



Steyning Church. One of the finest buildings of the late eleventh and the twelfth century. To identify the Norman church we have to exclude the porch, the west tower and the east end, and the original building went on two bays or so to the west, where the tower is now.



1831 plan and the Church from the south-west.



Saint Cuthman

Introductory remarks

- Steyning has a number of features associated with great churches.
- There are connections with Sarum Cathedral, partly rebuilt by Bishop Roger of Salisbury, 1102-39 and then with the Hospital Church of St Cross, Winchester, patron the great Bishop Henry of Blois, Abbot of Glastonbury 1126-71 and Bishop of Winchester 1129-71 – also with elements of Canterbury Cathedral, builder Prior Wibert 1153-67. These were the great movers and shakers in the matter of church building in the mid C12.
- It's a very ambitious building – not a great church, but certainly wants to be associated with the finest buildings in the late C11 and C12. I'll be making a number of regional associations and also make a plea for help in tracking down some features.
- Cuthman (see Blair, J. Sussex Archeological Collections 1997 – born about 680 probably at Chidham near Bosham – but his Life was probably written in the late eleventh century. It tells the story of how he walked pushing his mother in a cart until the rope round his neck broke when he was at present day Steyning and he decided to build his church here. This was a time when it was popular to write saints' lives to promote the building of churches (eg Cuthbert and Durham) I think we can say this was his church where his relics or part of them remained.
- Steyning was given to the Abbey of Fécamp by the Confessor, taken back and then reconfirmed in 1085.



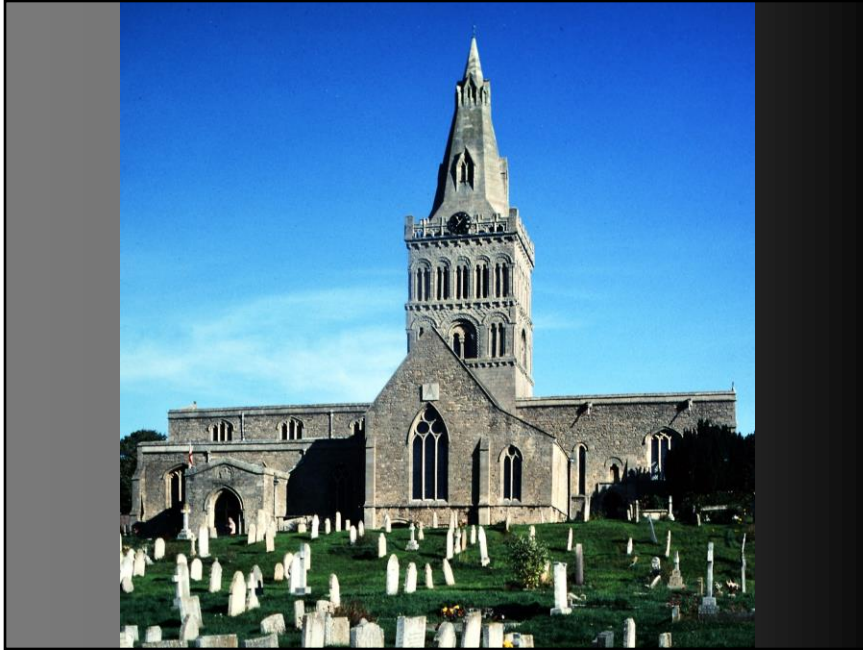
The Nave – amazing variety of decoration – every ornament is different – this is a higher form of artistic expression than plain or repetitious.



Steining and the nave of Ely Cathedral. Ely was commenced in early 1080, became the Cathedral in 1106 – an example of a great church. Much larger than Steining, three storeys, but otherwise features we find at Steining are taken from great churches like Ely. It has a wonderfully tall main arcade. The ornament at Steining is richer because it is later; the clerestory is very, very richly articulated, with columns which run up the side of the windows, and we have the bay division marked with this articulation which is very unusual in smaller churches and it is also very unusual in having a recessed form.



Domfront, Notre Dame sur L'Eau, exterior from the SW. We've lost the original east end of Steyning. We know from some excavation in the nineteenth century that there was a south transept. To work out what the original arrangement is it useful to look at something like this. This is the east end of Domfront, with a short apse or chancel area, a transept and an apsidal chapel in between, matched on the north side, and this is what I think we had at Steyning. It was matched in the north of England at North Newbold, on the right, near York. It was a property which belonged to the Archbishop of York so a very high status building. But it only has a nave, no aisles. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of that observation. As we go through the first half of the twelfth century it is only the grandest churches which have aisles as well as a nave – Steyning is in the upper echelon of what we might call major minor churches.



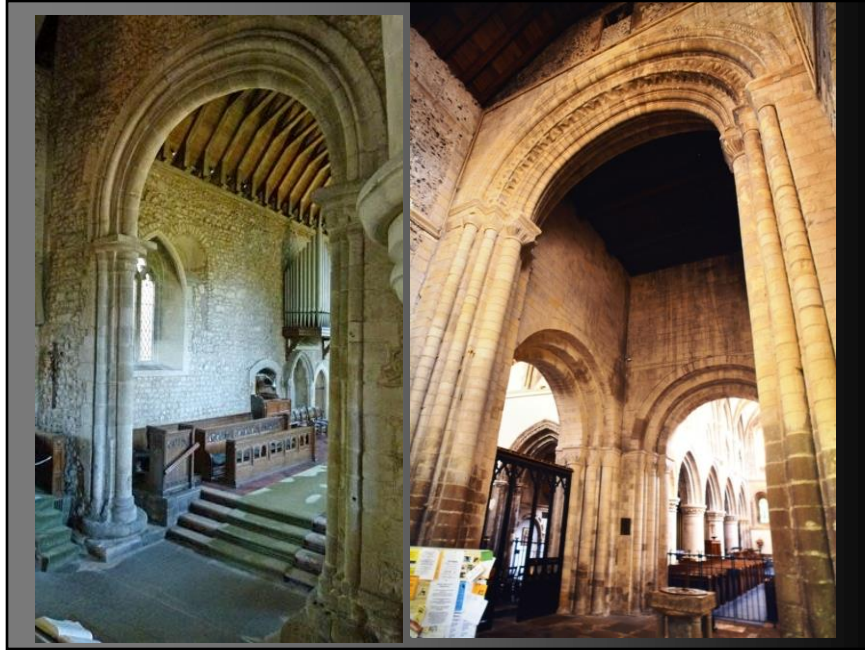
Castor, in Cambridgeshire. It was originally cruciform but had a later aisle; it also had an important pre-conquest saint, St Kyneburgha. It became a cell of Peterborough and the relics were taken to Peterborough. This was built I think as a cenotaph for St Kyneburgha. I think here at Steyning we have part of the relics of St Cuthman remaining.



Great Paxton, in Huntingdonshire, a church which was almost certainly built by Edward the Confessor. I'm standing towards the east end looking west; it has very large crossing piers and aisles. It's possible that in Steyning we have a notion of continuity with the Anglo-Saxon church.



