

Commemoration of the Dead in the Late Medieval English Parish: an Overview

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The artefacts within our parish churches can add an important dimension to the archaeological study of the buildings themselves. Many categories of fixtures, fittings and ornaments have received detailed attention from art historians as to their typology and development, but one aspect that has been neglected is the reasons why so many religious artefacts were provided by pious members of church congregations. They sought commemoration not just by erecting tomb monuments but also through many other forms of memoria. This paper, which covers the period c1300–1558, examines the responses of individuals to the doctrine of Purgatory by carrying out good works to improve their chances of salvation.

The practice of commemoration comprised a complex of liturgical and social acts connecting the living and the dead, collectively termed *memoria*, research into which at its best is characterised by the integrated use of objects and texts to examine the various aspects and functions of the commemoration of the dead. *Memoria* studies have been well established on the continent since the 1980s, particularly perhaps in the Netherlands where the MeMO (Medieval Memoria Online) project was established in 2008 at the University of Utrecht, in cooperation with VU University in Amsterdam, the University of Groningen and Data Archiving and Networked Services in The Hague, and with a large grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. MeMO has as its main objective the creation of a freely accessible database application that enables researchers to select and analyse source material relevant to the study of medieval memorial practices during the period up to the Reformation (c1580) in the area that is the present-day country of the Netherlands (Bueren et al 2011, 183–234; WS1). Although tomb monuments have

been widely studied, commemoration in this wider sense has hitherto attracted limited scholarly interest in England. The range of commemorative strategies and the variety of means chosen to implement them is a huge subject, deserving comprehensive treatment. This paper, which concentrates mainly on non-monumental commemoration, can provide only an introduction, hopefully illustrating the breadth of the subject matter and the utility of documentary as well as material evidence.

Death, judgement and Purgatory

Why did memorialisation matter so much to medieval men and women? On entering Wenhaston church (Suffolk) visitors cannot but be impressed by the still vividly-coloured Doom painting formerly above the chancel arch, which depicts the Day of Judgement, with the key centre of action being the encounter on the right between St Michael and the devil (Fig 1). The former has charge of the scales and weighs each soul against his or her unreconciled sins; the person shown

Fig 1
Doom painting c1500, Wenhaston, Suffolk (Photo: CB Newham)

in the scales is found wanting and will be handed over to the devil, who will speed him on his way to hell. This is far from the finest surviving Doom painting in England but one interesting aspect of the Wenhaston Doom is that the painting has blank areas where the rood beam and its accompanying figures would have been before the Reformation. The outline of the lost figures at Wenhaston shows just how dominant the image of Christ on the cross must have appeared. At the close of the Middle Ages such scenes would have been very familiar, providing a message that carried a resonance for everyman; all would die and all would be judged; yet there was still the hope of salvation. In one sense the outcome was ultimately a decision for God, but the medieval faithful strongly believed that an individual's fate could be influenced by his or her own actions. This is the context within which strategies for commemoration have to be understood.

Late medieval Catholic theology has been described as *'in part a cult of the living in the service of the Dead'* (Galpern 1974, 149). It is commonly accepted that late medieval man was obsessed by death, but what really concerned him was not the act of dying, but the fear of what would follow. The defining doctrine of late medieval Catholicism was that of Purgatory, which held that the soul had to be refined or purified before

it could enter heaven (McNeill 2011, 8–12). Purgatory loomed large in lay awareness and contemporary illustrations show it to be a fearsome experience. Naturally, the Christian faithful were anxious to minimise the time spent in such an inhospitable place. They were taught that the best way of achieving this was meek suffering and good works in this world. This was translated into practice in various ways, chief among which were the seven corporal acts of mercy, viz feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, giving shelter to the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting prisoners and helping to bury the dead. Going on pilgrimages and obtaining indulgences were also most beneficial. Other good works included providing education for the poor; mending roads and bridges; building, improving and beautifying churches; involvement in guild culture; establishment of chantries and much more. All these actions were regarded as being good for the soul. Medieval man also believed that the refining process could be speeded by the offer of prayers by the living faithful. This is succinctly summarised in John Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* of c1430: *'Prayer abreggeth purgatory'* (Furnivall and Locock 1973, line 22876). These prayers were sought in a wide variety of ways, but this paper will concentrate on the subset of *memoria* which operated

within a parish church context and will examine the subject from the perspective of the donors, although it is important to recognise that the church and parish community also benefited from their choices.

Memoria and the parish church

Many forms of *memoria* were commissioned during the lifetimes of those commemorated, even in some cases their tomb monuments. Some testators were doubtless concerned that their executors, especially if also significant beneficiaries, would not necessarily implement their testamentary bequests in full. Hence, Dame Katherine Harcourt (d1488) directed that her executors dispose of the residue of her goods for the health of her soul, that of her husband Sir Miles Stapelton of Ingham (Norfolk) and those of their parents *'as they will think best and as they will answer to Allmyghty God at the dredefull day of dome'* (Weaver and Beardwell 1958, 39–40). Several brasses have inscriptions which warn against leaving action to executors, including one formerly in St Peter, Cornhill, London, which included the verses:

*Man that behovyth oft to have this in mind
That thou geueth wyth thin hond that sall thou
fynd
For wydows be sloful, and chyldren beth unkynd
Executors be covetos and kep al that they fynd
(Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Aubrey 4, fo 40;
Emmerson 1978b, 51).*

The dilatory provision of the monument in Broomholm Priory to John Paston senior (d1466) of Paston (Norfolk) is a case in point (Emmerson 1978a). In 1471 his widow, Margaret, wrote to her son: *'Yt is a schame and a thyng that is myche spokyn of in thys countre that your faders graveston is not mad. For Goddes love, lat yt be remembyrd and porvyde for in hast'*. She reminded him again in later letters, but twelve years after John Paston's death, his monument had still not been commissioned. John Paston the younger was undoubtedly not alone in this respect: a guilty conscience may have led John Chambyr esquire (d1455) of Stratford (Middlesex) to direct his executors to buy two *'marblestones'*, one for his parents and one for himself *'with my arms inscribed on it'* (Northeast 2001, 309).

