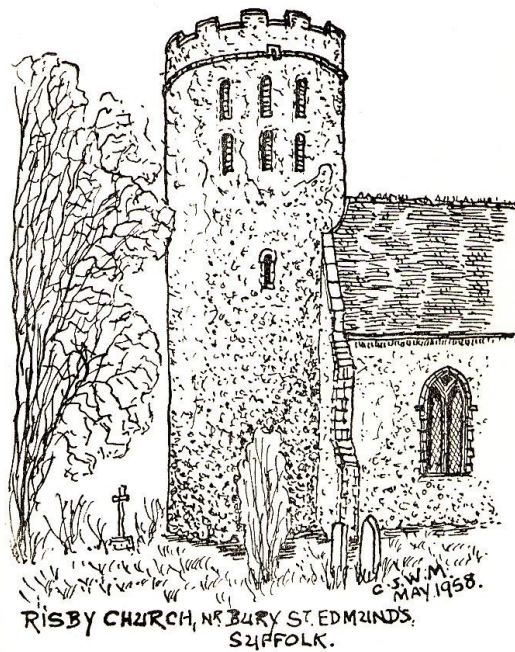




The Round Tower

Vol. XLII No 1.

September 2014



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Please forward orders to: - Mrs P Spelman, 105 Norwich Road, New Costessey, Norwich NR5 0LF. Cheques payable to The Round Tower Churches Society.

Grant Officer's Report 2014.

I had a quiet year in 2013/2014 with just seven grants paid out (£6450) although this year (2014/2015) we have already given Hemblington £1000 towards the repairs to their roof and have promised more (£6700 to date) money where work is yet to start. We promised **Fritton St. Catherine** a grant in 2007 to help pay for the interior walls to be redecorated after the lights and heating were fitted. Unfortunately they had many problems getting electricity to the church but at last the wiring is in and painting should be completed by now. The electrical contractors have done a marvellous job and the lights are hardly visible from the west. Without the gas heaters the wall paintings can now be conserved so that is their next expense.

West Somerton also had a lot of damp damaging their medieval wall paintings but with ingenious schemes their architect has cured the damp so they have applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for help. English Heritage has changed the application process which hasn't pleased many PCCs. It has to be made online and with email letters of support from other bodies so we have emailed them a letter to help with their Heritage Lottery Fund application. We have done the same with **Gissing**.

The walls of **Theberton** and **Holton** churches have been redecorated this year with our help in 2013/2014 so members visiting the east of Suffolk can now see two more very bright and very well cared for church interiors.

Nick Wiggin

The next issue is December 2014 and the deadline for contributions is 1st November.

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

Anne Woollett and Paul Hodge

The Cardinal's Hat

Back Street

Reepham

Norfolk

NR10 4SJ

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Membership Subscription

Minimum £10 (overseas £15) a year of which 40% goes towards the printing and posting of The Round Tower magazine and administration. 60% goes to the Repair Fund of the RTCS.

Magazines are published in March, June, September and December. The membership renewal date is the first day of the month following the application for membership.

To join the Society or to make any enquiry about your membership please contact :-

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THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

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If you are not as yet receiving the magazine as a PDF but would like to do so send an email to pt.hodge@tiscali.co.uk.



Editorial

Many RTCS members who have attended our tours over the years will have good memories of Stephen Hart . He died in July just a few week shy of his 90th birthday. Stuart and 'Lyn represented RTCS at his funeral. Stephen was a leading authority on the architecture and construction of our round tower churches. As magazine editors we will miss his contributions as much as you will. We have received several articles from Stephen in recent months and the first of these will appear in in the December magazine. 'Lyn has written his obituary on page 21. Stuart shares his memories of Stephen on page 22 .

The photograph of Richard (Dick) Barham on page 9 of the June magazine was not taken at Herringfleet. It shows Dick at Roughton pointing out bands of conglomerate.

Our cover drawing is of Risby. We will be visiting (or have just visited Risby depending on when the mailing goes out) on the last tour of the 2014 season. As is now the norm photographs of the tour will appear on our Facebook page and website.

Nick Wiggin our Grants Officer has written a report on what he has been up to in 2014/2014. You can read his report on page 2.

Many thanks to Andrew Clarke and the Foxearth and District Local History Society for allowing us to reproduce the J M Wood 1890 account of Pentlow. There is still debate as to whether or not the church might have Saxon origins although the nave fabric appears to be 12th century. As Andrew told us 'The church is an enigma, since it is so obviously built on a pre-existing mound near the river. Together with the Saxon finds from the associated mound on which Pentlow Hall was built it would suggest a very early date for the church as was proposed by W.J. Goode in his famous book'. For those of you who are unaware of the Foxearth and District Local History Society they have a website full of interest and they organise a first rate programme of meetings, visits and events: <http://www.foxearth.org.uk>. The photograph of Pentlow on page 13 is copyrighted to Robert Edwards and is licensed for reuse. The other photographs of Pentlow are courtesy of <http://www.explorestourvalley.co.uk>.