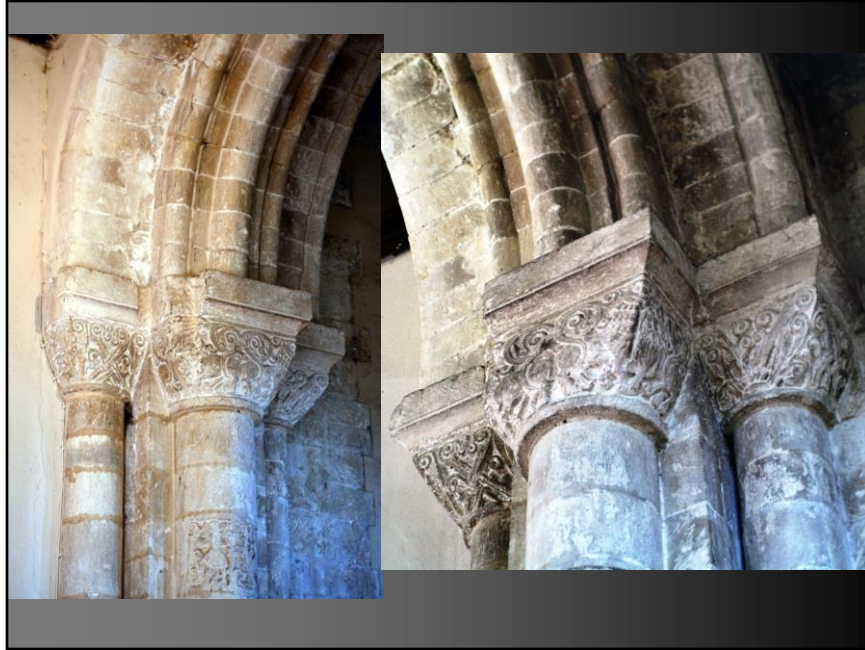
Steyning – looking at the major arch – and here we can see we are looking at something in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. See also Stoughton, Sussex.



Bosham. Similar arch at Bosham – not known whether it is pre or post Conquest. Standing at east end looking west provides a notion of continuity – also the similar arch at New Shoreham, richly decorated. And despite the weird angle of the photo of New Shoreham, you see the massive western crossing arch with the arch opposite moving into what is now a late twelfth century chancel. But that is a twelfth century arch which would have led into an apsidal chancel, perhaps, with apsidal chapels in between. I think there is a distinct possibility that the arrangement at Steyning was just like that (without putting money on it).



Steyning, view towards the east.



Steyning, the capitals on the arch leading from the south aisle into what was the south transept. The first thing to note other than the capitals is that on the west side of the arch there is a roll moulding, but on the east there is none. So the richness of the decoration is on the west side leading you through the arch to the space on the east. Then there are these three richly decorated capitals. When we look at the detail, it is in part an Anglo-Saxon tradition which is continuing.



Steining, the eastern the criss-cross capital, and panels at Sompting. See also, below and top right, reset panels at Sompting. In the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon sculpture they are dated, very precisely, eleventh century (a polite way of saying we don't know if pre- or post- Conquest) but in terms of the overall appearance they belong very much to a pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon tradition which continued after the Conquest. Also at Sompting, about halfway down the nave on the north side we have a Christ in Majesty, which is eleventh century, but also this panel – look at the termination of the leaves. This is the same design we get in Steining.



Steining, the western capital on the south aisle arch and again look at the termination of the leaves and the general arrangement of the leaves; that is to be expected (as it is so close to Steining).



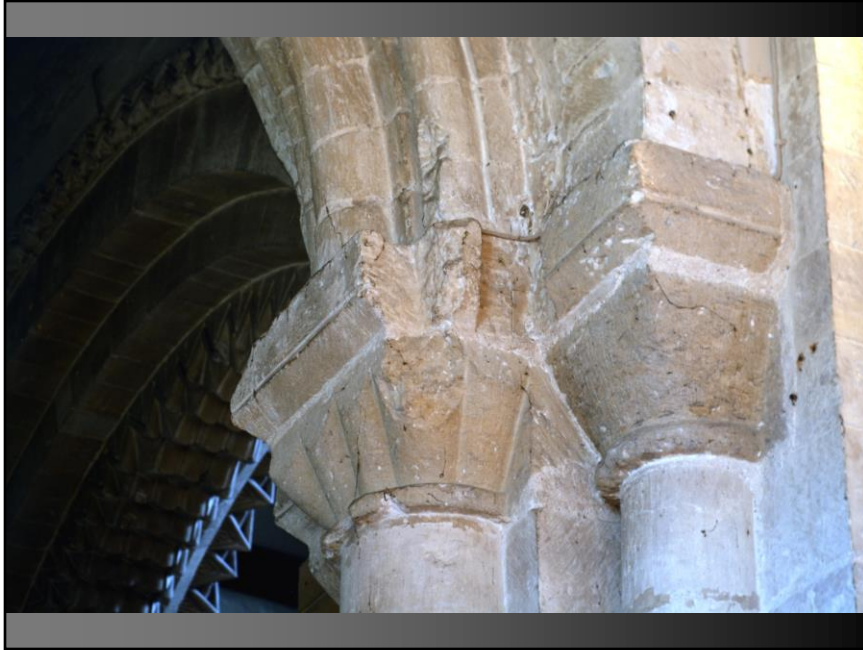
Steining, the W capital and Fécamp. But here, this capital on the right, focus on the leaves again, is in Fécamp, the mother house. There is a general relationship. One of the possibilities is that we had someone from the Steining area going over and working in Normandy. It's not always a matter of Norman craftsmen coming here – by this period, there is a general exchange.



Central Steyning capital, south aisle archway, St Benet's church in Cambridge top R and Cerisy-la-Forêt bottom L. This is the major central capital with these lions which share a head. Here we encounter something which is Norman or certainly main continental Europe rather than Anglo-Saxon. But the contrast is with what I have at the top right. Here we have on the right a very cute little creature, perhaps a cat, in St Benet's church in Cambridge – he's placed above the capital itself almost like a cat sitting in front of the fire. He is not part of the capital whereas the section we have at Steyning is very much integrated with the structure rather than being just plonked in front of the arch. In the lower right of the slide we have an example taken almost at random of some creatures from *Cerisy-la-Forêt* in Normandy. The placement of these is closely related to what we have at Steyning, although they do not share a head. People were back and forth between Normandy and England around 1100.



Central Steyning capital, south aisle archway. Lower down on the shaft below these capitals is a very, very unusual feature, carved into the shaft, a frieze-like arrangement this scene of hunters or gatherers, I'm not going to say any more than that, and on the right a remarkably close parallel from a manuscript put forward by Kathy Morrison in Steyning entry in the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture.



Steyning, capitals, south aisle arch. The other capitals from this arch connecting the south nave aisle with the south transept are much simpler, block capitals, probably painted but that's gone – and then a scalloped capital and these are useful for dating – you don't get scalloped capitals much before 1080 so that's the beginning of the bracket – they go on much later but given the parallels we made earlier I think around 1100.



Steyning, south aisle arch, E side. The other side of the arch –homework for you - where are the earliest spears used on capitals in relation to those scallops? The earliest I've found which are simpler like this have been in Gloucester Cathedral crypt around 1089, I think this is a little later so I am suggesting again around 1100.



Steining, Durham, Stoughton. Further parallels. Here's the Steining arch with the central roll. I'm looking at details and the closest I can find is here at Durham Cathedral, sadly not in the area, about 1093, this part the eastern aisle, completed around 1096. Stoughton and Stopham in Sussex have several arches; this is Stoughton, not exactly the same pattern very much the same design set.



