

Observations on the Romanesque Church of St Peter-in-the-East, Oxford

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SUMMARY

This paper investigates the twelfth-century fabric of the church of St Peter-in-the-East, Oxford. The design and function of the crypt are explored. Associations for the architectural and sculptural details of the church are examined with particular attention given to features found at St Peter's that are usually found in English Romanesque great abbey and cathedral churches rather than smaller churches. Links with Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, and the patronage of King Henry I, Bishop Roger of Salisbury (1102–39), and Henry of Blois, abbot of Glastonbury (1126–71) and bishop of Winchester (1129–71) are reviewed. Reflections of Anglo-Saxon and early Christian antecedents are considered, along with local parallels in allied work in Oxford and its vicinity.

Of the twelfth-century church of St Peter-in-the-East, Oxford, there remain a five-bay, three-aisle, groin-vaulted crypt beneath a square-ended, two-bay, rib-vaulted chancel, and the core of the aisle-less nave with its richly carved south portal. The crypt has long been the subject of scholarly investigation and Charles Lynam considered that it 'is perhaps the most important example in England of a crypt beneath a parish church'.¹ Yet the chancel and nave south doorway have garnered relatively scant attention from historians of Romanesque architecture and sculpture. This paper offers an integrated study of the Romanesque church which examines the function of the crypt and the place of the church in twelfth-century architecture in England.

DOCUMENTATION and HISTORICAL EVALUATION

The Domesday survey records that 'St Peter church, Oxford holds 2 hides in Holywell from Robert (d'Oilly). (There is) land for 1 plough. 1½ ploughs there, and 23 men who have gardens. There (are) 40 acres of meadow. The value was 20s.; now 40s. This land did not pay tax and did not pay any dues'.² St Peter-in-the-East was the mother church of Holywell and Wolvercote and may have been a tenth-century foundation.³ Excavations in 1968 revealed 'footings and plaster-floor levels of a timber and stone church of the late tenth century' and 'similar footings of a stone church of the eleventh century'.⁴ John Blair considered that the Domesday entry indicates that the church was 'of more than average status' and that 'later it had a mother parish outside the city, including the chapelries of Holywell and Wolvercote'.⁵ He further associated the apostolic dedication with minster status for the church along with the

¹ C. Lynam, 'The Crypts of St. Peter in the East and of St George within the Castle, Oxford', *Archaeological Journal*, 68 (1911), pp. 203–17.

² J. Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book, Oxfordshire* (1978), 28.28.

³ *VCH, Oxon.* 4, p. 398.

⁴ D.A.M. Sturdy, 'Excavations in St. Peter-in-the-East Church, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 37 (1972), p. 245.

⁵ J. Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (1994), p. 113.

churches of St Frideswide and St Michael.⁶ The possession of several minsters was a feature of Mercian towns.⁷ The *Victoria County History* records that '[t]he advowson descended in the d'Oilly family to Henry d'Oilly, who between 1154 and 1156 granted it to Osney abbey'.⁸ The grant did not take effect, perhaps because the church had already been acquired by Henry of Oxford (d. 1164), from whom it seems to have passed to his son John, bishop of Norwich (1175–1200), escheating to the Crown on his death in 1200.⁹ Henry was sheriff of Oxfordshire at the end of King Stephen's reign and continued under Henry II.¹⁰ Henry's son, John, was rector of St Peter-in-the-East in 1154x56, and was rector of St Mary's and rural dean of Oxford by 1160.¹¹ He was established in the service of Henry II by 1164 and he was appointed as dean of Salisbury early in 1165.¹² John of Oxford's high status makes him a likely candidate for the patronage of the very ambitious form of the church of St Peter-in-the-East between the mid 1150s and early 1160s. As we shall see, the inclusion of many features in the church usually only found in great cathedral and abbey churches, not least Christ Church, Canterbury, as well as associations with the work of the most munificent patrons like Roger, bishop of Salisbury (1102–39), Alexander 'the Magnificent', bishop of Lincoln (1123–48), and Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester (1129–71), combine to suggest that we are dealing with a patron who wished to be seen alongside those who created the very best buildings in the land.

DESCRIPTION

The square-ended, two-bay chancel is constructed of rubble masonry with ashlar dressings (Figs. 1–3).¹³ The eastern angles are articulated with clasping pilaster buttresses which are topped with round turrets above the level of the cornice of the side walls. The east wall is dominated by a four-light Perpendicular bar tracery window the lower half of which is below the Romanesque double-billet string course which would have marked the sill level of the twelfth-century fenestration (Fig. 2). Immediately adjacent to the arch of the window are the jambs of former Romanesque windows. It is likely that they formed a stepped triplet of round-headed windows like those preserved in the east wall of St Michael, Stewkley (Bucks.).¹⁴ The east bay of the both the south and north sides of the chancel preserves round-headed Romanesque windows the sill of which is marked by a double-billet string course which extends throughout the bay (Figs. 1 and 3). Each window has two orders; the inner is continuous with a shallow step at the angle while the second order has two stepped rows of chevron in the arch on cushion capitals atop detached shafts and moulded bases (Fig. 4). The inner row of chevron has single rolls. The outer row repeats this form with the addition of a row of delicate beads and a hollow roll to the outside. The hood mould is adorned with zig-zag. To either side of the Perpendicular window in bay 2 of the south wall of the chancel there are intersecting blind arches on cushion capitals, detached shafts and moulded bases that rest

⁶ Ibid. pp. 112–113; J. Blair, 'St Frideswide's Monastery: Problems and Possibilities', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), p. 225.

⁷ Blair, 'St Frideswide's Monastery', p. 225; A. Dodd (ed.), *Oxford Before the University: The Late Saxon and Norman Archaeology of the Thames Crossing, The Defences and the Town*, Thames Valley Landscapes Monograph, 17 (2003), p. 41.

⁸ *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 398.

⁹ Ibid.; H.E. Salter (ed.), *Cartulary of Osney Abbey*, 6 vols., OHS (1929–36), vol. 1, pp. 305–6, no. 347A.

¹⁰ C. Harper-Bill, 'John of Oxford, Diplomat and Bishop', in M.J. Franklin and C. Harper-Bill (eds.), *Medieval Studies in Honour of Dorothy M. Owen* (1995), p. 84.

¹¹ Harper-Bill, 'John of Oxford', p. 84, Salter (ed.), *Cartulary of Osney Abbey*, vol. 1, p. 242, nos. 255–6; C. Harper-Bill, 'Oxford, John of (d.1200)', *ODNB*.

¹² Harper-Bill, 'John of Oxford', pp. 84, 86.

¹³ For a plan of the church and crypt: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), *An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the City of Oxford* (1939), p. 144.

¹⁴ R. Baxter, 'St Michael, Stewkley', *Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland (CRSBI)*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3123/>.



Fig. 1. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, exterior of chancel from south. Photo by author.

on a single-billet string course. The figured corbel table on the north and south walls was reset when the walls were heightened in the fifteenth century. The corbels on the south side are entirely nineteenth century. On the north side the corbels are mainly damaged although the acrobatic figure on corbel 5 (counting from the east) may be original along with the weathered gaping mask on corbel 9.¹⁵

Between the east and west bays on the exterior of the chancel there projects the square frame of the staircase that connected the east bay of the chancel with the crypt and provided access to wall passages that gave access to the eastern stair turrets and in turn to the space above the chancel vault and the roof (Figs. 1 and 3). The staircase on the north side remains largely intact and the frame is covered with a shed roof while on the south side the staircase has been modified to provide an entry to the crypt from the churchyard.

The nave south doorway has three continuous orders and originally would have opened into an aisleless nave which was probably about twenty-five feet shorter than at present.¹⁶ The inner order has saltire crosses with drilled pellets in the interstices (Figs. 5 and 6). The second order is carved with beakheads clasping a substantial roll moulding. The third order has chevron with drilled cogwheels in the soffit and fine beads between the first and second rows.

¹⁵ E. King, *Munimenta Antiqua*, 4 vols. (1799–1805), vol. 4, p. 198, records that the corbel table on the south chancel wall is carved with ‘horses, (well known to be used as *Saxon* devices); – unicorns; – distorted heads; – and preposterous figures’. I owe this reference to John Hawkins.

¹⁶ J. Sherwood and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire* (1974), p. 296, note parenthetically that the doorway is reset but I see no evidence in support of this assertion. Compare J. Newson, ‘St Peter, Oxford, St Peter-in-the-East, Oxfordshire’, *CRSBI*, who also describes the doorway in detail, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/4/>.



Fig. 2. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, exterior of chancel from east. Photo by author.



Fig. 3. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, exterior of chancel from north. Photo by author.



Fig. 4. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, exterior of chancel, south window. Photo by author.

The crypt is divided into three aisles of five bays separated by round-headed ashlar arches carried on ashlar pilaster responds with chamfered impostes against the rubble walls and columns with monolithic shafts on various bases and carved capitals with chamfered abaci between the aisles (Figs. 7 and 8). Each bay is covered with a quadripartite groin vault; those across the western bays show clear remains of the centering boards used in construction while in the other bays the vaults are plastered. The capitals are predominantly variations on the theme of the double scallop but the second and third capitals of the north arcade (counting from the east) and the west face of the third capital on the south are more richly carved. The upper part of the west face of capital S3 has three rows of inverted fish-scales (Fig. 9). In the



Fig. 5. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, south doorway. Photo by author.



