

St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street: an Important Scheme of Romanesque Sculpture

Dav Smith

The Victorian church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street in the Ryedale region of North Yorkshire (Grid Ref: SE 72185 74295) contains an exceptional treasury of reused late 12th-century sculpture, all incorporated within its fabric. This article argues that despite its reuse within a later structure, this collection represents an important example of late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire, demonstrating many of the diverse threads and influences that characterise this distinctive regional flowering.

Reused within the fabric of the 19th-century church at Barton-le-Street (North Yorks) is an exceptional collection of late Romanesque sculpture dating from the 1160s. Detached from its original context and mixed with Victorian sculpture, this treasury has received little attention from either art historians or church archaeologists. This article will first examine the wider context of late Romanesque sculpture in 12th-century Yorkshire, exploring the diverse artistic influences which characterise it. The reused sculpture of Barton-le-Street will then be discussed within this wider context, and its significance will be evaluated.

The Romanesque sculpture of Britain is more diverse and varied than that of any other region of Europe, thanks to its blending of French styles with the art of Anglo-Saxon England, which was further supplemented by Viking and Celtic influences (Hicks 1996, 611). During the 1940s–50s, George Zarnecki established a framework for the study of Romanesque sculpture in England, a framework that is still the basis for much research today (Zarnecki 1953; Borg 1983, 55). Within this framework Zarnecki identified a number of distinct regional styles of sculpture, of which

the Herefordshire School is perhaps the best known (see Thurlby 1999). He also identified the Yorkshire School of Romanesque sculpture, stating that ‘*Yorkshire, more than any other region, including Herefordshire, can claim to have established a regional style of sculpture*’ (Zarnecki 1953, 35).

Yet Zarnecki’s formulation of a Yorkshire School seems never to have been fully accepted or classified by scholars, as demonstrated by the prefix ‘so-called’ being applied by both Stocker (1995, 84) and Thurlby (1996, 614). Stone (1955, 78) notes that unlike other ‘schools’, the flowering of late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire ‘*was not the product of a single generation under the unifying influence of one master craftsman...but was spread over a prolonged period in which considerable stylistic modification took place*’. Instead, the uniqueness of Yorkshire’s late Romanesque sculpture derives from its combination of different artistic influences, resulting in a wide variety of manifestations, thus making it difficult to define or categorise. Although this presents problems, it also reflects the complex development of sculpture in 12th-century Yorkshire, raising questions about

patronage and the transmission of style. This article will not attempt to address the category difficulties of identifying a 'Yorkshire School'; rather it will offer up an example which highlights what insights can be gained through more a detailed study of Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire.

Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire

A late flowering of Romanesque sculpture arose in the Vale of York from as early as the 1130s, spreading across Yorkshire before dissipating in the 1180s (Stone 1955, 78). It had two distinctive characteristics, the first of which relates to the treatment of carved capitals, where the decoration of figures and foliage are unbounded by the architectural shapes of the capital, instead spreading freely across its entire surface (Zarnecki 1953, 35). More interestingly, the second feature is its rich amalgam of artistic influences, resulting in diverse, and often lavishly decorated carvings, which reflect the evolving social, political and religious landscape of Yorkshire during the 11th and 12th centuries (Zarnecki 1953, 35).

Patronage

Patronage is at the core of many of the influences that inspired the development of a distinctive regional style of sculpture in Yorkshire. Unfortunately it is very difficult to establish the artistic role of individual patrons, especially for parish churches. The two principal methods of exploring patronage are through documentary evidence, and through identifying stylistic relationships between the sculpture in different churches, including tracing supposed diffusion from greater churches to parish churches. The paucity of written evidence makes it very difficult to assess the relationship between the role of individual patrons and the surviving fabric of parish churches (West 1988, 164). Many 12th-century Yorkshire churches present a web of interchanging relationships between differing patrons, ecclesiastical and secular, meaning that linking sculpture to an individual patron often ends in speculation. Equally, the tracing of stylistic similarities is made difficult by the loss of so much fabric and sculpture, especially from the greater churches and monasteries. Direct stylistic comparisons can rarely be made between surviving churches and the other buildings potentially linked to the same patron. This is further exacerbated by the Victorian

fervour for restoration and rebuilding, which saw much Romanesque sculpture lose its original context. However, the forthcoming work of Christopher Norton and Stuart Harrison on the Romanesque York Minster may help to illuminate some of the architectural and artistic relationships in 12th-century Yorkshire, and thus help clarify some of the current speculation on patronage in the region.

