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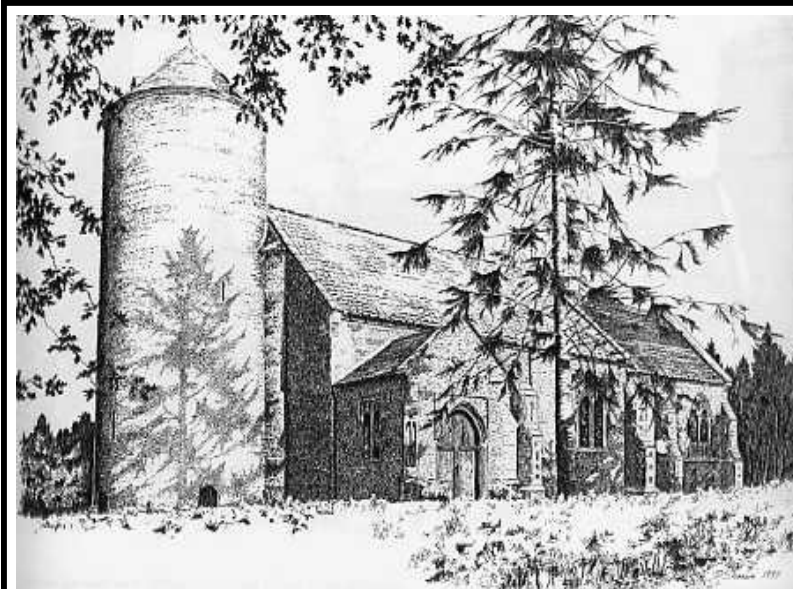
Vol. XXXV111 No. 1 September 2010



The Round Tower

Vol. XXXV111 No 1

September 2010



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In the year 1836, William Wallen's book "*History and Antiquities of the Round Church at Little Maplestead*" was published. Its illustrations showed the removal of a western screen, and the placement of box pews in the nave and chancel. The western porch had been converted into a schoolroom for the village. A large fireplace with chimney was incorporated blocking the present western doorway. During the years 1851 to 1857, the church underwent a drastic restoration involving refacing external walls, renewing windows and buttresses, with two new buttresses being added to the chancel. Interior stonework was extensively scraped and much new stone introduced, revealing under restoration a *piscine* and a *sedilia* in the south aisle. The chancel and apse are 10.5 metres long. The round nave is about 3 metres in diameter or, with the encircling aisle, about 9 metres in diameter. The belfry includes a single modern bell. The font is the most ancient feature remaining (probably made about the year 1080) and is presumed to have come from the aforementioned first church at Little Maplestead and is adorned with crude Romanesque carvings.

In a similar manner to Østerlars church on Bornholm, the modest organ at Little Maplestead is located in the round nave. It has two speaking stops: Stopped Diapason 8', Dulciana 8'; there is also provided an octave coupler to impart extra brightness to the organ. These two stops and the coupler provide potentially six permutations of sound timbre. The organ was built by Walker Organ Builder, London probably around the year 1900. A plaque is included on the organ casework in dedication to the organist Caroline Coe who died September 1998 aged 89 years, and who served at the church as organist for 43 years, entertaining the congregation at the church with these aforesaid six sound timbres.

Little Maplestead church is in a rural tranquil location, open and a great delight to visit. We would support combining a visit here with the other round towers at Pentlow and Lamarsh parishes. Presently, Little Maplestead is trying to raise £65000 for repairs to plasterwork and other reasons. There is, as yet, no "Round Church Society" in the United Kingdom.

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

LAST TOUR!

Saturday 4th September 2.30pm Long Stratton, Topcroft & Denton

Everyone is welcome to attend the Tour. There is no charge, although donations to the churches are encouraged. Refreshments will be provided by one of the churches during the afternoon. Any queries please phone 'Lyn Stilgoe on 01328 738237.

The next issue is December and the deadline for insertion is Friday 29th October 2010.

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

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Magazines are published on the 1st of March, June, September and December. Membership renewal date is the first of these dates following the application for membership.

