

St. Mary Minster, Stow-in-Lindsey, Lincs.

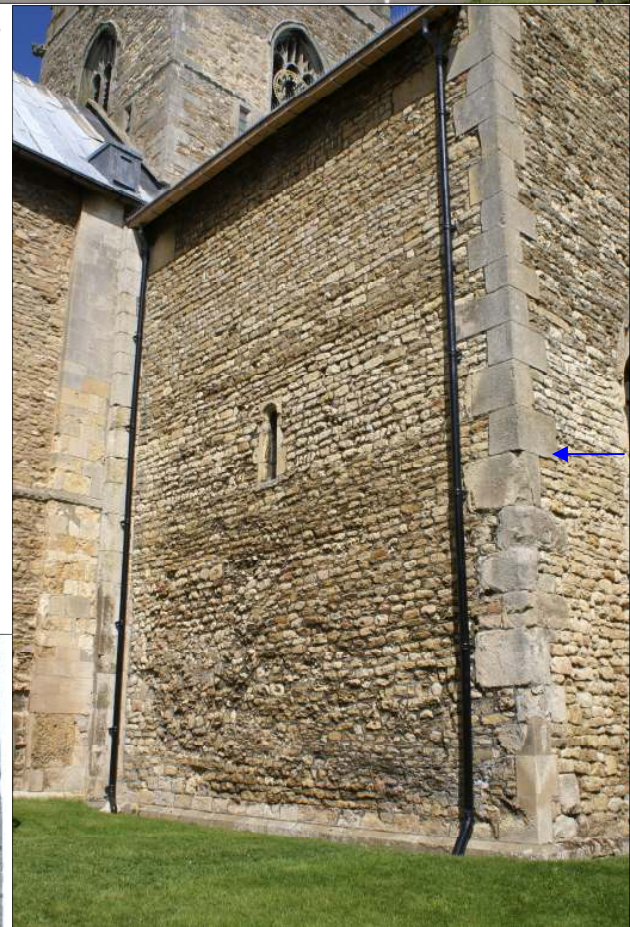
All pages pictures viewed clockwise from top right.

1. Chancel arch, from the east.
2. The Saxon window in south wall of S. transept, note the 'palmette' decoration to the hood, this is repeated on the nave archway to the crossing, and on the side facing the nave (see pic 4).
3. Nave archway, north pier viewed from nave, these unrestored pilasters showing evidence of fire. Note bulbous stops (corbels).
4. Looking up at crossing from within the nave (with later medieval pointed arches built within the Saxon crossing). During the 19th century restoration, Pearson found lead under the later flooring, which had poured down from the roof and which was from the time of the burning of the minster (perhaps by the Danes).



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5. South aspect of church, showing Norman nave (left) and the Saxon south transept and the 15th cent tower, the supporting piers for which are inserted within the Saxon piers.
6. The west wall of sth transept. Note the lower weathered side alternate quoin stones which belong to the "first" build, whereas those above (the blue arrow) are in far better condition and date to the rebuild after the burning of the building. This later build is attributed to Bishop Eadnoth II, 1034-1050. It should be noted that these 'upper' stones were *not* restored in Mr. Pearson's restoration of c.1850.
7. Saxon doorway in W wall of nth transept, viewed from interior, note typical non-radius stones in head.
8. The NE quoin, nth transept. Note again the older lower quoins and how they are cut back to receive plaster to butt up against that 'edge'.
9. The crossing from the nave. The crossing shows the classic Anglo-Saxon trait where the transepts are of a smaller dimension than that of the crossing. This is confused at first sight as the medieval tower rises *inside* the Anglo-Saxon crossing on its own piers.
10. Detail of W part of archway to south transept, viewed from inside the transept. The various orders (above the imposts) belonging to all four crossing arches represent a later rebuild, the piers and pilasters below the imposts are from an earlier build. Presumably the damaged crossing and the burning belong to the same moment in time which occasioned the rebuild here (by Eadnoth?), as also the transepts above a certain level.



