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Vol. XXXV11 No. 2 December 2009



The Round Tower

Vol XXXV11 No 2

December 2009



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The 'Survey of Church Goods', made after the Black Death in 1368 says that Burgh St Mary's church had the following items:- five liturgical books; 2 pairs of vestments; a stole; various altar cloths, towels and altar frontals; an oil lamp, pyx and a pyx veil, crismatum (oil vessel); Eucharist Box; a shrine box on the altar with a leather cover and a hand bell. No tower bells were mentioned though they may have existed even in such a small parish church. No Bible was mentioned as printing had not yet led to its wide circulation. This long list was fairly standard amongst Norfolk parish churches. The number of items is surprising and it is testimony to the extent of lay bequests and gifts from such a tiny parish.

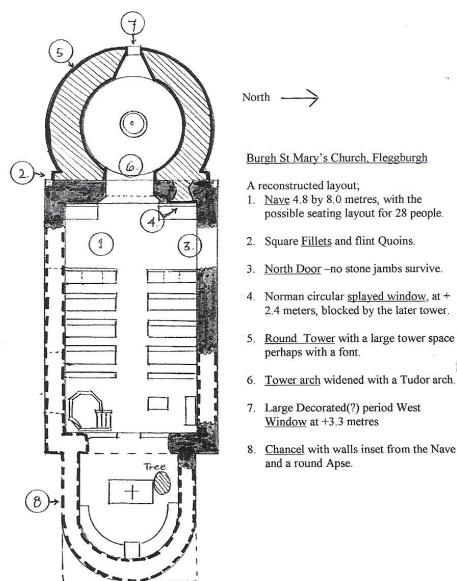
The 'Church Goods Survey' of 1552 when the valuables of every Norfolk church was sequestered by the state shows a much reduced list from the previous one but there were two bells and one clapper in the tower. Its valuation and contents were comparable with the list from its larger neighbour Burgh St Margaret's:- a silver chalice and patten; two lead candle sticks; a copper-gilt cross; a lead-lined holy water stoup; vestments, five of Bruges satin, one of damask and tourney silk, two of white fustian and an alb; a green and red Bruges cape; two linen altar cloths and five surplices.

The last rector, Robert Cannard was presented by the Bishop in 1554 when there was a lapse in patronage. St Mary's was closed between then and 1580 when the two sub-parishes of Burgh were united. By 1600 the former church

was reported to be a ruin yet a local farmer who had formerly been a Norwich alderman, was using it as a barn, no doubt with a leaky roof.

As this church is so little altered from its original form it is of great archaeological interest. It offers an important contribution to our understanding of the churches built in the Norman 'overlap period' when the earliest round towers were probably built. It urgently needs public support and funds in these harsh economic times for its future preservation.

Richard Harbord



A big thank you to all those who were moved by my heartfelt plea and provided both editorial and ideas for future articles. In this issue we journey from Suffolk to Belarus via church ruins in Norfolk and a box of sand in Cambridgeshire. Along the way join Philip Evans as he cycles round Suffolk and look out for Maureen Hershman's notes on a round tower visit in 1996...keep up the good work!

The next issue is March and the deadline for insertion is Friday 29th January 2010.

Please note the new contact details for the Editor's office and send all items to:-

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www.norfolkchurches.co.uk
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THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

Vol. XXXV11 No 2 December 2009

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Membership Subscription

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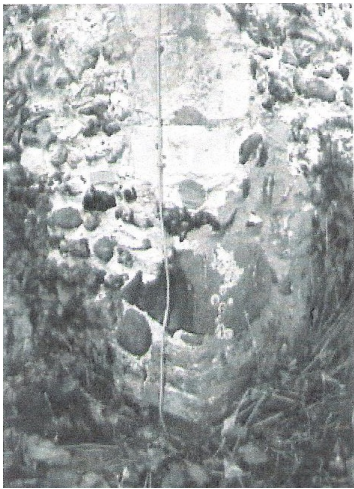
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ASHBY ST MARY'S, SUFFOLK

Standing isolated in open countryside along a rural track, the church consists of a nave and chancel in one under a thatched roof and a west tower with a low circular ground stage surmounted by an octagon of more than twice the height of the base, terminated with brick crenellations.

The chancel, a little wider than the nave, has dressed stone quoins, lancet side windows and a four-light east window of questionable provenance with plain lancet lights. Except where alterations have been made to the nave south wall in the area of the rood stair, the walls of the nave and chancel are both of uncoursed, closely-packed as-found flints. The pointed south door is twice-splayed and the north door is blocked. The walls, windows and doorways suggest the Early English period of the late thirteenth century for the nave and chancel.