Although '*firm evidence for the artistic role of patrons remains singularly elusive*' (West 1988, 159), it is possible to draw some conclusions about patronage and its importance in the development and transmission of style in late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire. Although the role of secular patrons should not be discounted, Wood (1994, 65) suggests that the complexity of the figuratively carved doorways in Yorkshire, such as at Alne, Fishlake and Riccall, was such that wealthy ecclesiastical patrons, rather than local patrons, would almost always have commissioned them. Major ecclesiastical patrons in 12th-century Yorkshire included York Minster and the York monastic houses of St Mary's Abbey and Holy Trinity Priory. The prominence of these ecclesiastical patrons on the development of late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire is difficult to establish and remains a matter of debate. Stone (1955, 78) tentatively attributes the later phases of development to the influence of St Mary's Abbey, York, whilst Butler (1982, 91) argues convincingly that the Archbishop and Chapter of York Minster were the predominant influence. Holy Trinity Priory, York, an alien house of Martmoutier Abbey in western France, almost certainly also made a contribution. However, as a French alien house, its position was often challenged at many churches, and therefore its influence is difficult to determine (Butler 1982, 91). Interestingly, three Yorkshire churches held by Holy Trinity Priory (Adel, Healaugh and Barton-le-Street) do show sculptural influence from that area of France (CRSBI 2008, West Riding preface). Stocker (1995, 84) also notes five Romanesque fragments from Holy Trinity Priory, York that feature the 'so-called' Yorkshire School style.

York was an important metropolitan and religious centre, and York Minster was undoubtedly one of the most influential buildings in the region. Not only did the building work at York Minster during the 12th century bring skilled craftsman to the area, it would also have provided inspiration for the design and decoration of many smaller churches in the region. The crypt, which was completed around 1160, contains a set of capitals described as '*one of the most elegant and*

restrained examples of the Yorkshire School' (Zarnecki 1953, 35). York Minster also provided a source of wealthy and powerful ecclesiastical patrons, often from the continent, who were able to endow church buildings with the latest and best in architecture and decoration. The Archbishop of York and members of the Chapter directly held or created prebends at several of the more highly decorated churches in Yorkshire during the later 12th century, including Riccall, Stillingfleet and Alne (Butler 1982, 91). Butler goes as far as to say of the Archbishop and his Chapter, that '*in quantity and quality their churches are distinguished by the degree of decoration employed*' (1982, 91), clearly demonstrating the importance of ecclesiastical patronage in the Romanesque sculpture of Yorkshire.

Influences on Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire

North Yorkshire contains more fragments of pre-Conquest sculpture than any other English county, nearly 80% of which stylistically date from the Anglo-Scandinavian period of c875–1066 (Lang 1978, 11). Developed through a succession of local schools, the art of Anglo-Scandinavian stone sculpture flourished in Yorkshire, resulting in a clear regional style, distinct from both the art of Scandinavia and the rest of Britain (Lang 1978, 20). Given that Yorkshire was one of the most important centres of sculpture prior to the Norman Conquest, it is not surprising to find a continuing influence of pre-Conquest art on later Romanesque sculpture (Zarnecki 1953, 37). Indeed, pre-Conquest artistic traditions can be found in much of the late Romanesque carving in Yorkshire, with Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian heritage often evident in the sculpture (Thurlby 1996, 614), for example in the flat carvings of dragons with intricately interlaced tails.

Western French artistic and architectural conventions are also found replicated and amalgamated in Yorkshire's Romanesque sculptural schemes. This western French influence can be found in many of Yorkshire's surviving Romanesque doorways (Zarnecki 1953, 36). This is demonstrated by the absence of tympana, and in the radial arrangement of the voussoirs (Thurlby 1996, 614). Of the 150 Romanesque doorways surviving in Yorkshire, 13 have radially arranged, figuratively sculptured voussoirs (Wood 1994, 60). Figurative sculpture includes any carvings that are individual and contain varied motifs, rather than repetitive patterns, such as chevrons (Wood

1994, 59). Highly decorated corbel tables, such as those found at Adel (West Yorks) and Barton-le-Street, (discussed below) also demonstrate a strong stylistic influence from western France (Wood 1994, 63).

An additional benefit of the diversity of wealthy ecclesiastical patronage centred on York is that it provided access to the latest manuscripts, styles and pattern books from across Europe. Thurlby (1996, 614) suggests that much of the Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire is reminiscent of the art of the metalworker and manuscript illuminator. Yorkshire's craftsmen were taking inspiration and subjects directly from illuminated manuscripts, often within a decade of the manuscript's production (Butler 1982, 90–1). This suggests that these patrons were very well connected, and wished the decoration of their churches to include the latest artistic motifs. That such manuscript-inspired carvings were appearing on village churches around Yorkshire also demonstrates that the diversity of patronage at York extended well into the surrounding area (Butler 1982, 92).

Lastly, one often overlooked factor in the development of such a richly decorated regional style of sculpture was the availability of fine quality carving stone, or freestone (Addyman and Goodall 1979, 76). The ready supply of Magnesian limestone and Hildenley limestone found around the Vale of York would certainly have played an important role in allowing for the development of the intricate and free flowing style characteristic of the 'Yorkshire School' (CRSBI 2008, West Riding Preface). Indeed, Addyman and Goodall (1979, 76) go so far as to suggest that the development of such a distinctive body of Romanesque sculpture probably owed as much to the availability of these natural resources as to the influences of the great Benedictine houses and to metropolitan York.