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Clockwise from top right.

- 11. The nave archway (southern impost), viewed from the nave and showing the delicate 'palmette' decoration, and which can also be found to the head of the Saxon window in the south wall of S. transept.
 - 12. NE corner of tower, quoins seen rising and built in 'cut back' style: note its plinth. Note also the Norman chancel with contrasting smaller fine ashlar, and accompanying plinth, all abutting the earlier work and running out to the left of picture.
 - 13. The SE corner of the tower seen rising to the eaves with a fine example of 'cut back' quoins reaching to within 6 stones of eave level (where the style changes#), indicative of the tower being destroyed/badly damaged in the fire, and so rebuilt above that height .
- # to the side-alternate type, also seen in the rebuild of the 'upper' quoins of the south transept.

The four crossing arches measure approx 35ftx14ft. It may be noted that there is no indication on the quoins of the Sth transept of 'cutting back'. Atkinson reported, in the mid 19th cent. restoration that there were traces of walls outside the nave as if there were aisles, but Taylor rightly points out that they may be earlier traces of porticus. It is likely they belong to an earlier stone church; the foundation of the diocese of Lindsey by King Egfrid dates to 674.



Pages 1-3 updated August 2010 with some new pictures. Text revised.

Pages 4 to 6 added May 2011.

[This page.](#)

14. The incised 'graffiti' on the north face of the south pier of the chancel arch. This rare depiction is the earliest known example, a scratching of an oared "Viking" sailing ship, and may well date to foreign incursions at some point, probably in the 10th century. This graffiti exhibits excellent and intricate detail (note the vertical lines running below the gunwale) and would seem to indicate that the 'artist' was fully conversant with this ship and may well have been a crew member. This digital photo has been considerably enhanced.



Crossing archway dimensions.

Referring to the text on the next page, dimensions taken with laser measuring equipment. Date May 2011.

H1 is the height to the (underside) crown of the arch. H2 is the height to the underside of the impost. W is the width between jambs. T is the thickness of the walling of the archway jambs.

Mean dimensions (M) represent the average of the 4 crossing archways.

(M) - H1 is 9.63 metres (31 ft 6 inches). H2 is 6.754 metres (22 ft 2 inches). W is 4.375 metres (14 ft 4 inches). T is 1.34 metres (4 ft 5 inches).

Nave archway H1 is 9.6 metres. Chancel H1 is the highest measured at 9.74 metres (31 ft 10.75 inches).

Plinths belonging to the four archways. Height is 1.25 metres (49 inches). Width is 2.33 metres (91.6 inches).

Other internal dimensions.

The south transept: floor is 0.15 metres (6 in) lower than crossing floor. Length north to south 7.377 metres. Width 7.649 metres. Height of walling 11.186 metres (36 ft 7 inches).

The nave (Norman): floor is 0.23 metres (9 in) higher than crossing floor. Length is 18.06 metres; width (west end) 8.447 metres; (east end) 8.41 metres. Height to underside of tie beams (mean) 11.603 metres (37 ft 11 inches).

All archway heights are taken as measured from the crossing floor, as datum.

All four arches show extremely close tolerances.

Equipment used.

Accuracy of digital measuring equipment: up to 10 metres +/- 1.5mm. Max range: 50 metres.

Dimensions less than 2 metres were taken using a steel measure.

