

Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

Comprising a west tower with remains of flanking and westward annexes. So wrote H.M.Taylor in vol. one of his "Anglo-Saxon Architecture" (pages 456-459). The church is built of flint rubble and to a high degree covered in a coating of once ancient plaster. However since Taylor visited the church in the mid 20th century it has, in recent years, been resurfaced. On the tower this has built up the thickness and the pre-conquest windows and the quoins are now unfortunately 'set back' from the face of the plaster and this is not how they were presented beforehand. Taylor commented *"... a coating of ancient plaster, which has been worked thin with the trowel at the edges, so to finish flush against the dressed-stone facings and quoins."* Unfortunately these skills today are not in evidence and the effect is clumsy and crude and shows a lack of understanding of how the plaster should be presented.

In the west wall of the tower is a fine archway, which gave access from the tower space to an annexe, perhaps a baptistery or entrance porch (i). The present aisled nave is set to the east of the tower and accessed by an arch of greater proportions than its western sister. There are very obvious clues which point to the position of the vanished annexes, none more so than that to the west where the two buttresses are a later re-working of the stumps of walling. As regards the north and south annexes the re-entrant quoins are clearly in evidence and the pictures on the following pages will describe exactly where their walls sprung from the tower. One must make mention of the high standard of workmanship to be found in the fine jointing and way the quoin and window stones have been carefully dressed, and, although they are typically not cut to a 'standard' height/size (which is a strong indication of pre-conquest date) the effect taken as a whole is impressive. The N & S annexes led into the tower by two modest round-headed openings, both receiving a lintel and the space above being filled with walling. Interestingly, the east wall of the south annexe remains complete and has been absorbed into the later south aisle, the quoins marking the junction of the wall and the original external south-east quoin of the annexe has survived, inside the aisle, where the present south wall of the aisle is built with a straight joint against it (ii). Much might be written about the great west archway, suffice to say it has been, for many centuries, subjected to the elements, and in that regard has not been treated kindly. However, that part which has received more shelter still displays the original carving on the capitals which both please the eye and raise the senses by the vigour of their style and skill of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship that owes little to Norman continental practise (except for the billet ornament).

With the Conquest these skills seem to have 'vanished', or at least one would assume that these talented craftsmen (who survived 1066 and the immediate years of risings) were pressed, enslaved, to the immediate demands of the vast castle building program. In any case the Normans had their own trained masons who would decorate/carve and embellish in their own continental taught style. The vibrant Anglo-Saxon style of carving was sadly to wither after 1066 and for some 20 years there can have been little 'small' church building work. Some late Anglo-Saxon work has been attributed to 'overlap' (1050 to 1100) but we must bear in mind that most of the Saxon aristocracy were either killed on the field at Battle in Sussex, or were stripped of their lands (and therefore their patronage ceased) to be replaced by the incoming Normans. Many surviving Saxon aristocracy were taken to Normandy and never returned, or they fled. A few Saxon bishops remained, Stigand to mention but one, but future building was to reflect the style of the dominant conqueror/landowner who would put his Norman stamp on the people of this broken land. For these reasons I am happy to put a pre-conquest date on the Anglo-Saxon work to be found at All Saints, a date perhaps c.1050. See page 8 for a reference to the strong resemblance to the mature work to be found at Stoughton church in Sussex.

Notes.

- (i) H.Taylor & Ponting.
- (ii) H.Taylor.