To join the Society, please make contact with the Treasurer:-

Mr Richard Barham
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THE ROUND TOWER

The quarterly magazine of the Round Tower Churches Society

Vol. XXXV111 No 1

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Photographs:-

Front Cover — Dot Shrive

*With thanks also to Simon Knott
www.norfolkchurches.co.uk*

WELBORNE, ALL SAINTS



Ladbroke's drawing of the church, circa 1820s

The church consists of a 25-foot wide nave, chancel, north vestry, south porch and round west tower.

The nave walls are about 2'5" thick and at the north-west corner where a later buttress is bonded to the nave west wall, the flintwork pattern suggests that this corner could originally have had flint quoins.

The north wall flintwork is closely packed and contains odd pieces of stone and putlog holes framed and bridged with Barnack stone, the lowest of these being only about three feet above ground level; below them the flintwork is more irregular. A difference in the flintwork of the upper two feet or so of the wall implies that it has been raised, but indications of the slope of a former roofline on the west wall suggests that the original eaves level must have been lower than the level of the raising. The pointed north door is blocked; of Barnack stone without impost, it has a continuous single chamfer profile, contoured on the arch. Above the door, irregularities in the flintwork might indicate a blocked former pointed opening.

The nave south wall flintwork is uncoursed rubble, rougher than the north wall and also has evidence of raising at the top, but less clear. The south door has a similar profile and arch detail to the blocked north door but as its stonework is not Barnack and its hood mould has a slight ogee



FIG 2 Structure of the rotunda **FIG 3** View of nave **FIG 4** View of the organ

rules pertained to Knights Hospitallers. Both Hospitallers and Templars built round churches based upon the design of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. In England, four round churches remain. Two are associated with Military Orders: the Temple Church in London ("Templars"), and Little Maplestead ("Hospitallers").

The village and church of Little Maplestead were given to the Knights Hospitallers in the year 1185 by Juliana Fitz-Audelin. Around the year 1186, the Knights set about building a church for their own use which may have had a circular plan. By the year 1463, it is evident that the Knights had ceased to live at Little Maplestead. King Henry VIII disposed of the church to eventually come into the ownership of various lay owners. The early parish church of Little Maplestead has completely disappeared, although it is supposed that the present church stands on the ground of the early church and retains its circular ground plan. The present church at Little Maplestead was built around the year 1335, and comprises a semi-circular eastern apse (the only 14th Century example of this type now existing in England), a six-sided "nave" surmounted by a conical roof with small windows and there above a low belfry and surrounded by a circular aisle as depicted in FIG 1 and FIG 2. Arguably, the apse is to be construed to include a nave, and the circular aisle is to be construed to be a part of a round tower. There is also a modern west porch and a south vestry. Use of a circular plan for churches had gone out of fashion by the end of the 12th century, thereby rendering the present church at Little Maplestead atypical. However, as the church was built for the Knights it was not, strictly speaking "parochial".

THE ROUND CHURCH AT LITTLE MAPLESTEAD



FIG 1 View of the rotunda at Little Maplestead

Although a classic form of round tower church reported in this Journal comprises a vertically elongate west-end round tower linked to a horizontally elongate nave with east-end sanctuary, many variants of such classic form have also been presented in the Journal, for example the Round Churches of Bornholm, Denmark. In the case of Østerlars round church on Bornholm, a nave was subsequently built onto a round structure to create the present form for the church, which is akin to a final form of church to be seen at Thorsager, Jutland, Denmark. The church at Little Maplestead has a similar history, namely a round church (“Rotunda”) to which a horizontally elongate nave has been subsequently added.

Little Maplestead is a rural parish in a geographical district which encompasses Pentlow and Lamarsh, both of which have round towered churches.

The “Military Order of the Knights of the Temple” was founded about the year 1118. It derives from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, and had a purpose to keep roads open for pilgrims. Such pilgrims received hospitality in houses known as Hospices. The Old Temple in about the year 1128 was the main Hospice and was subject to strict Cistercian rule. Similar

