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Vol. XXXV111 No. 2 December 2010



The Round Tower

Vol. XXXV111 No 2

December 2010



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ROUND TOWER CHURCHES BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Part 2

I had used the regular bus service to get me from Norwich to Long Stratton and had visited the church at Morningthorpe. As I walked on, I couldn't help taking a photo of a church at a distance, hunched in the fields. A lovely spot this: the day was baking hot. Not far away, by a couple of turns of lane, and through a village of houses set back on an ample green (Fritton Common), and on its own along a path of loose multi-coloured flints, is the church at Fritton. This is Fritton St Catherine, and should not be confused with the other round-towered Fritton (St Edmund), which is thatched. This Fritton isn't thatched, but is utterly charming all the same, standing in a kind of island of woodland in a field of arable.

It has a round tower with a traceried window, which shows no sign of having been added, at ground level, and a polygonal section at the top. The awkward junction between the tower and narrow nave has been filled in. At the quoins there is a suggestion of long-and-short work, but it is not mentioned in Taylor & Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*. Porches stick out at both sides, as if trying to anchor the cylinder of the tower to its churchyard. Inside, as at Morningthorpe, there is a font with heavily-carved angels and lions with a tail over their rump. A large painting of St Christopher—scarcely visible—is on the wall opposite the door, and there is another painting of a knight on horseback, adorned with plain red crosses. The delicately carved roodscreen appears to be a careful restoration, apart from the brightly painted panels at the base, with medieval figures and scrolls. One saint holds in his arms a large fish. The tower arch is extraordinarily tall, going straight through the thickness (about 5 feet) of the wall with no rebate or decoration except for a moulding where the imposts should be, flush with the nave wall, but taken all along the thickness on one side, part of the way through on the other. This moulding is a plain fillet with a concave below it, and seems to confirm that this arch is not Anglo-Saxon, despite its proportions.

I walked back into Long Stratton, trying as much as possible to stay under the trees out of the burning sun, and fully confident of a similar walk to the west of the A140 which would bring me to Aslacton, combining another famous round tower with my Anglo-Saxon interest, and, not much further, Forncett St Peter, where Taylor & Taylor tell me that 'Pre-Conquest work is immediately recognizable in the (round) tower and adjoining west wall of nave' - but, alas, on this occasion the heat had got to me, and instead I caught the bus back along the route, to Tasburgh.

Joseph Biddulph

The next issue is March 2011 and the deadline for insertion is Friday 28th January 2011.

Please send items for publication either as email attachments or on disc as **separate** files – text, photos, drawings etc., or by post to:-

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THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

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December 2010

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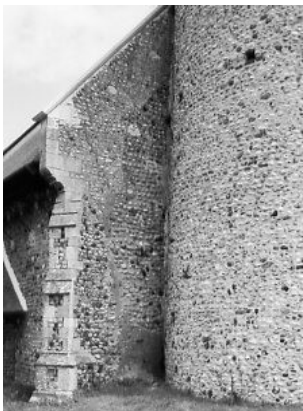
Photographs:-

Front Cover — Dot Shreeve

ST MARY'S, WEST SOMERTON

Architectural Description

The church comprises a thatched nave, a slate-roofed chancel, thatched north porch and a round west tower with an octagonal belfry.



Nave north-west diagonal buttress

The nave is about 60 feet long. At the west corners there are later two-stage diagonal buttresses of knapped flint and stone dressings, the top two weathering stones of which are broached to form bases for carved springers of widely-projecting corbels on the west wall. Earlier roofline slopes on the west wall gables suggest that the nave has been heightened.

On the north wall, at about mid-way between the porch and the chancel, there is a large sloping brick buttress probably of the eighteenth century, with a similar one on the south wall at an equivalent position. Rendering

on the nave walls was stripped in 1989, revealing a roughly-coursed cobble flint fabric, and several features of interest in the north wall.

Exposed in the north wall were two features believed to be blocked high-level round-headed windows with flint jambs and arches, one partially covered by the brick buttress and the other cut by remnant jamb stones of a later lancet whose internal embrasure is still visible.

Between the porch and the buttress, a round-headed blocked door was also revealed. Part of its arch comprising twelve radially-laid brick voussoirs is preserved in the wall; these bright red bricks, 10½" long x 1½" thick, are probably Roman.

Below the thatch eaves of the north wall, the sawn-off ends of tie-beams and principal rafters of a former roof were exposed. Visible until recently but now plastered over with daub, they are shown on Ladbroke's drawing of 1824 indicating that the stripped rendering had been applied since then. If the slope of those principal rafters is imagined as extended outwards to the point where it would have met the tie-beams, the eaves projection would have been about two feet, and this seems to be expressed by the present pantiled eaves overhangs on the eastern half of the nave

Wickmere which encourages us to think that all rural parish churches in this part of Norfolk built with a bell tower in the Saxo-Norman Overlap period, were given a round one.