Roger Rosewell will be talking to us at our Study Day at Yaxham on the 27th September. 'Lyn Stilgoe reviews his latest book on page 14. Details of the Study Day were in the June magazine. To check on current ticket availability telephone Stuart on 01449 614336 .

Roger Batty reviews Stuart Bowell's talk at Shimpling on page 15.

Inspired by Joseph Biddulph's article in the June magazine Jenny Gladstone gives us her interpretation of Little Snoring on page 16. The last paragraph on page 19 really made us think!

Finally if you haven't looked at our website for a while do please have a look. Lots of new material has been added in recent weeks.

Pentlow Church described by J.M. Wood, 1890.

The following account by J M Wood of Pentlow Church has come to light. It is a refreshing account since it has not been slavishly copied from other sources. It includes a brief note from the architect W. M. Fawcett, who was in charge of the restoration. Mr Wood may be correct that some round towers were built in Saxon times but as Stephen Hart argues Pentlow Church tower is later and probably datable to 1320.

The name of the parish Pentlow is supposed to be derived from the word 'Pent' and the Saxon word 'loieue'. The meaning of the former is well known and the latter signifies an eminence so if I am correct the name denotes a hill or eminence, pent, here at the twining of the river Stour.

There is no mention of Pentlow in the Saxon chronicles so far as I can ascertain; neither is there any mention of a church at Pentlow in the Domesday Book, the only entry being as follows : " Pentelauua was held by a free woman, in the time of King Edward, for a manor and four hides and three virgates", etc.; and at the time of the Survey was held by Ralph Baynard, etc.

The church is delightfully situated in the valley of the river Stour, and within a few hundred feet of the river, and adjoins Pentlow Hall, which is a moated house and was once the home of a Norman noble. It stands just within the present boundary of the county of Essex and overlooks the village of Cavendish in the county of Suffolk. It is about five miles north -north-west of Sudbury and about ten miles north of Lamarsh Church. The church is said to be dedicated to St. Gregory but in Bacon's *Liber Regis vel Thesaurus Rerum Ecclesiasticarum* it is stated to be St. George, which is probably correct. The church consists of a round embattled tower, rectangular nave and chancel, with a semi-circular apse and a Lady chapel on the north side adjoining the church.

This chapel belongs to the Kempe family, and contains a beautiful monument in good preservation, and well worth a visit in its own right. In the semi-circular apse is a fine altar-tomb probably belonging to the Felton family, the date 1542 being scratched upon it; but there is no inscription. The old Parish Register is in excellent preservation and dates from 1539.

The church is a remarkable structure with striking features having the peculiar appearance of being circular at both ends, viz., a round tower at the west end and a circular apse at the east.

Having examined the church as a whole, with an unbiased mind, and in some degree of care I was once more led to believe that the tower belonged originally to a structure of greater antiquity than the existing church, for the reason that the walls of the tower are of much greater thickness than the walls of the nave; besides, the character of the rubble-masonry appears different in the walling; and for other reasons which will be hereafter stated.

The nave, chancel and circular apse were built probably in the fourteenth century, the style being Early Pointed. The nave and chancel are separated by a fine pointed arch of the above period being of rather large proportions, spanning the whole width of the nave. But a question may suggest itself. Why was the circular apse built in the fourteenth century being a style so peculiarly Norman? To account for this one is led to suppose that the original Norman church was either destroyed or removed and the existing structure built on the foundations. Now as to the tower, which, as before stated, is at the west end of the nave and is so placed that the walls of the nave appear to be built into the circular work of the tower.

I have not been able to ascertain with any definite degree of certainty if the walls of the nave are really bonded into the walling of the tower, forming as it were one original piece of rubble masonry or whether the walls abut, forming a division such as exists at Broomfield, the tower there being entirely separated from the walls of the nave. The reason that one is not able to settle this important point is because the tower is plastered over within and without. I am, however, strongly under the impression that the tower-wall is not part and parcel of the nave wall but merely abuts.

The tower, like the others described, is perfectly round on plan, except where it is joined on to the nave-wall. It is clear internally from base to summit with the exception of a wooden floor and ladders reaching up to the framing for carrying the five bells which have the following inscriptions upon them:

"Miles Graye made me, 1665." (Letters are small capitals.)

"Miles Graye made me, 1662." (Letters are small capitals.)

"Miles Graye made me, 1628." (Letters are large capitals.)

"John Thornton made me, 1711." (Letters are large capitals.)

The walls are nearly perpendicular both internally and externally, the tower being about the same diameter at base and summit. Practically speaking, there is no batter to the tower.

