Romanesque Art in Southern Manche: Photo Album
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001. In this album, there are no monuments described in all touristic guides. On the contrary, these twelve Romanesque churches are little known. They are located in Southern Manche, that is to say in the southern part of the department of Manche, in Normandy, along the coast or in the countryside. These churches were built in the 10th, 11th or 12th century by villagers and parishioners, with local stones - schist and granite - on the medieval roads used by pilgrims to reach Mont Saint-Michel, their final destination after travelling for many months.

002. Southern Manche. The map of the region. From north to south, these blue spots show the churches of Saint-Martin-le-Vieux, Bréville, Yquelon, Saint-Pair-sur-Mer, Angey, Saint-Jean-le-Thomas, Dragey, Genêts, Saint-Léonard-de-Vains, Saint-Loup and Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme, without forgetting the beautiful Romanesque gate in Sartilly. This map was digitized by Georges Cercel.

003. Southern Manche. An old map of the region. This region has belonged to Cotentin for its northern part and Avranchin for its southern part. The limit between Cotentin and Avranchin is the small river Thar, that flows into the Channel at the south of Granville. In the Middle Ages, this region was rich, with more people living on the coast than inside the land. The economic life was active, with fisheries, salines near Saint-Martin-de-Bréhal, Bréville and Saint-Léonard-de-Vains, pitch sand and kelp used as fertilizers, and a number of intensive cultures. This old map belongs to the collection of the city library in Granville. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_02]

004. Southern Manche. The deanery of Saint-Pair. The parishes of Saint-Martin-le-Vieux, Bréville, Yquelon and Saint-Pair-sur-Mer were part of the deanery of Saint-Pair, one of the five deaneries of the archidiachoné of Coutances. The archidiachoné of Coutances was one of the four archidiachonés of the diocese of Coutances, the other ones being the archidiachonés of Cotentin, Bauptois and Val-de-Vire. Map by Marie Lebert.

005. Southern Manche. The deanery of Genêts. The parishes of Angey, Sartilly, Saint-Jean-le-Thomas, Dragey and Genêts were part of the deanery of Genêts and the archidiachoné of Avranches, like the priory of Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The archidiachoné of Avranches included three other deaneries: the deanery of Avranches, the deanery of Tirepied (that included the parish of Saint-Loup) and the deanery of the Chrétienté (Christendom). The deanery of the Chrétienté included nine parishes around the episcopal town of Avranches, including the parish of Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. Map by Marie Lebert.

006. Southern Manche. The medieval roads going to Mont Saint-Michel. This region was crossed by several roads used by pilgrims to reach Mont Saint-Michel. At the north of Avranches, we had from west to east the shore road coming from Saint-Pair-sur-Mer, the road coming from Saint-Pair-sur-Mer (with a different route), the road coming from Coutances, the road coming from Saint-Lô, and the road coming from Caen. At the south of Avranches, a medieval road was used by the pilgrims coming from Tinchebray, Condé-sur-Noireau, Falaise or Lisieux to reach Mont Saint-Michel. Map by Marie Lebert.

007. Southern Manche. Geological map. All these churches were built in granite and schist, which were the local stones. Sedimentary grounds formed by schist rocks surround two large granite grounds, those of Vire and Avranches. Laying down from east to west, the granite ground of Vire is around five kilometers large, and ends on the west with the cliffs of Carolles and Champeaux. Laying down from west to east, the granite ground of Avranches is narrower, and only from two to four kilometers large. These granite grounds are both surrounded by a metamorphic ring formed with schist rocks and grauwack (a kind of schist) rocks. The ground of Saint-Pair is a flysch (detritic ground) formed with grauwack rocks, siltit rocks et black argilit rocks with some schist inside. The ground of Granville is a flysch formed with grauwack rocks alternating with schist rocks. Map by Marie Lebert.

008. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. Location. The village of Saint-Martin-le-Vieux is located between Bréhal and the sea, near the haven of the Venlée, 2 kilometers west of Bréhal and 9 kilometers north of Granville. The village was situated on the medieval road coming from Cherbourg and going to Saint-Pair-sur-Mer to reach Mont Saint-Michel, the final destination for many pilgrims.

009. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The church, in ruins, stands on a hill. The church was under St Martin's patronage, and the second saint was St. Eutropius. The parish belonged to the deanery of St-Pair and the archidiachoné of Coutances. Foulques Paynel, probably a relative of Guillaume Paynel, founder of the Abbey of Hambye in 1145, gave to the abbey part of the tithe of the parish of Saint-Martin-le-Vieux, a donation mentioned in the cartulary of the Abbey of Hambye. During the French Revolution, the church was used as an arsenal and all its furniture was sold. It became a church again in 1801 but, as it was threatening to collapse around 1804 or 1805, it was no longer used. Since that time, the parish of Saint-Martin-le-Vieux is part of the parish of Bréhal. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_01]

010. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The Romanesque ruins, with a double belfry added in the 16th century. The ruins were overgrown by vegetation for a while. The masonry is made of irregular blocks in schist and granite. The arches and abutments of the openings are in granite. The schist is the local stone. The granit could come from the granite ground of Vire a few miles south. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_002]

011. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The Romanesque ruins. Between the choir and the nave, a double belfry (double because intended for two bells) was added in the 16th century, and built in pink granite from Chausey (an island not far from Granville). Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_003]

012. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building is formed by a long nave and a flat apse choir. The whole building has an external length of 26,5 meters and an external width of 6,4 meters (width of the front). The double belfry added in the 16th century rises between nave and choir. Plan by Marie Lebert.

013. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The south wall of the Romanesque nave. The large bay with a lowered centering was probably added in the 16th century, during the building of the double belfry. On the right of this large bay, the centering of the small Romanesque bay is carved in a granite block. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_004]

014. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The south wall of the Romanesque nave and its door, with its lowered centering and its abutments with chamfered edges. The small bay on the left is also Romanesque. The masonry of the walls is made of irregular blocks of schist and granite. Elements of opus spicatum (fishbone masonry) are visible, a proof the south wall is the oldest part of the church. Above the door, the little trefoil bay was probably added in the 16th century, during the building of the belfry. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_005]

015. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. The small Romanesque bay in the south wall of the nave, with its lowered centering and its abutments in granite. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_04]

016. Saint-Martin-le-Vieux. Behind the old cross, the double belfry from the 16th century, built in granite from Chausey. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_05]

017. Bréville. Location. The village of Bréville is located on the coast, about 6 kilometers north of Granville. It was situated on a medieval road that came from Cherbourg to go to Saint-Pair-sur-Mer before reaching Mont Saint-Michel, the final destination for many pilgrims.

018. Bréville. The Romanesque church in front of the line of dunes. In the background, the tip of Granville stands on the left. But, In Medieval Ages, Granville was almost non-existent, and the main town was Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_11]

019. Bréville. The Romanesque church among the trees. In the 12th century, Bréville had an active economic life, with fisheries, salines, pitch sand and kelp used as fertilizers, and intensive crops. The territory of the parish was owned by Mont Saint-Michel since 1022, when Richard II, duke of Normandy, gave the barony of Saint-Pair to Mont Saint-Michel. In the 13th century, the patronage was secular, with Guillelmus de Breinville as the lord between 1251 and 1279. The tithe was shared between the pastor and the abbot of Mont Saint-Michel. In the 16th century, Bréville, with its church and salines, was a prebend for the cathedral of Coutances. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_006]

020. Bréville. The Romanesque church was under the patronage of Our Lady (Notre Dame, in French), and the second saint was St. Helier. The parish belonged to the deanery of Saint-Pair and the archidiachoné of Coutances. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_007]

021. Bréville. The Romanesque church is composed of a two-span nave followed by a two-span choir with a flat apse. The square tower rises between choir and nave. Most of the nave, the tower base and the side walls of the choir are Romanesque, and probably from the second half of the 12th century. The masonry is made of irregular blocks of schist. Granite is used for the buttresses, the abutments of openings, the attached piers, the columns and the arches. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_006]

022. Bréville. The sacristy is the five-sided small building located in the extension of the choir. It was added much later, in the 19th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_009]

023. Bréville. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building is formed by a two-row nave and a two-row choir with a flat apse. The whole building has an external length of 27,75 meters and an external width of 7,65 meters (width of the front). The tower rises between choir and nave. The small five-sided building in the extension of the choir houses the sacristy. Plan by Marie Lebert.