There are several features that indicate an earlier foundation of the church. These include the herringbone band of ferricrete; the prodigious use of that stone; the 'slanted' west gable wall; a fillet; the archaic form of the tower arch and the narrowness of the original nave as indicated by the surviving stone quoins. W.J. Goode took these features to indicate a pre-1000AD dating for the church. In fact none of them can be used as reliable evidence to support such an early foundation (see 'Anglo-Saxon Architecture' by the Taylors). Herringbone was used by the Normans. The lower part of the tower arch may have been widened which gave it its unusual shape. The slanted gable wall was probably built on the foundations of an earlier timber church. This was the case in St Benedicts church in Norwich which also had a slanted west gable. There the archaeologists found that the tiny Anglo-Saxon church was made of timber. It was rebuilt in flint as part of the 'Great Rebuild' programme (circa 1050-1130). The church was subsequently enlarged in historical phases that may be mirrored in Wickmere church.

The lack of stone features evident in the tower arch suggests that the opening may have been cut through an existing wall or was it the result of widening? The west gable wall of the nave seems deliberately to have been made thicker than the side walls in order to support the tower on its western side. This suggests that the tower and the nave were built together. The change in form and materials in the upper half of the tower are evidence that those parts were rebuilt. The late 14th century character of the belfry openings and west window provide a date for those changes.

R. P. Harbord

SHCT Sponsored Bicycle Ride 11th September 2010

My thanks to all who generously sponsored me for the above. The trusty tandem took Margaret and I to 19 churches covering a distance of 33 miles. I raised £116 for the windows fund at Rickingham Inferior church and Margaret raised a further £128 for our own chapel.

Darrell Jackson

first floor level there is another opening similar to the one below with a four pointed arch. On the south side of the room is a tiny slit window with a similar form. Its deeply splayed embrasure has no definable shape. There are two blocked up putlog holes on the right hand side with stone caps. The wall flints are of a regular size and coursed. There is no sign of a doorway blocked or otherwise on the eastern side facing the nave.

In the next level up, there is a timber frame, which supports an ancient heating system including a water tank. Above that are the decayed remains of the late medieval bell-frame built with its heavy timber cross-braces. On the west side, below the bell frame and left of the belfry opening above it, is a deep recess 0.9 metres wide. This has plastered sides and appears to be part of a stair or means of accessing the upper part of the tower. The thickness of the tower walls is reduced to about 0.3 metres at this point. There is no evidence to suggest that this was an early belfry opening that was later blocked up.

The four pairs of belfry openings have tracery that are Decorated in style with cusped, ogee arches. They are similar in character and size to the west window at ground floor level. At belfry level there are Victorian A-frames supporting a steel bell cast in Sheffield in 1866 which is still in use.

The 1552 *Church Goodes Survey*, recorded four bells – a great bell of 18cwts; two smaller bells of 8 and 7 cwts; a Sacring bell of 5 cwts that probably hung at the chancel end of the church. One of these bells had been recently purchased. Another was replaced and cast in Norwich by the brazier John Brend in 1642. Two of the bells were sold by Bishops Faculty in 1779. A third bell was found to be cracked at the head and was removed by the patron Lord Walpole to Mannington Hall.

The top of the tower has two grotesque gargoyles. Its parapet is battlemented with flushwork tracery framing panels of square-cut flints. This is similar in style to the south porch so they are probably of the same time – about 1500. Wickmere church is rich in historical contents and furnishings that are of much the same period. Some of these may have come from the adjacent church at Wolterton - where only the round tower now remains. There is currently an exhibition displayed in Wickmere church showing how it has been refurbished alongside pictures of parish life over the ages.

Discussion.

Wickmere is part of the Bessingham cluster of round tower churches (see an earlier article, issue XXXIII, September 2005). There are (or were) seven other round towered churches within a radius of 4kms of



Nave north wall showing the pantiled eaves extension, recently restored

walls each side which, although now recently restored, also appear on Ladbroke's drawing. This large overhang would, no doubt, account for the unusual extent to which the corbels on the west wall gables project beyond the nave side walls.

The north door has a pointed arch and hoodmould and its east impost has an undercut roll abacus moulding; the impost is missing from the western one. The blocked south door is also pointed, with a single plain chamfer. Internally, both doors have tall pointed rere-arches.

In the north wall there are two two-light windows, one with cusped Y-tracery and probably as original, the other Perpendicular with a straight head as Ladbroke's drawing. The three south windows are all two-light with Y-tracery, the two western ones perhaps original but maybe renewed or restored to some extent and the eastern one probably later – it has hollow chamfered jambs and mullion, the other two have plain chamfers.

