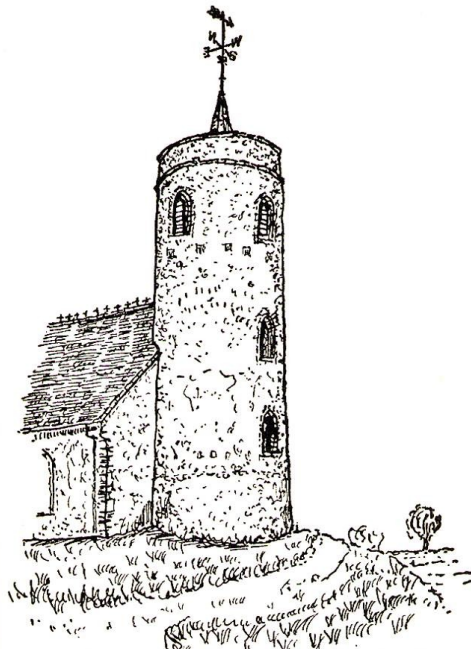




The Round Tower

Vol. XL11 No 2

December 2014



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Mettingham Church photo-graphed by Stuart Bowell

The next issue is March 2015 and the deadline for contributions is the 1st February 2015.

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

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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.

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

Mr Richard Barham

6 The Warren, Old Catton,

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THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

Vol. XL11 No 2.

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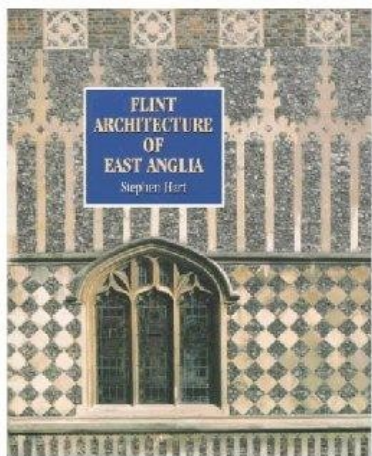


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Editorial

We reported in the September magazine that Stephen Hart had died. A short time prior to his death Stephen put the finishing touches to the second part of a series of articles he planned to write examining theories used to date round tower churches. We give you his thoughts on the validity of using wall thickness as a reliable indicator on page 6.



‘Lyn Stilgoe reminds us that Stephen Hart also wrote *Flint Architecture of East Anglia* which was published as a paperback in May 2000 and is still available. This is a splendid book and a must for all those with a passion for the flint buildings of East Anglia.

Richard Harbord reports on page 9 about a very exciting discovery at Carleton Forehoe.

Stuart Bowell reminds us of the round tower churches we visited in 2013 in the second and final part of his tour report on page 14.

The Norrises encourage us to visit the ‘lost’ round tower of Westley Waterless on page 18.

Paul Hodge draws attention to the round tower church at Poxwell (demolished as recently as 1969) on page 22.

Anne Woollett will report briefly on our very successful Study Day in the March magazine. We hope that our three speakers will also be producing articles for us in the months to come. The March magazine will also give venues and dates for the 2015 tour programme and the AGM.

EXAMINATION OF THE VALIDITY OF SPECIFIC THICKNESSES OF CHURCH AND TOWER WALLS AS RELIABLE INDICATIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATING SAXON AND NORMAN WORK.

This is the second of a series of article but sadly the last in which Stephen Hart examines the reliability of certain theories that have been used for dating round tower churches

The proposition that Norman walls were thicker than Saxon.

Baldwin Brown in *The Arts in Early England*, 1925, says: "Comparative thinness of wall is a good but by no means an absolute test of Saxon and Norman, Norman walls nearly always run thicker than Saxon. It may be asked whether thinness of walling etc. be not enough to prove pre-Conquest origin. This question can hardly be answered in an absolute form. Every investigator must rely to a certain extent on his personal judgement... certain kinds of evidence are of more weight in one part of the country than in another.

H.M. & J.Taylor, on pg.12 of their *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 1965, 1980 (paperback), say: "Pre-Conquest walls are seldom as much as 3ft in thickness and are more often nearer 2ft 6in, whereas Norman walls are seldom less than 3ft thick. There are notable exceptions: such as... those of the Norman church at Kilpeck which vary from 2ft 4in to 2ft 9in or of the Norman church at Weaverthorpe which are uniformly 2ft 4in. Even if thin walls alone are not a reliable guide they should be taken to indicate that the church deserves closer inspection to see if there are any supporting features. In the 13th century and later, walls were again often as thin as 2ft 6in but this was unusual in the Norman period from the Conquest to the end of the twelfth century." On page 642, where they describe the church at Weaverthorpe as "early twelfth century, i.e. Norman, but with some surviving Anglo-Saxon traditions", they state: "It should be noted particularly that the walls are thin; and that thin walls cannot therefore, by themselves, be accepted as satisfactory evidence of pre-Norman date". The nave walls are given as 2ft 4in thick and the tower as 3ft 6in.

