

Church of St Mary, Breamore, Hampshire (updated 2013)

All photos these pages are described viewed clockwise from top left.

1. General view from south, showing part timbered S porch.
2. Tower, part of nave and south 'porticus' from the south. Note how the porticus is less than the width of the tower, the corner of the tower walls seen rising clear of the adjunct. Note also that the tower is the same width as the nave
3. Rood (defaced) on exterior S face of nave wall, seen from within the south porch.
4. E wall, S porticus, doorway with double splay window above. SE quoin of tower seen here which heavily rebuilt.



Nikon

Breamore church.

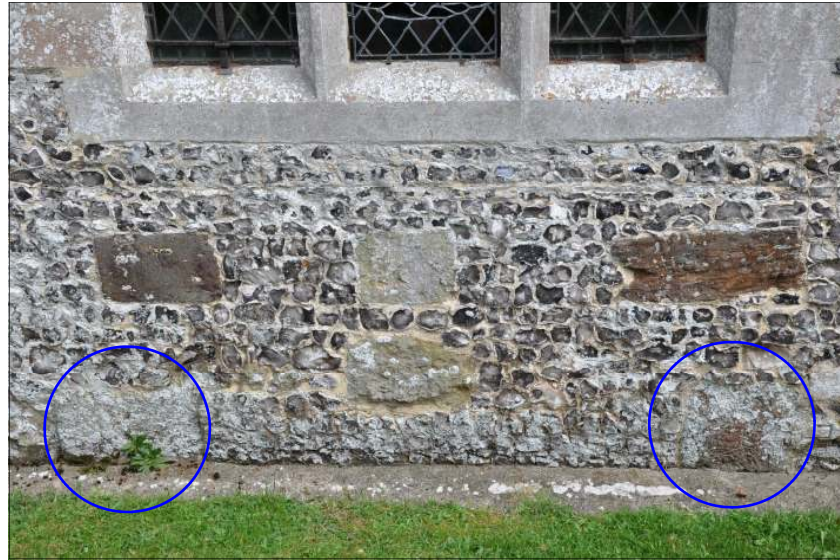
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5. The church seen from the NW. Note the remaining two double splayed windows in the N wall of nave. The possible west porch has vanished, however the two stones which were the foot of the west archway to the porch still remain (see next photo). The positions of the three pilaster strips (where some of the stones have vanished over time/rebuilding) are marked in this picture on the north wall by vertical grey lines. These pilasters are (partly) mirrored on the south wall (resize this file to see them more clearly). Those on the south wall are better preserved but the most westerly is missing where the south doorway occurs. Any trace of pilaster strips have vanished where the western buttresses occur.

6. Detail of the west wall with the two remaining archway jamb stones in position, more easily seen on site they are distinguished by being set equidistant from the centre line of the nave, are 'squared' on their 'inner' faces and are a pair, see the 2 blue circles (the intervening space is made up of squared flints at this low level).

7. The westernmost window in the north wall of the nave. The rendering around the windows was re-mortared in 1896-7 when several layers of plaster were removed from the exterior of the walls (revealing the flint construction). It is somewhat unfortunate since the present appearance is not how the original builders intended it! And see picture 20.

8. The 'pair' of double splayed windows in the S porticus seen internally. The right hand window (south wall) has been remodelled by the insertion of a small Early English Lancet window.