The two-bay chancel has walls of knapped and cobble flints of quite different workmanship from the nave walls. At the nave junctions and at midway along its side walls there are two-stage buttresses of similar pattern to the nave west buttresses but larger, and diagonal versions at the east corners. The two three-light windows in each side wall and the five-light east window are of Perpendicular styles though apparently restored as some differ from those shown on Ladbroke's drawing.

The north porch has a pointed entrance arch of two orders. The outer order has continuous chamfers on jambs and arch, and the inner one engaged shafts, moulded imposts and a chamfered arch. The walls of coursed cobbly flint rubble incorporate medieval bricks.

The tower has two stages; the lower stage, which is about two-thirds of the total height, is circular and the belfry stage octagonal. A course of chamfered dressed limestone, flush with the wall face of the circular stage, forms the base for the octagon which has quoins of dressed limestone at its angles. The fabric of both stages is similar, comprising flint cobbles, roughly coursed, and a few medieval bricks randomly distributed. The walls display a distinct and regular pattern of putlog holes framed and bridged with 2" medieval bricks about 9" to 10" long x 4½" to 4¾" wide.



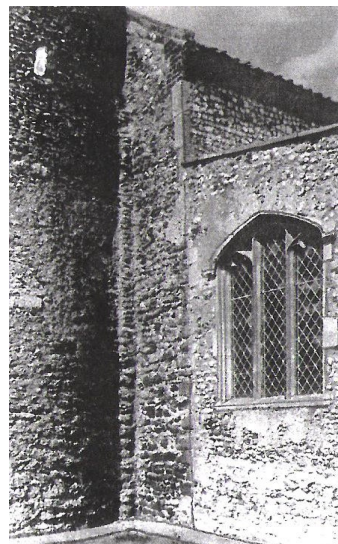
Upper part of tower before re-pointing

above the window, this pattern gives the impression of having been built with the wall rather than of being a later insertion.

In the cardinal faces of the octagonal stage, single-light lancet-type belfry openings are framed with stone externally, and in the other faces similar stone replica lancets are filled with squared knapped flints set flush with the external face of the stonework. The octagon terminates with a parapet of modern brick about 2'6" high, capped with brick-on-edge.

There are two windows in the circular stage, both facing west. The stone two-light ground-floor window with tracery of Late Geometric style is probably Victorian, apparently replacing the square-headed one shown by Ladbrooke, and a difference in the external flintwork below the window backed by a corresponding internal recess 3ft wide x 2'3" deep suggests that the tower may originally have had a west door.

The other window, a few feet below the top of the circular stage, is a small lancet framed externally in medieval brick; above it, bricks are incorporated in the flintwork in a rough fan-like array as a form of relieving arch, in a manner that can be seen elsewhere in early Gothic flintwork. Being well integrated with the flintwork and extending some 2ft or so



On the south side this angle was in-filled with a quadrant pilaster (fillet) made of smallish blocks of ferricrete. The fillet is not bonded into the walls on either side of it. It rises to about four metres and near the top it is tapered and square (see photograph left taken from the Round Tower Churches of England Fig 28 by Stephen Hart, Lucas Books). In plan the fillet gives the tower a horse-shoe shape. The west wall of the nave is slanted at 85 degrees to the axis of the nave rather than a right angle. This means that the northern junction between the tower and gable wall is less acute than the southern one. A late medieval stair over-sails the former. It displaced the fillet between the two walls if indeed it ever existed. The north and south quoins of the original nave survive

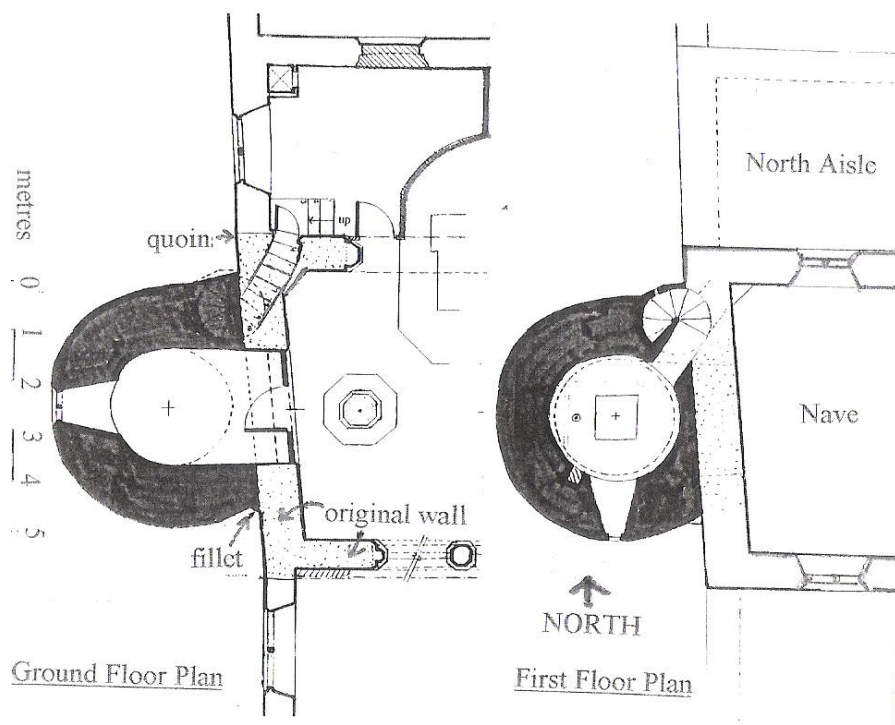
in the gable wall. These are marked with straight vertical joints and large blocks of ferricrete. The southern quoin is about four metres high but the northern quoin has 21 blocks and it rises to 4.7 metres. Inside the church, short sections of the return walls on the north and south sides of the nave can be seen. These correspond in plan with the positions of the two quoins on the exterior. It gives an internal width of the original nave of 5.3 metres.

