timpson’s ‘Country Churches’ on Sunday 13th September saw the wafer oven at round-towered Burnham Norton. Timpson pointed out that this item is ‘very rare’. It is therefore with some pride that we can mention another wafer oven to be found in the lower part of *internally* round - towered Old Buckenham. Readers may remember that Mr Sherlock Holmes and his friend Dr Watson visited this church in 1898, as reported in our December 1977 magazine. Watson mentioned ‘a cupboard containing the cleaner’s mops and brushes’, but omitted to say that it concealed the wafer oven. Holmes, of course, did investigate behind the cupboard, but what he found was, like the Giant Rat of Sumatra, ‘a story for which the world was not prepared’. It would moreover have made ‘The Adventure of the Octagonal Tower’ inordinately long, so the story has remained in Watston’s dispatch box in the vault of Cox’s bank.

It was only recently that the secret of the wafer oven at Old Buckenham was again revealed. The cleaner’s cupboard has been moved to one side, and now, at a convenient height some 3 feet above floor level, a small rectangular alcove contains the hoover flex, dusters and a plastic dust-pan with brush. The sides, base and upper ledge of this opening are framed in ashlar, while the back is flint, rendered and whitewashed. It measures 2 feet 3 inches high, 2 feet 1 inch wide and 1 foot 4 inches deep. Behind the upper ledge, hidden from general view, can be seen the basic flint with a blackened opening, 9 inches in diameter. This opening was for a flue which would have passed laterally through the wall, over 5 feet thick at this point. It is known that the tower was refurbished during the early 17th century.

There is an interesting wall painting, (c.1360), in Karlštejn Castle near Prague. It shows St Václav, Duke of Bohemia, (our Good King Wenceslas) baking eucharistic wafers at a similar wall oven. He holds an implement rather like those waffle makers that we used to buy at the Ideal Home Exhibition.

*Brian Turner—first published Vol XXVI No 2 December 1998*

## TOUR OF THE SAARLAND AND ALSACE-LORRAINE 2008



Rheinheim

Bebelsheim

Erfweiler-Ehlingen

Zetting

### Saturday 13th September 2008

Undeterred by the weather we left our hotel after breakfast. Along with Bernd Jatzwauk and our driver for the tour, Leonardo, we made our way out of Rastatt and crossed the river Rhine through Alsace-Lorraine to Reinheim (*featured in XXXV No 3 March 2008*). Herrn Becker, a local historian, met us on the steps of the church and gave us a guided tour in German! Fortunately Bernd jumped in and translated for us—a task he would have to repeat many times over the weekend. Of particular interest were the colourful and highly decorated pulpit and altar and the gothic chapel now used for baptisms at the base of the AD950 tower. Accessed by steps down from the nave, this sanctuary features lancet windows and a cross vault with human faces on the boss and mould ends. A sacramental niche with an ‘eye of God’ brings light to the dead outside to join with the living inside. Ms Heidi Kügler, author of the brochure “Rundturmkirchen im Bliesgau” and whose work has been featured in the recent Bliesgau article joined us for the rest of the tour and provided her own insights into the buildings and their history.

Our next stop was Bebelsheim St Margaret, one of the churches on the Speiz/Metz part of the Jacobean Way—an old pilgrim route, with an 11th/12th century tower thought to be part of an original fortified house belonging to the knights named after Bebelsheim. Our guide awaited us in the church and drew particular attention to the ‘Ways of the Cross’ the oldest being from 1695. Bomb damage meant major repairs to the church in 1955, fortunately not the tower, but the beautiful painted ceiling was lost. Our tour continued with an ascent of the tower to the bell platform and a visit to the vestry to look at some of the embroidered vestments, antique chalices and books. A lunch stop followed providing an opportunity to shelter from the rain and to sit and discuss all that we had seen.

To St Marcellus in Erfweiler-Ehlingen (*featured in XXXV No 3 March 2008*) next where we were met by the local church architect, Herrn Quack and the mayor of the village, Herrn Bubel. Earlier excavations showed that the church tower was built on the remains of a Roman villa. A bathhouse with hot and cold water nearby suggest that the villa was lived in by someone of high status. The tower (beside the east end) is believed to be 12th/13th century and is built of quarry stone crowned by an octagonal, tapered helm roof. In 1955, the refurbishment complete after the war, a new 5 bell (square) tower was built at the west end.

Our final visit of the day was to Zetting (*featured XXXVI No 1 September 2008*). The entrance to the church is through a doorway in the 9th century tower which has a spiral staircase up to the bell platform. A guide from the Tourist Information Centre kindly showed us round what turned out to be the highlight of the day. Stained glass windows of such quality - second only to the cathedral in Metz—are a complete surprise in this village church and dominate the elevated chancel. Highly decorated ceilings, intricately carved panelling and pulpit together with the gilded wooden altar all added to the setting.



Still staggered by the beauty of this church we made our way to our hotel, Viktor’s Residence in Saarbrücken. That evening, gathered around a large table, we enjoyed an excellent meal, good local wine and beer and looked back at the many high lights of the day.



Farebersviller

### Sunday 14th September 2008

Sunshine! The first visit of the day was to Farébersviller and again we were met by the mayor (we were getting used to this) Laurent Kleinhentz. An enthusiast and historian in his own right he kindly gave us copies of the ‘History of Farebersviller’. Modern stained glass windows, glass chandeliers and ornate paintings feature quite strongly. Of particular interest is a scene of Christ preaching from the water. The artist used the faces of local people in the village so there is a permanent record for generations to come. Once more we had the opportunity to climb the tower to just below the bell platform and look at the castings of the four bells. A few of us also took the opportunity to scramble through a small opening in the tower wall to inspect the upper floor of the nave.