

THE NORMAN DOORWAYS IN THE COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM.

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IN a lecture delivered to the Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries, and again before the Society for the Encouragement of the Fine Arts, and the Berkshire Archæological Society, an attempt was made to describe and illustrate, with the help of lantern slides, the principal doorways of the Norman style of architecture still remaining in the Churches or other ancient buildings in the Diocese of Oxford. While we have been able to bring together 110 examples from the County of Oxford, and 87 from Berkshire, we are only able to collect 41 instances in Buckinghamshire of buildings still or till recently retaining their Norman doorways.⁽¹⁾ Many of these are, however, of exceptional interest, and it will, therefore, be the object of this paper briefly to point out the salient features of those specimens of this most impressive style of art to which attention should be especially directed.

As explained in the lectures, and set out in the Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Archæological Journal, new series, vol. 6, p. 9, we will again divide our subject into four periods, viz., (1) the Saxon style, which seems to have held its ground till about the year 1080; (2) from 1080 to 1130, the early Norman, when the doorways were usually of plain and massive character, with bold roll mouldings and shallow ornaments; (3) 1130—1175, the period when we find the pure Norman style, with its wonderful variety of enrichments; and (4) from 1175 to 1210, the transitional, when we find the pointed arch with Norman ornamentation, or the semi-circular arch with the characteristic mouldings and features of the Early English period.

In this County, as in those of Berkshire and Oxford, some examples have disappeared within comparatively

⁽¹⁾ This number does not include Caversfield Church with its fine late north doorway, this parish now being incorporated with Oxfordshire, by which it is entirely surrounded.



WALTON ADAMS,

1.—BRADENHAM (SOUTH).

READING.



WALTON ADAMS

2.—TWYFORD (SOUTH).

READING.



LATHBURY.



WATER STRATFORD.





WALTON ADAMS,

4.- STEWKLEY (WEST).

READING.



WALTON ADAMS.

5.—HORTON (NORTH).

READING.



WALTON ADAMS, 6.—HANSLOPE (SOUTH CHANCEL).

READING.



WALTON ADAMS,

7.—LECKHAMPSTEAD (NORTH).

READING.

recent times, and one will now look in vain for the Norman doorway at Westbury, mentioned by Lysons in the "Magna Britannia," and for those at Akeley and Aston Abbots, briefly described in Parker's Ecclesiastical and Architectural Topography. At Cheddington some fragments of a former doorway are now walled up in the porch, and some of the voussoirs of a fine late arch are still preserved on the site of Notley Abbey.

Of the first or Saxon style mention is made in vol. 1, p. 37, of the "Records of Buckinghamshire," of a portion of a very early doorway visible in the interior wall between the piers of the Norman arcade on the north side of the nave of Iver Church. Another example is to be found, and this is undoubtedly the most curious and interesting in the Diocese, at Bradenham Church, where the south doorway is of early character, and similar in its mouldings, though with more attempt at ornamentation, to instances at Earls Barton and other better known examples. No mention of it is made by Parker in the "Ecclesiastical and Architectural Topography," who calls the Church "late poor P," nor by Lysons in his "Magna Britannia," while Lipscomb, in his History of the County, vol. iii., p. 557, merely refers to it as "having circular columns, and a decayed Norman arch." Sheehan, in his History and Topography of the County of Buckingham, p. 881, takes more notice of it, and states that the doorway "has a remarkable arch of late Saxon or early Norman workmanship. It is unusually small, richly moulded, and has a massive square sculptured stone placed across its base." From the illustration (fig. 1) we get a fair idea of this singular arch. On the outer order is a half-round moulding on the arch resting on half-round engaged shafts with rudely-sculptured capitals, that on the west having a shallow lozenge ornament, and with a cable band below; then comes a plain order with half-round on the angle continued without imposts down the jambs to the ground. Within this is a recess for the tympanum; the lower part only remains with a pattern of shallow vertical lines scored on it. This rests on a massive lintel, with a series of alternate raised lozenges on it in two rows, and this again rests on a smaller lintel with the cable ornament carved on

it, and supported on receding brackets attached to the jambs. On the inner side of this lintel is carved (? a date) "1111." On the interior side is also the hollow for the tympanum, and the large lintel carried right through the wall.