The drawing together of these various influences, including the availability of good freestone, the wealth of ecclesiastical patrons, and the mixing of the latest continental artistic ideas with established Anglo-Scandinavian artistic traditions, enabled the formation of a coherent regional style that flourished in Yorkshire during the second half of the 12th century, even if this body of work is difficult to classify as a 'school' in terms of an identifiable hand of a single master craftsman and his workshop. Having discussed the various artistic influences that resulted in this flowering of rich late Romanesque carving in Yorkshire, the article will now consider the church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street, Ryedale. Following a brief outline of the development of this church, its reused

Romanesque sculpture will be assessed within the wider Yorkshire context.

Architectural history of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street

The ancient village of Barton-le-Street lies approximately five miles to the west of Malton, in Ryedale, North Yorkshire. Recorded in the Domesday Book as Barton(e) or Bartun(e) (Williams 1992, Folio 305V), the current name reflects the village's location on the Roman road that ran from Malton west to Hovingham. This road ran along the edge of a limestone outcrop of the Howardian Hills, above the swampy lands of the Vale of Pickering.

Domesday records that there was already a church at Barton-le-Street in 1086 (Williams 1992, Folio 305V). However, the only surviving evidence of pre-Conquest worship on the site is an Anglo-Saxon cross base located in the churchyard. It is known that by 1089 the manor at Barton-le-Street was in the possession of the Norman knight, Ralph Paynel (Fleming 1991, 166). At this time Ralph Paynel refounded Holy Trinity Priory, York, and endowed it with 12 parish churches, including Barton-le-Street, and a moiety, or half ownership, of a thirteenth (Dalton 1994, 137). Archbishop Thomas II confirmed the appropriation of Barton-le-Street church by Holy Trinity Priory, subject to the provision of a competent vicarage being assigned (Addleshaw 1956, 14). However, it seems that this was never carried out and Barton-le-Street remained an ancient rectory (Addleshaw 1956, 14). Consequently, Holy Trinity Priory never had the formal right to claim tithes from Barton-le-Street, possibly explaining why successive generations of Paynels reconfirmed the gift. Holy Trinity did, however, initially hold the advowson, meaning that they controlled the appointment of a priest in the church, and so maintained a regular connection with Barton-le-Street (Page 1914, 475).

The church at Barton-le-Street was rebuilt around the 1160s, based on surviving sculpture and Victorian photographs of the medieval church. This Norman church was a moderately sized two-cell structure, comprising nave and chancel, but it was endowed internally and externally with an exceptionally elaborate decorative scheme of late Romanesque sculpture. Indeed, Boase states that Barton-le-Street '*must have been one of the most richly carved of the smaller churches of England*' (1953, 240). It is not

possible to positively associate any single patron with the construction and decoration of the 12th-century church, although it probably relates to the patronage of either Holy Trinity Priory (Wood 1994, 60) or William d'Eu, who was Precentor of York Minster from 1139 to c1174 (Butler 1982, 93–4). Given the high quality architectural detailing and wealth of elaborate sculpture, there can be no doubt that a very wealthy and well-connected patron oversaw the construction of the 12th-century church. Holy Trinity held the advowson at Barton-le-Street for much of the 12th century, and presented William d'Eu as rector, which he held '*for a long while*' (Clay 1939, 200–1), likely until his death c1174, whereupon Holy Trinity briefly retook possession of the church. As the sculptural scheme is likely to date to the 1160s, it is possible that either William D'Eu or the prior at Holy Trinity, or perhaps even the impropiator and rector working together, were responsible for the rich sculptural decoration of the medieval church at Barton-le-Street.

In 1869 the church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street was entirely demolished, with a Victorian replacement structure built on its foundations. The Victorian church (Fig 1), designed by Perkin and Son of Leeds, was constructed in 1870–71 for the Meynell Ingrams of Temple Newsam, who owned the manor at Barton-le-Street. It is interesting that the firm of Perkin and Son were chosen for this rebuilding, as they were not church architects by trade, instead tending to work on civic buildings, such as the Leeds Union Workhouse and the Armley Gaol. A letter of 1870 by Mrs Meynell Ingram suggests that the decision was taken because it was a small firm, and therefore inexpensive, as well as able to give its full attention to the rebuild (Hall 2004, 291). The exact justification for the rebuilding is not clear, but Cox (1900, 216) records the possible reason as being the desire to produce a uniform 'Romanesque' building, removing the alterations of later centuries. The rebuilding occurred shortly after the opening of the rebuilt church at nearby Slingsby, which was primarily funded by Admiral & Mrs Howard of the neighbouring Castle Howard Estate, so competition and fashion must also be considered as possible reasons for the work.

