

# Anglo-Saxon windows, belfry openings, etc.

## The types and techniques explored.

All pictures on these pages are described from top left and viewed clockwise (commencing with the photo outlined in blue on each page).

1. Stow in Lindsey minster church, Lincs. High status work, window in south wall of Sth transept. Note the hood worked with palmette decoration (this matches the work on the nave crossing archway.) The dimensions of the aperture of this window are approximately 6ft 6in tall x 10in. wide. Its sill is approx. 13ft 6in. above the lowest order of the plinth. Thickness of the wall is 2ft 6in. This window, dating to the 'upper work' (after the fire), can reasonably be assigned to the work of Eadnoth I in the first half of the 11th century. (source: H.Taylor)



2. Haddiscoe church, Norfolk. Belfry window Nth, (one of four). Note triangular heads and with surrounding strip-work enriched with billet ornament. The Anglo-Saxon characteristic where the through stone is supported on a central shaft, but here with attendant billet decoration, gives an indication of the influence of Continental-Romanesque practise. Perhaps dating to before 1050.



A note about "Continental-Romanesque." In the past some "Romanesque" work has been referred to as "Norman." It should be understood that the Continental-Romanesque style (developed on the continent) in the first half of the 11th century was studied and executed in pre-conquest England by Anglo-Saxon masons. Witness Edward the Confessor's magnificent Romanesque Westminster Abbey which was sufficiently advanced to be consecrated on Christmas Day 1065. Being able to afford, and employ, the very top masons meant enjoying the very latest Romanesque style of building as studied on the continent and with the newest styles of form and decoration. Doubtless masons were not employed on cathedrals and monasteries constantly and work on humbler fabric was after all paying work which kept the wolf from the door, and so new ideas filtered down to the other lesser masons. The first half of the 11th century was a time of rapid change.





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3. Framingham Earl, Norfolk. Circular window in south wall of chancel. Clear signs of 'basket-work' technique can be seen on the surrounding cement and flint, and this photograph is reproduced to such a size that this feature can perhaps be seen. Look carefully for the concentric 'rings' of the basket still imprinted in the surrounding mortar, here more discernable to the upper right. Thankfully the Victorian restoration did not get this far! For those not familiar with the technique, a woven basket was positioned in place, and in the case of double splayed windows (which seen here) the two baskets were placed base to base, and the walling was then risen around them. Once the walling had set firm the baskets could then be broken away and discarded and in this simple way an aperture, or simple window opening, was formed. In some cases the original oak frame can survive (and see Odda's chapel picture 4).



4. Odda's chapel, Deerhurst, Glos. North window, double-splayed, viewed externally. Note the remains of the oak frame, seen at the head of the window and inside the present metal grill. The fabric, interestingly, is precisely dated by the dedication stone, 12th April 1056.





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5. Remains of blocked window, south wall of chancel of Milborne Port minster church. Try to ignore the metal heater which cuts across the scene, this is the eastern capital with the arch springing and truncated. The capital is finely worked with stylised foliage and matches the central crossing arches where the capitals are predominately interlaced foliage and acanthus leaves, springing from a cable design. The capital seen here must be seen alongside a flattish cushion capital relating to the blocked north window (Continental-Romanesque). In every respect the two windows are to one pattern, but the capitals exhibit differing styles. These surviving parts of two windows can be married against the strip-work which survives in partial state on the exterior of the south wall of the chancel, and which has vanished on the north side. All so ably expounded by H.M.Taylor and seen in his "Anglo-Saxon Architecture", Vol1, page 427. The exterior panelling has a close association with St.Laurence at Bradford-upon-Avon. The exterior faces of these windows would have been of

1ft 6in to 2ft in width and about 5ft in height, and their sills about 12ft 10in above ground level (Taylor). Date is in the first half of the 11th century. It is mentioned that Regenbald rebuilt his Minster in a "sumptuous hybrid style" - he was a Lotharingian and found great favour with Edward the Confessor, but is thought to have fallen from power in the reign of William I and returned to the continent.

6. No description of Anglo-Saxon work could possibly be complete without mention of the remarkable opening in the west face high up in the nave at St.Mary, Deerhurst, Glos. This much altered and rebuilt monastic church (which evolved during the Anglo-Saxon period) dates from prior to 804, and features a west tower that had its beginnings as a single story porch, and Nth & Sth porticus. Shown here the double triangular-headed opening faces into the nave from the tower, evidently 'mutilated' by the conversion from a window to a doorway (leading to a now vanished upper chamber in the nave). The southern window rises from chamfered bases but the north window is cut back to convert it into a door. All three pilasters are fluted on their eastern faces and the upper half of each flute is further ornamented by the insertion of reeding. Immediately above this double window a rectangular flat stone rests on the heads of the hood moulds, as though to carry an inscription or a painting, but there is no trace of any such decoration on it. The church stands in the kingdom of Hwicce.