The thickness of the nave walls is estimated to be 0.75 meters on the north and southern sides. The west gable wall is thicker at 0.9 metres. The tower space is closed off by a wooden screen. The tower arch is 'cruck' shaped with a low spring-point so the sides appear to bow outwards. The opening between the lower walls is the same width as the tower space. The chamfered jambs appear to be made of flint and are plastered over. There is a double arch which is probably made of stone but this is also plastered. The depth of the outer arch coincides with the thickness of the gable wall. The inner arch is slightly higher and it rises to within 0.4 metres of the first floor beams. The eastern side of the tower where it meets the gable wall, is fully rounded. The western side of the upper gable wall steps in to accommodate the rafters of the nave roof. The ridge height approximately coincides with the cill level of the belfry opening. The western end of the north aisle is closed with a screen to form a vestry. In this vestry is a narrow Tudor doorway that leads to the tower stair mentioned above. This rises over a low 'squinch' (a small arch) and then to a spiral stair with brick steps. At

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, WICKMERE

The church stands in a wooded landscape in splendid isolation. Recently grants of £250,000 were awarded, one of which came from this Society. It was spent mainly on re-roofing the nave, leaving the tower untouched.

The tower is circular for its full height of 14.5 metres. The walls of the lower three metres are built exclusively of brown conglomerate stone (ferricrete). On the lower west side, a band of these stones are laid at an angle, suggesting a 'herringbone' course. Otherwise they are uncoursed. In the middle and upper parts of the tower there is a mixture of uncoursed ferricrete and cut or whole flints. From the mid-height point up the tower, it tapers towards the top with a slight batter. This change is marked internally where the wall steps in to provide a ledge for the first floor beams to rest on. The thickness of the tower walls are reduced to about a metre and the tower space becomes wider (see Layout Plan below). The tower was positioned far enough away from the nave wall for there to be a deep re-entrant angle where they joined.



1 metre = 3 feet 3 inches

Within the tower, the internal shape is circular to the top, though at the level of the external change of shape, a 5½" offset reduces the thickness of the octagon wall. Internally the circular stage and the octagon both have similar fabric, with medieval brick putlog holes and odd bricks here and there. Neither in the external flintwork of the circular stage nor within the tower, is there any evidence of blocked former windows or belfry openings.



Upper door in the tower east wall

In the tower east wall at first floor level internally, a large upper doorway recess, 3ft wide x 8ft high, has flint reveals with medieval brick jambs, arch and soffit and a brick fan-type relieving arch above; the arch is pointed but with a rounded apex. At the back of the recess, the opening has been blocked and within the blocking a lower sub-arch of stretcher bricks encloses an access hatch to the nave roof. Opposite, the small brick west window has flint reveals with medieval brick jambs and a pointed arch extending through the full thickness of the wall.

Inside the octagonal stage, the embrasures of the four belfry openings have medieval brick jambs and rere-arches, and the constructional methods of their rere-arches, using medieval bricks, are similar to those of the small lancet window and the upper doorway opening in the stage below. In the sections of curved wall between them, there is undisturbed continuity of the wall fabric with no evidence of there having been openings in these sections. This shows that the blank lancets in the diagonal faces externally are not blocked openings but were built as decorative features.

The diameter of the tower internally is 8'9"; its wall thickness measured at the apex of the tower arch is about 4'1" and is about the same at the west window. Above the tower arch the internal profile of the tower's east wall is curved. The thickness of the nave west wall outside the tower is a foot or so less than the tower wall at the tower arch apex and about the same thickness as the nave side walls.

