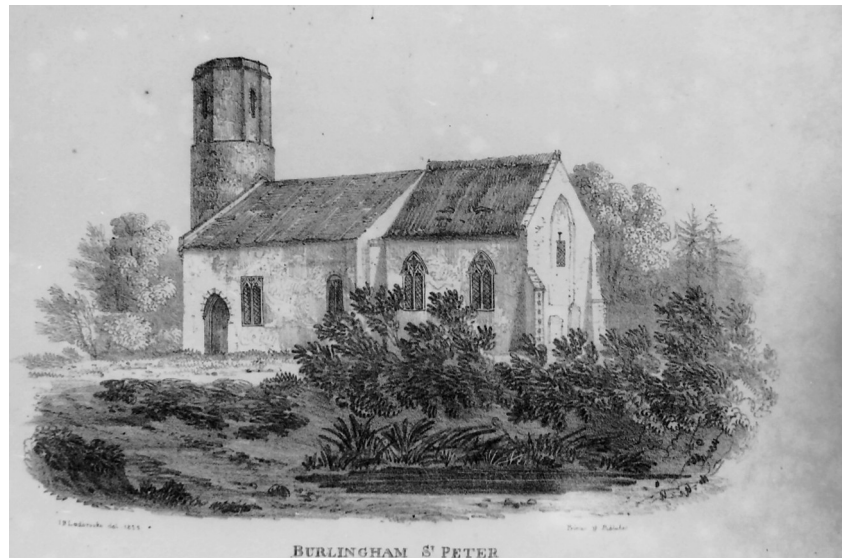




The Round Tower

Vol. XL No 4

June 2013



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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

Tel: 01603 870452

anne.woollett@tiscali.co.uk

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 :-

Mr Richard Barham

6 The Warren, Old Catton,

Norwich, NR6 7NW

Tel: 01603 788721

THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

Vol. XL No 4 June 2013

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RTCS members who have already registered will automatically receive this magazine as a PDF. Colour photographs will be in colour not in black and white. If you have not yet registered but would like to receive the PDF in addition to your paper copy please send your email address to pt.hodge@tiscali.co.uk

Editorial

Our cover picture is the Ladbroke drawing of Saint Peter's Church, North Burlingham. Richard Harbord has written a very interesting article about this church on page 6.

The Treasurers report and our annual accounts for 2012-13 are on pages 11-13.

Details of the grants given to our churches in 2012-13 to help them with their repairs are on pages 14-15. The committee is delighted to report that with promises already made and two grants agreed at the committee meeting which followed our AGM on the 11th May we have given or promised just over £150,000 in the forty years since the society was founded.

The minutes of our AGM held on the 11th May at Gunton (where the society was founded) are on page 16.

Some of you will have seen the article by RTCS committee member and Eastern Daily Press Agricultural Editor Michael Pollitt which appeared with pictures as a double page spread in the Eastern Daily Press on the 4th May. A link to this article and a further article on the 14th May is on our Facebook page. You can read the 4th May article page 17.

On page 20 H.T and T.S. Norris offer tantalising clues about possible missing round tower churches in North West Essex.

Part two of the 2012 RTCS tour report will appear in the September magazine. Other good things will be an article on bricks in round tower churches by Stephen Hart and a report on the Fishley coffin slab by Julian Litten.

Over five thousand of Bill Goode's photographs of round tower churches have been scanned by Dick Barham and uploaded by Paul Hodge to the 'Round Tower Churches of South East England' Facebook group. Join the group to view these photographs.



The Society also has a Facebook page. Visit this page for up to the minute news and photographs about the society and round tower churches. Please 'like' the page to add your own photographs, news and comments about round tower churches.

RTCS TOURS 2013

Saturday Tours. First church at 2.30pm

- 1st June Sidestrand (NR27 0LT), Roughton, Aylmerton.
6th July Aldham (IP7 6NN), Hasketon, Ramsholt.
3rd Aug Beachamwell (PE37 8BD), Cockley Cley, Watton.
7th Sept Stockton (NR34 0HJ), Kirby Cane, Bungay Holy Trinity.

