# Reviews and new books

## *Images of temporal and spiritual power*

*Glyn Coppack*

**Miller, C,** 2000, *The Bishop's Palace: architecture and authority in medieval Italy.* Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London. ISBN 0801435358. Hb, xv & 307pp, 98 figures; $49.95

Although considerable effort has been expended researching the development of the Christian church from late antiquity to the high Middle Ages, much less thought has been given to the men who controlled and directed that church, bishops who could trace their origins back to St Peter and the Apostles. It was, at least until the 12th century, bishops who built their own cathedral churches and provided the interface between church and state. The position of the bishops, one of growing but changing authority, was reflected in the houses associated with their cathedrals, which, like the cathedrals themselves, evolved to provide a framework for the life of the church and its bishop. Professor Miller has chosen to look specifically at northern Italy, though the story she tells has a much wider currency, and to look at only one class of bishop's house, that closest to the church that contained his chair. Consistency requires the latter given the time range of her subject, but a wider view would have shown the proper context of her thesis. Miller's approach is historical and art-historical, and she uses archaeology as a source rather than a methodology. In this she misses a few tricks.

Bishops' residences conveniently go through three stages identified by the name given to them in contemporary documents: the *episcopium* of the 6th to 8th centuries; the *domus sancte Ecclesie* of the 8th to 10th centuries; and the *palatium,* which first appears in 1020 and was the standard term across Europe by 1100. To what extent are these changes of name, all redolent of significance, reflected in the development of buildings and how do the buildings themselves reflect the position of the bishop in wider society?

The earliest *episcopia* developed from late Roman houses. Their spaces, *triclinia, aulae, cubiculae* and *balneae* were identical in name and plan to their secular counterparts; they differed only in their decoration which was full of Christian iconography. They used the architectural vocabulary of the ruling elite and their location, together with the cathedral at the centre or just within the walls of late Roman fortified towns, indicated their alliance with civil government from the point at which the civil administration was starting to break up.

*Episcopia* were an integral part of the church complex, physically attached to and arranged around the basilica, with a plan that archaeology is starting to sort out. They were complex and multi-phase, had a tendency to move as the one or two churches developed, and spread from Palestine and Algeria to northern France. In the study area, some survive in part, at Ravenna and Parenzo, others are known from excavation, at Grado, Aqueleia and Naples, and many are so well documented, as in the Lateran at Rome, at Ravenna and Naples, that a paper reconstruction of the plan is possible. To understand their planning and use it is essential that the best evidence is used. By limiting the study area to northern Italy (though a few extraneous examples creep in to underline the occasional point) perhaps the best example of the development of an *episcopium* from the 4th to the 8th century - revealed by Charles Bonnet in Geneva between 1976 and 1993 - is completely ignored. It is only excavation and archaeological analysis of surviving buildings which will define the form and use of the *episcopium;* historical sources provide date and detail.

The name *domus sancte Ecclesie* is first used in documents from c700 at Lucca, and its continued use coincided with a change in the planning of bishops' houses. Towers began to appear and the naming of rooms changed reflecting influences north of the Alps. *Aulae* became *salae* (from the German *saal*), *triclinia* and *cubiculae* became *caminatae* and eventually *camerae.* For the buildings themselves, there is the evidence of both excavation and surviving fabric at Reggio for the *domus* built between 900 and 944. Documents suggest a first floor hall and archaeology identifies a tower of three storeys at its east end. Hall blocks survive at Como and Pistoia, both from the early years of the 11th century. These are actually the *saalbau* of the Empire, which is hardly surprising as the bishops were very much the agents of Imperial authority in northern Italy. Their planning is aristocratic and their siting against the cathedral is still overtly liturgical. Their planning also resulted from a major change in the bishop's household. Before the 8th century, the *episcopium* housed not only the bishop but his clergy, living in a single quasi-monastic household. The *domus*

housed the bishop and his personal household, for the clergy had begun to form into a 'chapter' which by the 10th century was becoming self-regulatory and housed in its own discrete quarters. While bishops had actually improved their secular standing as servants of the Emperor they had begun to lose control over their own cathedrals. From the 6th to the 9th century, bishops chose to be buried in the suburban basilicas and monasteries that contained the graves of the early Christian martyrs; from the 830s, they chose to be buried in their cathedrals and to translate the early martyrs there to underline their authority. If they chose their burial place to bolster episcopal authority (and sanctity), it is hardly surprising that the architectural model chosen to underline their authority when living was that of secular power and wealth. If the architecture of the *domus* was German, it comes as little surprise to read that so were many of the bishops. These were also troubled times, with Magyar and Saracen raids, and though the *domus* was barely defendable, the complex still lay within Roman town walls which could be rebuilt or strengthened.

**It brings together a wide variety of sources and some wonderful historical insights**

The 11th and 12th centuries were the period of Gregory VII's reform of the Roman church and a change in the planning of the bishop's house across Europe. In northern Italy, this coincided with a major shift in power, from the Emperor to the Communes, and with a concomitant reduction in the bishops' temporal power. This is also the period for which the best structural evidence survives and where documentary evidence is particularly good. Perhaps the key sites here are Pistoia, Verona, and Parma. These indicate the ultimate development of the bishops' house at the time of the Gregorian reforms. This period saw the development of the twin halls that characterised bishops' houses for the next three centuries, a phenomenon seen elsewhere in Europe. The significance of the paired halls is that one was public and one more private, indicating that there were two aspects to the bishop's life. This would be highly significant if it was restricted to northern Italy where bishops were competing with the Communes and their new civic halls, but that is not the case. It was a European phenomenon that arrived fully developed in England in the late 11th century via northern France. Where there was a difference, it was that the Italian bishops tried to place their palaces in the piazza to create a public aspect while in other areas the bishop's house remained more secluded.

This was the time at which the *domus* became the *palatium,* not simply in northern Italy but across Europe. In the peculiar circumstances of northern Italy, Maureen Miller sees the change of name as an attempt to enhance status that was otherwise being eroded. The documentary evidence might seem to support this, but what about the architecture? The first floor hall was, after all, the seigneurial hall common in the 11th and 12th centuries and its planning was well established by the 11th century. In bishops' houses it had been fairly constant since the Carolingian period. Professor Miller sees some spiritual significance in the planning of the hall of the *palatium,* related to the contemporary planning of the bishops' churches and demonstrated by their apparent proportionality. This, though, was at a time when the bishop's influence in his own cathedral was being challenged. Bishops were frequently willing their bodies not to the cathedrals but to monastic communities they had founded or restored, partly because it was the monastic world which was revitalised by the Gregorian reforms, and partly because the cathedrals were beginning to be seen as the property of the Commune or the chapter. Bishops were looking towards their wider diocese and concentrating their energies in the see palace to enhance their spiritual standing.

The move away from the cathedral was strengthened by the introduction of chapels into bishops' palaces. Chapels had always existed, for instance at Ravenna or the Lateran, but were far from common before the millennium. Their association with palaces seems to coincide with the Gregorian reforms between the early 11th century and *c*1170. Early examples like the chapel of the Holy Cross at Bergamo and San Michele at Como borrow from the design of the Lombard baptistery. Later examples are generally more 'ecclesiastical' in style. Later chapels are at first floor level and accessed from the hall, not the chamber as in a secular house. They related to the need for the bishop to be able to hear the hours while he was conducting other business as well as demonstrating the public aspect of the bishop's spiritual role. It is not without significance that many 11th and 12th-century bishops began their careers as canons and clearly demonstrated a considerable degree of personal piety.

Both hall and chapel were heavily decorated, and one of the finest examples of 12th-century fresco decoration in northern Italy is the cycle of paintings in the *aula della curia* at Bergamo. The chapels of San Niccolo at Pistoia and San Siro at Novara retain cycles of painting that indicate that they were no less didactic than the hall at Bergamo and that wall decoration was as much a demonstration of power as the architecture itself.

Although there are problems in studying bishops' houses within the constraints of a single region, and though the emphasis here is historical and art-historical with a failure to make the best use of the archaeological data available, this is still a very useful book. It brings together a wide variety

of sources and some wonderful historical insights in a very readable way. It lacks the political correctness of many international studies and remains remarkably clear of post processual jargon. The separation of the data into two parts - 'office/space' and 'culture/power' - works well, as does the bringing together of documentary and structural evidence. Professor Miller is a very competent historian and her handling of the art-historical material is sure-handed, a rare combination. Taking a regional view, however, does require wider knowledge, particularly where an argument is made that there is a direct correlation between the planning of bishops' houses and local political developments. On the face of it there does appear to be some correlation, but it is also true that the same or similar development can be seen elsewhere, where political considerations were clearly different. If this had been apparent, the conclusions of the book might have been modified; they would certainly have had more authority.

Maureen Miller has provided a well-argued and reasonably well-illustrated book. The line drawings are all redrawn for this publication and are clear and easy to read. If there is a problem, it is that they have been simplified, removing some of the archaeological evidence available in the original sources, and this suggests an attempt to simplify the architectural element of the story. Cornell University Press proudly states that it is environmentally responsible, printing on recycled paper. While this might be perfectly acceptable for text and line drawing reproduction, it is not for the photographs. Without exception, and this includes those professionally produced, they are lacking in contrast and clarity. Here, the author has been badly served by her publisher and the reader denied the delight of enjoying the fresco cycle at Bergamo in all its glory.

*Glyn Coppack is an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with English Heritage who specialises in the archaeology of the medieval church and particularly the development of monastic sites and bishop's houses. He is currently working on the bishop's palace in Lincoln.*

*The Bishop's Palace: architecture and authority in medieval Italy* is available from all good bookshops

# *Wells: Roman mausoleum, or just Anglo-Saxon Minster?*

*John Blair*

**Rodwell W,** 2001, *Wells Cathedral: Excavations and Structural Studies, 1978-93.* English Heritage: London. ISBN 1 85074 741 5. Hb, 2 vols., 618pp, 543 figures, 15 colour plates. Price £150.00

The excavation east of the cloister at Wells, conducted by CRAAGS in 1978-80, is the latest major Anglo-Saxon church project to reach full publication. When work started it was already known that Bishop Stillington's great chantry chapel, demolished in 1552, had replaced an older Lady Chapel on a markedly different alignment, and it was surmised that this alignment, projected westwards across the cloister, was that of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral. The excavations not only uncovered the 12th to 15th-century chapels in all their unusual detail, but also showed that they replaced a series of older structures which must indeed be understood as part of an Anglo-Saxon ritual alignment, between the (unexcavated) cathedral westwards and the natural spring of St Andrew eastwards. One of the early features, a tiny rectangular sunken building on a N-S alignment, has attracted great interest thanks to the suggestion that this was a Roman or sub-Roman mausoleum, the focus of ritual continuity at Wells since at least the 5th century. The report has therefore been eagerly awaited. Now that we have these two large and lavish volumes, they are both more and less than might have been hoped for.

To take first the strengths: this is very much more than an excavation report, and stratigraphical description and analysis only occupy a small part of it. The study has grown to include not only the structures in the Lady Chapel area, but many aspects of the topography, fabric and furnishings of Wells cathedral in general. The plans of the 13th and 15th-century chapels are correlated with adjacent standing walls, and with fragments of magnificent architectural decoration, to recover much of their above-ground as well as below-ground detail. The building phases and chronology of the early Gothic cathedral and its cloister are thoroughly reassessed. The font, with its traces of standing figures under arcades, is dated (more-or-less persuasively) to the 10th century. Special studies include water-management, the topography of the town, floor-tiles, grave types, and burial generally. The illustrations are numerous and excellent, notably Richard Bryant's exquisite sculpture drawings. This book greatly enriches knowledge both of Wells cathedral and of Gothic art in south-western England, and will be a standard source for a long time to come.