Steyning, exterior, N and S clerestory windows. One of the suggestions made in the Corpus is that another early part of Steyning Church may be seen on the north clerestory of the nave, because as you see they are very plain quite unlike the south side – so the suggestion seems to be that they built the north side around 1100 and then waited until 1160 to finish it off – I think not. I would like to suggest that these are absolutely contemporary – c 1160-65 – The reason there is more decoration on south side is that is the town side and meant to be looked at. Some examples:-



Norham in Northumberland, N and S aspects. Lots of decoration on south side, facing the town, chevron ornament; on the north side much smaller windows and no ornament around them at all.



Christchurch Priory. Closer to home, we have Christchurch Priory; the south side is the monastic side, very plain, but the north side is the town side, very rich ornamentation – this area was rebuilt in the fifteenth century but it is the public side, very important for decoration.



Steining, the W main arch, S and N capitals. For the major western crossing arch, the big arch at Steining, I would think work on that is around the mid-twelfth century – say around 1150, before work started on the nave. And it's a different building campaign – we get a rather awkward junction there between the pillars of the crossing and the masonry of the nave – it's less pronounced on the north side but still uncomfortable so I think there is a break in the building there and a date in the mid twelfth century is going to work out very well. More homework- these little running stringcourse arches linked by a little strip– I have not found that anywhere else. If you find that let me know.



Steining, crossing to N aisle. Here, I've moved in to the crossing area. The first two bays of the north side of the nave - we look through to this arch which I am detailing here. In contrast to what we see on the south aisle there is no ornament on the west side of this north aisle arch. It's all on the east side. That rich decoration leads me to suggest that having the decoration on the east side is emphasising, even advertising what the function is of that north transept; I would like to think that is where we had the relics of St Cuthman. We need to find analogues and I have found two.



Bampton, Oxfordshire. First at Bampton Church south west of Oxford, where there is the shrine of St Beornwald, an Anglo-Saxon saint. The shrine was probably here in the north transept chapel. It is late fourteenth to fifteenth century but goes back to the late eleventh century church. From the crossing where the photo was taken you go up a staircase and into a watching chamber (see the two black window outlines at the top of the slide) and you can look down at the relics which are kept into the north transept.



Whitchurch Canonichurch. Next we have the wonderful nave of Whitchurch Canonichurch in Dorset. This is the north nave arcade at Whitchurch. The south door is opposite. As you come in through the south door what is facing you is this amazingly richly decorated arch (the rest as you see is relatively plain) and I think this is meant as a signpost - your way to get to the shrine of St Whit, across the nave up here, you hang a right into the North transept.



Whitchurch, north transept. This is what you see (the shrine in Whitchurch); we come in from the left, there are very rich stiff leaf capitals, probably around 1200 or later in the thirteenth century. I think something analogous may well have taken place at Steyning.



Steyning and St Nicolas, Old Shoreham. Detail of the arch in Steyning is very similar to (on R) the western crossing arch detail at Old Shoreham.



Steyning Nave. Here we have two interior views of Steyning nave with the south and north juxtaposed. I mentioned the love of variety. It's not just in the ornament; look at the clerestory here. On one side there is one shaft, on the other two, but they are clearly contemporary.



Steyning nave and interior of Domfront. Looking at parallels in aisled naves. On the left the south side of Steyning and on the right Domfront (we looked at the exterior of Domfront, the small priory church – this is the interior). In your minds here you have to open these arches at Domfront up as originally these led into an aisle as they do at Steyning - above are the clerestory windows. The details at Steyning are so much richer.



Jumièges, Saint Valentin. This is Jumièges parish church in Normandy (not the famous abbey there), probably built about 1120, two storey elevation, aisles but no ornament. Here the western arch is taller than the arches which formerly led to the transepts, which is what I was suggesting for the crossing at Steyning although not quite so extravagant as what we have at New Shoreham.



Steyning on left, and Secqueville en Bessin, Saint Sulpice, on the right. Somewhat closer in proportion is the building we have on the right at Secqueville en Bessin in Normandy, not precisely dated but from the early part of the twelfth century. It is mainly in reference to this sort of grand Norman parish church that we get the idea of the height of the main arcade but notice also the large size of crossing arch. But in contrast to Domfront the arches are in the same height so we can't be absolutely sure whether Steyning would have been like New Shoreham or closer to this.



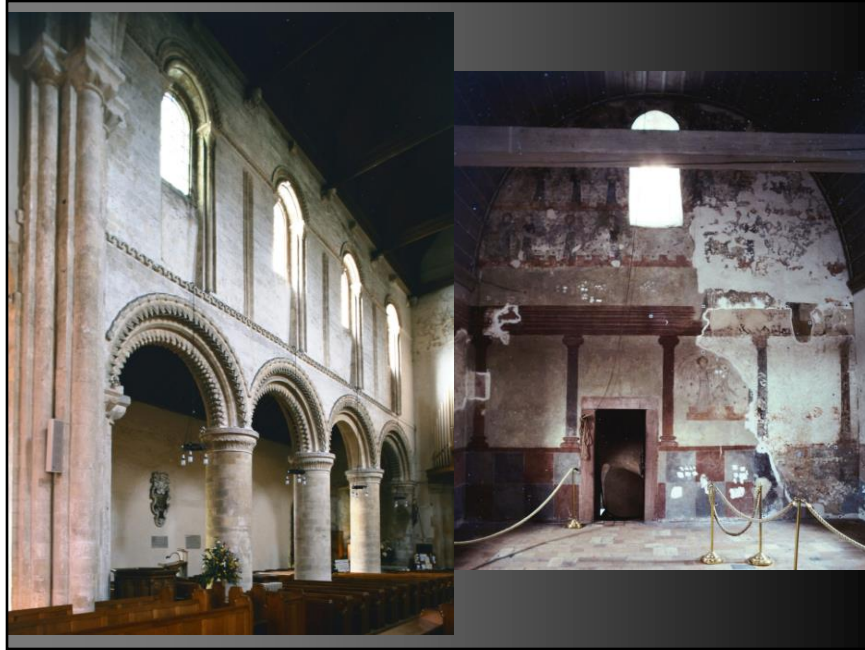
St Margaret at Cliffe, Kent. This is St Margaret at Cliffe, one of larger Kentish churches which is not an abbey or Canterbury Cathedral. From this we can get an idea of a church which is broadly analogous to Steyning, with the big arch here, another tangential example, but no crossing area. It has fairly tall nave arcades, clerestory and a little bit of variety. It is generally related to Steyning but not anywhere near as magnificent, and nothing like as richly decorated.



Steyning and Hospital Church of St Cross, Winchester. I will be suggesting to you, when we look in detail at all the ornamentation, that the closest relation to Steyning or one of the closest we have is the Hospital of St Cross, about a mile south of Winchester. The patron is Bishop Henry of Blois, astronomically rich. When he came back from exile in Burgundy in 1158 work started on his church. The ornament on this is as varied as we have in Steyning and some details are identical – but they used pointed arches which started in France in the 1130s and 40s and it's also vaulted as well. At Steyning however they don't go in for what is the latest architectural detail.