Fig. 6. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, south doorway, detail. Photo by author.



Fig. 7. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, interior to east. Photo by author.



Fig. 8. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, interior to west. Photo by author.



Fig. 9. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, capital S3, west face. Photo by author.

centre there is a stylized figure with a pointed conical head lacking facial features, arms outstretched to the sides and a striated body-suit standing on a two-stage plinth. The arms droop below the elbows and the forearms terminate on large volutes. The lower angles of the capital are adorned with hollow backing leaves with a foliage knop at the north-east corner not preserved on the south-west. The south face of capital N2 has the scallops enriched with a variation on the fish-scale motif. Capital N3 has a plain east face while the other three sides are richly carved. The south face has two addorsed half lions(?) with manes divided by a vertical band with a *fleur-de-lys* above and below (Fig. 10). The beasts' heads face the angles and they have legs arranged one above the other, the upper one having a larger paw. On the west face a two-legged dragon faces the beast on the south side of the capital (Fig. 11). The neck is collared and a beaded strip runs from the collar to the wings. The tail curls towards the lower left corner and then rises to the upper corner of the capital where it curls once more to extend horizontally towards the middle of the capital where it appears to be chewed by the large mouth of a small demi-beast depicted in profile with its mate shown as a mirror image to the right. Below the dragon is a centrally placed *fleur-de-lys*. At the south-west angle of the capital is a standing figure wearing knee-length, slightly flared trousers who is pushed down by the dragon's tail. On the north face a quadruped faces towards the north-west corner and has a tail that passes between its back legs and behind the body to terminate towards the upper left of the composition (Fig. 12). The beast is ridden bareback by a puny, bald man whose knees and lower legs are on the back of the beast; he grasps the upper part of the neck of the beast to pull its head back. The north-west angle figure appears to raise his right fist towards the beast while thrusting a large horizontal object into its chest. Newson observes that there is little surface detail on this side of the capital in contrast to the south and west faces.¹⁷ She suggests that it

¹⁷ Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East'.



Fig. 10. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, capital N3, south face. Photo by author.



Fig. 11. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, capital N3, west face. Photo by author.

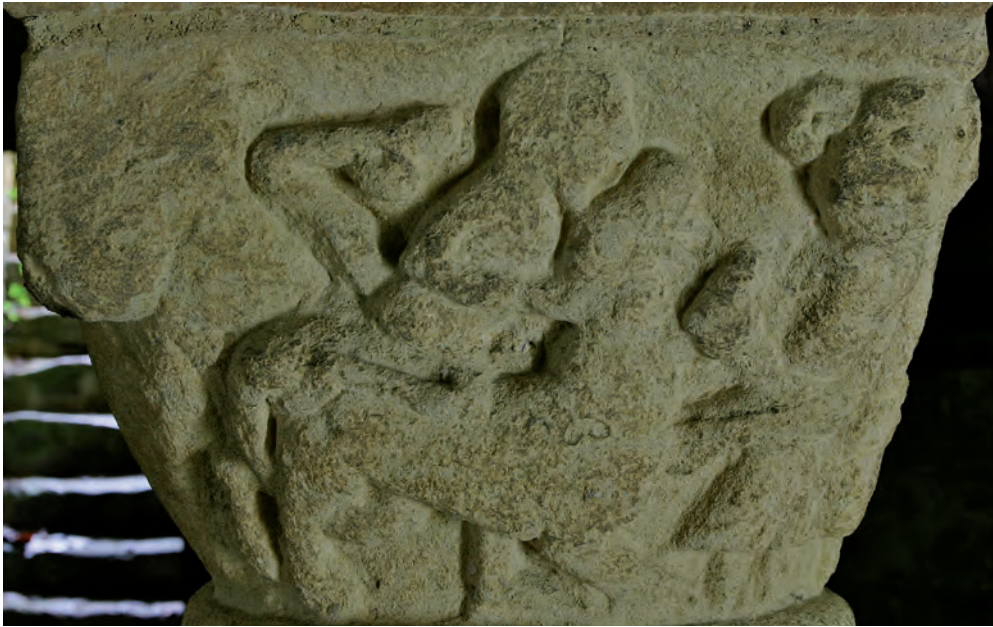


Fig. 12. Oxford, *St Peter-in-the East*, crypt, capital N3, north face. Photo by author.

is unfinished. It is likely that detail would have been provided in paint in the tradition of the label stops of the chancel arch at St Mary's Priory, Deerhurst.¹⁸

At the west end of the crypt there is a nineteenth-century font which seems to be based on the Romanesque original in the church albeit without twelve standing figures under the arcades (Fig. 8).¹⁹ The Romanesque font is illustrated by Theobald and seems to be contemporary with the church.²⁰

In the east wall of the north and south aisles original round-headed, single-splay windows light each bay, and there is a small rectangular aumbry immediately below the windowsill (Fig. 13). The window in the central bay is probably a sixteenth-century enlargement.²¹ The east bay of the north wall retains its original Romanesque window, now blocked, and original windows are in the two eastern and two western bays of the south wall. In the middle bay of both the north and south walls is a doorway with plain, single-order jambs surmounted by a lintel and tympanum enclosed in a plain arch. On the south, the lintel comprises three stones, two long side stones with a smaller, voussoir-like block in the centre (Fig. 14). The tympanum is made of three stones arranged vertically. The upper parts of these stones also form the lower part of the tympanum and the arch. The lintel of the north doorway is similar to its southern counterpart but with a larger central stone (Fig. 15). The tympanum appears to be from a single stone scored with fictive mortar joints to give the appearance of three stones set above two. Each of these doorways led to a vice that communicated with the east bay of the chancel. In the west wall there is a single-order round-headed doorway in each bay. The one in the centre has a plain tympanum comprised of three stones above a single-stone lintel and

¹⁸ R. Gem and E. Howe, with R. Bryant, 'The Ninth-Century Polychrome Decoration at St Mary's Church, Deerhurst', *Antiquaries Journal*, 88 (2008), pp. 109–164; R. Bryant, *Making Much of What Remains: Reconstructing Deerhurst's Anglo-Saxon Paint and Sculpture*, Deerhurst Lecture 2014 (2015), pp. 2–4, figs. 3 and 4.

¹⁹ Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East'.

²⁰ J. Theobald, 'Some Account of St Peter's Church in the East, Oxfordshire, from an Old MS', *Archaeologia*, 1 (1770), pp. 151–55, plate II.

²¹ RCHME, *City of Oxford*, p. 143.



Fig. 13. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, north aisle to east. Photo by author.



Fig. 14. Oxford, *St Peter-in-the East*, crypt, bay 3, south doorway to former vice, detail. Photo by author.



Fig. 15. Oxford, *St Peter-in-the East*, crypt, bay 3, north doorway to vice, detail. Photo by author.

irregularly sized voussoirs (Fig. 16). The doorway leads to a barrel-vaulted bay, a *confessio* to house the relics, while those in the lateral bays led to staircases that communicated with the nave above. According to the plans in the Royal Commission *Inventory*, the entrances to these staircases would have been about 15 feet to the west of the chancel arch.²²

²² Ibid. p. 144.



Fig. 16. Oxford, *St Peter-in-the East*, crypt, west centre bay to west. Photo by author.

The chancel is entered through a thirteenth-century(?) two-order pointed arch, with a stilted second order, carried on twelfth-century responds with coursed shafts and scalloped capitals with zig-zag on the abaci which is continued around the chancel as a string course and other vault capitals (Figs. 17 and 18). The responds are displaced outwards. The chancel itself comprises two rib-vaulted bays carried on single columns with wall-set capitals in the corners and stepped, triple-shafted responds in the middle to receive the pointed transverse arch between the bays and the individual ribs. The ribs have a semi-circular trajectory and are ornamented differently in the two bays. In the east there are chain-link-like projecting roundels all of which are enriched with various ornaments including saltire crosses with beads in the interstices, beaded medallions and stylized eight-petalled flowers.²³ The ribs in the west bay have two rows of stepped chevron and a small, ornamented boss at the intersection. The vault webs meet the wall in pointed trajectory without formerets. Most of the capitals are variously detailed cushions and scallops but the following have figurative decoration.²⁴ The north-east vault capital has outlined cushion shields with a worn demi-figure at the angle with wings extending from behind a plain pointed frame. The upper half of the north-west capital of the east bay has a cushion on each face and below there is a simple egg-shaped head above a puny body or large stylized beard(?) with the bodies of addorsed bipeds with tails that pass under each body to end above with a tuft. The south-west and north-west vault capitals both have a small angle head with grooved volute leaves issuing from the mouth. Towards the west of the east bay of the south wall there remains the blocked doorway to the vice that led down to the crypt and up to a wall passage at windowsill level which is still to be seen to the east of the jamb of the south window (Fig. 19). In turn, this, and its counterpart in the north wall, led to vices in the eastern angles of the chancel which led to the roof space and were capped by the conical turrets on the exterior (Figs. 2 and 20).²⁵ The original windows remain in the

²³ Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East' for a detailed description.

²⁴ For detail photographs of the capitals: Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East', <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/4/>.

²⁵ *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 400.



Fig. 17. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, interior to east. Photo by author.