The pointed tower arch is about 15ft tall and 5'8" wide in reveal. Facing the nave, the arch stonework has continuous chamfers around the whole

archway, with a hoodmould over the arch. An inner order has engaged semi-octagonal respond shafts with imposts of the same profile. On the tower side, behind the inner order, the pointed rere-arch goes straight through the wall without splays or imposts and has a plastered finish.

Interpretation

The blocked openings formed without stone dressings and the arch of Roman bricks exposed in the north wall suggest that the original nave could be as early as the eleventh century. However, a nave length of about 60ft and the location of its door as shown by the Roman brick arch being nearer to the centre than to the west end are uncharacteristic of small early churches. This could mean that the nave was originally shorter, and that like the nave at Thorpe Abbots, was lengthened westwards. Corroboration for this is provided by the north and south doors with pointed stone arches at the conventional positions nearer to the west end; they are clearly later than the blocked door.

It is suggested that in the thirteenth century the Norman door was blocked, the nave west wall was demolished, the nave was extended westwards with new north and south doors, and the former lancet window in the north wall of which blocked remnants survive was probably inserted. There is nothing to indicate the original nave length, but if the junction of the extension had been at the positions of the present north and south doors, no evidence of it would be likely.

The circular part of the tower has been called Saxon (W.J.Goode) and the Listed Building description and the church guide both date it as 11th/12th century with an added c.13 belfry; the 1995 Pevsner calls the tower c.13 with a later top and a c.14 tower arch. There is no visible evidence to support the suggested early dates for the lower stage, or to show that it is earlier than the octagon, and clearly if the original nave had been extended at the time implied by the style of the pointed north and south doors, the tower could not be Norman or earlier.

There are convincing grounds for the argument that the tower's two stages are contemporary. (1) Where an octagonal belfry stage has been added to a circular tower at a later date, a difference in the styles of flintwork of the two stages is to be expected and is usually found, but here, the flintwork workmanship in the two stages is similar, both externally and internally. (2) The putlog holes are formed with similar bricks in both stages. (3) The belfry opening embrasures in the octagon are of similar construction to the internal

thatched nave of the day. Having passed the ancient traceried door, the Seven Sacrament font attracted much attention. There are many faded wall paintings in the nave and these repay close study. On the north wall, with the help of field glasses, one can make out the Three Living and the Three Dead, the Ascension, with feet disappearing into a cloud, the Nativity and St Christopher. The door to the rood loft still has a wooden frame with evidence of colour remaining.

Following our AGM in the village hall, the good people of Seething gave us a splendid tea with some especially delicious scones.

June gave us better weather as we met at Beeston St Lawrence. Much ferricrete can be seen in the fabric of the tower, which is thought to be of early construction. As a result of widening the nave to the south, the tower is off centre to the nave. With its plastered Georgian ceiling and large south windows the interior is very light. There are many grand monuments to the Preston family but also a simple brass plaque on which is recorded.... 'Thomas F Preston Lieut. Norfolk Yeomanry attached to the RFC.... After serving in the Dardanelles, he was killed while flying over German lines in Belgium on January 24th 1917.' He was 28 years old.

Ashmanhaugh St Swithin had its tower rebuilt in 1849 but is notable for having the smallest diameter of all our round towers. Inside is a fine carved bench back showing the five wounds of Christ and below these are initials and a date, 1531. In the churchyard a gravestone commemorates two brothers, George Riches and William Riches, who both died as a result of the Great War. After our visit to the church we were generously treated to a sumptuous tea in the village hall, which was enjoyed by all, before moving on to our final church of the day.



Great Hautbois St Mary, away from its village, is down a lane in the Bure Valley. The nave, aisle and porch are ruinous but the chancel still has its roof. Although the ruined walls have been capped, vegetation, including small shrubs, can be seen growing between the flints in several places and must be a threat to the structure. The tower remains standing and almost complete. Its single light belfry openings, formed with flint, are indicative of early construction and this tower is generally thought to be of pre-conquest date. *To be continued...*

Stuart Bowell

The parish of Tebay was combined in 1977 with the neighbouring parish of Orton from where the Vicar manages a group of churches. St James, Tebay, with its round tower and spire, continues to proclaim God's message in that place and can now be seen to the east of the M6 motorway a little distance south of junction 38 for Tebay. Very different from the East Anglian round tower churches, this is an interesting addition to their ranks and well worth a visit when holidaying in the Lake District or as a break from the tedium of motorway driving.

John Rhead

I am grateful to Rev. Alan Byrom at Silloth and particularly to Mr Reg Capstick who wrote the illustrated history of St James, Tebay and checked the proofs for me.