The excavated data are not discussed separately, but woven into the chronological narrative of the book. For the post-1100 phases, where the stratigraphy is straightforward and is supplemented by other evidence, this approach works well. It is with the earlier phases, too confused and fragmentary to admit immediate and

clear-cut interpretations, that problems emerge. In the first place there is a serious lack of sections. Not a single general section is published; sections of individual features appear as vignettes on some plans, but levels are only sporadically shown. This means that the vertical relationship between features, and the possible impact of geology and relief, are often hard to grasp. Secondly, the presentation of fragmentary features within the framework of a single, strongly-argued interpretation means that the testing of alternative hypotheses requires laborious cross-comparison, sometimes frustrated by the non-publication of relevant details.

The *'minster sited next to the great spring which they call* Wielea', containing a church of St Andrew, emerges in the written record as the supposed beneficiary of a grant in '766' (for 774). This is, however, a dubious charter: the MSS are very late, and the most recent commentator suggests that it may have been *'re-written as a grant to Wells* [when the see was established there c 909], *having originally been a grant to Sherborne, or possibly a layman'* (Edwards 1988, 252). Written evidence is indeed not to be expected: the claim for Wells as an early religious site rests on the excavated evidence, the uncontentious aspects of which can usefully be summarised here:

1 The geology is highly distinctive: concentrated ground-water, heaving up through several springs and wells, feeds streams which run off in a west-south-westerly direction. The cathedral stands immediately west of the major spring ('St Andrew's well'), and the streams have conditioned the whole topography of the town. It is a fair point (p 53) that this is the kind of place in which one might expect a Roman water-cult.

2 There is limited evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity, the latter mainly comprising abraded fragments from a wide range of building materials. It is reasonable to think that there was a Roman complex, possibly a villa, not far away, and not impossible that some fragments of features on the site are Roman.

3 Radiocarbon determinations (p 571) show that orientated burial was taking place on the site by at latest the 9th century, and probably by the 8th; one redeposited bone gave a date of 1450 BP (cal. AD 450-670 at 2-σ). It must be stressed, though, that none of these results *necessarily* shows that burial started before the establishment of English control in Somerset. Other finds from this period are an early 8th-century sceat and a piece of blue window-glass (p 516-17, 481).

4 By the 10th century the site contained structures. A thick-walled building of sub-square plan (the 'mortuary chapel') was constructed up against an existing wall (F806) to its W, and partly overlay a sunken building - the supposed 'Roman mausoleum' - which was backfilled no earlier than the 940s.

5 The outer face of a deep curved footing, found at the extreme W end of the excavation, is reasonably identified as the east-facing apse (possibly polygonal?) of the 10th or 11th-century cathedral church.

6 A two-cell chapel, the first clearly-defined phase of the Lady Chapel-by-the-Cloister, replaced the 'mortuary chapel' and whatever lay westwards. It lay on roughly the same axial alignment, its chancel superimposed on the 'mortuary chapel'. This was a typical product of the 'Great Rebuilding', comparable in scale and plan to, for instance, the second church at Raunds (Boddington 1996, 22-5); it is convincingly dated to the episcopate of Giso (1061-88), the first recorded benefactor of the Lady Chapel.

7 Various associated structures, dated broadly to the 11th or 12th centuries, include accommodation built by Giso for his canons, and a mid 12th-century cloister.

8 The Lady Chapel survived the demolition of the rest of the old cathedral complex in the 1170s, and was lavishly extended in the early 13th century.

9 The Lady Chapel was demolished in the late 1470s and replaced by Stillington's chantry chapel.

The sunken building makes its appearance on p 40 as *'a sepulchral structure of uncertain but probably late Roman date'*. By p 45 it *'cannot be seriously doubted that the grave chamber lay within a building'*, and thereafter it is usually called *'the Roman mausoleum'* without qualification. On p 53 we read:
*'That the Wells mausoleum was a focus for contemporary burial in the eighth century, and was still standing into the tenth century ... is sufficient proof suo jure of its ancient Christian connotations. It is inconceivable that a place of overt pagan sepulture would have been retained and honoured for so long unless there had been a Christianizing occurrence of at least local significance.'*

The facts on which these claims are based are as follows. A rectangular pit was dug; pairs of posts - 10 cm square on one side, 10 x 20 cm on the other - were inserted along its sides; and some kind of timber lining was placed behind or between them. In a second phase this lining was replaced by coursed rubble, the retention of the posts showing that there must have been a timber superstructure (p 42-3). The usable space was too narrow in the W-E dimension (1.4 m) to

accommodate an adult corpse, so it is suggested that primary coffined burials were aligned N-S. Eventually the 'cellar' was filled with dumped earth and quantities of well-sorted charnel, interpreted as the contents of many further coffins which had accumulated inside. The building is said to be datable by *'the late Roman style of construction, and the overlying middle Saxon cemetery'* (p 43). But no Roman parallels for its construction are adduced (the one conceivably relevant feature (p 42) is the mixing of brick chips in the mortar), and the parallels for its form shown in Fig 36 are unpersuasive. And far from being sealed by mid-Saxon graves, it remained open until at least the 940s: a coin of 941-4 lay on its very bottom, under the charnel-rich fills (p 78, 517-18). The lack of any other deposit between these fills and a builders' layer (L1498) from the primary timber phase implies that the timber superstructure survived up to this point.

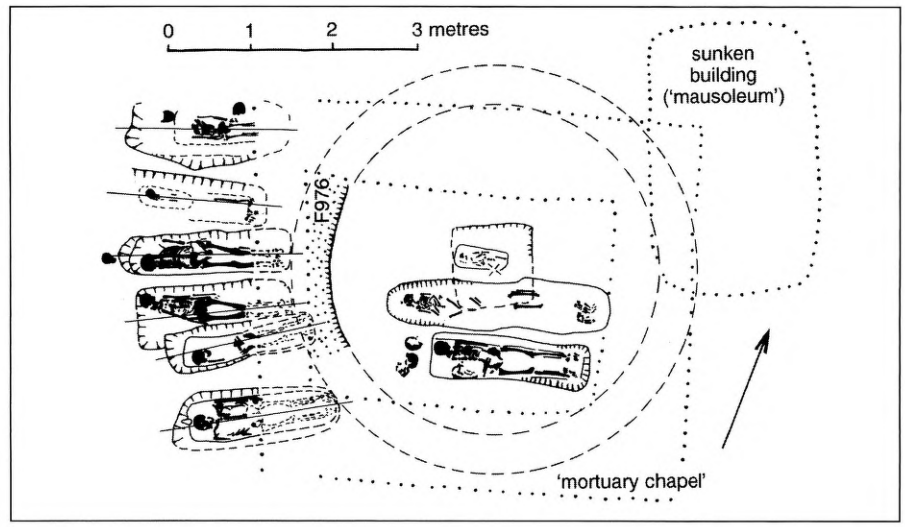


*Fig 1 The earliest phases at Wells: alternative interpretation to illustrate the hypothesis of a circular feature (Drawing: J Blair, re-worked from Rodwell's Fig 43)*

**'Roman mausoleum' a chimera...but a magnificent achievement in other things**

Can we really believe that this small, flimsy building stood from before AD 500 to the 940s, and that during that time it received *'important coffined burials'* (p 78, 537) aligned N-S in defiance of universal Christian practice? The structure's location does certainly imply some ritual function (ossuary or relic-platfrom?), but there seem no solid grounds for dating it earlier than the 9th or 10th century. The construction-deposit left inside it, combined with the absence of floor-layers, suggests that the 'cellar' was an unused damp-proofing cavity - necessitated by the wet environment - below a suspended floor, in which case the coin could have fallen through a board-crack some time before the back-filling.

The chimera of the 'Roman mausoleum' at Wells is doubly unfortunate: for its phantom presence in the archaeology of the sub-Roman British Church, and for its distorting effect on the interpretation of the other early features. Since a mausoleum must sit within a square enclosure, tiny fragments of walls and ditches are pressed into service (p 45). To the west a *'length of sinuous, flat-bottomed trench F976, cut into the subsoil, seemingly marked the site of a robbed structure'* (p 56) and is

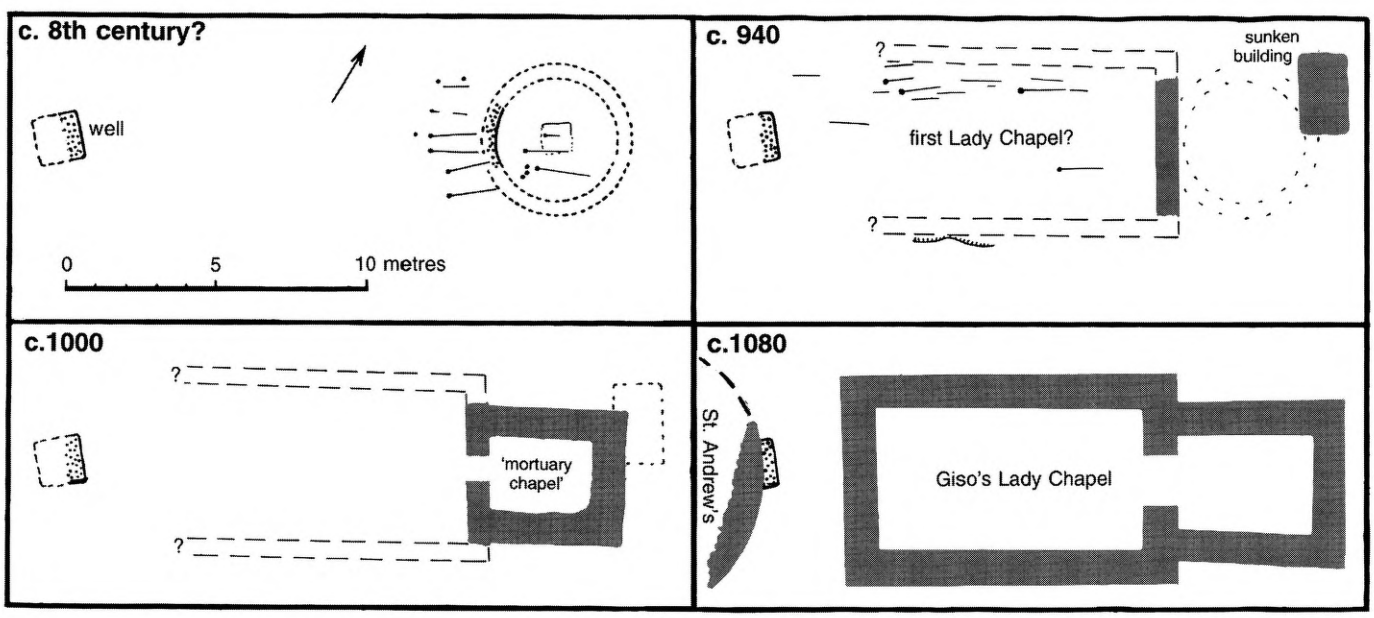


*Fig 2 Developments at Wells up to c 1100: alternative phase-plans derived from Rodwell's data (Drawing: J Blair)*

identified as the western enclosing wall. But as shown on the plans it is not 'sinuous', but inwards-curving on its eastern edge; moreover, a dense group of burials to its west appear, when projected to their anatomically correct lengths, to hug the destroyed outer edge of the same feature and to show the loosely radial configuration well-known from burials around apses (see Fig 1). A tentative inference - but surely a more convincing one than the 'mausoleum' - would be that a circular enclosure, whether prehistoric, Roman or early medieval, was respected by one group of graves and contained another. One burial in each group yields a radiocarbon date in the range between the mid 7th and late 9th centuries (p 571).