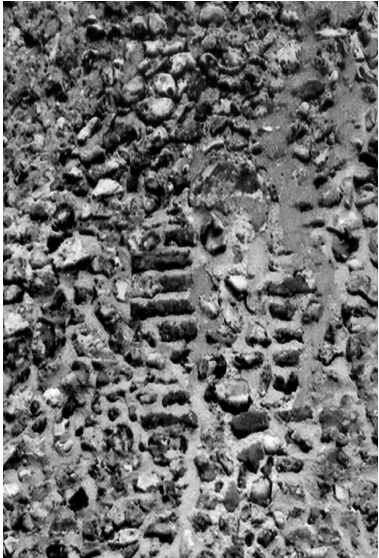
apex supporting a fleuron finial, it is probably later. The west wall south of the tower has fabric comparable to the south wall but shows no indication of a former roofline as on the north side. The south-west quoins are brick but flint for the bottom foot or so. Except for a few very decayed original medieval bricks at the top, they seem to be post-medieval renewals and yet they are apparently covered by the west wall of the Perpendicular porch.

The present chancel with Geometric style windows was built in 1875, replacing the small chancel with Intersecting and Y-tracery windows shown in Ladbroke's drawing which is recorded as having replaced an earlier one in 1671. The north vestry was probably built with the chancel, and the nave windows with straight heads and tracery of Decorated style renewed at the same time.



The tower from the south-west

The other, a small single-light round-headed ground-floor window in the west wall is formed without any dressings or arch. It is double-splayed but its glazing plane is not at the centre of the wall; the inner splay is 3'2" deep and the outer one only seven inches. The inner splay is plastered but the outer reveals and the head are roughly mortared. Above this window at about a third of the tower's height, two short sequences of vertically aligned medieval bricks suggest that they could be remnants of the jambs of a blocked lancet window. Further up, two short vertical strips of stone might also be remnants of a truncated blocked opening.



Remnants of probable former brick window in west wall of tower



Double-splayed tower west window

Whether a round tower is contemporary with its church or was added later, its construction is usually integrated to a greater or lesser extent with the nave west wall, but Welborne, with Wrampingham, Broomfield and Topcroft, is one of the few where the tower seems to be a virtually independent structure. When viewed from the side, these towers appear to be almost tangential to the nave west wall and internally the wall thickness at the apex of the tower arch is roughly equivalent to the combined thickness of the nave and tower walls. At Welborne, this thickness is six feet, the tower wall measured at the west window being 3'9" and the nave wall outside the tower about 2'5". There are fillets in the re-entrant angles between tower and nave west wall; on the north, a flat fillet is about 11" wide and on the south a quadrant of about 2'11" girth is not bonded to the tower and appears to be later.

The tower's internal diameter at ground-floor level is 10'6". The tower arch opening through the nave wall has splayed reveals and a segmental arch to the nave, but in the tower behind it, the arch is pointed and the opening is more or less parallel-sided.

Within a large pointed splayed recess in the nave west wall above the tower arch, there is a narrow blocked lancet opening, the jambs and head of which, although painted in with the plaster reveals, have sharp arrises and appear to be of stone. Behind it in the tower, there is no evidence of an upper door and any external traces of the opening would have disappeared behind the tower's east wall when the tower was added.

NAME *All Saints*

SITUATION *Weston Longville, Norfolk*

CONSTRUCTION *Porch roof tiled. Niche over tower, W. Window. Nave—tiled. Chancel—tiled, wood lined. Priest door. SGN aisles. Leaded.*

FONT *Plain sided octagon on 4 pillars. Wooden cover.*

WINDOWS *Perpendicular and Decorative style.*

CLERESTORY *Yes, 5 windows. Unusual design.*

STAINED GLASS *Top most portions of window in S. Aisle.*

CARVINGS *on Bench Ends.*

WALL DECORATIONS *Royal Arms of George III. Wall painting of the tree of Jesse in N.aisle. Also paintings each side of chancel arch.*

ORGAN *By J.W. Walker of London 1906.*

PULPIT *Wood.*

MONUMENTS *Wall tablets to the Custance Family, Henry Rookwood and the Thorne family. Brass memorial under mat near lectern.*

ROOD SCREEN *Yes and stairs to former loft. 15th century screen.*

CHANCEL *Carved stone Reredos with Victorian inlay. Piscina and triple sedilia. Aumbry on N. wall. Massive entrance door.*

OTHER FEATURES *Old Parish chest. Box pews in S.aisle. Roll of Honour to those members of the 466th Bomb Group 2nd Air Division, 8th Airforce 1943/45. Former airfield nearby— war memorial just outside church yard. 10 died in WW1.*