The south-west corner of the nave

Both the west corners of the nave have dressed stone quoins, probably of Caen stone, but their lower parts are in different materials – modern brick to about four feet high at the north-west corner, and at the south-west the lower two feet consists of brick, an erratic and the odd flint. In support of a Saxon attribution for the church, these mixed materials have been interpreted as the remnants of Saxon quoins, but were that so, it would mean that the stone quoins, claimed as replacements of Saxon material, would have been introduced only upwards from two or three above the ground, which seems most improbable; it is much more likely that the stone quoins are the original corners and

that the lower parts of both are repairs. It is always the material nearest to the ground that is most liable to deterioration and most often found to have been replaced.

The tower is built on a plinth weathered with sloping medieval bricks laid edgeways and topped with a level course of similar bricks; the plinth is partly concealed by vegetation and rising ground levels but visible on the north side. There can be little doubt that this brickwork is part of the tower's

local family of that name so perhaps they owned Burgh St Mary's chapel. The Clere family of Ormesby owned the sub-manor and church patronage from 1243 until it closed in the 16th century.



St Mary's tower covered in ivy left and the north doorway, right



Only the tower and north wall remain. The apse of the short chancel can be implied from church records. Only its foundations below ground survive. The western quoin has been robbed of its stones. From their indentation in the remaining wall, the stones appear to have been large flints. There was a circular window in the western gable wall of the nave. This was blocked when the later tower was added.

Neither *Nikolous Pevsner* or *H. Munro Cautley* mentions Burgh St Mary in their books on Norfolk churches. Using the early window; the small size of the nave and the flint quoins as diagnostic dating features, *Goode* says the church could be Anglo-Saxon in date. There are no other datable features. Even the flint type and its coursing are hidden under blankets of ivy. The early circular window suggests a Norman date for the nave. The tower has squared filets, which rise above the original eaves, which may have been raised. The octagonal upper stage of the tower, providing the belfry, had tall openings. The springs of their arches survive but not the arches themselves. The tower is about the same width as the nave so the circular window in the west gable was then blocked up. At least one large window seems to have been inserted in the north wall at the same time. As the tower space is wide and the nave was small, it is probable that the font was placed in the former. This would still have allowed seating for only about twenty eight people.

THE RUINED ROUND TOWERED CHURCH OF BURGH ST MARY, FLEGGBURGH

It is reported that there are nearly a hundred ruined churches in Norfolk of which at least ten had a round tower, including Burgh St Mary. Norfolk County Council has an ongoing programme to stabilise the crumbling ruins of these Scheduled Ancient Monuments. A deep fissure from top to bottom of St Mary's tower threatens its survival. Sadly Burgh St Mary's church has not yet benefited from the stabilisation programme. The ruin is shown on old 1" scale OS maps with a public footpath leading to the ruin, but not on the modern maps. The lack of public access and its location on private agricultural land may be reasons for its neglect. Instead the ruin is the secluded haunt of the local youth and survives at their mercy. The church was never more than a tiny chapel serving a small part of an extended parish, recently Fleggburgh. Is the building of any archaeological value and is its neglect of any significance?

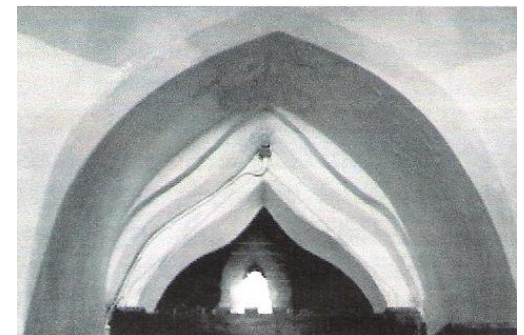
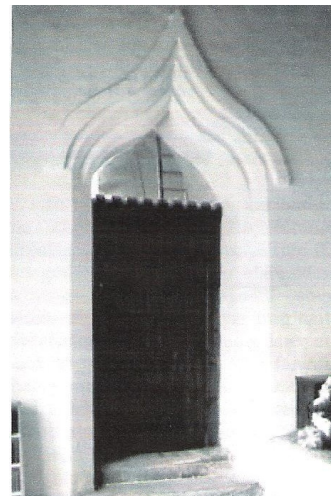
The ruin stands half a mile due east of Burgh St Margaret's, which is the present parish church. This has a Norman door and is wholly thatched. The ruin of St Mary's is hidden amongst trees but its location is given away by the name of lane on its south side—Tower Road. Another route on the north side, which has now disappeared, may have connected St Margaret's, passing St Mary's across a narrow neck between two Broads—Rollesby and Ormesby. It continued eastwards to Ormesby village where there was another round towered church with an apsed chancel—all now completely gone. This route would have been two hundred metres north of Rollesby Bridge. The place-name 'Burgh' means 'a fortified place'. Roman bricks can be seen in the church's walls - so did the name derive from a Roman guard-post next to the causeway or crossing between the Broads?