Those are the opinions of two recognised authorities on Anglo-Saxon architecture. Both warn that wall thicknesses alone should not be taken as reliable evidence for a particular period.

In a footnote to his paper on Yorkshire churches in *Minsters and Parish Churches, The Local Church in Transition 950-1200*, Ed. John Blair, Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, Monograph No.17, 1988, Dr. Richard K. Morris warns "Although it is often said that the walls of Anglo-Norman parish churches were thicker than those of pre-Conquest buildings, I am not aware of any systematic study which bears out this generalisation. Hence, while wall-thicknesses of pre-

Conquest churches have been analysed by Dr. Taylor, there are no corresponding data for churches built in the period 1100-1150. Until such information becomes available, it may be unwise to place too much reliance upon the ‘thin/thick’ contrast”.

Although Baldwin Brown, the Taylors and Morris warn that wall thickness shouldn’t by itself be taken as proof for dating, W.J.Goode, in his *Round Tower Churches of South East England*, frequently uses it as such not only in the absence of supporting evidence but in spite of contrary evidence. His statement that “wall thickness is recognised as a reliable guide in separating pre-Conquest from the much thicker Norman walls” seems to be the basis for an assumption that Norman nave and tower walls of flint were always thicker than Saxon ones, and no reasons are given as to why particular thicknesses can be defined as demarcations between Saxon and Norman.

If measurements were consistently able to show that there were no Norman flint walls thinner than a certain thickness and no Saxon ones thicker than that, wall thickness would be useful for differentiating Saxon and Norman walls; but they don’t. There are relative thin Norman walls and thicker Saxon ones, and post-Norman walls thinner and thicker, and there are so many walls of unproved age of various thicknesses that the concept of a particular thickness as a demarcation of style must inevitably make it a precarious and unreliable diagnostic tool. Definition of particular thicknesses also allows manipulation of attributions to suit theories that depend on them.

Do generalised wall thickness theories apply to walls of flint?

The conventional wisdom, as reiterated with reservations by Baldwin Brown and the Taylors, that generally speaking, Norman walls were thicker than Saxon is probably based largely on wall thickness comparisons of Saxon and Norman churches built of stone. But in relation to flint walls, no consideration appears to have been given to the likelihood that Norman builders, being unfamiliar with flint before their arrival in England and then being faced with a material new to them, or that Anglo-Saxon builders though under Norman direction would have stuck to established indigenous methods of construction; post-Conquest flint walls would therefore probably have been built in the same way and generally to the same thicknesses as earlier ones. In any event, local labour rather than Norman newcomers would be more likely to have been employed on minor churches, and traditional techniques would no doubt have prevailed for some time after the Conquest. Changes of technology, and this also applies to the introduction of dressed stone, would have been very gradual at this level.

Round tower wall thickness is more likely to be related to traditional practices than to building periods, and other aspects such as a tower’s height or the bearing capacity of the ground are also likely to have been relevant. The walls at Fornsett St. Peter, for instance, were probably made 4ft.3in thick because of the tower’s 58ft. height and those of Hasketon tower may have been made 5ft. thick because of

its height of 60ft. (its features suggest it was of a single post-Norman build); the walls of the unattached tower at Bramfield may have been made 4'6" thick to compensate for the absence of stability normally provided by attachment to a church and the thick walls of Syleham tower may have been dictated by unreliable soil conditions of the low-lying ground where it is situated. The tower height at Thorpe Abbots (55 ft.) may account for its thick walls or they may have followed the standard set at nearby Syleham.

It has been said that the Normans built thicker flint walls because their mortar was inferior. Although masons in control of major projects like Norwich Cathedral may have followed Norman practices, at smaller churches the mortar would probably still have been prepared by local artisans in the same way as before the Conquest, with ingredients from the same local sources. In any case, are there any grounds for the contention that Norman mortar was inferior to Saxon, or is this simply an unproved myth, repeated so often that it has entered the domain of fact? There seem to be no authoritative comparisons of Saxon and Norman mortars, and as Norman buildings have stood for 900 years, their mortar can't be so inferior!

It has also been suggested that Norman walls had to be thicker than Saxon walls because, whereas the latter were built of solid flints right through, the Normans are said to have built solid inner and outer skins and filled between with small flints and rubble. Although some Norman stone walls (and for that matter later ones) may have been found to be ashlar-faced with rubble infill, it is uncertain whether any Norman walls *wholly of flint* have been built in this way. As suggested above, it is more likely that the Normans would have followed established practice rather than experiment in an unfamiliar medium.