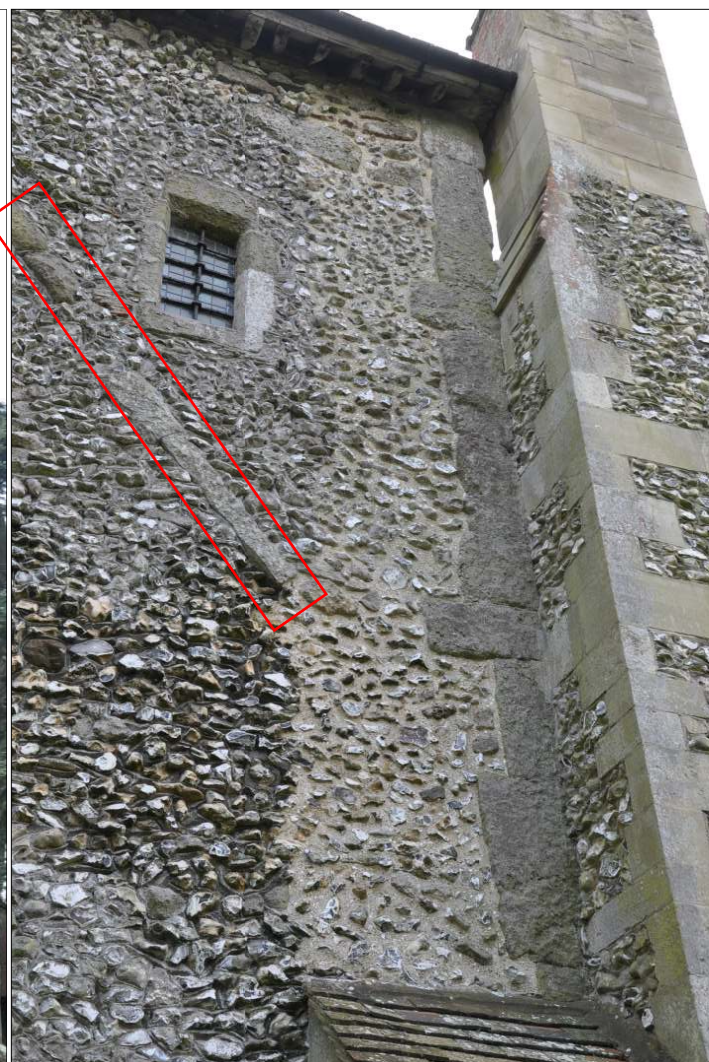
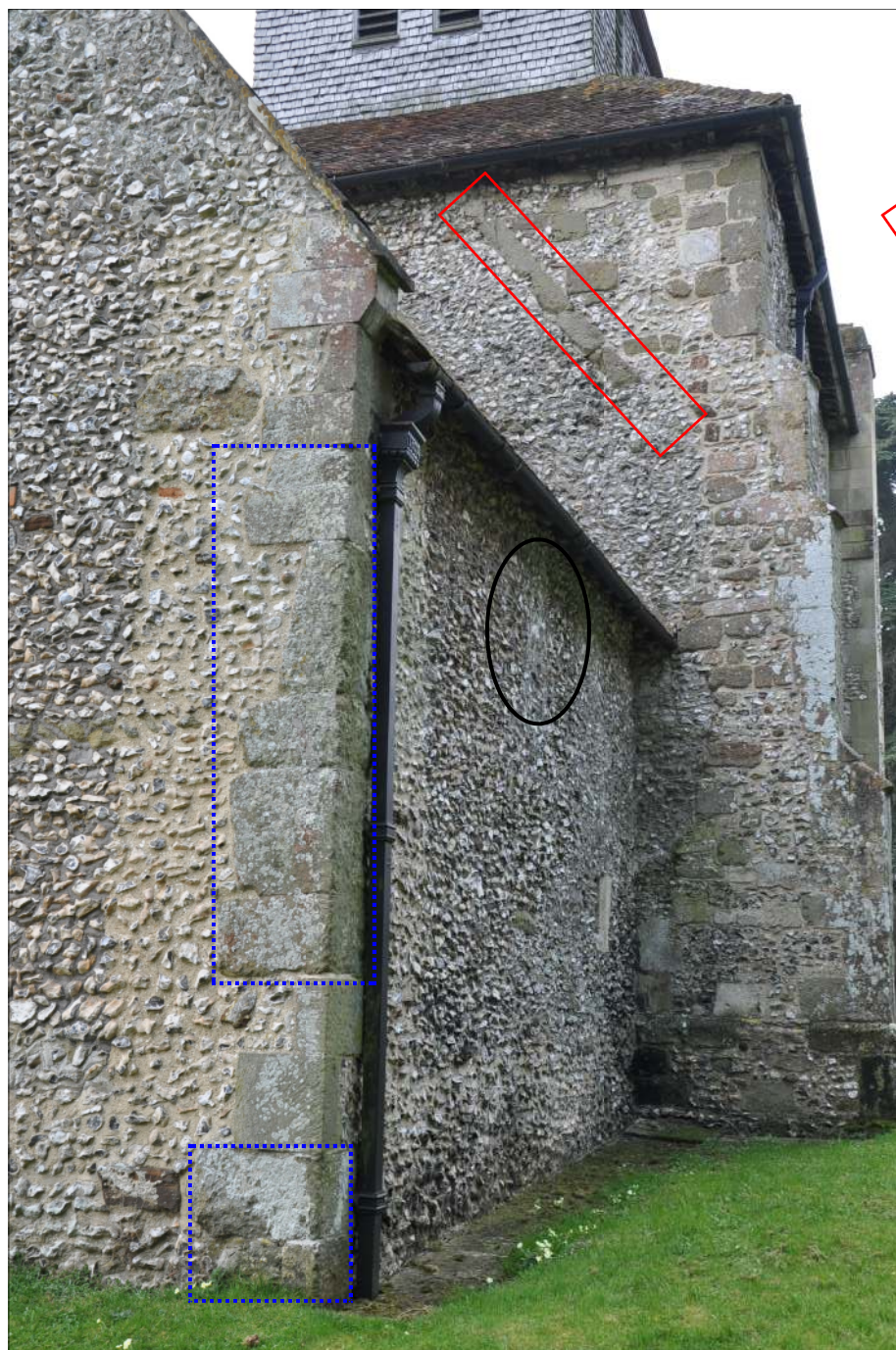


