13th-century church architecture in Cornwall
Cornwall Historic Churches Trust, 25th June 2018

Background and introduction
Of all the medieval building periods, this is probably the leanest. With one or two near-exceptions no complete churches of this period have survived, and we must rely on disparate fragments to build up a picture of what a 'typical' 13th century Cornish church looked like. As ever, *Pevsner* summarises the problem well: 'The arrival of the gothic style in Cornwall, sometime in the C13 is not well represented in architecture of the Early English Period, and, where it exists, is more in structure than in architectural detail.' (Beacham and Pevsner 2014, 26). In part this absence must be telling us something about the dearth of church building at the time, but it is equally sending messages about the preceding and succeeding periods; namely that much was inherited from the 12th century, and survived to be modified and added to, and that much of the inherited stock of 12th–14th century building was removed by rebuilding in the course of the later medieval period. This is so throughout the West Country (and beyond, of course), where increased prosperity, piety, changing liturgical needs, and no doubt other less altruistic factors as well (such as local competition, architectural self-aggrandisement, and the like), led to massive rebuilding and enlargement of churches in the 'Perpendicular' period from the late 14th to the 16th centuries, 'well into the post-Reformation period, somewhat later than was once thought:' (*ibid.*, 28).

Itineraries survive in the bishop's registers for Bishop Walter Bronescombe's visitations in 1259 and 1261, and in some cases these may reflect rededication, following enlargement with e.g. transepts.
1259, September 24 – St Breock (bishop's manor of Pawton); 26– St Newlyn East; 27– Kenwyn; 28 – Truro St Mary; 29 – Black Friars, Truro; October 3– St Anthony in Roseland; 5– St Michael Carhays (bishop's manor nearby at Tregeare); 8 – Mevagissey; 9 – St Austell; 11 – Looe St Mary; 13 – Sheviock; 14 – Antony; 1 – Rame; 16 – Pillaton; 17 – St Mellion; 18 – Botus Fleming; 20 – St Dominic; 22– North Petherwin (then Devon); 23 – St Clether; (24 – Kelly in Devon); 25 – St Stephen by Launceston (then Devon churches).

1261, August 12 – Lamorran; 13 – St Michael Penkevil; 14 – St Just in Roseland; 20 – St Stephen in Brannel; 28 – St Germans Priory (then Devon).

Religious houses were founded (or refounded) in the C12th and 13th: Tywardreath (1088), Launceston (1127), Bodmin (1123–4), St Germans (1161–84; 1261), Glasney (1265); Friaries appeared in the mid. C13th at Bodmin and Truro. Survival of early fabric at these sites, however, is very limited.

Plans of parish churches
St Anthony in Roseland is just about the most complete plan, with architectural detail to match, although the extent to which it is an original C13th build is compromised by the extremely fine C12th south doorway, which may simply have been re-used in the new church, and by extensive 19th-century restoration and repair. This church does, at least, provide us with a cruciform plan with a crossing tower, as a starting point. Tintagel is another (although of C12th origin, apparently not attaining its full plan until the C13th, as may be typical: below). Lamorran may also have preserved a small C13th cruciform plan, now disguised by its rebuilding in 1854 by William White.

Surviving plan elements of the C13th include especially the addition of transepts, occasional towers (below) and surviving chancels; plus very occasional aisled plans. The cruciform plan was probably the most typical of a developed C13th church, now often fragmentary and masked (wholly or partially) by the addition of late medieval aisles: there are examples at Gorran; Mawgan-in-Meneage; St Anthony-in-Meneage; St Ewe; Lanlivery; Lesnewth (until butchered in the C19th); etc. Typical survivals might be one transept plus the chancel (example at Budock); one transept and portion of the nave (examples at Gerrans, Gorran, Mawgan-in-Meneage, Ruan Lanihorne, St Breward, etc.).

Transepts
Often one transept survives in an otherwise extended/rebuilt church (typically with an aisle added to one side). A tell-tale sign that often indicates the position of a former transept is a wider arch in a later arcade/aisle (a good example can be seen at St Ewe). Surviving transepts include: Budock (S); Gerrans (N); Gorran (N); Gulval (N); Gwithian (N, see Blight 1885, 136); Lanlivery (N); Manaccan (S); Mawgan-in-Meneage (S); St Anthony-in-Meneage (S); St Anthony-in-Meneage (S); St Anthony-in-Roseland (N/S); St Breward (N); St Enodoc (N?/S); St Ewe (N); Tintagel (N/S); and many other examples.

Lancet windows
The most common single feature to indicate work of the 13th century is the lancet window. Two single lancets (nave, N) and a triple lancet (north transept, E) will provide examples to look at on the day at Gerrans itself. Such features are not necessarily *in situ* and were sometimes moved around in later phases, although study of associated fabric can help to establish context. The north and east walls of the chancel at Minster preserve C13th work *in situ*, with a door and two windows. There are many other examples, including (*inter alia*): Lanlivery (N transept, triple); Lostwithiel (tower); Manaccan (x3 single lancets; triple lancet to chancel; said to be inserted into C12th fabric); St Breward (nave SW, inserted into earlier fabric); St Levan (N transept); Ruan Lanihorne (double); Tintagel (triple lancets E&W in N transept; plentiful single lancets elsewhere; S transept has two-light cusped lights: the beginning of tracery, see also chancel S); Wendron (chancel, N). St Anthony-in-Roseland again provides good examples of the use of single and multiple lancets, albeit restored (and thus of uncertain authenticity). Examples of plate tracery, representing the beginnings of tracery proper, are virtually non-existent in Cornwall; the later Y-, or intersecting-, tracery really looks forward to the 14th century, although technically beginning in the last two decades or so of the 13th century.