024. Bréville. The church tower, between choir and nave, has a Romanesque base, while the floor in slight recess and the spire are from the late 15th or early 16th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_010]

025. Bréville. The church tower reaching the sky. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_07]

026. Bréville. The first floor and spire of the church tower. The first floor is opened on each side by a long narrow opening. The octagonal stone spire has angles rounded by tori, with a small gable with thin columns in the extension of each opening. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_011]

027. Bréville. The Romanesque gate in the south base of the tower, with a semi-circular arch formed by a grain molded by a torus followed by a chamfer carved with slightly visible saw-teeth. The archivolt is a thick band adorned with saw-teeth in high relief carved with a hollow row of triangular sticks. The archivolt rests on the right on a stone carved with a human head, while disappearing on the left into the masonry of the nave. The central keystone of the arch is adorned with a large human head carved in high relief. The capitals baskets of the attached columns are carved with two angle hooks. The two human heads, carved in a limestone, didn't resist well to the test of time, as well as the angle hooks. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_012]
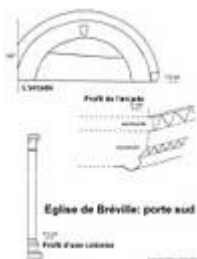
028. Bréville. Sketch of the Romanesque gate in the south base of the tower. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

029. Bréville. Above the Romanesque gate in the south base of the tower, a human head carved in a limestone didn't resist well to the test of time, unlike the heads carved in granite in the south gate of the church of Yquelon. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_013]

030. Bréville. The Romanesque gate in the south base of the tower. The archivolt topping the semi-circular arch rests on a granite stone carved with a human head. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_014]

031. Bréville. A Romanesque modillion carved with a human head, under the cornice. Most other modillions, more recent, are plain and only chamfered. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_015]

032. Bréville. A Romanesque modillion carved with a human head, under the cornice. This modillion is above the bay of the second row of the nave. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_016]

033. Bréville. The choir (inside). Its ribbed vault is from the late 15th or early 16th century. The tiles of the second row of the choir are from 1863. The floor of the first row is covered with schist pavings from Beauchamps laid in 1969. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_017]

034. Bréville. The nave (inside). Its wooden ceiling was replaced by a plaster ceiling in 1852. The door and the large bay visible in the back wall - which is the west wall of the front – doesn't have much character because of the rebuilding of the church front in 1783. The pegged oak door is from 1970. In 1969, the walls were covered with a lime plaster, and the floor with schist pavings from Beauchamps. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_018]

035. Bréville. The nave (inside). The plaster ceiling from 1852 was recently replaced by a wooden ceiling, like in old times. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_09]

036. Bréville. The tower base (inside), between choir and nave. In the foreground, an arch with chamfered edges rests on half-attached columns. This arch between the choir and the tower base was redone during the renovation of the choir in the 15th or 16th century. In the background, the arch between the nave and the tower base belongs to the original Romanesque building. This is a slightly triangular arch with irregular quoins, resting on two thick attached piers. The pier impost is molded with a chemfered band. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_019]

037. Bréville. The main altar, situated in the apse of the choir, with a statue of Our Lady on the left - the church is under her patronage - and a statue of St. Helier - the second saint - on the right. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_020]

038. Bréville. A detail of the main altar, in the apse of the choir. A statue of Our Lady, the patron saint of the church. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_021]

039. Bréville. A detail of the main altar, in the apse of the choir. The statue of St. Helier, second saint of the church. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_022]

040. Bréville. The fountain Saint-Hélier. This fountain was topped by the statue of St. Helier that is now in the background, on the right. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_10]

041. Yquelon. Location. The village of Yquelon is located 2 kilometers from Granville, between the villages of Donville-les-Bains and Saint-Nicolas, at the south of the river Boscq. The name "Yquelon" has Scandinavian roots and means "oak branch". Yquelon was situated on the medieval road coming from Cherbourg and going to Saint-Pair-sur-Mer before reaching Mont Saint-Michel, the final destination for many pilgrims.

042. Yquelon. The Romanesque church. The territory of the parish was part of the barony of Saint-Pair, owned by Mont Saint-Michel since 1022, when Richard II, duke of Normandy, gave the barony to the Mont. The lord of Yquelon, Rogerius de Ikelun, affixed his signature to two main charters of the Abbey of the Lucerne in 1162. In the 13th century, the patronage was certainly secular. The tithe was shared between the pastor, who was receiving most of it, the Abbey of Montmorel (located in Poilley, near Ducey), and the leper hospital Saint-Blaise de Champeaux. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_023]

043. Yquelon. The Romanesque church is under St. Pair's patronage, and the second saint is St. Maur. The parish belonged to the deanery of Saint-Pair and the archidiachoné of Coutances. The churches of Yquelon and Bréville have similarities, because they are near by and were both built in the second half of the 12th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_024]

044. Yquelon. The Romanesque church is formed by a two-row nave followed by a two-row choir with a flat apse. The large square tower – with its three floors in slight recess and a saddleback roof - is adjacent to the first row on the north side of the choir. The rectangular openings show that the tower was partly rebuilt since the 12th century. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_12]

045. Yquelon. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building has a two-row nave followed by a two-row choir with a flat apse. The whole building has an external length of 21,75 meters and an external width of 7,6 meters (width of the front). The tower is adjacent to the first row of the north side of the choir. Plan by Marie Lebert.

046. Yquelon. The Romanesque church front. Its masonry is made from irregular blocks of schist and granite, that are local stones. The front wall is strengthened at each end by a flat buttress resting on a stone wall. The three semi-circular bays above the portal were opened in 1896, to replace a large rectangular bay, that had itself replaced the two small original Romanesque bays. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_025]


047. Yquelon. The Romanesque church front. Its gable wall is topped by an antefix cross with bifid branches. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_026]

048. Yquelon. The Romanesque church front. The oculus in the gable wall is original. Its band is adorned with billets, with a stone carved with two human heads in high relief in its lower part. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_027]

049. Yquelon. The Romanesque west gate. Its semi-circular arch is formed by a plain grain resting on plain abutments and surrounded by an archivolt. The archivolt is a prominent band adorned with saw-teeth in high relief carved with a hollow row of triangular sticks. Its two ends rest on a granite stone carved with a human head. The keystone of the arch is adorned with a human head in higher relief. The inside abutments are molded with a small column with a square abacus and base. These abutments support a tympanum in granite, which was restored and carved with a cross In Romanesque style in 1897. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_13]
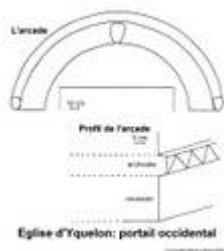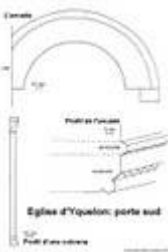

050. Yquelon. Sketch of the Romanesque west gate. This gate has similarities with the south gate in the church of Bréville, located a few kilometers north-west. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

051. Yquelon. The Romanesque west gate. Detail of the semi-circular arch of the gate. Its archivolt rests at each end on a granite stone carved with a human head. These granite heads resisted more gracefully to the test of time than the limestone heads in the church of Bréville. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_029]