The present Victorian church is decorated in a uniform neo-Romanesque style and is constructed of Hildenley limestone, with external decorated work, such as the windows and parapets, in Birdsall sandstone. Cox (1900, 216) notes that the limestone masonry from the medieval church was re-cut and re-faced before being utilised in the construction of

*Fig 1**The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street (North Yorks) viewed from the south-west.*

the current church. Care was also taken to preserve and reuse as much as possible of the late Romanesque sculptural decoration. The contract to build the Victorian church stated that the new structure should match the size and proportions of the previous church (Cox 1900, 216). Interestingly, Cox (1900, 216) also records that the builder actually reduced the wall height by approximately three feet in order to reduce costs, but this alteration, which was done in breach of the contract, was not noticed until several years later.

Romanesque sculpture at Barton-le-Street

Elaborately decorated in the Romanesque style, the Victorian church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street incorporates a wealth of reused sculpture within its fabric. A number of scholars, including Zarnecki (1953) and Stone (1955), have recognised the significance of Barton-le-Street for the quality of the surviving 12th-century sculpture in the church. However, because of the Victorian rebuilding, the extent of the surviving sculptural scheme, its original context, and its significance has not yet been fully understood. Butler (1982, 94) commented that the Victorian rebuilding '*tended to embellish and obscure*

the earlier work'. This loss of context and clarity caused by the Victorian rebuilding seems to have reduced the Romanesque sculpture of Barton-le-Street to relative obscurity. This is clearly demonstrated when comparing it to similar Norman churches that received a lighter 19th-century touch, such as St John the Baptist, Adel. This highly celebrated church, which has a broadly comparable decorative scheme to Barton-le-Street, was restored but not rebuilt by the Victorians, and thus the late Romanesque sculpture retains its context.

The author's unpublished MA dissertation focused on the detailed archaeological recording and analysis of the church and its sculpture (Smith 2009). Archaeological recording was combined with basic geological and stylistic analyses, resulting in the reused 12th-century carvings being fully differentiated from Victorian replacements and added sculptural elements. In total, over 250 pieces of late Romanesque sculpture were identified and mapped within a digital model of the current church (Fig 2). Documentary research, archival photographs and architectural drawings were then used to create a digital wireframe reconstruction of the medieval church as it appeared shortly before its demolition in 1869. Analysis of this model indicated that the 1160s church had survived with only minor

Fig 2
Wireframe model of the current St Michael and All Angels, showing the location of the reused late Romanesque sculpture.



Fig 3
Reconstruction of St Michael and All Angels church prior to demolition in 1869 (viewed from south-west), showing the original location of much of the reused 12th-century sculpture.

alterations, principally to the windows and chancel arch. Documentary evidence also enabled the original location of much of the reused sculpture to be identified within the medieval church. By modeling these results within the digital reconstruction of the medieval church (Fig 3), the original context of the sculpture could be established and its overall importance analysed.

This model demonstrates that almost all of the elements forming the medieval sculptural scheme have been preserved within the present church. Therefore, despite the loss of the original context, it must still represent one of the most complete Romanesque decorative schemes to be found in a Yorkshire church. Stone (1955, 80) described Barton-le-Street as *'the most splendid product of the Yorkshire School at its peak period'*. But what makes the sculptural scheme at Barton-le-Street particularly important is that it so clearly demonstrates the different artistic influences that characterise late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire. Below is a description and analysis of the key reused sculptural elements and their context within Yorkshire Romanesque sculpture, with focus given to those elements demonstrating these stylistic influences.

Doorways

Yorkshire retains a wealth of surviving doorways from the later 12th century, with decorative carvings that demonstrate a uniformity of style across the region (Zarnecki 1953, 35). There are more than 600 parish churches in Yorkshire, most of which were founded before the 13th century (Wood 1994, 60). Based on surviving architectural, sculptural, and documentary evidence, at least 92% of North Yorkshire's parish churches and at least 44% of its chapels were in existence by c1200 (McClain 2005, 193). While the decoration in these churches tends to be fairly simple and crude, there are a number of churches whose decoration, particularly in the doorways, stands out both in terms of quality of craftsmanship and variety of themes and motifs expressed by their sculptors (Butler 1982, 81).