Arcades/aisled plans
Wholly 13th century arcades/aisled plans are few and far between, confined really just to fragments at St Austell (both sides of the chancel, the south earlier than the north) and St Minver (a four-bay north arcade). All the others are either 12th century survivals: major examples at North Petherwin (possibly altered to accommodate a transept) and St Breward (two phases both C12th?), and Morwenstow; lesser survivals at Lelant, Lesnewth, and traces at St Teath and St Clether (rebuilt from fragments by John Hayward in the 1860s); or later early 14th century examples, such as Crantock, chancel aisles, Fowey, and Lostwithiel.

Fonts
Indubitably C13th fonts are relatively uncommon, although more can be named if 'transitional' examples are included. Cubert (with unusual 'chip-carved' ornament); Lanteglos-by-Fowey (with stiff-leaf, see sculpture, below); Creed, Egloshayle, Philleigh, St Cleer, St Gennys, St Mabyn (all with variations on the theme of blind arcading with pointed

arches); Poughill, Poundstock and St Tudy (same, with two tiers of arches); St Germans (late Norman or early C13th); Mawgan-in-Meneage, Zennor (late C13th), both with 'stove-pipe' attached shafts. [Thanks to Jo Mattingly for many of these examples; who also suggests St Erme, Wendron and Whitstone for their unusual foliage; and Wendron. Many of these fonts are illustrated in E.H.Sedding's splendid *Norman Architecture in Cornwall*.]

Sculpture

Stiff leaf (the hallmark of E.E. sculptural decoration) is largely notable by its absence: there are examples at Lanteglos-by-Fowey (font with stiff leaf decoration on an otherwise C12th font form); St Allen (capitals of the blocked north doorway); and St Anthony in Roseland crossing tower, also including fine head carvings to the corbels. The three heads, two as label stops the third at the apex, of the arch of a blocked doorway at Gorran, provide one of the few other examples of figure sculpture to survive (if the dating is correct). Others are the effigy of a priest at Ruan Lanihorne; the double effigy at Mawgan-in-Meneage of Sir Roger de Carminow and his wife, *c.*1300 but said to be moved from elsewhere.

Incised/sculpted memorial slabs are virtually the only other decorated items: there are examples at St Allen; Lesnewth; Gerrans; Wendron (probably early; Blight 1885, 107) and St Michael Penkivel (x2). A group from Bodmin, Little Petherick, St Breock, St Merryn, St Buryan have foliated crosses, some with inscriptions in French. Gwithian is said to have a C13th tomb slab re-used as a coffin rest in the churchyard (Beacham and Pevsner 2014, 231).

Towers

Parts of early western towers are not uncommon (often with later rebuilding above): Lostwithiel is one (with later spire); Crantock (lower stage, rebuilt above); Ruan Lanihorne (again rebuilt above); St Veep; amongst others. Towers placed over, or adjacent to, transepts are generally indicative of an early origin, sometimes C12th, sometimes C13th. There are at least nine in Cornwall (Blisland, Bodmin, Duloe, Lawhitton, Mawgan-in-Pydar, St Enodoc, Saltash, and Veryan, plus Lanlivery now known from archaeological excavation), possibly more, since Pevsner referred to 'about a dozen'. There are many more examples in Devon, especially in North Devon around Barnstaple and Bideford.

Spires

Spires may once have been more common than the surviving evidence suggests (often replaced by later towers); although the surviving examples generally belong to a rather later bracket than our period. The available, rather exiguous, surviving evidence suggests that St Minver may have belonged to the C13 (albeit rebuilt); St Enodoc is another example of the period; other C13/14 spires are at St Agnes, St Anthony-in-Roseland, Cubert, St Ewe, Gerrans, St Hilary, St Keverne, Lostwithiel, Menheniot, Rame and Sheviock. Others at Bodmin, Glasney and Helston are attested by the coastal defences map of *c.*1540 in the British Library.

Stone

Purbeck marble, another of the hallmarks of C13th architectural decoration elsewhere, is pretty rare. It occurs in fonts at Egloshayle, Lanteglos-by-Fowey St Cleer, St Germans and St Mabyn; in memorial slabs at Little Petherick, Ruan Lanihorne and St Michael Penkivel [x2]; and in an altar slab with consecration crosses at St Veep. One piece of a free-standing shaft (a typical C13th usage of the material) was noted in the collection of excavated architectural fragments from Glasney College.

Archaeological fabric recording
The dearth of early fabric is everywhere qualified by the potential of church fabric to yield a more complex picture when it is subjected to detailed scrutiny. Archaeological fabric recording of churches is in its infancy in Cornwall, as elsewhere, but has the capacity greatly to advance our understanding of fabric independently of architectural features. Model pioneering studies are those by Warwick Rodwell at Lanlivery, and John Allan at Minster, Boscastle. During my travels in preparation of this talk, I have especially noted considerable potential at St Allen (features in the chancel south wall) and Budock (chancel north wall), for example, and many of the examples quoted in this handout possess similar potential.

Further reading
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With thanks to Joanna Mattingly for comments and suggestions for additions.
27.v.18/18.vi.18