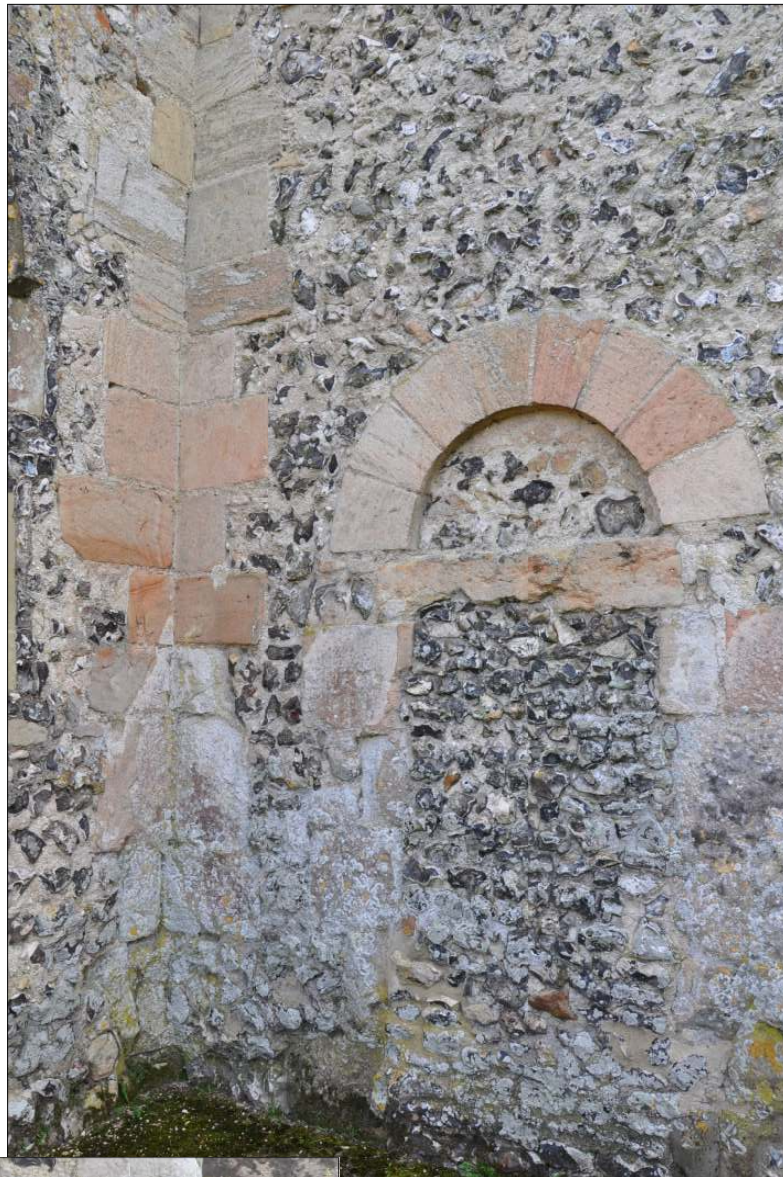
Proceed to further pages for pictures with explanation.



Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

All pictures viewed clockwise from top left. This page -

1. West archway, tower, viewed from W.
2. Blocked doorway in N wall tower.
3. The tower viewed from the south.
4. Detail of the RH capital, seen in photo 1.



Nikon



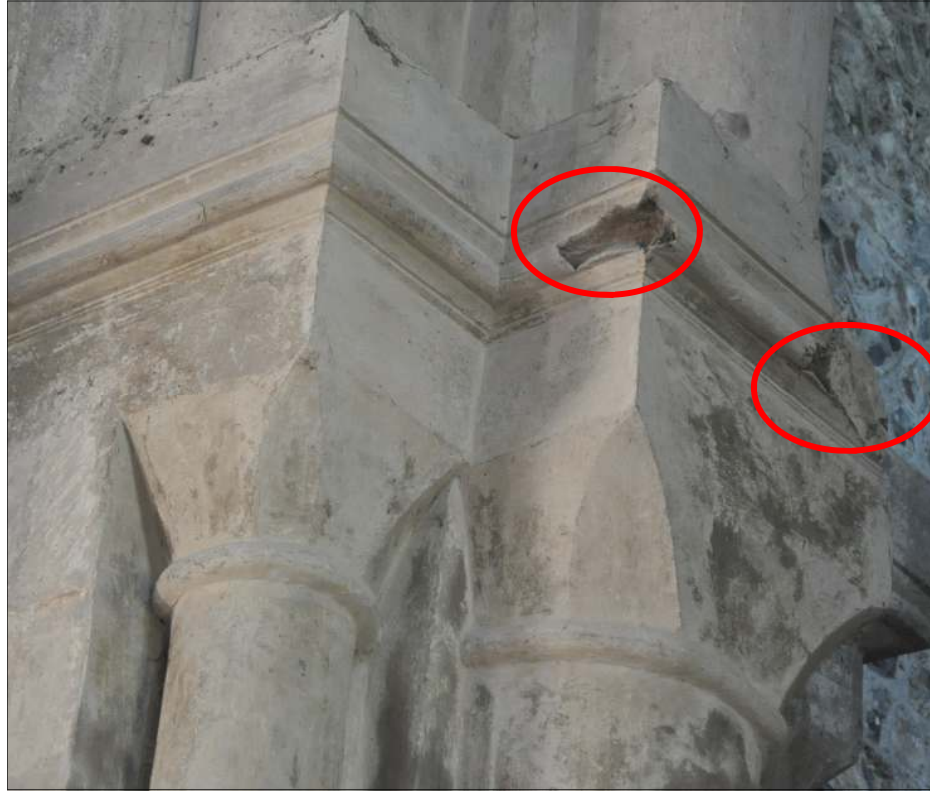
Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