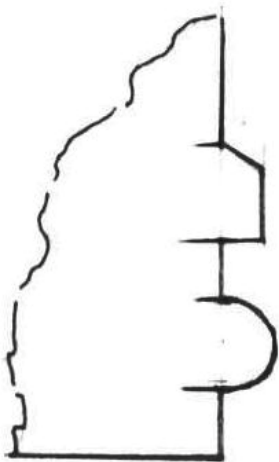
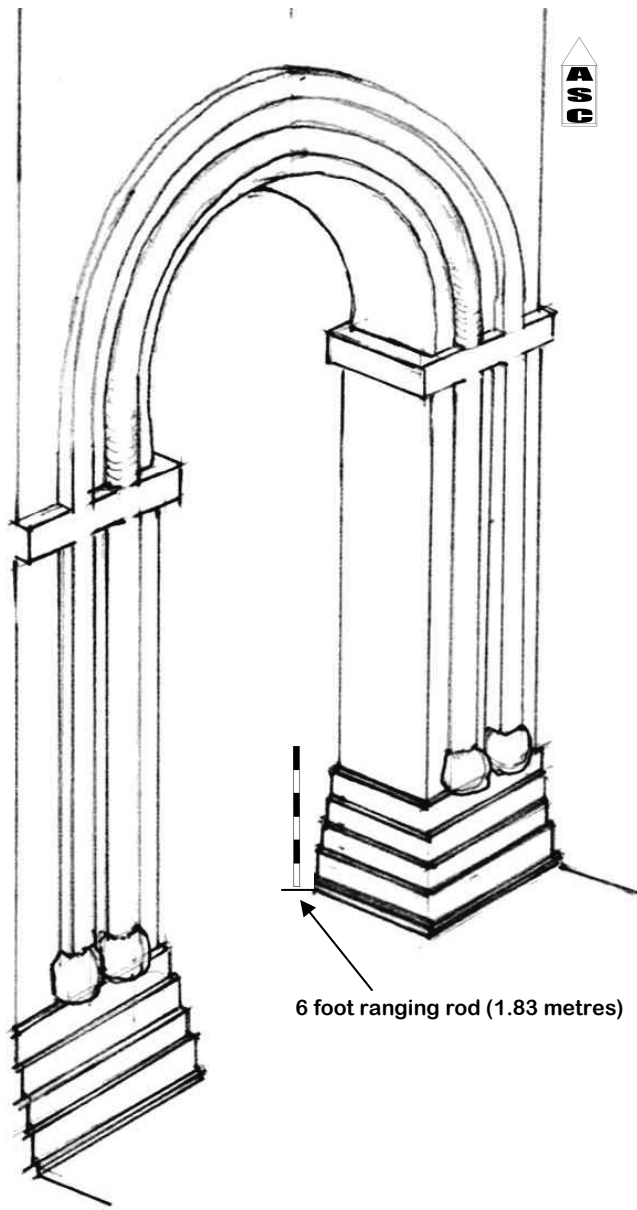
St. Mary Minster. Stow-in-Lindsey.

Clockwise from top right.

15. Line drawing of the nave archway viewed from the nave. This illustrates how it most probably looked as built and before the damage from the fire which took down the roofs. The tower and four semi-circular arches were doubtless in such a badly damaged state that they were taken down (above impost level), and the arches were rebuilt in a more mature style with the multiplicity of mouldings we see today. In the drawing we see the vertical pilasters continued above, and springing from, the imposts. Note the imposts are drawn 'box' section, as at Brigstock. When the archways were rebuilt it seems the imposts were refashioned with the characteristic chamfer of that later date. There is evidence on them for this refashioning since the chamfer makes an awkward and contrived junction with the pilaster strips below, whereas a box section would suit the original scheme perfectly. It is immediately obvious upon viewing the previous photos (see 4, 10 & 11) that the mature style of the semi-circular archways, consisting of several orders, do not match or marry with the work below. Dr. H.Taylor noted this on page 590 in Vol II of his "Anglo-Saxon Architecture". The pilaster strips spring from great corbels which are set in the wall above the tall plinths upon which the jambs rest. Those pilaster strips that were not restored in the 19th century plainly show signs of having been subjected to considerable heat. However, this seems not to be general, there are differing areas of the cherry colour of the stonework on the arches and perhaps it depended upon how intensive was the heat of the burning timber roofing when it collapsed, and where it fell. Although the (Victorian) restoration has muddled the waters to a certain extent, the stonework belonging to that work has a uniform darker hue. H.Taylor noted that "*. . . the several churches which have arches outlined by double patterns of pilasters and hood-mouldings all have the same arrangements of a half-round next to the arch and a square one outside it.*" Taylor also notes that "*The round arches which carry the walls of the original crossing are by far the tallest and widest that survive in a cruciform pre-Conquest church, and the fact that all four have survived is a wonderful testimonial to the quality of the workmanship.*" Taylor gives the arch dimensions as approximately 33 feet by 14 feet, all four arches being identical. See previous page for readings taken with up to date digital equipment.