CHURCH TOURS 2013 on Sundays. First church at 2.30pm

- 16th June Frenze (IP21 4EZ), Thelveton, Dickleburgh, Rushall RT.
21st July Stow Bardolph (PE34 3HJ), Crimplesham, Bexwell RT,
Fordham.

All are welcome on these tours. There are no charge though donations in the church offertory boxes are encouraged. Tea will be provided by one of the churches during the afternoon. The Sunday Tours end with a form of Evening Service, usually at 6.30pm (which is optional). Any enquiries to 'Lyn Stilgoe 01328 738237.

At the latest count Simon Knott has visited 878 Norfolk churches and 690 churches in Suffolk. He has visited many of these churches more than once. Simon has lovingly recorded each of these churches on his websites in both text and photographs. The Round Tower Churches Society are very grateful to Simon for his continued kindness in allowing us to use his photographs.
www.norfolkchurches.co.uk

Saint Peter's Church, North Burlingham, Norfolk.

TG 366102, Blofield Deanery.

The RTCS last gave an account of this ruined church in 1998. The round tower collapsed in **1906**. It was never rebuilt and the tower arch was blocked up. The church was finally abandoned in **1936**. Since then the church-yard (privately owned) is still visited but the ruins have returned to nature. This is partly because there are other medieval churches in North and South Burlingham. The former has the Church of St Andrews which is close to St Peters. North Burlingham was a two church village. St Andrews has a tall and prominent Perpendicular period tower which makes it impressive. The present parishes of Burlingham are joined with Lingwood and together they have a combined population of 2500 people. In 1870 St Peters was an independent parish but with only 80 people and 18 houses.

1. Manorial and Parish history.

North Burlingham lies east of Norwich near to Acle, just off the A47. It has two churches, one at each end of the village and less than a quarter of a mile apart. The larger one is St Andrews, so St Peters at the east end of the village street is known as the 'Little Church'. Both were mentioned in the **1086 Domesday Survey**. Each was endowed with land and they were early foundations. St Peters was in the King's manor which held jurisdiction in the village while St Andrews was in the Bishop's manor. St Andrews has a Norman doorway. Cox (1) and Goode thought that the round part of St Peter's bell-tower could also have been Norman. The first recorded priest in that church was in **1287**. Rebuilding of its early chancel seems to have preceded the Black Death. Two priests died and were replaced in **1349**. Later the parish's tax assessment was substantially reduced. This setback is reflected in the survey of the contents of St Peters which was made in **1369** (2). The church had the requisite number of liturgical books, vestments and altar furnishings but it was noticeably poorer than its bigger neighbour, St Andrews. The local tradition is that St Peters was 'low church'. By **1400** St Peter's parish had recovered sufficiently for another and more ambitious building phase. The **1552** sequestration survey of contents, shows that St Peters had become much better endowed (3). Two of the three, late-medieval bells were scheduled to be removed but it seems they were not. A visitation in **1593** made by Bishop Redman stated that the minister was lax in his duties. A predecessor had been an antiquarian. This implied neglect helped to preserve the church from further major changes until the 19th century.

From the beginning, St Peters seems to have been very much an estate church. The Burroughes family built the modest Georgian mansion of Burlingham Hall in **1790** and became patrons of the church. They planted a woodland belt around their park which is evident in Faden's map of Norfolk, surveyed in the 1790s. St Peter's Church sits in part of that woodland. The family only resided in the parish for four generations yet they installed nine mural tablets (4) and two armorial Hatchments in St Peters. By **1845**, the population of St Peters had risen to 55 people. In **1870** it had 70