St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street has two reused Romanesque doorways, which were re-set in their current locations during the Victorian rebuilding. Described by Pevsner (1966, 73) as *'amongst the most exuberantly decorated in Yorkshire'*, Barton-le-Street is also the only church in Yorkshire to retain two figuratively carved Romanesque doorways. Both doorways have radiating voussoirs and no tympana, demonstrating the influence of western French

architectural taste. Despite being described by Glynne (Butler 2007, 82–3) as proportionally large compared to the church, both doorways are actually relatively small in comparison to the large Romanesque portals found on some other Yorkshire churches, such as those at Fishlake, Stillingfleet and Adel. The lack of a single great portal doorway comparable with these churches may possibly explain why, unlike these other Yorkshire churches, the doorways of Barton-le-Street have received comparatively little attention from either antiquarians or modern scholars. However, it is also worth noting that the Romanesque doorways at Barton-le-Street have received more attention than any other sculptural element in the church, although most of that attention has been focused on the iconography of the carvings in the arches. Despite the fragmentary survival of the carving, the two Romanesque doorways at Barton-le-Street, with their pre-Conquest Anglo-Scandinavian artistic influences and figuratively decorated jambs are singular if not unique in England, and are worthy of more focused attention.

The porch doorway (medieval north doorway)

The porch doorway (Fig 4) is a heavily restored and reconstructed version of the medieval north doorway (Cox 1900, 216). It consists of two orders of chevron decoration, with the inner order, which is original, containing lateral chevrons with carved balls/cones. The outer order is largely Victorian and is decorated with lateral chevrons. This outer order is supported on scalloped cushion capitals above nook shafts with spiral beading. Based on their condition, the style of carving, and the use of a different, creamier limestone, it is clear that both of these elements are Victorian replacements (Fig 5). The inner order of the arch is supported by decorated doorjambs with figurative carvings within square panels on both faces, with a corner shaft running between them. Sadly, only five of the original figuratively carved jamb stones have survived, with the others being Victorian replacements.

Surrounding the porch doorway at Barton-le-Street is an unusual narrow, flat order of sculpture in the form of a decorated hoodmould. The voussoirs, which are long and narrow, contain shallow carvings representing a variety of subjects, including animals, a mermaid with two fish, and a naked Eve holding an apple. One voussoir depicting St Michael slaying a dragon may be a rare, early example of a patronal image. However, it has been argued that an external Romanesque carving of a saint may not have been carved as a depiction

of the patron saint, but rather may have furnished a convenient identity for the church when a later dedication took place (Marks 2003, 40).

The flat carving of this hoodmould is more reminiscent of Anglo-Scandinavian art than late Romanesque. Many of the individual carvings also demonstrate pre-Conquest artistic influence, despite being contained within stylistically 12th-century beaded panels. For example, the second voussoir from the left springing depicts a winged dragon whose tail is carved into an elaborate interlacement, reminiscent of the decoration found on pre-Conquest crosses (Zarnecki 1953, 36). Stylistically unique in Yorkshire, this decorated hoodmould demonstrates the strong continued influence of the Anglo-Scandinavian artistic heritage. The closest comparable Romanesque doorway is at All Saints, Bradbourne (Derbys; Zarnecki 1953, 36). As at Barton-le-Street, Bradbourne's doorway is stylistically datable to the mid-12th century, in this instance by the outer order of beakheads. The inner two orders of the doorway contain long, narrow voussoirs similar to those forming the hoodmould at Barton-le-Street. They are decorated with a variety of flatly carved beasts and monsters, many of which are also portrayed with interlacing tails. Both of these

Fig 4
The porch doorway and inner doorway.

Fig 5
The extent of Victorian carving in the Romanesque doorways.

doorways are striking examples of the extent to which pre-Conquest artistic tradition permeated through the stylistic development of sculpture in the north of England.

The inner doorway (medieval south doorway)

The Inner Doorway, on the north side of the present nave, was reconstructed from the remains of the medieval south doorway (Cox 1900, 216). The arch consists of two orders, both with figurative carvings. The voussoirs of the inner order contain an inhabited vine scroll above a thick roll moulding. The vine scroll links across the 11 voussoirs, with a stag/goat pictured amongst the foliage on the stone to the right of the apex. The outer order of 16 voussoirs contains a collection of figurative carving, mostly of heads, but also a variety of other motifs, including beasts and foliage. The stone at the apex, which presumably depicts the Tree of Life, is constructed out of a much creamier limestone, suggesting it is a later (possibly Victorian?) replacement. However, the remainder of this arch stylistically matches the other 12th-century work in the church. Unlike today, Glynne noted in 1863 that this doorway did not contain nook shafts (Butler 2007, 83). Like the porch doorway, the inner order of the arch of the north doorway is supported on figuratively carved doorjambs (Fig 6), although this time without corner shafts. In this instance, seven of the original carved jamb stones survive, while five are Victorian.