The Danes heavily settled the north-eastern part of Norfolk. Coincidentally there are many round-towered churches around St Mary's (but not as many as on the Norfolk-Suffolk border) and conversely, there are very few churches with crossing towers. The Great Survey of 1086 lists two main estates in the parish. These belonged to rival magnates - the bishop and earl. This two-way split could explain why there were two churches in the parish. The early bailiffs of the Bishop were the de Burghs. In the late medieval period this family became great magnates and absentee land-lords yet in 1242 they still claimed ancient rights of warren and fishery on the sides of the broads adjacent to St Mary's churchyard. Burgh *Vauxhall* Manor was held by the

original structure, as later insertion of such a feature into an existing wall would have been virtually impracticable causing seemingly unnecessary disturbance. As the bricks are unlikely to be earlier than late 13th century, they date the base of the tower as no earlier than the octagon which contains similar bricks.

The circular ground stage of the tower with an internal diameter of 9'1" and walls 4'2" thick is about 15ft. high, above which it is octagonal externally with eight lancet belfry openings and medieval brick quoins at the angles between the octagon faces and in the dressings to the belfry openings. The exterior flintwork of the octagon is not significantly different from that of the circular stage except for the inclusion of occasional medieval bricks. Internally, the circular ground stage and the octagonal stage are circular and the unplastered walls above first-floor level contain putlog holes of medieval brick as well as many similar bricks at random within the fabric. The upper door with a pointed arch, is also formed in medieval brick and there is no reason to suppose that it has been altered from an earlier pattern but it has been blocked with later brick.

The tower arch, presumably the same age as the tower, has a pointed arch. It is 4'6" wide in reveal, 10'6" high to the apex and measures 4'2" thick at the head. It appears to have been modified in the 14th century by the construction within it of a narrower doorway 3'9" wide with an ogee head of two orders, and a flat ogee hood mould facing the nave, all plastered.



The tower arch from the nave left and from the tower, above

The nave west wall measured outside the tower is 2'9" thick (the same as the side walls); with the 4'2" thickness of the tower's curved east wall at the tower arch apex, this could imply either a tower built with the church or an added one. The similarity of the tower's lancet west window to those in the chancel and the lancet style of the belfry openings might seem to suggest that tower and church are contemporary, and the apparently later ogee alteration to the plain pointed tower arch tends to support that conclusion. But if that were so, a late 13th century date would represent an early use of medieval brick. If, on the other hand, the tower is considered to be an addition to the nave, its lancet style suggests an improbably short interval between the two building campaigns, and the ogee tower arch alteration would represent a further phase, perhaps when the upper door was blocked.

Where the upper stage or stages of a round tower are octagonal, it seems to have been too readily assumed that they are always additions to an earlier circular lower stage, without adequate consideration being given to the possibility that the circular and octagonal parts might be contemporary. In several cases, evidence in the fabric suggests that upper and lower structure could be the same age and there is reason to believe that the arrangement of an octagonal upper structure on a circular ground stage was a considered architectural phase of the post-Norman period which came into favour in the 13th century at about the time of the wholly octagonal towers at Buckenham and Toft Monks. The tower at Ashby is probably one of the earliest in which the clearly post-Norman belfry stage is contemporary with the circular base stage and the evidence to support this includes the similarity of the external flintwork of the circular and octagonal stages and the post-Norman features of the circular stage, i.e. medieval bricks in the plinth, the lancet west window and the pointed tower arch.

In support of a Saxon attribution, the continuation of the internal circularity of the ground stage into the octagonal stage has been claimed as proving that the octagonal stage below the belfry was also originally circular on the outside being later cut back to octagon shape. This fanciful theory was based on the assumption that a tower built circular internally would also be circular outside. But of course, a circular internal profile does not preclude an octagonal shape externally, as is shown by the fully octagonal towers at Buckenham, Toft Monks, Old Buckenham and Kettlestone and the octagon of the round tower at Ilketshall St Andrew which are all circular inside. It is much more likely that the tower at Ashby was originally built as it is because of the impracticability of paring, refacing and quoining the walls of an existing circular flint tower to an octagonal shape. In any event, the medieval

LETTERS

"As an organist I was interested to read the article regarding the placement of pipe organs in round towered churches. The photograph of the Pugin case at South Pickenham reminded me of a family holiday we had in 1981 when we stayed in an annexe in The Rectory garden. The Rector at that time was Canon Derek Green who was also Rector of North Pickenham and worked for Scripture Union. I can remember playing the organ and recorded the specification in my notebook. As you look at the case the Great is in the main case whilst the short-compass Swell is below it, immediately above the console in what is known as the "Brustwerk" position - very unusual for an English organ. I don't think the doors to the organ case were in position. I think there was a notice in the church to the effect that they were awaiting funds for restoration. It's good to see that they are back in position. It's a shame that the pedal pipes (a later addition?) are arranged behind the case and spoil its silhouette. If they were to be painted white at least they would be camouflaged to some extent - highly appropriate for an organ moved from a Battle Training area! *John Radford*

"I felt I had to write a letter of thanks about the Study Day at Hoxne church on Saturday 4th October..."