SUMMER TOURS 2010

There was a wet start to our Tour Season in May at Geldeston St Michael. Here is much Victorian work, both restoration and rebuilding, but the porch has 15th century stonework with passion symbols and the Trinity symbol. Inside is a font of the same date. In the East window the striking 20th century coloured glass is by Leonard Walker. A wall memorial to Robert Christopher Pack aged 19, records that he was a Flight Lieutenant in the RNAS, killed 21st June 1918 at sea when on patrol duty off Great Yarmouth.

Much has been written by so many about Hales St Margaret and every visit here is a delight, even in the rain! Remaining relatively unchanged for centuries its thatched nave and apsidal chancel, with pilaster strips and Norman arcading, give it a simple but sturdy appearance. Of the two Norman doorways the north is by far the finer, with a feast of chevrons, wheels, stars and what I like to call "beer barrel" motifs. The interior also has an air of simplicity. There is a 15th century font and there are fragments of wall paintings including foliage and images of St Christopher and St James the Great. A climb into the small gallery gives a view of the nave at its best. Inside the tower two circular double splayed windows, blocked from the exterior, clearly show the impressions of basketwork laid as a former for the flint work during their construction. This church is cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust.

The rain persisted as we approached Seething St Margaret across damp pasture land. The tower here begins to taper at about two thirds of its height, suggesting a later build than the lower section. This was our second thatched

first-floor window and the upper door openings in the circular stage below, both incorporating medieval brick in their jambs and arches.

The theory that the present lancet belfry is a later addition to an earlier circular stage presupposes either that the tower originally stood only to the height of the circular stage or that the present belfry replaces a conjectured earlier one. However, the continuous pattern of the external putlog holes of the circular stage and the undisturbed appearance of its upper flintwork inside and out proves that there never were any belfry openings where they might have been expected and so that would imply the improbable circumstance of a short tower without a belfry. In the second case, since the tower's deduced addition to a thirteenth-century nave extension and the medieval bricks in its structure almost certainly establish a post-Norman date for the circular stage, the early post-Norman style of the present belfry makes it more likely that it is contemporary with the circular stage than a replacement of a conjectured earlier post-Norman belfry.

If it did originally have a west door, the tower, initially without a tower arch (cf Sustead), could have been contemporary with the nave extension which is attributable as thirteenth-century by the abacus moulding of the south door impost, with the tower arch being formed later, in the early fourteenth century. Alternatively, the tower and tower arch may have been built together in the early fourteenth century, the Y-traceried windows in the nave walls perhaps inserted at the same time.

Irrespective of whether or not the nave was extended in the thirteenth century, the use of medieval brick in both stages of the tower convincingly establishes it as post-Norman. It is now generally accepted that after its cessation at the end of the Roman period, brickmaking in Britain was not revived until the late 13th century – well after Saxon and Norman times. The earliest datable use in East Anglia of locally-made bricks is thought to be circa 1270-80, at Little Wenham Hall, Suffolk. Medieval bricks are not usually difficult to distinguish from Roman; medieval bricks are seldom less than 2" thick, are more irregular in shape and can vary in colour from pale buff to purple-red, whereas Roman bricks are generally thinner, often longer and wider and usually a good bright red. Here, the medieval bricks in the tower can be compared with the Roman bricks in the blocked doorway arch in the nave north wall.

Clearly part of the original tower wall construction, the medieval bricks used externally and internally in the putlog holes and around openings were

almost certainly built with the tower and not inserted later. They provide solid evidence for dating the circular stage as no earlier than say the last quarter of the thirteenth century, but probably more likely the early fourteenth-century. The lancet style of the belfry openings has no doubt been the reason for thirteenth-century attributions for the tower's octagonal stage, but it obviously cannot be earlier than the stage below. The style of the pointed tower arch suggests the fourteenth century but in view of the uncertainty as to whether it was built with the tower or formed later, it is unhelpful in establishing the tower's date.

The cut-off ends of principal rafters and tie beams, until recently visible, were probably timbers of an earlier medieval nave roof, perhaps of the same date as the widely-projecting corbels on the west wall and the diagonal buttresses at the NW and SW nave corners. The broach detail worked on the top weathering stones of the buttresses that forms the springer for the corbels is convincing evidence that buttresses and corbels are contemporary, probably fifteenth-century Perpendicular. Ladbroke's drawing shows the NW corbel apparently as now, thus precluding it from being a Victorian variation as might have been thought.

Assuming that the ends of the tie beams of the supposed medieval roof had rested on the then-existing top of the nave side walls, those walls would originally have been lower than now and raising them to their present level between the timbers would have been done in association with the building of the diagonal buttresses and the west wall's corbels. Concurrently, the west wall gables appear to have been raised: the flintwork above the former gable rooflines marries with that on the corbels. At the east end of the nave, the buttresses between nave and chancel project sufficiently to provide a stop for the overhanging eaves and suggests a Perpendicular rebuilding of the chancel at the same time as the supposed medieval nave roof and the west end alterations.