5. East face of eastern archway to the tower. This archway is different in detail, and larger, compared to its western sister (see page 2) and shows signs of heavy repair in plaster/whitewashed cement rendering. I might add here, just to throw in a query, and since there is much 'restoration' and filling to be seen on the east face of this archway, it would need either a ladder to investigate (or binoculars) but there might just be a line of fill running around the outer order. It can be seen as a darker 'line' and might it just be more tidying' to mask and fill a half-round hollow, as seen undisturbed at the chancel arch at Stoughton church (see later pages for the restoration, or interference, with the arch here in more detail).
6. Viewed from under the tower its east face has suffered less from the restorers hand and the joints in the archway are evident. There are two orders, the inner having a bold soffit roll and the outer has a roll on each arris. The capitals are of cubical form and the restorers hand is evident in the form of the moulded impost. This is particularly obvious where the mouldings of the south impost are badly damaged and its opposite sister shows traces of brick under the mouldings where the cement build up has crumbled away. I will show which is post medieval and which is original Anglo-Saxon work. To this end my line drawing in picture 20 attempts to show its original form and I show in detail the post medieval work exposed.



Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

7. The elevated arched opening in the east wall of the tower (seen from the nave) and situate above the arch in photo 5. Note the typical pre-conquest style non-radial voussoirs.
8. The nave (east) archway, southern impost. The cement rendering broken away here to reveal the post medieval mouldings constructed in brick/cement (circled in red line).
9. The base of the south jamb of the nave archway. Note the later 'faired in' stonework/cement rendering thus disguising the original shape/style of the bases which were of concentric ring mouldings in a similar way to the west archway (see also photo 23). See also line drawings 19 & 20 of this archway 'restored' to see how it may have looked before being 'modernised'. These alterations and the later cement rendering have masked its strong pre-conquest style. I feel this may well have been carried out before the Victorian era. Refer also to my remarks about picture 5 on the previous page.



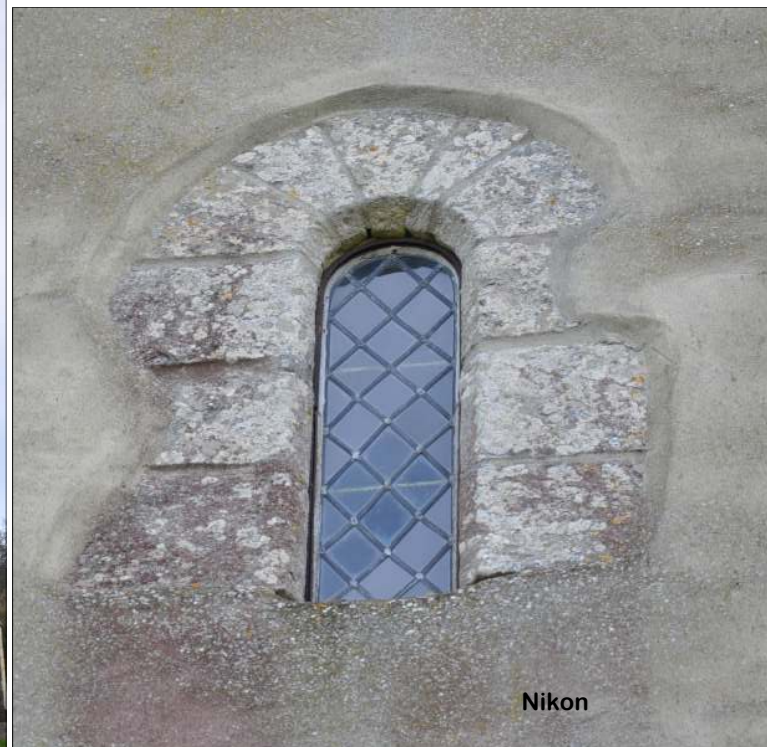
Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