Figuratively carved doorjambs are very rare in Romanesque doorways in England (Allen 1887, 331) and the vast majority of Romanesque doorways in Yorkshire have plain doorjambs, with the decoration reserved for the capitals and arch voussoirs. Of the few examples of carved jambs in Yorkshire, beakhead or chevron designs prevail, such as on the great portal at Adel (West Yorks). Barton-le-Street contains the only surviving figuratively carved doorjambs in Yorkshire. Therefore, it is curious that Barton-le-Street's two sets of figuratively carved doorjambs have not received greater attention from scholars. Admittedly only 12 of the original 27 Romanesque doorjamb stones survive, but they contain 22 figuratively carved Romanesque sculptures, some of which are very fine and in extremely good condition. Comparable examples on churches of a similar size to Barton-le-Street appear extremely rare, with the south doorway of St Mary, Iffley (Oxon) being the closest example found. Stone (1955, 81) claims that, with their varied figurative carvings contained within square panels, the

*Fig 6
Detail of the figuratively carved doorjamb panels in the inner doorway.*

doorjambs are stylistically north Italian, suggesting an architectural influence from the Lombardy region. The motifs found on the doorjamb panels are quite varied, with Wood (1994, 84) suggesting they may represent series of fables or proverbs, whilst Butler (1982, 86) proposes that some might represent signs of the zodiac. The positive identification of any iconographic schemes remains elusive, as it is not known whether the Victorian doorjamb panels are based on the medieval originals, or if they derive from the imagination of 19th-century masons. Equally, it is not known if the reused Romanesque stones are in their original order. However, the irregular pattern of reuse of the 12th-

century stones (see Fig 5) may suggest that they are in their original locations, with the worn stones replaced *in situ*.

Capitals

Capitals offer a good indication of changing tastes in style during the 12th century, with cushion capitals becoming increasingly elaborate through the 1140s and 50s before being gradually replaced by waterleaf capitals from the 1160s, which were in turn replaced by crocket capitals towards the end of the century (Ferne 2000, 45).

Barton-le-Street houses several late Romanesque cushion capitals, most with intricate acanthus leaf carvings, which date them on stylistic grounds to c1160. The clusters of capitals supporting each side of the chancel arch are made up of three Romanesque and one Victorian capital each, all of Hildenley limestone (Fig 7). The westernmost capitals are both intricately

carved with fine beaded arches below the abacus, and heads on the angles (a beakhead on the north and a human head on the south side). The addition of these beakheads on the angle is not uncommon on Romanesque capitals in Yorkshire (Keyser 1909, 179). Acanthus vines spread out across the capital from the mouths of these heads, reminiscent of Green Men. Where the capitals meet the shafts there are neckings decorated with central bands of beads.

The central pier of the chancel arch has a double capital on each side. On the southern side, each face of the cushion capitals contains a panel within a beaded border. Each of these is decorated with figurative carvings, including a feline creature, a Green Man, and a woman with a strange conical pleated hairstyle and legs twisted to the side, which Ketchley (1907, 13) suggests represents a siren. The lower portions of these central capitals are decorated with interlacing arches studded with beads. The neckings contain spiral beading, as does the central spine dividing the capitals.

Fig 7

Detail of the chancel arch capitals (north), showing the free-flowing acanthus carving across the face of the capitals. Note the Victorian capital to the far right.

The central double capital on the northern side of the chancel arch is stylistically similar to the westernmost capitals. They again have carved heads on the angles and the cushion capital is covered with interlacing acanthus vine decoration, although in this instance a beast with a floriated tail inhabits the vine pattern on one face. The only other difference is that the small arches beneath the abaci are decorated with barley sugar moulding between large beads.

These figuratively carved capitals all demonstrate the unique style of Romanesque capital carving that developed in Yorkshire. They have interlaced acanthus patterns tracing freely across the surface, unbounded by the faces of the cushion capitals. The carving of beakheads on the corners of the capital further demonstrate that the decoration was in no way subservient to the architectural planes of the capital. Whilst these capitals might not represent the artistic achievement of those found in the York Minster crypt, they remain very accomplished examples of this distinctive facet of late Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire.

Corbels and corbel tables

During the Victorian rebuilding, all but four of the Romanesque corbels were relocated to the interior of the current church in order to protect them from further weathering (Ketchley 1907, 3). Based on photographic evidence, now lost, Allen (1889, 153) recorded 106 exterior corbels at the medieval church, 16 of which were undecorated later additions or replacements. Of the 90 Romanesque corbels Allen recorded, 84 have been reused in the current church. These corbels are all decorated with stylised heads of animals, beasts, demons, and humans, including: warriors, musicians, saints, and kings. Although the corbels survive in varying condition, all demonstrate a very high level of artistic skill and craftsmanship.

The nave contains 32 individual carved corbel stones supporting the wall plate. The porch and chancel contain an astonishing corbel table, comprising carved corbels supporting an arcade, with heads in the soffits of the arches and flamboyantly decorated spandrels (Fig 8). Boase (1953, 240) describes the corbel table at Barton-le-Street merely as '*an unusually elaborate piece of work*', despite it possibly being the most elaborate Romanesque corbel table to be found in Britain. Many of the stones of the upper course are heavily worn and there are a small number of repairs and replacements, presumably all Victorian, particularly on the east wall of the porch and the north wall of the chancel. The finest and most highly decorated pieces of the corbel table can be found on the south wall of the chancel. Where it can still be made out, the decoration of the spandrels is relatively similar throughout the corbel tables. A billet moulding with a row of beading above surrounds each arch, and the spandrels are filled with intricately interlaced acanthus leaves, although some other patterns can be seen in the porch. Reverend Ketchley (1907, 5) mentions carvings of reptiles, which the author was unable to locate, although these may be hidden behind the organ case, where he suggests many of the most remarkable sculptures are located.