Thickness of Nave Walls

It is in descriptions of individual churches in his book that Goode's designation of 3 feet as a minimum thickness for Norman nave walls is found, through repeated assertions such as "Norman walls were never under 3ft thick" (Hassingham, 2'10"), or "the church walls are under 3ft thick so this church just cannot be of Norman date" (Stuston, 2'10"); even 3ft. walls are dismissed as "too thin to be Norman" (Theberton). Of over a hundred churches that he calls Saxon that show a range of nave wall thicknesses between 2 and 3 feet thick, about thirty with nave walls under 3'0" thick have no Saxon attributes and can convincingly be adjudged as Norman on the evidence of post-Conquest features.

It is doubtful whether 3 feet or any thickness can be defined as the lower limit of thickness for Norman church walls, particularly as in flint walls differences in thickness of two or three inches may be found when measured at different places. Since some undisputed Norman churches with round or square towers have flint walls less than 3ft thick (e.g. St Etheldreda, Norwich, 2'2" and Ousden, 2'10"), the implication is that, in

the absence of proved Saxon evidence, any such walls could just as likely be Norman as Saxon.

Thickness of Round Tower Walls

In their comments on comparative thicknesses of Saxon and Norman walls, Baldwin Brown and the Taylors refer only to church walls and give no indications of wall thicknesses to be expected in Saxon and Norman church towers, stone or flint, round or square. Even were it to be established that flint walls of Norman churches are generally thicker than Saxon, it doesn't follow that this would also apply to tower walls as, Saxon or Norman, they are generally appreciably thicker than church walls anyway. It is not unreasonable therefore to question whether there are any grounds for a basic assumption that Norman round tower walls were thicker than Saxon ones, and if they were, the basis on which a demarcation thickness between Saxon and Norman could be determined.

Goode's article in Vol.X. No.6 of the Round Tower Churches Society magazine affirms his adherence to an assumed Norman lower limit of 4 feet, but no explanation is offered of the grounds for *any* particular thickness being regarded as a valid demarcation of the lower limit for Norman. In his book, a specified tower wall thickness is frequently used as evidence for an attribution.

If Norman tower walls were built 4 feet thick, who can say that some might not have also been built at 3'11", 3'10" or 3'9" etc.? The incremental difference is only marginal. There are no veritable grounds for defining any particular figure, (even if it could be proved that Norman round tower walls of flint were on average thicker than Saxon ones anyway), and it is much more likely that typical average tower wall thicknesses could, subject to other valid evidence, be Saxon, Norman or post-Norman.

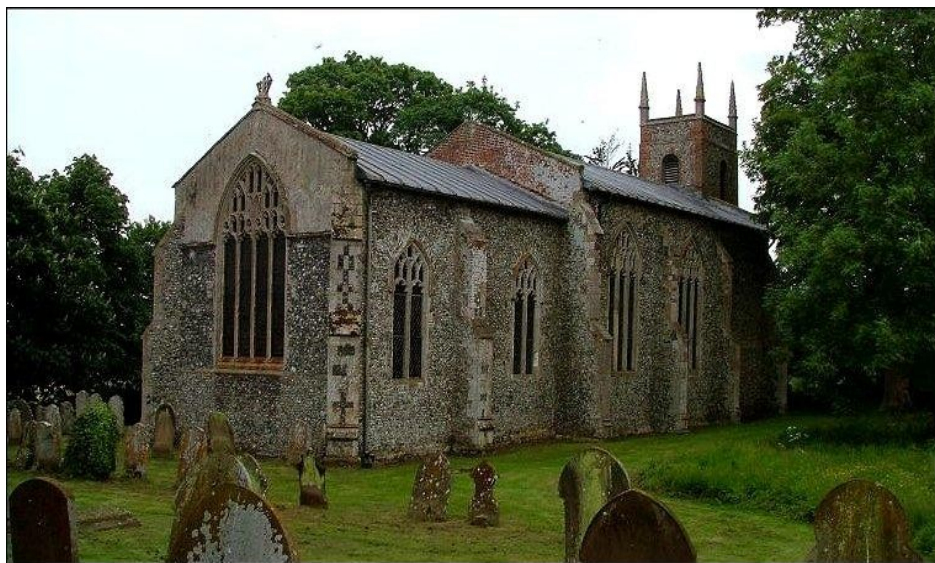
Table A below, prepared from Goode's measurements, shows the wide range of round tower wall thicknesses in 3" increments of towers he considers as Saxon and the number of towers of each wall thickness. Table B shows the wall thicknesses of thirty five round towers, almost all of which are in Table A, that have no recognised Saxon features but have convincing evidence for a Norman attribution.

