Romanesque Sculpture and Architecture in Cornwall – An Introduction

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Distinguishing Features

❖ Romanesque (or Norman) architecture in UK c.1070–1200

❖ Rounded arches; small windows; use of geometric ornament e.g. chevron; architectural features e.g. capitals based upon Roman forms but with own character

❖ Sculpture tends to survive on fonts, tympana (segmental infill above doorways), capitals, corbels (supporting a feature, often along roofline), around doorways

Tympana

Egloskerry* N door – dragon; S door – Agnus Dei.
Treneglos* S door – two lions beneath central tree of life.
Launceston, St Thomas S door – two large rosettes and Agnus Dei; other fragments nearby.
Rame (set inside church) – 3 large rosettes.
Mylor N door – single cross in circle above hyphenated chevron; W door – rosette.
Perranaworthal S door (inside, set above door) – Agnus Dei with border of wavy foliage.
St Michael Caerhays N door – Agnus Dei.
Cury S door – interlocking circles in chevron border; small flowers.

Doorways

St Germans W portal* stunning archway of 7 orders of different chevron varieties.
St Anthony-in-Roseland* S door with chevron, foliage in cusped border, Agnus Dei.
Kilkhampton* S door 4 orders of chevron, beakhead, carved capitals c.1130s/40s.
Morwenstow* S door + porch same carvers/date as Kilkhampton; north arcade c.1160s/70s
        (close connections with N Devon Romanesque).
Cury* S door with interlaced chevron around tympanum; decorative jambs.
St Martin-by-Looe N door chevron.
Manaccan S door frontal (forward-pointing) chevron.
St Stephen-in-Brannel S door with small bosses.
Landewednack S door with chevron and geometric motifs.

Fonts

Palmette type (repeating palm motif and geometric patterns) – Fowey; Ladock; Lanreath*; Lanlivery (fragments); St Mewan (base of 14C font); strong comparisons with S Devon examples in Torbay and Teignmouth area.

Altarnun type (heads on each corner, rosettes supported by serpents with head at each end) – Altarnun*, Callington, Lanest, Lezant, Landrake, Launceston St Thomas, Lawhitton, Jacobstow, Warbstow, (and in Devon) Bratton Clovelly and Ashwater.

Bodmin type (corner heads and columns, elaborate examples have foliage/tree of life and lions/beasts on bowl) – Bodmin*, St Newlyn East, Roche, St Stephen-in-Brannel, Tregony, St Austell, Luxulyan, South Hill, St Kea, St Columb Minor, Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Wenn, St Ewe, Crantock, Stithians (fragment as aumbry base on N side of chancel), St Erme (foliage, no corner columns, but clearly by same carvers).

(Both Altarnun and Bodmin type fonts late Romanesque c.1180–1200).

Miscellaneous

Lanreath – altar slab remnant (v. rare) carved with repeating star motif.
Liskeard – tower arch and recycled corbel heads on 1900s tower.
Tintagel – fragments of sculpture incorporated into fabric near chancel; altar stone in chapel.
St Stephen-by-Launceston – E end figure sculpture 11C panels of Christ and the Virgin Mary.
St Germans – numerous capitals/window arches carved with chevron and other motifs.
St Teath – Norman pillar fragments in church and around village.
South Petherwin – enormous scalloped capital; pillar.

Known to be Lost

Bodmin W doorway/portal – 18C engraving (Borlase?) in Maclean's survey of Trigg-Minor.
Tremaine N door – tympanum carved with a dragon (Langdon 1906). Small church unbeatable for atmosphere, on hilltop with trees; beautiful views and silence.

Further Reading

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Zarnecki, George, 1951. *English Romanesque Sculpture 1066–1140*, London: Tiranti.

Zarnecki, George, 1953. *Later English Romanesque Sculpture 1140–1210*, London: Tiranti.

* indicates a fantastic example – well worth a visit!