The carved heads in the soffits of the arches are aligned either parallel or perpendicular to the wall and are arranged singularly or occasionally in pairs. They are skillfully and individually sculpted, representing a variety of heads and faces, mostly male, many with different hairstyles, beards and helmets, but some animals, such as a pair of intertwining serpents, are also featured.

Cox (1900, 216) states that the best of the nave corbels from the medieval church were reused in the nave, and similarly those from the chancel were reused in the porch, and presumably also the chancel. This would mean that the current relationship is maintained from the previous church, with the decorated corbel

Fig 8

The intricately carved corbel table in the porch, showing carved corbels supporting an arcade with decorated spandrels and carved heads within the arch soffits.

table used in the chancel, while corbel stones alone were employed for the nave. Assuming Cox's statement is correct, this demonstrates a clear hierarchy in the decoration between the medieval chancel and nave. Such a hierarchy also appears to have existed with other architectural elements of the medieval church, such as the buttresses and internal stringcourses, so this seems plausible.

Such an elaborately carved and decorated corbel table is extremely rare in Britain (Zarnecki 1953, 36), and the level of decoration at Barton-le-Street appears to be unparalleled in the smaller churches of England. The presence of carved heads in the soffits of the corbel table arcade is a characteristic feature of the western French style of sculpture (Zarnecki 1953, 36). The best known comparable example is on the west front and towers of the church of Notre-Dame-la-Grande in Poitiers, France (Thurlby 1996, 614). The closest Yorkshire comparison is at St John the Baptist, Adel, which has a corbel table arcade formed by double roll mouldings set perpendicular to the wall, but this has none of the flamboyant decoration seen at Barton-le-Street. The elaborately decorated corbel table at Barton-le-Street, with heads in the soffits of the arcade, is a clear demonstration of western French influence on Yorkshire Romanesque sculpture.

North porch carvings

A collection of interesting reused carvings can be found in the porch, set above the north door (Fig 9). Two of the stones form an 'Adoration of the Magi' scene, while seven others form part of a series of the 'Labours of the Months'. Three of the stones contain carved flowers within circular borders, and another, weathered and obscured by the wall plate, appears to be of similar design. The condition of these carved limestone blocks suggests that they are medieval, although the author was unable to stylistically date them accurately. In the centre of the collection is a large square stone from a grave slab, decorated with part of a bracelet cross carving, stylistically dating from the late 12th or early 13th century (A McClain pers comm 2011). Above this is a very small corbel with weathered vine patterning, of uncertain date.

The Adoration of the Magi

Two rectangular limestone slabs with shallow relief carving, set to either side of the arch above the north door, combine to form a depiction of the Adoration of

the Magi. The left panel shows the Virgin and Child lying in a bed, with two bearded angels swinging censers above. The panel on the right contains the three magi, dressed in swirling drapery, wearing crowns and carrying gifts. Two shepherds wearing pointed hoods and carrying crooks follow them. The 'Adoration of the Magi' panels do not appear on Perkin's elevation drawings (Perkin & Son 1869) and are not mentioned by Sir Stephen Glynne in his description of the medieval church (Butler 2007, 82–3). Ketchley (1907, 12) records that their original location was in the east wall of the nave, with one placed on either side of the chancel arch, near the springing. He also notes that they were previously whitewashed over, which could explain why they were not mentioned in the other sources. The dating of the 'Adoration of the Magi' stones is contentious, with the shallow relief carving and the presence of beards on the angels leading many to assume that they must be Anglo-Saxon in date (for example: Cox 1900; Ketchley 1907; Page 1914; Wallace 2009). Boase (1954, 240) suggests that they are either an 11th-century work, or a faithful copy of a 'Winchester' drawing, referring to a style of manuscript illumination dating from the 11th and 12th centuries. However, Zarnecki (1953, 37), who also draws a parallel with the Winchester School, firmly dates them to the 12th century. Stone (1955, 245 n7), who also firmly dates the panels to the mid 12th century, draws parallels between the skirted figures carved in the Adoration panels with a late 12th-century Yorkshire psalter, now in the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow.

Zarnecki (1953, 37) and Pevsner (1966, 73) both comment on the unusual iconography of the first panel, which Ketchley (1907, 10) describes as '*singular if not unique*'. In later medieval iconography, depictions specifically related to the Virgin in her post-natal state are referred to as 'Our Lady in Gesyn' (Marks 2004, 143). Marks suggests that this iconography, which is found throughout Europe, probably arose during the late 13th century in line with the increased significance placed on the Nativity (Marks 2004, 144). Although the dating of the Adoration stones at Barton-le-Street is contentious, this carving is significantly too early for the 'Our Lady of Gesyn' group and is worthy of further research.