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7 & 8. Deerhurst. The elevated doorways leading to first floor levels in the N & S porticus (respectively), viewed from the nave. Situated at the eastern end of the N & S walls of nave. Harold Taylor did much research at Deerhurst in the 1970's.



9. The church at Worth, Sussex is set in the depths of what was once the ancient forest of Andredswald. One of the three remaining two light window openings in the nave, the modern glazing here has been sympathetically executed. Dating to the first half of the 11th century or possibly earlier.

10. One of the three small windows set in the south wall of the chancel of the monastery of St. Paul, Jarrow, Co. Durham. The Venerable Bede lived there for all but the first few years of his life. The original nave was sadly demolished in 1782. A dedication stone now high up inside the nave/tower records the date of 23rd April 684/5.





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11. Window (blocked) in S wall of chancel, church of All Saints, Little Shelford, Cambridge. Note the carved uprights, that on the left-hand side exhibiting interlaced knotwork.



12, 13 & 14. Three windows illustrated here, in the tower of St. John at Great Hale, Lincs. Picture 14 is of the smaller (south) window in the ground floor.



12 & 13 show two of the belfry windows. The tower is of late Saxon date rising unbuttressed and sheer for about 60 feet without string-course or offset. The round heads of the double belfry windows are formed of single stones cut to semi-circular form above and below; in the centre of each window these heads rest on a through-stone slab and mid-wall shaft; the square ashlar jambs



have chamfered imposts, and the mid-wall shafts have ornate capitals of unusual but nevertheless tentative form. (H. Taylor).

15. Interior view of the lower W window in the tower of the church of St. Andrew, Corbridge, Northumberland. The tower comprises re-used Roman stone from the site of nearby Coriosopitum.





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16 & 17. The church of All Saints, Earls Barton, Northants. The remarkable openings and strip-work in the tower are probably the most illustrated and most widely known example of Anglo-Saxon workmanship. Each face of the tower is enriched by vertical pilaster strips which rise from square corbels. H.Taylor devotes 5 pages in his "Anglo-Saxon Architecture", Vol I but suffice to say here that the openings comprise of curved and ornamented heads of single stones, and feature turned baluster shafts. The west doorway is quite remarkable itself and will be discussed further in another file upon the subject of doorways. H.Taylor dates this tower



to the period 950-1000.

18. The ancient church of St. Peter's at Barton-upon-Humber also exhibits similar treatment, if not as lavishly, although this could reflect differing dates or a different school of masons. The double-headed openings here are perhaps more what we would expect and in the second stage we have an absence of pilaster strips. Here in picture 18 the treatment is more mature, conventional, in the lower two stages we have double headed windows with round arches in one piece over and the surrounding strip-work of separate stones. The turned central mid wall shaft (seen here) supports a through-stone slab. The pilasters are of long & short type with stops at their foot. In the later Saxon work above can be clearly seen a differing treatment, thin stones of roughly coursed rubble make up the first fifty feet of the tower (and is covered by roughcast), whereas the top (third) stage is of well-dressed stone. You will observe the treatment of the window in the third stage is different, the courses of stonework are carried to the window opening and make its 'edge' whereas in those below the jambs are made of vertical stones. In all cases we find mid-wall shafts supporting a through-stone. The differing techniques were enough to arouse the interest of Thomas Rickman and moreover he made the correct deductions in regard to sequence of building. An understanding of Anglo-Saxon work had begun, but not before important early fabric was lost for all time. I should mention that Warwick Rodwell has done important work at Barton-on-Humber and his publications relate to extensive excavations there, and especially his 'unpicking' of the construction of the tower.





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19. In Hampshire near the River Avon we find the late Saxon church of St.Mary, Breamore. Consisting of nave, low central tower, flanking transeptual chapels, or 'porticus', and chancel, all complete save for the lowered height of the chancel, and the north porticus, and a possible westwerken. Here (19) we see a generous sized double-splayed window in the east wall of the S porticus, set just above a low wide doorway. This window is mirrored by others in the nave. Set cheek by jowl with Breamore House, the church is situated part way up a slope of the Downland, and below some 1/2 a mile distant a large Anglo-Saxon cemetery was found on the banks of the Avon.