Virtually all material remains indicative of the heavy expenditure once undertaken to speed the soul of the deceased through Purgatory are to be found in

churches. Often tomb monuments, chantry and guild chapels, and painted glass, screens and walls are in a damaged state. Moreover, only a tiny proportion remains, for example, of the medieval plate and textiles paid for by pious members of medieval society with the aim of attracting prayers for their souls. For such categories of artefacts we can add to our knowledge by turning to the documentary record. Wills are the main source used in this paper, even though they authenticate religious provision at only a single point in a person's life – and that at a crucial time when they are facing death and judgement and may thus be thought most likely to see the advantages of making provision for eternity. It is much more difficult to document the equivalent provision made in the rest of a person's lifetime, although donors of artefacts may be listed in church inventories or have had their name inscribed on the objects they donated. The benefactions lists in the Church Book for All Saints', Bristol, show how successive parishioners and the clergy strove to provide ever richer fittings and furnishings for their parish church (Burgess 2004). What was provided in return is explicit; the names were committed to corporate memory as the parish undertook that the benefactors *'should not be forgotten but had in remembrance and prayed for of all this parish that be now and all of them that be to come'* and an annual General Mind was celebrated for all *'good doers'*. The grocer Thomas Spicer, alias Baker (d1492), and his wife Maud (d1504) established a chantry in the church and her will in particular reveals considerable expenditure on *memoria*. Yet that this was due to a profound piety, rather than deathbed anxiety, is established only by the list of donations during her widowhood listed in the All Saints' Church Book: they were valued in the region of £87, while donations attributed to her husband, excluding land, amounted to only £3 7s 6d.

Some testators were evidently keen that prayers for their soul should begin as soon as possible after their death. William Swetman, mercer and former mayor of Norwich, requested 4,000 masses to be said immediately after his death, as did John Grygge (d1446) of Lavenham (Suffolk), in his case specifying that they should be carried out within a week (NRO, NCC Surfleete 124–5; Northeast 2001, 132–33). To have carried out this last instruction in full would have required 570 priests to celebrate every day. Such examples may well have been aspirational rather than realistic. The wide area over which priests would need to be found was clearly recognised by John Testwode (d1412) of Trent (Somerset), who left 100s for

celebrating one thousand masses *'for my soul within the octave (8 days) after I shall pass away from this world, together with the expenses of divers horsemen in arranging the matter'* (Weaver 1983, 59–60). The urge for speed extended to other types of bequests. Thomas Gatle (d1440) of Great Livermere (Suffolk) made his bequest of 10 marks towards building the new tower of the church of Great Barton conditional upon the parishioners setting the work under way and preparing the materials within a year after his death, while John Dikke (d1509) made his bequest of £30 for the stone and timber work for the tower of New Buckenham (Norfolk) subject to the condition that the work be completed within a year (Northeast 2001, 67–68; Cattermole and Cotton 1983, 241). Similarly, John Roper (d1527) of Canterbury (Kent) requested that the east window of the north aisle of St John's Hospital Canterbury be *'glazed with such images or pictures as I show unto my executors, and that to be done within two years after my decease'*; the glazing was duly carried out in 1529 (Duncan 1906, 68; Marks 1993, 20). One explanation of the desire for haste might be extreme fear of Purgatory, but another, perhaps more pragmatic reason could be that those concerned were confident that they would in time be released from Purgatory and therefore that prayers said speedily were more likely to be effective in their intent. It should be noted, however, that such cases are a minority, with most commemorative strategies being intended to attract prayers over an extended period.

Occasionally testators were surprisingly relaxed as to how their money might best be invested in order to attract prayers. James Iden (d1513) of Brede (Sussex) bequeathed to the parish church 40s:

to helpe the bying of a vestment ... and yf the parishioners will not bestowe yt to that entente then I will that 20s. thereof be bestowid in reparacions of high weis witin the parisshe of Brede aforeseide, where as moste nede shalbe sene' (Garroway Rice 1935, 201)

These alternatives may seem surprisingly different to us, but to the testator they were just different forms of memoria, either of which would benefit his soul, as is made explicit in the case of Alexander Kirk (d1528) of Ampthill (Bedfordshire) who directed that money should be distributed *'in meritoriows and charitable dedes as to poore people, mendyng of high ways and otherwise'* as should be thought expedient for his soul and those of his wife, parents and all Christians (Bell

1997, 91–93). These, however, were again exceptional cases. Most testators who made pious provision in their wills knew exactly what they wanted, some setting out provisions in great detail.