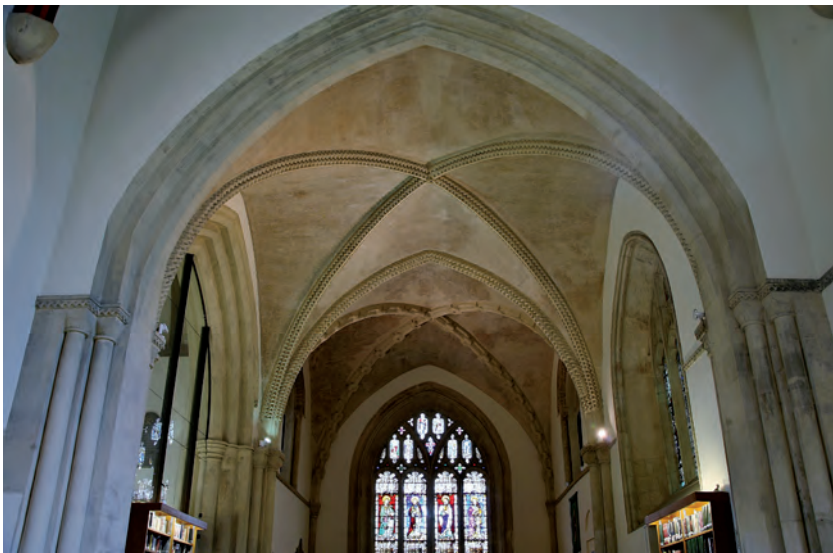


Fig. 18. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, chancel vault from west. Photo by author.



Fig. 19. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, chancel, east bay, south wall from north-west. Photo by author.



Fig. 20. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, chancel, east bay, north wall from south-west. Photo by author.

north and south walls of the east bay. The two-order, round-headed arches are ornamented with chevron on the outer order of the same pattern as on the exterior. The chevroned arch is carried on a string course which extends from cushion capitals which are set to the very inside of the chevron and have an unusual volute extension that interrupts the otherwise plain continuous inner order, except on the west side of the north window. The east shaft of the south window is enriched with a beaded foliage scroll but the other shafts are plain.

The loose beakheads preserved on a shelf against the south wall of the east bay of the chancel do not taper and therefore could not have been part of an arch.²⁶ They may have come from the jambs of a lost nave doorway as in the north doorway of Barford St Michael and the south doorway of St Peter's Windrush (Glos.).

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In an article published in 1770, James Theobald states that St Peter-in-the-East was founded by St Grymbald a monk about 814.²⁷ Edward King's 1805 account is a little curious. He states that 'there is every reason to believe, that very nearly the whole of it (Grimbald's church) remains entire, saving that there have been some modern windows inserted'.²⁸ He notes that there are some 'grotesque Saxon Capitals' in the crypt but in the chancel 'we discover a style of Architecture hitherto much unnoticed; which, though it be indeed far more finished, and refined than in the Crypt beneath, is yet very much unlike anything that we can, in any instance, ascertain to be "Norman"'. King illustrates various details of the chancel which are of great use in showing that the work we see today is accurate and not the fanciful product of nineteenth-century restoration. In 1825 John Preston Neale repeated the Grimbald association for the church but also observed that: 'The whole style of the Chancel corresponds with the interior of Iffley Church, and there is also a striking similarity between the south door of St. Peter's and the western entrance of that venerable fabric'.²⁹ John Britton saw 'nothing in the fabric itself which can warrant our ascribing it to any period anterior to the Norman era'.³⁰ He suggested that the details of the crypt and chancel 'are all in exact conformity with our early Norman buildings; and the probability is that this edifice was first raised within a very few years after the Norman Conquest'.³¹ The sub-committee that excavated the crypt in 1863 suggested that the crypt and walls of the chancel 'are of one and the same date'.³² The excavation revealed stairs at the end of the southern passage from the west of the crypt 'leading straight up to the nave of the church'.³³ This was confirmed by excavation of the north passage.³⁴ The sub-committee conjectured that one of the west passages was for descent to the crypt while the other for ascent, and J.H. Parker concurred.³⁵ It was further suggested that central west room was to house a shrine, a view endorsed by J.H. Parker in his comments on the sub-committee's report. Parker ventured to suggest that the chain ornament of the ribs of the east bay of the chancel vault may indicate that the relic was a portion of St Peter's chain.³⁶

²⁶ Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East'.

²⁷ Theobald, 'Some Account of St Peter's Church in the East'.

²⁸ King, *Munimenta Antiqua*, vol. 4, p. 197.

²⁹ J.P. Neale, *Views of the Most Interesting Collegiate and Parochial Churches in Great Britain; including Screens, Fonts, Monuments...*, 2 vols. (1825), vol. 2 (unpaginated).

³⁰ J. Britton, *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*, 5 vols. (1807–26), vol. 5, p. 172.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² 'Report of Sub-Committee (Relative to the Excavations made in St Peter's Crypt)', First Meeting, Trinity Term, 1863, *Proceedings of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society*, ns, 1 (1860–64), pp. 226–7.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 224.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 225.

³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 227, 229.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 229. J.W. Hawkins, 'Grymbald's Crypt: St Peter in the East, Oxford', unpublished paper, p. 2 (http://www.academia.edu/4127763/Grymbalds_Crypt_St_Peters_in_the_East_Oxford), also reads the chain motif on the ribs of the east bay of the chancel vault as a reference to St Peter.

Further to the date of the Romanesque church, the Royal Commission *Inventory* suggested c.1140–50 for the crypt, chancel and nave.³⁷ The *Victoria County History* gives mid twelfth century.³⁸ Sherwood and Pevsner considered that '[t]he date is probably not the same for all the Norman evidence'.³⁹ They attributed the crypt to c.1130–40 with the chancel and nave in the 1160s. Newson modified this to 1120 for the crypt and 1150 for the chancel.⁴⁰ John Hawkins proposed around 1130 for the crypt with the chancel immediately afterward yet he considered that it was not finished until about 1170.⁴¹ Geoffrey Tyack suggested that the crypt 'may have been begun in the 1130s' and that 'the main body of the church... may not have been built until the 1160s'.⁴² John Blair did not address the minutiae of dating but did contribute the important observation that St Peter-in-the-East was probably an Anglo-Saxon minster church and that the present crypt was 'equipped for displaying an important relic'.⁴³ John Crook considered the crypt to be a 'throw-back to an architectural form more commonly associated with the tenth and eleventh centuries'.⁴⁴ He dated the crypt to the mid twelfth century on the basis of masonry techniques and 'the art-historical detail of the capitals'.⁴⁵ He suggested that the focus was on the *confessio* because of the more elaborate carving of the western face of the westernmost capitals and particularly the most elaborate capital with a winged monster on the west face of the second north capital from the west.⁴⁶ Crook questioned the Royal Commission view that the crypt was a reconstruction of an earlier arrangement, an idea earlier mooted by E.A. Freeman.⁴⁷ Crook expressed the view it should be explained by a 'renewed interest in the cult of saints, which manifested itself in the twelfth century with the revival of an earlier architectural form'.⁴⁸

ANALYSIS

Crypts in English churches are readily associated with some of the great abbey and cathedral churches built after the Conquest, as at St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury; Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury; Winchester Cathedral; Rochester Cathedral; Bury St Edmunds Abbey; Worcester Cathedral; St Peter's Abbey (now cathedral), Gloucester; and between 1154 and 1175 at York Minster. The crypt of Lastingham Priory is a smaller version of this, 1078–85. Sir Alfred Clapham included the crypt of St Peter-in-the-East in a list of lesser churches at St Mary le Bow, London; St George's Chapel at Oxford Castle; St Mary, Warwick; St John the Baptist, Berkswell (Warks.); and under the north transept of Old St Chad's, Shrewsbury.⁴⁹

For the arrangement of the crypt and, in particular, the *confessio* for a shrine, there is a good parallel with St Ludgar at Werden where there is a shrine in the *confessio* and passages from the church to the north and south (Fig. 21).⁵⁰ A smaller version of this exists in the crypt of St Wystan's, Repton (Derbs.).⁵¹ John Crook has gathered evidence which suggests a *confessio* probably existed in the same position in the pre-Conquest church at Wing (Bucks.).⁵² The plan and scale of both crypt and chancel at St Peter-in-the-East, and the elaborate arrangements

³⁷ RCHME, *City of Oxford*, p. 90.

³⁸ *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 400.

³⁹ Sherwood and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire*, p. 295.

⁴⁰ Newson, 'St Peter-in-the-East'.

⁴¹ J. Hawkins, 'Grymbald's Crypt: St Peter's in the East, Oxford', p. 1.

⁴² G. Tyack, *Oxford: An Architectural Guide* (1998), p. 11.

⁴³ Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, pp. 112–13.

⁴⁴ J. Crook, *The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West, c.300–1200* (2000), p. 233.

⁴⁵ Crook, *Architectural Setting*, p. 234.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ E.A. Freeman, comment reported in 'Report of Sub-Committee', p. 228.

⁴⁸ Crook, *Architectural Setting*, p. 236.

⁴⁹ A.W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture After the Conquest* (1934), p. 67.

⁵⁰ Crook, *Architectural Setting*, pp. 101–103, fig. 31.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 128–30.

⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 130–2.



Fig. 21. Werden, St Ludgar, crypt, interior to west. Photo by author.

for viewing a relic, are remarkable, and suggest that the twelfth-century church was, or was intended to become, a place of pilgrimage.