people living in 18 dwellings so the ecclesiastical parish was consolidated with St Andrews. The seating capacity of the Nave was only around 70 (Bryant says, 130! (5)) and they became squeezed in the small Nave, so a wooden Gallery was added at its western end. The Rev Randall Burroughes died in **1872**. In his memory, his widow 'energetically' restored the church in **1874**. This was the Hon Emily Harbord, daughter of the 3rd Lord Suffield (1832-1912), the Slavery Abolitionist. The Victorian refurbishment was extensive. This works programme did not include the Bell Tower except that a clock was (unfortunately) then attached to the lower part of the belfry. It added to the weight imposed on the slim and poorly constructed walls of the tower. Warning cracks were noted but no action was taken. In the evening of September 3rd, **1906** the tower collapsed 'with a deafening roar'. It took with it the upper part of the west gable of the Nave; the Gallery and it broke the Font. In **1921** the Font was re-assembled (6). Today the rest of the rubble still lies in a heap where it fell. Sadly, Mrs Burroughes who had donated £2,806 towards the church's restoration lived long enough to hear of this disaster. The open gable was quickly closed up but when a gale blew, the boarding rattled which was disturbing for the Sunday School and its minister. Two bells were stored on the floor of the porch while the third bell was hung on a chain and put back into use. Photographs taken c1900 shows the church from the outside and inside before it went into decline. No stained glass is visible in the photograph. The Burroughes family sold the Hall in **1919** and the advowson (the right of presenting a vacant benefice or living in the church. Originally, the relation of a patron (*advocatus*) or protector of a benefice and thus privileged to nominate or present it) in **1930**, thus ending their connection with the church. The Hall was eventually demolished in **1952**. The congregation bravely continued with church services for an amazing thirty years after the disaster, until June **1936**. The wall memorial plaques dedicated to the Burroughes were moved to the tower space of St Andrews where they are still displayed. The wonderful medieval screen was relocated to the west end of the same church. The bells were taken to St Peter Hungate Church in Norwich. In the same year, the rector sold off the contents of the church. 22 bench-pews, some with Medieval poppy-head ends and other fittings were sold to Blofield Church; the church silver was sold to St Anne's Church, Earlham. Since then St Peter's has been de-consecrated and it declined into a sorry ruin, though the memorials in the churchyard are still visited (only *by written permission* from the property owners, in the former Rectory). Even if Norfolk County Council; the 'Friends of Friendless Churches Society' and English Heritage took an interest in restoring the church, what new use could it be put to?

The architecture of St Peter's Church.

The building is composed of a medieval Round Tower, Nave, Chancel, and North Porch; a Victorian south Porch and north Vestry. A slit window at eaves level on the south side of the tower is the only opening that can be detected in the rather blurred photograph. It also suggests that there was a fillet though there is no

remaining evidence of one now. There was no string-course between the round and octagonal parts though there was a noticeable inset where they met. The north wall of the Nave continues eastwards into the chancel on the same alignment. As the Chancel is much narrower than the nave their central axis are about 0.35 metres apart. Reporters on the *Norfolk Landscape Archaeology* team have convincingly explained this anomaly in their report, EEA 51 (6). From their analysis of the structure, they proposed a sequence of five constructional stages into which the Tower was fitted.

Building phases.

1. A small, narrow nave with an even smaller chancel either late Norman or early medieval. There may or may not have been a western Tower. The axis of the Nave is 5° to the west of north, indicating it has early foundations.
2. In the early 14th century, the chancel was replaced with a larger one but of the same width as the Nave. Its walls may form the core of the surviving chancel, which has Decorated-style tracery in the windows. The present windows seem to be faithful replicas if we accept the accuracy of the drawing made by Robert Ladbroke which shows the church and its chancel in **1822**. The piscina on the north side has a double cusped arch and a quatrefoil drain which is in character with this period.
3. In the late 14th century, the nave (only) was widened on the south side and a new Round Tower added on its central axis. The east and the southern extension of the west walls of the nave are much thinner than the north walls. The style of the South Door (it has continuous mouldings) and Chancel Arch are of this period. The two, flat-topped windows on the south side and the three light window on the north side of the nave, with early Perpendicular tracery are a bit later in style. At the eastern end of the nave is a narrow *Piscina* directly under the south window indicating the position of the 'low' altar where a statute of the BVM and a suspended light are mentioned 'on the south side' (ie, of the nave) of the church in the Will of the rector, the Rev Hugh de Thame, in **1378**.
4. Ralph and Agnes Godwin left a bequest to the church in **1518**. The parapet of the tower and the tower-arch was rebuilt with late medieval brick. The north door has a double ogee arch which indicates that the north Porch was added at this time. Also a doorway with a flat arch and stair to the screen loft, were inserted into the north wall of the Nave; with two niches were cut out on the outside of the south wall of the Nave. Inside, a wooden screen was placed in front of the chancel arch. Richard Green left a bequest for the 'perk' screen in **1536**, which was very late as Henry VIII separated from Rome the year before. It is elaborately carved with three single divisions on either side. The central arch is wider and decorated with pommel-heads projecting from the cusplings. In the spandrels are angels on both sides, each holding shields with the emblems of St Peter and St Paul. This probably indicates two guilds in the church rather than a dual dedication.

