

**The Church of St Peter, Forncett**  
**Detail of Eastern Bell Opening**  
Supplement to principal report of November 2006



**Description**

*Circa 1100.*

Basic cushion shape with raised ribs emphasising the angles as with the other surviving original capital. Additional decoration of incised volutes at each corner and a sunken *patée formée* cross on the outward face. On the lower faces of the capital, emerging from the pronounced necking, is further leafy decoration apparently

composed of four concave leaf shapes connecting to form a saltire Each motif is raised in relation to the tapering capital. The stone is a rough shelly limestone no doubt from the Barnack quarries near Stamford.

It is unusual to have decorated capitals at bell openings of parish churches at this period; they are normally confined to a simple cushion or volute type. When such decoration occurs, it is often eccentric and original in comparison with the Romanesque sculpture of the great Anglo Norman churches being erected at that time throughout the country. Comparison can be made with Lincolnshire early 12<sup>th</sup>-century towers where bell stage capitals sometimes imitate oddly provincial Roman models; for example St Mary le Wigford, Lincoln.

It is of interest that the eastern bell opening was chosen for the decoration directly above the ridge of the nave. This position is the least visible from the ground and, no doubt, a reason for the sculpture not having been noted before. The use of the oriented place was presumably for the same reasons that medieval churches are aligned with their chancels to the east.

Stephen Heywood. March 2008  
NHER No: 10048