Breamore church.

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9. The NE corner of the chancel with the tower behind. Note the original roof line indicated by the run of stonework outlined in red (the original height of the chancel has been reduced). This corner of the tower has been substantially rebuilt with the addition of a buttress, perhaps indicating worries about settlement in medieval times and possibly aggravated by the demolition of the north porticus. The original stones of the NE quoin of the chancel are outlined in blue for identification. However the SE quoin (not shown here) is in the main side alternate work, but the bottom 'long' stone of that quoin is 'cut back' whereas the rather regular side alternate stones above are not and which appear to match a (later) rebuild of the SE quoin of the tower. There is an area of flint work (circled in black) on the north wall of the chancel which is of a different 'pattern' to the walling, and it may be a fill where another double splayed window was situated. It is very high in the wall but remember the chancel walls have been lowered.

10. This very fine run of stonework is the NW quoin of the tower and incorporates some 'long' stones. Unfortunately it is marred by the Victorian chimney and boiler house, a great pity. Outlined (again here in red) is the stonework at the point where the roof of the north porticus abutted the tower. The square window seen in the tower is a remodelling of the original double splayed window of which there were four (see further photographs).



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Breamore church.

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11. The two double splayed windows in the north wall of the tower seen internally. Note the reworking when rectangular medieval windows were inserted.

12. The pitch of the roof of the vanished north porticus as seen against the north face of the tower (do not be confused by the more modern stonework to the very right of the photo, this is the Victorian chimney rising from the boiler-house). The NE quoin of the tower has been in large part destroyed due to the medieval buttress. The 2 red arrows indicate the remains of the jambs of the north porticus archway.

13. Western part of N wall of nave, showing truncated pilaster strip below the medieval window, and also a double splayed window which is one of two in this wall.

Note in the previous pictures the form of the roof of the tower which probably represents (and noted now only from descriptions) major Anglo-Saxon towers that have vanished, such as those at the cathedrals at Selsey (Sussex) and Winchester (Hants).



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Breamore church. This page; sole surviving (south) archway leading to south porticus from tower (for dimensions see the very last page).

14. Detail of monolithic W impost, with cable decoration. The faces of the imposts seen from inside the tower have sadly been crudely mutilated and are now flush with the other stonework of the arch, whereas seen from within the porticus the cable decoration continues around the western impost only (the eastern impost having been mutilated).