This in turn has implications for the later phases (see the present Fig 2). F806, a length of N-S wall overlying F976, is projected in both directions and seen as a *'middle or later Saxon replacement'* for the *'Roman'* enclosure wall (p 56). But is it not more simply identified as the E wall of a rectangular church, on the same footprint as the 11th-century nave of the Lady Chapel which has presumably obliterated its N and S walls? The next stage, the 'mortuary chapel', would then be an added chancel, neatly overlying the circular feature and its group of burials. This sequence - one-cell church, added chancel, standard two-cell replacement in the 'Great Rebuilding' - is exactly what occurs at Raunds (Boddington 1996). In trying to reconstruct fragmentary remains, it is surely best to see whether familiar solutions might work before resorting to abnormal ones.

As we all know, archaeologists find what they want to see: these points are not made to assert that my conjectures are necessarily right either, but to illustrate the problems of framing the presentation of such fragmentary and ambiguous data around such a strong and exclusive narrative. The recent reports on York and Deerhurst go out of their way to offer alternative hypotheses (Phillips, Heywood & Carver 1995, 177-95; Rahtz & Watts 1997, 150-91). The Wells report, a magnificent achievement rich in so many other fascinating things, could easily have afforded to do the same.

**Bibliography**

Boddington, A, 1996, *Raunds Furnells: the Anglo-Saxon Church and Churchyard.* London

Edwards, H, 1988, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom.* Oxford

Phillips, D, Heywood, B, & Carver, MOH, *Excavations at York Minster, I.1.* London

Rahtz, P, & Watts, L, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire: Fieldwork, Excavations and Structural Analysis 1971-1984.* Woodbridge

*John Blair is Fellow in History at The Queen's College, Oxford. His Book* The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society *is in press.*

*Wells Cathedral: Excavations and Structural Studies, 1978-93* is available from the English Heritage Publications order line Tel 01761 452966 (product code 50086, plus £5 p&p)

# *High Culture and High Crosses: Documents of the Irish-speaking World*

*Cormac Bourke*

**TM Charles-Edwards,** 2000, *Early Christian Ireland,* CUP:Cambridge. ISBN 0 521 36395 0. Hb, pp xix + 707, 14 maps, 32 tables, 26 figures; £45

**Fisher, Ian,** 2001, *Early Medieval Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands.* Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland & Society of Antiquaries of Scotland: Edinburgh. ISBN 0-903903-30-X. Hb, pp xiv + 178, 2 maps, numerous figures and half-tones; £20

Charles-Edwards' book is monumental in scope and scale, tracing Irish social, political and ecclesiastical organisation from the 5th century to the 9th. The chief sources for the enquiry are saints' lives, annals and laws. The lives include the 7th-century 'Patrician documents' by Tírechán and Muirchú, the slightly later *Vita Columbae* by Adomnán and the 8th-century 'O'Donoghue' group of lives. The annals in their diversity reflect the unity of their parent source, the Iona 'Chronicle of Ireland' which was contemporary from the 6th century and begun, perhaps, under Columba's auspices. The laws are those of laity and clergy, in Old Irish and Latin respectively, which interdependently regulated different estates. Charles-Edwards' first chapter is a tour of the northern half of Ireland in the footsteps of Tírechán's St Patrick; in the last chapter the Vikings are introduced.

There is a wealth of data between, sometimes new, sometimes freshly nuanced. Thus, for example, the conquest of the midlands by the Uí Néill dynasty is attributed to Coirpre and Fíachu, sons of Níall Noígíallach, employing *fianna,* 'warbands', drawn from northern Connacht (pp 464-8); the Uí Néill and the Éoganachta were allies in aggrandisement (pp 488-91), and the language known as standard Old Irish was essentially theirs (p 583). The Irish Church *'allowed for several sources of authority';* the synod, which comprised not just bishops but abbots and scholars, was a centre of decision-making and, in its diversity, a cohesive force (pp 275-7). The annals typically record patronymics for abbots but not bishops, so that *'there was an*

*association between paternity* (and thus membership of a particular lineage) *and the office of abbot'* (p 274). Here, it seems, is an implication that annals, like charters, could record entitlements. Their nature is further illuminated in the finding that the primary source, the 'Chronicle of Ireland', recognised as kings of Tara only those who died peacefully and so accords with the values of Adomnán (pp 503-5). On a wider front, there is analysis of Columbanus and Merovingian politics, and of papal intervention in Ireland in the cause of paschal orthodoxy (pp. 364-7). Such orthodoxy allowed Wilfrid to claim authority in northern England *and* northern Ireland, and his claim galvanised Kildare and Armagh in their contest for all-Ireland primacy (pp 432-8). Pope Vitalian's letter to Oswiu *c*666 might anticipate *Laudabiliter* (p 434), and Wilfrid's ambition is linked with *'the first English invasion of Ireland'* in 684 (p 417). There you have a flavour of what this book contains.

The book raises, if unintentionally, some issues of terminology. The four modern provinces of Ulster, Munster, Leinster and Connacht (the author's 'Connaught') appear in their early historic guise, but can be an uncomfortable framework. The 5th century saw a 'larger Leinster', inclusive of Brega and Mide; a 'larger Connaught', west of the Shannon and Foyle and a 'larger Ulster', west of the Bann and north of the Boyne. Ulster is defined in terms of the hegemony of the Ulaid, a name translated throughout as 'Ulstermen' with no concession to the distaff side. But Giraldus Cambrensis in the 1180s could locate the Cenél Conaill of Donegal (part of the Uí Néill, who displaced the Ulaid) *'in the northern and further part of Ulster', in boreali et ulteriori Ultoniae parte.* It cannot be supposed that Giraldus, or his informant, was trying to revive the obsolete, and it is safe to conclude that Ulster, the name, had never lost its wider reference and had acquired (or retained) territorial scope. But the provinces were traditionally understood in ethnic or genealogical terms. *Connacht,* like the rest, was so interpreted (*'the Descendants of Conn'*) but, as Sproule has suggested (1984, 32), might originally have been an abstraction, 'headship'. Historians might wish the provinces to be, as it were, a single currency, but definitions in terms of pure abstraction as well as of ethnicity, hegemony and territory are not to be easily reconciled.

Another terminological issue is raised by the Irish presence in northern Britain, here taken to be the result of settlement which was still 'comparatively recent' in 563. Whether or not such a settlement ever happened, there is no hint from Adomnán that the local Dál Ríata were not at once *Scoti*, 'Irish', and part of the *status quo.* This leaves Ultán (to name just one individual), the famous scribe *Scottorum gente,* in a position of some ambiguity, at least in historiographical terms. Here he is an 'Irishman', and one cannot disagree, but let not the reader assume that today's Ireland (the island) was ever necessarily his home. If Ireland *'was a cohesive unit because its inhabitants spoke one language'* (p 103), it follows that such cohesion pertained not just to Ireland but to the Irish-speaking world.

**A model of source criticism**

Charles-Edwards, having characterised Patrick as *'the apostle of the western extremities of Ireland',* characterises Columba as the *'apostle of the Picts'.* Not everyone will be convinced, and the thesis is based largely on the oblique evidence of the 6th-century eulogy, the *Amra Coluim Cille,* which has Columba 'teaching' the *'tribes of the Tay'.* A compromise, not canvassed here, might be that members of Columba's community were evangelists among the southern Picts; the saint's lack of direct involvement might explain Adomnán's silence, while his patronage of missionaries could have warranted the poem's praise. Worth noting, even if not easily explained, is that dedications to Columba (in the form Colum / Calum Cille) are a western phenomenon and conspicuous by their absence in southern Pictland.

Charles-Edwards suggests that Columbanus was *'the father of his monks'* and that *'it made no difference whether they were Irish, British, Frankish, Burgundian or Gallo-Roman'* (p 374). But if for the latter three we substitute Picts and Anglo-Saxons then the same applies to Columba with equal force. Columba exemplifies the advice given to Molua that he should establish a monastery *in peregrinatione;* Charles-Edwards observes of Clonfertmulloe that it was a border monastery with a rule of succession which allowed *'for anyone of whatever kindred* (including *peregrini*) *to become abbot'* (p 257). Iona is another example, both as to location and abbatial personnel (despite Cenél Conaill dominance), and it may be that Columba and Columbanus pursued one and the same monastic goal. The monastic ideal is expressed by Adomnán in the words attributed to the dying Columba; saying nothing of preaching the gospel to all nations, the saint enjoins mutual peace, love and fraternity. Given a 6th and 7th-century Irish context, we might see the body of monks not just as *'the dim reflection ... of the concord of heaven'* (p 374), but as the self-conscious, godly and righteous opposite of the *fían,* 'warband'; this was the equivalent of the Germanic *comitatus* which *'may be recruited from men of different peoples'* and *'was condemned ... for its explicit paganism'* (p 464). The author aptly points a contrast between the fían of Coroticus, their foreheads perhaps marked with pagan emblems, and Patrick's baptised converts, newly anointed.

Charles-Edwards is satisfied that *'the Irish were slow to show any interest in the cult of bodily relics'* (p 348), but

there is a hint to the contrary in Muirchú's testimony; that writer mentions contention for Patrick's remains and the angel Victor's promise to the saint that *'a church in honour of your body will be built'*. Charles-Edwards errs in suggesting (pp 65-7) that Muirchú records Patrick's burial at both Saul and Downpatrick; in fact Saul is mentioned only as the site of Patrick's death, so that the issue of translation does not arise. The author further suggests, from the negative evidence of Adomnán, that the latter *'had no truck with the cult of corporeal relics'* (p 565), and that *'there was no shrine for Columba even by the time of Adomnán'* (p 349), but I am not so sure. Adomnán, after all, is not forthcoming about Columba's missionary role, which Charles-Edwards espouses. Moreover, in what Jennifer O'Reilly (1997, 103) has called Columba's 'ceremonial *adventus*' at Clonmacnoise, as reported by Adomnán, the saint is conveyed like a living relic within a frame of branches through the vallum to the church. The frame is termed *pyramis,* the enclosure appropriate to a tomb. Nor is the distinction between a shrine and *'a grave in a monastic cemetery'* so important, since either might serve cult and pilgrimage. Open-air, tent-shaped shrines show how grave and shrine might merge, and - as Ian Fisher can attest (see below) - fragments from Iona include posts from corner-post shrines. Of the two 7th-century portable metal shrines which stand (for the time being) at the head of the insular tradition, one is preserved at Bobbio. The removal from Ireland to Bobbio of the Antiphonary of Bangor finds mention, but the shrine is a contemporary (or earlier) document which travelled the same route. As for its potential contents, relics of Comgall come to mind.