Table A		Table B	
below 3' thick	4	below 3' thick	1
3'0" to 3'2"	18	3'0" to 3'2"	1
3'3" to 3'5"	21	3'3" to 3'5"	7
3'6" to 3'8"	29	3'6" to 3'8"	8
3'9" to 3'11"	36	3'9" to 3'11"	6
4'0" to 4'2"	25	4'0" to 4'2"	10
4'3" and over	9	4'3" and over	2

Many in Table A that have no recognised Saxon features, could be Saxon, Norman or post-Norman. Some are called Saxon on claims of a common building date with a church with doubtful Saxon evidence.

If wall thicknesses of towers attributed by Goode as Saxon can vary by as much as two feet, we might reasonably expect a similar range of thickness in Norman tower walls, and for that matter, in post-Norman ones. It is untenable therefore to preclude a Norman attribution for tower walls less than four feet thick or any other thickness.

St Mary's Church, Carleton Forehoe, Norfolk



It was Sunday morning the 9th December 1711. The three church bells of Carleton Forehoe were ringing merrily away and then without any warning the tower 'suddenly' collapsed. Tumbling down with the tower came the bells, bell-frames and most of the west gable wall of the nave. The end of the roof was left hanging in space. We are not told what happened to the bell-ringers. Joseph Champion was the curate between 1701-29 (C. Hugh Bryant's 'Norfolk Churches'). The Rev Benjamin Gooch was the Rector of Aswellthorpe but he is buried in Carleton which he held in plurality (there is a Latin memorial to him in Carleton's chancel dated 1728). It was Gooch who did the administration involved with the rebuilding of the tower. Benjamin Gooch was the father of the famous surgeon with the same name.

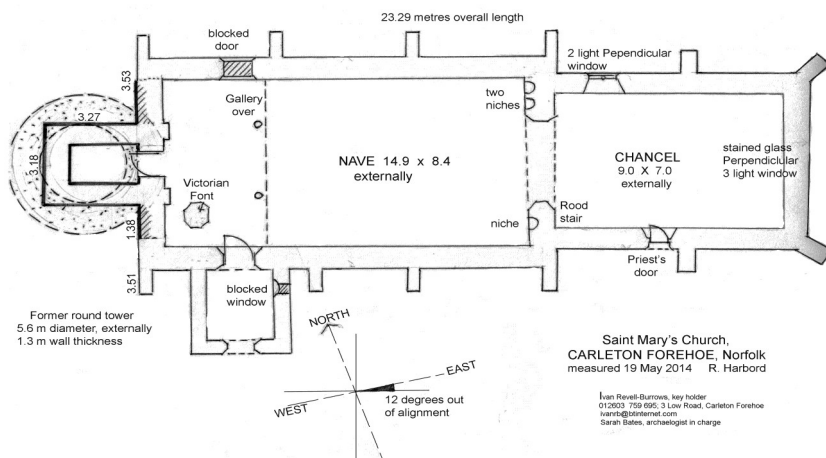
Joseph Champion probably abandoned the morning service at Carleton Forehoe and from then on and for a long time afterwards parishioners had to resort to his other church nearby in Kimberley. Workmen arrived on the site and advised that to rebuild the tower would cost £100. Thomas Little DD, the Vicar-General petitioned John Moore, the Bishop for a Faculty which was finally granted on 20th September 1713 (NRO, DN/ FBA and, KIM 3/3/2; Wodehouse Mss) with consent