The cost of commemoration

Those whose actions are examined in this paper are inevitably from the strata of society which could afford to carry out material good works, although some of the options open to them cost little. Graffiti might seem a curious means of commemoration but, particularly in churches with interior structures of soft, fine-grained stone such as chalk, prayers and commemorative texts can be found scratched into various surfaces. On a pillar at Little Gransden (Cambridgeshire) one reads *'Hic est sedes margaretae Vit. an. D'* ('This is the resting place of Margarita in the tenth year of her life') (Pritchard 1967, 44–45). Harlton church (Cambridgeshire) includes amongst its graffiti an inscription beginning *'Orate pro anima'* ('Pray for the soul of'). Again at Ropsley church (Lincolnshire) a pillar at the west end of the south arcade has an inscribed inscription:

Ista columna facta fuit ad festum Sancta Michaelis Anno Domini MCCCLXXX et nomen factoris thomas bate de corby

This column was made for the feast of St Michael in the year of our Lord 1380 and the name of the donor was Thomas Bate of Corby

For modern scholars this is valuable dating evidence for part of the architecture, but Bate's intent was to record evidence of his good work.

The most common pious bequest in wills was the provision of lights at altars and religious images and inclusion in the parish bede-roll, both of which required just a few pence. Those who gave money for lights received no tangible benefit unlike those who joined guilds, but they believed that their gift might attract prayers and that such a good work would earn them remission in Purgatory. At the bottom end of the financial scale, John Coole (d1528) of Riseley (Bedfordshire) gave just 2d *'to the torches'* (Bell 1997, 90). John Tylkys (d1462) of Glemsford (Suffolk) was able to be more generous, giving a bequest for *'a light to be found before the image of Our Lady in the chancel of Glemsford as long as 20s. lasts'* (Northeast and Falvey 2010, 12). Such minor bequests are otherwise largely

unrecorded, although the tailor William Chapman (d1446) recorded on his modest inscription brass his obit and funding of a candle to be burnt perpetually before the Blessed Sacrament at the high altar of St Dunstan-in-the-West, London; the inscription was turned over and reused for a brass to Francis Style (d1646) at Little Missenden (Buckinghamshire) (Fig 2). Bede-rolls were monastic in origin and were designed to carry the names of dead brethren to other houses where they would also receive prayers (Cook 1963, 3–6). The parochial bede-roll served a similar purpose, although it was not used in exactly the same way throughout England. In many parts of the country, every Sunday and feast day the list was placed on the high altar during the celebration of Mass and the names read out by the celebrant to the assembled worshippers. John Passey (d1509) of Eltham (Kent) gave the vicar 2s a year to include him, his wives and his friends in the bede-roll (Duncan 1906, 23). The implication, although not stated, was that their names should remain on the bede-roll in perpetuity, or at least for a long period. More clarity is provided by the will of Thomas Knevett (d1523) of Elstow (Bedfordshire) who left half an acre of land to ensure that he would be prayed for *'in perpetuity'* (Bell 1997, 17). Dedicated soul masses for a limited period were more expensive. Generally, the wealthier the person the greater the variety of opportunities for commemoration that was open to them – and also the greater the need, based on the Gospel teaching that *'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'* (Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, Luke 18.25). Examples from different ranks in medieval society illustrate this, as well as providing further evidence for the wide range of *memoria*.

An outstanding example of one who adopted as many as possible of the options open to him to attract

prayers for his soul was the merchant of the Staple of Calais, Thomas Robertson (d1531), who lived in Algarkirk (Lincolnshire) (Badham 2010a). He had two brasses laid down in his memory but, like many others, his two tomb monuments were only a small part of his commemorative strategy. He was a member of several of the Boston religious guilds, notably the prominent guilds of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Corpus Christi. In his will Thomas made extensive and explicit instructions for his remembrance. Immediately following his death 1,000 masses were to be said for his soul and the arrangements for his funeral were lavish, with attractive inducements being provided for clergy to attend the event, their prayers being regarded as especially efficacious. He directed that provision should be made for obits at Algarkirk, in the rood chapel he had built as a form of family chantry chapel, and at nearby Fosdyke. These and many other local churches received money for the upkeep of their fabric and specific bequests of vestments and plate. Significant sums were directed towards the support of the Boston-based religious guilds, all the Boston friaries, and religious houses, including those as far away as Lincoln, Walsingham, Canterbury and Calais. Charitable deeds would also earn Thomas credit, so twelve poor men were each to receive black garments and a payment of 4d to bear torches at his *'buryall day, sevynday and thirty day'*, while on the same occasions every man, woman and child in Algarkirk and Fosdyke was to receive 2d; and £11 was distributed each time to the poor and bedridden of eleven local villages. Other beneficiaries of his wills were poor maidens on their marriage days; poor people willing to take up the priesthood but having no friends to help them; the lazer house in Boston; the orphans of St Katherine's priory outside the walls of Lincoln; the prisoners within Lincoln Castle *'that lyeth for lacke of payments of*

Fig 2

Brass to William Chapman (d1446) on the back of a reused brass to Francis Style (d1646) at Little Missenden, Buckinghamshire (Rubbing: Martin Stuchfeld)

their feed and hath no frends to helpe them'; and to the priests and scholars in the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford to preach and teach the word of God. Finally, he left funds for mending and maintaining the common highways and bridges of Algarkirk and Fosdyke, the repair of Bridgedyke bridge (in Boston), and repairing of the highway there. Thomas Robertson clearly planned to cover all bases in his search for salvation.