The nave of Peterborough Cathedral. This is a very important relationship – this is the cathedral, the abbey of Peterborough as it used to be, and we are looking down the nave. It was commenced in 1117 or 1118 but took a long time to build. The north side we see here is constructed between 1177 and 1191 but most people looking at it would say but it's purely Romanesque and that is absolutely right. But what they are doing here is saying we don't want suddenly to move into pointed arches; at the east end we have rounded arches and we are concerned for the overall image and the continuity of the architectural motifs. I think that is a very important consideration for the use of round headed arches in Steyning – although in theory it was old-fashioned by this time the continuity of design is so important. So although they can use detail which is cutting edge the notion of having the whole with rounded arches is very important.



Steyning, clerestory and Lorsch Abbey, Germany. The articulation we have up here is exceedingly unusual and I think it is probably inspired by a tradition of painted decoration which may well go back to early Christian times. On the right we have the Carolingian abbey gatehouse of Lorsch in Germany –eighth century – the painting is original. We have the south side here but I really needed the north side; it's clearer on the north side. I think there is a linking between the clerestory at Steyning and string course and this sort of decoration in paint; in the Steyning clerestory it is translated into stone.



Steyning clerestory shaft (L) and shaft from the demolished cathedral of Old Sarum (R). This recessed shaft is very rare indeed. This example is from Old Sarum (Bishop Roger of Salisbury) which doesn't exist any more. I had to go to the English Heritage store at Portsmouth to find this single recessed shaft. So people in Steyning seem to be saying, we are going to look at one of the richest of contemporary buildings and take a feature that we might almost say is a signature of Old Sarum.



Gloucester Cathedral Chapter House (L) and Malmesbury Abbey. Here the eastern shafts are set back, a couple of examples both related to Old Sarum.



Labelstops, Steyning. We think of them as quite common in medieval churches but when did they start? You find them in Wells Cathedral where there is a beautiful set of heads from circa 1176 but to have them before that date is very unusual – Steyning is special in that regard – also very unusually we have two bays with these bosses or paterae.



Old Sarum with Steyning. And here we have a close-up of a patera from Old Sarum – there were lots of them dotted around it and in Salisbury, so another Bishop Roger feature is being taken over to Steyning.



Steyning, South door. The south doorway and the detail on the right of this pointed scallop material – this did thrill me – I was thinking I'd never seen that and then I went through the Sarum material and I found this. I think Steyning was inspired by Old Sarum. I've never seen that anywhere else and it suggests this link.



Steyning south door and stone from Old Sarum. And here's a single stone from Old Sarum – sadly a double one – but you can see it is pointed with a roll moulding, and I think this does suggest this link with Old Sarum.



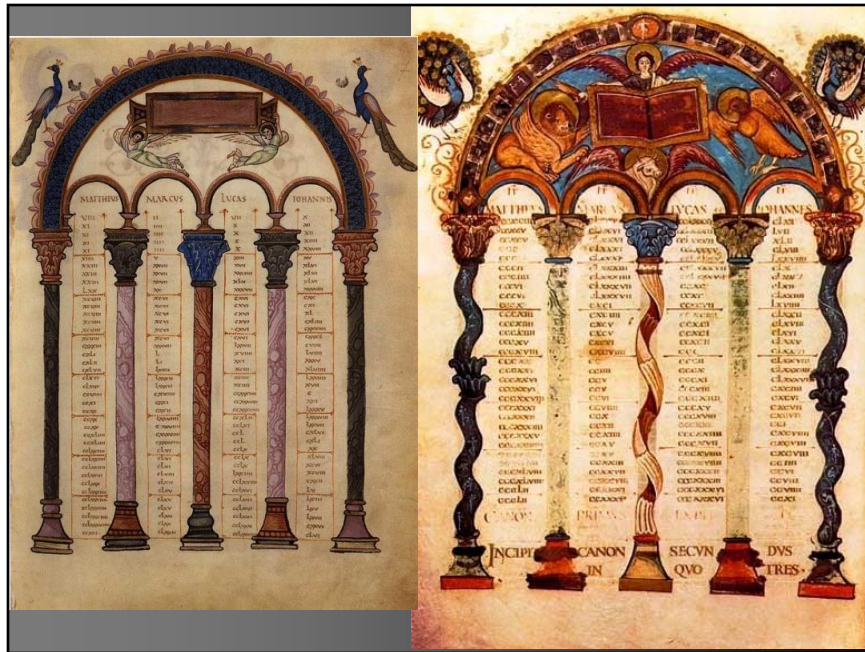
Portable Altar of Countess Gertrude of Brunswick, post 1038. I firmly believe that throughout in the Middle Ages variety is very important – *varietas*. It is something which you should really marvel at. And when you move into Gothic revival in the nineteenth century John Ruskin praises gothic capitals and naturalistic foliage over the boring Greek classical foliage. This is the Gertrude Altar from soon after 1038 from Brunswick. Illustrated by metalwork; it was thought important to emulate it as it cost a lot. We have this amazing variety of ornament to the shafts, the arches.



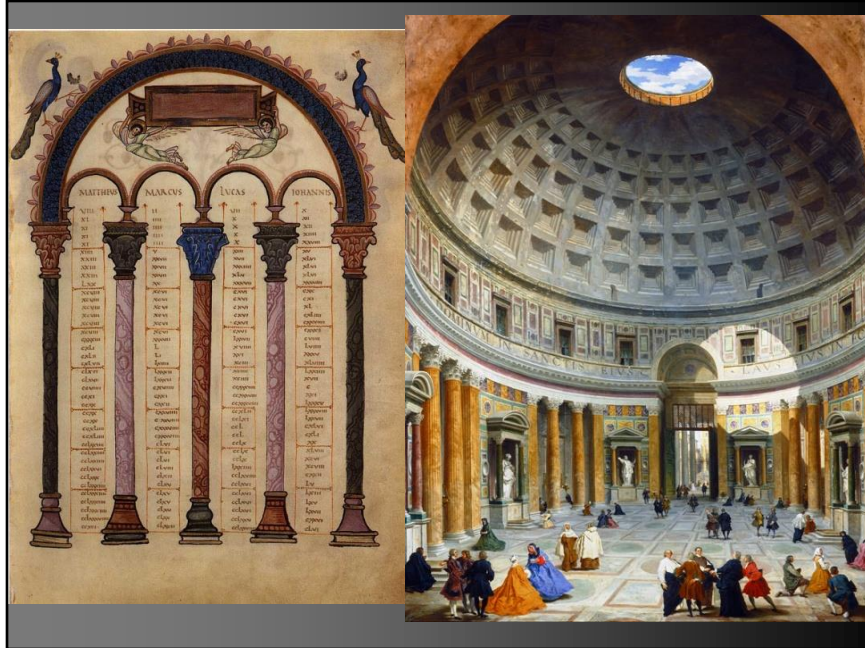
Paderborn altar of 1100, by Roger of Helmarshausen – great difference in all the detailing of all the columns and arches.



Reredos of Abbot Suger of St Denis. We see exactly the same thing with this altar reredos made for Abbot Suger of St Denis – see the difference in ornament and also look at the arcade which runs beneath the base of the columns which cannot work architecturally because there would be no support – but as a piece of metalwork it works perfectly. The other important traditions in relation to sculpture are manuscript illumination and the tradition of Rome. Here you have the canon table from the Lorch gospels given to the abbey of Lorch in the early C9, made in Charlemagne’s workshop in Aachen, specifically looking back to ancient Rome.



Carolingian canon tables from the Lorsch Gospels and the Soissons Gospels. Here's another example showing the link with Rome; another of Charlemagne's gospel books has twisted columns (we know that the nave of the Constantinian church of Old St Peter's had different coloured columns all the way down.) Look at the different colours.