to rebuild the tower. The Faculty permitted the two ‘lesser bells’ to be sold as they were probably damaged in the fall. They were worth £45-10s. It was probably this short-fall in funds that led to the plan to build a smaller tower to house just the one remaining bell. Sir John Wodehouse, 4th Bart (1669-1754) of Kimberley, the patron of the living consented to this perhaps because he was unwilling to make good such a large shortfall. He probably did, however, give generously as his initials appear in a date stone on the south face of the tower and another on the north side J-M; John and his wife Mary. Carleton Forehoe is the latest parish church where a lost round-tower has been rediscovered. An extended spout at the top of the present square tower needed a new soak-away at the base. When this was dug out, the foundations of the previous tower were revealed. That was in October 2013. Stephen Heywood, the Norfolk Conservation Officer writes that the remains of a round tower were found 0.8 metres below the surface yet the mortared and coursed flint was still 0.4 metres high. This confounds the usual theory that round tower walls sat only on a levelled base with no foundations. The inner face of the wall projects beyond the outer west face of the later square tower. This allowed the external circumference to be estimated at 5.6 metres and the wall thickness at 1.25 metres. These large dimensions and the type of flint-work in the foundations suggest a Norman date rather than anything earlier. On either side of the tower, part of the west wall next to the tower shows a different type of flint-work for a width of 1.3 metres. That may indicate the extent of the remaining gable wall that survived the collapse of 1711. The round tower did not appear to be attached to the west wall of the nave so it was probably demolished before the church was rebuilt and slightly widened around 1400 when John Preston was the long serving incumbent (1381-1429). The tower-arch gives no further clues. The present square tower was added in 1713 and the round tower-arch dates from that period. It has a typical mid-Georgian centre keystone and heavy square imposts. The present tower stands 3.2 metres square independent of the west wall. Inside is a bell cast in 1656 by John Brend brazier of Norwich. It has a diameter at the rim of 35” which agrees with the dimension given in the early 18thc Church Terriers (NRO DN/ TER). The estimated weight of the bell given in various Terriers varies enormously but later 18thc records settled on 8cwts. Neither the church survey of contents of 1369, nor the ‘*Church Goodes*’ inventory of 1552 (Norfolk Archaeology vol 28) survive so we do not know the size of the three medieval bells accommodated in the round tower. The 1716 Terrier talks of a ‘new bell-frame’ which is still there today. It may be archaic in design but it is unlikely to be medieval.

The south porch benefitted from a bequest of 5s, made in 1397 by Agnes Fulbone (Norfolk Archaeology vol 38, 242; NRO NCC Harsyte 242). That may also indicate the date of the rebuilding of the nave and chancel which have very early Perpendicular windows. Archaeologists found the church was orientated 12° (according to C. Hugh Bryant) north of the normal east-west axis. My measurement on the chancel steps found only 5° – does this deviation of the axis indicate the origins of an Anglo-Saxon church?

Carleton Forehoe is so named to distinguish it from two other Carleton parishes in Norfolk. Despite being a tiny appendage to the great Kimberley Estate to the south, it gives its name to the Forehoe Hundred. This is surprising as to the south is the enormous parish of Wymondham which gives its name to another Hundred. 'Forehoe' means four burial mounds (HER 8873) that were probably local landmarks and meeting places. They lie in woods on the south side of the Norwich to Watton road (B1108) a short distance west of the church. In the *Domesday* Survey there were three small manors, the King's being the largest. This was focussed on a small village and moated manor house by the river, some distance away from the church. In 1086 it had a population of around 100 so only a small church was needed (HER 8888).

The present church stands isolated in fields south of the Watton Road on rising ground above the village. The public can only reach it by a gated footpath. There are no signs that there ever were houses near to it. The Tyllis family owned most of the manorial estate after the Black Death and it may have been them who patronised the rebuilding of the church circa 1400. The family's connection with the parish ended with Edward and Avice Tyllis. In the church nave there is a brass in his memory with a shield bearing six stars, dated 1521. He left 10s for the guild of the BVM whose altar probably stood on the north side of the nave. His Will instructed that the manors of Carleton Hall (St Benet's) and Gelhams (HER 8879) be sold to Sir Thomas Wodehouse of Kimberley whose family later became Barons and Earls of Kimberley. In 1603 there were 76 communicants so the growth of population had been very small – which is probably why the nave was only slightly widened in the rebuilding programme of c1400.



A detailed analysis of the architecture

The north section of the west wall of the nave has an inset half way along its length and what appear to be quoin stones. If this was the corner of the Norman nave it would have been a very narrow space. The nave width at 6.5 metres would have been slightly narrower than the present chancel (7.0 metres wide). On the south section of the same gable wall there is a change in the flint pattern in a similar position of the same wall. This could be from the removal of a turret stair. The middle stage of the tower has a narrow corridor 1.2 metres long, leading in a south-eastern direction perhaps towards the steps down. Its end is now blocked with brickwork different from the adjacent walling. When the tower foundations were excavated, the digging did not seem to have extended that far along the base to confirm whether the turret existed or not.

The tower arch is wider than the tower space – 1.72 metres compared with 1.22 metres. This means there is an awkward junction between the two on the west side of the arch. This is curious as both seem to have been designed at the same date. The opening has a round arch sitting on flat imposts on the east and west sides. The eastern side of the arch has a central keystone. All this is in character with the early Georgian period when it was built. The arch is visible from the gallery. It is unlikely that it was intended to be an external door and the square tower added later. It is all plastered over so it is impossible to check whether it is brick lined or reusing a Norman tower arch.

Another curiosity is in the middle stage or Sound Chamber where there are four round headed window openings including one that looks east into the roof space of the nave. Did this replicate a former upper doorway? The windows have rounded arches and are deeply splayed. The walls are made of a mixture of red bricks and flints and are only 0.83 metres thick compared with the round tower walls of 1.25 metres.