Four doorways to the crypt indicate some sort of processional arrangement with a division between clergy and pilgrims. The north and south doorways in bay 3 of the crypt communicate with the east bay of the chancel – see the blocked door at the west end of bay 1 in the south wall of the chancel (Fig. 19). There was a similar doorway on the north side of the chancel ‘which has been stopped up, but the staircase exists behind it.’⁵³ The staircase may still be entered from the crypt and it rises to the blocked doorway in the chancel. The report of the sub-committee, suggests that the stairs from the chancel to the crypt ‘were probably for the use of priests’ – stairs from the nave for laity and that there was a shrine in the room between the passages at the west end of the crypt.⁵⁴

The design of the crypt at St Peter-in-the-East is adapted from Anselm’s crypt at Christ Church, Canterbury (1096–1130). Obviously it is much smaller than Canterbury but the groin vaults, the mix of relatively plain capitals with figured capitals – something not found in any other English Romanesque crypt – and, perhaps most significantly, stairs between the crypt and the eastern arm of the church in addition to those at the west end of the crypt. At Christ Church Canterbury there are two pairs of vices, one in the eastern transept, the other in the north-east and south-east chapels. These are reduced to the single pair at St Peter-in-the-East but the occurrence of more than two stairs to the crypt at St Peter-in-the-East is sufficiently unusual to suggest that our Oxford crypt was modelled on Canterbury. Even the subject matter of the figured capitals St Peter-in-the-East with addorsed beasts, a dragon, and a riding figure, is paralleled at Canterbury.⁵⁵ In terms of style we find equally prestigious association; the

⁵³ ‘Report of the Sub-Committee’, p. 227.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ D. Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral and Its Romanesque Sculpture* (1991), pp. 34–79. J. Britton, *Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*, vol. 5, p. 172 observed that the ‘grotesque animals and human figures [are] not very dissimilar to those in Lanfranc’s crypts at Canterbury’.

dragon with beaded back on the west face of capital N3 of St Peter-in-the-East crypt is related to the dragon-fight capital from Reading abbey.⁵⁶ John Crook is quite right to point out that the most richly carved capitals in the crypt of St Peter-in-the-East are towards the west end to focus on the *confessio*, rather than as a marker of the altar in the east bay.⁵⁷ He is not accurate when he writes '[t]he western faces of the westernmost pair are more elaborately decorated than the eastern faces,' but he correctly observes that 'the most elaborate capital of all is the northern capital of the second pair from the west.' Here it is probably significant that the east face of this capital (N3) is plain, while the only other figurative work in the crypt is on the west face of capital S3. Interpretation of the placement of the sculpture is not straightforward, other than to concur with Crook's association with the *confessio*. Given that the richer decoration occurs not on the westernmost pair of column capitals but on the penultimate pair, it would seem that the two western bays of the crypt were set aside from the bays to the east, perhaps for an altar dedicated to the saint whose relics were in the *confessio*.

Constructional details used in the crypt are of interest. The marks of the wooden centering for the construction of the vaults are particularly clear in the north aisle above the doorway to the chancel stair and in the west bay of the 'navé' and the north aisle (Figs. 16 and 22). The lower section of the tympanum is cut from the same stone as the lintel in a manner similar to Ludlow castle, Mathon (Herefs.) and elsewhere.⁵⁸ The voussoirs are unusual in that they do not have the regular scale of Anglo-Norman stones but the first on the left and the second on the right are significantly larger than the others (Fig. 16). These large stones seem to hark back to a pre-Conquest manner of construction. The lintel of the south doorway comprises three stones of which the one in the centre takes on a trapezoidal voussoir-like form (Fig. 14). The lintel of the north doorway is similar but with a larger central stone. This method of construction follows Roman precedent as in the frigidarium at Cimiez-Nice (Alpes-Maritime), and is on the lintel of the inner and outer faces of the east doorway in the great Tower of Chepstow Castle (1067–71).⁵⁹ Janet Newson relates the plain tympana of the north and south doorways of Cassington with those in the crypt at St Peter-in-the-East.⁶⁰

The differentiation between the groin vaults in the crypt and rib vaults in the chancel probably has less to do with the relative chronology of the fabric than with its iconography; ribs are used in the chancel as a permanent ciborium over the high altar and sanctuary as a whole.⁶¹ The groin vaults in the crypt may be read as a reference to the adoption of an earlier medieval tradition of a *confessio*, as suggested by John Crook. Analogous differentiation between a groin-vaulted crypt and rib-vaulted sanctuary occurs at Suger's abbey church of Saint-Denis, completed by 1144. Also, the differentiation between the essentially Romanesque crypt and the early Gothic superstructure of the eastern arm of York Minster as remodeled by Archbishop Roger of Pont l'Évêque (1154–81) is a similar iconographic articulation of different spaces.⁶²

⁵⁶ R. Baxter, 'Reading Museum and Art Gallery, Reading, Berkshire', <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/862/>.

⁵⁷ Crook, *The Architectural Setting*, p. 234.

⁵⁸ M. Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales* (2006), p. 47, fig. 59.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* figs. 7 and 82.

⁶⁰ J. Newson, 'St Peter, Cassington, Oxfordshire', *Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3779/>. Only the construction details of the south tympanum of the Cassington south doorway relate to St Peter-in-the-East.

⁶¹ M. Thurlby, 'The Roles of the Patron and the Master Mason in the First Design of Durham Cathedral', in D. Rollason et al. (eds.), *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093–1193* (1994), pp. 161–84; *idem*, 'The Building of the Cathedral: The Romanesque and Early Gothic Fabric', in D. Pocock (ed.), *Durham Cathedral: A Celebration* (2014), pp. 21–53; Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales*, pp. 92–104; *idem*, 'Articulation as an Expression of Function in Romanesque Architecture', in J.A. Franklin et al. (eds.), *Architecture and Interpretation: Essays for Eric Fernie* (2012), pp. 48–56.

⁶² M. Thurlby, 'Roger of Pont l'Évêque, Archbishop of York (1154–81), and French Sources for the Beginnings of Gothic Architecture in Northern Britain', in J. Mitchell (ed.), *England and the Continent in the Middle Ages: Studies in Memory of Andrew Martindale* (2000), pp. 35–47.



Fig. 22. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, crypt, north aisle, west bay, detail to north. Photo by author.

On the exterior south wall of the chancel there is intersecting arcading sitting on a string course at windowsill level (Fig. 1). Such arcading is usually confined to towers or west facades of English Romanesque churches. At Christchurch (Twynham) Priory intersecting blind arches are used on the exterior dado of the north transept, and they also appear on the south nave aisle at Malmesbury Abbey and the exterior of the Lady Chapel of Glastonbury Abbey (1184–86/9). On smaller churches, the only examples of intersecting blind arcading known to me occur on the dado of the chancel at St Peter and St Paul, Tickencote (Rutl.) and the chancel of St Athenase, Leuchars (Fife). Round-headed blind arches set level with windows exists in smaller churches in England at Dymock (Glos.), Hales (Norf.) and, probably later than St Peter-in-the-East, at Barfreston (Kent). At Stewkley the east wall has single blind arches flanking the central window.⁶³ There is also something similar on the exterior of the chancel of St Laurence, Bradford-on-Avon (Wilts.) probably of the early eleventh century.⁶⁴ Most significantly, the closest parallel for the arrangement at St Peter-in-the-East is the intersecting exterior arcade above a plain dado on St Anselm's choir at Christ Church, Canterbury, completed by 1130. Given the association between the crypts in both places, it seems most likely that there are Anglo-Saxon associations in the intersecting blind arcade. The motif appears in the canon tables of Anglo-Saxon gospel books as in the eleventh-century Bury Gospels (British Library, MS Harley 76). It is used in the dado arcades of the aisles of Durham Cathedral in connection with the relics of St Cuthbert, and above the dado arcade in the interior of the chapter house at Worcester Cathedral commissioned by the Anglo-Saxon Bishop Wulfstan in 1084.⁶⁵

⁶³ Baxter, 'St Michael, Stewkley'.

⁶⁴ E. Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons* (1983), pp. 145–6.

⁶⁵ M. Thurlby, 'The Anglo-Saxon Tradition in Post-Conquest Architecture and Sculpture', in D.A. Woodman and M. Brett (eds.), *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past* (2015), pp. 330–1; idem, 'Anglo-Saxon Reminiscences and other Aspects of the Romanesque Fabric of Worcester Cathedral', *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, 26 (2018), pp. 113–48.