The church from the north-west.
J.B. Ladbroke's drawing of 1824

As constructed, the apse, the tower and spire remained at the west end, the altar at the east and the other furnishings necessarily rearranged. The pulpit too, originally wooden, but now (since 1930) of Shap granite, also moved east. The building varies in several respects from the illustration. Instead of a level roofline throughout, the chancel is narrower and lower than the nave and the main door is situated below a downward extension of the roof adjacent to the tower on the north side of the church. Additionally, a small extension on the south side houses the organ. There was also room for the person working the organ blower handle though, with the organ now electrically blown, this is handy for storage. The font holds pride of place centrally in the apse. Below the apse is the vestry which is approached by descending a staircase within the lower part of the tower.

In view of its origin, St James' church, Tebay has always been considered a 'railway church'. As mentioned, the site was provided by NER, though the cost of building and furnishing the church is believed to have been by public subscription. Additionally, the Vicar, Rev. E. Holme, sent a circular to every individual shareholder of the L&NWR asking for contributions.



Nave interior, Tebay

The 'railway' theme continues inside the church. Internal wall facings are single lines of bare red brick separated in each case by several courses of yellow brick. This attractive decorative feature is said to represent railway lines. It would appear to have done so at Tebay as this style of brickwork was used by the L&NWR at some of its major stations on the West Coast main line as at Crewe and Preston. But one has to wonder

whether this feature may have a wider meaning, as Ferguson had previously used it at Christ Church, Sillioth. However, the Carlisle and Sillioth Bay railway had nothing to do with L&NWR and indeed by 1880 was part of the North British Railway, a Scottish company. Additionally, the font at Tebay is Shap granite and circular, its wooden cover in the form of a railway locomotive wheel, having an outer wooden rim, central boss and spokes. (The word 'baptistery' was used 'on line', but this is misleading).

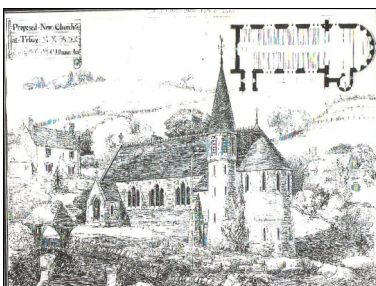
It is clear that the NER did not forget Tebay. In 1921 the church needed to replace its heating boiler. The replacement was provided by the railway, though the type of boiler is not known.

valley above the railways and the River Lune at Tebay as a site on which an Anglian church and rectory could be built.



The architect preferred by the Diocese of Carlisle was Charles James Ferguson. This appointment was not surprising as Ferguson, then a pupil of George Gilbert Scott, had recently designed Christ Church, Silloth, (built 1870) on the Solway coast west of Carlisle and won an award for it (see left). Like Tebay, Silloth was a tiny hamlet before

the railway arrived, growing quickly on its coming. The Carlisle and Silloth Bay Railway Company also constructed a dock bringing in coastal and international trade. A church was clearly needed, but there is no record in Silloth of the company involving itself directly. Funding seems to have come from various sources, charitable or otherwise.



C. J. Ferguson was considered an up-and-coming architect. He later became better known for industrial design rather than ecclesiastical. His Silloth church was cruciform with an apsidal east end and a spire. However, his illustration and layout plan entitled 'Proposed New Church at Tebay' and dated 'Nov 8 1878' (see left) shows a very different design. It would be a simple building having a level roof line

throughout, but with the addition of an apse. The illustration shows, adjacent to the apse, a bell tower surmounted by a spire, the porch being at the opposite end of the building.

Ferguson's layout plan shows how the necessary furnishings would be located. The altar, altar rail and choir stalls would appear to be at the apsidal end of the church, then the pews, and ultimately the font and entrance door furthest from the apse. Doubtless Ferguson saw the apse as the focal point of the church, as it was at Silloth. However, consideration of Ferguson's plan shows the apse to be at the lower end of the building on the sloping site. The slope is down from east to west, and thus it follows from Ferguson's layout plan that the altar would be located at the west end of the church! Clearly, the altar should be at the east. The question must be asked, did Ferguson mistake the site geography?

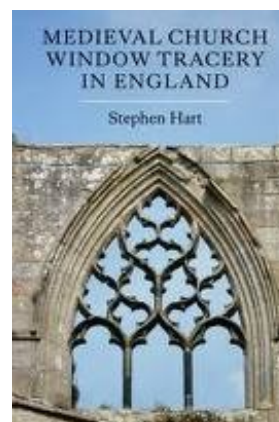
If the remnant timbers are those of a medieval roof, the question arises as to when that roof was replaced and the ends of its timbers cut off. The nave's present wagon ceiling is said to be nineteenth-century but clearly, from the evidence of Ladbroke's drawing (see left), the former roof had gone before then. We may guess that it was lost during the eighteenth century when many churches fell into disrepair and repairs were often of poor standard. It remains a mystery as to why the pantiled overhangs were retained on only half of the north and south walls – perhaps a symptom of insensitive attitudes of the time.