5. The final building stage was the 1874 restoration programme which included the addition of the South Porch; north Vestry and boiler room; a new east window and other Chancel windows were replaced. The height of the thatched roof of the Chancel was the same as the nave until it was lowered in 1874. The chancel arch was rebuilt and perhaps also lowered. The two chancel doorways were rebuilt with more elaborate mouldings. Other changes to the church at that time have already been listed .

The evidence that trigger this time-frame came when archaeologists stripped plaster from the west wall of the Nave in 1978. They found a ragged vertical joint in the western wall, where the extended wall was bonded into the existing gable in the late 14th century. Externally, in the same location on the plan, none of the original south-west quoin-stones survive. The same can be said of the north-west quoin stones. Bill Goode's claim (6) to have seen large flint quoins in that location has to be questioned. So too can his claim that the round part of the tower was Norman. From the analysis given above, it seems likely that it was built much later. It is also probable that the round part of the tower and its octagonal belfry were built at the same time. The plain lancet, belfry openings and severely plain parapet should not diistract us from this conclusion.

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3. *Norfolk Archaeology*, vol 26, 260-261, Church Survey of 1552.
4. '*Norfolk Archaeology*', vol 32, 52-64; 'Monumental inscriptions in North Burlingham, St Peters', Rev A R B Wylam.
Also; *RTCS magazine*, May 1980, page 43; A list of monuments in St Peter's Church.
5. '*Norfolk Churches, Blofield Hundred*'; Rev C. Hugh Bryant. Unpublished except it was serialised in the Norwich Chronicle newspaper, 1906; Local Studies Library, Norwich, c726.5. The contents have to be treated with caution as the records of the two sub-parishes in North Burlingham have sometimes been merged in the text.
6. *The history of the North Burlingham Churches, S Andrew and S Peter*', Rev Gilbert F.
Hill, BD; rector; Library Press Lowestoft, 1931; with a photograph of St Peters, c1905.
7. '*Round and Disused Tower Churches in Norfolk*', EEA 51; by Neil Batcock.
8. *RTCS, magazine*; March 1991, page 29; by W. J. Goode, a survey of ruined towers.
See also, *RTCS magazine*; March 1998, page 57; by R. Barham; and *History of Norfolk*, vol 7, p222; by F. Blomfield, Parish History

Richard Harbord



This photograph from the Bill Goode archive dates from before the tower collapse of 1906 and appears to show North Burlingham in excellent order..



This photograph of North Burlingham by Bill Goode was taken in 1978.

TREASURER'S REPORT 2012-2013.

The Society has had another good year and we have been able to award grants totalling £21,450 to thirteen churches who requested help from us. Looking back through our archives I see that the grants given during the last financial year alone exceeded the grants given by the Society during the first 24 years of our existence. We know from the feedback we receive how much our help is appreciated by the parishes concerned even though our grants are small in relation to those given by other funding organisations. We hope that we will be able to continue to offer financial help to round tower churches for many years to come. At the end of the financial year our funds stand at £18,559 and we have outstanding grant promises of £6,500 to pay out once building work commences at the churches concerned.