So much for one reader's reflections. Slips and misprints are few and unimportant. Suffice it to draw attention to the attribution of some of Adomnán's words to Cumméne the Fair (p 360), and to a seeming inconsistency in the use of the term 'Chronicle of Ireland', despite a preliminary note in explanation (ppxix, 505, 527); Alhfrid son of Oswiu has been largely supplanted in the index by an *alter ego* Ahlfrid. The dust cover (and here I register a vested interest) inverts one of the plates of the Clonmore shrine (counterpart of that at Bobbio); by right the image should have been cropped and the motif abstracted. But these points are as nothing in the total context. Charles-Edwards is an expert guide whom even the uninitiated might follow and chapters can be enjoyed selectively. This book is a model of source criticism and must now become a standard reference.

**Ian Fisher's book** is a corpus of sculpture, almost all of it Christian, produced mainly between the 6th century and the 12th. Data excerpted from seven *Inventory* volumes for the former county of Argyll is abbreviated and revised, and combined with the evidence from the remainder of the West Highlands, the Hebrides and Clyde islands. In addition to engravings and graffiti in four caves, 462 pieces are individually described and, with a few exceptions, illustrated.

An Introduction considers the symbolism of the cross, the range of sites and the range and function of associated monuments. The book is more than *'an aid to the understanding and appreciation of our early medieval heritage'* (p vii), and is *'a resource for conservation management and further research'* (p 25). Given its origins and purpose, the book depends on numbering and cross-referencing; the reader must attend to the Editorial Notes before embarking.

Thirty-four pages of Comparative Drawings (by Ian Scott, with John Stevenson and John Borland) are essential to the book, their arrangement dictated by overall form and, for simpler examples, by the shape of the motif and the manner of its execution. The range includes linear, outline and relief crosses, cross-slabs and free-standing crosses. Simple forms predominate in Iona (and overall) and are seen as illustrative of *'the strong ascetic commitment inspired by Columba's own example'* (p 11). At the other end of the scale, the free-standing crosses of Iona are said to have been inspired by the enshrinement of the saint's relics, here taken to be signalled by the promulgation of his 'law' in the 750s (pp 1, 16). The genesis of the ringed cross in repairs to St John's Cross is reaffirmed; *'the first ringed cross ... designed as such'* was Kildalton (p 16).

New material includes an alphabet stone at Lochgoilhead, parts of a free-standing cross at Inchnadamph, and parts of a recumbent slab at Sgor nam Bàn-Naomha. A reference to a *leacht* on Iona is newly recognized, perhaps a stage on a *turas* or pilgrimage round. A cross-slab on Lismore is freshly interpreted and suggests the quality of what once existed. The study area was mostly Irish-speaking, but stylistic links with Ireland are no more telling than those with Northumbria, Strathclyde and Wales. Eight symbol stones attest a Pictish presence in the north, and there is a Pictish strain in sculpture on Eigg and Canna. The same applies to Applecross; three fragments there are presented definitively as parts of one (exceptional) cross-slab.

The variable context of the sign of the cross emerges. It is a concept and a gesture; in material terms it marks graves, seaside landing places, routes, holy wells, the sites of notable events and the limits of sanctuary. The cross *'offered protection and invited prayer'* (p 9), recalling Muirchú's Patrick *'signing himself'* repeatedly and praying before crosses he encountered. Sites, too, are variable. Iona is the classic mother monastery and North Rona an eremitical retreat. Cladh a' Bhile remains mysterious, an *'obscure burial ground'* (p 8) and *'a remarkable site'* (p 10), notable here for the single

greatest concentration of sculpture outside Iona. Iona may have offered burial to the laity, if Reilig Odhráin *'originated as a lay cemetery'* (p 2), and pastoral responsibility seems to be implied. A pastoral role might connect with aristocratic patronage, here said to be little evidenced except where single horsemen *'probably represent secular patrons'* (p 19) at Eilean Mór, Rothesay and Kingarth (and cf Canna and Eigg). But (if correctly interpreted) this is a Pictish convention, as Fisher recognises, and there was another norm in the Irish-speaking world. In Ireland lay patrons are acknowledged in inscriptions but nowhere certainly represented. St Martin's Cross once carried an inscription but need not have been unique; laser scanning of weathered surfaces might advance the question.

There are problems of interpretation. One shares Fisher's uncertainty about the naked and phallic? Christ on the cruciform stone from North Rona; was it a sublimation of sexuality on the part of maritime desert fathers? More conventional, perhaps, is the pair of figures at bottom left on the west face of St Martin's Cross. Regarded here as *'too simplified for identification'* (pp 118, 133), both pose and context suggest Cain and Abel. An observed ambiguity between the cross-of-arcs and its interspaces (p 12) might have been resolved with paint.

This book admirably fulfils its author's purpose. It arises from years of survey in which Ian Fisher has played a pivotal but under-acknowledged part. It is gratifying to see his name on title-page and cover at last.

**Bibliography**

O'Reilly, J, 1997, 'Reading the Scriptures in the Life of Columba', in C Bourke (ed), *Studies in the Cult of Saint Columba,* 80-106. Dublin.

Sproule, D, 1984, 'Origins of the Éoganachta', *Ériu* 35, 31-7.

*Cormac Bourke is Curator of Medieval Antiquities, Ulster Museum, Belfast.*

*Early Christian Ireland* and *Early Medieval Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands* are both available from all good book shops

# *'The most distinguished piece of Gothic architecture in Ireland'*

*Richard Fawcett*

**Milne, K** (ed), 2000, *Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, a History.* Four Courts Press: Dublin. ISBN 1 85182 487 1. Hb, 420 and xxii pp, 32 black and white plates, 8 figs; £27.50

**Stalley, R** (ed), 2000, *George Edmund Street and the restoration of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.* Four Courts Press: Dublin. ISBN 1 85182 495 2. Hb, 237pp, 72 figs; £27.50

Over the last quarter century, cathedral studies have been in a gratifyingly healthy state. There have been several impressive single- or multi-author monographs on English and Scottish cathedrals, as well as the conference transactions of the BAA. But, although there have been general works on Irish cathedrals by RW Jackson in 1981 and Peter Galloway in 1992, there have been no recent monographs on individual buildings. The volume on Christ Church Cathedral (also known as Holy Trinity) in Dublin is therefore especially welcome.

The book is divided into 18 chapters by eight contributors, with an inevitably greater concentration on the centuries after the Reformation, for which more information survives. Indeed, the writers of the earlier chapters must envy the carefully documented accounts that Kenneth Milne and Barra Boydell, in particular, are able to present on the later history of the cathedral and its musical life. However, while those later chapters are enormously valuable, it is assumed that readers of this journal are likely to be especially interested in the construction and fabric of the cathedral, and this review will concentrate on those aspects.

A first chapter by Raymond Refaussé introduces the cathedral's history, both as an institution and as a building, and briefly discusses the materials available for the study. He also introduces a number of topics that are developed in subsequent chapters, bringing out the extent to which the cathedral was in some ways an alien presence for much of its history, serving mainly the Anglo-Norman rulers before the Reformation, and the Protestant Anglo-Irish afterwards. The second chapter, by Stuart Kinsella, covers the cathedral's history from 1030 to 1300. Starting with speculations on the possibility of an early episcopal church, he moves on to the firmer ground of King Sitriuc's foundation dedicated to the Holy Trinity following his visit to Rome in 1028. He then discusses the foundation's expanding endowments and the communities that served it. After the initial small group of Benedictines dating from around the time of Bishop P·traic (1074-84), and who may have been supplanted by secular canons, in about 1163 a community of Augustinian canons following the rule of Arrouaise was established, which served the cathedral up to the Reformation. Amongst the themes are the growing anglicisation of the cathedral and the fraught relationships with St Patrick's Church, which eventually emerged as another cathedral. On the former score, the turning point was the imposition of John Cumin, archdeacon of Bath, as archbishop in 1182, and on the latter, it was Cumin who elevated St Patrick's to collegiate status, although it was

only in about 1220 that it acquired cathedral dignitaries.

Kinsella's themes are taken forward in a chapter by James Lydon which covers the institutional history of the cathedral from 1300 to 1500. For this period the materials are more extensive, including account rolls from 1337 to 1346 and the important collections of documents known as the *Liber Niger* and the *Liber Albus.* We see how the Augustinian community seldom numbered more than ten, meaning that most of the canons had to be office holders. The consequent burdens of visiting the priory's properties and serving its parishes must have taken a toll on conventual life. Nevertheless, the cathedral provided a continuing focus for national and civic life, with parliaments and councils held within its walls; the Book of Obits demonstrates that it was also a favoured burial place for Dublin's ruling élite.

Between Kinsella's and Lydon's chapters is the first of four masterly chapters by Roger Stalley, which together cover the cathedral's architectural history from around 1030 to the completion of George Edmund Street's restoration in 1878. The major problems faced in understanding the medieval architecture are the paucity of documentation and the extent of rebuilding carried out in the restoration of 1868-78. Nevertheless, Stalley provides a convincing interpretation of the evidence, while placing the architecture and sculpture firmly in their wider artistic context. After analysing the late Romanesque work in the choir and transepts, which he dates to 1190-1210, and which he frankly admits to be *'cumbersome and inept'*, he moves on to the nave. Started in about 1234, he shows how a design that had its roots in Worcestershire resulted in *'the most distinguished piece of Gothic architecture in Ireland'.* His second chapter, covering the period 1250 to 1530, discusses what can be discovered about the conventual buildings, and is particularly valuable for the elucidation of the extended choir, a structure that was almost totally destroyed by Street. The first short eastern limb, with its apse and ambulatory, can only have housed the presbytery, and an eastward extension was evidently started in 1281, after which a free-standing Lady Chapel was built to its north-east on a slightly different alignment. When Archbishop John de St Paul extended the choir yet further in the mid 14th century, he built it hard against the Lady Chapel resulting in the eastern limb as a whole having a broken axis. While the finished building must certainly have provided an improved setting for the liturgy, as well as space for a feretory, it was something short of great architecture.

**These two books are an outstanding landmark in cathedral historiography**

The medieval history of the cathedral is rounded off with inter-related accounts of its liturgy, by Alan J Fletcher, and of its music; the latter, by Barra Boydell, is the first of five chapters on this aspect, for which Christ Church had a high reputation for much of its history. Raymond Gillespie then provides three chapters on the successive phases of the Reformation between 1500 and 1660, and there are two chapters by Kenneth Milne on the cathedral's history down to 1960. Christ Church's post-medieval architectural disasters are discussed in the third of Stalley's chapters. Most damaging of all was the collapse of the nave vault in 1562, which also brought down much of the south arcade wall. That wall was immediately rebuilt, but with no attempt to reinstate the original architectural forms, or the offending vault itself. The collapse had repercussions for the adjacent elements of the north aisle wall and the tower, and extensive rebuilding was eventually undertaken on the latter after ominous cracks were heard while the archbishop was preaching in 1588. It would be good to know what his text had been.

By the late 18th century, the cathedral's architectural merits were increasingly appreciated, and efforts were made to improve its appearance. In 1794 plaster vaults were constructed over the transepts and crossing, and in 1830-33 a plaster veneer of pattern-book Gothic detailing was applied to the interior of the choir, along with new furnishings. But such unscholarly decorators' Gothic was anathema by the later 19th-century, and the calls for restoration culminated in Street's great campaign of 1871-8, which is covered in the last of Stalley's chapters. Since Christ Church in its present form is as much a product of Street's restoration as it is of successive medieval building operations, there could be no understanding of it that did not take full account of the restoration. The editor and publishers are therefore to be commended for publishing the selection of texts given in *George Edmund Street and the restoration of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.* This is the seventh in a series covering the cathedral's documentation, and few other cathedrals can compete with such a record of publication.