Our Chairman Stuart Bowell and members of the committee must be congratulated for organising this event. We had three of the best church historians—Roy Tricker who had us under a spell whilst talking about Hoxne church, Anne Haward who explained about the documentation of church information and illustration and Clive Payne who let wild on St Edmunds King and martyr. All three gave outstanding lectures and should be congratulated. A mention was made of Stuart's attire—but those of us who know him know he is a free spirit and a Norfolk boy! Even the weather kept fine for the event—there must have been someone out there watching over us. Thanks for an enjoyable day." *Roger Batty (hopalong)*.

John Scales passes on his thanks for your support for the Norfolk Churches Trust bike ride...

"I have received a letter from the church warden at St Peter's Holton in which she calls my cheque for £229.50p "really excellent!" Much of that sum was, of course, due to your generosity, for which I am most grateful. I don't think I can remember a lovelier day for cycling, and here in South Norfolk, half of the twenty churches I visited had round towers."

LETTERS

“ I was particularly interested in the photograph and text about the Pugin organ in South Pickenham on pages 8 & 9 of the September 2009 (Vol XXXV11 No. 1) magazine. I remember the surprise I felt some years ago when I came upon an organ which seemed quite inappropriate (as it seemed to me) to a village church with a round tower. The late Bill Goode refers briefly to it in his book, simply saying that it has a ‘very fine case’, and that it comes from West Tofts in the Thetford Battle Area.

Clearly, the Pugin connection, and the fact that West Tofts (as the Professor Norris article suggests) was an unusual church cry out for an article in the magazine. So far as I can see, Bill Goode has no description of it, nor do I know of other than passing references. Have I missed something somewhere?

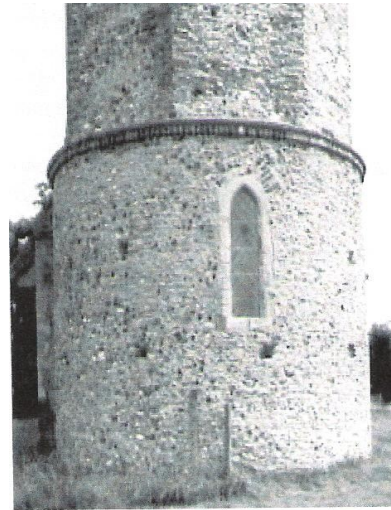
Is it possible that one of your regular subscribers could help in this regard?

I turn to the question of organs generally in round tower churches. Sadly I do not play, but I love pipe organs and always look when I visit old churches. East Anglia has a treasure trove of interesting organs, from the huge Snetzler in St Margaret’s, Kings Lynn, and the smaller example by the same maker a few miles up the road in Hillington, to the fascinating variety of small instruments in the round tower churches. I will admit to secretly playing well loved hymn tunes ‘by ear’ and two fingered in Gayton Thorpe (a church in which my old friend Rev. Alan Bidnell preached occasionally when Methodist minister in Lynn many years ago). I have little doubt that a study of organs in the round tower churches would be fascinating—and only regret that distance precludes me doing this.

Indeed while we rightly consider the building and architectural hints as to its origin, I feel it a shame that church furniture is rarely mentioned in any detail. For instance, the design of pews, type of wood used, pierced or solid backs, carved ends etc.—one only has to visit (say) Blakeney to see an example of a church greatly beautified by carving on pews and on other items of furniture. Irene and I were in a very ancient church in Oxfordshire a couple of days ago with box pews two hundred years old built (it appeared) by a local carpenter. What a gem! I hope I make my point.” *John T. Rhead*

Lots of interesting suggestions here for articles in the magazine — any volunteers prepared to take up the gauntlet and write a piece for a future issue? Do let me know...Editor

bricks in the octagon's internal walls and in the plinth preclude a Saxon origin and point to post-Norman construction, consistent with a widely-held Early English attribution for the octagonal stage of the tower.



The junction of the octagon to the lower stage of the tower

The modern brick and tile string course between the tower's circular and octagonal stages poses the question of how this junction was originally treated. A pre-war photograph in Cautley's *Suffolk Churches* shows the lower two or three feet of the octagon in poor condition and parts of what might have been a string course. In the tower's restored condition, the top parts of cambered triangular fillings above the tile course merge into the flat faces of the octagon's sides in the same manner as in a few round towers with brick angles on the octagon like Horsey and Wramplingham where the junctions of octagon to circular stage are formed without a string course.

Stephen Hart

Photos and Jottings

Maureen Hershman and her husband hit the round tower trail around East Anglia in 1996 - here are a few of her memories...



All Saints Frostenden...

“This church is near a pig farm with rams grazing in the churchyard. The vicar told us we had missed the excitement when a piglet had escaped into the lane before morning service and all the congregation had helped to retrieve the poor creature...”