Of the second or early Norman period (1080—1130), we find examples in the north and south doorways at Brill Church, both having a bold roll moulding to the outer order, with shafts and cushion capitals, plain chamfered hoodmould and abacus, and plain inner order and jambs. Plain doorways at Ilmer and Hughenden may belong to this or the subsequent period.

Of the third or pure Norman period (1130—1175), the south doorway at Over Winchendon is a fairly early example. It has the chamfered hoodmould, a deep hollow and bold angle roll to the outer, and plain inner, order. There is a quarter-round moulding on upper portion of the abacus, one shaft on each side to the outer order, the west ornamented with the cable, and the east with the lozenge pattern. The capitals are scalloped. On the inner east jamb is carved a very large and curious votive cross.

Another very fine and somewhat early example is the south doorway at Leckhampstead. At the apex of the arch is an eight-rayed star or rose. There is a plain outer order, and then a hollow and bold angle roll, resting on a massive chamfered abacus supported on a shaft on either side; that on the west is ornamented with overlapping scallops, and has an eagle on the capital, with a cable band below, while that on the east has a series of chevrons with an upturned monster head immediately below the capital, on which is also sculptured an eagle. The arch has a plain inner order, which has been painted with crimson oblong bands.⁽²⁾ There is a large tympanum recessed within the arch, evidently of two dates; the upper part has plain voussoirs, which have been painted with irregular blotches of red. In the lower part is enclosed a small

⁽²⁾ Traces of colour have been noted on Norman doorways at St. Margaret's and St. Maurice's, York, and Brayton, Yorkshire, Shurdington, Gloucestershire, Pyrton and Brize Norton, Oxfordshire, Monk Sherborne, Hampshire, Glastonbury Abbey, Somerset, and elsewhere.

and earlier tympanum, curiously sculptured. On it are two large dragons fighting. They have their mouths open, and are striking each other with their tongues. Both have long ears, wings, and two foreclaws, but the hinder parts of their bodies, that on the west is beaded and twisted, terminate in foliage, and what look like fruit pods full of seed and bursting open. Their lower jaws rest on the head, and their claws on the hands of a small human figure with horns or long ears, clad in a single garment, open at the neck, drawn in at the waist, and again widening out, and carried down to the knees; the feet are both turned outwards. His left hand is touching the left claw of the eastern dragon, which rests on a sort of altar, formed of three steps like the base of a cross, the upper part being out of the perpendicular, as though toppling over under the weight of the dragon. Small pellets are scattered about over the groundwork, and in the east corner is, perhaps, another animal, attacking the dragon from behind. On the lintel is a good example of the beaded star ornament. This small tympanum is very curious and interesting, but it is not clear what the subject is intended to portray. The north doorway is of much later date, and will be described subsequently. At Dunton is a small blocked north doorway, with double zigzag on the arch, plain tympanum and some interlacing scroll on the lintel. On the east abacus is some sculpture, viz., in the centre a figure prostrated at the feet of our Lord who stands at the west side, whilst another personage, probably a female, is looking on from the east side. Above the prostrate figure is, perhaps, a cloud with the Almighty and an angel regarding the miracle which is being performed. A five rayed star is incised on another portion of the cloud. On the east abacus is a shallow carving, perhaps the head of an animal. The south doorway at Twyford (fig. 2) is a very interesting example. On the hood-mould we have a zigzag band forming a series of chevrons enclosing leaves on either side. Then comes a series of 24 beak and monster heads on a roll, of rather peculiar character, some beaded, one with a billet in its beak, and no two being exactly alike. This rests on the abacus, which is not chamfered, with a

series of roses on quatrefoils within lozenges on the western, and of eleven rayed stars within circles on the eastern portion. There is one shaft on each side with ornamental capitals, having the head of an animal on the angle with a separate body on each face. On the outer jamb on each side are carved seven large studded roses or stars with circular centre and eight leaves or rays, similar to those on the south doorway at Iffley, and beyond again the zigzag and leaf with chamfered edge similar to the hoodmould. There is an inner order with bold triple zigzag round the arch and down the jambs without impostes to the ground.