Moving up the social scale to the gentry, over more than 100 years five generations of the Stathum family of Morley (Derbyshire) made generous provision for their souls, including commemoration by a series of prestigious London-made brasses, some with overt intercessory imagery (Lack et al 1999, 147–151). The inscriptions reveal that they were major benefactors of their parish church and made significant improvements to the fabric, including building the spire and the north chapel. The brass of John Stathum (d1454) records his gift of three bells to the church, and a bequest of 3s 4d yearly for bread for the poor. John appears to have been genuinely pious. The year before his death he entered into an agreement with the prior of Breadsall Priory for an annual mass for himself, his wife, his parents and his grandparents (BL, Additional Charter 5243). In addition there is another brass in the church dating from the end of John's life listing the prayers to be said for various members of his family:

For the souls of Rafe, Godith, Thomas, Elizabeth, Cecill and John and of their successors and for all Christian souls De Profundis etc., Pater Noster etc., Ave Maria, et ne nos, requiem eternam etc., Domine exaudi orationem, with this orison Inclina domine etc.

Their names were doubtless entered into the parish bede-roll, but the position of this brass above the piscina near the high altar demonstrates that its purpose was to act as a permanent obit reminder to the priest when he celebrated mass – perhaps, one might say, an autocue in brass. This is not the only striking feature of this example. The text of the inscription concludes '*John Stathum ordained this to be said and more written in other divers books*'. Remarkably one of the books referred to survives, as another instance of the diversity of *memoria*. The Stathum Hours in the Derbyshire Record Office at Matlock includes prayers from the Office of the Dead with the names of the same members of the Stathum family inserted (Fig 3; Dufty 1952; DRO, D5649).

Fig 3
Stathum Book of Hours (DRO, Matlock, D5649, fo 53; reproduced courtesy Derbyshire Record Office)

The more costly strategies of knights may be typified by Sir William Burgate (d1409), lord of the manor of Burgate (Suffolk), and his wife, Eleanor. William enjoyed the career of a typical county landowner of the times: he served as commissioner of array for Suffolk between 1385 and 1403, was appointed to hold special assizes in March 1396 and represented Suffolk in Parliament in 1388, 1390 and 1395 (WS2). The couple had only daughters so he was the last male of his line. There is evidence that William and Eleanor Burgate were sincerely pious and were much concerned as to the fate of their souls after death. They procured a papal indulgence in 1397 so that they might be granted plenary remission by their confessor as often as they pleased. It is possible that they also provided for a chantry or obit in their parish church, although no evidence of this remains. On entering Burgate church the first object to be seen is the font. It was badly damaged by iconoclasts, but was clearly once a fine example; what marks it out is the base which bears an incised inscription which reads in translation '*Pray for the*

souls of Sir William Burgate and Eleanor his wife who made this font'. The chancel is dominated by a tomb-chest which is set immediately in front of the altar. The brass which tops the tomb-chest is a very fine product of the London B workshop, the choice of the great and good at this time. Finally, the couple's arms are also to be seen on the decorative top band of the piscina in the chancel, marking it out as another of their pious donations. This example also highlights another significant aspect of strategies for memorialisation, namely that some bequests are, so to speak, captioned to ensure that the donor's identity was not overlooked. Clearly this couple was not taking any chances but was putting their stamp of ownership on all their artefacts aimed at securing intercession, with, in their case, the tomb monument as the main focus of devotion. A fair number of such inscriptions marking personal associations with particular objects or parts of the fabric are to be found on brasses, but are rarely seen on carved monuments. There is a good chance, however, that inscriptions were once painted on carved tombs which have worn away over time or that informative *tabula* were originally displayed near the tomb.

Buildings and inscriptions

At the other end of the scale from the major donors, large numbers of parishioners might contribute to a parish building project, as with the church at Long Melford (Suffolk), which was rebuilt between c1460 and c1495. This is an especially well known and heavily labelled building with seven building inscriptions in total on the exterior, many attributing different parts of the build to specific donors (Dymond and Paine, 2012, 177–180). On the north side of the clerestory are commemorated Robert and Marion Sparowe, Thomas and Mabel Cowper, Giles Dent (parson of Melford), John Clopton, Jon Smyth and Roger Smyth, while a lost inscription also named Giles Dent, John Clopton, Robert Coteler and Thomas Eles. On the south clerestory an inscription seeks prayers for the souls of Roger, Margaret and Katherine Moryell, John Clopton, William Qwaylis, John Smith and Thomas Couper. On the porch are recorded five members of the Clopton family, including once more John Clopton and *'alle thoo sowlis yt ye seyde John is bounde to prey for'*. The inscription on the lower windows remembers Roger Morell, John Keche and his parents, Thomas and Joan Elys, John and Alice Pie, John and Alice Distr and John and Christian Distr. On

the lower window we read of Lawrence Martyn and five other members of the Martyn family. Finally round the Lady Chapel is an inscription seeking prayers for John Hyll, John Clopton, Richard Loveday, William, Margery and Margy Clopton, Alice Clopton and John Clopton. In total a remarkable 39 people are named in these building inscriptions, demonstrating that a large number of the richer members of this prosperous community, many of them presumably clothiers, contributed to the rebuilding, all hoping as a result to gain remission from time spent in Purgatory.