The Pantheon in Rome – a general view.



Details of the Pantheon in Rome with all the detail of the different fluting, colours and ornament of the various archways – this illustrates that with the Romanesque we do look back to the glories of ancient Rome.



Steining and Malmesbury Abbey labelstops. There's one on the end of the north arcade at Steining and see Malmesbury Abbey for these wonderful label stops – basically the same type of beast.



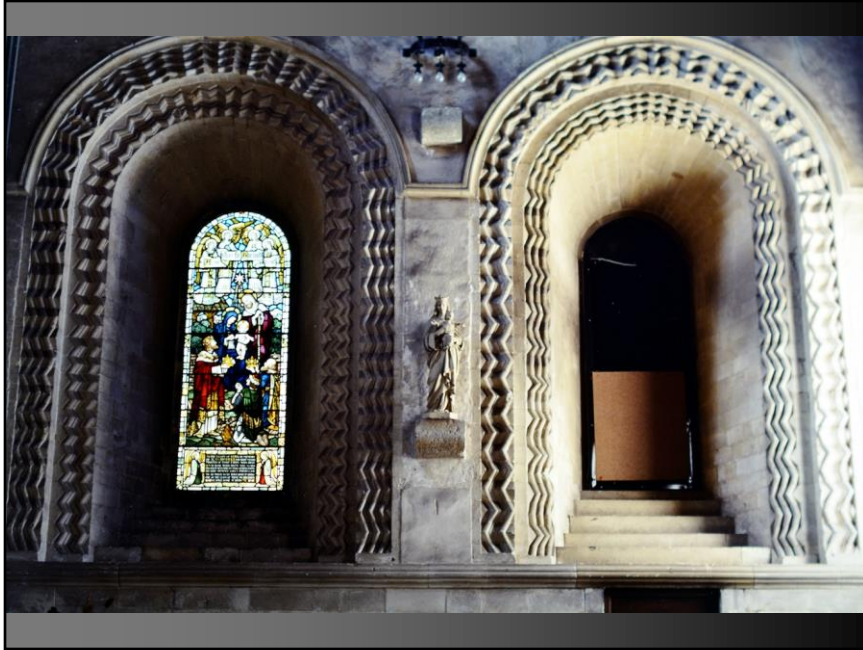
Malmesbury and a Deerhurst head, which I put on for the beast labelstop tradition but also because this shot has traces of paint. This is the beginning of the beast labelstop tradition – look at the church here for traces of paint. The idea is that ultimately we have to reconstruct the painted nature of the interior which I emphasise would have been the norm rather than the exception in buildings like Steyning.



Old Sarum. Varieties of Chevron – here are four from old Sarum – there are 18 different known sorts of chevron or zigzag ornament – variety was the spice of life for Bishop Roger of Salisbury.



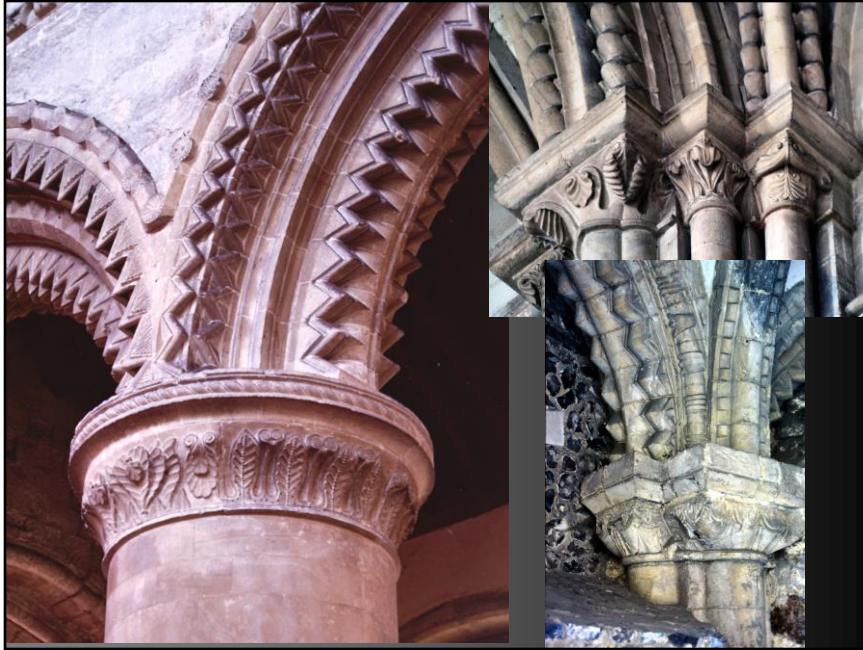
Steining. Examples of enormous variety of chevron in Steining – you could count the different types.



St Cross, Winchester. And this is something we find at St Cross at Winchester – two windows in the north wall, different chevrons used right the way along.

connections

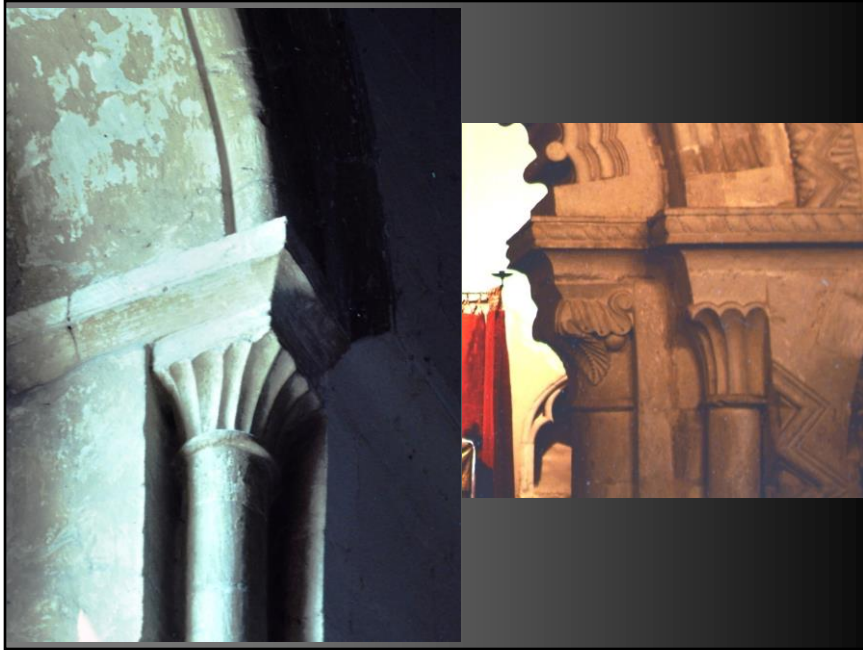
What I want to do in the next few slides is to run through the indications that the chief master at Steyning came from St Cross