052. Yquelon. The Romanesque south gate. His semi-circular arch is formed of a grain molded with a torus and topped by a chamfer carved with a row of slightly visible saw-teeth. The arch is surrounded by an archivolt formed by a thick band with chamfered edges. The lower chamfer is also adorned with a row of slightly visible saw-teeth. The inner grain rests on two attached columns through capitals. Their basket, topped by a square abacus, is adorned with small angle hooks. The door certainly underwent an overhaul: both capitals, without an astragalus, are not well connected to the shaft of the columns and to the beginning of the arch, the torus of which is cut. The outer grain and archivolt disappear into the masonry of the nave to the left, whereas they rest on a slightly prominent and chamfered large stone on the right. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_14]

053. Yquelon. Sketch of the Romanesque south gate. This gate also has similarities with the south gate in the church of Bréville, located a few kilometers north-west. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

054. Yquelon. The Romanesque choir (inside). The nave opens on the choir with a very thick triumphal arch resting on two piers embedded into the thick wall. The two bays of the choir are separated by another very thick arch. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_030]

055. Yquelon. The Romanesque choir (inside). Each row is topped by a ribbed vault. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_031]

056. Yquelon. The Romanesque vault of the choir. The very large ribs are adorned with two thick angular tori surrounding a small triangular molding. This Romanesque ribbed vault was probably one of the first ribbed vaults in Normandy. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_032]

057. Yquelon. The Romanesque vault of the choir. The ceiling arches and ribs rest on reversed pyramid-shaped bases. Topped with a square abacus slightly chamfered, the central base supports both the fallout of a ceiling arch and the one of two ribs. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_033]

058. Yquelon. The Romanesque vault of the choir. The vault keystones are carved with geometric designs in low relief within a circle. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_16]

059. Yquelon. The enfeu and its tombstone. In the north wall of the nave, an enfeu (recess for a tombstone) with a lowered centering houses a 12th-century tombstone in soft limestone depicting a knight. Mr Lomas described it in a journal named Bulletin of the Society of Antiquaries in Normandy (Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie) dated 1886-1887: "The tombstone bears a knight in relief, depicted with his hands clasped, his head resting on a pillow, and his greyhound at his feet. (...) It bears no indication of his name or no indication of a year. It is therefore impossible to specify the person whose remains are covered. What we can say with certainty is that this person belongs to the powerful family of Yquelon, whose family member Roger Yquelon affixed his signature on two main charters of the Abbey of the Lucerne in 1162." Discovered in 1885 in the cemetery adjoining the north of the church, the tombstone was embedded in the enfeu in February 1893. At the length of the enfeu, 2.15 meters, is exactly the length of the tombstone, we can guess the tombstone was probably buried in the cemetery at the time of the French Revolution, before being discovered in 1885 and regaining its original location. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_17]

060. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. Location. The village of Saint-Pair-sur-Mer is located on the coast, 3.5 kilometers south of Granville. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer was a prosperous town and the vital center of the region until the construction of Granville in the 15th century. Many people moved to Granville then, at the expense of Saint-Pair. Saint-Pair grew again in 1880 with the development of seaside resorts. Medieval roads – a coast road and a shore road - were used by pilgrims from Saint-Pair to Mont Saint-Michel, and are still used today by "modern" pilgrims and visitors.

061. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The church is under St. Pair's patronage, and the second saint is St. Gaud. The church is a place of pilgrimage dedicated to the worship of St. Gaud, whose sarcophagus was found in 1131 during the building of the Romanesque church. Much later, in 1880, the Romanesque nave was demolished to be replaced by a much larger nave and a transept to accommodate the many parishioners of this popular seaside resort. The enlarged church was consecrated on August 26, 1888. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_18]

062. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The church is shown here from the north-east to get a view of the whole building. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_07]

063. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The old Romanesque church, after a drawing from E. Biguet published in the journal Le Pays de Granville dated 1934. The Romanesque nave was demolished in 1880 to be replaced by a much larger nave and a transept. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_034]

064. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The church plan before 1880, as we can imagine it. The total external length was 37,5 meters. The external width of the nave was 11,1 meters (this hasn't changed). Plan by Marie Lebert.

065. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The plan of the present church. Regulary oriented from west to east, the building has a two-row nave with a porch, a large transept and a three-row choir with a semi-circular apse. The external length of the whole building is 57,1 meters. The external width of the nave is 11,1 meters. The square tower rises at the crossing of the transept. The transept arms are opened by two apses on their eastern side. The choir opens north on two chapels, one towards the apse and one towards the tower. At the angle formed by the south transept arm and the choir, a rectangular building houses the sacristy. Plan by Marie Lebert.

066. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The Romanesque tower. We can accurately give a date to the tower foundations, which is very seldom. We know that they date from 1131, thanks to a contemporary manuscript mentioning the discovery of St. Gaud's sarcophagus in the choir during the digging of the foundations. The same manuscript gives the name of the architect – Rogerius Altomansiunculo - who supervised the works. To know an architect's name is quite unusual too, because most architects of the time were remaining anonymous. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_19]

067. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The Romanesque tower is square, and its two floors are topped by an octogonal spire. A group of two blind arches adorn the first floor, at the north and south. Large twin bays adorn the second floor on all four sides. Divided by a small column with a square abacus and a square base, these twin bays are topped by a semi-circular arch molded with a simple torus and resting on attached columns. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_035]

068. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The Romanesque tower. The two floors of the tower. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_20]

069. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The Romanesque tower. Inside, the tower rests on four massive symmetrical piers supporting four slightly triangular arches. These arches surround the groin vault beneath the tower. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_036]
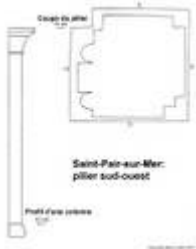
070. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. Sketch of the south-western pier of the tower. This pier is as follows: east, west and south, it is salient. North, an attached pier surrounded by two attached columns rests on a stoneboard. Molded as a champered band, the impost topping the pier forms the abacus of the capitals of the two columns. The capital baskets are carved, with a square base topped by a chamfer. The pier rests on a broader square base with chamfered edges. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

071. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. Detail of the north pier of the tower. Resting on a stoneboard, an attached pier surrounded by two attached columns is topped by an impost molded as a chamfered band. The impost also forms the abacus of the capitals. The capital baskets, in granite, are carved with angle hooks. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_037]

072. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. A carved capital basket. Under the tower, a capital of the north-west pier has a granite basket roughly carved in low relief with the bust of a man whose head is big. His right arm is raised and his left arm is folded over his chest. An oak branch is visible on the right. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_038]

073. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. A carved capital basket. Under the tower, another granite basket is carved with an angle hook in low relief. The capital baskets of the north-west, north-east and south-east piers are all adorned with angle hooks of this kind. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_039]

074. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. St. Pair's sarcophagus. A stone altar dating from the 19th century covers the shell limestone sarcophagus of St. Pair. St. Pair (482-565) founded a chapel with St. Scubilion, the foundations of which are still present underneath the choir of the present church. St. Pair also gave his name to the village previously known under the Roman name Scessiacus, or Scissy. St. Pair and St. Scubilion's sarcophagi were found in 1875, during the excavations made by abbot F. Baudry. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_040]

075. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The plan of the oratory sketched by abbot F. Baudry. In September 1875, during excavations in the church choir, abbot F. Baudry found part of the foundations of the 6th-century oratory and several shell limestone sarcophagi: the sarcophagi of St. Pair and St. Scubilion and, nearby, those of St. Senier and St. Aroaste. St. Gaud's sarcophagus was found in 1131 while digging the foundations of the Romanesque tower. This plan is included in the book of Chanoine Pigeon entitled "Vie des Saints du Diocèse de Coutances et d'Avranches" (Life of the Saints in the Diocese of Coutances and Avranches), published in Avranches in 1888.

076. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The foundations of the oratory. On the floor of the second row of the present choir, the double line of black tiles surrounded by a row of clear tiles shows the exact place of the foundations of the old oratory. The underneath foundations form a semi-circular apse going on as side walls that disappear in the Romanesque building. Fortunatus (530-600), bishop of Poitiers, wrote in his "Vie de Saint Pair" (St. Pair's Life) that the cells of the early monks were built beside the sea. Then monks move their dwellings on the banks of the river Saigue, at the site of the present church, attracting a population that settled around the oratory. In the foreground, a white gravestone shows the spot where St. Pair's sarcophagus was buried and discovered. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_042]

077. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. St. Gaud's reliquary, on the altar covering his shell limestone sarcophagus. St. Gaud (400-491) has its own chapel, built in the 19th century in the north wall of the choir, the church being a place of pilgrimage dedicated to his worship. After fourty years as the second bishop of Evreux, St. Gaud resigned from office to come and retire in the solitude of Saint-Pair. St.

Gaud's sarcophagus was found in 1131 while digging the foundations of the Romanesque tower. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_041]

078. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. St. Gaud's reliquary. In this photo dated 2009, the reliquary is adorned with both ex-votos and flowers. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_21]

079. Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. The baptismal font. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_24]

080. Angey. Location. The village of Angey is located 2,5 kilometers west of the village of Sartilly. The parish of Angey has been part of the parish of Sartilly since 1914. The church of Angey is used only very occasionally for weddings and funerals.

081. Angey. The church and its cemetery. The church is under St. Samson's patronage, and the second saint is St. John the Baptist. The parish of Angey belonged to the deanery of Genêts and the archidiachoné of Avranches. In 1162, the church of Angey and its dependencies were given to the Abbey of the Lucerne by William of St. Jean. The abbot of the Lucerne was the lord of the church from then on. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_12]

082. Angey. The church, with its Romanesque choir. The base of the tower may also be Romanesque, but from a later period, because its masonry is slightly different from the masonry of the choir. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_25]

083. Angey. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building is formed by a long nave and a one-row choir. The whole building has an external length of 26,85 meters and an external width of 7,5 meters (width of the front). The tower rises between choir and nave. Plan by Marie Lebert.

084. Angey. The choir with a flat apse, and the tower rising between choir and nave. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_26]

085. Angey. The baptismal font, probably from the 14th century, is adorned with carved trefoil arches in low relief. The base of the font is carved with a rope, probably a symbol of the religious community. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_27]

086. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. Location. The village of Saint-Jean-le-Thomas is located on the coast, 12 kilometers south of Granville and 9 kilometers north of Avranches. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas was situated on two medieval roads, the first one coming from Saint-Pair-sur-Mer and the second one coming from Coutances. Another shore road going from Saint-Pair to Mont Saint-Michel was crossing the dunes nearby.

087. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The church is under St. John the Baptist's patronage. The parish of Saint-Jean-le-Thomas belonged to the deanery of Genêts and the archidiachoné of Avranches. In 917, William Longsword, second duke of Normandy, gave to the Abbey of Mont Saint-Michel the village of Saint-Jean-at-the-end-of-the-sea with its church, mill, vineyards and meadows. In the 12th century, the duke Robert I gave again to Mont Saint-Michel the seigneury of Saint-Jean and its dependencies. In 1162, the local lord, William of St. John, second founder of the Abbey of the Lucerne, gave to the abbey the church of Saint-Jean-le-Thomas with its dependencies, including many properties around and in England. In the 15th century, the church was still owned by the Abbey of the Lucerne, the abbot of the Lucerne being the lord of the church. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_28]

088. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The church. Its Romanesque nave is from the 11th century and early 12th century. The pre-Romanesque flat apse choir is probably from the 10th century. The Romanesque gate opened in the south wall of the nave has a large porch from the 15th century. The massive square tower is along the south wall of the nave, with two floors topped by a balustrade with an openwork design. The tower was built in 1895 to replace a timeworn tower, with granite stones from the Saint-James quarries. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_043]

089. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building is formed by a long nave and a flat apse choir. The whole building has an external length of 31.2 meters and an external width of 8.1 meters (width of the front). The church gate is opened in the south wall of the nave, with a porch. Built along the nave, the tower rises south. Plan by Marie Lebert.

090. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The church front and the tower. The wall of the church front is topped with a small glacis covered with schist plates, behind which rises the gable wall. In the middle of the front, a flat buttress ends with a glacis at the base of the gable wall. The two small Romanesque bays on both sides of the buttress were reopened in 1973, during the restoration of the church choir. The massive tower was rebuilt in 1895. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_044]

091. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir and its south wall. The choir has similarities with the church Notre-Dame-sous-Terre, present in the innards of Mont Saint-Michel and built by the Benedictines shortly after settling down on the Mont in 966. In both buildings, the bay centerings are made of brick quoins, and walls are made of fairly regular small blocks of granite joined with a thick mortar. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_045]

092. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir. On the left of the large central bay, a small Romanesque bay is clearly visible, with its centering and abutements in granite. Photo by Claude Rayon [Claude_31]

093. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir and its north wall. High in the wall, the centerings of the pre-Romanesque bays are made of brick quoins. The large semi-circular bay with a trefoil arch was pierced in 1895, when the tower was rebuilt. The pre-Romanesque bays were discovered and reopened during the restoration of the choir in 1965 by Yves-Marie Froidevaux, a chief architect at the (French) Historic Monuments. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_046]

094. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir and its north wall. The masonry is made of fairly regular small blocks of granite joined with a thick mortar. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_047]

095. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir. The centering of this small pre-Romanesque bay is made with brick quoins. The same bays are present in the church Notre-Dame-sous-Terre, built around the same time in the innards of Mont Saint-Michel. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_30]

096. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir (inside) and its north wall. The fairly regular granite blocks of the walls and the brick quoins of the bays are also visible inside, following the restoration of the choir in 1965 by Yves-Marie Froideveaux, a chief architect at the (French) Historic Monuments. The five bays with centerings in brick quoins - three north and two south - were found and reopened at that time. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_048]

097. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir (inside). The two large semi-circular bays on each side of the choir were added in 1895, during the construction of the new tower. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_049]

098. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The pre-Romanesque choir (inside). The wooden barrel vault was added in 1965 and completed in 1973. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_050]

099. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque nave (inside). This nave is probably from the 11th century and early 12th century. In the front wall in the background, the two Romanesque bays were reopened in 1973 after being found under the plaster. The upper bay - a median bay situated in the gable wall - was walled up at the same time, but its granite abutments remain clearly visible. The barrel vault of the nave is in plaster. The floor is covered with large pavings In granite. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_051]

100. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque nave (inside). Another view of the nave, this time towards the choir. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_32]

101. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque nave (inside). Romanesque murals were found on the south wall of the nave, a very interesting discovery because murals are almost non-existent in the region. The existence of such ancient wall paintings, probably from the 12th century, was unknown until 1974, until the plaster of the walls of the nave was redone. Colour spots attracted the attention of abbot Porée, pastor of the church, who then requested the visit of the fresco specialists of the (French) Fine Arts Department. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_052]

102. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. In this part restored in December 1974, there are three paintings: the struggle of a man against an angel, on the tympanum of the walled-up gate, then a fight between two figures, and finally a country scene. These paintings are surrounded by decorative borders. These murals may be the work of pilgrims going to Mont Saint-Michel on the medieval road along the coast. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_053]

103. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, on the south wall of the nave. On the tympanum of the walled-up gate, the battle of a man against an angel, "a fight that could be the one of Jacob against the angel sent by God, or God himself showed in a visible form", according to abbot Porée, pastor of the church at the time of the discovery of the murals in 1974. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_054]

104. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals. The same scene on the tympanum of the walled-up gate, taken with a different angle to show the two foliage borders. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_33]

105. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals. The same tympanum of the walled-up gate, seen from the outside. Above the gate, a small Romanesque bay with its centering and abutements in granite. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_29]

106. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. In this country scene, with wheat ears visible on the left, a figure wearing a large cloak holds a flask and pours wine in a cup held by another figure. On the right, a third figure holding a tillage tool is partly erased. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_055]

107. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. The third painting, of which much has disappeared, is the struggle between a figure with a cloack whose head is surrounded with a halo and another armored figure who seems to be on the ground. This could be St. Michael's struggle against the Devil, according to abbot Porée, pastor of the church at the time of the discovery of the murals in 1974. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_056]

108. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. Situated between the country scene and the fight scene, this detail shows that the mural was painted directly on the lime plaster, which explains the clear background. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_057]

109. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. This partial view of the fight scene shows that all contours were drawn in ocher paint, and inside surfaces were painted in ocher and buff. Only these two colors were used, directly on the lime plaster. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_058]

110. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque murals, in the south wall of the nave. The paintings are surrounded with a foliage border. The flourishes run between two horizontal stripes. The first stripe is ocher along the flourishes and the second stripe is buff along the ocher stripe, with a row of white dots at the junction of the two colours. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_059]

111. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque gate and its porch, in the south wall of the nave. Like often in the region, a porch was built later on – this one is from the 15th century - to offer to pilgrims and parishioners two stone benches and a shelter from rain and western winds coming from the sea. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_54]

112. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Romanesque gate, in the south wall of the nave. The semi-circular arch of the gate is formed of a grain adorned with a simple torus molding. The arch rests on two attached columns that seem an extension of the torus, with the same diameter. The columns are topped with capitals with a square abacus. The capital baskets are carved with barely visible small angle hooks. The square base is topped by a double torus. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_55]

113. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. Sketch of the Romanesque gate, in the south wall of the nave. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

114. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The porch. The stone roof of this 15th century porch is made of irregular schiste plates joined with a thick mortar. The arch of the Romanesque portal is adorned with a torus. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_060]

115. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. The Virgin and Child. Situated under the 15th century porch, at the south of the nave, this stone statue stands above the Romanesque gate. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_061]

116. Dragey. Location. The village of Dragey is located on the current coastal road going from Granville to Avranches, 20 kilometers south of Granville and 13 kilometers north of Avranches. Dragey was on the route of three medieval roads, the first one coming from Saint-Pair-sur-Mer, the second one coming from Coutances and the third one coming from Saint-Lô. The shore road coming from Saint-Pair was crossing the dunes of Dragey before reaching Mont Saint-Michel, the final destination for many pilgrims.

117. Dragey. Panorama. On the hill where the church stands, the silhouette of Mont Saint-Michel and Tombelaine emerge from the mist. For pilgrims, this view was announcing the end of a long quest. The church of Dragey was given to Mont Saint-Michel in the 11th century by Robert, duke of Normandy. Dragey and his church were among the dependencies of Saint-Jean-at-the-end-of-the-sea, that later became Saint-Jean-le-Thomas. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_34]

118. Dragey. The church, built on a hill, is isolated with its rectory at about one kilometer from the village. The church is placed under St. Medard's patronage, and the second saint is St. Eloi. The parish of Dragey belonged to the deanery of Genêts and the archidiachoné of Avranches. The Romanesque nave is from the 11th or 12th century, whereas the tower and choir are from the 13th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_062]

119. Dragey. The church is not situated in the village, unlike the other churches in the region. Visible from far out at sea, the tower was a landmark for seamen. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_063]

120. Dragey. The church has a one-row choir and a three-row nave. The tower rises between choir and nave. Only the nave is Romanesque. The choir and the tower, more recent, are from the 13th century. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_35]
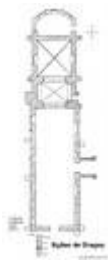
121. Dragey. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the rectangular building is formed by a three-row nave and a one-row choir. This whole building has an external length of 40,8 meters and an external width of 9,1 meters (width of the front). The tower rises between choir and nave. Plan by Marie Lebert.

122. Dragey. The church front. Its masonry is made of irregular blocks of schist and granite, which are local stones. The front is strengthened on each side by two thick buttresses that end with a glacis. The large twin bay with a slightly triangular arch is from the 13th century. In 1860, this bay was reopened and restored, and the original gate was replaced by a gate without much character. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_064]

123. Dragey. The south wall of the nave. The 16th century porch before the Romanesque gate was reopened en 1969. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_065]

124. Dragey. The tower base has a gate with a triangular arch from the 13th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_066]

125. Dragey. The north wall of the nave (inside). The inner plaster of the side walls was scraped by the villagers to show the opus spicatum (fishbone masonry), at the request of abbot Pierre Danguy, pastor of the church between 1954 and 1974. The opus spicatum – with lines of schist plates arranged horizontally - attests the church was built in the 11th century and early 12th century. The long bay with a deep splay is from the 13th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_067]

126. Dragey. The north wall of the nave (inside). Villagers patiently scraped the plaster to show the opus spicatum (fishbone masonry), a sign their church was early Romanesque. The inner plaster now only covers the last top quarter of the walls, probably too hard to reach. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_37]

127. Dragey. The north wall of the nave (inside). The large trefoil bay is from the 13th century. A walled-up Romanesque bay with a deep splay is on the right, with an arch formed by a row of small granite quoins. This Romanesque bay is the only remaining original bay in the church. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_068]

128. Dragey. The north wall of the nave (inside). As the only remaining original bay, this walled-up Romanesque bay has a deep splay, with an arch formed by a row of small granite quoins. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_36]

129. Dragey. The church choir. The bays of the choir we guess on each side were enlarged in the 15th century. The choir was previously quite dark, with a feeble light coming from two small Romanesque bays. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_069]

130. Dragey. The old baptismal font supports a holy water font. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_38]

131. Dragey. The stained glass window of one large twin bay in the south wall of the nave. This window is an ex-voto recounting one of the many drownings occurring in the region. On 5 May 1921, Harry Iselin, the son of a family of landowners near Dragey, drowned with an American friend, back from walking back from Mont Saint-Michel while crossing its dangerous shores. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_39]

132. Dragey. Detail of the stained glass window. On the top, the Mont Saint-Michel, and below, a partial view of archangel St. Michael. This large twin bay with a trefoil arch replaced in 1860 a rectangular opening, that replaced itself a small Romanesque bay in 1790. This was also the case for the other twin bays. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_070]

133. Genêts. Location. The village of Genêts is located on the current coastal road between Granville and Avranches, 6 kilometers north of Avranches. The village is facing Mont Saint-Michel, around 4 kilometers far away. The medieval roads used by pilgrims to go to Mont Saint-Michel started from Saint-Pair-sur-Mer, Coutances, Saint-Lô and Caen to reach Genêts. Then they needed to cross dangerous shores to reach Mont Saint-Michel, their final destination. In addition, the shore road between Saint-Pair and Mont Saint-Michel was crossing Bec d'Andaine, near Genêts.