The east front of St Peter-in-the-East has been compared with the west facades of Angoulême Cathedral and Poitiers, Notre-Dame-la-Grande (Vienne), especially for the ‘pepperpot’ turrets at the angles (Fig. 2).⁶⁶ The association with the Angoulême façade is confined to the conical cap of the turret; Poitiers, Notre-Dame-la-Grande, is closer in having a conical cap above a cylindrical turret. The west facade of Saint-Jouin-de-Marnes (Vienne) and Saint-Hilaire, Melle (Deux-Sèvres), may be added to this list along with the simpler form of the turrets on the west front of Saint-Pierre at Aulnay-de-Saintonge (Charente-Maritime). Whether this is indicative of a western French source for the Oxford design is a moot point. In none of the western French examples do we find the cylindrical turret on top of the clasping buttress, as at St Peter-in-the-East. Square turrets on clasping buttresses of Romanesque facades are readily found in great churches in England, as at Norwich Cathedral, the former west front of Hereford Cathedral, and elsewhere. At Rochester Cathedral the western angles of the nave octagonal towers surmount the stair turrets. Ely Cathedral north transept has polygonal towers above squared stair turrets. At the north-west corner of the north transept of Wimborne Minster (Dorset) the lower section of the turret is squared and then turns round after the ground storey.⁶⁷ The circular stair turret at the north-east corner of the central axial tower at Beckley has been compared to the circular turrets at the east angles of the chancel at St Peter-in-the-East.⁶⁸ The Beckley turret rises from the ground and does not project above the roofline as in the St Peter-in-the-East turrets. The closest English association is with the former cylindrical turrets atop the clasping buttresses of the transept facades of St Albans Abbey, a parallel observed by the Bucklers (Fig. 23).⁶⁹ The association may also be read iconographically so as to link the relics in St Peter-in-the-East with those of Saint Alban. Such a line of thinking may be extended to the late twelfth-century seal of St Frideswide’s Priory on which St Frideswide is enthroned beneath a canopy surmounted by three turrets like those at the angles of the chancel at St Peter-in-the-East.⁷⁰ Turrets on the facades of Romanesque churches in western France have been given sepulchral associations.⁷¹ It is also worth noting that cylindrical turrets with conical tops surmount the stair turrets of the westblock at St Pantaleon, Cologne, where the turrets start out square and the turn octagonal below the cylindrical superstructure. Possibly this Imperial association inspired the design at St Albans which in turn is reflected at St Peter-in-the-East. Here it is important to emphasize that turrets are not at all common in smaller English Romanesque churches. There are examples on the west front of St Giles, Bredon (Worcs.) and St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury (Herefs.) both of which belonged to the Bishop of Worcester, and St Cross Hospital Church, Winchester, all buildings of the highest level of patronage. Mention might also be made of the Lady Chapel of Glastonbury Abbey (1184–86/9) where multi-shafted cylindrical turrets surmounted the clasping buttresses on the corners of the building.⁷² A version of this motif occurs on the north transept of St Frideswide’s, Oxford.

Two-bay rectangular chancels were used in minor churches in England and in Normandy before the Conquest and continued to feature in similar churches after 1066 and throughout the twelfth century. There is an early Norman example in St Cross, Holywell, Oxford.⁷³ To find this space vaulted is rather less common. There are no Anglo-Saxon examples and it is even

⁶⁶ Newson, ‘St Peter-in-the-East’.

⁶⁷ M. Thurlby, ‘Aspects of Romanesque Ecclesiastical Architecture in Dorset: Wimborne Minster, Sherborne Abbey, Forde Abbey Chapter House, and St Mary’s, Maiden Newton’, *Proceedings of the Dorset Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 122 (2000), pp. 1–19.

⁶⁸ J. Newson, ‘Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley, Oxfordshire’, *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3807/>.

⁶⁹ I.C. Buckler and C.A. Buckler, *A History of the Architecture of the Abbey Church of St. Alban with Especial Reference to the Norman Structure* (1847), pp. 130–1, plates between pp. 130 and 131.

⁷⁰ T.A. Heslop, ‘The Late Twelfth-Century Seal of St Frideswide’s Priory’, *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), pp. 271–4, fig. 107.

⁷¹ L. Seidel, *Songs of Glory: The Romanesque Facades of Aquitaine* (1981), pp. 29–32.

⁷² M. Thurlby, ‘The Lady Chapel of Glastonbury Abbey’, *Antiquaries Journal*, 65 (1995), pp. 107–70.

⁷³ RCHME, *City of Oxford*, p. 129.

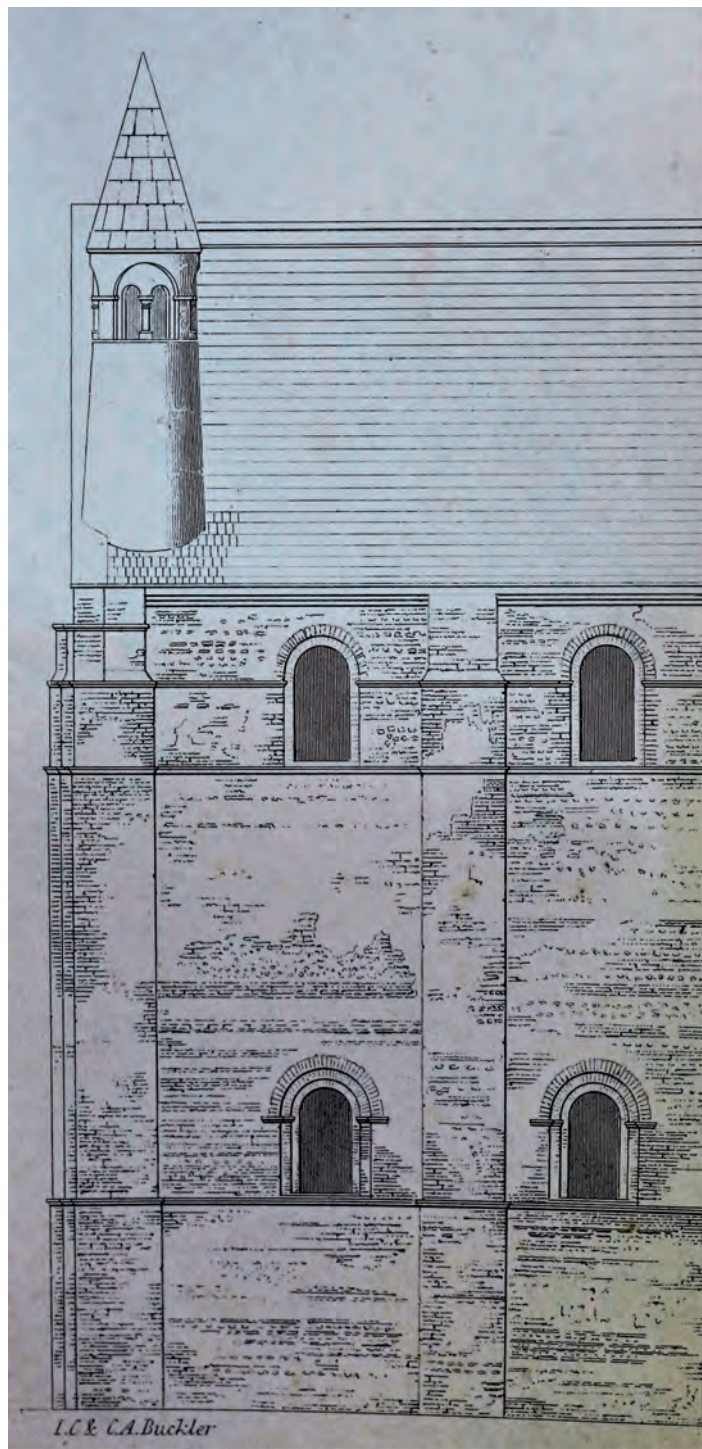


Fig. 23. St Albans Abbey, south transept, exterior from east (after J.C. and C.A. Buckler, *A History of the Architecture of the Abbey Church of St. Alban with Especial Reference to the Norman Structure* (1847)).

doubtful that such vaulted chancels existed before the Conquest. In Normandy, barrel- and groin-vaulted chancels were created before 1066, as at Notre-Dame-sur-l'Eau at Domfront (Orne), where a groin vault covers the square bay before the semi-domed apse. Vaulted chancels are introduced into England after the Conquest although not necessarily from Normandy; eleventh-century Belgium might also have been a source. There is a barrel-vaulted bay before the semi-domed apse in the mid eleventh-century church of Saint-Hadelin, Celles. Notre-Dame-du-Rosaire at Wierde (Namur) has a single-bay, groin-vaulted chancel, and Saint-Pierre at Hamoir-Xhignesse has the same with a semi-circular eastern apse. The earliest example of a vaulted chancel in an English minor church is likely to be Kempley (Glos.) where the Romanesque barrel vault survives complete with its original painted decoration. Dendrochronological dating suggests a felling date for the timbers of the nave roof of between 1120 and 1150, and, for the west door, 1114–44.⁷⁴ The introduction of the rib in vaulting in England and Wales is usually associated with the building of Durham Cathedral between 1093 and 1133, although Lincoln Cathedral after 1072/5, St Mary's Abbey, York, after 1088, Christchurch (Twynham) Priory, after 1087, and Chepstow Priory are candidates for earlier examples.⁷⁵ Be that as it may, two-bay rib-vaulted chancels in minor churches in England are relatively rare. Examples occur, or were intended, at Avington (Berks.), Brabourne (Kent), Compton Martin (Som.), Devizes, St John; Devizes, St Mary (Wilts.); Hemel Hempstead (Herts.), Leonard Stanley (Glos.), Ripley (Surrey), Rudford (Glos.), Upton (Bucks.) and Warkworth (Northumb.).⁷⁶ Where the patronage of these church can be determined we deal with the elite. Warkworth was one of six churches given by Henry I to Carlisle Cathedral, and he placed. Soon after his accession Henry I endowed for life one of his chaplains, Richard d'Orival (de Aurea Valle) with four churches including Warkworth.⁷⁷ The Devizes churches were most likely built for Roger, Bishop of Salisbury (1102–39).⁷⁸ Avington is not documented but the details have been convincingly associated with Bishop Roger of Salisbury.⁷⁹ Hemel

⁷⁴ D.W.H. Miles et al., 'Tree-Ring Analysis of the Nave Roof, West Door, and Parish Chest from the Church of St Mary, Kempley, Gloucestershire', unpublished Ancient Monuments Laboratory report, 36/99 (1999); B.M. Morley and D.W.H. Miles, 'The Nave Roof and other Timberwork at the Church of St Mary, Kempley, Gloucestershire: Dendrochronological Dating', *Antiquaries Journal*, 80 (2000), pp. 294–6.