15. The inscription (picked out in red) translated reads "Here is manifest the Word to thee." Note the defaced imposts. From the form of the letters a date in the latter part of the reign of Ethelred II (978-1016) has been suggested. It may be the lettering is an addition to the arches but at least this fixes the latest date for their construction to the second decade of the 11th century.

16. The north face of this archway seen from the tower, the only remaining of the original five archways.

17. Detail of the commencement of the inscription.

18. A fragment of lettering on a voussoir from a now vanished archway reads "DES" (and is situate above the medieval chancel arch). It is not in its original position (see page 10).



Breamore church.

This page; pilaster strips -

18. Cut back pilaster strip at south wall of nave and a little to east of E wall of porch.

19. SW quoin (cut back) where tower adjoins the nave (tower to right).

20. Seen here, to the left, again, the SW quoin to the tower and to the right the SW quoin of the S porticus. The topmost stone of the quoin projects (ringed in blue) and which see also the drawing on page 7. The black arrow indicates a recent new stone, which unfortunately sticks out like a sore thumb (it will take some 300 years to weather down!).

Note: the pilasters and quoins, laid in irregular long-and-short technique, are of the type where the finished pilaster appears as a raised rib cut on the face of stones which are otherwise only roughly dressed, and are appreciably wider than the pilaster itself. Undoubtedly the walls were originally rendered in the traditional way and this rendering was carried up to the raised, or proud edge, of the pilaster strips, so that the stones showed as a vertical strip. The original rendering was unfortunately removed in alterations in 1896-7. I have attempted to recreate the effect where the tower quoin rises; compare pic 20 (rendered) to pic 19 as seen today. The colour is a matter of conjecture, Winchester Minster was called the white church due to its whitewashed colour. Breamore church was evidently plastered in a 'pale ginger' daub (or 'natural'). So on the left it is shown whitewashed, and on the right 'natural'.



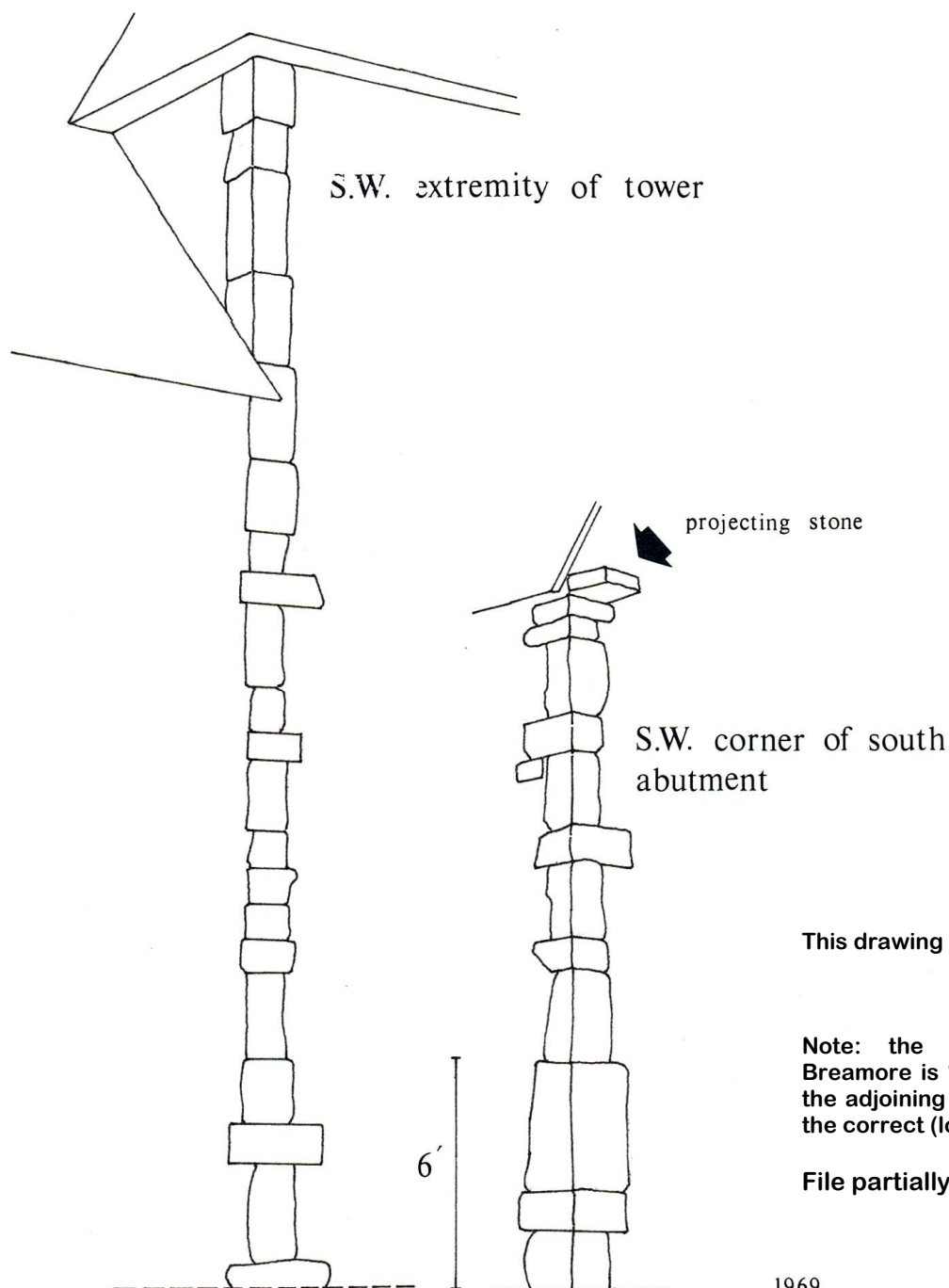
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Breamore church.