The most interesting doorway in the County is undoubtedly the south entrance to Dinton Church.⁽³⁾ It is a fairly early example, and worthy of the most careful examination. It has three courses of billet on the hoodmould, and continued down the outer jambs to the ground. Then come two recessed orders, on the outer a bold raised and recessed zigzag, and a raised zigzag on the angle, with small fircones within the chevrons. This order is also continued down the jambs to the ground, there being a small abacus below the spring of the arch, with a head below it at the angle on the west, and a beaded monster with beaded scroll and some pellets behind it on the east side. The inner order has a hollow and massive angle roll, with small pointed member between. To this order is a chamfered abacus, with the star and foliage on the upper part, and a leaf pattern on the chamfer, bold spiral shaft, the west capital scalloped, the east having a bird on it, and both having cable bands below. The bases are of the usual rounded form, and rest on square blocks, on each of which is sculptured an upturned monster head. Round the tympanum (fig. 3) is a guilloche pattern, formed by three interlacing beaded scrolls. In the centre of the tympanum is a tree, and on either side an animal, with paws, head, and shaggy mane of a lion, and body, without hind legs, gradually tapering off to the tail. Each animal is in the act of biting off the fruit from

(3) This doorway is figured in Lysons' *Magna Britannia*, Buckinghamshire, Vol. I., p. 486, and in Lipscomb, *History of the County of Buckingham*, Vol. II., p. 146.

the tree. Below, on the main face, is the inscription, in large capital letters—

+ PREMIAPROMERIT SSIQ SDESPETHABENDA

and below, on upper chamfered edge of the lintel—

AVDIATHICPRCEPTASIBIQVES TRETINSNDA + (4)

This no doubt explains the symbolism of the subject, which portrays the animals feeding on the tree of knowledge, and is an exhortation to all human beings to endeavour to copy their example and eagerly devour those Christian precepts the practice of which will in due time obtain its reward in Heaven. Many similar examples are to be found on the tympana of our English Norman doorways, which no doubt bear the same interpretation. On the lintel is the combat between St. Michael and Satan. An immense dragon, with terrible jaws and large extended tongue, is advancing from the west towards a small winged figure in the east corner, who holds a cross, which he is apparently about to thrust down the throat of the serpent. On the under side of the lintel is the beaded guilloche pattern again. Carried down the inner jambs are a series of heart-shaped ornaments. The whole composition is very elaborate and interesting, and one of the best specimens of Norman work to be found in this country.

At Lathbury, now let into the interior wall, is part of an early tympanum⁽⁵⁾ (fig. 3), with sculpture, conveying the same lesson as that at Dinton. In the centre is a tree, the trunk being formed by beaded intersecting circles, and with branches and foliage partly beaded, springing out of it on either side. On the right is a lion, and on the left two animals ([?]) a horse and a dog. The lion is eating the fruit, and the other animals are devouring the foliage. There is a south doorway, with the nailhead ornament, &c., of later date.

(4) Præmia pro meritis si quis desperet habenda

Audiat hic præcepta sibi quæ sint retinenda.

“If any one should despair of receiving rewards for his deserts, let him hear and apply to himself these precepts, and deem it to be his duty ever to uphold them.”

(5) See Records of Buckinghamshire, Vol. IV., p. 43, and plate.