CHURCHYARD **TIDY** ☒ **WILD** ☐ **LYCH GATE** **N** ☐ **YEW TREE** **N** ☐

TOWN ☐ **VILLAGE** ☒ **ISLOATED** ☐ **PHOTO** ☒ **GUIDE** ☒

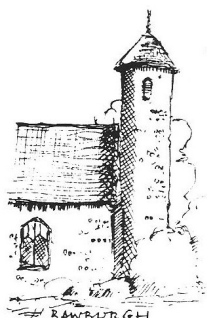
INTERESTING GRAVES OR MEMORIALS *Service graves:- PVTE T.C. Munt. Royal Norfolk Regt. d 5.8.1941. Age 19; Sgt C.R. Land. RAF Pilot. D 4.2.1943. Age 36. Several black gravestones in the church.*

GENERAL COMMENTS *1st Rector Edmund de Fleming c1290. A church noted for its association with Rev James Woodforde 1740-1803 and vicar 1774-1803. Parson Woodfordes 'Diary of a Country Parson. A well looked after church.*

Date: *16th September 1998*

Completed by: *John Lee*

A Yorkshire Man's Record of East Anglian Churches!



'When I took early retirement redundancy from the Norwich union in 1992 I decided to set aside a day each week to looking at churches with my wife Shirely. This still continues in the Summer months, though after 18 years we are running out of churches!

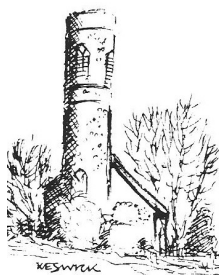
When working for the NU I was local Chief Surveyor looking at factories, warehouses etc for insurance purposes.

This involved the completion of Report Forms, and on Retirement I decided to create my own Report Form for churches. After initial trial and error I produced the following form (usually A4) and complete these for each church I visit. This one-page report then gets filed away together with any Guides or Photos of the church to form my own record of church visits that I make. Not only in Norfolk and Suffolk but in other counties I have visited on holiday like Yorkshire, Northumberland and Leicester/Rutland.

The ring binders holding these reports currently take up 31 inches of shelf space!

To give you an idea of what one of my completed forms looks like—please see the example opposite for All Saints, Weston Longville visited on 16th September 1998.'

John Lee



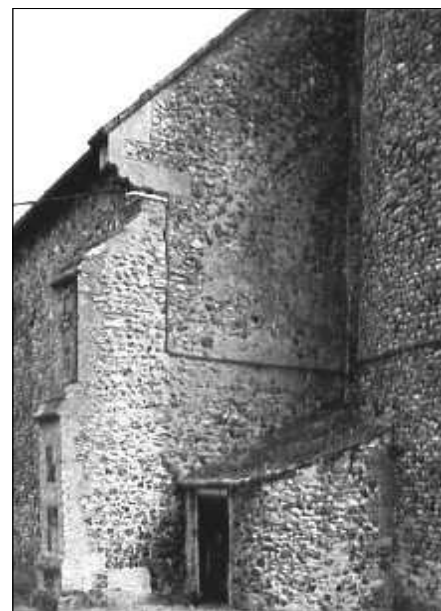
Inside the tower at upper levels, there is no evidence of blocked belfry openings. At about six or seven feet from the top, i.e. approximately the level at which the change in the exterior fabric occurs, there is a set-back of the inside wall above which the flintwork differs from that below.

Interpretation

The flint quoins behind the NW buttress, part of the nave west wall below a former roofline north of the tower, the lower three feet of the north wall and the remnant flint quoining at the base of the south-west corner are probably all that



The blocked lancet window in the nave



NW corner of the church showing possible flint quoins at the buttress junction, and an earlier gable line in the west wall

remain of an original towerless church of uncertain date which the quoins imply must have had a 25 foot-wide nave – a width that tends to point to a later date than a pre-Conquest one which the flint quoins might be thought to indicate.

It is unusual to find putlog holes as low as those in the north wall and so it seems that this wall was rebuilt in the thirteenth century from that level, though not to its present height but higher than the probable original lower eaves implied by the former roofline on the west wall that was presumably raised at the same time. The Barnack stone north door would probably have been incorporated then and the lancet west window formed.