Detail of 'cut back' pilaster strip (quoin) at the meeting of nave and tower (south wall), and seen to the right the SW quoin of the transept or porticus, illustrating the random long & short work. The pilaster strips spring from a large rectangular base stone which protrudes beyond the face of the strip and exceeds its width by a factor of two or more.

SAXON CHURCH

Breamore, Hampshire



This drawing was made in 1969.

Note: the correct pronunciation of Breamore is "Bremmer". I used to live in the adjoining village and am familiar with the correct (local) version.

File partially revised and expanded.

1969

Breamore church.

21. The remaining original (lower) portion of the SE quoin of the tower. This is a particularly important part of the fabric since it is the only remaining 'freestanding' corner quoin belonging to the tower/nave build which survives; however the topmost stone (in this photo) and those above, include medieval restorations/replacements. This portion of quoin stones remains (thankfully) un-restored to date. To the right runs the pre-conquest walling of the chancel (which note is not 'full width' as is the nave).

22. I include this photograph of the south porticus to show the similar type of (cut back) quoin seen in picture 21, but also to illustrate the repairs recently carried out and certainly dating to after 1962 (when I first knew this building). They do not seem to match either the greensand, or the ironstone used in the original build, and if restoration of this type were to continue then we are to lose the important story that the stones tell us here. Note the projecting stone at the head of both quoins. I wonder if this arrangement supported a timber beam/gable?

The form of the double splayed and plaster faced windows at Breamore are similar in style to the remains of a blocked window in the south wall of the nave at Sompting and those at Odda's chapel at Deerhurst. The latter fabric dates to exactly 1056. No doubt this type of window opening was in general circulation for a century or more and this simple style of 'economy' window could be easily constructed by semi-skilled workers with no recourse to the use of dressed stone which would require a skilled mason. It also has a more generous opening area than, say, the two light windows at Worth (Sussex) and perhaps this reflects the more affordable availability of glass, or simply the desire to admit more light. It is likely that windows of this date had exterior shutters (Avebury) but the windows at Odda's chapel have remains of the original oak frame and that would be to accommodate (leaded) glass. Windows were leaded to facilitate 'joining' the small pieces of glass since there was a limit to the maximum glass size that could be made.



Breamore church.

This page; interior views.