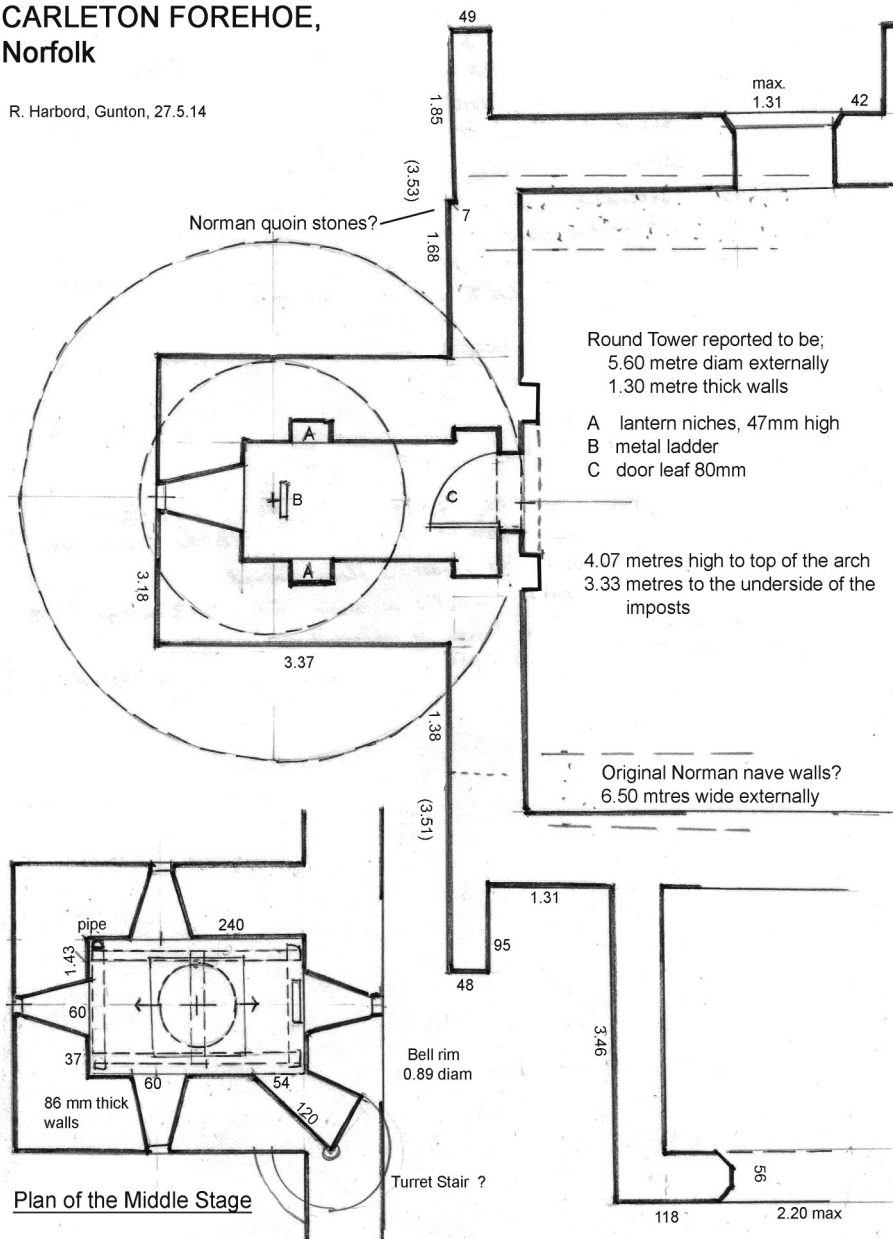
The belfry openings appear to once have had ‘Gothick’ tracery but most of it has been replaced by louvers. At the belfry stage the bell-frame occupies the whole of the rectangular space of 1.43 by 2.40 metres. It has the usual strong timber bottom and top frames; corner and central posts; raked members leaning towards the top of the centre posts. The space is only slightly larger than the area below in the Sound Chamber. Clearly this was the determining factor that shaped the tower plan. It covers only about 60% of the footprint the former round tower.

The church was once closed for services but with generous patronage it was later reopened. Then the lead on the roofs was stolen. Lottery money fortunately paid the heavy expense of reinstating them. Regular church services are now held in the church. Clearly this is a much loved church.

Richard Harbord

St Mary's Church, CARLETON FOREHOE, Norfolk

R. Harbord, Gunton, 27.5.14





View of the foundations
of the round tower at
Carleton Forehoe.