This lancet window would presumably have been blocked when the tower was added and the tower arch formed. The medieval bricks in the tower walls suggest that that would have been no earlier than the fourteenth century and may have been contemporary with evident alterations to the nave west wall south of the tower and to the nave south wall.

The absence of an earlier roofline in the nave west wall south of the tower as on the north side suggests that this wall has been rebuilt and the similarity of its fabric to the nave south wall could mean that the latter was rebuilt at the same time. With medieval brick quoins replacing the original flints at the south-west corner and the south door with an ogee hoodmould in a different stone from the north door, these alterations also suggest a fourteenth-century date.

The flintwork of the nave buttresses appears to be later, probably fifteenth-century, and they may have been built in conjunction with the apparent raising of the nave walls implied by the different flintwork of the top two or three feet of the north and south walls. This extra height would have allowed for the gabled roof of the Perpendicular porch which was probably also contemporary.

In the absence of any evidence of blocked former belfry openings in the tower, the change in the fabric of its upper part suggests that an original belfry was demolished and that in its place the upper part of the tower was rebuilt without belfry openings, but with small dormer openings in the conical roof to act as sound-holes. Ladbroke's drawing of the 1820s shows the tower as it is now, thus dating the deduced rebuilding of the top stage, its brick eaves corbelling and the conical roof as pre-Victorian, probably eighteenth century.

When the Perpendicular south porch was built in the fifteenth century, its west wall would have partly obscured the earlier medieval brick quoins at the south-west corner. When those bricks were subsequently renewed with post-medieval bricks (leaving a few of the original medieval ones in place at the top), it seems that the old bricks would have been carefully chopped out allowing the replacement bricks to be inserted behind the flintwork of the porch wall, producing the visual anomaly of an earlier wall covering an apparently later feature.

The present pantiled nave roof replaces the thatch shown by Ladbroke and the gable parapet walls are correspondingly lower with projecting kneelers that differ from those in his drawing.

also the lack of a market, craftsmen and the culture that went with it. These things may have been available in those parts of England with good quality building stone but not it seems, in East Anglia

The Viking disruption from the 9th century onwards would not have helped in this regard. By the late 11th century, the Normans had stabilised the country both internally and externally. The movement of materials and labour skilled crafts-men freed to circulate from say the stone bearing areas of Stamford and Caen in Normandy to East Anglia for the first time. It is doubtful whether stone imported into Norfolk was used there in parish churches before 1100. Until then it could be argued that humbler stone locally available, was used for ordinary types of buildings but this has not been upheld by archaeology – at least not yet.

After the Conquest timber was used to build a temporary Keep in Norwich Castle, its pallisades and gates. From 1100 onwards, many temporary wooden buildings were erected in the Cathedral Precinct while the cathedral was being built and wood was also used in form-work, scaffolding and later, the cathedral roof. Much of the timber was locally sourced from the Bishop's estates. Carpenters resident in Norwich equalled the number of masons until the late Middle Ages though the number of migrant craftsmen is unknown. Timber remained the chief building material well into the 12th century.

By 1060, Harold Earl of Norfolk and later King had finished building a great church at Waltham Abbey and Archbishop Stigand probably oversaw another monumental church at Westminster Abbey completed by 1065, both of them Romanesque using Norman masonry and craftsmen. If the 'Great Rebuild' was instigated by both the state and the local community, then the 'overlap period' began before the Conquest. Mid 11th century churches were mainly towerless except for the larger minster which were often built with an ambitious plan using a square crossing, axial or end towers, or a combination of these. They were being built at the same time as some of the early round towers. In fact, Norman church round towers outnumber all other types built in that period. This does not confirm that superior materials such as imported stone were used at the same time in parish churches but also it does not rule it out.

Richard Harbord

direction rather than style. Some Anglo-Saxon architectural details such as baluster shafts found in belfry openings and strip-work are supposed to derive from a timber building tradition but there is no evidence to support such a whimsical theory. Clearly the prodigious use of timber as a privileged material was appropriate for a sacred building and flamboyantly displayed accordingly.