As from April 2012 increases in postage cost the Society an extra £80 for each mailing of the magazine. To help offset this your Committee took the decision to advance purchase a stock of stamps at the old price which should keep us going until the December 2013 magazine. Thank you to all those members who took up the idea of sending a welcome donation in addition to their membership subscription and to those who enclosed stamps with their membership subscription. Remember all the help you give will ultimately enable the Society to continue to help round tower churches in need.

During the last eighteen months the Society has received £237 from Geoff Swann arising from the sale of used postage stamps. This little side-line is well worth encouraging and any stamps or stamp collections should be sent direct to Mr G Swann at 33 Saville Street, Bidworth, Mansfield, Notts. NG21 0RW. Alternatively hand your stamps to me on our tours and I will pass them on to Geoff.

Finally a thank you to Michael Coates who examined the accounts and helped me to make them balance!

Richard Barham. RTCS Hon Treasurer.

ROUND TOWER CHURCH
Statement of Accounts for the Year ended 31st March 2013
Society Accounts

2012	Income	2013
<u>39,444</u>	Opening balance	<u>31,443</u>
7,784	Annual subscriptions	8,095
1,383	Tax relief on Covenants and Gift Aid	1,226
1,879	Donations and lectures	1,917
104	Bank and COIF Charities Deposit Interest	110
147	Magazine advertisements	172
560	Sale of books and Society items	769
13	Post age charges from sale of Society items	14
-	Battle Area Tour donations	410
-	Study day donations	295
31,443	Closing balance	18,559
<u>51,314</u>		<u>44,451</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2013

729	Nat-West Bank— Current Account	191
18,286	Nat-West Bank—Reserve Account	5,799
12,342	COIF Charities Deposit Fund	12,445
86	Petty cash in hand	124
<u>31,443</u>		<u>18,559</u>

Richard Barham. Hon. Treasurer

I have examined the Accounts and Books etc of the Society and certify that this is true Sd/

Grants 2012 – 2013.

CHURCH

BARDFIELD SALING St Peter and St Paul.

BAWBURGH Sts Mary and Walstan.

BRAMPTON St Peter.

CROXTON All Saints.

HEMBLINGTON All Saints.

HERRINGFLEET St Margaret.

GAYTON THORPE St Mary.

POTTER HEIGHAM St Nicholas.

STOCKTON St Michael.

SWAINSTHORPE St Peter.

SYLEHAM St Margaret.

TAVERHAM St Edmund.

YAXHAM St Peter.

The Round Tower Churches Society	
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Memorial slab to Ada and Bill Goode in Gunton churchyard.

ROUND TOWER CHURCHES SOCIETY

The 40th Annual General Meeting was held at The Annexe, Gunton St Peter,
on Saturday, 11th May 2013 at 2.15pm.

1. The Chairman, Mr Stuart Bowell, welcomed the 34 members and friends present to the church where Mr Bill Goode, who started the Society 40 years ago, had worshipped. The Rev'd Philip Gray kindly led the opening prayers. Mr Bowell, as the 4th Chairman, then spoke of his memories of Mr Goode, who died in 2008 aged 95 years. Mr John Scales, the 2nd Chairman, then recalled both Mr Goode and Mrs Ada Goode. Their ashes are interred in this churchyard.
2. **Apologies** had been received as recorded in the Minute Book.
3. The **Minutes** of the **39th AGM** on 12.5.2012 were agreed and signed.
4. The **Chairman** gave a review of another satisfactory year, including the Church Tours and the Study Day. He thanked the Committee Members individually for their hard work, and all the Members for their support. He particularly mentioned Dr Woollett and Mr Paul Hodge for their work on the re-designed web-site and the Facebook page, reaching out to a new audience. He commended the remarkable achievement of the Society giving grants in excess of £150,000 during its 40 years.
5. The **Treasurer**, Mr Richard Barham, presented the accounts, with grants of £21,450 given during the year, with a further £6,500 promised. The web-site costs had increased because of setting up the new programme and its facilities. He recorded his gratitude for the assistance given him by Mr Michael Coates.
6. The **Grants Officer**, Mr Nick Wiggin, endorsed the Treasurer's statement that it has been a record year for the amount given in grants, with 13 grants given.
- 6a. **Web-site and Facebook:** Dr Woollett and Mr Hodge gave progress reports.
7. **Election of Officers and Committee:** Mr Bowell as Chairman was proposed by the Rev'd P. Gray, seconded by Mr John Butcher, and agreed. The existing Committee Members and Officers were proposed for re-election en bloc by the Rev'd P Gray, seconded by Mr J Scales, and agreed.
8. **Independent Examiner:** Mr R Barham proposed the re-appointment of Mr M Coates, seconded by Dr Woollett and agreed.
9. **Any Other Business:** Mr Kevin Scales offered his willingness as a Chartered Buildings Surveyor to assist any round tower church with grants applications, etc. The Rev'd Philip Gray gave notice of some services in redundant churches. Mr R Harbord said that the Norwich Diocese was undertaking a survey of church chests, and possibly one on bell frames.