The proportion of the tower is 51 ft. high from the nave-floor to the top of the stone works forming the embattlements or 48 ft. high to the top of the flat lead roof. It has an external diameter of nearly 22 ft and an internal diameter of 13 ft. 2 in; the walls therefore being of the great thickness of 4 ft. 5 in. to 4 ft. 6 in; the walls of the nave being only from 2 ft. 6 in. to 3 ft. thick.

The rubble-masonry of the tower is of a rough character similar in many respects to that in the towers of Great Leighs, Broomfield and Lamarsh; the materials being also entirely local, viz, rounded and angular flints besides nodules of water-worn sandstones brought probably by the "drift" and picked up in the river-gravels. All are bedded in coarse lime-mortar.

In the inside of the tower, about half way up, the original rubble-masonry may be seen, not having been plastered over. From its appearance one would at once say that it was built at an early period and like the rubble-work in the other towers before described very little attempt has been made to lay the material in course. But in the upper part of the tower a different condition of things exists. Here the rubble-

masonry has been carefully built in course ; each stone seems to have been separately set and pointed. One can see at once that the upper part of the tower is rather of a later period, or been rebuilt, probably the latter.

Externally, the tower is unlike Great Leighs and Broomfield, in that its summit is finished off by being embattled with Barnack stone while the before mentioned towers are all surmounted by spires. Beneath the flint embattlements are a few odd pieces of Roman tiles.

The tower at one time had nine openings in it, viz, three in the lower part, three at a higher level and three a short distance from the top. These openings, or their remains are to be seen on the south, west, and north faces, immediately above one another. The lowest opening on the south face is a mere rectangular slit, 6 in. wide, and 2 ft. 8 in. high, having Barnack stone quoins and a square stone head or lintel slightly splayed; while that on the west face is a large pointed, perpendicular window in a wood frame; the original slit having probably been cut away to make room for the window. On the north face, and at the same level are the remains of a similar slit to that on the south face; but it is now filled in, the stone quoins and head remaining. The openings in the next tier are also rectangular slits about 9 in. wide and of a similar character to those below and look much like the original openings. The three upper windows or louvres are pointed, having Perpendicular tracery and stone mullions. From the position and appearance of the rectangular openings, one is led to think they formed part of the original design of the tower, while the pointed windows are of a much later period, being probably the work of mediaeval architects. The west window in the lowest tier was no doubt inserted for the purpose of giving more light to the interior of the lower part of the tower which is now occupied as a vestry. The three upper, pointed windows were evidently inserted at the same time as the lowest west window, or vice versa, being of the same character and period. These windows or louvres give light to the bells and were, no doubt, inserted for some purpose in connection therewith, probably when the bells were fixed.

The only entrance to the tower is from the nave, through a stone semi-circular tower-arch of Norman design, 4 ft. 7 in. wide, and 10 ft. 3 in. high to the soffit. The inner ring or intrados of the arch is perfectly plain, also the sides of the opening; and when looked at towards the tower, from the inside of the nave, it has the appearance of an ordinary, plain, semi-circular, Norman arch with square stone quoins. This inner ring of stone, I am led to think, formed the original tower-arch. Having entered the tower, and looked towards the east, the arch presents itself under entirely a different aspect. Instead of looking, as one would have expected to do, upon a plain, semi-circular tower-arch, one sees a beautiful early Norman semi-circular doorway fixed within the tower-arch. The semi-circular arch of the doorway is formed of plain rings of stone and a bold, half-round, ogee-moulding. It is supported on each side of the opening by a beautiful, slender stone column, the shaft of which is quite plain, and about 5 in. diameter, having a cap or capital

richly carved with floral decoration, the design being different on each capital and on each face of the capital visible. The shafts are supported on pedestals having plain mouldings, the stone of which the columns are formed being Barnack of a rather coarse texture while the stone forming the arch is a close-grained limestone.

A great part of this beautiful doorway, with its columns and mouldings, are built partly, as before stated, within the tower-arch, and made to appear as forming part of it, while a part of the carved capitals, etc., are buried within the walling of the tower.

On looking at the doorway as a whole, it certainly strikes one as being entirely out of place and having the appearance of being stuck into its present position, forming in no way any part of the original tower-opening. To account for part of the arch-columns and capitals being buried in the wall it seems probable that the walling had to be cut away to 'accommodate the doorway in its new position and when fixed the rubblework was made good again, care only being taken to preserve the contour of the circular work of the tower, thereby allowing the flint-work to overlap or bury part of the doorway.

Just above the centre of the semi-circular arch forming the doorway, and built into the walling of the tower is Norman grotesque head which certainly appears out of place, and looks as if it had been placed there with the object of preserving it.

Neither can I think that the semi-circular arch forming the doorway is coeval with the beautiful columns which support it. One can hardly imagine such delicate columns designed to support an arch carrying such a mass of superincumbent material; nor can one imagine such carved columns forming part of an arch devoid of all ornament. Neither must it be forgotten that the stone of which the columns are made is of an entirely different character to that forming the arch.