⁷⁵ On Durham Cathedral vaults: J. Bilson, 'Durham Cathedral: The Chronology of its Vaults', *Archaeological Journal*, 79 (1922), pp. 101–60; M. Thurlby, 'The Purpose of the Rib in the Romanesque Vaults of Durham Cathedral', in M. J. Jackson (ed.), *Engineering a Cathedral* (1993), pp. 43–63; idem, 'The High Vaults of Durham Cathedral', in Jackson (ed.), *Engineering a Cathedral*, pp. 64–76; idem, 'The Roles of the Patron and the Master Mason in the First Design of Durham Cathedral'; idem, 'The Building of the Cathedral', in E. Fernie, *The Architecture of Norman England* (2000), pp. 135–7; idem, 'Romanesque Cathedral 1093–1133', in D. Brown (ed.), *Durham Cathedral: History, Fabric and Culture* (2015), pp. 130–40. For the possibility of Romanesque rib vaults in the choir of Lincoln Cathedral: P. Kidson and P. Murray, *A History of English Architecture*, 2nd edn (1979), p. 52. For Christchurch (Twynham): L.R. Hoey and M. Thurlby, 'A Survey of Romanesque Vaulting in Great Britain and Ireland', *Antiquaries Journal*, 84 (2004), p. 165, figs. 12 and 27; C.H. Moore, *The Medieval Church Architecture of England* (1912), pp. 16–20, figs. 14–17. On Chepstow Priory: Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales*, pp. 20–40; idem, 'Observations on Romanesque Architecture in the Diocese of Monmouth', *Monmouthshire Antiquary*, 34 (2018), pp. 17–37.

⁷⁶ Hoey and Thurlby, 'A Survey of Romanesque Vaulting in Great Britain and Ireland'. There are examples in Normandy at Chef-du-Pont (Manche) and Magneville (Manche): L.R. Hoey, 'The Articulation of Rib Vaults in the Romanesque Parish Churches of England and Normandy', *Antiquaries Journal*, 77 (1997), pp. 145–77; M. Baylé, 'Structures murales et voûtements dans l'architecture romane en Normandie', in *L'architecture normande au moyen âge*, ed. M. Baylé, 2 vols. (1997), vol. 1, pp. 49–78, esp. pp. 70–3.

⁷⁷ VCH Cumberland, 2, pp. 8–9.

⁷⁸ The architectural and sculptural details of the Devizes churches relate closely to Bishop Roger's work at Sarum Cathedral: R.A. Stalley, 'A Twelfth-Century Patron of Architecture: A Study of the Buildings Erected by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, 1102–1139', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 34 (1971), pp. 62–83 suggested a date after 1157 for the Devizes churches; J. Blair, 'Clerical Communities and Parochial Space: The Planning of Urban Mother Churches in the 12th and 13th Centuries', in T.R. Slater and G. Rosser (eds.), *The Church in the Medieval Town* (1998), p. 277 attributed both churches to Bishop Roger.

⁷⁹ Stalley, 'A Twelfth-Century Patron of Architecture', pp. 78–81; R. Baxter, 'St Mark, Avington, Berkshire', CRSBI, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/317/>.

Hempstead probably housed Augustinian canons associated with St Bartholomew's Smithfield.⁸⁰ Leonard Stanley was founded as an Augustinian priory 1121–30 by Roger de Berkeley II, but in 1146 Roger de Berkeley III gave it to Benedictine Gloucester as a cell.⁸¹ The manor of Rudford was given to St Peter's abbey, Gloucester, by King William I and confirmed by William II.⁸² Upton was held by the king at Domesday and was formerly Earl Harold's vill.⁸³ It was subsequently held by the Beauchamp family, and it was Payn de Beauchamp, Baron of Bedford, who gave the manor to the Augustinian priory of Merton (Surrey), which was founded in 1125.⁸⁴ The manor of Brabourne belonged to the Cluniac priory of Monks Horton from 1144.⁸⁵ In contrast to the vaults in these churches, at St Peter-in-the-East the transverse arch is pointed. The earliest pointed arch in Anglo-Norman architecture is in the wall arches of the straight bays of the north-east and south-east radiating chapels at St Peter's Abbey (now Cathedral), Gloucester. On a monumental scale the pointed arch is used in the east wall of the north and south transeptal towers at Exeter Cathedral, commenced 1114/16;⁸⁶ north and south crossing arches of St John's, Devizes (Wilts.); nave arcades at Malmesbury Abbey where pointed transverse arches are also used in the nave aisles.⁸⁷ There is a pointed barrel vault in the chapter house of St Peter's, Gloucester, and a pointed transverse arch in the chapter house rib vault at Forde Abbey (Dorset).⁸⁸ The webbing of the vault of the St Peter-in-the-East chancel meets the walls with a pointed trajectory (Figs. 17–20).

The vaulted chancel of St Mary, Easton (Hants.) is pertinent to our discussion (Fig. 24). It comprises a semi-circular apse to the east of a square bay with rib vaults and pointed arches which span the full width of the church as at St Peter-in-the-East. The work is closely related to the Hospital Church of St Cross and it is likely that, as at St Cross, Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, was the patron.⁸⁹

The two-order pointed chancel arch of St Peter-in-the-East is probably thirteenth century but it rests on Romanesque shafted responds with cushion capitals with zig-zag on the abaci (Fig. 17). The *Victoria County History* suggested that '[t]here may have been a triple chancel arch, the central piers standing on the solid masonry of the west wall of the crypt between the *confessio* and the stairs to the nave'.⁹⁰ Examples of triple arches separating the nave and chancel are known in seventh-century Kentish-group churches, as at Reculver and

⁸⁰ In 1201 the canons of St Bartholomew's, Smithfield, paid the king a fine of 200 marks for the confirmation of the grant of the church of Hemel Hempstead: *VCH Herts.* 2, p. 227; E.A. Webb, *The Records of St Bartholomew's Priory and of the Church and Parish of St Bartholomew the Great, West Smithfield*, 2 vols. (1921), vol. 1, p. 365; H. Gardiner, 'St Mary the Virgin, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/407/>.

⁸¹ C. Swynnerton, 'The Priory of St Leonard of Stanley, Co. Gloucester, in the Light of Recent Discoveries, Documentary and Structural' *Archaeologia*, 71 (1921), pp. 119–226; J. Turnock, 'St Swithun, Leonard Stanley, Gloucestershire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3729/>.

⁸² R. Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Gloucestershire* (1712), pp. 147, 630; H.W.C. Davis (ed.), *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum 1066–1154*, p. 46, no. 167 (possibly spurious); C. Johnson and H.A. Cronne, *Regesta Henrici Primi, 1100–1135* (1956), p. 410. T.D. Fosbrooke, *Abstracts of Records and Manuscripts Respecting the County of Gloucester, Formed into a History...*, 2 vols (1807), vol. 2, p. 212 records that the manor of Rudford was given by William Rufus to St Peter's abbey, Gloucester.

⁸³ Morris (ed.), *Domesday Book, Buckinghamshire*, 1.5.

⁸⁴ *VCH Bucks.* 3, pp. 314–18.

⁸⁵ *VCH Kent*, 2, pp. 151–3.

⁸⁶ M. Thurlby, 'The Romanesque Cathedral of St Mary and St Peter at Exeter', in F. Kelly (ed.), *Medieval Art and Architecture at Exeter Cathedral*, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions, 11 (1991), pp. 19–34.

⁸⁷ On Romanesque Malmesbury abbey and the start of construction by Bishop Roger of Salisbury between 1118 and 1139, see M. Thurlby, 'The Romanesque Abbey Church of Malmesbury: Patronage and Date', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine* (2019), forthcoming.

⁸⁸ Thurlby, 'Aspects of Romanesque Ecclesiastical Architecture in Dorset', pp. 11–13, fig. 21.

⁸⁹ Y.L. Kusaba, *The Architectural History of the Church of the Hospital of St. Cross in Winchester* (1983); M. Bullen et al., *The Buildings of England, Hampshire: Winchester and the North* (2010), pp. 253–4.

⁹⁰ *VCH Oxon.* 4, p. 400.



Fig. 24. Easton (Hampshire), St Mary, chancel, interior to E. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Interior_view,_St_Mary%27s_church,_Easton,_Hampshire_D6C_0872_NEFedited_edited-1.jpg.