10. The internal aspect of the lower window set in the north face of the tower, and the confident style and cut of the stonework strongly reminiscent of the windows seen at Stoughton in Sussex, except that seen here is not double splayed and is almost cut 'straight through'.
11. Here is the external aspect of the same window and note a typical pre-conquest method of construction where there is a total absence of a purpose made stone cill (as seen, for instance, at Stow-in-Lindsey), the jambs here rising straight from the flint work. There is a modern wooden frame extant, doubtless replacing an original oak frame.
12. This smaller window set above that seen in picture 7 is a similar type with its cill simply being the flint



walling but here the jambs and arch have a chamfer. The modern plaster facing is of a greater thickness and it gives the stonework of the opening a 'sunken' effect.

13. To place these two windows more clearly in context, here is the north aspect of the tower.



Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

All pictures viewed clockwise from top left. This page -

14. North face of the tower walling seen to the right (west) of the blocked archway. The twin rows of faced stones are the remains of the quoin re-entrants (as seen at St. Mary, Stoughton). Here the vertical red lines delineate the extent of the now vanished wall which was the west wall of the north porticus. The protruding (base) stone is all that now remains of this wall. Its east wall is now partly extant as the westernmost wall of the north aisle to the nave. In exactly the same way is that to the south aisle and seen in picture 15.



15. South face of the tower. Marked with red lines the vanished west walling and its re-entrant quoins of the south porticus. The corner of the re-entrant quoins relating to the east wall of the south porticus are delineated by a shortened green pecked line (not to be confused by the black line which is an awkwardly placed lightning conductor!). With the east and west walls fixed in this



picture it may be appreciated that the archway is centrally placed, as is its sister the north archway. I say 'archway' as that was their original use, to give access from the tower to the two porticus.

16. The base of the south jamb of the west archway of the tower and carved to show two attached half-round shafts. The bases of

these half-round shafts are finished with four concentric rings and rest upon simple rectangular plinths. Both jambs are extremely similar but their capitals are dissimilar and despite being partly weathered at least the side nearest to the door is somewhat protected and the fine carving has survived. See pictures 4, 17 & 18.



Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

17. The west archway to the tower. Seen here the face of the south jamb and the detail of the best preserved part of the capital, interestingly with a billet ornament above, and in that showing influence from continental Europe and knowledge of the developing Norman Romanesque. Here a beast sits upon foliage which is cushioned below by an accomplished execution of a palmette design. The remainder of the capital is covered by beautiful leaves of flowing foliage. The adjoining capital on the right is badly weathered but the palmette design is repeated here.
18. Its northern sister with a similar wild beast and with pointed tail, perhaps a lion? The creature sits upon a crude double row of palmette mouldings. The corner of the capital has a bold scroll design and the whole is not so confidently executed and dominates the design, perhaps a less experienced craftsman. Here the impost is not billet decorated but consists of a series of delicate mouldings. Its adjoining capital has lost every detail save a band at the base which stands proud and must have been a palmette leaf design. It is a great pity that the loss of the west adjunct has exposed to the elements this archway with its finely executed and powerfully presented carved capitals.