The doorway as a whole certainly has the appearance of having been made up of pieces belonging to two different doorways (probably parts of the north or south entrances to the original church) and that they were probably placed in their present position with the sole object of preserving them. All the openings in the inside of the tower, especially the slits, are heavily splayed on all sides except the top, the splays in this tower being much heavier than in those previously described. The quoins of the splays are formed in Barnack stone and coarse, shelly limestone and appear to have been inserted at a later period; but on this point I am not particularly clear.

In the nave, and close to the north door is a very handsome stone font, probably of the transitional Norman period, although stated by some to be late Saxon, say 1150. It is in one block, 2 ft. 9 in. square, and 1 ft. 6 in. deep and I am not quite clear if it is Barnack stone or a coarse, shelly limestone. All its four faces are beautifully and richly carved with floral designs, and on each face the design is different. The four corners are represented by four columns having carved

capitals and moulded pedestals. This font is probably coeval with the columns forming part of the doorway in the tower and no doubt belonged to the original church. The font stands upon a rubble masonry pedestal about 2 ft. high and is surmounted with an exceedingly elegant wood canopy which opens with doors (being a good specimen of the florid style) of about the fifteenth century.

It has been asserted by ancient and modern county topographers, besides some antiquarians, that this tower is strictly Norman; others say that it is after the Danish manner of building, whatever that may have been; while others declare that the original Norman church had the existing tower-arch with its patchwork columns and ornamental capitals, for its western doorway or main entrance, and that the tower was built up against this old Norman doorway at the time the existing Early English church was built.

On visiting Pentlow Church I found the nave had lately been restored by that eminent architect and antiquarian William Fawcett, F.S.A. of Cambridge; so I determined to write to him and ask his opinion with reference to the tower and the west entrance. He kindly replied as follows:

"At Pentlow there must, I think, have been a church before the round tower was built. We cannot imagine anyone so foolish as to build that beautiful west door in a position in which it would hardly ever be seen, and with parts of it buried in the tower-wall. The tower-builders probably intended to remove it to some other position in due time; or if not, probably did not admire it, but thought it old-fashioned. It is astonishing how little the work of one generation was appreciated by the immediate succeeding ones. There is nothing either in the tower that would show it to be earlier than the nave, so I feel no doubt about it myself. There is a similar case at Polstead in Suffolk, near Bures. In both these cases they have evidently been elaborate and stately west entrances."

It hardly becomes me to differ with those who take this latter view, especially this eminent architect and antiquarian, but it certainly appears to me, from the style of the tower, its proportions as compared with the other Essex towers, the thickness of the walls as compared with those in the church, the character of the rubble masonry, and, for other reasons before mentioned, that the tower is of greater antiquity than any other part of the church, excepting, perhaps, the font and columns, and that the tower-arch proper is coeval with the tower.

Had the tower been built at the same period as the church, or even at a later period, it is probable its east face would have been built flat, for the convenience of abutting the nave roof against, whereas it is round, necessitating an awkward joint by cutting the nave-roof into the circular walling of the tower. Mr Gage, in his paper before the Society of Antiquaries in 1829, makes no observation on this round-towered church, which is remarkable, as its features are striking.

It is evident he was not aware of its existence, although he visited Bartlow Church, just on the borders of Cambridge, within about fourteen miles of Pentlow, with its round tower, and gives a drawing of it in his paper.

Once more quoting from Gage's paper, in which he says, "The Saxon copy of *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (1) in the Cottonian Collection (2) at the British Museum contains an illumination or drawing of a church with a round tower: it was not unreasonable to expect to find at least one tower that might pass as Anglo-Saxon, but all these thoughts vanished when the towers themselves came before me in review."

To satisfy my curiosity I have examined this beautiful illuminated eleventh century MS., and on page 7 I find an illuminated drawing of a building which I assume to be a sacred edifice. This building has a round tower or turret. On page 28 is a drawing in perspective of what appears to be a square fortress or castle, the angles of which are round towers. Proceeding further, on page 33 is an illuminated drawing of a building, probably a church, and the one referred to by Gage, having what I take to be an unmistakable round tower having a rectangular opening in the base with a semi-circular arch over it : this has the appearance of being the main entrance into the tower. At a higher level are two round holes or openings with a rectangular slit between them; at a higher level still the tower is smaller in diameter, with similar openings.

Besides this particular Saxon MS. there are others also containing illustrations of round towers. Surely this is evidence to support Mr Brock's idea that the origin of the round towers of Suffolk and Norfolk are Saxon. But there is one thing certain, and that is, if the Saxons did not build round towers, they were cognisant of the style; otherwise they would not have illustrated them in their manuscripts.

Mr Fergusson, in his *History of Architecture* states with reference to round churches and towers, the following:

"The idea of round building seems to date from very early times. They existed in the form of basilicas and tombs at Rome and a round tower is to be found at the Port of Ravenna attached to the Church of St. Apollinare in Classe. The church is said to have been commenced in 538 and dedicated 549 A.D. It is of the Romanesque style."