20. St.Mary-le-Wigford, Lincoln. The east and north face of the tower, with double-opening belfry windows to be found on all four faces, that on the west face being the most interesting (but not easily photographed however). The treatment of the central capital of the east opening is closer to a Continental-Romanesque school, whereas the others follow the Anglo-Saxon school. Note the long-and-short work of the jambs, the mid wall shaft supporting a through-stone slab and the arched round heads are supported at the sides on projecting chamfered imposts. The west doorway has suffered in more modern restorations and has been given an enriched hood-moulding with incised dog-tooth ornament. Otherwise the tall opening is the original Saxon doorway.



21. At the church of St.John the Baptist, Barnack we have a most interesting tower with strip-work pilasters, and constructed of roughly squared blocks of the well known Barnack stone from quarries in use since Roman times. The stone would have been brought up from quays on the nearby Welland. Seen centre in picture 21 a highly carved stone about 6ft high topped by a cockerel, the highly decorated stone showing stems and acanthus leaves. Either side are round-headed openings with simple stone frames. prior to 1935 they were



blocked up. It may be noted that the first stage has rather random quoin stones but the second stage has long-and-short work and is cut back to allow a plaster covering to be run up against the upstanding edge (see picture). This should be borne in mind when viewing the windows which would have shown as the upstanding 'rib' running around the window and surrounded by plaster rendering covering the main surface of the walling. It seems there are two stages/dates of building here.



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22. At the church of All Saints, Brixworth, Northants, we have a fine building, much altered during the time span of the Anglo-Saxon era and dating from 675. Here we see a triple headed opening looking out over the nave from the tower. Interestingly it cuts through the head of an earlier arch. The turned baluster shafts support heads worked in Roman brick. The smaller picture (23) puts the position of the opening in context (picture looks westwards), and shows the blocked south arcade to the left. The west tower, as is often found, is built over an earlier west porch, the whole being raised at a later date, and in a similar way as found at Deerhurst. Picture 24 shows the remaining original window in the north wall of the chancel (to the left) with its head made from tufa. Also the (partially) obscured window in the north west quarter of the nave (belonging to earlier work). Picture 25 shows the run of the clerestory windows on the south face of the nave, and there is much use of Roman brick, the heads of the windows being so constructed. The original 'aisles' (more likely side chapels, as at Deerhurst) have gone and the later blocking (10th century) has (?) Victorian windows giving additional light to the nave.





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Picture/plate 26 is a thumbnail pencil sketch of a double opening nave window at Worth church (Sussex). See also page 4.

27 to 30. Monastery of St. Paul, Jarrow.

27. South facing window, tower.

28, 29 & 30. Three early windows, south facing, chancel.



31 & 32. The church of St Peter & St Paul, Scrayingham, Yorks. In the north wall of the nave, two of the three newly discovered small (blocked) pre-conquest windows; firstly (31) the easternmost window, then lastly the 'middle' window (the westernmost is hidden underneath a medieval buttress). Pic 31 has the eastern window picked out within a blue square to make it more obvious. The first six courses of the chancel consist of very large stones laid with coarse joints compared to the courses above with finer joints, and also appear to include blocks exhibiting characteristic Roman tooling. In typical pre-conquest technique some stones are sawn/notched to accept the adjoining block. It is possible that the walling above that level represents a build of later date and/or different masons. The nave seems of an overall build but the first 2 courses do seem to be of a 'rougher' build and below these levels mentioned there is little success in maintaining level courses, again, all in all typically pre-conquest work.





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Picture/plate 33. The church of St. Denys, Warminster is a much altered edifice, not least the nave which is a Victorian replacement of a much rebuilt medieval nave. However, there exists an early window in the east wall of the north transept which is blocked where the glazing would have been. In fact behind this blocking there is an area of later medieval walling which has entirely masked any trace of the original exterior face of the wall. Furthermore the wall of the transept has received a build up to its interior face in Norman times so that this earlier window has a substantial arch to permit it to stay in use. It has been determined by measurement that the blocked glazing is some 15 inches distant from the original interior face; very obviously no exterior wall can be that thin so we must assume the window was originally built as a double-splayed opening and that would give a wall thickness of about 30 inches, a typical dimension for a pre-conquest wall. I would date this window to between 1035 and 1060. It seems that the pre-conquest church would likely be cruciform with transepts at the crossing. That some Anglo-Saxon walling might remain of the original crossing seems doubtful as little enough remains of Norman date, however the site of an earlier central crossing has been suffered to remain.