Stephen Hart

Medieval Church Window Tracery in England By Stephen Hart

ISBN 978 1 84383 533 2 The Boydell Press, Woodbridge £45.00

3 drawings, 258 black & white photographs, 19 colour photographs



Stephen Hart has published yet another beautifully produced book on an entirely new subject within the field of medieval architecture. This book is an overview of the history of tracery in England spanning the entire period from the 12th century to the fifteenth. But this book is no gazetteer, it advances through the different stages of development with clear language and abundant photographic illustration.

The book begins with lancets and general window forms onto plate tracery, the relatively rare precursor of the more familiar bar tracery. The author draws attention to the rarely mentioned variant of 'sunk-spandrel' plate tracery, which overlaps with the emergence of bar tracery in the 1240s, which is more realistically portrayed here as a natural development, rather than the normal interpretation of it being a sudden appearance borrowed from Rheims Cathedral. The chapter on the lancet style is not restricted to the late 12th and 13th centuries before the introduction of bar tracery as it would normally be treated. Instead it follows the style of grouped lancets through to the late Middle ages and the incorporation of tracery.

In the realms of bar tracery Hart makes an important distinction between co-incident and non co-incident arched lights which influence the shape and 'skeletal framework' of all traceried windows of two or more lights. The different forms of Geometric tracery are carefully grouped, analysed and appropriately named with suitable terms.

The use of the ogee curve transforms and enriches tracery. It is normally agreed that the ogee was first used on the Eleanor crosses in 1291. Hart treats this attribution with a degree of doubt, suggesting that the form may have occurred naturally where a trilobe occupies the head of the lights. However, the late 13th-century date for the beginning of the curvilinear style is maintained. Hart lists and exactly defines those descriptive terms often used rather loosely in architectural descriptions. Such terms as dagger, mouchette, soufflet and vesica with its variants are given clear definitions. Hart defines and gives examples of the different tendencies within the curvilinear style.

Perpendicular tracery occupies the shorter final chapter where panel tracery and super mullions and transoms are explained. The author does not fall into the trap of describing the style as coming after the curvilinear because they coexist, sometimes in one campaign. The book ends with a very useful glossary and an index.

This fresh analysis of window tracery is a useful book for students of medieval architectural history. The language is clear and academically respectable. The illustration of this complex subject is outstanding and almost without parallel. When in doubt about how best to describe a window type Stephen Hart's book will have the answer, as it can serve both as a well-balanced history and a technical hand book. The author does not venture into the disputed territory of regional schools and does not discuss the tracery of the great cathedral and abbey churches but acknowledges their precedence in some cases.

This book is a valuable addition to the study of medieval architectural history and is suitable for both expert and interested amateur.

Stephen Heywood

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ST JAMES, TEBAY

In the March edition of 'The Round Tower' our learned Editor posed a question 'Tower or Turret', this in the context of St James parish church, Tebay, Cumbria. She invited readers to express their thoughts...



Entries on the web do not help, the tall structure at the north west corner of St James is variously referred to as a 'turret' and as a 'bell tower'.

Ignoring the central towers on major churches, I have always considered that a tall structure on the end of a lesser church in which bells are hung, were hung, or could satisfactorily be hung, to be a tower. I am mindful of King Athelstan's law of 937 applicable in East Anglia that 'A *bell tower* must be built on the land of every Thegn' - effectively, in general terms, every modern parish. Thus, the tall square, circular or octagonal structures (Norfolk has six octagonal church towers) at (usually) the west end of parish churches are unquestionably towers, as is the circular structure at the western end of St James church, Tebay. This is clearly a tower as it has belfry type windows and houses a bell. It also carries a short spire.

This church has a very different history from those we know and love in East Anglia, and was built in a railway context. Those of us brought up with real steam railways will know that Tebay is at the lower end of Shap Bank, an incline on the West Coast main line of 1 in 75 for four miles between Tebay and Shap. Right from the opening of the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway before 1850 trains required extra help to climb Shap Bank. By 1859 when the London and North Western Railway (L&NWR) took over, banking engines were stationed at Tebay. Banking only ceased with the phasing out of steam in the 1960s.

Additionally, railways were laid westwards from Darlington to Tebay, these became a branch of the North Eastern Railway (NER) in 1863. The NER had its own separate facilities in Tebay east of the L&NWR main line. Growing from a tiny hamlet, Tebay was now a small railway town.

Certain of the old railway companies were very mindful of not only the practical needs of their employees, but spiritual needs also. The NER provided an acre and sixteen perches of land on the eastern side of the