The south doorway at Water Stratford is a rather late example of this third period. On the chamfered face of the hoodmould are a series of concave ovals, with a billet across the centre of each, forming flat nailheads at their point of junction⁽⁶⁾, and then a double row of raised zigzag in the arch. This rests on a curiously-carved abacus, supported on jamb shafts, with elaborately-sculptured capitals. On the eastern one is beaded interlaced scroll, terminating in a small monster head at either end; on the western one is the scroll, having the cable ornament, proceeding from a small head at the upper part of the angle, and terminating in a bird's head at the lower west side. On the tympanum⁽⁷⁾ (fig. 3) is a representation of Christ in Majesty, seated within an oval vesica held by an angel on either side. He is richly vested, and is giving the Benediction with the right hand, while the left rests on the Book of the Gospels. Below, on the lintel, is represented an arcade of interlacing semicircular headed arches, except beneath the feet of Our Lord, which are partly carved on the lintel, where the arches are lower, and do not interlace. The arches have slender shafts, and the background is diapered with intersecting lines, forming a kind of diamond pattern. The subject of Christ in Majesty is not an uncommon one during the Norman period, and excellent samples, both in sculpture and painting, remain in various parts of England. The north chancel doorway has also a sculptured tympanum, on which is a small representation of the *Agnus Dei* holding the cross on a ground diapered with roses. On the lintel are two dragons, with heads and claws, and their bodies intertwined so as to form the beaded guilloche. The arch and jambs are plain, with a plain chamfered hoodmould.

At Stewkley, where we have one of the most interesting Churches of the Norman period to be found in England, the tower arches furnishing us with grand

(6) A similar form of ornamentation may be seen on the south doorway at Foxcott (see post), and on the transitional Norman nave arcade at Leckhampstead.

(7) This doorway is figured in Vol. VII., p. 117, of the Bucks Records, and a full description of it is there given.

examples of that style, there are doorways on the west, north, and south of the nave, on the south of the chancel, and on the north side interior beneath the tower. The nave arches are all of considerable merit. In each case a string course, ornamented with the zigzag, which runs right round the exterior walls, is carried round the head of the arch, so as to form a label or additional dripstone. The north doorway has a series of broad, flat labels on the hoodmould, which has a dragon's head as a termination on one side, and an inverted head on the other. On the arch is a bold recessed and raised zigzag. The abacus is chamfered, with one shaft on either side, one capital having scalloped, the other foliated carving. There is a plain tympanum and segmental arched lintel. The south doorway corresponds very closely with the north. It has a series of large pellets on the hoodmould, the recessed and raised zigzag in the arch, and the capitals somewhat varied in their ornamentation. There is a head on the west one, with foliage coming from the mouth. The western doorway (fig. 4) is more elaborate, with numerous enriched mouldings, and a blind arch in the wall on either side.⁽⁸⁾ The zigzag stringcourse along the west wall is carried round above the central arch, which has a half-round on the chamfer of the hoodmould, and three reveals each enriched with variations of the zigzag ornament, those on the inner order being carried down the jambs, without imposts, to the ground. The abacus is chamfered, that section to the outer order being carried along so as to support the adjoining parts of the side arches, a wavy band of foliage being introduced below that portion on the south side. The shafts to the outer order are connected with a jamb or pier, which separates them from the shafts of the blind arches. There are also shafts to the middle order, that on the north ornamented with the spiral, and that on the south with the beaded cable moulding. There is a small

⁽⁸⁾ In the Berks, Bucks, and Oxon Archæological Journal, New Series, Vol. 6, p. 14 note, a list of similar examples is given, viz., at Ifley (Oxfordshire), St. Nicholas, Abingdon (Berks), Chepstow (Monmouth), Ketton (Rutland), and St. Leonards Priory, Stamford (Lincoln), all being comparatively of late Norman date.

tympanum, divided so as to form two small semicircular headed arches, with a central oblong panel, the lower part of which seems to have been broken away. On either side is sculptured a large dragon, apparently in the attitude of adoration towards some subject formerly sculptured or painted on the central portion, and foliage, a smaller dragon being also introduced on the south side. The side arches have the hoodmould continuous with that of the central doorway, and one order with the recessed and raised zigzag and jamb shafts. All the capitals are carved with animals, birds, dragons, beaded scallop, &c., those on the north being the more elaborate. At the top of the pier dividing the outer shafts, on north is a head and some interlacing foliage, on south some fluting. In the interior of the Church a stringcourse, with double row of the indented ornament, is carried along the walls and round all the five arches, so as to form a hoodmould. The little doorway under the tower has a plain arch, jambs, and recessed tympanum. There is one similarly situated at Iffley. This interesting Church is said to have become the property of Kenilworth Priory in 1170, and this seems to be about the date of the present structure.