Bradwell-juxta-Mare (Essex), but I do not know of any examples from the twelfth century.⁹¹ The Royal Commission *Inventory* proposed that the present chancel arch was probably wider than its predecessor but large chancel arches that occupy the full width of the east wall of an aisle-less nave are found in twelfth-century churches.⁹² The responds are 19 ft 11 in. apart; the nave is 25 ft 6 in. wide. There is no shortage of parallels with English Romanesque parish churches in which the chancel arch occupies the maximum width available; Great Givendale (Yorks.),⁹³ and Tickencote (Rutl.) are outstanding examples. A large chancel arch 19 ft 6 in wide is used before the Conquest at All Saints, Wing (Bucks.) (Fig. 25) in the tradition of large apse arches in Early Christian basilicas. Such a parallel suggests an association with the Emperor Constantine's basilica of Old St Peter's, Rome, a church emulated in the huge scale of great Romanesque shrine churches of St Albans, Winchester, Bury St Edmunds, and Durham Cathedral. Also at Durham the spiral piers and the ribs suggest a link with Old St Peter's ciborium. It follows that the use of ribs in the chancel vault St Peter's-in-the-East appropriates a feature of great churches. It is also worth noting that the Romanesque responds of the pointed Gothic chancel arch at All Saints, Earls Barton (Northants.), like St Peter-in-the-East, show no signs of remodeling or resetting to accommodate the pointed Gothic chancel arch. They provide a grand entrance to the elaborate chancel as at St Peter-in-the-East.⁹⁴

Given the use of a pointed transverse rib in the chancel vault at St Peter-in-the-East, it seems likely that the original chancel arch was also pointed just as at Easton (Fig. 24). The chancel arch at Asthall is also pointed and has a beakhead at the apex of the arch which indicates

⁹¹ On Kentish-group churches: E. Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo Saxons* (1983), pp. 32–46.

⁹² RCHME, *City of Oxford*, p. 145.

⁹³ R. Wood, 'St Ethelburga, Great Givendale, or Givendale, Yorkshire, CRSBI, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/2703/>.

⁹⁴ N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn, revised by B. Cherry. (1973), p. 196, and followed by B. Bailey et al., *The Buildings of England, Northamptonshire* (2013), p. 242 assert that there are two campaigns of construction at Earls Barton in the twelfth century. I find no evidence to support the separation of the construction of the chancel arch responds and the rest of the chancel in the twelfth century. Follows *VCH Northants.* 4, pp. 116–22.



Fig. 25. Wing (Bucks.), All Saints, interior to east. Photo by author.

that, even if the arch is rebuilt, the pointed trajectory is original. There is a pointed chancel arch at Bishops Sutton (Hants.) and at St Mary Magdalen's Chapel, Winchester by Henry of Blois.⁹⁵ The twelfth-century chancel arch at Dorchester Abbey is also pointed and of a large scale as at St Peter-in-the-East.⁹⁶ The acanthus capitals of the Dorchester arch are related to those in Henry of Blois's Hospital Church of St Cross and the chancel of Easton, where we find remarkably close parallels for the capitals of the west doorway of the north transept at Dorchester.⁹⁷ The outward displacement of the jambs of the chancel arch at St Peter-in-the-East may well be an indication that the twelfth-century arch failed and had to be replaced with the present arch (Fig. 17). The vault is not built as originally intended. The ribs do not sit on the stepped supports; specifically the side shafts and capitals do not carry the diagonal ribs as planned (Fig. 20). The springers are confined to the area above the central capital. The narrowness of the springers, and the fact that they are not carved with the rich ornament of the parts of the vault, suggests a knowledge of early Gothic vaults in northern France.⁹⁸

Variety in the pattern of the ribs in the two bays of St Peter-in-the-East chancel vault should be seen in association with the work of some of the most prestigious patrons of architecture in twelfth-century England. Bishop Roger of Salisbury used eighteen different types of chevron in his remodelling of Sarum Cathedral.⁹⁹ Enthusiasm for multiple chevron types was shared

⁹⁵ *Vetusta Monumenta*, 7 vols. (1747–1896), vol. 3, plates I–III.

⁹⁶ W. Rodwell, *Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire: The Archaeology and Architecture of a Cathedral, Monastery and Parish Church* (2009).

⁹⁷ Kusaba, *The Architectural History of the Church of the Hospital of St. Cross*.

⁹⁸ Sherwood and Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire*, p. 296 thought that the west bay of the chancel vault was remodeled in the nineteenth century but King, *Munimenta Antiqua*, pp. 195–203, plate XLI, and Neale, *Views of the Most Interesting Collegiate and Parochial Churches*, vol. 2, plate 2, show that ribs do not spring from the side capitals of the responds.

⁹⁹ M. Thurlby, 'Sarum Cathedral as Rebuilt by Roger, Bishop of Salisbury, 1102–1139: The State of Research and Open Questions', *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, 101 (2008), pp. 130–40.

by Henry of Blois in his Hospital Church of St Cross where the variety is extended to the vault ribs. The three-bay rib vault in the eastern arm of Stow Minster (Lincs.) built for Alexander, bishop of Lincoln, nephew of Bishop Roger of Salisbury, uses a different rib profile in each bay.¹⁰⁰ The ribs of the east bay of St Peter-in-the-East are unique although there is a general similarity with one bay of the former Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate.¹⁰¹ Parker's interpretation of the ornamentation of the ribs in the east bay at St Peter-in-the-East as a reference St Peter's chains or some filings from the chain is entirely plausible.¹⁰² Details of the ornamentation of the individual chain links on the ribs of the eastern bay are instructive for associations. There are many saltire crosses with beads in the interstices as on the inner order of the south doorway which probably indicates that the two are contemporary (Figs. 5, 6, 26 and 27). Several symmetrical rosettes relate to former wall bosses from Sarum Cathedral, the east processional doorway in the east bay of the nave of Romsey Abbey,¹⁰³ the west doorway of St Nicholas, Kenilworth (Warks.),¹⁰⁴ on the inner order of the south doorway of St Mary's Iffley,¹⁰⁵ and the jambs of the south doorway of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin at Twyford (Bucks.).¹⁰⁶ Of these, Sarum is the work of Bishop Roger; Romsey probably enjoyed royal patronage between 1120 and 1135. Beaded roundels are found on the east arch and south window of the presbytery at Llandaff Cathedral, at Reading Abbey, where one is seen in conjunction with a beakhead on a voussoir (Fig. 28), Malmesbury Abbey exterior nave clerestorey, in the spandrels of the west portal of St Nicholas, Kenilworth, and, on a scale closer to St Peter-in-the-East, on the tympanum of the south doorway of St Andrew, Great Rollright.¹⁰⁷ The small boss at the junction of the ribs in the vault in the western bay of the St Peter-in-the-East chancel is significant in regard to the date of the work. This type of boss is not common but it does find close parallels in the water tower at Christ Church, Canterbury, which is documented to the time of Prior Wibert, 1153–67.¹⁰⁸

The use of wall passages in the chancel is another feature of St Peter-in-the-East more usually found in Anglo-Norman great churches (Figs. 19 and 20). The passages were reached from vices entered through doorways in the east bays of the chancel – seen blocked on the south wall but only from the vice on the north side. In addition to giving access to the wall passages, the vices communicated with the crypt to provide entry for the clergy as opposed to the entrance and exit at the west end flanking the *confessio* which would have been for pilgrims.

The beaded foliage on the east shaft of the south window in the east bay of the chancel at St Peter-in-the-East is a most unusual motif for a parish church (Fig. 29). There are fine examples of richly carved shafts with foliage and animal and other motifs at Kilpeck and Shobdon (Herefs.) but such elaboration is exceptional in small churches.¹⁰⁹ What is perhaps more to the point is that such decoration may be more readily associated with great churches as in the Romanesque doorways of Ely Cathedral and the west central portal of Lincoln Cathedral, works for Bishop Nigel of Ely and Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, both nephews of Bishop

¹⁰⁰ M. Spurrell (ed.), *Stow Church Restored 1846–66*, Lincoln Record Society, 75 (1984).

¹⁰¹ M. Thurlby, 'The Architecture of the Eastern Arm of Holy Trinity Priory in its Wider Context', in J. Schofield and R. Lea (eds.), *Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate, City of London: An Archaeological Reconstruction and History*, Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph, 24 (2005), pp. 91–7.

¹⁰² Parker in 'Report of Sub-Committee', p. 229; Hawkins, 'Grymbald's Crypt', 4; A. Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principle Saints*, 12 vols. (1779–80), vol. 8, pp. 1–4.

¹⁰³ R. Baxter, 'St Aethelflaeda, Romsey, Hampshire', CRSBI, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/2865/>.

¹⁰⁴ H. Sunley, 'St Nicholas, Kenilworth, Warwickshire', CRSBI, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/1382/>.

¹⁰⁵ M. Thurlby, 'The 12th-Century Church of St Mary's Iffley: The State of Research', *The Friends of St Mary's Iffley Annual Report 2010*, pp. 3–17.

¹⁰⁶ R. Baxter, 'Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Twyford, Buckinghamshire', CRSBI, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3252/>.

¹⁰⁷ Newson et al., 'St Andrew, Great Rollright', <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/4683/>.

¹⁰⁸ Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral and Its Romanesque Sculpture*, illustrations 172 and 173.

¹⁰⁹ M. Thurlby, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture* (2013).



Fig. 26. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, chancel, east bay, rib detail. Photo by author.

Roger of Salisbury. Perhaps most importantly, the closest comparison is with a fragmentary shaft from Reading Abbey which shares the beaded stems and some beaded leaves with the St Peter-in-the-East shaft.¹¹⁰

The form and ornamentation of the south portal at St Peter-in-the-East with continuous orders and no tympanum are found elsewhere in Oxfordshire (Figs. 5 and 6). On the inner order, the chip-carved saltire crosses with beads in the interstices are not sufficiently unusual to suggest attribution to a particular workshop or school but it is worth recording that in Oxfordshire they occur on the tympanum of the south doorway at St Andrew, Great Rollright;¹¹¹ the imposts of the chancel arch at St Mary, Westwell;¹¹² and on the abaci of the chancel arch of St Andrew, Headington; as well as relatively nearby examples at St Nicholas,

¹¹⁰ Baxter, 'Reading Museum and Art Gallery', 1992.79, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/862/>.