There are many other churches in which those helping to rebuild the fabric left visible reminders of their identity in the hope of reciprocal prayers. The church at Isleham (Cambridgeshire) received a new clerestory and angel roof at the end of the 15th century. An inscription on the wallplate asks for prayers for the *'good estate'*, a formulation often used during people's lifetimes, of Christopher and Elizabeth Peyton and *'for the soule'* of his father Thomas senior and mother Margaret *'qwych dyd mak thys rofe in the yere of Our Lorde 1495'* (Fig 4). The paint has now faded and the wood darkened, but originally it would have been more legible to the congregation and clergy. At Closworth (Somerset) the west side of the tower has two figures either side of an elaborate image niche while the south side has a man and two women in costume of the early 16th century (Fig 5). They undoubtedly commemorate major donors, the names of whom are now lost to us. More easily visible is a stone panel over the porch at Sherborne St John (Hampshire) with the inscription *'Of your chere pray for the sowles of Jamys Spyre and Jane his wyf which caused this porche to be mad at ther cost the yere of our Lo[r]d 1533'*. Above the inner door is a badly damaged monument with another inscription to the couple. This would have ensured that all those entering the church would have been encouraged to pray for the couple. Although it cannot be proved by documentary evidence, it is possible that the couple was buried beneath the floor of the porch and that the porch formed a canopy for their tomb (Lunnon 2012). Robert Dobson (d1483) of Covehithe (Suffolk) requested burial in the parish churchyard and instructed his executors to erect a stone porch covered with lead over his grave (SRO, Ipswich, IC/AA2/370).

Lest this assessment of the intended audience for commemorative inscriptions be thought unduly simplistic, it is worth noting that there is another aspect to them. It is difficult to understand how some of these inscriptions could be read and acted upon before the widespread availability of binoculars. That

Fig 4

Part of building inscription seeking prayers for members of the Peyton family at Isleham, Cambridgeshire (Photo: Tim Sutton)

painted surfaces placed upright (Holder 2010). Each has a cross with below it a name, one being Henricus Frowyk and the other Thomas Knollys. Frowyk was a former and future mayor of London and one of three aldermen appointed in 1440 to supervise the construction of the new guildhall chapel. In 1442 three more men were appointed to the supervising committee, one being Knollys, a common councillor and son of a former mayor. These painted stones are rare survivals of foundation stones laid by major donors at the foundation ceremony but this is not an isolated example. Although most exemplars relate to monastic churches, documentary evidence reveals that similar stones were laid in the foundation ceremony for St Stephen Walbrook, London, in 1429 (Holder 2010, 20–21). Great play may have been made of such stones at the foundation ceremonies, having an impact on contemporaries, but this could only have been short-term in its effect. In these cases the ultimate intended audience could only have been God.

As has already been demonstrated, the inscriptions on tomb monuments could also serve the purpose of recording lifetime gifts to enrich a church. That on the brass to John Spycer (d. 1437) and his wife Alice at Burford (Oxfordshire) (Monumental Brass Society 1988, 157) reads:

*Y pray yow all for charite:
hertely that ye pray for me
to oure lorde that sytteth on hye
ful of grace & of mercye.
The wiche Rode solar in this chiche
upon my cost Y dede do wirche
wt a laumpe brenyng bright
to worschip god both day & nyght*

Fig 5

Donor figures of the early sixteenth century on the tower at Closworth, Somerset (Photo: Brian and Moira Gittos)

not all building inscriptions were intended to be seen by an earthly audience is strikingly illustrated by a pair of painted medieval stones found buried deep beneath the foundations of the medieval guildhall chapel in London; they had originally been placed at the bottom of the medieval foundation trench with the

*and a gabul wyndow dede do make
in helth of soule & for Crist sake.
Now Jhu that dydst on a tre
on us have mercy & pite.
Amen.*

Such inscriptions enabled charitable gifts to be remembered long after the lifetime of the person and, indeed, after the roods, vestments, books and bells had decayed or been destroyed. Executors were often as mindful of the advantage of providing such information in inscriptions on monuments as were those who commissioned their own monument: the inscription on the incised slab at Crundale (Kent) to John Sprott (d1466) mentions that in his will he 'left to each of his parishioners, both married and widowed, 40d. and to each of those unmarried 12d.' (Badham 1996, 443), while the incised slab at Rothley (Leicestershire) to Bartholomew Kyngston (d1486) transcribes the part of his will specifying provision for obits and for inclusion in the bede-roll (Fig 6).

Fixtures and Fittings

Glazing

As some of the earlier examples have indicated, a particularly popular way amongst the better off to endow more and better church fixtures and fittings was glazing windows. Its popularity, as with other associated types of *memoria*, can probably be accounted for by the scope it offered for labelling with identifiers of the donors. Being such a striking feature of a church's decorative scheme, it may also often have served a further purpose to the one I have so far emphasised: intended not just to ensure that the pious would know for whom to pray, but also as a very worldly means of self-glorification. Such cynicism is not a new insight. That the vast sums of money that were expended on such works were perhaps to the greater glory of the givers as much as to exalt God, was highlighted in the alliterative verse satire *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*:

*Thanne I munte me forth the mynstre to knowen,
And awaytede a woon, wonderlie well ybeld ...
Wyde wyndowes ywrought, ywritten full thikke,
Schynen with schapen scheldes to schewen aboute,
With merkes of marchauntes ymedled bytwene,
Mo than twenty and two twyes ynoumbred.
Ther is none heraud that hath half swich a rolle,*

*Fig 6
Incised slab to Bartholomew Kyngston (d1486) at
Rothley (Leicestershire) with a record of his will
(Rubbing: FA Greenhill)*

Then I went up to see the church, and beheld it immediately wonderfully well-built ...with wide windows fashioned and inscribed with many names, shining with coats of arms painted in the glass, with merchants' marks placed in between, more than twice twenty in number. There is no herald that has half such a roll.
(Skeat 1867, lines 171–79).