With reference to the round towers of Suffolk and Norfolk, he states that there are in Norfolk and Suffolk some forty or fifty churches with round western towers; but as a matter of fact there are one hundred and seventy four some of which seem undoubtedly to be mere modifications of the western round nave of Scandinavian churches. These Norfolk churches with round towers may consequently be looked upon as safe indexes of the existence of Scandinavian influences in the Eastern Counties and also as interesting examples of the mode in which a compromise is frequently hit upon between the feelings of intrusive races and the habits of the previous inhabitants. It can scarcely be doubted that round naved and round towered churches existed in the Eastern Counties anterior to the Norman Conquest and if any still remain, they have not been described. The earliest that are known were erected during the Norman period, and extend certainly down to the end of the Edwardian period.

Now with reference to these remarks of Fergusson's, I am somewhat at a loss to know how he arrived at such a conclusion, viz, that the round towers of Norfolk owe their origin or development to the existence of Scandinavian influence in the Eastern Counties. The expression, " Scandinavian influence", is somewhat broad and vague. It is difficult to know exactly what Fergusson intended to imply. It may be that he intended to apply it to all those races which invaded Britain from the first coming of the Saxons down to the Norman Conquest; or on the other hand, he may have intended it to mean the Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes. I assume the latter. We have no record, as far as I am aware, of any Swedish settlement in our islands. As for the Norwegians, they only occupied, as far as I know, the Orkneys and Shetlands and the northern parts of Scotland, whereas there is evidence to prove conclusively that the Danes occupied and in considerable numbers all our northern and eastern counties.

According to the Saxon chronicles the Danes first landed in England about 787 A.D.; but I believe they made piratical invasions prior to this date. It was not, however, until 866 that they invaded Britain with the idea of colonising a part of it, and it was not until 870 that they conquered East Anglia. From the first landing of the Scandinavian race until 1013 when the Danish kings commenced to rule, the Scandinavian invasion may be looked upon as a period of continuous, barbaric fighting, robbing, plundering, and burning; indeed it is recorded that they burnt many early monasteries, etc. Under these conditions and many others which I could mention, it hardly seems probable that our architecture owes much of its development to Scandinavian influence.

If the round towers owe their origin to Scandinavian influence, why are they only to be found in such a small portion of the country they invaded and occupied? I am under the impression that during the period the Scandinavian races were invading and occupying our island, architecture in their own country was in a rude and undeveloped condition. So far as my research into Scandinavian history has yet carried me, I have failed to discover any record or trace of circular building, except circular barrows, either in Norway, Sweden, or Denmark. Further I am under the impression that prior to the eleventh century the Scandinavian race had not embraced Christianity. Of course I am well aware of the existence of their round churches and semicircular apses of the later part of the eleventh century, a style they may well have learnt from our own island.

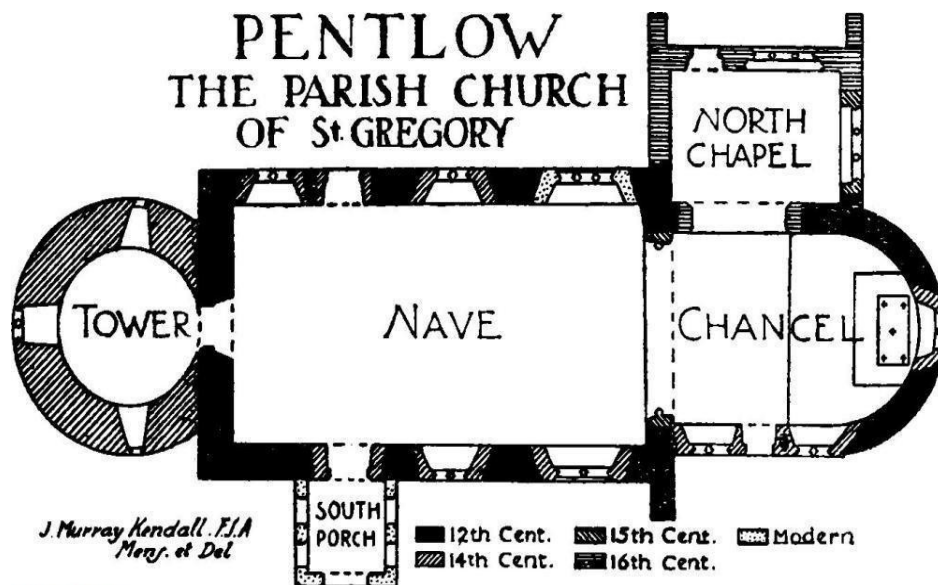
Had Fergusson stated that the round towers of Norfolk owed their origin to the Saxons I would not so much have doubted it, as it seems more probable that the Saxons could have introduced or developed round towers, coming as they did from that part of the Continent where undoubtedly architecture was in a higher state of development; besides which, it is recorded that round towers existed on the Rhine at early times.

