

Church of St. Peter, Britford, Wilts.

Taylor's account of this church runs to a good two pages, but visible remains condense down to two side arches which originally led to their individual porticus, or side chapel, parts of the south doorway (much restored), and parts of the walls. Having been reopened in the restoration of 1873 the two arches were provided with small annexes into which they now open. Rickman saw the (then) blocked arches and dated them as Anglo-Saxon. Taylor puts a date of 800-950. Today there remains part of the fabric of the nave and parts of the east walls of the porticus embedded in the later transepts. The south porch was built to protect the original pre-conquest nave doorway which was reopened; it is however much altered.

This page has been added in 2011 and to avoid disturbing the original numbering the pictures on this page and on page 2



are not numbered. The first picture is of the church from the SW and it shows (red arrow) the south annex built to protect the opened up south archway to its 'lost' porticus. The nave west wall is a medieval, or later, possibly Georgian rebuild with a distinctive plinth which seems to indicate a date between 1720 and 1810.

The lower picture is taken from the north and shows the nave wall with the annex (to the left) sheltering the north archway. It can be seen that the walling above the red line is of a completely different makeup to the Anglo-Saxon walling below. Unfortunately this means there are no traces of any pre-conquest windows in the fabric, and the medieval tower and chancel have swept away every trace of any older work. The tower above eave level appears to be a Georgian rebuild.



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This shows the west wall of the north transept and part of the annexe built to shelter the north archway. I have reproduced it to fill the width of the page since the transept wall importantly contains original Anglo-Saxon walling, and which was the east wall of the north porticus. The medieval walling I have partly obscured so that the un-obscured walling is that belonging to the porticus. The blue line indicates the extent of the medieval plinth belonging to the walling which was extended northward when the transept was built.

H.Taylor, in volume I of his "Anglo-Saxon Architecture" (pages 105 to 108) gives the dimensions of the north porticus as 8 feet 9 inches from east to west internally and 10 ft north to south and with walls about the same thickness as the nave (2ft 5in). Nave dimensions are, internally from west wall to medieval west arch of the tower, 44ft 4in x 20ft 6in. The two archway dimensions are given height to crown, and width between jambs. South arch h 7ft 8in and w 5ft 7in. The north arch h 7ft 11in x w 5ft 10in.



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The arches are comprised, in my opinion, in the greater part of reused Roman pieces of stone, stone 'tiles', and tiles, put together as if in some weird jigsaw. The base mouldings especially are pure Roman. I will post more information on these arches on another (text) page.

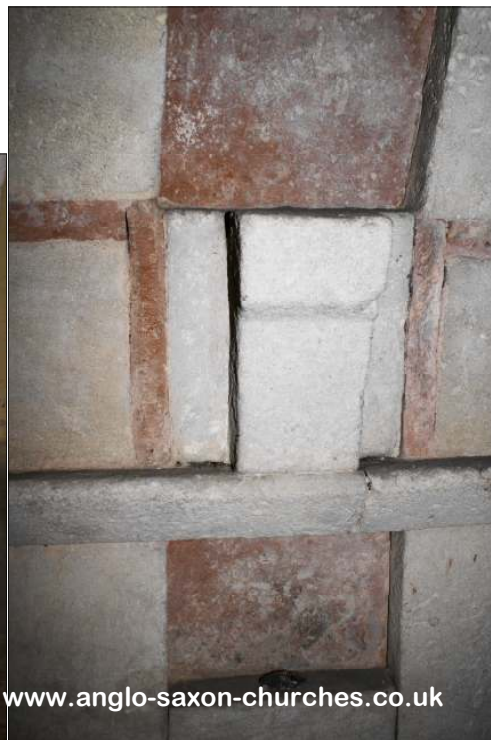
Pictures viewed clockwise from top left.

1. North archway.
2. East jamb of same; note that the vertical stones are in one piece, and this 'design' of grapes, or a vine, is found illustrated, albeit in more elaborate form, in Prof. Banister Fletcher's book "A History of Architecture" pg 67 illus. F. under the heading "Roman Ornament. 1."
3. Detail of Roman mouldings of the east jamb (southernmost of the pair). Note this stone has been shortened/sawn at the top, to 'fit' its new site, or perhaps both vertical stones were one and were

sawn in two? Taylor gives both stones as being 4ft 1in high and 8 inches wide.

4. A detail of impost of north arch and its make up. Above the impost is an undecorated (unfinished?) animal head.
5. Base of the west jamb of the north archway, note the Roman mouldings, used like a skirting board; they are common to both jambs.
6. South archway, which comprises a far higher Roman tile content than stone 'tile'.

It is as if the builder has been presented with a pile of stone and asked to make two archways. Its not a bad job considering and the result of full of interest! Both these archways, on both faces were originally outlined with traditional square pilaster strips but are now much cut away; importantly parts remain.



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7. Here the west jamb of the north archway; the base mouldings (ringed in orange) are mentioned on page 1. They repeat on the east jamb. H. Taylor described them as being more like a skirting board, they are patently not Saxon, the vertical stones appear to be reused Roman. But, here on the north face, you will see a traditional square section pilaster strip (blue arrow).

8. On the east jamb the Roman moulding seen again, ringed in orange. Note the decorated Roman stone occurs on both 'edges' on the east jamb but the uprights on picture 1 of the west jamb are plain. Perhaps the builders simply didn't have enough decorated stone? Note the square decorated tiles used quite separately. Blue arrow shows the pilaster strip.

9. Looking at the north side of the east jambs with the archway springing from the abacus, note the square section pilaster strip running up from the blue arrow, it has simply been cut off below this point. Note the 'undecorated, or un-sculptured' head sitting at the centre above the abacus (red circle).

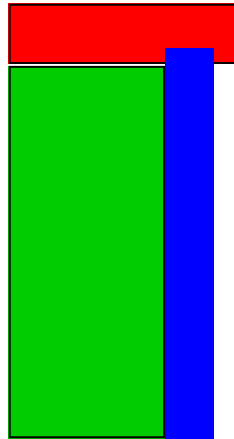
Picture 10 is described on page 5.



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10. Previous page, a decorated stone seen in more detail, seen in its position in pic 7. It is finely decorated in an intertwined strap work design.

11. The south archway (top left this page) has a very different treatment that sets it apart from the north archway. This is the east jamb seen from the nave (north face). Picked out by the blue arrow is the remains of the easterly pilaster strip which is hacked away below the arrow. The impost also is hacked away on its north face. See how the east jamb uprights are 'notched' into the impost (timber technique). And see the coloured drawing illustrating this, where the jamb is in blue the impost in red, and the nave walling behind the impost is green. Observing picture 11, the jamb construction is similar to the north archway but importantly all the uprights are plain and devoid of detail, and the central part which is set back in a similar manner to its sister is devoid of decorated tiles. Compare this to picture 1. The impost is not chamfered but is a square plain section. The archway is constructed wholly of Roman bricks, yet its sister uses stone where each has been carefully shaped to a radius.



12. This shows the west jamb viewed from the south (not easy to photograph as the 19th century annexe built to protect the then newly opened archways is tiny). The blue arrows indicate the square pilaster strip and the red arrow where the jamb protrudes in a vertical plane thus in itself making a pilaster strip. The whole 'assembly' sits on a protruding plinth (green arrow).