After an introduction by Stalley, which naturally covers much of the same ground as his chapter XVII in *Christ Church Cathedral,* the main body of the book is taken up by three pieces from Street's pen. The first is his report of 1868 in which, after a perceptive account of the cathedral's architectural history, he urges the restoration of the nave, while dismissing the need for restoration of the chancel, despite the fact that he abhorred it as a piece of architecture. At the time this report was written, any prospect of restoration must have seemed remote; but by the time he wrote his second report of 1871 (the second text of the book), the distiller

Henry Roe had offered to fund a complete operation, including a new Synod Hall, and Street was able to recommend tackling the whole building. As well as restoring the nave to its 13th-century state, he argued for demolishing the despised long choir and replacing it by an eastern limb to the plan indicated by the underlying crypt, though the evidence for its superstructure was very slight. Few cathedral architects were ever provided with such financial and artistic freedom, but by the time he wrote his extended account of the cathedral's architecture in 1882, which forms the third and longest text of the volume, the world had moved on and he was having to justify many decisions taken during the restoration completed four years earlier. The need for such justification is made clear by some of the later texts of the volume, in which Street is charged with archaeological inaccuracy and the abandonment of Protestant principles. Mercifully for him, perhaps, the most damning attack came after his death, in 1886, from Thomas Drew, a later cathedral architect, which is printed as the fourth text.

Street's apologia, read together with Stalley's judiciously balanced accompanying commentary, provides a fascinating insight into what was, depending on one's stance, one of the most invasive rebuildings of a medieval cathedral, or one of the most artistically creative reconstructions of a devastated masterpiece. It is an essential document of the 19th-century restoration movement for what it tells us about the attitudes that might underlie such works. Street regarded himself as imbued with lofty conservation principles, though the urge to create a building that was both a worthy setting for modern liturgy and a noble work of architecture, was not always consistent with his own *'...strict rule to restore absolutely and exactly whatever I knew or could discover to have originally existed...'*. His work was also governed by the view that the guiding concept of the designer was paramount, and not the individual contributions of the journeyman masons. He considered that even the finest medieval building *'...might be repeated again to-day with absolutely the same effect..., every detail of it having been executed originally, not by the happy unity of view of a number of workmen, but by their strict obedience to the orders of their master, the architect...'*. Such a view, however strictly accurate, seems strangely at variance with the principles of craftsmanship and regard for patina expounded by William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a society founded while Christ Church was under restoration, and which Street himself joined. Street does not seem to have recognised that the Society stood for something different from what he had come to believe.

Together, these two books are an outstanding landmark in cathedral historiography, representing a considerable feat of scholarship in weaving together a consistently soundly-based narrative, despite the variability of available documentation. It is perhaps a pity that the Four Courts Press, which has done such service to Christ Church in the range of its publications, has not made the two books more handsome than they are. The volume on the restoration is the more attractive of the two, being bound in cloth and printed on good paper, though the reproduction of the engravings to Street's reports and account should have been less murky. The history is less appealingly presented. Although the 56 photographs and engravings on 32 pages of plates are well reproduced, this is not a generous allocation for such a book, and their location in a single gathering at the centre of the volume gives it a rather old-fashioned feeling. Nevertheless, these are minor complaints, and certainly must not detract from the warm reception that these books deserve, and the hope that comparable accounts of other Irish cathedrals will follow.

**Bibliography**

Galloway, P, 1992 *The Cathedrals of Ireland,* Belfast

Jackson, R W, 1981 *Cathedrals of the Church of Ireland,* Dublin

*Richard Fawcett is Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments with Historic Scotland and has just finished work on a book on Scottish Medieval Churches.*

Both books are available from Four Courts Press, Tel 00 353 1 453 4668 or can be ordered online at www.four-courts-press.ie

# *From Norman abbey to Victorian cathedral*

*Lawrence Butler*

**Rogan, J** (ed), 2000, *Bristol Cathedral: history and architecture.* Tempus: Stroud. ISBN 0 7524 1482 8. Pb, 160pp, 25 colour plates, 68 illustrations; £14.99

This attractive and informative book seems to be aimed at an audience wanting the background information that the average guidebook does not supply. Superficially this is the work which places Bristol cathedral in its historical and architectural context. Three historical essays are a useful introduction. Dr Joseph Bettey examines St Augustine's Abbey which was the cathedral's medieval predecessor. Canon John Rogan discusses the cathedral in its difficult early years, when it was poorly financed and saddled with a geographically incoherent diocese, and

the third chapter, also by Rogan, is *'The cathedral restored 1800-1970'.* It is with this third chapter that doubts begin to surface. The chapter's title does not fully recognise either the historical break or the architectural one. The historical hiatus was in 1836 when the see of Bristol was amalgamated with Gloucester. The architectural break was in 1864-68 when Canon John Norris initiated restoration under Street to provide a cathedral worthy of the city's aspirations and a building able to welcome the return of an independent bishop (in 1897 - the date is not given in this book). Perhaps the episodic nature of this third chapter reflects the varied and discontinuous strands which had their impact upon the cathedral's development.

Two subsequent major chapters discuss the architecture of the abbey and cathedral, whilst two more descriptive ones deal with monuments, stained glass and other furniture and fittings. In view of the fragmentary nature of the Romanesque survivals, it is not surprising that the chapter by Dr Catherine Oakes is confined to three scholarly and detailed case studies, concentrating upon the sculptured panel 'the Harrowing of Hell', the highly-decorated chapter house, and the ornate gatehouse arches. Each of these case studies is cogently argued with extensive use of wider analogy and each is sufficiently mature to recognise that the last word on stylistic interpretation has yet to be said. This chapter is of a high standard throughout. The contribution by Alan Rome on Gothic architecture steers an equally skilful course between an understanding of the medieval abbey's transept and eastern arm with its attendant chapels and an appraisal of Street's nave, aisles and western towers as a complementary essay in revived Gothic. Throughout his study the impact of ritual needs and changes is carefully explored with useful illustrative material.

The final two chapters by John Rogan, drawing heavily upon the fully acknowledged work of the late Dr MQ Smith, are concerned with monuments, stained glass, woodwork, roof bosses and mural paintings. Although there are attempts to link these chapters to the wider context of Bristol's trade contacts, its glass workshops, its intellectual milieu and its doctrinal influences, the nature of the subject matter rather dissipates the contextual setting and emphasises the descriptive approach. Perhaps this is inevitable when the chapter division is by function and materials rather than by the development of ritual needs, either medieval or modern. Despite damage in the Second World War, the stained glass displays a wide variety of styles and periods. The misericords of *c*1520 have entertaining illustrations from the Reynard the Fox fable.

In this volume the sum of the parts is clearly weaker than the individual contributions. Much of this failure can be attributed to the editorial approach. Discounting the publisher's claim of 'deft editing' there is far more evidence of *laissez-faire.* Each chapter has its own bibliography at the end of the book: some are alphabetical, some are chronological, while others are arranged internally by topic. Consequently the same work will be repeated with different methods of reference. The figures, both the excellent colour plates and the monochrome illustrations of variable quality, are not referred to within the text although many clearly support and illumine the interpretation. A few are unfortunate gap fillers with little obvious relevance. On the one occasion where there is a reference to a text figure, it is incorrect.

For a reader unfamiliar with Bristol there is no location map of the city and no adequate plan of the cathedral. The three plans or diagrams that are included show different and contradictory information. Perhaps the reader should be recommended to a reliable phase plan (Paul 1912) or even better have one included in this volume. This would certainly help to locate the Newton chapel, which is not named on any plan. Outside the cathedral there are various references to monastic buildings, both surviving and those demolished in the post-Reformation centuries, but there is no adequate plan to assist the reader. Along with the gap in reference to figures, there is a comparable absence of cross-references; such referencing is all the more necessary since the index is not entirely reliable.

However, this publication is clearly a work inspired by love of the building, allied to a pride in its history and to the testament it provides of Christian worship in Bristol. It suffers by comparison with the British Archaeological Association's conference volume (Keen 1997). At a time when there have been excellent composite volumes on cathedrals, especially those of Lincoln and Norwich, it is a pity that this publication is a poor relation in that company.

**Bibliography**

Keen, L, 1997 *'Almost the Richest City': Bristol in the Middle Ages,* Brit Archaeol Assoc Conf Trans, **XIX**

Paul, R W, 1912 'The plan of the Church and Monastery of St Augustine', *Archaeologia,* **63**, 231-50

*Lawrence Butler is Senior Lecturer in Medieval Archaeology, University of York and specialises in the analysis of later medieval buildings. He has served as consultant archaeologist to the cathedrals of Lincoln, Sheffield and Wakefield 1978-2001.*

*Bristol Cathedral: history and architecture* is available from Tempus Publishing Ltd, The Mill, Brimscombe Port, Stroud, GL5 2QG, Tel 01453 883300, Fax 01453 883233, email tempusuk@tempus-publishing.com

# *A Godly man in extraordinary times: the life and works of William Dowsing*

*Jonathan Finch*

**Cooper, T** (ed), 2001, *The Journal of William Dowsing. Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War.* Ecclesiological Society/Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge. ISBN 0 85115 833 1. Hb, xxiv + 551pp, 64 b&w halftones, 39 line illustrations and 40 maps; £50.00 (+ £2.00 p+p)

This new edition of William Dowsing's journal, chronicling some ten months of iconoclasm between December 1643 and September 1644, is a landmark for many reasons. For the first time it brings together the two sections - both known only from 18th-century transcriptions - covering Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, and it provides a new and heavily annotated transcription of both. Although the journal forms the core of the book it is framed on either side by 11 chapters and 16 appendices covering a wide range of subjects, each seeking to contextualise the man and his work in a way not previously attempted.

William Dowsing's journal provides the only systematic firsthand account of the iconoclasm that was visited upon parish churches across the country in the mid 17th century. Most of the entries appear formulaic and dispassionate, listing the work done in each church and the arrangements and conditions set down for its completion. Dowsing visited Higham St Mary, for example, on February 2nd, and recorded: *'We brake down 15 superstitious pictures in the chancell; and 16 in the church,* (so called); *and gave order to levell the steps in 14 days'.* Despite the journal's unique nature the previously published version of the Suffolk entries, edited in the 1890s, is more informative about the attitudes of the Victorian High Church than the events of the 1640s. This volume is more than just an updated version of the journal, it is a substantial contribution to our historical understanding of the 1640s and our appreciation of the processes by which our churches and their interiors have evolved.

It soon becomes apparent that one of the chief aims of the book is to flesh out the two-dimensional caricature of Dowsing so familiar to ecclesiastical historians. We learn of his homes and farms, his library, his preaching and, significantly, his post-iconoclastic afterlife as a disillusioned elderly yeoman farmer. John Morrill's enlarged and updated version of an earlier article strives to explain *'a life rooted in a quite remarkable biblicism'* (p 28). It gives shape to Dowsing's actions as a personal contribution to the reordering of the world, to make it fit for the return of Christ. The biography of this unremarkable man thrust into the historical limelight by the surviving transcriptions of part of his journal is a lesson in historiography itself, while the unique nature of his commission from the Earl of Manchester is meticulously reconstructed from the fragmentary documentary record. There is even a genealogy of the manuscript itself, recreating its journey through history and ending with the current edition. The section that deals with Dowsing forgeries serves to demonstrate the power that this Suffolk man has exercised down the centuries.