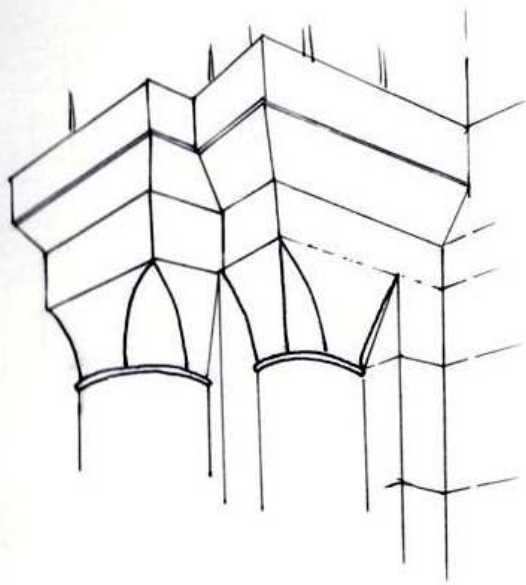


Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

View drawings/photographs from top left.

The east archway to the tower drawn as it most probably appeared in its original 'as built' state, having observed several important 'clues' which mask the original features.

19. Seen here the south capital viewed from within the tower. Note the chamfered and quirked responds here without the existing (applied) mouldings which are constructed of a dark cement or mortar of some form and finished with a stone coloured wash. This can clearly be seen in photo 21 where the 'mouldings' are badly damaged revealing their construction, quite possibly of late 18th or early 19th century date and carried out in the mistaken intention to elaborate and beautify the 'plain' pre-conquest impost. To understand the original form of the imposts here please refer to the photo file of Stoughton church (Sussex) where you will see the chancel archway there is worked in a remarkably similar manner. Indeed the responds, capitals and the bases are to all intents and purposes identical, but here at Netheravon the capitals have not received any carved decoration. The bases of the half-round attached shafts here have a cement mortar applied (in a similar way as the imposts) to mask the original form of concentric 'rings' springing from the base. The lower ring can be seen 'bleeding' through the applied mortar covering (see next page). Of the capitals of the chancel arch at Stoughton church H.Taylor said - *The angle-shafts have capitals with simple cubical tops, which are reduced to meet the circular shafts by the elementary expedient of chamfering each face and then chamfering each angle, an expedient which has many parallels in Anglo-Saxon work. The capitals support quirked and chamfered imposts which are recessed to conform with the recessed form of the jambs.* This description applies perfectly to the capitals and imposts of the east archway here at Netheravon. It is most probable that the work at both churches belong to the same school of masons and was carried out at either the same time or after a short period had elapsed. This leaves us wondering which school worked on the west archway.
20. The east face of the archway, in its probable original form. At present it exhibits a thin layer of hard plaster which is probably whitewashed, or at least the finish is an off-white to give the effect of stonework, with the result that the joints of the stonework are totally masked. I am of the opinion that this occurred during the later part of the 18th century or early 19th, a Georgian "revamp" and before the screen was removed. The west face of the arch has in some part escaped this 'beautification' or interference (see photo 6), but the east face was originally built to present the 'best' or important face.