In offering these latter remarks I must ask you to accept them with caution, as I have not yet sufficiently studied the subject from the point of view mentioned. I have merely thrown out the remarks as a suggestion.

Notes). (1) The *Psychomachia* (Battle of spirits) by the Late Antique Latin poet Prudentius is probably the first and most influential "pure" medieval allegory, the first in a long tradition of works as diverse as the *Romance of the Rose*, *Everyman*, and *Piers Plowman*. In slightly less than a thousand lines, the poem describes the conflict of vices and virtues as a battle in the style of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Christian faith is attacked by and defeats pagan idolatry to be cheered by a thousand Christian martyrs. The Saxon copy of *Psychomachia* that Wood refers to is now in the British Library.

Aurelius Prudentius Clemens was a Roman Christian poet, born in the province of *Tarraconensis* (now Northern Spain) in 348. He probably died in the Iberian Peninsula certainly after 405 possibly around 413. Prudentius was a lawyer and was twice provincial governor before the emperor Theodosius I summoned him to court. Towards the end of his life (possibly around 392) Prudentius retired from public life to become an ascetic.

(2) The Cottonian Collection has a fascinating history. Sir Robert Cotton (1571-1631) gathered a remarkable collection of manuscripts, especially rich in historical, devotional and literary material of British interest. The Lindisfarne Gospels (Cotton Nero D IV), one of the most famous books in the British Library's collection, was among Cotton's greatest treasures.



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<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/>

Pentlow, Church of St Gregory and St George

Pentlow church is one of six round towered churches in Essex. The main construction of the church is flint and pebble rubble with dressings of limestone and clunch (a predominantly chalk/clay based building material bedded in mortar to form walls). The nave and chancel date from the 12th century and the west tower and north chapel from the 14th century. The north chapel was rebuilt in the 17th century.



The north chapel houses the tomb of Judge Kempe, his son John and John's wife Elinor. It dates from the early 1600's. The judge died in 1606 and his son John died in 1609. The tomb is intricately carved, depicting Judge Kemp, his son and daughter in law on the top and in a panel on the side John and Elinor's 14 children. Some of the brightly coloured paint is still visible.



There is also a much smaller tomb against the north wall of the sanctuary for Edmund Felton and his wife Frances which dates from 1542.

The font dates from the 12th century, three sides are elaborately carved with foliage and it is unusually deep! The base of the octagonal wooden font cover dates from the 15th century but the top part is modern.



There is an article by Stephen Hart about Pentlow in the September 2007 Round Tower magazine.

**MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS by Roger Rosewell,
£7.99, Shire Publications, ISBN 978-0-74781-7**

This is another welcome addition to the Shire Publications written by Roger Rosewell. Roger, a nationally recognised expert on the subject, wrote the major book “Medieval Wall Paintings in English & Welsh Churches”, published by Boydell at £39.95 in 2008. Inevitably research moves on, and more wall paintings come to light, so this is a newly written work with different photos, at a more modest price. It is hoped that the information will now be available to a much wider audience.

The book sets out why there were paintings done on the walls, the subjects they portrayed, how the painters went about creating the images, the trigger for their destruction, and present day methods of conservation! There are many well-chosen colour illustrations to explain the text. At the back of the book, there is a Gazetteer listing where one can find good examples of this art, county by county.

This is a useful, informative book for anyone interested in this art form, whether a newcomer or someone already enthusiastic about the subject!

‘Lyn Stilgoe

The Round Tower Churches Society often provide speakers to local groups. The occasion may be a meeting of a village or town society or as part of a fund raising event for a round tower church. This gives the society an opportunity to raise awareness of the RTCS and its work. RTCS member Roger Batty has sent us a report of one such event held last autumn at Shimpling.

I volunteered to go with Stuart ('the boy from the Waveney Valley') Bowell on his visit to Shimpling to give a talk entitled Round Tower Churches – a Norfolk and Suffolk speciality.

The setting of the now redundant church of St George, just to the south of the village, is quite superb. A grassed over and muddy cart track leads from a farm, difficult to access at the best of times, but probably near impassable at certain times of the year.

We arrived early to set up the slide projector and screen, agreeing that the best place to talk from was the pulpit. One could not help but admire the sun shining through the large west window in the tower, lighting up the chancel and the nave. Bats could be seen flying past the chancel windows.

The church has no electricity and as darkness fell Stuart used a head torch to consult his notes. The slide projector was powered by a small generator in the churchyard, which worked well.

After a general introduction covering the distribution of these churches in East Anglia, the three most frequently asked questions about round towers were considered. Why were the towers built round? When were they built? For what purpose were they built?