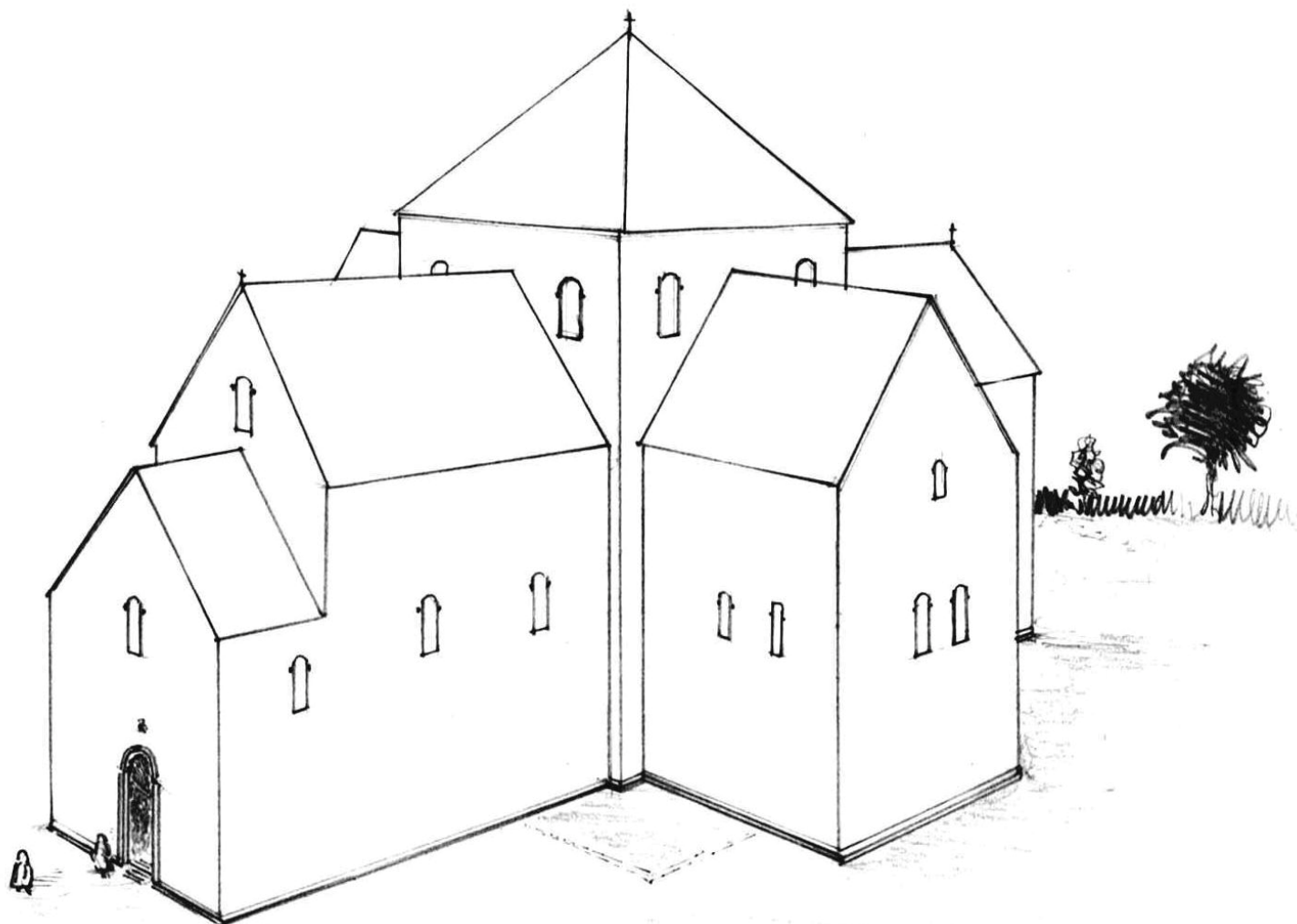
Most probably originally here at Stow, as extant at Brigstock, where the single pilaster is of a square section, it is seen to change shape as it springs from the impost to continue above as a hood-mould and receiving the finishing touch of a chamfer upon its outside face. It would be the correct convention for a hood-mould. It is a little difficult to convey this in drawing 15 so a section taken at the apex of the archway may be seen in drawing 16 and which for clarity of this point. The plinths upon which the walling rests are of 5 orders, the bottom order being of square section and the upper four are chamfered. There is insufficient space here to elaborate at length upon the vicissitudes that this church has suffered, but suffice to say that parts of these plinths were buried as the floors were raised. The Rev'd G. Atkinson (who was Rector at Stow during the 19th century restoration) made detailed notes which included the observation that the original floor in the area of the crossing and transepts was composed of a kind of plaster. Between that and the Norman floor was a considerable amount of charred debris amongst which he found lead that had run molten from the roofs. The present floor of the crossing and the adjoining parts of the transepts has been restored to the original level, and the present floor in the nave and chancel (one step above the Anglo-Saxon floor) is at the Norman level in those two arms of the church. It is worth commenting upon the fact that the walling of the crossing stops at eave level, it is unclear whether the tower was not rebuilt above this level or whether there existed some masonry above that level which was removed when the later medieval tower was erected (within the confines of the pre-conquest crossing). There clearly must have been some stonework to support even a simple low cap roof at a level above the ridge.