**A substantial contribution to our historical understanding of the 1640s**

Beyond the man himself there is a considerable amount of new information about his deputies, who emerge from the shadows of parish records and personal letters. At times they operated in areas that Dowsing was unable to reach, such as Norfolk, whilst others assisted by making pre-emptive visits, by accompanying Dowsing, or by follow-up visits to make sure the work was done. The deputies provide another fascinating insight into the way networks established through kinship and friendship were used to exercise authority. Here was the real strength of radical Protestantism, the plaited rope of personal and religious commitment used to harness the power of the State as it penetrated further into local communities.

It is much to the contributors' credit that their attention to detail extends beyond the traditional fare of the historian to include much that is drawn from the fabric and fittings of the parish churches in East Anglia that Dowsing and his deputies visited. Detailed notes about the surviving church fabric - helping to elucidate both the text and the fabric - accompany the journal entries. The balance of material and documentary evidence is far more successfully achieved than in other recent works where the fittings and furnishings are uncritically presented to illustrate the historical narrative. Here, the very fact that Dowsing's quest was one focused on furnishings and fittings, demands that one engages with the material evidence. It was the iconoclasts who recognised the enduring power and significance of material culture within parish churches. By insisting on the removal of chancel steps, altar rails, and 'altar-wise' communion tables, the iconoclasts demonstrated the power of liturgical space and the importance placed upon the way it was structured. By removing intercessory inscriptions, on bells or monuments, and icons, the iconoclasts sought to remove the traces of superstition that had left the door open for Laudianism.

It is the combination of the surviving material evidence with the

new transcript of the journal that gives this edition such academic weight. There is a careful reconstruction of Dowsing's movements throughout East Anglia, a consideration of how many churches were visited in Suffolk and an assessment of damage to bells in Norfolk and Suffolk, as well as sections on damage to glass and brasses. Each is scrupulously researched.

The role of this volume as a foundation stone for further work is made clear by Trevor Cooper's inclusion of a list of questions raised by the work, about Dowsing as an individual and about the place of his iconoclasm within the broader context of the 17th century. One area for further exploration is the extent to which the geography of iconoclasm can usefully be mapped. While several chapters trace the movements of Dowsing and his deputies through East Anglia, rather less attention is paid to why they enjoyed such freedom. There is an interesting piece on the dubious authority of Dowsing's commission from the Earl of Manchester - something challenged by the Fellows of Pembroke College in a fascinating debate over biblical precedent and legitimacy. Beyond the ivory towers of Cambridge, however, resistance took the form of non co-operation: churchwardens unable to find either keys or ladders. But we rarely glimpse the broader picture of social control. Since it has been argued that many monuments survived because the gentry rarely lost control, it is significant to note that Dowsing and his men operated in parts of East Anglia recognised as having relatively few large landed estates. In Norfolk, for example, Dowsing's deputy, Captain Gilley, operated in the south of the county, an area that was characterised by numerous freeholders and where social control was weak. In contrast, the north of the county was dominated by large landholders, who were able to exercise considerable control over a more pyramidal social structure. The social geography of iconoclasm is just one area which archaeologists and historians should now be looking to. Other topics should include how the chronology and location of iconoclasm throughout the 16th and 17th centuries affected what was targeted.

This volume is a key text in the growing literature on iconoclasm. If one were to offer criticism it might be of the organisation of the book. Eleven chapters and 16 appendices do not suggest a strong overall plan. It is also unclear why five pages on Dowsing's homes should be a chapter, while the analysis of the stained glass and monuments lost is relegated to the appendices. However, we should be grateful that the material was all included. Although the work is based around the fleeting notoriety of one man whose work was confined to a particular area of East Anglia, this book is an essential reference work for those interested in the passions that were aroused by the role of the church in early modern society. The archaeology of iconoclasm can begin in earnest.

*Jonathan Finch is Lecturer in Archaeology at the University of York and is Director of Studies for the MA in Medieval Archaeology. He has recently published* Church monuments in Norfolk before 1850: an archaeology of commemoration *(BAR **317**; 2000).*

*The Journal of William Dowsing* is available from Boydell & Brewer Ltd, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 3DF, Tel 01394 411320, Fax 01394 411477

New Books

# *Death, Art and Memory in Medieval England: the Cobham family and their monuments, 1300-1500*

*Jonathan Finch*

**Saul, N,** 2001, Oxford University Press: Oxford. ISBN 0 19 820746 8. xv + 287pp 42 ill, 7 diagrams. Hb £29.99

Nigel Saul sets out to present a new paradigm for the study of medieval commemoration that rejects the formalist critique he sees as dominating a study led for too long by antiquarians. Instead he suggests that the monuments, in this case of the Cobham family, should be seen within the wider contexts of rituals of bereavement, strategies of legitimation and the wider social dynamics of gentry culture.

The book then examines the Cobham family from the 12th and 13th centuries through to the beginning of the 17th. The zenith of the family's power came with the 3rd Lord Cobham, Richard, who founded the impressive Cobham College alongside the parish church, which was transformed into the family mausoleum. There is useful account of the church, its advowson, the personnel, their liturgical equipment and indeed their monuments. The next chapter provides a summary of the production of, and market for, brasses since the 13th century, which focuses on the workshops in London.

The next chapter is a discussion of the brasses themselves: their form, style, and workshop attribution. But it also deals with who commissioned the monuments and the family strategy which determined who should be buried and commemorated where. It is undoubtedly the heart of the book, building on years of careful research in the family archives and antiquarian papers and delivers a rounded portrait of gentry family pursuing the commemoration of their partners and kin in a manner fitting of their status. The web of Cobham power spread beyond the narrow confines of a single Kentish parish, and Saul tracks down the monuments of the various cadet branches of the family who lie elsewhere.

Whether or not it presents a new paradigm for the study of monuments is, however, debatable. Archaeologists have been analysing and debating the significance of medieval material culture for some time, yet their contribution seems to have been ignored. Comments about monuments being *'a highly problematic source for the historian'* (p 227) are apparently overcome by reading them as *'any other set of source material'* (p 9). There is little emphasis here on the active role of monuments in creating, articulating and perpetuating social strategies, which has been articulated elsewhere. Saul seems content with concerns about portraiture, production and patronage. There is even little about memory despite its popularity within new historicism - indeed the title of the book seems to have been disingenuously transposed in terms of the emphasis of the text. This is, however, a beautifully produced book, particularly in terms of the number and clarity of the illustrations - most of which are rubbings by one of the subject's unsung heroes, William Lack - allowing the reader the rare treat of being able to examine the monuments alongside the text. It is an extremely well written and enjoyable vignette of one family's contribution to our medieval heritage - heritage that lies in every medieval church.

*Available from all good bookshops*

## *Buildings, Faith and Worship: the Liturgical Arrangement of Anglican Churches 1600-1900*

*Jonathan Finch*

**Yates, N,** Revised edition 2001, Oxford University Press: Oxford. ISBN 0 19 827013 5. xxxiv +261pp 24 plates and 14 plans. Pb £19.99

The revision and republication of Nigel Yates' book is a welcome addition to the literature on post-medieval churches. Yates sets out to correct some of the later 19th century propaganda that still runs through so many church guides and even some academic literature. He does this not only by drawing attention to reports of dilapidation from the medieval period, but more constructively through the detailed examination of both church papers and fabrics. Divided chronologically into three sections, the first deals with the legacy of the Reformation before 1660; the second with liturgical provision, experimentation and tradition between 1660 and 1840; and the third with the considerable impact of the Oxford Movement after 1840. The revisions in the new edition relate to a decade of new research - arguably a decade with more research than any preceding it - and two new appendices dedicated to surviving pre- and early Ecclesiological interiors in Britain. These appendices, which take the form of a gazetteer, include a codified description of the interior, date and description of what remains with any attributions. The book really is a mine of information and a must for anyone with a serious interest in post-medieval churches, or indeed, those interested in the modern alterations within medieval churches. It is also to be hoped that the revision of this classic text will further stimulate research into this sadly neglected and misunderstood area of church history and archaeology.

*Available from all good bookshops*

## *The Cistercian Evolution: the invention of a religious order in twelfth-century Europe*

*Tim Pestell*

**Hoffman Berman, C,** 2000, Middle Ages Series. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia. ISBN 0 8122 3534 7. Hb, 392pp, 49 figures; $59.95

One might be forgiven for thinking there were few monastic orders other than the Cistercians in the Middle Ages, such as been the deluge of recent literature discussing them. Another offering is Professor Berman's analysis of the Cistercian order's origins in France. The central thesis of this substantial volume is that the *Carta Caritatis* issued by Stephen Harding, second abbot of Cîteaux, was not simply the product of a rapidly

expanding new order, needing a regulatory constitution to help plan new houses. Instead, Berman argues that the Charter of Love has no clear or reliable reference before the mid 12th century, and probably dates from *c*1165 rather than the 1119 date to which it is usually ascribed. She argues that *Carta Caritatis* was therefore a tool for bringing together a large number of loosely-affiliated communities sharing Cistercian customs, rather than a guide to shape new houses from the start. Berman concludes that *'the Cistercian Order* [was] *not founded in 1098,* [nor] *even founded before the death of Bernard of Clairvaux in 1153'.* Heavy stuff indeed. Berman's case relies upon the redating of several documents, as well as the dismissal of others as forgeries. Such controversial ideas will take time to be assimilated, but Berman's well-referenced discussion and familiarity with the primary documents supplies a rich quarry for those evaluating her claims, as well as providing much detailed discussion of the earliest Cistercian (or perhaps for Berman, 'Cistercian') foundations in Europe and France.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *Romanesque churches of the Loire and Western France*

*Naomi Tummons*

**Costen, MD,** & **Oakes, C,** 2000. Tempus: Stroud. ISBN 0 7524 1444 5. Pb, 194pp, 5 figures, 20 colour plates, also black and white photographs; £17.99

This is a very readable work on the history and architecture of the churches from dioceses such as Poitiers, Tours, Saintes and Angers. There is a good chapter on church reform, with necessary but not overly-complicated references to the effect that the Papacy and moves for reform within the Curia had upon the church in France, together with detailed analysis of the churches, their patrons, the power and influence of the French (and latterly during the period that of King Henry II of England) and the climate that cultivated this rash of foundations. The book has many excellent illustrations, most of which have been taken by the authors. They show a range of detailed features from the churches, particularly of the carved capitals, such as those at Civaux, St Gervaise and Poitiers, St Hilaire-le-Grand, of elaborately decorated tympanums and of wall paintings, drawing our attention to the individuality and skill of the craftsmen. Sadly, only 20 are in colour. This is a shame since the subject would be better served with more colour photographs, particularly chapter 5 on sculpture and wall painting. Figures show the location of churches throughout the region, together with examples of floor plans. What readers will find particularly helpful is a detailed gazetteer with directions from the closest town. The authors have annotated this gazetteer to show features of special interest, such as an important facade or sculpted capitals, and in some cases have included facts of note.