The two carvings forming the 'Adoration of the Magi' offer another fine example of the continuing influence of pre-Conquest artistic traditions on 12th-century sculpture. In addition, the fact that the treatment of the carvings is comparable with manuscripts of the earlier 'Winchester School' also

Analysis and conclusions

Built by a wealthy ecclesiastical patron, the late 12th-century church at Barton-le-Street must have been the one of most lavishly decorated Romanesque churches in Yorkshire, if not England. Whilst the medieval church has been lost, much of its sculpture was retained and reused within the replacement Victorian building. However, the loss of context for this sculpture has meant that this exceptional treasury of late Romanesque sculpture has not previously been fully examined or analysed.

This article aimed to demonstrate the benefit of using archaeological investigation to allow the significance of reused Romanesque sculpture to be understood. Archaeological recording and analysis at Barton-le-Street has revealed that almost all the constituent elements of the Romanesque carved decorative scheme were retained in the Victorian rebuilding, with varying degrees of survival. The only major feature entirely missing is the Romanesque chancel arch, with only the capitals surviving. This had already been lost by the time of the Victorian rebuilding and no descriptions of it survive. In 1863 Glynne merely noted that, *'the chancel arch has been altered badly'* (Butler 2007, 83). Nevertheless, Barton-le-Street's reused 12th-century carvings provide an exceptional example of a near-complete late Romanesque sculptural scheme.

Sadly, there is little evidence for tracing the original relationship between individual carved stones, such as the arrangement of the corbel stones. Therefore any original iconographic schemes can no longer be readily discerned. Importantly, however, the relative spatial arrangement and hierarchy of the Romanesque decorative scheme appears to have been maintained in the Victorian rebuilding. This is most clearly demonstrated by the corbel tables, with the nave corbels reused on the interior of the nave, and the elaborate chancel corbel table reused in the interior of the chancel's and porch. The same nave/chancel decorative hierarchy is also maintained with the interior stringcourses. Sections of the Romanesque acanthus leaf nave stringcourse and hoodmoulding are still to be found in the present nave, whilst Cox (1900, 218) records that part of the Victorian chancel's diamond stringcourse is reused from the medieval chancel.

This is especially interesting when one considers that the Victorians held the sculpture to already be out of context. At the time of rebuilding, it was erroneously believed that Barton-le-Street's sculpture

had been reused from a major York church, either St Mary's Abbey or Holy Trinity Priory (see Baines 1834, 412; Cox 1900, 215). The true significance of the reused sculpture at St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street is that it clearly demonstrates so many of the various influences and streams of artistic expression that combined to create the most distinct regional flowering of late Romanesque architecture in England. From the anachronistic influence of Anglo-Scandinavian artistic traditions, to the influence of rich ecclesiastical patronage and the latest manuscript illustrations, all of these strands can be found amongst the reused sculpture incorporated into this Victorian church. Zarnecki (1953, 36) wrote that Barton-le-Street offers the *'most striking analogy between the Yorkshire School and Western France'*.

The sculptural system at Barton-le-Street not only offers an insight into the richness and variety of the Romanesque sculpture in Yorkshire, but also helps to elucidate the development of a rural parish church in 12th-century North Yorkshire. Furthermore, it offers insight into a complex period of Yorkshire's history, demonstrating the impact of both the great monastic houses and the influence of metropolitan York on the transmission and development of architectural and artistic trends in church building and decoration at the height of the Romanesque period. A more comprehensive study of Yorkshire's Romanesque sculpture could provide valuable insights into the complexities of 12th-century patronage and the development and transmission of architectural and artistic styles from metropolitan York to the rural churches of its hinterland.

Whether or not there is a 'Yorkshire School', in the sense of the recognisable influence of a single craftsman and his school, there can be no doubt that the patrons and craftsmen of 12th-century Yorkshire blended a variety of artistic influences to create a rich and distinct body of late Romanesque sculpture. The treasury of reused sculpture in the church of St Michael and All Angels, Barton-le-Street, deserves to stand proud as a fine example, demonstrating many of these diverse threads of influence. Further study of Yorkshire's late Romanesque sculpture could offer great insights into the power of patronage and the transmission of style. Despite its Victorian rebuilding, Barton-le-Street deserves to be celebrated as much as St John the Baptist, Adel, a church with which it has many similarities, or SS Mary & David, Kilpeck (Hereford).

Dav Smith is presently undertaking PhD research in the Department of Archaeology, University of York on the reuse of medieval material in Victorian rebuilt churches in North Yorkshire. He is also postgraduate research assistant to Dr Jane Grenville.

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