Do you have a picture and unusual anecdote to share..?

ST SAVIOUR IN THE NUNNERY OF SAINT EFRASINNIA, POLOTSK, BELARUS

Sir Nikolaus Pevsner expressed in his *Guide to North-West and South-West Norfolk* (1) views about the origin and evolution of the Round Tower Churches in East Anglia. He showed less interest in the material construction of these churches as a guide to their date, but rather, to the contrary he considered their origins principally within the context of European church architecture as a whole. He wrote, “We ought to look to the Continent for precedents and parallels”. With that intent, he listed a few Italian examples of churches, dating from the 9th and 10th centuries. In particular, he cited an example of a church at the monastery of St. Gall, and he also included other examples of churches from Ravenna, dating these examples of churches back to the 9th century. There in Italy, the round bell tower of St. Apollinare, in Classe, is in Classical style, dating back to the 6th and the 9th centuries, while, in Germany, he pointed out there was a preference for round towers erected in pairs around the year 1000 (2).

His mention of churches in Ravenna, which in its location looks towards the Adriatic Sea, and churches in Italy, as a whole, reminds one that Italy was also a centre of Byzantine religious and secular monuments. Byzantium, itself, was situated in the East, and from the great city, via Kiev, the Eastern Orthodox Church was, in time, to become the faith of Russia and its neighbours, the Ukraine and Belarus. Round-towered churches, monasteries and nunneries of the Medieval Age and later, are a hallmark of the Russian Church, as well as the other churches of the Orthodox East. Hence, the Round Tower has also become the style of churches in Eastern Europe down to the present time. Today, round towered churches are being built constantly in Eastern Europe in huge numbers, in many of its numerous towns and villages.

Polotsk (Polatsk) is situated in the North-West of Belarus. Like Novgorod and Pskov, both associated with the Hansa League in the Middle Ages, Polotsk is situated beside a river, the Dvina, namely a river known as the Daugava in Latvia. This river flows westwards into the Baltic Sea at Riga. The Vikings and the Warangs (Varangians) made journeys along Russian rivers (as the former did in East Anglia). Polotsk was well known to them, having been mentioned in their Sagas as one of the towns of Kievan Rus. Moreover, Polotsk derives its specific name from the Polota River, which runs into the far larger Dvina. The earliest mention of Polotsk dates back to the 9th century. The nearby Kryvichy tribe were part-pagan

and an outstanding medieval wine glass pulpit. The pulpit was given in the late 15th century, by John and Catherine Goldale whose figures appear painted upon its panels, together with depictions of Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory and Jerome, the four learned doctors of the early Christian Church.

Only a short drive along the coast is Burnham Deepdale St Mary. Here is another wonderful Norman square font, which portrays in simple but vigorous carvings the Twelve Labours of the Months, showing the seasons and the tasks of the rural year. Ironically two of the labours show indoor inactivity during January and February, while December shows a lively feasting scene. A second great treasure displayed here is a chasuble, a priest's garment from the 15th century, embroidered with Passion symbols. For those not already sated, there are many fragments of medieval glass, including an angel's head and a full moon with a face – the man in the moon- who as we all remember... ‘came down too soon and asked the way to Norwich’.

Titchwell St Mary stands barely a mile from the sea. Its tower is about 40 feet high, topped by a lead covered spire. Entering by an early 13th century south doorway, the roofs and fittings of the interior appear largely modern. The plain round Norman font is set on a modern shaft. It is said that the font was returned to the church and set on its new base after many years of being used as a drinking trough.

Stuart Bowell

The Silent Tongues from Feltwell St Nicholas

Five of us used to speak to you
Two hundred years and more
We called you from your cottages
And from the old fen shore.

With lofty tower one morn we fell
In eighteen ninety eight
No more we call you to your prayers
For silence is our fate.

AJD 1979



SUMMER TOURS 2009 PART 1



Our 2009 Tour Season began in May at Cranwich St Mary. Hidden away among trees, this thatched church stands in a circular churchyard. Its tower has pre-conquest features and the perforated stone slabs below the belfry windows excited considerable comment concerning their intricate interlaced patterns. The entrance is via a south doorway, with dog tooth ornamentation from circa 1200. Inside

many of the furnishings date from a 19th century restoration while the harmonium rather amusingly has 'patent mouse proof pedals'!

At Feltwell, as if by magic, swifts appeared screaming and swirling overhead to celebrate their return and our first tour of the summer. They had honoured us in the same way last year at Wacton. St Nicholas is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Its rather truncated appearance is the result of the demolition of the chancel in 1862 and the fall of much of the tower in 1898. The surviving base of dark conglomerate has been roofed to provide a baptistery. There are high quality 15th century flushwork panels between the clerestory windows on the exterior of the nave's south side. The interior is surprisingly light with many interesting features, including a 13th century piscina, a 20th century crucifix carved by a German prisoner of war and the clappers from some of the five bells which fell with the tower and are now displayed by the tower arch together with a poem, *The Silent Tongues* (see reproduction right).