In the mid-11th century, the 'Great Rebuild' began in East Anglia where wooden or clay walled churches were rebuilt in stone and flint. This massive building campaign was probably instigated by Stigand (Bishop of Norfolk and Suffolk 1040-42, after which he was Archbishop of Canterbury until 1067) and his brother Aelmar (Bishop 1043-67). The campaign gathered momentum towards 1100 and continued well into the 12th century.

Flint, glacial *erratics*, Roman bricks and tiles etc were used. Brown sandstone was locally available in Norfolk especially for the use as corner stones of walls. *Ferricrete* is found in North Norfolk and used as far south as Taverham (west of Norwich). That coarse material became a marker for this era. Where this was not locally available then large flints were used. It was only in the 'Rebuild Period' that these materials were used. Flint is available throughout East Anglia but when used for construction it needs lime mortar. Limestone is not naturally available in Norfolk so crushed chalk was used instead. Chalk is easily collected on the coast but not so inland where it has to be extracted from pits or by digging tunnels, some of which survive around Norwich. Chalk was used for other purposes such as soil fertilisation and making hard surfaces. This introduced a scarcity factor, made worse by the difficulty in transporting along poorly made and insecure roads or where river transport was not available.

The same limitation also applied to other building stone available in Norfolk. This is found on the western side of Norfolk – *Carstone*, which is an iron-bound sandstone and its variant, Conglomerate (also known as *Ferricrete*, or 'Puddingstone') which has an ad-mixture of gravel and flint chips. These are coarse types of stone that do not lend themselves to carving and shaping. Another building stone is *Clunch*, a sort of hard chalk. It is too soft and suffers from weathering when used externally. There is no certain archaeological evidence to confirm that any of these materials were used in Norfolk buildings before the middle of the 11th century. The limitation was not just a shortage of mortar in viable quantities and transport difficulties but

Discussion

The blocked lancet has been claimed to be an original Saxon upper door, later altered and subsequently blocked, that gave access from the nave to a Saxon tower. But that is improbable because of its narrowness, its splayed jambs and the absence of any evidence of it within the tower. Its embrasure splayed towards the nave implies that it had been the west window of a formerly towerless church, and the almost independent structure of the tower that covers it shows that the tower must be later.

Charles Cox, (*County Churches, Norfolk*. 1910. George Allen, London), wrote of this church: *The round tower is supposed to be of late construction, because it conceals a large plastered-up lancet window at the W. end of the nave, but this is imperfect reasoning, and students of these towers will probably accept it as Norman*. Cox did not explain why he thought it imperfect reasoning to deduce a late date for the tower or why it would be accepted as Norman; a tower covering a lancet window surely implies for the tower a later date than the window.

Munro Cautley (*Norfolk Churches*. 1949. Adlard, Ipswich) called the tower Norman, and Claude Messent (*The Round Towers to English Parish Churches*. 1958. Fletcher, Norwich) gave no indication of having considered that it might be later than Norman.

In both the 1982 and 1994 editions of his book, W.J.Goode calls the tower and church Saxon on the evidence of the north-west nave corner of flints and an assumption that the tower west window is a restored Saxon window, but offers no explanation of the "large blocked up window over the tower arch" other than referring without comment to Cox's enigmatic statement. In the 1984 Church Guide leaflet, R.Butler-Stoney seems to accept Goode's interpretation of the north-west flint quoin as a Saxon feature that "confirms the early date", and he also suggested that the blocked lancet was a small Saxon doorway, later enlarged and finally blocked up; yet he refers to the church as having been built circa. 1280.

The 1999 edition of Pevsner dates the tower as c.12 and describes the blocked lancet as an upper door, altered. Were that so, it raises the question to which it is difficult to find a plausible answer, as to why a presumably former Norman upper door would have been altered to a narrow lancet shape with splayed jambs and arch to the nave. restored.

The claim for a Saxon attribution for the ground-floor west window in the tower, and hence for the tower and nave, is based on the grounds that it is round-headed, double-splayed and constructed entirely of flints, even if restored. However, this window, with the glazing plane only seven inches

from the wall's outer face, does not conform to the Saxon pattern where the aperture is at the centre of the wall, nor does it seem to be an existing opening altered; its roughly mortared jambs and a head without arch voussoirs even of flint seem to show that it is an opening crudely broken out through an existing wall.