Stuart then moved on to outline the history of the Round Tower Churches Society and its work, concluding with slides illustrating a selection of the churches, details of tower construction and some examples of the treasures to be found inside the churches such as fonts, pulpits and screen paintings.

At the end of the talk, after questions and refreshments, the audience disappeared into the dark and we packed up the equipment to go home. As we left the church we both had a strange feeling that generations of previous churchgoers were leaving the church with us, having hopefully enjoyed the evening as much as we had.

Little Snoring and iron-bound conglomerate.

I read with enthusiasm Joseph Biddulph's thoughts and conclusions on the enigma of Little Snoring church. (The Round Tower Vol. XLI No 4. June 2014). I have puzzled over the structure myself. I don't have Mr Biddulph's knowledge of architectural dating, but I agree with his main conclusion - that the present nave was built largely reusing the stone from the demolished nave of the old church. I would like to add to his account this slightly more detailed look at the deployment of iron-bound conglomerate in both the original tower and the rebuilt nave. It may add a little more to the story.

Mr Biddulph uses the terms 'brownstone' and 'brown ironstone' and these are useful descriptive terms for this patchy, locally derived stone. However I will continue to refer to it as iron-bound conglomerate as this also describes its nature – that the iron binds the sand and flint together to make a conglomerate rock. (See my own article also in The Round Tower Vol. XLI No 4. June 2014)

I suspect that when Little Snoring church was first built it contained no limestone stonework for doors, windows or quoins. I suggest this because there are extant traces of iron-bound conglomerate having been used for all these functions within the original church and the use of a local stone would have been considerably less expensive than transporting limestone from the Midlands to central Norfolk.

- Starting with the retained circular tower, I suggest that its lower sections are very much as first constructed. The iron-bound conglomerate is used to good visual effect, which must have been more dramatic still before the stone was colonised by the pale lichen. This lichen typically coats and masks the stone when it is exposed to weathering and so reduces its visual impact. The lowest course of the tower is a basal circuit of large but unshaped iron-bound conglomerate boulders. Above this is a band of flint, then a double herringbone band of small, cobble-sized iron-bound conglomerate, followed by more flint and finally a band, 5 or 6 circuits deep, of boulder-sized, unshaped iron-bound conglomerate. Let into this upper, wide, iron-bound conglomerate band, on the west face of the tower, are the remains of an early (Anglo-Saxon?) window opening. This opening was also constructed of iron-bound conglomerate and shows V shaped stone work at the top of the window arch (Photograph 1). All the windows above this point are constructed of limestone and I suggest that they were additions made after the initial construction phase of the tower.

- The beautifully constructed tower arch – now open to the elements for all to see was also made from iron-bound-conglomerate: this time used as a freestone. It is a plain, double order Saxo-Norman arch, with imposts also of ironbound conglomerate (Photograph 2). The builders of the church must have had access to a thick, extensive and relatively flint-free patch of the stone in order to have extracted the quantities of free stone required for the tower arch and church quoins. Was this local stone exhausted before the church was completed, so requiring imported limestone for the windows and doors, or did it, as I suspect, merely become unfashionable? I am guessing that the more elegant limestone Norman door and window openings were set into the ‘old’ church after its initial build and before its demolition and rebuild.



*Photograph 1.
West view of
the tower
showing an
early window
constructed of
iron-bound con-
glomerate.*

- The quoins now deployed at the west end of the ‘new’ nave have limestone quoins underneath the iron-bound conglomerate ones. This is a reverse of what is expected when the quoins are in their original positions, and suggests to me that the original church was pulled down at the same time as the new one was rebuilt. This resulted in the limestone and brick which was originally at the top of the old church ending up at the bottom of the ‘new’ one (Photograph 3).



*Photograph 2.
Tower and
tower arch
from the
east.*

So when might the rebuild have happened? Surely sometime after the limestone Romanesque south and north doors were fitted to the 'old' church. The strange south door on the 'new' church appears to me as if its stonework started life as a regular Romanesque doorway set into the 'old' church. However, by the time the 'new' church was built fashion had changed enough for the church builders to desire a pointed arch ... so when the stonework was reassembled in its new situation it was 'rearranged' in an attempt at a pointed arch. The resultant door is narrower than the original must have been, its stonework is somewhat 'mangled' and the arch ended up as a rather odd shape (Photographs 4 and 5 on page 20).



Photograph 3. Quoins at the north-west corner of the 'new' church.

My interpretation for this church is:

1. Church built in flint and iron-bound conglomerate – probably pre conquest.

2. Limestone Romanesque north and south doors, and upper tower windows, fitted into the 'old' church.

Some catastrophe occurred to the 'old' church resulting in the 'new' church being constructed from the material of the 'old' – including the attempt at constructing a pointed south door arch reusing the old Romanesque stonework.

If this story is correct it also illustrates how 'plastic' flint churches are; windows and doorways can be replaced at will with very little disturbance to the church fabric and often with only small signs in the rubble flint walls to show that this has occurred.

