

Earl's Barton, Northamptonshire

Βερετun

Church of All Saints

Church fabric

Possible remains of cross-shaft

Grid ref SP 852 638

Tower only, C10

Fisher

West tower – period C1, also Architectural sculpture and transennæ

Taylor

Tower only Anglo-Saxon, AD 950-1000

(BB)

Church passed to Countess Judith, niece of William the Bastard and widow of Anglo-Saxon Earl Walpeof. She may have built first Norman nave and small chancel of about AD 1100.

Church originally almost definitely of turriform type. Lowest floor of tower was nave with chancel probably short, to E as indicated by marks of roof on E face of tower. Upright-and-flat quoins on E side of tower complete to ground indicate that E adjunct or chancel was narrower than tower, unlike some Anglo-Saxon turriform churches, there was no W adjunct as shown by decoration on W doorway.

Tower

Biggest and most magnificent of all Anglo-Saxon towers, though aesthetically inferior to BARNACK. Four stages of diminishing height and width. 68'8" high to top of modern battlements. Not set out square, the SW angle is much less than a right-angle and NW angle is obtuse, but error not noticeable to the eye. Stands on square-sectioned plinth. Walls of rubble, 4' thick at base, decreasing by amount of set-offs to 2'6" at top of fourth (belfry) stage under battlements: covered with modern plaster. Stages separated by string-courses; lowest has hollow chamfer; upper two square-sectioned. All quoins have upright-and-flat, not cut back in line with uprights so would show through original plaster. Upright-and-flat work on lower part of E wall visible inside church from nave on N side; that on S side hidden except for a little high up near nave roof: slabs about 20" long × 7" or 8" thick.

Decorated vertical pilaster-strips in all four walls, 4" wide, arranged somewhat erratically. All strips have cubical corbels at bases. Corbels of ground

floor strips just above plinths, those of upper stages immediately above corresponding string-courses.

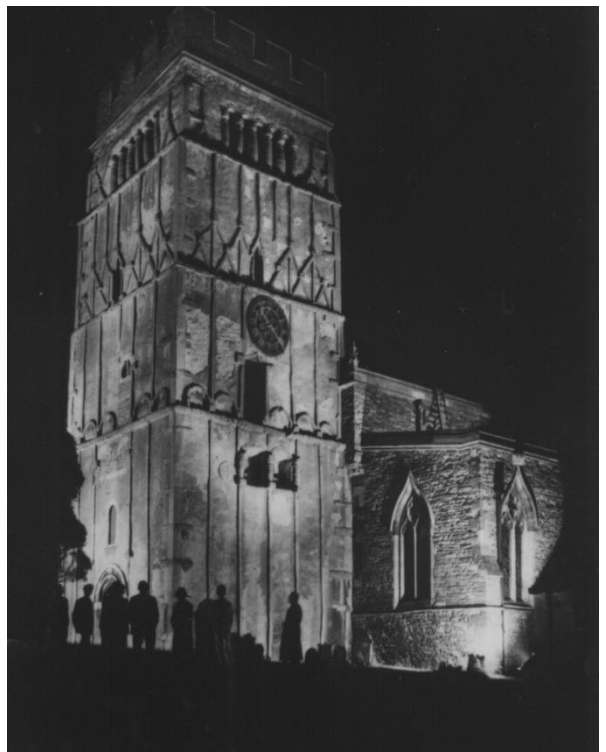
J. Strzygowski maintains that arch-head pilaster work is a deliberate copy in stone of half-timbering construction, but few other writers agree with this. It is probably derived from Carolingian and Ottonian prototypes or German lisenen work (c.f. GERNODE, Abbey church). Perhaps in this case we have an attempt at blind arcading (c.f. BARNACK, BARTON-ON-HUMBER, Lincolnshire; WING, Buckinghamshire, GEDINGTON).

Tower arch leading to present nave not in original state: 12'6" wide. No indication of Anglo-Saxon forms.

Tower, N face

24'6" wide.

Ground stage has 4 vertical pilaster-strips
Second stage has 4 vertical pilaster-strips
Third stage has 4 vertical pilaster-strips
Top stage has 2 vertical pilaster-strips



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Each strip rests on triangular base. Double row of gable-head strips above second string-course acting as it were as arch-heads to pilaster-strips below. Small stone cubes separate gable angles at points of contact

Third stage, just below string-course, has narrow gable-head opening like window, but straight cut, not splayed.

Top stage has striking, five-fold, round-head opening. Each arch-head cut from a single stone, with six purely decorative baluster shafts with no caps or bases: not mid-wall but held by upper and lower corbels in front and separate from thin dividing walls supporting heads. Shafts roughly finished, oval cross-section with banding on front faces only.

Tower, S face

23'6" wide.

Ground stage has 5 vertical pilaster-strips

Second stage has 5 vertical pilaster-strips

Third stage has 6 vertical pilaster strips

Top stage has 2 vertical pilaster strips each resting on triangular base.

