

Anglo-Saxon Towers (2).

This file follows the 'first' file, which is "Anglo-Saxon Towers".

As before the photographs are described/numbered in clockwise rotation on each page, commencing at top left photo.

The church of St.Mary The Virgin, Wendens Ambo, Essex. This small village is approximately three miles south-west from Saffron Walden. The unusual name stems from the merging of two villages (in 1662), Great, and Little, Wenden. Ambo simply means "both". Domesday recorded Wenden Magna as being owned by a Frenchman Robert Gernon, and Wenden Parva by William de Warenne.



1. The west tower seen here viewed (2015) from the NW, and with later battlements. The main features of the tower are the west doorway (with plain tympanum), the two-light windows, and the topmost circular openings on each face and being carefully faced/ bordered with knapped flints. In the top stage the windows are similar to each other (but there are differences), each of two lights and with a shaft being either of circular or square section and with a plain capital. These two-light windows spring from a stringcourse and in typical pre-conquest fashion have their own cill comprising a line of relatively 'thin' stone and in this case where the stringcourse is set some eight or so inches lower in way of them. The shafts are not mid-wall but in each case the jams are plain and square and the archway follows without capitals. There are on the higher faces of the first stage three remaining arched openings on each face (again with brick arched heads) partly blocked, the east face has the roof of the nave obscuring any opening which may have existed. The west doorway is of two orders with square section and plain chamfered and quirked capitals, the arch made up of Roman bricks (see photo 2). The quoins nicely laid with fine joints, some side alternate, some simply alternately laid. This tower of a late date, perhaps 1060, but not post-conquest.

H.Taylor was of the opinion that this tower was constructed in "overlap" style and could pre-date the conquest as well it might have post-dated it. I cannot see it being of post-conquest date as it exhibits no firm Norman Romanesque features. It has certain pointers to attempting to copy (Continental) Romanesque techniques such as the carefully flush set tower windows and the centre shafts not being mid-wall. But at this late period just before the conquest we see how Anglo-Saxon style was

being diluted, influenced, by Continental Romanesque, and probably by the intercourse between masons from France and our Anglo-Saxon masons here.

2. Seen here, the west doorway belonging to the tower (see picture 1). Of two plain orders the jambs, of which some of the stones are 'long' and standing upon a heavy and clumsy plain plinth, and the head a plain tympanum (possibly of later date). The arch is again of two orders but constructed of Roman brick casually laid (non-radial), in a similar way as are the brick headed openings in the upper part of the lower stage of the tower. The arch rests upon chamfered and quirked capitals. Inside, the broad tower arch is cut straight through the wall with capitals which are chamfered and 'double' quirked, and made up of several pieces longitudinally and of a light freestone. It should be noted that this freestone has been used to construct the jambs of the doorway and it has weathered badly, whereas the quoins are of a darker harder stone and very lightly weathered and still very crisp showing the original execution. All in all this tower has the Anglo-Saxon 'feel' but where the work is changing and moving away from the traditional Anglo-Saxon and owing just a little to Norman Romanesque. In a nutshell, constructed by the hands of a later newer generation of Saxon masons.



3. A drawing of St. Botolphs church in Sussex. The chancel arch here is quite crude and of either very late Anglo-Saxon date or following on closely after the Conquest. The quoins of the tower (seen here) exhibit the use of very random size stone, with a few 'long' stones, but in the main it seems whatever they had to hand was used. The nave may well belong to the same build as the tower but the nave quoins have unfortunately been heavily rebuilt, in places with brick, but the general style of what remains is not dissimilar.