Jenny Gladstone



Photograph 4. South doorway in the 'new' church.



Photograph 5. Detail of the south doorway of the 'new' church.

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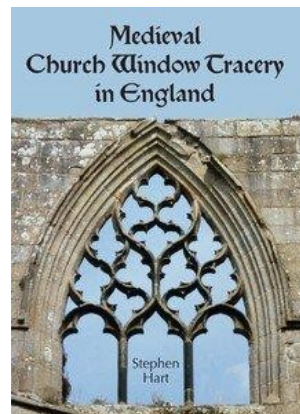
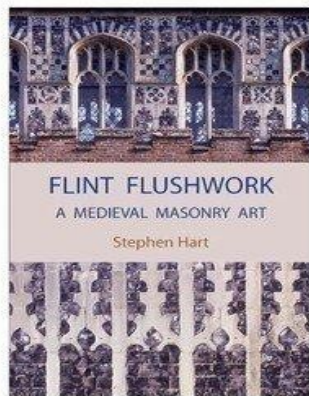
The Round Tower Churches Society looks forward to your posts and your tweets.



STEPHEN HART 1924-2014

It is very sad to have to record the passing of Stephen, just six days before his 90th birthday. He was an outstanding architect with a great knowledge of medieval stonework. In his retirement he devoted much time to the meticulous study of our round towered churches. Stephen was always generous with his learning and very patient and enthusiastic in explaining everything to those with less knowledge. It is in great part thanks to his work that the Society now has a reputation in the academic world and is credited with considerable insight into the history of these precious buildings. Stephen was a hands-on member of the Committee from 2000 to 2010 which included nearly four years as Magazine Editor from his first issue in December 2000.

We are fortunate that much of this expertise will live on in that he has published three well reviewed books where he imparted his great knowledge of church architecture including "The Round Church Towers of England" in 2003. He also updated the useful booklet "East Anglian Round Tower Churches" which for many people is their first introduction to the understanding of these towers. Right up to the last he was contributing detailed, learned articles for our magazine and there are more yet to be published.



Stephen has kindly willed that the Round Tower Churches Society will inherit his research papers for our archives. These will be available for future generations of ecclesiologists and round tower church aficionados to learn from.

Stephen will not be forgotten and the Round Tower Churches Society is without a doubt a better and a more worth-while organisation for his involvement with us.

'Lyn Stilgoe. RTCS Secretary.

Memories of Stephen Nelson Hart

The death of Stephen is a great loss to our Society. His knowledge of Round Towers was unequalled. At a sad time there is comfort in reflection. Many of you reading this will have your own memories of Stephen from our summer tours. My own memories are legion and I share a few of them here.

Stephen made his contributions on tours in his own quiet yet authoritative way. Never wishing or prepared to take over from the tour leaders yet freely offering his thoughts and ideas when asked. I particularly remember his enthusiasm for putlog holes. There was great excitement at Sustead in September 2003 at the first opportunity to purchase a copy of the recently published 'The Round Tower Churches of England'. Stephen was kept very busy signing copies.

Stephen became our magazine editor in late 2000 producing his first magazine for December 2000. The magazine had a new title 'The Round Tower' and also a new logo on the cover. As Stephen commented in his editorial... 'a simple symbol rather than a figurative illustration creates a more pithy impact'. His appointment as editor gave us the benefit of his presence on the Committee and also meant that I got to know Stephen much better. However, I was extremely surprised to learn his age when he told me. On a tour in 2004 Stephen apologised for leaving early: 'I am going to a family party' he said. I replied 'Oh, a special occasion?' 'Yes, it's for my birthday.' I asked 'is it a big one?' He replied 'I shall be 80'.

A few years later during a tour 'Lyn was interrupted by a loud, low flying aircraft. A Spitfire, someone suggested. Stephen said quietly 'a Mustang with a Spitfire engine – the Mustang became a much better aircraft when fitted with the Merlin engine.'

During 2010 I was fortunate enough to join Stephen, 'Lyn and Richard on a visit to Hales St Margaret. Owen Thompson, archaeologist and development Officer for the Churches Conservation Trust accompanied us and we were able to climb the tower giving us the opportunity to examine the interior fabric at close quarters. To do this in Stephen's company, with the benefit of his expertise, was a real privilege.

A talented man himself, Stephen had great respect and admiration for the work of others. When reviewing 'The Round Tower Churches of Norfolk' in 2001, he wrote of Dorothy Shreeve's superb and meticulous drawings: 'To draw a wall of flints that doesn't look like a spotted dick is in itself difficult enough, but to achieve the subtleties of shading and texture of different kinds of flint on flat and curving surfaces that the artist manages here, shows a rare and enviable skill'.

Stephen was laid to rest in the churchyard of All Saints, Easton on the Hill near Stamford the village that had been his home for over 50 years.

Stuart Bowell. RTCS Chairman.

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