134. Genêts. The village and its church. The church tower - with its saddleback roof, its balustrade and its gargoyles - emerges above the roofs of the village. Genêts is a very old place. It was the tidal port of Avranches, the capital of the region before its looting by the Norman pirates in the 9th century. The barony of Genêts was given in 1022 to the Abbey of Mont Saint-Michel by Richard II, duke of Normandy, as well as the baronies of Saint-Pair and Ardevon. The center of a barony and a deanery, Genêts became an active town under the early Norman dukes. In the early 14th century, there were nearly 3,000 inhabitants, and the church counted seven chapels and a full clergy. This was the most flourishing period. During the Hundred Years War, Genêts was looted, fleeced and burned by the British troops from 1356 on. During the Religion Wars between Catholics and Protestants, Genêts was again sacked in 1562 by the troops of the Protestant Montgomery. During the French Revolution, Genêts lost its juridiction of a seneschal, its sergentery, its deanery, its fairs and its markets, and went from being a town to being a village. The county town became Sartilly. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_083]

135. Genêts. The church, beautifully made, is the work of Robert Torigni, abbot of Mont Saint-Michel between 1154 and 1186, who built it on the site of an older timeworn church. The Romanesque church was consecrated in 1157 by Herbert, bishop of Avranches, along with Roger, abbot of Bec-Hellouin. The church and cemetery of Genêts were granted the title of (French) Historic Monument in 1959. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_40]

136. Genêts. The church is composed of a broad nave, a transept and a three-row choir with a flat apse. A massive tower topped by a saddleback roof rises at the transept crossing. The Romanesque parts are the transept crossings, part of the transept arms and two-thirds of the tower. The porch before the south gate in the nave is from the 16th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_071]

137. Genêts. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the building is formed by a wide nave, a transept and a three-row choir with a flat apse. The whole building has an external length of 53.7 meters. The external width of the nave is 10.8 meters (width of the front). The first row of the choir opens north and south on two flat apse chapels, that open themselves on the transept arms. Plan by Marie Lebert.

138. Genêts. The north wall. The tower is Romanesque for two-thirds of its height. Its upper part was built in the early 16th century. The nave was completely rebuilt in the mid-18th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_072]

139. Genêts. The Romanesque transept, with its north part and its gable wall. The masonry is made from irregular blocks of schist and granite. The schist is the local stone. The granite probably came from the granite ground of Avranches a few miles south-east. The gable wall is opened by a large semi-circular bay. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_073]

140. Genêts. The tower is situated at the transept crossing, with two floors. It is Romanesque to two-thirds of his height, with blocks of granite of medium size, while the top is from the early 16th century, with much larger blocks of granite. The lower floor is blind. The upper floor is open to the north, south and west by walled-up Romanesque twin bays, that were extended by Gothic trefoil bays added in the early 16th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_074]

141. Genêts. The tower is topped by a saddleback roof, the base of which is hidden north and south by a balustrade with an openwork design. Its corners are adorned with Gothic gargoyles shaped as dogs, wolves and imaginary animals. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_075]

142. Genêts. A Gothic gargoyle at another angle of the balustrade hiding the base of the saddleback roof of the tower. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_41]

143. Genêts. A Gothic gargoyle at another angle of the balustrade hiding the base of the saddleback roof of the tower. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_076]

144. Genêts. The gate in the south transept. This heavy and simple gate is from 11th century, with semi-circular plain grains and thick columns. It probably belonged to the building that was prior to the Romanesque church consecrated in 1157. The semi-circular arch is formed of two thick non-molded grains. The external grain rests on two thick attached columns topped by a square chamfered abacus, which goes on as a chamfered band on the wall. The capital basket is carved with barely visible angle hooks. The outside ground level is now at the same level as the start of the column trunk. The square base is topped by a double torus is below ground level. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_077]
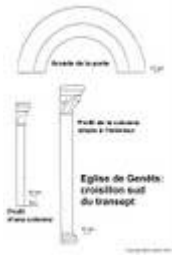
145. Genêts. Sketch of the gate in the south transept. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

146. Genêts. The Romanesque transept crossing is bounded by four strong square piers. The two west piers are attached to the transept and the nave. They receive four thick triangular arches that surround the groin vault above the transept crossing. The first row of the choir opens north and south on two flat apse chapels, that open themselves on the transept arms. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_078]

147. Genêts. The Romanesque transept crossing. The piers support four thick slightly triangular arches that surround the groin vault above the transept crossing. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_079]

148. Genêts. The Romanesque transept crossing. The four piers are perfectly symmetrical, with two flat non-molded sides and two other sides with two attached twin columns on a backwall, that support the triangular arches. On one angle of each pillar, an attached column supports the spring of one arris of the vault. Each pillar is topped by a large impost molded with a chamfered band. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_46]

149. Genêts. The Romanesque transept crossing. One of the tower piers. Two sides have a flat non-molded surface. On the other two sides, the arches are received by two attached twin columns on a backwall. In one corner, an attached column receives the spring of one arris of the vault. The carved basket capitals are topped by a thick square abacus. The square bases are topped by a double torus. The pier itself rests on a broader square base. The other three pillars are perfectly symmetrical to this one. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_45]
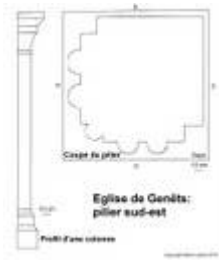
150. Genêts. Sketch of the south-east pier in the transept crossing. This pier is topped by an impost molded with a chamfered band. East and south, the pier has a flat non-molded surface. North and west, the arches are received by two attached twin columns on a backwall. At the north-west angle, an attached column receives the spring of one arris of the vault. The carved capital baskets are topped by a thick square abacus. The pier itself rests on a broader square base. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

151. Genêts. Detail of the north-west pier in the transept crossing. The capital baskets, carved in low relief, are adorned with plant designs such as chestnut leaves, oak leaves with acorns, and vine leaves. Other baskets are carved with grapes, animal designs - such as hares running around - or geometric designs - such as small arches and prominent bands. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_080]

152. Genêts. The porch. This large porch, from the 16th century, stands before the south gate of the nave, which is from the 13th century. The porch has offered pilgrims and parishioners two stone benches and a shelter from rain and western winds coming from the sea. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_44]

153. Genêts. The porch from the 16th century is topped by a wooden frame added in the 18th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_082]

154. Genêts. The porch. Detail of the wooden frame added in the 18th century. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_42]

155. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. Location. The village of Saint-Léonard-de-Vains is located at the very end of the cape of Grouin du Sud, 2.5 kilometers from the village of Vains and 7 kilometers from the town of Avranches. The priory church stands in front of the bay of Mont Saint-Michel and the rock of Tombelaine. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains was the final village of the medieval road coming from Caen. Then the pilgrims needed to cross the dangerous shores to reach Mont Saint-Michel, their final destination. The priory church has become a private property since the French Revolution, and the village is now part of the parish of Vains.

156. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. Winter panorama. The village and its priory church under the snow, at the end of the winter. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_084]

157. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. Winter panorama. The village and its priory church, seen a little closer, at the end of the winter. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_085]

158. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. Spring panorama taken from inside the priory. From there, the Mont Saint-Michel seems to open itself to pilgrims and travellers. Saint-Léonard is a very old village. St. Leonard lived there in the 6th century before being elected the eighth bishop of Avranches in 578. The village was then invaded by the Normans in the 9th century. After the Norman conquest, the village was part of the duke of Normandy's territory, and the fief of the lords of Vains. In 1087, shortly before his death, William the Conqueror gave the priory to the Abbey of Saint-Etienne in Caen. In 1158, Henry II confirmed this donation, which included a mansion, arable lands and vineyards, as well as salines with the right to fish and to collect kelp. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_47]

159. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. Spring panorama taken from inside the priory. The priory was a simple priory, that is to say a small monastery where some religious men detached from a main abbey were living under the direction of a prior, but without taking care of other souls (unlike a pastor for his parishoniers). The priory church was the property of the abbey of Saint-Etienne in Caen until the French Revolution. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_50]

160. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The priory was sold in 1793, during the French Revolution, and the buyer turned the church into a farm building. In an article from the periodical Le Pays de Granville dated December 1976, Jean Bindet recounted that, "after the nationalization of the church properties in November 1789 and the sale of national properties from 1791 on, the priory and dovecote were left abandoned, and their ruins, with the church that had not suffered too much, were sold in 1793 for the sum of 200 francs in banknotes ... The buyer, wanting its purchase to fructify, decided to transform the church into a farm building. The choir of the ancient church became a kitchen with a fireplace built in the apse; the nave became a barn and a stable; the tower itself was used: the base as a cellar, and the floor was divided into a room and an attic, and topped with a chimney." The priory remained a farm for a long time, as evidenced by the cow behind the fence. This old photo was digitized by Claude Rayon. [Claude_48]

161. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The priory church is still a private property in the late 20th century, but no longer a farm. In cooperation with the (French) Historic Monuments, the owner has turned the nave into a house by opening rectangular windows and revamping the interior. In 1985, date of this photo, the tower and the choir are still in bad shape. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_086]

162. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The priory church. The nave has become the owner's house in the late 20th century, which explains the rectangular doors and windows. The building has retained its original form though, with a nave strengthened by buttresses and a two-row choir with a flat apse. The tower, between choir and nave, is topped by a saddleback roof. In 1985, the tower and the choir have not been restored yet. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_087]

163. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The priory church. On this Photo by the 1980s, we still see the stairs leading to the first floor of the tower (they doesn't exist any more), as well as the rectangular openings of the tower and the choir, and the chimney above the choir. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_19]

164. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The priory church. On this recent Photo by 2009, the large rectangular openings pierced in the choir and the tower have been replaced by small bays of Romanesque style. The stairs leading to the first floor of the tower were removed, like the chimney above the choir. The building is back to its former beauty. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_49]

165. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The plan of the priory church. Regularly oriented from west to east, the building is formed of a nave and a two-row choir with a flat apse. The whole building has an external length of 32.75 meters and an external width of 9.65 meters (width of the front). The tower rises between choir and nave. Plan by Marie Lebert.

166. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The Romanesque tower is from the early 12th century. Situated in the extension of the choir, its square base is topped by two floors in slight recess. The first floor was probably blind originally, with openings pierced after the French Revolution. The second floor is opened north, east and south by two twin semi-circular arches. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_088]

167. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The Romanesque tower. The masonry is made of irregular blocks of schist and granite, with a few rows of regular granite blocks. The saddleback roof rests north and south on a cornice supported by modillions. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_089]

168. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The Romanesque tower. On three sides - north, east and south - the second floor is adorned with two twin semi-circular arches, with a double grain formed by two rows of granite quoins. The arch rests on plain abutments through a square abacus, that goes on as an horizontal band along the wall. The cornice is supported by modillions carved with rough human heads or molded in quarter-round. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_090]

169. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The Romanesque tower. The second floor of the tower and its saddleback roof. Two birds are resting. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_51]

170. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The base of the Romanesque tower and its north wall. This wall is strengthened by a central buttress surrounded by two semi-circular bays with an arch formed by a row of granite quoins. The lowered arch and abutments of the door are made of large blocks of granite. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_091]

171. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The base of the Romanesque tower and its north wall. The lower part of the wall consists of an opus spicatum (fishbone masonry) characterizing the 11th or early 12th century. The masonry of the upper part of the wall is made of regular blocks of granite. A row of badly damaged modillions is still visible above the bays. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_092]

172. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The base of the Romanesque tower, and its gate with its semi-circular arch and abutments in granite. The opus spicatum (fishbone masonry) of the masonry is a sign the church is early Romanesque. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_52]

173. Saint-Léonard-de-Vains. The base of the Romanesque tower. Inside, the tower rests on massive piers. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_53]

174. Saint-Loup. Location. Saint-Loup (also called Saint-Loup-sous-Avranches) is located south-east of Avranches, only 6 kilometers from the town, in a hilly region close to the granite ground of Avranches, making granite stones easily accessible.

175. Saint-Loup. The church is the only entirely Romanesque building remaining in the region. Built by the lords of Saint-Loup, the church was under St. Loup's patronage. The second saint is St. Gilles. The parish belonged to the deanery of Tirepied and the archidiachoné of Avranches. The nave has three rows. The north and south walls are strenghtened by four buttresses on each side. Three small semi-circular bays are still visible, two in the south wall and one in the north wall. The other bays were opened or enlarged thereafter. The church was granted the title of (French) Historic Monument in 1921. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_093]
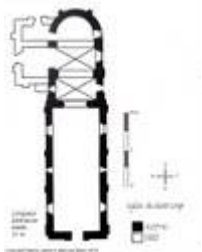
176. Saint-Loup. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the building is formed by a two-row nave and a three-row choir with a semi-circular apse. The whole building has an external length of 31 meters and an external width of 8.2 meters (width of the front). The tower rises above the first row of the choir. The north side chapel along the second row of the choir was added in 1602 by the lords of Saint-Loup. Plan by Marie Lebert and Bernard Beck.

177. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque west front. Strenghtened by two buttresses, the front wall is topped by a slight glacis behind which rises the gable wall. The bay with a triangular arch above the Romanesque gate is probably from the 13th century. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_094]

178. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque west gate. Its semi-circular arch is formed of two grains surrounded by a archivolt, which is a chamfered band. Each grain has the following moldings: a thick angle torus, a listel, a shallow cavetto and a row of carved hollow saw-teeth. The grains rest on four attached columns. Molded in quarter-round, the capital abaci go on as an horizontal band along the wall. The baskets are carved with rough sculptures: angle hooks or angle heads whose features were erased with the test of time. The square bases are adorned with a torus topping a chamfer carved with barely visible small claws. They rest on a small stone wall going on along the whole length of the front. The lintel is a big monolith block of granite, and it is topped by an opus reticulatum (diamond-shaped masonry) of diamond-shaped stones. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_095]
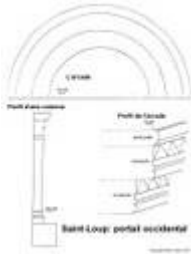
179. Saint-Loup. Sketch of the Romanesque west gate. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

180. Saint-Loup. The south wall of the choir. In the first row, the south gate is flanked by two flat buttresses. Between these buttresses, above the gate, the masonry is supported by a cornice with three large carved modillions. The first modillion is a grotesque human being putting his right hand to his mouth while folding his left arm. The second modillion is a human head. The third modillion is a crouched human being, with his hands on his knees. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_097]

181. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower rises above the first row of the choir. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_096]

182. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. The masonry of its walls is made of regular granite blocks, that are smaller than for other parts of the church. The granite was extracted from the granite ground of Avranches, that is close to Saint-Loup. In the foreground, on the right, this buttress belongs to the north side chapel adjacent to the second row of the choir. This chapel was added in 1602 by the lords of Saint-Loup. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_098]

183. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. This square tower consists of two floors topped by a spire. The first floor is ornated north and south with large blind arcades. The second floor is opened by a bay on each side. The level between the two floors is underlined by a chamfered band. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_099]

184. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. The upper floor is opened by a bay on each side. This bay is surrounded by a semi-circular arch formed by two grains surrounded by a chamfered band. Each grain is molded with a thick angle torus followed by a listel and a broad shallow cavetto. On both sides of the bay, the grains rest on four small attached columns. The basket capitals are carved with geometric designs – angle hooks, half-circles - or human heads. These baskets are topped with a square abacus going on as a square horizontal band along the wall. The square base of the small columns is topped by a double torus. These bays are similar to the west and south gates, with the same moldings for the grains and similar sculptures for the capital baskets. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_22]

185. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. The lower floor is adorned north and south by a double blind semi-circular arch toped by a prominent band going on as an horizontal band on the bare wall and then on the east and west sides. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_100]

186. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. On the lower floor, a small opus reticulatum (diamond-shaped blocks) is present at the corner between the twin arches. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_101]

187. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. The upper floor is opened by a similar bay on each side. The semi-circular arch of the bays is formed of two grains surrounded by a chamfered band and resting on four small attached columns. The capital baskets are carved with geometric designs such as angle hooks and half-circles, while other baskets are carved with human heads. These bays are similar to the west and south gates, with the same moldings for the grains and similar sculptures for the capital baskets. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_102]

188. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. The cornice rests on modillions carved with human heads or molded in quarter-round. Most of the cornice was rebuilt during the rebuilding of the octagon spire on a square base, with skylights. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_103]

189. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque tower. Detail of the cornice and its modillions carved with human heads. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_104]

190. Saint-Loup. The Romanesque south gate, in the first row of the choir. The semi-circular arch is formed of an grain surrounded by an archivolt made of a chamfered band. The grain is molded with a thick angle torus followed by a listel and a large shallow cavetto. The grain rests on two attached columns. The capital baskets carved with human heads are topped with abaci molded in quarter-round. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_21]
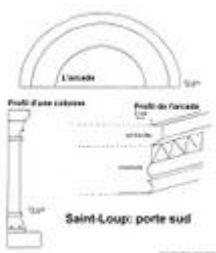
191. Saint-Loup. Sketch of the Romanesque south gate, in the first row of the choir. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

192. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. Location. The village of Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme is located 5.5 kilometers south-east of the town of Avranches, in the hills of the river Sélune. Saint-Quentin was situated on the medieval road taken by pilgrims from Tinchebray, Condé-sur-Noireau, Falaise or Lisieux to reach Mont Saint-Michael. The parish of Saint-Quentin was one of the nine parishes around the episcopal church of Avranches, grouped in the deanery of Chrétienté (Christendom). This deanery was part of the archidiachoné of Avranches.

193. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The large church has a rectangular narthex (wide porch) along the entire length of the front. The base of the tower and the nave are Romanesque - probably from the second half of the 12th century - and have similarities with the church of Saint-Loup. Several parts are from the 13th century: the narthex before the church front, the two floors of the tower, the three-row choir, and finally the south side chapel of the choir. The north side chapel was built later on, in the 15th or 16th century. The walls of the nave still

bear the mark of the large bays that were opened in the 18th century to replace the small Romanesque bays. The present bays date from 1951, with a size similar to the original bays. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_105]

194. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The church plan. Regularly oriented from west to east, the building is formed of a three-row nave and a three-row choir with a flat apse. The whole building has an external length of 47 meters and an external width of 9.6 meters (width of the front). North and south, two large chapels are adjacent to the first two rows of the choir. They are so large that they look like transept arms. The tower is between choir and nave. The church front has a narthex (wide porch) on its entire length. Plan by Marie Lebert.

195. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The large tower, between choir and nave, rests on four thick piers that receive east and west two semi-circular arches with a double ring. The row between choir and nave is topped by a groin vault with an oblong plan. In the foreground, the wooden barrel vault of the nave was rebuilt in 1926 and 1927. The nave pavings were laid in 1929. The church walls were covered with lime plaster in 1953. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_24]

196. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The large tower has a Romanesque base and two floors from the 13th century, with a saddleback roof. In the foreground rises a Romanesque wayside cross. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_106]

197. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. Detail of the Romanesque wayside cross situated near the church. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_107]

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197. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. Detail of the Romanesque wayside cross situated near the church. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_107]


198. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The church front is adorned on its entire length with a rectangular narthex (wide porch) from the 13th century, topped by a balustrade with an openwork design. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_108]

199. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The Romanesque gate of the church front. This gate is surrounded by a semi-circular two-groin arch and an archivolt. The grains rest on four attached columns, with square bases adorned with a torus topped by a chamfer. The capitals baskets are carved with balls, heads with a prominent chin, and a human being on all fours. These rough sculptures are in high relief. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_109]

200. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. The tower base and its Romanesque gate. This walled-up gate is similar to the south gate of the church of Saint-Loup. His semi-circular arch is formed by a grain surrounded by an archivolt with a chamfered band. The grain is molded with a thick angle torus followed by a listel and a shallow cavetto. The grain rests on two thick columns through a band modled in quarter-round forming the abacus of the capitals and going on along the bare wall. The capital baskets are carved with a tree on the right and two human heads on the left. The bases are square. The left base is topped with a chamfer adorned with tiny triangular claws and a torus. The right base is topped by a double torus. The tympanum is formed by a large monolith block of granite resting on inside abutments through a band molded in quarter-round. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_110]
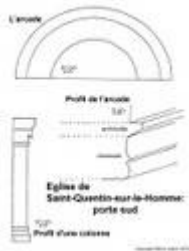
201. Saint-Quentin-sur-le-Homme. Sketch of the south gate, that is walled-up at the base of the tower. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

202. Sartilly. Location. The town of Sartilly is located on the road between Granville and Avranches, 15 kilometers south of Granville and 11 kilometers north of Avranches. Sartilly was on the medieval road going from Saint-Lô to Mont Saint-Michel, the final destination for many pilgrims. The parish of Sartilly belonged to the deanery of Genêts and the archidiachoné of Avranches. The church is under St. Pair's patronage.

203. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate was the west gate of the Romanesque church, and is now the south gate of the church that replaced it. The Romanesque church, which was ready to collapse, was demolished and replaced in 1858 by a much larger building of Gothic inspiration. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_10]

204. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The capital baskets are carved with various designs like oak leaves, acanthus leaves, scrolls framing an acanthus leaf at the corner, or corner curls. The sculptures, carved in high relief in granite, are much more elegant than in any other small church in the region. The square base of the columns is topped by a double torus. Photo by Marie Lebert. [Marie_11]

205. Sartilly. The old Romanesque church, demolished in 1858, in a drawing from the journal Revue de l'Avranchin dated 1924-1926. This church was described in the Minute Book of the City Council (Registre des Délibérations du Conseil Municipal) of Sartilly of 1837-1864: "The church we should replace is an old building (...) composed of: 1) a dark nave which is 19 meters and 60 centimeters long and 7 meters wide, with the lower part of its walls soaked with moisture and cracked in several places, and not standing straight anymore, particularly towards the end of the church; 2) a tower between the nave and the choir (...); 3) a choir which is 9 meters long and 6 meters wide (...)." Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_118]

206. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate is in granite, which is the local stone, Sartilly being located at the heart of the granite ground of Vire. This gate, probably from the second half of the 12th century, is the most beautiful Romanesque gate in the region. The moldings of the arch and archivolt are the result of meticulous work, as well as the sculptures of the capital baskets, with oak leaves, acanthus leaves and scrolls. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_111]

207. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. Sketch of the arch, the archivolt and a column. This gate, which was the west gate of the Romanesque church, is now the south gate of the church that replaced it. Sketch by Marie Lebert.

208. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The arch of the gate is formed of three grains: a grain with a lower centering, and two semi-circular grains surmounted by a archivolt. The first grain is molded with a thick angle torus followed by a listel and a large cavetto adorned with large and slightly rounded bezants. The second grain is molded with a thick angle torus. The third grain is molded with two tori surrounding a listel. The archivolt is a prominent cordon ornated with saw-teeth in high relief carved with a hollow row of triangular sticks. It rests on both sides on two carved heads with well designed features. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_112]

209. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The left columns. On each side of the gate, the three grains rest on three attached columns through an impost molded with a cavetto. The square part of the impost is adorned with a small hollow molding. The impost goes on above the external pier supporting the archivolt. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_113]

210. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The left side of the archivolt. The archivolt is formed by a band adorned with saw-teeth in high relief carved with a row of triangular sticks. On either side of the arch, it rests on a head carved in the granite. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_114]

211. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The left side of the archivolt. Detail showing the same carved head, in profile. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_115]

212. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The right side of the archivolt. Detail showing the second carved head on which the archivolt rests. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_116]

213. Sartilly. The Romanesque gate. The right side of the archivolt. Detail showing the same carved head, closer. Photo by Alain Dermigny. [Alain_117]

214. End of this album, with a cap and its angel holding a shield, in the church of Saint-Pair-sur-Mer. Special thanks to Alain Dermigny and Claude Rayon for their beautiful pictures. Many thanks to Bernard Beck, Danièle Cercel, Georges Cercel, Philippe Dartiguenave, Nicolas Pewny, Martine Valenti, Marie-Noëlle Vivier and Russon Wooldridge for their kind help over the years. Photo by Claude Rayon. [Claude_22]

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