*Available from all good bookshops.*

# *The architectural setting of the cult of saints in the Early Christian West c300-c1200*

*Charlotte Foster*

**Crook, J,** 2000, Oxford. ISBN 019 820794 8. Hb, 308pp, 111 figs, black and white plans and photographs; £50.00

This book considers the persistent influence of the cult of saints on the architecture of early medieval churches from as early as the 2nd century until the end of the 12th century. The author highlights not only the times when the influence was obvious, such as in the Rome of Pope Gregory the Great or during the Carolingian period, but also more subtle influences such as tomb shrines and high shrines in medieval England. The particularly western emphasis fills a gap which has long required attention.

The work opens with a useful overview of the development of the cult of relics providing a review of documentary sources from early Patristic writings to the comments of 16th-century reformers. The main body of the book is a largely chronological description, analysis and discussion of the evolution of the influence of the cult of saints upon architectural developments. The balanced use of documentary and archaeological methods combine with the excellent use of plans and photographs to provide a detailed and scholarly work which will be welcomed by all students of the early Church.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *King's College Chapel, Aberdeen, 1500-2000*

*Jackie Hall*

**Geddes, J,** (ed), 2000, Northern Universities Press: Leeds. ISBN 1 902653 19 X. Pb, 328, black and white plates and figs; £28.50

Founded as an integral part of his new university at Aberdeen by Bishop Elphinstone, King's College Chapel was only in use as a religious building for around 60 years. Thereafter it had numerous uses and was preserved almost intact until its sensitive restoration as a place of worship in 1824. Thus it has one of the best 16th-century interiors in Scotland, as well as a number of modern fittings of note.

Published to celebrate the quincentenary of the chapel, this is a monumental book of 26 chapters (the last a comprehensive bibliography) by 23 different authors - too many to mention by name as they deserve. It is divided into two more-or-less equal halves, on the pre-reformation and post-reformation and each half is divided into four further sections. The chapters dealing with the early life of the chapel are split into introduction, worship, architecture and fittings, and the post-reformation half similarly covers organisation, worship (liturgy and music), architecture and fittings. In each case, the chapters on fittings predominate - 17 of the 26 chapters altogether. These cover every type of fitting from inscriptions, woodwork (stalls, screen, pulpit, desk), paintings, bells, tombs and armorials to glass, mace, Arts and Crafts Furnishings and the 1912-31 monument to Bishop Elphinstone.

The book brings together the architecture and fittings within the context of a *'rich and meaningful liturgy'* (p ix), including possible references in the building to the Temple of Solomon, as well as the artistic context. In the case of the early woodwork, this milieu is shown for the first time to have been a well-developed local craft. One might quibble with the description of the pre-reformation fittings and building as 'medieval' and the illustrations, though of good quality, are rather small, but overall this is a work of outstanding quality at a reasonable price.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *The window glass of the Order of St Gilbert of Sempringham: a York-based study*

*Tim Pestell*

**Graves, CP,** 2000, The Archaeology of York 11/3. CBA: York. ISBN 1 902771 15 X. Pb, 234+viii pp, 72 figs and plates, 5 tables; £26.00 (+p&p)

Window glass represents one of the most commonly encountered artefact types on monastic sites, but only rarely does enough survive, of good enough quality, to make anything more than very general statements. The excavation of St Andrew's Gilbertine priory in York has allowed deeper consideration because of an unusually large assemblage of window glass, amounting to approximately 50,000 fragments or c 6.25sq m. This report therefore attempts to study not only the York material, but to set the site in a broader context by examining the known evidence for glazing from all the English Gilbertine sites. Unfortunately, the comparanda available are less impressive. Of 30 sites, 24 have no surviving glass. Of the remaining six, Chicksands in Bedfordshire has only five excavated fragments (although this may have increased as a result of the recent visit of Channel Four's Time Team). Indeed, the only substantial assemblage for comparison came from Sempringham itself and Ellerton priory, N Yorks. If this seems disappointing, Grave's report is not. She has brought together all the available information and, in the case of Haverholme priory (Lincs), published for the first time what little window glass was found in the 1960s excavations.

The principal thrust of the work revolves around the glazing schemes of St Andrew's itself. Two main periods of glazing are revealed, one dating to the 13th century, the other to a century later. These are interpreted as reflecting a change in the outlook of the priory, the earlier scheme with its general absence of colour or figural schemes subsequently being replaced by both, along with some heraldry. This is explained by the priory's changed economic circumstances, with the need for patronage forcing it to accept *'a change in spiritual priorities, and a more secular aesthetic having been embraced'* (p 510). Although this certainly reflects wider moves in patronal display in the 14th century, it is perhaps disingenuous to suggest the original founders may not also have desired the earlier plain glazing schemes: such austerity in their foundation, especially for a new order as distinctive as the Gilbertines, was surely another means of signalling their piety.

This report follows directly in pagination from the St Andrew's priory excavation report published as

*The Archaeology of York 11/2* in 1996. Not only does it form a major achievement in the consideration of monastic window glass, it marks another step in the admirably thorough publication of this excavation.

*Available from C Kyriacou, York Archaeological Trust, Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York, YO1 7FG, Tel 01904 663000, Fax 01904 663024*

# *Alban and St Albans: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*

*Tim Pestell*

**Henig, M** and **Lindley, P** (eds), 2001, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions XXIV: Leeds. ISBN 1 902653 40 8 (Hb), 1 902653 39 4 (Pb). 270+xviii pp, 134 figs and plates, 13 in colour; hb £48, pb £36

In this, the latest publication of the British Archaeological Association's conference transactions, it is the turn of St Albans to go under the spotlight. The result is a valuable collection of 18 papers, with a wide range of subjects. There are, of course, the usual architectural considerations, including assessments of St Alban's influence in late 12th-century regional sculpture, reconstruction of the 13th-century abbey church west front, and discussion of the Gothic nave and presbytery. There are also more specific studies of the Gloucester chantry, the high altar screen and the timbers in the church central tower.

However, the Roman past is such an important component to the story of St Albans, it is only right that a number of papers highlight this ancestry. In particular, the crucial early cult background to the town is well considered, from a variety of perspectives. Niblett's paper on the Roman origins of cult in the *municipium* provides an interesting background to the subsequent rise of St Alban's veneration. The saint's cult is discussed by Sharpe, in his re-evaluation of the *Passio Sancti Albani* (dating its earliest recension to the mid-5th century), and by Clark, who argues that 15th and 16th-century *Lives* of the martyr formed a means by which the monks defended their privileges. This promotion of cult is touched upon in other papers, for instance a concise description of pilgrim souvenir badges from the shrine, and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle's consideration of the Alban cross. The latter suggests that the unique form of the St Alban's cross derived from a Coptic cross which was acquired by the abbey in the early 13th century.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given their extensive research project at St Alban's, it is the Biddles who provide three papers (or 97 of the 270 pages) in this volume. Of these, perhaps the most important is the Biddles' joint paper on the origins of St Alban's abbey, describing not just the Anglo-Saxon foundation but the underlying Romano-British cemetery. This presentation is likely to remain the principal discussion of the early monastery's archaeology for some years. Although there have been numerous short interim reports of the work undertaken by the St Alban's Abbey Research Committee, because most have been in *The Alban Link* they have not been easily accessible to a wide audience.

The papers within this volume will, as Lawrence Keen puts it in the preface, *'stand for some time as a significant and worthwhile contribution to St Albans'*. Perhaps the one note of discord is that such quality does not come cheap. At £36 for even a paperback, many are likely to reach for the photocopier before their wallet when considering this volume.

*Available from Subscriptions Department, Maney Publishing, Hudson Road, Leeds, LS9 7DL, Tel 0113 249 7481, Fax 0113 248 6983, Email maney@maney.co.uk*

# *English churchyard memorials*

*Jonathan Finch*

**Lees, H**, 2000, Tempus: Stroud. ISBN 0 7524 1441 0. Hb, 160pp, with 75 b&w halftones and 25 colour plates; £19.99

Hilary Lees' attractively produced, slim hardback is devoted to the extra-mural monuments, crosses and mausolea found in the country's graveyards, and boasts a forward by HRH The Prince of Wales. Having set the scene with chapters on the churchyard and the churchyard cross, three chronological chapters move from Roman to modern monuments. These are followed by chapters on 'Sculpture and symbolism', 'Inscriptions and lettering' and 'Materials'. The final chapter reveals that the study was based on monuments that are listed Grade I or Grade II* and it provides a brief survey of their condition. The monuments, hogbacks, crosses and mausolea are listed in three appendices.

Popular interest in churchyard memorials has been growing for some years although many are still in a parlous state. Any book that raises public awareness about the unique significance and beauty of churchyard

memorials is to be welcomed, and this one is well illustrated with colour and black and white photographs. There are, however, moments of confusion: the inclusion of an open 'prehistoric burial mound' amongst the illustrations of churchyard memorial types in an attempt to unite prehistoric customs with those of the Christian graveyard, is one. The chapter on the Gothic Revival is curiously divided between sections on mausolea and modern memorials, thus ignoring the majority of monuments that fill our graveyards. After nearly 40 years of study, recording and conservation it is perplexing that Burgess' book of the same title as this latest offering is still the standard work.

*Available from all good bookshops.*

# *Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux and the Norman Cathedral at York*

**Norton, C,** 2001, Borthwick Paper no100, Borthwick Publications, University of York. ISBN 0903857855. Pb, 38pp, with 12 figures. £4.00 (+p&p)

In this booklet Christopher Norton provides a scholarly but imaginative re-interpretation of York's Norman Cathedral. The paper is written in a lively and engaging style and is accompanied by 12 well-placed figures and comprehensive references. The first section of the paper considers the historical context of the appointment of Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux, the Conquest and 'harrying' of the north, and the issue of the relative primacy of the Sees of York and Canterbury. Norton argues that this explains the architectural aspirations and sheer scale of the rebuilding of the cathedral in the mid 1070s. Thomas' institutional reform of the cathedral as a body of secular canons between 1088 and 1093 and his animosity towards the rival foundation of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Mary's in the mid 1080s is also discussed. Norton demonstrates the impact of both these factors on the layout of the Minster precinct and the design and plan of Thomas' cathedral.

In the remainder of the article Norton re-considers existing interpretations of the Norman cathedral. He provides a new and important analysis of the geometrical system employed in its layout and then re-interprets the archaeological evidence of the eastern arm of the cathedral. He proposes that the crypt passages partially exposed in the excavations of 1967-72 provided access to a large, hall-crypt space and further east, to a crypt chapel. At choir and presbytery level this created a series of carefully orchestrated spaces which, Norton suggests, may be the *'earliest example of a liturgical choir east of the crossing in any of the great churches in this country'.*

The article concludes by identifying models for York Minster's Norman design, such as Saint-Georges de Boscherville in Normandy and possibly Bayeux Cathedral, and parallels with English sites such as St Augustine's Canterbury, Rochester, Winchester and Lastingham. In so doing Norton demonstrates that Thomas of Bayeux's Norman cathedral at York has important implications for understanding the wider development of Romanesque architecture in mid-late 11th-century England.

*Available from The Borthwick Institute, Tel 01904 642315*

# *The way and the light: an illustrated guide to the saints and holy places of Britain*

*Jonathan Finch*

**Sharp, M,** 2000, Aurum Press: London. ISBN 1854107224. Hb, vi + 217pp, with black and white and colour plates; £14.95

The archaeology of religion and popular ritual has been enjoying some belated attention and this book offers an account of the people and places throughout Britain that were, at one time, such an important part of the religious landscape. The structure of the book provides a chronological framework before devoting chapters to saints who could be characterised as hermits, visionaries or martyrs. Two chapters concentrate on the shrines and chapels that form the fragmentary archaeology of these once popular traditions, whilst the final chapter provides a map, co-ordinates and full gazetteer.