At Adstock are two doorways, altered in the 14th century. On the south doorway is some curious sculpture on the abacus, with bats and nailheads on the west side, and beaded semicircles enclosing roses and leaves on the east. There is one shaft on each side with large capital, that on west having beaded foliage, that on east a leaf at the angle, and a head on either face, all connected by a beaded scroll. The arch is of later date. The north doorway has the original hoodmould, but the heads forming the terminations look later. The arch is Norman, with foliage within beaded semicircles, and a pair of wings. This appears to have been part of a tympanum now cut away. On the abacus is the indented moulding. There are several votive crosses on the jambs of both these doorways.

The north doorway of Horton Church (fig. 5) is a very fine and rather late specimen. The hoodmould, which has a sort of crozier for the terminations, has a small half-round on the main portion, and a series of billets

on the chamfer, and there are four recessed orders. The outer has four courses of bold raised zigzag, continued without imposts down the jambs to the ground. On the next is an excellent specimen of the knotted cable, also continued down the jambs to the ground. This is a somewhat rare ornament, but good examples remain in the slype of St. Albans Cathedral, built by Abbot de Gorham about the year 1160, and on the west doorway of the Temple Church, London, said to be twenty or thirty years later. The Norman towers at Exeter Cathedral also have this ornament on the various arches. Then come a series of large raised lozenges with raised zigzag on the angle and on the soffit. This rests on a chamfered abacus and jamb shaft, with chevron, fluting, and stiff-leaved foliage on the angle of the capitals. The inner order has plain arch and jambs. The north doorway at Upton-cum-Chalvey is also late, approaching the transitional period. The hoodmoulding is new, but there are two reveals, with bold roll to the outer, supported on shafts with capitals, each ornamented with three large leaves. On the inner order is a recessed zigzag, with leaves between the inner points, all continued down the jambs to the ground. There is an engaged angle roll, with small engaged shafts having flat cushion capitals.

The south chancel doorway at Hanslope Church (fig. 6) has a chamfered hoodmould, with a course of the double-cone ornament on the inner face. This is not a common moulding, and is rarely found except in the Eastern Counties. There is an example on the doorway of Stoneleigh Church, Warwickshire. There are two orders, on the outer a bold zigzag resting on an abacus, and large capital on each side, ornamented with animals, &c.; the original shafts have disappeared. On the inner order, which is continued without imposts to the ground, are a series of beaded half ovals or pointed arches, the bases resting on an engaged roll on the angle of the arch and jambs. There are various ornaments filling up the spandril spaces between the heads of the arches. There are doorways at Stoke Mandeville, Hambleden, Medmenham Abbey, and Worminghall, the last with a course of double billet on the hoodmould, which also belong to this third period.

Of the fourth or transitional period (1175 to 1210) there are not so many examples, nor are they of so much interest. One of the most ornate is the entrance to the Buckingham Grammar School, formerly the Chapel of a Guild of the Holy Trinity, founded by St. Thomas a Becket. On either face of the hoodmould are a series of ornamental nailheads, then comes a course of bold zigzag, and then on the inner order a series of pointed arches, plainer than, but somewhat similar to, those at Hanslope. There is a zigzag band on the abacus, with a leaf within each chevron, and one shaft on each side with rich foliage on the capitals.

At Notley Abbey are numerous voussours of a fine late doorway, with a bold zigzag enclosing a trefoiled leaf, very similar to those at the Chapter House of St. Mary's Abbey, York.

At Stone, the south doorway has been much renewed. The outer and inner orders are mainly new, but the middle order has a raised zigzag on arch, and soffit, with a small keel shaped at the angle; chamfered abacus, one shaft on each side, with foliage on the capitals. At Foxcote is a south doorway, with nailheads separated by billets on each chamfered face of the hoodmould, half of an engaged roll or keel shaped on the angle of the arch, chamfered abacus, and plain jambs. There is a plain north doorway, now closed up, with obtusely-pointed arch, which is probably of the same date. At the old Chapel at Creslow, now desecrated, and incorporated with the farm buildings, is a north doorway with pointed arch, having the triple billet on the hoodmould, then recessed and raised zigzag on the main order, with chamfered abacus, having a series of loops enclosing pellets on the chamfered portion.