SUMMER TOURS 2013 – Part 2

Aldham St Mary was the first stop on the July tour. The church stands in an elevated position. The tower is circular to the top, with brick framed lancet pattern windows, including the belfry openings. Evidence that the tower was added to an earlier church can be seen inside, where the tower arch is formed of medieval brick in an older nave west wall. Through this arch, in the tower, is a tastefully fitted kitchen area built of locally grown oak. In the side of a window, on the south side, is a large fragment of stone carved with interlaced ornamentation, possibly part of a shaft of an early cross. A similar design can be seen in another piece of masonry at the south-west corner of the nave.

Hasketon St Andrew, has an octagonal upper stage, with Y-tracery belfry openings. These match the west window in the tower's round section and suggest a contemporary build for the two parts. At 60 feet, with the top much repaired in brick, this is the second tallest of the round towers. Inside the church is an early 16th century font. The interior has undergone much Victorian restoration.

Ramsholt All Saints, remote at the end of a long lane, overlooks the river Deben. The tower is one of only two buttressed round towers (Beyton All Saints is the other) and is mainly constructed of local septaria with some flint and medieval brick. Its three buttresses give it a somewhat oval appearance. Entering, via a red

brick fronted south porch, the nave and chancel have box pews fitted in the 1850s. Those in the chancel, unusually face west. The pulpit is of the same date. On a warm sunny day we enjoyed a picnic tea in the churchyard. Self-provided, this was, however, another nomination for tea of the year.



Aldham, St
Mary.



Hasketon, St
Andrew.

The August tour began at Beachamwell St Mary where this impressive church, with nave and chancel thatched, stands near the village green. Here the tower is of great interest, with the original belfry openings in the circular stage having double triangular heads to the north and west and double round heads to the south and east. The later octagonal stage has flushwork dummy windows alternating with the actual belfry openings. These latter have a complex and unusual tracery design. On the north-west corner of the nave, long and short Barnack quoins can be seen. Inside there is a Jacobean pulpit, but most of the fittings are modern. A fearsome looking medieval graffiti devil lurks to surprise the unwary. His malign presence is balanced by two figure brasses, both memorials to priests.



Our picnic tea at Ramsholt, All Saints.

Beachamwell,
St Mary.



On our last tour to Cockley Cley All Saints (in 2003) the remains of the tower, which fell in 1991, were fenced off and sad looking. They have since been made safe and tidied up to good effect. The interior here has a very Victorian look as it had what Munro Cautley described as ‘a most drastic restoration in 1866’.

Watton St Mary's tower has a later octagonal top with a nicely traceried parapet and fearsome looking gargoyles. The round section of the tower has a western door and as both north and south aisles also have western doors, we are met with a three door western front to the church. The interior has been reordered but the splendid 17th century poor box remains. A wooden male figure, with 'Remember the Poore 1639' carved upon it, holds out a hand to receive charity. Behind the hand is a slot so coins drop down into a collecting box beneath.



Cockley Cley, All Saints,



Watton, St Mary.

September's tour took us to the Waveney Valley. Stockton St Michael has nave and chancel thatched, under a continuous ridge. A small lead-covered spire sits atop the tower and the church is entered through a 17th century brick porch. A 14th century octagonal font has a Jacobean cover while the Royal Arms displayed on the wall are those of William IV. Considerable fragments of medieval glass survive in the windows and include figures of the Virgin and Child and the wounds of Christ.

Kirby Cane All Saints has pilaster strips at intervals around the base of the tower. These plain vertical strips of flint are from ground level to about 4 feet up and may be evidence of a pre conquest build to the base of the tower. Entering through a Norman doorway, we find a font with well carved heads supporting the bowl. A black floor slab tells us that 'Thomas the son of Mary Catelyn was Captain of a troop of horse for the service of King Charles in the first in his English wars – he was slain by the rebels in 1644'.



Stockton, St Michael.



'Lyn at Bungay, Holy Trinity.

Our last church on this final tour of the year was Bungay Holy Trinity, where early long and short work can be seen on the tower's exterior. This is generally believed to be pre-conquest. Lionel Throckmorton, who in 1565 was one of the founders of my old school, has a memorial in the church. It records that 'he happily finished this life 14th November 1599'. In contrast a gravestone in the churchyard tells us that Henry Scarle 'was cruelly murdered on 10th February 1787 in the 23rd year of his age'.

So another Tour season was over. We said our farewells and set off for home. With autumn approaching, next summer seemed a long way off.

Stuart Bowell

ST MARY, WESTLEY WATERLESS.

St Mary, Westley Waterless once had a round-tower. The parish of Westley Waterless lies in a stretch of country flanking the Suffolk town of Newmarket. St Marys church stands in a pleasant churchyard that is close to and faces a village pond. The church is partly 16th Century, though it also incorporates several Decorated era features.