23. The north wall of the nave running away to the west, note the two double splayed windows, the furthest now lighting the west gallery.

24. The space under the tower, seen from the chancel and looking west.

Note: in the 13th century the name of the village was spelt BROMMORE or BRIMORE (today pronounced "Bremmer"). The probable meaning is "marshy ground where broom grows". The dedication of the church was St. Michael in early medieval times. In 2002 Time Team excavated an early Saxon cemetery by the nearby river Avon.



Breamore church.

This page; relative sizes of the Anglo-Saxon tower arches (restored).

25. Here are three of the tower arches shown as they would once probably have looked viewed from under the nave archway and looking eastwards. The missing chancel arch is central to the picture, the surviving south arch is on the right and its vanished sister, the north arch, is on the left. You will see that the north arch is larger than its sister on the south, and that the chancel arch is again larger than the other two shown here. Full details of archway dimensions are on the next page.

One must study the remaining archway understanding its currently 'defaced' state. Firstly the face of the impost (seen from within the tower) have been hacked back to the level of the face of the jambs. From within the south porticus the face of the west impost is in pristine condition, it projects forwards and the heavy rope roll moulding is repeated on its edges. This is sadly what is missing now on the north facing aspect. We then realise that the object of the defacing, perhaps belonging to a 13th or 14th century date, was to remove the projections which did not fit the then current thinking. However, this 'tidying' did not stop there. Here, as with the contemporary remaining doorway in Sherborne Abbey, and in a similar manner as at Britford church (Wilts), rectangular pilaster strips framing the archway were removed together with the square bases from which they sprung. Understanding this we now realise how 'undressed' the surviving archway now appears. With the traditional pilaster strips and continuing hood mould 'restored' the archways look 'finished'. As at St. Peter's, Barton-on-Humber, it may be that here at Breamore the pilaster strip and hood mould decoration was only provided on the more important inward face of the tower (see also chancel arch at Wittering, Northants), but perhaps with the exception of both faces of the nave archway which probably would have received pilaster strips (see Stow-in-Lindsey). A little judicious removal of plaster from a small area surrounding the surviving arched opening on its northern face would easily determine whether there are any remnants of surviving pilaster strip embedded in the wall (pilaster strip-work was not a surface ornament, the stonework was embedded deeply in the wall and it formed very much a part of the structure of the archway). So here we see a representation of how impressive the interior of the tower must have looked before the medieval mind came to bear upon it. I should add that due to the limitations of my expertise with computer graphics I have not been able to show the imposts restored with the rope moulding on the faces.



Dimensions.

Archways. Where H1 is the height of the opening: H2 is the height to the underside of the impost:
W is the width between jambs: T is the thickness of the walling at the jambs (or walling at an opening).

Note; the crossing floor is 0.114 metres (4.5 in.) above the nave floor. The chancel floor is 0.51 metres (20 in) above the crossing floor. All heights are taken using the crossing floor as datum.

The following are widths of four archways, firstly the westernmost the remains of which are embedded in the present west wall of the nave, secondly the remains of the north archway in the tower, and thirdly the existing south archway. There are full dimensions of the existing south archway.

1. Western. W. 1.68 metres (66.1 inches).
2. North. W. 1.48 metres (58.25 in).
3. South. W. 1.333 metres (52.5 in).
H1. 3.142 metres (10.3 ft/123.7 inches)
H2. 2.172 metres (7.13 ft/85.5 in)
T. 0.91 metres (36 in).
R. = Ratio of width to height. 1 to 2.357

4. Chancel arch foundations give a width of 2.03 metres (see further observations).

You will see that the south arch was the smallest of the four. There are no records of the foundations of the nave archway.

Western impost of the south arch is a rectangular block 0.266 metres (10.25 in.) high; 0.56 metres (22 in.) measured west east, and would have been 1.092 metres (43 in.) north south (assuming in restored/original condition before being defaced).

The NAVE (internal).

- L. 15.546 metres (51 ft/612 in.)
W. (mean) 6.273 metres (20.58 ft/247 in.)
H. 6.759 metres (22.18 ft) measured to underside of tie beams (mean).