How, then, can the contradictory and conflicting attributions described above be reconciled with the evidence that the church and tower show?

If a preconception that flint quoins were never used after the Conquest is disregarded, it allows that the north-west corner does not necessarily establish the nave as Saxon. The use of flint quoins is not exclusively Saxon; they have been used in post-Conquest buildings, for example on the thirteenth century tower of Beeston Regis church, the fourteenth century nave and aisle at Rackheath and in the fifteenth century for the nave extension at Warham St Mary and on the nave and tower at Heigham. Assuming the Welborne nave is just another instance of flint quoins in post-Norman buildings, the following constructional chronology of the church is suggested:

Late c.12 ? Original towerless church built with a 25 foot wide nave, flint west quoins.

C.13. Nave north wall partially rebuilt and heightened, with a north door. Lancet window formed in the west wall. West wall also heightened.

C.14. Round tower added, tangential to nave west wall. Tower arch formed. Nave west lancet window blocked. Nave west wall south of the tower and south wall rebuilt with medieval brick south-west quoins and incorporating south door.

C.15. South porch built. Nave walls raised (to accommodate porch roof?). Re-entrant fillets extended.

C.17. Chancel rebuilt.

C.18. (or possibly earlier) Top of tower rebuilt, replacing original belfry with plain walls and conical roof and dormer sound-holes. Tower west window formed? Most south-west brick quoins renewed.

C.19. Chancel rebuilt again. Nave windows renewed. Pantiled nave roof. Gables lowered, with corbel kneelers.

Uncertainty remains over several aspects of this church's constructional history, particularly with respect to its original date, the nave width and alterations to the nave walls. But one thing seems pretty certain – the tower is not Saxon or Norman; its medieval brick putlog holes and the traces in its west wall of a blocked window with medieval brick jambs, and the fact that it covers the blocked lancet west window surely confirm a post-Norman date for the lower part, with a rebuilt upper stage.

Stephen Hart

early dwellings may have been made of turf slabs but a roof of this type of building needs planking to support it. Much of East Anglia is covered by the 'Claylands'. Buildings made of this simple material are still in use today. Puddled clay is placed in wooden moulds to make building blocks. These are sun dried and then placed over a firm plinth, in courses. They are then weather-proofed with a stiff external render. Deep eaves to the thatch are provided to throw rainwater clear of the walls. Many of the dwellings in the outer suburbs of Norwich were made in this way in the Middle Ages. 'Cob' construction is where the clay is stiffened by adding chopped straw, horse hair etc. This weak form of construction could be further strengthened by integrating a timber frame into the fabric. This allowed two storeys to be built with this form of construction. When walls are painted white; colourful decorative patterns added and with a carved door panel it is possible to imagine such a simple building serving as an early church.

After the Viking historical interlude dwellings and perhaps churches in towns were dispersed in separate curtilages. A better quality form of construction used a heavy timber frame with 'wattle and daub' for the infill panels.

Some of the earliest churches in the region that have been archaeologically excavated show evidence for the use of large post holes implying a heavy timber frame though the *Cruck* form of construction was never used in Norfolk. In other excavated churches the remains of the earliest foundations are ephemeral so the walls may have been built of clay blocks on compacted ground. In 1973, when the 'Anglia TV Centre' was being built in Norwich, a towerless timber church was found. The evidence suggested that it had the form of a Scandinavian 'Stave' church. Its walls were made of split tree trunks placed vertically in horizontal slots cut in the ground and roof plates. It may have been built soon after the last invasion by the Vikings in 1004 and demolished about 1070. St Andrews, Greensted in Essex is the sole surviving example of this type of church and is dated about 1013. A square weather boarded tower was added to it much later in history. Scandinavian examples have a lot of ornamental carpentry especially at the western entrance front but none of that survives in Norfolk even as a building tradition.

Timber was used for many purposes ranging from modes of transport to engineering works so the carpentry tradition derives from this functional

BUILDING MATERIALS USED IN ANGLO SAXON CHURCHES AND THEIR TOWERS

In his book, '*East Anglian Round Towers and their churches*', Bill Goode and other more recent writers have reviewed the way building materials were used in the early round tower churches without putting them in an historical framework so that is what is attempted here.