16. Section at apex of archway showing how the original semi-circular arch was probably formed on its face.



17. Viewed from the south-west, an impression of how the Minster church may have looked at a date just before the Great Fire. The only matter for conjecture is the length of the nave which I have assumed was somewhat short and finished at the west with a porch (which may have contained a rood). This presumably would be the second church on this site. The rebuilding, after the Great Fire, it is assumed was carried out by Bishop Eadnoth II (1034-1050). It may be useful to note here that a later rebuild was undertaken by Remigius (Wulfwig's successor) who installed Benedictine monks at Stow (before 1076). He found the church in a 'ruined condition and did much re-construction'. However, one should move with caution, the Normans were fond of 'blowing their own (political) trumpet.' In some cases blithe assumptions were often made later (which with the passage of time has stuck) where reference had been made to documents noting that such and such old (pre-conquest) church was demolished and built anew. Propaganda is not a recent beast, it was alive and well in the days following 1066; care should be exercised not to repeat it. At Stow it would be realistic to say that work by Eadnoth had encompassed reconstruction of the upper part of the crossing (witness the beautifully rebuilt tower arches), the transepts (new quoins/fabric above about 10 feet) and quite possibly the (short) chancel, but that work had stalled on the nave. Work on the latter is generally attributed to Remigius (or Remigus) de Fécamp, who died 7th May 1092. The new chancel is attributed to Bishop Alexander (died Feb 1148).

Referring to H.Taylor's text on page 593 of Vol II of "Anglo-Saxon Architecture", he gives the thickness of the crossing walls as 4 ft 6 in, the side walls of the transepts as 2 ft 6 in and about 33 feet tall.



STOW-IN-LINDSEY ANGLO-SAXON
MONASTERIUM.
before the Great Fire.

FJP
MMXI