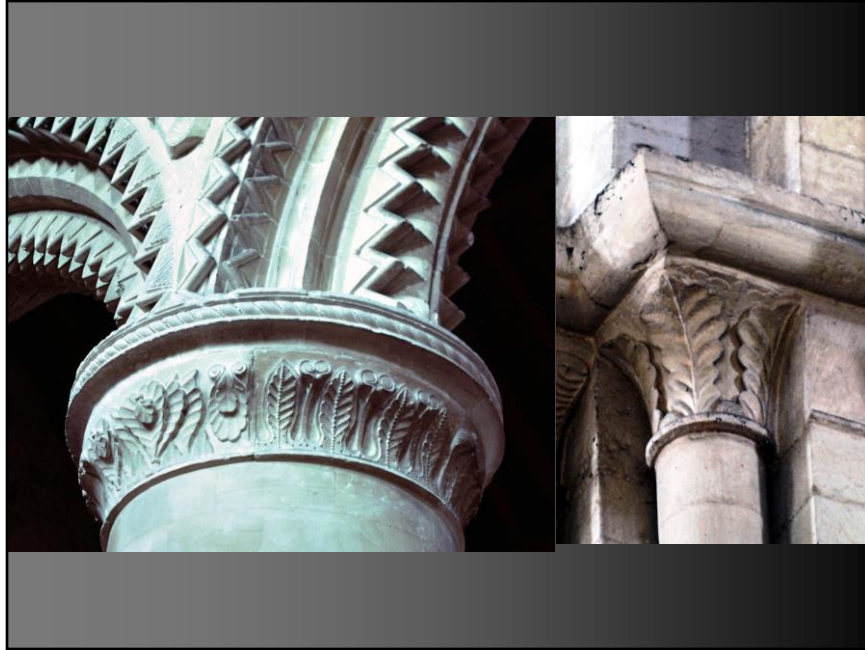
Steining on L, St Cross top R and Canterbury, watertower, bottom R. See here in the left-hand slide a hollow in the mouldings, a “gouged roll” and keeling (like the keel of a ship) and this is what we find right up at the top - very deeply cut with the chevron flanking the moulding (top right) and roll moulding, very, very unusual but it appears at St Cross and this is the Water Tower at Canterbury – precisely dated 1153-67.



Steyning, Winchester St Cross, and Winchfield in Hampshire (which is also related to St Cross.) Fluting on capitals.



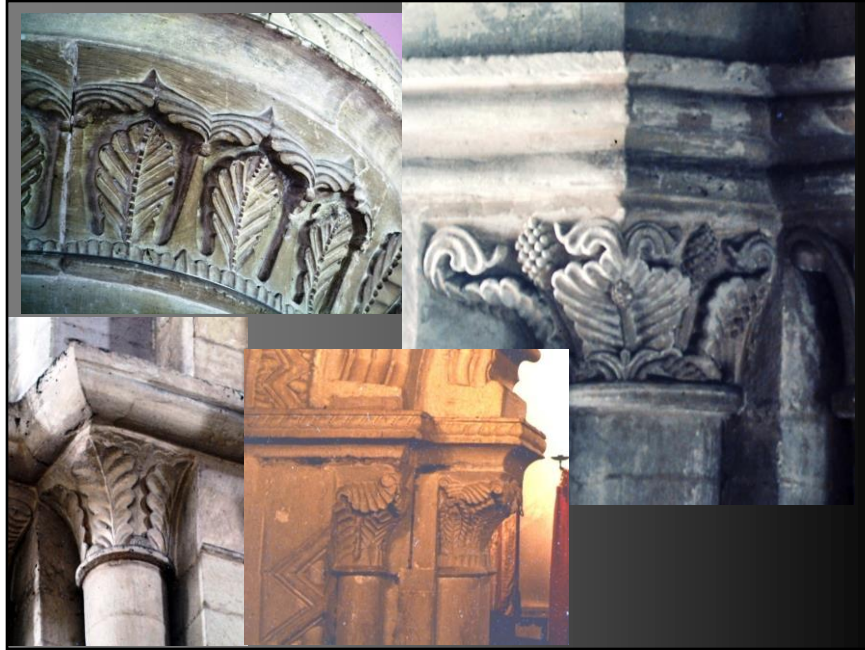
Steyning clerestory on the south side and Winchfield again. Fluting.



Steining and St Cross. All this wonderful playing with detail – these leaves at Steining, fluted and furled, bell shaped with the ornamental foliage, also at St Cross.



Steyning and St Cross. More distinctive leaf forms from Steyning and St Cross – this is where Steyning Man got his inspiration and I would suggest he worked at St Cross before coming to Steyning.



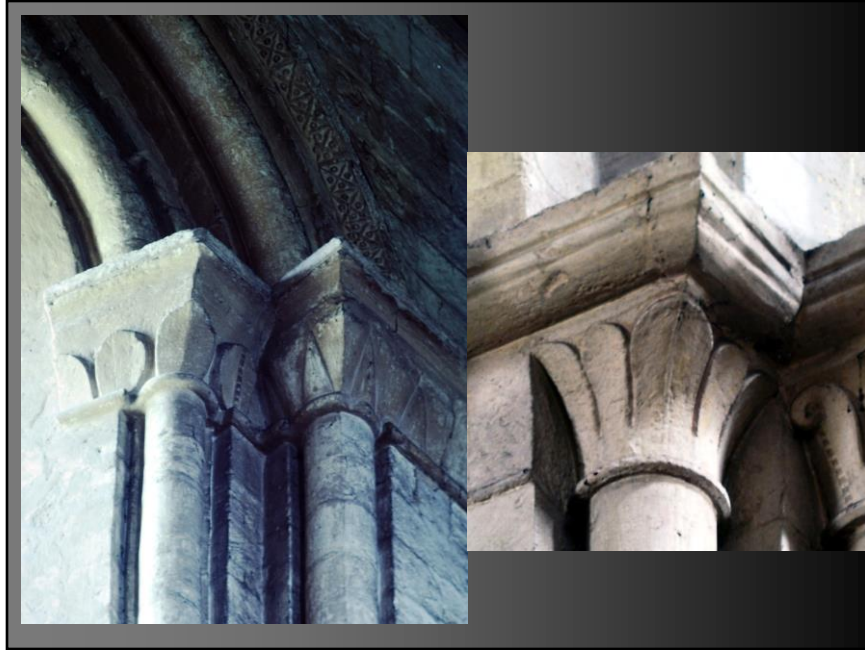
Steyning and St Cross. More leaf details from Steyning and from St Cross – the leaves flopping over at the top – all this very unusual.



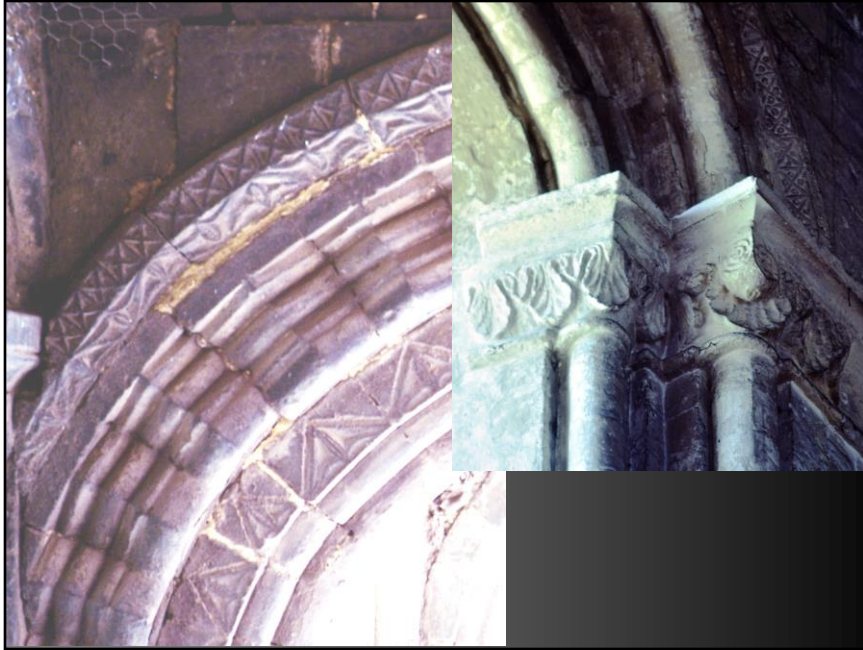
Steining. More leaves - Run round Sussex and see if you can see any of these – there won't be that many



St Cross. More leaves.