Single rows of semi-circular strips above lowest string-courses acting, as it were, as round-heads for pilaster-strips below, suggesting some kind of primitive attempt at blind arcading. Double row of gable-head strips above second string-course, corresponding to N face. Ground stage just below first string-course has double, double-splay window with stone, mid-wall slabs in which lighting apertures cut in form of crosses. Window-head segments cut from single stones with two thin roll mouldings surmounted by a cross carved in low relief. Crosses over windows very unusual, though frequent over doorways in lintel or wall, but Chi-Rho often found in similar position in Palestine, probably original custom of hanging charms above openings to ward off evil eye etc., possible example of Near Eastern influence.

Three baluster shafts, each with three rings, on face of wall between and on either side of window openings, supported between two square-sectioned upper and lower corbels; purely decorative, supporting nothing. Support for arch-head is thin piece of independent walling immediately behind centre shaft.

Second stage just above first string-course has tall, round-head doorway, 7' x 2'6" cut straight through wall. Jambs of single stones, head of several, large,

irregular stones not properly cut voussoirs: purpose unknown.

Third stage, just above string-course, has narrow gable-head opening as on N face.

Top stage has five-fold belfry opening as on N face.

Tower, E face

Double row of gable-head strips above second string corresponding to N face.

Second stage has tall, round-head doorway similar to that on S face, above roof of present nave but below that of original chancel, of which marks are visible. Possibly gave access to roof chamber.

Third stage, just above string, has narrow gable-head opening as N face.

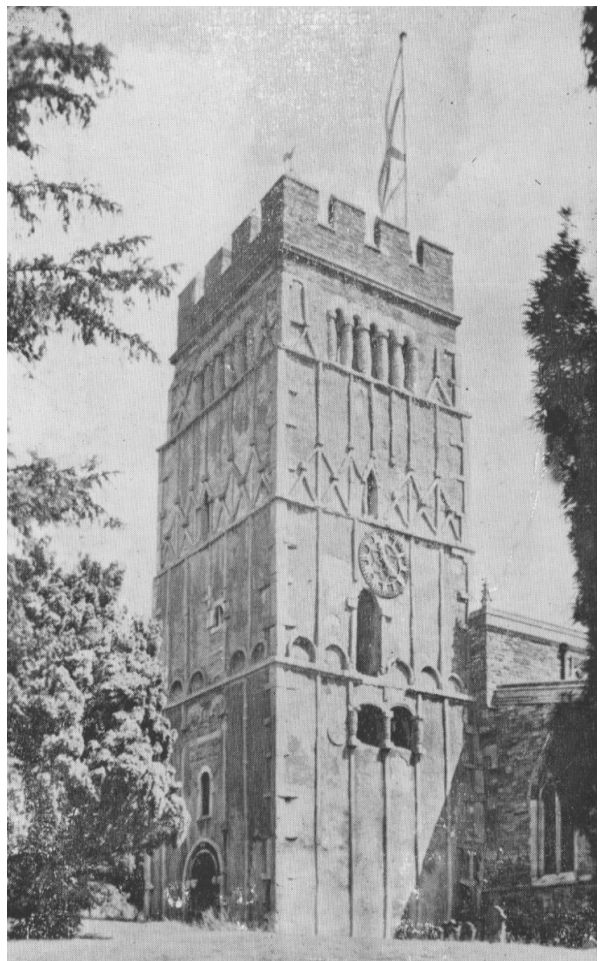
Top stage has five-fold belfry opening as on N face.

Tower, W face

Just over 24' wide.

Ground stage has 4 vertical pilaster-strips

Second stage has 5 vertical pilaster strips



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Third stage has 5 vertical pilaster-strips

Top stage has 2 vertical pilaster strips, each strip resting on a triangular base.

Single row of round-head strips above lowest string-course, corresponding to S face.

Double row of gable-head strips above second string-course, corresponding to N face.

W doorway 8'7" high to inner crown of arch; 3'3" wide between exterior jambs. Arch-head cut from two stones, interior head from one. Each jamb of large flat slab on end with long narrow ones lying above, two on right jamb and one on left. N slab larger, 4'6" high × 3'7" deep × 6" thick. Exterior ornament of outer ring of vertical square-section pilaster-strip passing outside imposts and round arch-head. Within this is strip-work hood-mould resting on imposts and two, half-round inner mouldings above imposts on face of arch-head. Outer pilaster-strips and jambs stand on independent square-sectioned plinths, resting on tower plinth. Internal E face undecorated and flush with wall except remains of a few inches of square-sectioned pilaster strips which probably at one time encircled arch-head on each side just above springing. All plinths and imposts square-sectioned

blocks or slabs: soffits and faces of imposts have plain, incised, round-head arcading $\frac{3}{16}$ " deep with faint traces of incised carving in arch spaces, possibly Anglo-Saxon but some suggest Norman.

Above W doorway is Norman round-head internally single-splayed window, cutting into space, now blocked on exterior only, originally occupied by lower half of Anglo-Saxon double-splay double window with stone mid-wall slabs in which lighting apertures are cut in the form of circles.

Second stage just above first string-course has tall, round-head doorway 7' × 2'6", partially blocked, similar to that on S face; purpose unknown.

Third stage, just above string-course, has narrow gable-head opening as on N face.

Top stage has five-fold belfry opening as on N face.

Sculpture

S wall ground stage to W of double-headed window has carved circle containing arch of four arms: suggested to be fragment of cross-shaft built into wall. Background cut away leaving circle and cross in low relief; resembles church consecration crosses in design.