The CHANCEL (internal).

- L. 6.28 metres (247.3 in/20.6 ft)
W. (mean) 4.179 metres. (164.5in/13.7 ft)

The TOWER.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| East west dimension | 6.067 metres. (19.92 ft/239") |
| North south dimension | 6.292 metres. (20.64 ft/247.7") |
| Height to underside of tie beam | 10.265 metres. (33.7 ft/404.15") |
| T of west walling (at nave archway) | 0.825 metres (32.5") |

Some further observations.

H. Taylor tells us that the Rev'd Hill, in 1897, recorded the foundations of the chancel arch and which indicated a width of 6ft 8in, or 80 inches, or 2.03 metres (are we to assume that the vanished nave arch was of similar dimensions?). Taking the south archway as a guide then if that ratio of width to height (1 to 2.357) were repeated it would indicate a chancel arch with a height (H1) of 4.78 metres or 15 ft 9 in (188 inches). Thus its dimensions may well have been one and a half times greater than the south arch (1.52 to be exact). The width of 2.03 metres compares to the eastern arch at Barton-upon-Humber church at 1.668 metres and H1 at 4.19 m. It gives a width to height ratio of 1:2.512 - compared to Breamore at 1:2.357

The south tower archway (which was the smallest), with its incised text, has six massive voussoirs which are through-stones and are non-radial. The jambs are not through-stones.

Archway dimensions explored.

The variations between the different archways is most interesting, one might expect south and north crossing archways to be very similar but perhaps with larger archways to chancel and nave. Unfortunately there is at the moment no record of excavations which might give a dimension for the width of the nave archway, but stonework of the jambs of the north archway survive some four feet in height and fix its size, and critically the first course of stones above ground level survive of the western nave archway jambs thus fixing that. Interestingly we find that each arch are different, and by a considerable margin. If we study the two archways at Barton-upon-Humber St. Peter's we observe that the eastern archway is the larger when compared to its western sister. But here we only have two abutments and not four as at Breamore. At Britford we only have a pair of archways to their vanished porticus and any contemporary chancel arch has completely vanished. At Milborne Port the very fine set of four archways under the crossing are unhelpful since this is a well developed, advanced example, of an early eleventh century crossing, in the pre-conquest sense in that its abutments (like Wimborne) are of lesser dimensions compared to the tower. At Norton (Co. Durham) we have a similar example of a crossing, but there we only have the pair of north and south archways surviving, the west and east archways are later Norman replacements. At Stow, Lincs, the crossing of the great Minster church has four archways built to very closely matching dimensions.

Breamore church, Hants.

Continued from previous page.

If Breamore church is of one build, one date, might we reasonably expect the pair of north and south archways to be (at least within inches) the same size? The north arch is ten percent wider than the south. Unfortunately only one archway survives more or less intact. Are we to assume that the incised wording on the south arch is contemporary with its building date. Even if it is later then perhaps it is not by much, a few decades perhaps? Unfortunately we have not the quantity of examples of contemporary fabric now extant with which to compare and draw more definite, more valid reasoning, and conclusive arguments.

The (interior) head of the south doorway to the nave consists of stones which appear to be through-stones and are possibly non-radial (partly obscured by timberwork belonging to the west gallery). This doorway is unusually high in relation to its width and although it appears, from the outside, to include Norman treatment, the capitals look to have been restored; importantly there is no tympanum (a post-conquest feature). Possibly a Saxo/Norman overlap, but that being so we presume the original entrance was through the now vanished west porch.

Weights. Taking the mass of a cubic metre of Limestone as 2611 kilos, we can calculate the block of stone which makes up the western impost of south archway at 0.16266 cu metres. It therefore may weigh in the order of 0.425 tonnes/ 0.42 tons or 934 lbs, or 8.3 cwt. In other words it weighs about one third of the weight of an average size family saloon car!

Dimensions taken using laser equipment, accurate to +/- 1.5mm at 10 metres distance.

Dimensions under 1.5 metres taken using steel rule.

Newest updates/revisions to this file , July 2013.