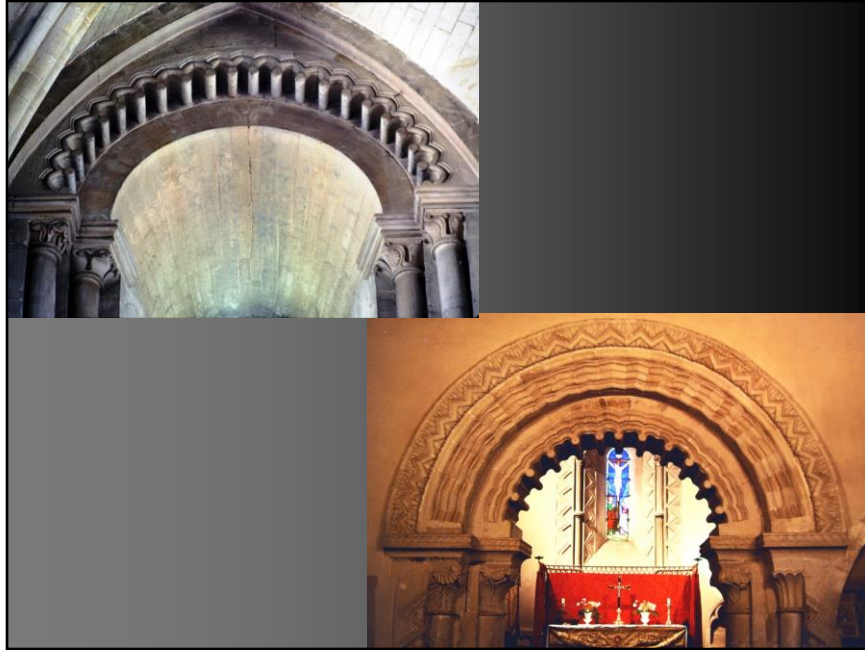
Steining and St Cross. Plain leaves – laurel or ‘rubberplant’ – Steining detail rivals St Cross



Steining and the Water Tower at Canterbury. This is something which is really quite intriguing; you have to look very hard up to see this. At the top a saltire (St Andrew's) cross detail with a 'polo mint' motif, and an even simpler version of St Andrew's Cross – here it is (on the left) in another work by Prior Wibert at Canterbury, the staircase of the new Hall – so again Steyning is being very up to date and fashionable.



Steining. Another gouged roll – that's a good illustration of the keeling but here - a rarity, you see these the horizontal rolls on the underside of the arch – where do they occur? – you've guessed it – St Cross and Winchfield



St Cross and Winchfield. The chancel arch at Winchfield (right) and the choir of St Cross, one of the east clerestory windows on the top left – here you see the little rolls which are running through there.



Steyning and St Nicolas, Old Shoreham – the local link – the foliant rosettes. In their unusual position, but we have them at Steyning.



St Nicolas, Old Shoreham. The link in a way is substantiated when we see that motif, the label mask we found at Old Sarum here in Old Shoreham, making reference to the great patronage of Bishop Roger of Salisbury; think of the cost of doing that, in place of the usual roll moulding - you need an infinite supply of polo mints.



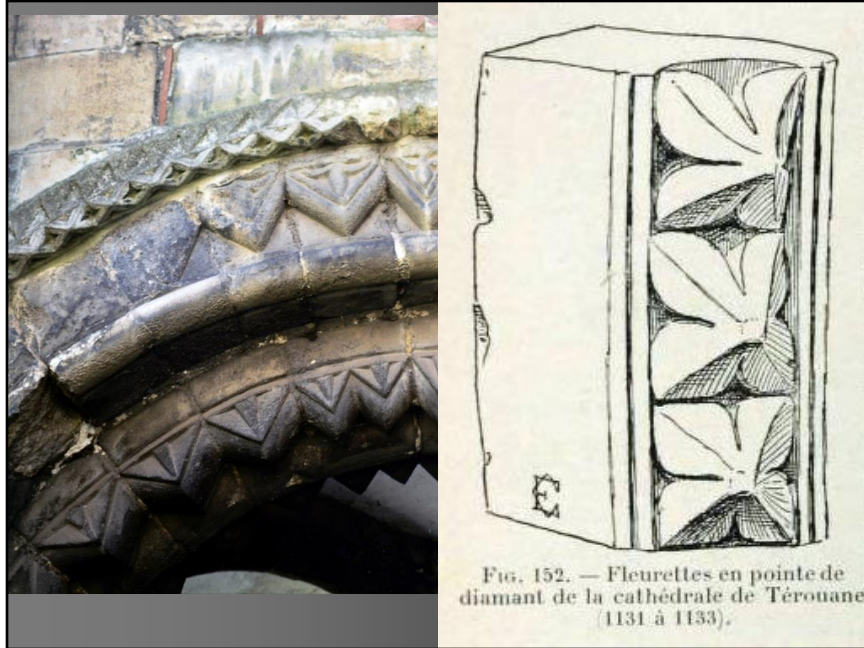
St Nicolas, Old Shoreham, Cathedral of Old Sarum and Sherborne Abbey. Label masks - at Old Sarum and in Sherborne Abbey, another building of Bishop Roger on the west crossing arch.



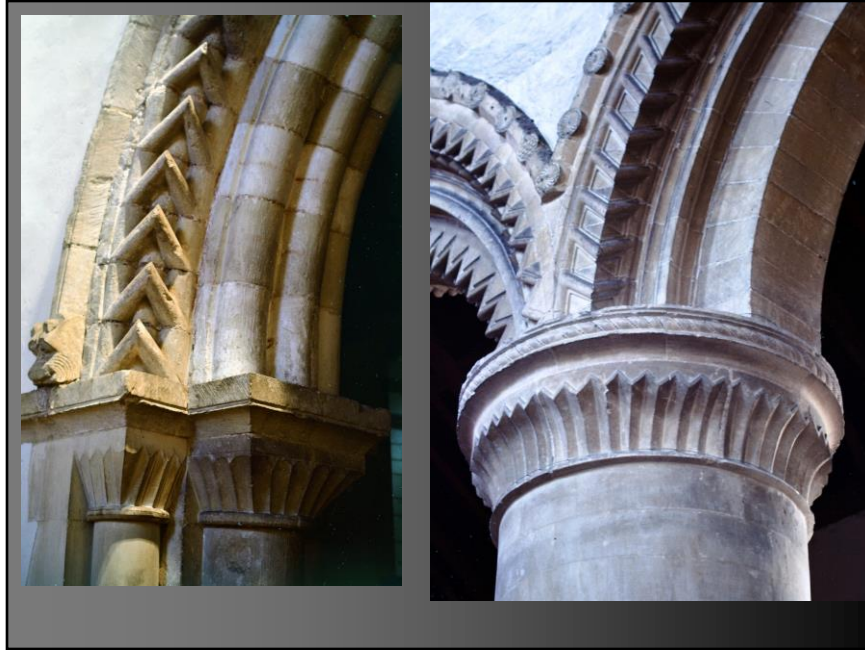
Steving, St Cross, Infirmary Chapel Canterbury, Finally for dating – I said the nave is between 1160 and 1175. Here we have the detail of the westernmost clerestory arch on the south side, the last bit which survives of the Norman building at Steving, and if we look at this waterleaf capital here at St Cross, it's not unlike the plankton leaf like design, except it flares out, it curves out, and the key thing is this little volute which curls out, and here a former clerestory capital of the infirmary chapel at Canterbury, Prior Wibert 1153-67. I don't have an illustration but this type of capital also appears in the choir of Canterbury cathedral. It is precisely dated 1175 after the devastating fire of 1174. They disappear after that and new acanthus capitals come in from France. This in 1175 at Canterbury is outdated but they continue elsewhere but certainly not after 1180 and for a building this important I think after 1175 this is going to be outdated, too late.