This practice is amply illustrated by documentary and material evidence. John de Beverley, a London priest (d1380), left 40s for alterations to the glazed windows in various churches 'on condition that a shield of my arms be placed in any window newly painted' (Gibbons 1888, 34). Richard Halley (d1524), vicar of

Stowe (Buckinghamshire), asked to be depicted in the porch window by a figure of a priest *'hawying a chales in his hande with my name wryte under ye fote for a remembraunce'* (Marks 2004, 246). Such identifiers are reasonably frequent in extant medieval stained glass. In other churches individuals or families paid for separate windows, as at Waterperry (Oxfordshire), where several windows incorporate donor figures, some representing people commemorated by monuments in the church (Newton 1979, 201–07). The 14th-century window in the nave presents some problems in identifying the donors represented by a man and woman in civil dress, but they could be members of the Beaufeu family; a brass of c1360 to Isobel Beaufeu is in the nave floor (Badham, 2000, 216). A mid-14th century fragment of a knight of the Fitz-Ellis family is incorporated in a 15th-century window in the north side of the nave with

donor figures of Robert and Margery Fitz-Ellis and a daughter; they are likely to be descendants of an earlier Robert Fitz-Ellis whose fine London-made effigy is in the south aisle (Southwick 1987, 12, 15, fig 5). Finally in the south side of the nave a window to Walter Curson (d1527) and his family contains donor images and the inscription:

*Pray ye for the soule of Walter Cursson and
Isabeil his wife whose goodys as the rooffe of this
churche and the rooffe of this the lordys Ile and
the covering the leede of all the same also this
wyndow were made*
(Fig 7)

Fig 7

Window in the south side of the nave at Waterperry (Oxfordshire) with donor figures and inscription to Walter Curzon (d1527) and his family (Photos: CB Newham)

There is a brass to Curson in the nave (Oxford Portfolio of Monumental Brasses 1889, pl 4), even though he was buried in the church of the Augustinian Friars at Oxford where he would undoubtedly have had another monument, maximizing the chances of eliciting prayers.

Paintings and images

Wall paintings and religious images provide many of the same advantages to the donor as just exemplified for stained glass, in that heraldry, donor figures and associated texts can be incorporated in any scheme primarily focussed upon religious imagery. Yet there are major problems in interpreting the probate evidence, since many references are ambiguous, especially those to the painting of a saint, which might mean the colouring of a carved devotional image rather than a wall painting. Although few extant carved religious images survive, the damaged Seat of Mercy Trinity from Brant Broughton (Lincolnshire) flanked by donor figures of an armed man and a lady shows that these too could be funded by parishioners (Fig 8). Two Northamptonshire wills are typical of the ambiguity of bequests for images. T Gybbard (d1518) directed 'I bequeath to peynt Sent Loy and Sent Modwyn' in Cottesbrook church and Arthur Sothern (d1518) of Higham Ferrers gave 13s 4d to 'the peynting of Seynt

Anne in the qwer' (Serjeantson and Isham Longden 1913, 302 and 341). In neither case are there any other documentary references to these saints in the specified churches which might clarify matters, nor does either church retain any medieval wall paintings.

Sometimes, however, the bequests are specific: a wall painting was definitely referred to in the will of Thomas Pellet (d1519) of Steyning (Sussex) who directed that 'I will that my picture and my wifes and my children shalbe paynted in the bacsyde of the wall behind the Rode' (Garroway Rice 1941, 164). There are also some unambiguous references to carved devotional images: Peter Walpole (d1485), who was buried in St Andrew Holborn, London, before the image of St Etheldreda bequeathed five marks:

to the making of a new ymage of sainte Etheldrede with the painting and other necessaries to heir longing and more money if more nede. And I will that there be write under the fote orate pro anima Petri Walpole.
(Boatwright et al 2008, 152–154)

Soul masses were to be sung in front of her altar for a year. Clearly Walpole anticipated that every person praying at St Etheldreda's image on their own behalf, or that of someone close to them, would add a prayer for him. Additionally he may have hoped that every time Etheldreda received a prayer she might intercede on his behalf.

Turning to surviving wall paintings, some schemes include references to the donors. The church at South Newington (Oxfordshire) retains a remarkable array of wall paintings, including one of St James the Great with the kneeling figure of a male donor. A male figure also appears together with a woman as donors before an adjacent image of the Virgin and child; the three leopards of the Giffard arms are displayed in the pedestal on which the Virgin stands (Fig 9). There is some dispute as to the identity of the donors, but the fact that the paintings probably date from the 1330s indicates that these images are most likely to represent Thomas Giffard and his wife Margaret Morteyne. In all probability Thomas Giffard is also the man kneeling before St Michael; quite possibly he might have paid for all of the 14th-century paintings in the church. The inclusion of the name-same saints Margaret and Thomas in the wall painting scheme reinforces this assumption.

The rood was a key focus of devotion in the church and its upkeep important to the congregation. Its

Fig 8
Seat of Mercy Trinity religious image from Brant Broughton (Lincolnshire) flanked by donor figures of an armed man and a lady, perhaps Philip de Lymbry (fl 1347) and his wife (Photo: Tim Sutton)

liturgical significance clearly suggested to those who provided funds that it was a good work that would give them eschatological benefit. Most bequests for the building and painting of roods and rood screens are lacking in detail, although a welcome exception is that of Jane, viscountess Lisle (d1500), whose testamentary specifications for a splendid and expensive new rood at St Michael Cornhill, London, are unusually precise. It was to cost £90 and was to include images of Mary and John. She specified that:

Amongst the which werks I will that myn executors wt. out delay after my decease ... shall do to be made and set up II schochons the oon of them wt the armes of my Right worshipfull husband Robert Drope and myn joyntly, to thentente that our soules by reason thereof may the rather be remembered and praied for.