Weeting St Mary owes much to the 19th century, its tower having been built in 1868. Older features survive inside, including the 14th century arcade to the north aisle and in the chancel a double piscina from the late 13th or very early 14th century. Julius Angerstein lived at the Hall in the early 19th century. On his death in 1823 his collection of pictures was purchased for £57,000.00 to become the nucleus of the National Gallery.



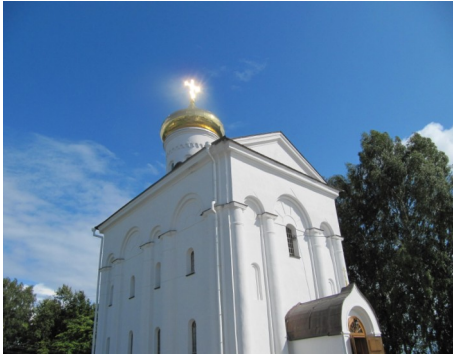
A fine but breezy June day welcomed the tour to the very north of Norfolk. Burnham Norton St Margaret has fine views north from the churchyard, while to the west of the 55 foot high tower, is the grave of the Master of the Cutty Sark. Inside the church is much to interest and excite; a splendid square chunky Norman font, screens

part-Christian, and their town was in due course to become a centre for trade. Among its most famous rulers was Prince Vseslav Brachyslavavich, nicknamed "the magician". There is a contemporary statue dedicated to Prince Vseslav Brachyslavavich to be found in Polotsk. Moreover, there are numerous cultural monuments and traces that date back to this time, one that was contemporary with our so-called "Dark Ages" (3).

Polotsk, at a later date, had its Cathedral of Saint Sophia. Scanty remains of the Cathedral date back to the age of Kiev. These remains may be seen preserved in the crypt of the Cathedral. But the "soul" of this ancient town of Polotsk is undoubtedly to be found at a site situated two kilometres away to the North of the city centre. At the site, the Church of the Saviour was built within the 12th century (namely around year 1161). Moreover, at the church, St Efrasinnia, the "*heavenly médiatrice*" of "*Belya Rus*" lies buried. The church was designed by Ioann as its architect, and it was destined to become a great central point for pilgrimages. St Efrasinnia was to become the holy lady who was to be recognized as the patron saint of Belarus. Her life and her social background have much that reminds us of our own St Etheldreda of Ely, who, in the 7th century, left her second husband, King Egfrid, and who also founded a monastery. In the 12th century, Ely was to become a shrine calling for both monks and nuns. In Polotsk, the nunnery that we know today, and which is overshadowed by its neighbour, the later Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Cross, contains a copy of the original Cross of Efrasinnia, a holy relic, which originally was attributed to the skill of the craftsman, Lazar Bogsha. The relic was dated to the 12th century, and it was a unique treasure and marvel of Eastern Slavonic applied art. Its post-war replacement is now at the centre of the annual pilgrimage, the pilgrimage being held each year on 5th June, when the replica Cross is annually kissed by countless pilgrims who flock to the site from all over Belarus.



Despite the rebuild of the 19th century, and the wartime ravages of "The People's War", her church today is a fine example of a round towered church in Belarus (4). The church dates from a slightly later era than some of our own round towered churches in East Anglia, although the church possesses the same "feel" of the Romanesque Age in a number of respects; there are similarities in respect of its modest size, its plain and simple round tower with rotunda, and its golden topped cap that now crowns its structure.



General exterior and view of the Romanesque arch above - St Saviour in Saint Efrasiinnia's Nunnery, Polotsk, Belarus



Within the church, the nave is dark and poorly lit. At the present time, the church is filled with ladders and wooden platforms enabling cleaners and art experts to examine closely the remarkable collection of wall paintings and frescoes upon its walls and pillars. Many of the paintings date back to the 12th century (others are later) and they include one of a female saint whom some experts believe represents St Efrasiinnia herself. These paintings are a century later than many of those that have been discovered in the Church of St Mary, Houghton-on-the-Hill, in Norfolk, although several features are not dissimilar. Like that Norfolk church, St Efrasiinnia's church has paintings akin to European Romanesque paintings that are dated

between the years of 1000 to 1170, and, so too, pertain to the period of the earliest wall paintings in Houghton-on-the-Hill church. Similar to both, are the depiction of facial expressions, for example in respect of protruding eyes, in haloed figures, of saints, of martyrs, and of angelic figures bearing scarves and scrolls.