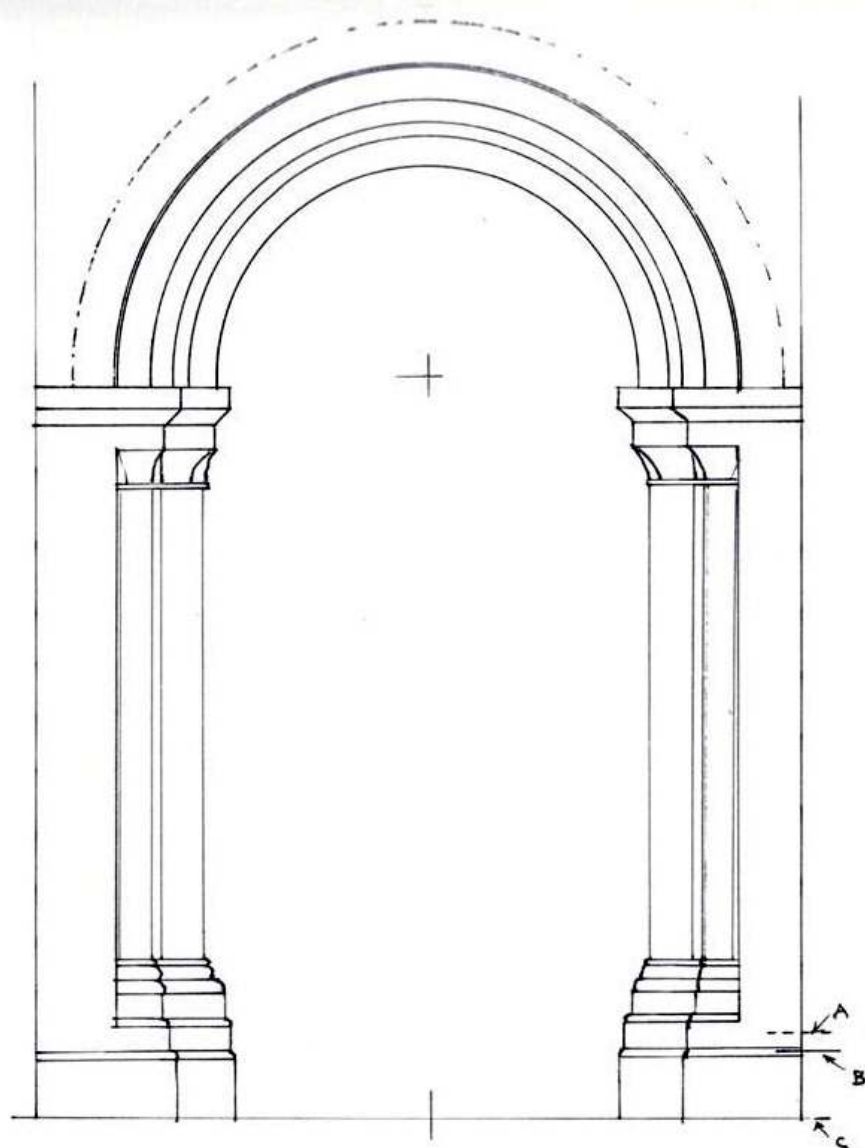
The drawing right (20).

"A" indicates the present floor level in the tower.

"B" indicates the present nave floor level.

I have shown the Anglo-Saxon floor level, "C" at an estimated 12 inches/0.3 metres lower than B.

For archway dimensions please see page 9.



Church of All Saints, Netheravon, Wilts.

View photographs from top left.

21. The south impost of the east archway (seen in the previous page) where damage has revealed the darker cement/mortar build up (arrowed) of the construction of the mouldings applied to the surface of the original stonework. There is clear evidence of where a (wooden or metal) screen was attached to the north shaft of the archway and it is possible that the damage was done by careless removal of the screen (which would have partitioned off the tower). There once existed a north porch accessing the north aisle (seen in a drawing/painting from the Buckler Collection) and perhaps its demolition necessitated the opening up the tower for easier access to its south doorway (which may have once been blocked).
22. Black & white copy of a Buckler painting of 1809. It shows a stub of the west wall of the north porticus which has been tidied flush at a later date.
23. The base of the south jamb of the archway, the arrows indicate the 'bleeding' through of the lower ring to the foot of the column/shaft, the smoothed mortar rendering masking the concentric receding rings at the base (see drawing no.20). This very hard mortar rendering here is a 'sandstone' colour under the wash.



Dimensions (taken in common with other files on this site).

Archways.

H1 is the height of the opening (to the soffit roll).

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).

Datum is the tower floor (nave floor is 6 inches lower).

East tower arch.

H1 5.675 metres. (18.633 ft).

H2 3.833 metres. (12.585 ft).

W. 2.915 metres. (9.57ft).

Dimensions under are corrected to an assumed level of the Anglo-Saxon floor (at tower floor minus 0.46 metres).

H1 6.135 metres (20.14 feet).

H2 4.293 metres (14.095 feet).