(Marks 2011, 212–13)

The greatest concentration of extant rood screens with donor identifiers is in Norfolk. At Aylsham there are two reading ‘*Orate pro animabus Thome Wymer Johanne et Agnetis uxorum eius qui hanc partem ...*’ (‘Pray for the souls of Thomas Wymer Joan and Margaret his wives who in this place ...’) and ‘*Johannis Jannys ... huius operis deaurari fecerunt qui ... obiit anno domini Milesimo CCCCvi*’ (‘John Jannys ... of this work the gilders made ... in the year AD 1506’) (Baker 2011, 115–17). Wymer, a wealthy weaver from Worstead, was evidently an important benefactor of the church; he was buried in the sanctuary and the inscription on his brass, which was made in his lifetime, records that ‘*qui cum multis Bonis de ... suis propriis istam ecclesiam in vita sua et post mortem charitative ornabit*’ (‘he adorned this church with many of his own goods during his lifetime and will adorn it after his death and through his charity’) (Suffling 1910, 254). He evidently hoped that parishioners seeing either the screen or the brass would offer up a prayer for his soul. Other types of identifiers can also be found. Merchants were contributors towards rood screens; they were not armigerous but could be identified by merchants’ marks. The screen from St John Maddermarket, Norwich, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, was the gift of Ralph Segrym (d1474), who was mayor in 1451, as shown by his merchant’s mark on one of the panels (Lasko and Morgan 1973, 50–51). He also chose additional memorialisation in the form of a monumental brass (Suffling 1910, 182).

Fig 9
Wall painting of c1330 at South Newington, Oxfordshire with figures probably representing Thomas Giffard and his wife Margaret Morteyne kneeling before an image of the Virgin and child (Photo: CB Newham)

Fonts

Fonts also had inscriptions or other identifiers to indicate the donor, although there are very few bequests mentioning this type of *memoria*. At Keysoe (Bedfordshire) is a rare 13th-century example with a Norman French inscription: ‘*Trestui ke par hid passerui Pur le alme Warel prieu Ke Deu par sa grace Verrey merci li face. Am[en]*’ (‘Pause, whoever passes by this spot, and pray for the soul of Warel, that God by His grace may grant him true mercy. Amen’) (Bond 1985, 113). Fonts with inscriptions clearly identifying the donor can be found in much greater numbers from



Fig 10
Font displaying the arms of William Burgh and his son William at Catterick, Yorkshire (Photo: author)

the 15th and 16th centuries in Suffolk, including that at Burgate referred to earlier and another of c1510 at Hessett, which has a kneeling stone to the west of the plinth, upon the three sides of which is an inscription asking for prayers for the souls of Robert Hoo and Agnes his wife *'who made this font'*. In northern England, mention should be made of a group of eighteen fonts of distinctive design, carved from Egglestone marble quarried on the banks of the River Tees near Barnard Castle, most of which probably date from the 15th and early-16th centuries (Badham and Blacker 2009, 54–59). Unlike the richly-carved fonts found in East Anglia and many other parts of the country, religious imagery is absent on virtually all the Eggestone marble fonts. Instead, the main form of decoration on the bowls is a series of raised shields, often marked with heraldry or merchants' marks, making them a highly commemorative type. The example at Catterick (Yorkshire) displays the arms of William Burgh and his son William (Fig 10). Some of these fonts have inscriptions, including at Bolton-by-Bowland (Yorkshire) on a series of brass plates. It seeks prayers for Ralph Pudsay, his wife Edwina and one of their many sons, Ralph, who was rector of Bolton-by-Bowland church (Badham and Blacker 2009, pls 66, 67).



Fig 11
Detail from wooden pulpit c1488 at Horsham St Faith, Norfolk, showing a kneeling clerk or priest with an invocatory scroll (Photo: author)

Pulpits and lecterns

If probate references to fonts and font covers are rare, similar references to pulpits and lecterns seem almost non-existent, meaning that virtually the only evidence of their provision by pious parishioners has to be drawn from extant examples with inscriptions, themselves not to be found in large numbers. At Rossington (Yorkshire) a pulpit supposed to have come from the destroyed church of St Mary Magdalene, Doncaster, has an inscription carved into the cornice round the top reading *'Pray for the soul of Richard Stansall and his wife'* (Howard and Crossley 1917, 281 and fig 290). Of particular interest are two 'wine-glass' wooden pulpits in Norfolk which retain their full painted decoration. That at Horsham St Faith includes a panel showing a clerk or priest with an invocatory scroll reading *'M[er]cyful lady quene of hevyn kepe me from ye dedly synys sevyn'* kneeling below the Blessed Virgin Mary and child on a pedestal, but who the donor is remains uncertain (Fig 11). This pulpit has an inscription in Latin seeking prayers for the donor but only a few scraps including the date 1488 remains legible. It