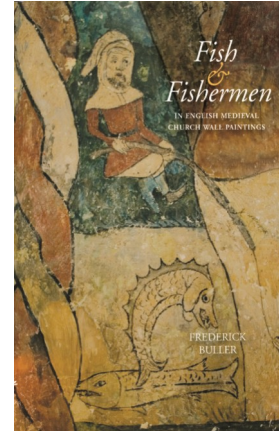
In the 11th and 12th centuries, both East Anglia and Polotsk were very remotely joined by post-Viking age trading links. These early routes and trade links to easterly towns were later to be continued from Kings Lynn by the Hansa League, the great trading community of the Baltic and beyond. Any visitor to St Efrasiinnia's church will experience the spiritual vision of that age of trade, of adventure and of the religious fervour that we may still read about in *The Book of Margery Kempe*, who journeyed in the Baltic as far as Gdansk and Prussia.

Prof. H.T. Norris and Dr. T.S. Norris

Fish & Fishermen in English Medieval Wall Paintings

By Frederick Buller

IBSN 978-1-899600-98-4 The Medlar Press £25



This is an unusual and interesting book by an expert in angling and anything to do with fish! Mr Buller, an RTCS member, has long been investigating the earliest representations of fish and fishermen, most of which are to be found as medieval wall paintings in churches. St Christopher was a very popular saint and fish are usually to be seen swimming round his legs, to denote that he is standing in water! The Hermit had advised the giant Reprobus to carry people across the local dangerous river in his search for the strongest person in the world. One day after he carried a child who became heavier and heavier, he was told that he had carried the Creator of the

World and would in future be called Christopher, the Christ-bearer. The Hermit is often to be seen nearby with a rod, hoping to catch the fish!

There are splendid colour photos of the various fish to be found, and indeed, in some cases, pictures of the paintings and details now no longer visible. The fascinating thing is that the varieties of all the fish have been identified by Mr Buller, (as far as is possible with perhaps fanciful and inaccurate depictions!) He has noted that churches within reach of the sea naturally chose salt water fish! Witton, two miles from the coast, had a crab, a lobster, a gurnard and a flat fish.

The round tower churches mentioned are Hemblington, Witton, Fritton St Edmund, Fritton St Catherine and Moulton St Mary. Other churches in both Norfolk and Suffolk are well represented among the 50 churches discussed. This is not an academic or "church" book, but a labour of love and a delight to look at. It will make the reader find new depths in the St Christopher paintings still to be seen, though alas too many are disappearing due to time or inappropriate restoration work.

'Lyn Stilgoe

as the recession bites, we shall once again see bunches of primroses and snowdrops, marigolds and stock on the window sills. And as for these ancient buildings, the oldest in each village by far, at least the good qualities of lime mortar are being appreciated. May our round towered churches survive for another millennium!

Philip Evans

SNAILWELL, CAMBRIDGESHIRE



Snailwell church



Hammerbeam roof

According to Arthur Mee in his book "Cambridgeshire" first printed in 1939, a few grains of sand are to be found in a jewelled box on the altar of Snailwell church, the sand being said to have been brought to Snailwell from Jerusalem. However, Arthur Mee also dated the round tower (*see left*) to the Norman period and drew attention to the very high pitched roof of the nave of the church. This feature of the roof is strikingly noticeable within the interior of the church. Most of the rest of the church dates from the 14th century, although much restored by Rowe in 1878. The interior roof is of a hammerbeam type (*see left*). The church has an early English cross sunk in a spandrel of the south arcade of the church. In the north wall of the chancel of the church, a low tomb-chest is to be found. Medieval woodwork is to be seen in the two oak screens with a few associated poppy heads. The font is 600 years old.

The hammerbeam roof is particularly beautiful, the roof having three rows of carvings in its wall-plate. On the ends of the beams of the roof, there are to be seen six ancient wooden figures, three bishops and three men holding shields. There is a gravestone in the churchyard; this gravestone was formerly in the wall of the church. Moreover, the gravestone dates from the 15th century.

Snailwell has memories of a martyr, William Flower, who was martyred for his faith, in St Margaret's churchyard, Westminster, in 1555. This martyrdom took place after his hand had been severed at the stake, thereafter he was knocked down into the fire.

Prof H.T. Norris & Dr T.S. Norris

Notes and References:

(1) **The Building of England**, Penguin Books, 1962/1984, pp. 24-25.

(2) **ibid**, pp. 24. It is hoped to discuss this further in a forthcoming article on the two most famous later fortified round towered churches in Belarus.

In architecture, in the earliest Medieval period, namely of the 12th and 13th centuries, elements of the Byzantine cubic church were combined with the East Slavonic treatment of volume and with local decoration to form an original Belarusian Romanesque style of architecture. The Polotsk School included builders who interpreted the Byzantine domed cross plans, with six piers, three aisles and a single dome.

(3) The Runic-style stone outside St Sophie Cathedral, Polotsk: this stone is later than the famous Jelling Stone in Jutland (Denmark) though it shares common features in both style and form. It is not a Runic inscription.