After the Meeting, Mrs Dugan, Churchwarden, kindly provided refreshments.

ROUND TOWER CHURCHES SOCIETY CELEBRATES 40TH ANNIVERSARY.

Norfolk has the lion's share (127) of the national total of about 185 round tower churches. There are another 43 in Suffolk, 6 in Essex, 2 in Cambridgeshire 2 in Berkshire and 3 in Sussex. Forty years ago one enthusiast, the late Bill Goode, founded the Round Tower Churches Society and next Saturday, members will hold their annual general meeting at St Peter's church hall, Gunton the place where it all began.

Over the past four decades, the society has grown and now has more than 500 members. It has provided almost £150,000 to help safeguard and maintain these striking churches. "It would be entirely fitting if, as seems probable, we reach a total of £150,000 in our 40th anniversary year," says the chairman Stuart Bowell.

At last year's annual meeting the long-serving treasurer Dick Barham reported that 14 churches had been given grants totalling £16,500. These included the largest single grant in the society's history of £5,000 to help with the re-thatching of St Mary the Virgin, Cranwich. This same church also received the society's first grant many years ago of £20 to help pay for the removal of the slate roof.

Although several efforts had been made to found a society it was not until September 1973 that the Round Tower Churches Society became a legal entity. A year earlier, a round tower church, St Andrew's, Letheringsett had been brought to national attention when it was featured by the Royal Mail on a stamp to mark British Architecture 1972. This 5p stamp helped to raise the profile of round tower churches. By the second annual meeting the membership of the society had grown from 24 to 70 and it received official charitable approval. Five years later the society's membership reached 472.

Mr Goode had taken up photography as a hobby in 1965 when he acquired a new camera and he started visiting and recording round tower churches. "I read some books about round tower churches and I found the writers were often contradicting themselves. That challenged me to find out what was

right,” he told the EDP in 1994. The EDP subsequently reported: “He readily admits he didn’t even know how many of them there were and became hooked on the mystery, the beauty and the character of these remarkable buildings.”

For Mr Goode who retired as a television engineer for Pye in Lowestoft in 1975 these mysterious and beautiful churches were to become a consuming passion. Self-taught, he studied their architecture and decided to start recording and measuring them using a couple of washing lines which were lowered from the top of the tower to measure the height. With his wife Ada he travelled thousands of miles in an orange Volkswagen Beetle complete with a 19ft ladder on the roof.

Mr Goode found that many churches were in very poor condition and that money for repairs was in extremely short supply. Using £2,000 of his savings he published a book ‘East Anglian Round Towers and their Churches’ in 1980. It was a financial success and went on to make a £3,000 profit. This profit was ploughed back into the society by Mr Goode. Further books followed including ‘Round Tower Churches of South East England’ in 1994.

His research led him to a controversial conclusion that many more churches had been built by the Anglo-Saxons than previously credited. His books also sharply contradicted those historians who had claimed that the round towers were built as defensive watch towers. Mr Goode went on to suggest that the design of round towers had been adopted partly because of the lack of dressed stones to provide quoins for the corners of walls and the skilled traditional builders he contended – would have used whatever material was to hand – and would know how to use flint and lime mortar. Also that when the Normans and their successors built new or extended existing churches it is likely that these local skills would have been used across East Anglia.