Church historians know that the Romans had used a wide range of building materials, which in theory could also have been used in construction during the Anglo-Saxon period. For example, Saxons fired clay pottery in kilns so why not also bricks? The Romans provided a precedent for building forms with their churches and temple-like churches built in small numbers all over Britain. The 7th century cathedral of *St Chedds* on the Essex coast is built of materials robbed from the adjacent Roman fort so why could this not be repeated elsewhere in East Anglia? In the middle Saxon period there were continental examples of round bell-towers so why not also in England? All this led historians like *Munro Cautley* to speculate wildly and suggest a pre-Viking 9th century date for the first English round towers. Thirty years later *Bill Goode* was more cautious and suggested a 10th century start date.

The 6th century missionaries in East Anglia camped out in the ruins of Roman forts. They used a portable altar and preached in the open, which may have started a long-standing tradition. The earliest churches of the Anglo-Saxons may have been built originally as timber mausoleums, later extended and adapted for worship. Otherwise dwellings and barns were probably converted into churches. In West Stow, Suffolk; timber long-houses, or 'halls' for extended 6th century pagan families have been found. There is no obvious connection between them and churches. In Essex the extensive forests allowed a prodigious use of timber but further north in East Anglia much of the woodland had been replaced by farmland even before the Romans arrived. The extensive areas of heath and wasteland had mainly poor quality woodland so as the size of the population increased, timber became scarcer. The great carpentry tradition of Essex is less strong in Suffolk and even more so in Norfolk.

A lot has been written about the use of timber and flint in churches. Much less has been said about the humbler building materials that also played a part in church development and the conditions that surrounded them. Some



www.norfolkstainedglass.co.uk

I've recently discovered this website depicting stained glass images from Norfolk churches. They have catalogued about 100 churches so far in the region including the round tower churches of St Andrew's at East Lexham and St Mary's at Stody.

The image below, of the Madonna and Child taken from Ormesby St Michael, featured in the 2009 Christmas stamp series... *Editor*



ROUND TOWER CHURCHES BY TAXI!

One Saturday last July, a beautiful summery day, and with nothing in particular in my diary, I decided to visit some more round tower churches. It was mid-day and I was at home, in London. Quickly gathering together a few necessities I set off for Liverpool Street, an hour and a half away, and took a train to Norwich, reached after another two hours. Yet another train and I finally reached my destination, Great Yarmouth: where, to my relief, several taxis were on the rank outside the station. After telling the driver I wished to take a tour of certain churches with round towers, he stared at me quizzically wondering if it was All Fool's Day.

Realising my mission was of serious intent our first stop was Mautby. Providing a few details of churches with round towers, which he admitted to never having really noticed, I then mentioned that when visiting Ashby, the previous year, I was delighted I would be able to see inside as a wedding was taking place. (This very remote church, as with so many others, is kept locked).



St Peter and St Paul's church, Mautby



St Mary's church, Ashby

Whilst strolling around and taking external photographs I enjoyed listening to the congregation's rendering of "Sing Hosanna" and knew which county I was in since hosanna came over as hooz-anna. "A long time since I've sung hymns" (schooldays long ago) said my driver, who rarely nowadays attended church weddings, his friends being either

single or had married in registry offices. He asked me "how 'doo' "Sing Hosanna" 'goo' then?" and I started to hum the tune. We were both then in full voice: hooz-anna from my driver, who was born and lived all his life in *Norfolk* (as had my late grandparents, affording me the opportunity to spend wonderful school holidays in the area), and ho-zanna, from my *London* accent.



St Mary's church, West Somerton

Then came Rollesby and West Somerton (at which place, as well as studying the architectural features, the grave of Robert Hales should not be missed: born in 1806, he died half a century later, weighing thirty stone having grown to a height of seven feet six inches).

The final stop was at the ruined Burgh St Margaret. Brief calls had been made at each allowing me to photograph the churches and look inside those that were open. Back at Great Yarmouth the stranger said he had not enjoyed an afternoon as much for a long time, and to boot was paid for it. We parted with smiles and hand-shakes and I took a train to Diss, staying overnight with a relative. I too had enjoyed a very pleasant day, albeit with a rather late start, and adding several more Round Towers to my expanding collection.

Valerie Grose

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