(4) The wall paintings within the church of St Efrasinnia: The paintings are influenced by Byzantine tradition. Those in the existing church of St Efrasinnia and the adjacent burial vault are within the Kievo-Byzantine tradition, allowing for an individual and a psychological characterization, a feature that may also be noticed in the paintings in Houghton-on-the-Hill church.

Photos and Jottings



Hales, St Margaret...
"We met a confirmed bachelor driving an old sports car (Lotus) collecting sloes to make gin. He praised its flavour and said he was a bachelor as no woman could put up with him!"

CYCLING ROUND THE ROUND TOWERS

Having left London, and not having a regular job, I was living with my mother in Halesworth with time on my hands. We decided that I should try and improve my drawing skills locally by making pen-and-ink drawings around the town. An interior of Bassett's restaurant was made into a postcard, but was somewhat ridiculed as his spaniel, lying on the rush matting, could be mistaken for a duck! One of the Ancient House—a very old gentleman's outfitters called Vanstone's with a curious carved over-mantle - was more successful. That was an introduction to the perils of 'wild drawing' as I had to stand for several hours on the pavement opposite. The day was extremely hot, sultry and humid, a perfect day for thunder-bugs. They not only were using my face and neck to land on, but also my paper, and sometimes the wet ink of the drawing. There were also the passers-by on their legitimate business, some of them justly curious at this oddly dressed personage (the very oldest clothes must be chosen for pen-and-ink work outside) with blotchy melanomatous face, who appeared to be suffering itching from many fleas.

It was in the days when churches did not expect to have to satisfy visitors. Many did not even have a wall coin box for thank you offerings; a few had a bit of text from some earlier incumbent about notable fittings or windows; postcards were uncommon, and 'A short history of this church' also uncommon. We often used to sit in churchyards as we found that the wall to the north of the church was usually warm, and with the main entrance porch being on the south aspect, our picnics were usually undisturbed. Out of this came the idea of making drawings of churches – where curious passers-by would be rare, a place of safety could be found in inclement weather, and a picnic could be taken without embarrassment. And other simple needs were usually easily catered for in the overgrown churchyards of those days. Now it would take a visit to the wildlife corner! And so I set off, cycling out up to

ten miles and taking two to three hours on each drawing. The round-towered churches were my favourites. They were smaller, had an enormous feeling of age, and their subtle courses of flintwork and lime mortar showed interesting variation as the wall or tower was raised.

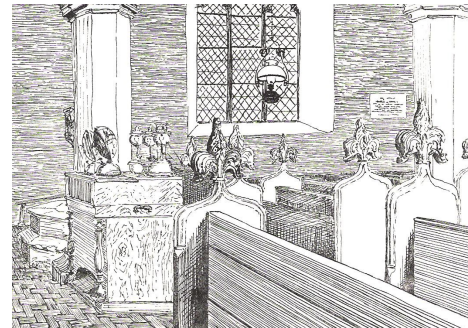
As my mother went to Holton church she wanted to have some-



Holton Church

thing of the church that visitors could take away, and suggested that we might have a postcard made, at a reasonable cost, in black and white. So we gathered together a few of the better drawings with the Holton one, and took them to The Halesworth Press. There were many hurdles to making postcards: I soon learned that one must draw an original at no more than twice the size of the card, and that most 'card' is too flimsy to survive the mail. Also that the 'card' must be personally assessed and specified, and that printing on both sides was costly. In the end we were able to sell them at 2d each and the churches could perhaps make a small amount on any sale.

I only did the drawings and the cards—my mother did the hard bit, the selling. She ran an infant school on the Bungay edge of the town in the mornings, and liked to get out on her bike in the afternoons. She used to put a few cards in her basket and take off to a meeting with a church elder. The church warden would look at the cards, turn them over and over doubtfully, suck their teeth, and offer to take perhaps two, maybe even five. So it really was not a big earner. However she continued with her cycle trips, and I still have the red or blue 'Sylvine' exercise books for each card showing the single-figure trickles of cards sold to each church.



Inside Westhall Church

Later I did some church interiors, and I remember well Westhall church, then (in the early seventies) a 'lost' place, down a narrow lane, with an interior that reeked of care against the depredations of time and weather: moss in the SW corner, oak pews whitened with age, and lit by oil lamps alone. The card (left) shows the Tilly warming lamps lined up on the harmonium. Now, with

more money around in the population (despite the falling attendances at services) it is almost as clean and tidy as a wealthy South Suffolk church! Those cycle rides have made me feel that our rural churches ought not be too tidy nor too often cleaned. In those days the atmosphere in them was of survivors, cared for by few but loving hands. The feeling was of being worn, but not worn out. And essentially local. Nowadays we see florists flowers from countries far and wide on the altar. I feel these to be inappropriate, but with so many people in the countryside being essentially urban, very busy and commuting, it is unavoidable. Let us hope that one day