When he stepped down in 1992 as Chairman of the Round Tower Churches Society after nineteen years in post Mr Goode had visited all 185 round tower churches at least twice and climbed the tower of every one of them except for 10 that he deemed unsafe.

In 2005, when the society's first study day was held at Mendlesham it was announced that the Prince of Wales had agreed to become the patron of the society.

Mr Goode resigned as President of the Round Tower Churches Society in 2007 and died in 2008 aged 95. On Mr Goode's death Stephen Hart, a leading expert on church architecture said that the society that he founded would serve as a living memorial to its enthusiastic founder. The society has continued the late Mr Goode's vision of helping to maintain and safeguard the nation's precious heritage of round tower churches.

Michael Pollitt

This article by RTCS committee member and EDP Agricultural Editor Michael Pollitt appeared with pictures as a double page spread in the Eastern Daily Press on the 4th May 2013.



W.J Goode

A CLUE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE MISSING ROUND TOWER CHURCHES OF NORTH WEST ESSEX.

The district of Uttlesford named after one of the Domesday hundreds covers most of north-west Essex, a rolling, leafy landscape once described by the Poet Laureate John Betjeman as ‘a quiet, prosperous agricultural area of old stone and flint churches, pargetted cottages with red tiled roofs, spreading farms and gabled manor houses, little hills, elms, oaks, willowy streams and twisty lanes leading to towns of renowned beauty as Thaxted and Saffron Walden’

In the past Uttlesford has lost at least three round towers including those at Arkesden, Wicken Bonhunt and Birchanger. Some evidence for their destruction and the building of new square towers exists in the Essex County Records and Archives in Chelmsford but we can have no real idea of what they looked like.

However, in Hertfordshire just on the border from North-West Uttlesford lies the church of St George, Anstey. The church is not in itself a round towered church but it does have a tower feature. St George is an impressive cruciform building which dates partly from Norman times and partly from the 13th to 15th Centuries. The church is rich in monuments and receives high praise in Pevsner’s “Hertfordshire” book (1953/1978 editions, pp. 70 to 72).

In his book Pevsner draws our attention to a turret or tower feature in the south transept of the church and constructed around the year 1290. He correctly describes the feature as a “fine sight” with 13th Century lancet windows and a “round stair turret”. In effect this turret is a round tower as defined by the Round Tower Churches Society and its characteristics may give us a clue in respect of the likely construction of the missing round towers of the Uttlesford churches. The round stair turret is constructed from flints bound in mortar and is approximately 2 metres diameter and 6 metres in height. Its lancet windows are arranged in the “round stair turret” to watch a South porch entrance which is still the principal access to the church. The lancet windows in the turret or tower include several small rectangular windows and a relatively larger crucifix-form window.

An important feature at Anstey is its crude font. This really must not be missed by visitors to the church. The font dates from Norman times or possibly even earlier with four mermen who hold their split tails with their two

hands. The mermen feature has no liturgical significance but was a popular feature in classical times and later. The font is likely to have been in continuous use for christenings and baptisms for the past thousand years. The church at Anstey may have a sister church in St Peter's, Cambridge which also has a square Norman font with mermen at its angles. The tails and arms of the mermen at Cambridge are arranged in a symmetrical manner very like the font at the Anstey.

It is clear that masons skilled in building round towers were here at Anstey and could have offered their skills to other parishes in the neighbourhood such as Arkesden, Wicken Bonhunt and Birchanger. Alternately of course it is equally possible that they might have arrived at Anstey fresh from their work at Arkesden, Wicken Bonhunt and Birchanger.

References:

“Hertfordshire Monumental Inscriptions” for St George, Anstey, for St Mary, Meesden and for St Giles, Wyddial: M.I. Series no. 102, Hertfordshire Family History Society, 2011

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