¹¹¹ Newson et al., 'St Andrew, Great Rollright, Oxfordshire'.

¹¹² J. Blair and S. Blair, 'St Mary, Westwell, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/821/>.



Fig. 27. Oxford, St Peter-in-the East, chancel, east bay, rib detail. Photo by author.



Fig. 28. Reading Museum and Art Gallery, voussoir from Reading Abbey cloister. Photo by Ron Baxter.

Condicote (Glos.) on the lintel of the south doorway and the jambs of the chancel arch; and the lintel of the south doorway of the church of the Assumption at Leckhampsted (Bucks.).¹¹³

The beakhead motif on the second order was first used by Bishop Roger of Salisbury in his castle chapel at Sherborne, and by King Henry I at Reading Abbey (Fig. 28).¹¹⁴ It is also used for Bishop Henry of Blois in his castle at Taunton (Som.) and on the south doorway of St Nicholas, Bishops Sutton (Hants.). In light of this link with the highest level of patronage, it is hardly surprising that the motif was so often emulated elsewhere. It was very popular in Oxfordshire with examples on the chancel arch of St Nicholas, Asthall,¹¹⁵ the north doorway at Barford St Michael, reset as rere-arch in the east wall of chancel at St Mary, Bloxham,¹¹⁶ on the west doorway of St John the Baptist at Burford, Great Rollright south doorway,¹¹⁷ Iffley west doorway, a corbel reset in the vestry at St Nicholas, Kiddington,¹¹⁸ the west doorway of

¹¹³ R. Baxter, 'Assumption, Leckhampstead, Buckinghamshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3161/>.

¹¹⁴ On beakhead: J. Salmon, 'Beakhead Ornament in Norman Architecture', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, 36 (1946) pp. 349–57; F. Henry and G. Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Arches Decorated with Human and Animal Heads', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, 20–1 (1957–8), pp. 1–35; R. Baxter, 'Beakhead Ornament and the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture', <http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/beakhead/beakhead.htm>; R. Baxter, *The Royal Abbey of Reading* (2016); R. Stalley, 'Diffusion, Imitation and Evolution: The Uncertain Origins of "Beakhead" Ornament', in Franklin et al. (eds.), *Architecture and Interpretation: Essays for Eric Fernie*, pp. 111–27; J. Newson, 'Beakhead Decoration on Romanesque Arches in the Upper Thames Valley', *Oxoniensia*, 78 (2013), pp. 71–86.

¹¹⁵ J. Blair and S. Blair, 'St Nicholas, Asthall, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/1096/>.

¹¹⁶ J. Newson et al., 'St Mary, Bloxham, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/4685/>.

¹¹⁷ J. Newson et al., 'St Andrew, Great Rollright, Oxfordshire'.

¹¹⁸ J. Newson, 'St Nicholas, Kiddington, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/25/>.



Fig. 29. Oxford, *St Peter-in-the East*, chancel, east bay, south window, detail of east shaft. Photo by author.

St Ebbe's, Oxford,¹¹⁹ one voussoir from St Frideswide's, Oxford,¹²⁰ examples reset on the south face of the tower at St Nicholas, Tackley,¹²¹ and the south doorway at St Peter's, Windrush. Of these, the examples from Reading abbey, Asthall, Barford St Michael, St Ebbe's, Oxford, and Iffley share with St Peter-in-the-East the love of finely drilled holes on the beaks (Figs. 5, 6 and 27). This detail is also found at St Faith, Shellingford on the former north doorway, now the

¹¹⁹ G. Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture, 1140–1210* (1953), pp. 7, 54, illustration 10.

¹²⁰ R. Halsey, 'The 12th-Century Church of St. Frideswide's Priory', *Oxoniensia*, 53 (1988), p. 165, fig. 67.

¹²¹ J. Newson, 'St Nicholas, Tackley, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3791/>.

doorway from nave to vestry, where the use waterleaf capitals provides a date bracket of 1155 to 1180.¹²²

Continuous orders of chevron occur on the interior of the presbytery aisle and transept windows of Henry of Blois's Hospital Church of St Cross, Winchester. In Oxford the motif is used on the chapter house doorway at St Frideswide's where the rolls of the chevron share the stepped arrangement with St Peter-in-the-East, but not the cogwheels to the inside not the fine beads between the rolls.¹²³ Two continuous orders of chevron on the south doorway of St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock where the fine beads on the inner order and the hollow roll on the outer order relate to St Peter-in-the-East.¹²⁴ Cogwheel chevron with fine beads are also found on the south doorway at St Michael and All Angels, Great Tew.¹²⁵ The use of rich chevron on both the interior and exterior arches of the chancel windows at St Peter-in-the-East is relatively unusual (Figs. 4, 19 and 20). There are examples in the chancel of Stow Minster (Lincs.), St Cross Hospital Church, Winchester,¹²⁶ and Stewkley and Iffley both of which belonged to Kenilworth priory.

The zig-zag hood on the chancel windows of St Peter-in-the-East is also used on a fragment of a blind arcade springer from St Frideswide's, Oxford,¹²⁷ on the tower east and west arches at Cassington, the chancel arch of St Nicholas, Kiddington, the inner order of the north doorway at Barford St Michael, and on the string course on the north, south and west walls of Stewkley.¹²⁸

CONCLUSION

St Peter-in-the-East is an extraordinarily ambitious Romanesque church. The five-bay crypt with a *confessio* at the west end indicates that the church possessed an important relic. Parker's reading of the chain ornament on the ribs of the east bay of the chancel as a reference to St Peter's chains may indicate that the church possessed some filings of those very chains. Alternatively, we might be dealing with the desire to associate the relics of a local Anglo-Saxon saint with St Peter, just as at Durham Cathedral where the dimensions of the church, the spiral columns and rib vaults serve to link St Cuthbert with St Peter. The two entrances to the crypt from the nave show that St Peter-in-the-East was conceived as an important site for pilgrims, while the two vices from the east bay of the chancel and the richly decorated capitals in the penultimate west bay of the crypt suggest that there was an elaborate liturgy associated with the relics. The aim seems to have been to create nothing less than a miniature version of Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, not only in the design of the crypt but also with the inclusion of intersecting blind arches on the north and south walls of the chancel. A further iconographic association is provided with the round turrets at the corners of the chancel in relation to this motif at St Albans Abbey and concomitantly with the relics of St Alban.

In addition to the rib-vault, the wall passages in the north and south walls of the chancel of St Peter-in-the-East are associated with the design of great churches. And, in addition to parallels with Christ Church, Canterbury, we find affiliations with the work of some of the greatest patrons of architecture in twelfth-century England, including Henry I, Bishop Roger of Salisbury and Bishop Henry of Blois. These links make it clear that St Peter-in-the-East was the product of a patron bent on playing in the premier league of architectural patronage.

¹²² R. Baxter, 'St Faith, Shellingford, Berkshire, *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/1034/>.

¹²³ Halsey, 'The 12th-Century Church of St. Frideswide's Priory', pp. 115–67, fig. 51; N. Coldstream, 'Christ Church, Oxford, Christ Church Cathedral Chapter House, Oxfordshire', <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/5565/>.

¹²⁴ J. Newson, 'St Mary Magdalene, Woodstock, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/34/>.

¹²⁵ J. Blair and S. Blair, 'St Michael and All Angels, Great Tew, Oxfordshire', *CRSBI*, <http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/1844/>.

¹²⁶ Kusaba, *The Architectural History of the Church of the Hospital of St. Cross*.

¹²⁷ Halsey, 'The 12th-Century Church of St. Frideswide's Priory', p. 120, fig. 54.

¹²⁸ R. Baxter, 'St Michael, Stewkley'.

Given royal connections already established by his father, John of Oxford is a good candidate which would put the building between c.1155 and c.1160.

The standard established at St Peter-in-the East for a richly articulated parish church did not go unchallenged in Oxfordshire. At Burford the central axial tower included wall passages in the tradition of lantern towers of great churches. At St Mary's, Iffley, there is a rib-vaulted chancel with chevron on the ribs like the west bay of the chancel at St Peter-in-the-East.¹²⁹ Details of the beakheads in both places are so close as to suggest the work of the same craftsmen. And, the inclusion of Tournai marble shafts in the tower arches at Iffley which is unique in a unique in a parish church, serves to associate the work with that of Bishop Henry of Blois and other leading patrons of the later twelfth century in England.¹³⁰

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¹²⁹ Neale, *Views of the Most interesting Collegiate and Parochial Churches*, vol. 2; M. Phythian-Adams, 'The Patronage of Iffley Church: A New Line of Enquiry', *Ecclesiology Today*, 36 (2006), pp. 7–23.

¹³⁰ On the use of dark marble in England: M. Thurlby, 'Bishop Puiset's Hall at Auckland Castle: Its Place in English 12th-Century Architecture', in D. Rollason (ed.), *Princes of the Church: Bishops and their Palaces* (2017), pp. 348–74.