The church had a round tower which fell down in 1855, Traces of the tower's original shape are discernible outside the external West end wall of the church. On the wall of the south aisle are copies of two documents that testify to the previous existence of a round tower. The two original documents are held in the British Library under references *Add 9461 73 93507*, and *Add 5819 109v 93507*. One is a line drawing. The other is a sketch of the tower as it stood, even showing stone decoration above its first stage.



Sketch of St Mary's done some time prior to 1855.



The outline of the slender round tower can just about be made out by the West Wall.

The tower shown in the sketch appears to be unusually slender. It is clearly discernible that the ground in the churchyard is unstable and this may have contributed to the collapse. The slender construction of the tower also probably did not render it particularly robust. From the sketch and the traces of foundations, it is estimated that this tower had a diameter in a range of 1.5 metres to 2 metres and a height of about 7 to 8 metres,

A nearby round-towered church at Snailwell, is distinctly East Anglian in type. However, Westley Waterless is closer in geographical location to the lofty octagonally-capped tower as found at Wood Ditton.

There are some remarkably interesting features in Westley Waterless. They include a superb monumental brass, dated 1325 AD, of Sir John Creke, fully armed in the plate and chainmail armour of the period. Sir John Creke is depicted beside his wife who is beautifully attired. In the monument Sir John and his wife are depicted at prayer. The monument is shown on page 478 in Pevsner's entry for Westley Waterless in "*Cambridgeshire*" (published in 1954). There are also fragments of 14th Century stained glass window, a stone effigy of the 15th Century and carved window traceries.

Amongst more recent features in the church is a delightful chamber organ which was a gift made in 1968 in memory of Rear Admiral Donald S. Evans USN. There are also wonderfully carved grave stones and a font. The attractive chancel adds charm and atmosphere to the interior.



Not to be missed is the graffiti carved into the stonework surrounding the windows in the south wall of the church. Studies have been made as to their significance. One curiosity pertaining to the graffiti is the use of Arabic numerals at a time when Roman numerals were conventionally employed.

This graffiti are shown in “*English Medieval Graffiti*”, 1967, and also in “*The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*”, by Dorothy Metlitzki, Yale University Press, 1977.



In conclusion, despite the loss of its round tower Westley Waterless church is still well worth a visit. As with Feltwell which has remains of its round tower contemporarily intact there appears to have been no attempt made to reconstruct the round tower of the church at Westley Waterless.

H.T., K.T. and T.S. Norris



Churchman's Cigarettes produced cards of round tower churches. Do any of our members have cards that they are prepared to donate to the RTCS archive?

Poxwell, Dorset

Many of you will be aware of and perhaps own the little books by Claude Messent. He drew the towers of most of the English round tower churches in the late 1950's. John Salmon has scanned and uploaded all 176 of them to our Facebook page and very good they look too. One of them was St John the Evangelist at Poxwell in Dorset.



This had me excited because I was unaware of a round tower church in Dorset. There are two sentences in Bill Goode's book and I now see that we have six prints from what look like Victorian glass plates in the Goode archive (these images can be viewed by joining the Round Tower Churches of South East England group on Facebook). The Goode book and further online research tells me that there was once a small church standing alongside Poxwell Manor, dedicated to St John the Evangelist that dated to around the beginning of the 12th century. This church was demolished in 1868 when an interesting tracery window was resited in an extension to the Rectory. The church was then rebuilt as a round tower church in 1868/1869 only to be demolished in 1969 as it was too costly to maintain and it was believed to be unsafe; ironically it took two steel cables to pull the spire down. The bell which had hung in both churches now hangs in nearby Broadmayne church. There remains an enclosing wall around where the church once stood. The Reverend Messent obviously got to Poxwell just in time.

Paul Hodge

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SALES & MAGAZINE DISTRIBUTION	Mrs Pauline Spelman 105 Norwich Road, New Costessey, Norwich NR5 0LF Tel: 01603 743607
MAGAZINE EDITORS	Dr Anne Woollett The Cardinal's Hat, Back Street, Reepham, NR10 4SJ Tel: 01603 870452 email: anne.woollett@tiscali.co.uk Mr Paul Hodge The Cardinal's Hat, Back Street, Reepham, NR10 4SJ Tel: 01603 870452 email: pt.hodge@tiscali.co.uk
COMMITTEE	Mrs Teresa Wiggin Fir Tree Cottage, Witnesham, Ipswich, Suffolk IP6 9EX Tel: 01473 785596 Mr Michael Pollitt 60 Chamberlain Road, Norwich, NR3 3LY Tel: 01603 486997 email: michaelbpollitt@btinternet.com
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