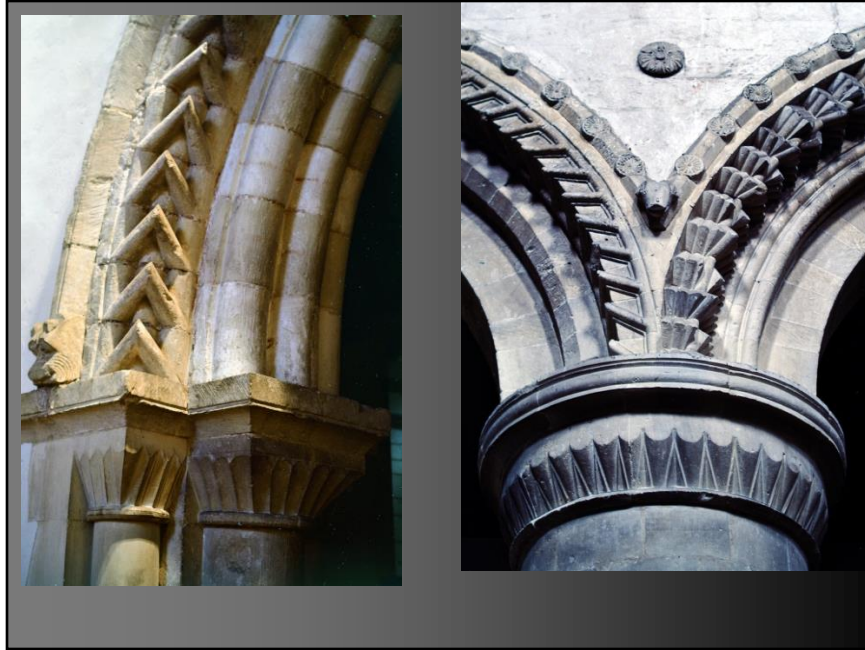
Steyning. Dogtooth; David Parsons had a challenge for me, the use of dogtooth in Steyning Church. This is dogtooth from the north nave aisle, a little pyramid, based, I am told on the dogtooth violet, and here it is on the south clerestory. This is generally associated with the rebuilding of Canterbury after 1175 and on into the C13.



Canterbury Water Tower and Thérouanne (1131-57). But it also occurs here, on the Water Tower of Canterbury Cathedral, Prior Wibert again, 1153-67, from where we have also drawn many other parallels for the work at Steyning. On the right, this is an illustration from Camille Enlart's *Manuel d'Archaeologie* – he illustrates dogtooth at Thérouanne Cathedral (destroyed in the fifteenth century, dated 1131 or 1133. 1131 is right at the starting date – Therouanne was consecrated around 1157. So with that French reference and the reference to Prior Wibert I think the dogtooth at Steyning comes way back, pre-1180 will fit very happily into the 1160-1175 bracket.



Burpham and Steyning. Relations in the area – Burpham Church. Wonderful little church, and here on the south transept arch fluted capitals, we have the beast head label stop and the chevron ornament – the Steyning ornament here pointing down



. **Burpham and Steyning.** And another one – pointing up - the quality at Burpham is not quite so good, perhaps someone who'd seen Steyning and wanted it for the south transept.



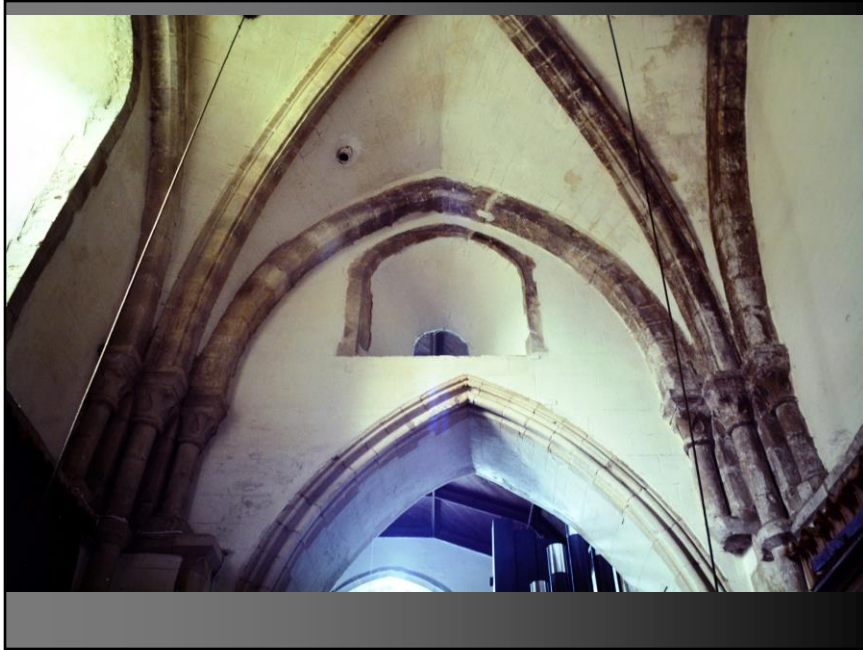
Amberley – wonderful massive chancel arch, there is a detail, multiple chevrons.



Broadwater – much simpler – moulded arch, chevron arch.



Broadwater. This is the chancel arch very elaborate dogtooth ornament and we've got gouged rolls used there; look also at Bishopstone.



Icklesham – the tower vault on the N side, gouged roll, a mini one just like Steyning, waterleaf capitals, notice as well pointed arch.



Wimborne Minster. This is a bit of an outlier – Wimborne Minster and other cuth-name saint – St Cuthburga. This is going to date probably from the eleventh century but look at the ornament - but also Sarum label stops.



Steyning. South side of Steyning exterior. This weird buttress, very, very unusual.



Malmesbury. It occurs at Malmesbury – I wonder if it was introduced by Bishop Roger at Old Sarum.



. **Steining, corbels** Get some binoculars and look at the corbels. Corbels again are found in the most extra richly decorated churches.



Winchester Cathedral corbels.



St Mary de Haura, New Shoreham. Finally, a building just down the road which continues the principles of variety we have seen at Steyning. See the north arcade, all the columns different. This is interesting in terms of the rivalry between Shoreham and Steyning – this is the latest style brought in from France.