The north doorway of Leckhampstead Church (fig. 7) is a very good specimen of transitional work, with a half-round hoodmould, having a head at the apex and terminations, and ornamented with a zigzag band, having leaves within the chevrons on either side. On the outer order is a keel-shaped moulding on the angle, with a hollow and half-round on either side on the face and soffit of the arch. On the inner order is a bold zigzag, set on an angle roll, with foliage within the chevrons on the upper side. The abacus is of the

late type, with two half-round mouldings on the lower part. There are shafts to the outer order, and engaged shafts to the inner, terminating about two feet above the ground, the outer capitals having stiff-leaved foliage, the inner have the fluted ornament. This doorway is very like the north entrance of Caversfield Church, which, though surrounded by Oxfordshire, was formerly included in the County of Buckingham.

There are late doorways at Shenley Mansell, Stantonbury, and Waddesdon, this last one appearing to have been altered in later times. This would also seem to be the case with the south doorway at Bletchley, where the arch is now pointed. It has a course of beaded elliptic arched on the hoodmould; on the outer order are 28 large beak heads on a roll, with a human head at the apex. Part of the chamfered abacus remains.

The south doorway at Radclive (fig. 8) is the last and latest of our series, its probable date being not earlier than 1200. It is obtusely pointed, with a series of roses or early dogtooth in the hoodmould, and three recessed orders. On the outer are bold zigzags, with varied trefoil leaves within the chevrons, on the face and soffit of the arch, forming large deeply undercut lozenges on the angle, and showing a sunk roll moulding carried round beneath them. On the next order is a hollow, with half-round on either side, and then on the inner order a quarter-round, both on exterior and partly on the interior face, with a broad fillet band on the soffit. It has the late form of abacus, banded shafts to the outer orders, the inner continued down the jambs to the ground. All the capitals have varied early foliage. Between the outer shafts, in a hollow down the jambs, are carved four-leaved roses, or stars.

Such is a brief description of the principal doorways in the County. Many of them are already well-known, while others have not received the notice they deserve. It must be conceded that the ingenuity displayed by the Norman builders is well exemplified in the work carried out by them in Buckinghamshire, and that here, as elsewhere, it is easy to refute the statement as to the want of variety to be found in Norman architecture, and particularly with regard to the doorways, on which they expended such special attention.

Annexed is a full list of examples still or till recently existing in the County:—

NAME.	DOORWAYS.
Adstock Church	N. and S.
Akeley "	N. and S.
Aston Abbots "	S.
Bletchley "	S.
Bradenham "	S.
Bravfield "	N.
Brill "	N. and S.
Buckingham Grammar School	N.
Cheddington Church	Fragments.
Creslow Chapel	N.
Dinton Church	S.
Dunton "	N.
Fingest "	N. and S.
Foxcott "	N. and S.
Hambleton "	W. of N. transept.
Hanslope "	S. Chancel.
Hitcham "	N.
Horton "	N.
Hughenden "	S.
Ilmer "	S.
Iver "	N.
Lathbury "	S. and Tympanum.
Leckhampstead "	N. and S.
Linford, Little "	S.
Medmenham Abbey	
Medmenham Church	N. and S.
Notley Abbey	Fragments.
Radclive Church	S. and S. Chancel.
Shenley Mansell "	N. Chancel and S. Chancel.
Stanton Bury "	N. and S.
Stewkley "	W., N., S., S. Chancel, and N. Tower interior.
Stoke Mandeville " , . . .	N.
Stone "	S.
Stratford, Water "	S. and N. Chancel.
Turville "	N. and S.
Twyford "	S.
Upton-cum-Chalvey "	N. and S. Tower interior.
Waddesdon "	S.
Westbury "	
Winchendon, Over "	S.
Worminghall "	N. and S.