Mick Sharp's fluid and easy style of writing, which weaves together the stories and legends of hundreds of saints over some 800 years, is a joy to read. The lack of formal structure, however, makes the publisher's omission of the index all the more unfortunate. To say this is not an academic book should not be taken to mean it is lacking in solid research - it is clearly the product of many years' hard work. But the writing is not focused on critical analysis, instead it conveys a gentle empathy with its characters. Archaeological and historical insights are employed, but they are used to support rather than overwhelm the stories of the people

and places. The pictures are - as one would expect from the doyen of archaeological photography - a sheer delight. The images vividly bring to life the two key elements of pilgrimage that are so often neglected - what it meant to travel through a landscape charged with symbolic meaning and what pilgrims experienced as they arrived at a shrine.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *The College of the Vicars Choral of York Minster at Bedern: architectural fragments*

*Kate Giles*

**Stocker, DA,** 1999, The Archaeology of York 10/4. CBA: York. ISBN 1 902771028. Pb, 184 pp, 20 half tones, 90 line illustrations; £20.00 (+ £2.00 p+p)

David Stocker's recent volume on the architectural fragments from the excavation of the College of the Vicars Choral, Bedern, York between 1973-1980 is intended to be an adjunct to the forthcoming excavation report (AY 10/5). Both are published in the accessible and affordable format of the York fascicule series. However, the volume is also designed as a freestanding interpretative catalogue and is an excellent example of the way in which collections of worked stone can be published in a coherent and meaningful way.

The first part of the volume contains a useful synthesis of the structural sequence of the buildings by Richard Hall. It is accompanied by selected summary phase plans. The following section presents the interpretation of architectural fragments recovered from the site. Their archaeological context, petrology, form, function and style are analysed. Stocker demonstrates convincingly that most were reused 12th and 13th-century fragments from other monumental medieval buildings in York, including the demolished 12th-century phases of York Minster and possibly the elusive 13th-century parish church of St Mary ad Valvas. The volume not only sheds light on colleges of vicars choral - a building type which has received relatively little coherent attention from scholars - but also contributes to a debate of international significance, namely the form and appearance of the cathedral of Archbishop Roger of Pont l'Eveque, possibly the earliest Gothic building in the country. The main body of the text is the catalogue. The architectural fragments are divided into three main groups - of 12th-century, 13th-century and later/miscellaneous material. The catalogue is accompanied by an extensive selection of line drawings, sections and moulding profiles. There is a useful section on masoncraft, including illustrations and summary tables of tooling data. The text is well referenced, with a good bibliography and index.

At first glance this might appear to be aimed at a somewhat limited specialist market. In fact Stocker has produced a report which is relevant to a diverse range of audiences, demonstrating simply and eloquently the archaeological processes through which miscellaneous collections of worked stone can be interpreted as meaningful medieval buildings.

*Available from C Kyriacou, York Archaeological Trust, Cromwell House, 13 Ogleforth, York, YO1 7FG, Tel 01904 663000, Fax 01904 663024*

# *Lambeth Palace: A history of the archbishops of Canterbury and their houses*

*Nick Russell*

**Tatton-Brown, T,** 2000, SPCK: London. ISBN 0 281 05347 2. Hb, 116pp, 70 plates, 29 line drawings; £17.50

This work addresses a subject that, surprisingly, has received little attention in the past - Lambeth Palace and the other houses of the see of Canterbury; Otford, Mayfield, Knole, Saltwood Castle, Croydon, Charing, Ford, and Maidstone. The author should be commended for his courage in undertaking such a vast subject, for although Lambeth Palace and most of the other houses discussed have, individually, been the subject of limited research, nobody has attempted to look at them in context.

Owing to the scale of the subject this work concentrates mainly on Lambeth Palace, only discussing the other houses in passing, and as such it would benefit from a short introduction to each of the houses. However, it does provide an accessible, readable entry to the subject.

Mr Tatton-Brown acknowledges the scale of the undertaking and presents this well-illustrated work as an interim study from which further historical and archaeological research can progress. This is an accomplished volume which leaves the reader eager to discover more, particularly about the lesser houses.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *Burial Practice in Early England*

*Joseph Elders*

**Taylor, A,** 2001, Tempus: Stroud. ISBN 0 7524 1487 9. Pb, 192pp, 81 illustrations, 34 colour plates; £17.99

This is a timely book, coinciding with an increase in public and academic interest in burial archaeology manifested most obviously in the television programmes currently gracing our screens, notably *Meet the Ancestors* and *Time Team.* Alison Taylor has attempted to cover a broad time span, from the Neolithic to the Norman Conquest, the approach strictly chronological with a chapter for each period.

This breadth has the advantage of making the book an introduction and one-stop shop for professional archaeologists and interested amateurs for the period covered, while clearly not allowing much space for new or in-depth analysis of the material, or comparison with continental developments. The author does, however, find space to propose some interesting ideas, for example the lack of archaeological evidence for excarnation, and emphasising the potential value of literary and pictorial evidence for burial practices.

Particular sites are studied as examples of certain types of practice, accompanied by a wealth of illustrations, with photographs and plans of recent excavations such as at Sutton Hoo or Cherry Hinton alongside antiquarian depictions of long-lost tumuli or grave goods. While most of these are of good quality, some have reproduced extremely badly, which is a pity. There are no maps, so the distribution of particular burial rights is difficult to follow. The chapter of most interest to readers of this journal on the later Anglo-Saxons is quite short, but provides a useful update and summary.

Taylor marshals for the reader a huge amount of information from hundreds of sites, in a clear and readable style and format. The book is well-researched and indexed, with a useful bibliography. It will serve as an invaluable overview and quick reference source, and a pointer to more detailed studies within the large period covered. As such it is a welcome and up-to-date addition to the burgeoning literature on this subject, at a reasonable price.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *Medieval archaeology, art and architecture at Chester*

*Nancy Edwards*

**Thacker, A,** 2000 (ed), British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions XXII. BAA & Maney Publishing: Leeds. ISBN 1 902653 08 4 (Hb); 1 902653 09 2 (Pb). xvi + 189pp, with numerous line drawings and plates; Hb £39.00, Pb £28.50

This volume comprises 14 papers arising from the British Archaeological Association's conference in Chester in 1992. They discuss the development of the town and its various ecclesiastical foundations as well as touching on some of the other monastic establishments in the vicinity; spanning the Roman period to Gilbert Scott's 19th-century restoration of the Cathedral. There are several papers of particular interest to readers of *Church Archaeology.* Alan Thacker discusses the obscure origins of St Werburgh's and St John's and the Norman impact on ecclesiastical foundations in the town. Richard Gem examines the complexities of the Romanesque architecture of the Benedictine Abbey of St Werburgh's (now the Cathedral) and St John's and their affinities. Simon Ward (in a new paper commissioned since the conference) outlines the recent results of important archaeological excavations on both sites which include the identification of a possible Anglo-Saxon phase at St Werburgh's. Virginia Jansen identifies an early Gothic extension to the east end of St Werburgh's and John Maddison considers the complicated building history of the choir in the 13th and 14th centuries. Within the town were also Dominican, Franciscan and Carmelite friaries. Simon Ward surveys the archaeological and other evidence for these and their impact on the later development of Chester's topography. Outside Chester, J Patrick Greene discusses the impact of the Dissolution of the monasteries in Cheshire, particularly Norton Priory. Despite the fact that it has taken eight years for these conference papers to be published, they still provide a valuable contribution to our understanding of the ecclesiastical foundations of Chester although there is little discussion of the parish churches, St Mary's Nunnery or St Ursula's Hospital. The volume is copiously illustrated with fine colour plates showing the newly recorded cycles of wall paintings in the Chapel of Chester Castle which date to the time of Henry III.

*Available from Subscriptions Department, Maney Publishing, Hudson Road, Leeds, LS9 7DL, Tel 0113 249 7481, Fax 0113 248 6983, Email maney@maney.co.uk*

# *Historic Ulster churches*

*Charlotte Foster*

**Walker, S,** 2000, Belfast. ISBN 0 85389 767 0. Pb, 123pp, 170 figs, black and white photographs with some line drawings: £12.50

This book consists of 12 chapters considering the medieval to modern periods with a heavy emphasis upon the 18th and 19th centuries. The work was funded by the Ulster Historic Churches Trust who *'had to steer a course between, on the one hand, architectural excellence and historic interest and overall merit, and on the other giving a fair representation to all the principal Christian denominations'* and who felt that *'those of Ulster's churches which are already written about elsewhere should not necessarily feature here'.* It is difficult to detect just what the selection process was for individual entries in this book, which appears to be a gazetteer but is too selective to be used as such. References to individual churches vary from a short paragraph to a page, with single illustrations where possible, usually a black and white photograph, the quality of which is variable. The information provided with each entry is, however, perfectly reasonable and in a form that is easily accessible, so that the book will provide a useful guide to some of the more interesting aspects of the historic churches in Ulster, particularly for anyone planning a tour.

*Available from all good bookshops*

# *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome, a comprehensive guide*

*Joseph Elders*

**Webb, M,** 2001, Sussex Academic Press: Brighton. ISBN 1 902210 57 3. 324pp, over 90 illustrations, no plates. Hb £49.50, pb £25

The subtitle of this book is *A Comprehensive Guide,* and it is this ambition of approach to such an enormous subject which dictates the chosen format, the itinerary, of which there are no less than thirteen. This places the book deliberately in the tradition of the pilgrims' guidebook, and the author is careful to give balanced accounts of the legendary associations of each site together with accounts of excavations, phased plans and evocative descriptions of the buildings and features which can be seen there. Excerpts from Dickens, Goethe, and Stendhal's accounts of the sites give an extra dimension and depth to the descriptions.

The itineraries are preceded by a brief introductory chapter on the early Christians in Rome, which acknowledges its debt to the work of Krautheimer as the backbone of the information presented here. This out of the way, we are directly in to the itineraries, starting of course with St Peter's, with sites listed in order of importance and progress along the author's suggested routes. Sites must be accessible and also contain visible Early Christian features in order to be included; many catacombs are excluded for this reason. Where special permission is required to visit certain sites, advice on obtaining this is provided.

The excellent plans of each church and complex and occasional sections and elevations should be singled out for praise, always to the same scale and thus facilitating comparison. Less satisfactory is the use of a key which only appears in the introductory section on how to use the book, with different conventions for 'Roman', earliest Christian phase, second, third, and fourth phases, and post 9th-century. This is rather arbitary, and one could wish that a key had been included alongside each of the plans, where it might have been particular to each church and given the reader a more precise oversight of the dating, complementing the text. Nevertheless, this is an invaluable research tool for the student of Early Christian Archaeology.

Readers expecting photographs will be disappointed, as those adorning the cover are the only ones offered. This leaves all the more space for detailed descriptions. The book is meant to be taken in hand as one visits the sites for oneself (even the best time of day for light is given), but for those who do not have the opportunity to go to Rome with this in mind, and I for one am now searching my diary for the opportunity to do so, this book contains a wealth of information not elsewhere available in such an accessible form.

*Available from all good bookshops*