probably commemorates Thomas Sond, who was recorded as rector there in 1469, the next incumbent on the list being John Wolmer, who occurs in 1504. There is no such uncertainty at Burnham Norton, where two panels feature kneeling images of John Goldalle and his wife Katherine, while an inscription seeking prayers for their souls runs below the panels (Baker 2011, 127–28, 218). Cast copper alloy (latten) lecterns were evidently the most prestigious type to be found in England (Oman 1930, 47–49). Some may have been funded by a single donor, especially where the name is engraved on the lectern. The brass lectern at Norwich St Giles (previously in St Gregory's church) is a 15th-century brass eagle type which bears the inscription: '*Orate pro animabus Willim Westbrok Rose et Johanne uxorem ejus, A. Dni MCCCCLXXXIII*' ('Pray for the souls of William Westbroke and Rose and Joan his wives AD 1493'). The example at Oxborough (Norfolk) also has on the knop on the stem an invocatory inscription inviting prayers for Thomas Kyppyng, rector of Narborough from 1461 until his death in 1489 and holder of a chantry at Oxborough. Originally it read '*Orate pro anima Thome Kyppyng quondam rectoris de Narburgh*' but iconoclasts have deliberately erased the request for prayers at the beginning.

Seating and flooring

Although church seating was evidently provided for the laity in some churches from the 13th century, it is not until the 15th century that many wills survive which record donations towards pews and other seats. In 1475 William Philpot of Godmersham (Kent) directed

that the making of new seats called Pews in the church of Elmsted be done at my expense, viz., that the space from the place where St Christopher is painted to the corner of the stone wall on the north side of the church.
(Duncan 1906, 116)

Rarely is there any detail given of the form of seats, although John Bawde (d1501) of Woolpit (Suffolk) referred in his will to '*the stool weche I did make colord [and] garnyshed wt. scallops*' and other signs of St James (SRO, Bury Wills Reg. Boner, fo 136). Woolpit church retains some medieval benches but the ends are carved with animals, not symbols of St James, so Bawde's 'stool' has apparently perished. Some extant church seats have inscriptions which enable us to identify their benefactors. At Altarnun (Cornwall)

Fig 12

A bench end of c1510–30 with an inscription to Robert Daye, William Bokyngham and John Hodge at Altarnun, Cornwall (Photo: CB Newham)

a bench end carries on a shield held by an angel the inscription '*Robart Daye maker of this worke and William Bokyngham Curate, John Hodge, Clarke*' (Fig 12). The form of the script suggests a date of perhaps c1510–30. Some writers have assumed that Daye was the carver, but it is much more likely that he and Hodge were the donors. It may be that Daye took the lead in funding the project given that the description names him as maker and not the group as makers. More explicit is the inscription on a bench at Wickmere (Norfolk), which reads '*Orate pro animabus Jon Baron, Ysabel Baron, Rauffe, Ysabel*' (Fig 13). Heraldry or other identifiers carved on pews can also help identify sponsors. At Cothelstone (Somerset) the arms of the de Stawell family are on two of the bench ends.

Saints in North Street in York near the tomb of my children buried there') (Badham 2010b, 79).

Rather more unusual was the testamentary bequest of Nicholas de Stowe, perpetual vicar of Snettisham (Norfolk), in his will made on 4 August 1376. He asked to be buried in the chancel of Snettisham church before the image of the Blessed Virgin, and he left five marks for making the '*pavimentum fundi*' of the chancel (NRO, NCC, Will Register Heydon, fo 135r). The tiles which were used for this work were specially commissioned from the local tile factory at Bawsey, near King's Lynn. They bear the inscription '*Orate pro anima d[omi]ni Nich[ol]i de Stowe vicari[i]*' (Lee Warner 1847). None of these tiles remains in Snettisham church, probably because the medieval chancel fell into disrepair following the Reformation and was rebuilt to a shorter footprint in the early 19th century; however, some of Nicholas de Stowe's tiles have been found at other Norfolk churches nearby, at Barwick, Beauchampwell and North Creake as well as at the kiln site (Eames 1955, 165 and pl XXIV). Others have made their way to the British Museum from Daniel Gurney's discovery of the kiln site, and there are about fifteen examples and twenty fragments from the 1928 discovery in the Rutland Collection (Eames 1980, 1:109–112; 2:605). Others are to be found in Ipswich Museum (Eames 1980, 1:111) and in the Society of Antiquaries of London. With each tile seeking prayers for his soul, onlookers could not fail to be reminded of the donor.

Fig 13

A bench end with prayer to members of the Baron family at Wickmere, Norfolk (Photo: CB Newham)

Initials were another form of identifier, as at East Brent (Somerset) which has a bench end with the inter-twined initials of John Selwood, abbot of Glastonbury from 1457 to 1493. Other carvings include heraldic devices and rebuses, such as the elephant and castle at Lopham (Norfolk), the badge of the Beaumont family, which was associated with the parish from the 1430s to the 1460s. It is possible that some of these personal identifiers on pews also indicated the donor's intention to sit there during services. The will of Nicholas Blackburn the younger (d1448), a former mayor of York, includes a request for burial '*In choro beate Marie ubi sedere consuevi infra ecclesiam meam parochialem Omnium Sanscotum in Northestrete in Ebor prope sepulcrum puerorum meorum*' ('In the choir of St Mary where I was accustomed to sit within my parish church of All

Moveable objects

Most medieval liturgical textiles have perished, but one extant example is the funeral pall which John Fayrey of Dunstable (Bedfordshire) gave to the guild of St John the Baptist, and which was appropriately labelled to enable the donor family to be identified long after their deaths (Badham 2012). There are groups of standing figures, the foremost figures in each being identified by an inscription as Henry Fayrey and his wife Alice, and their son John and his wife Mary. Bales with a merchant's mark and the initials 'I B' complete the composition. Similar instant identification of the donor was clearly intended by the bequest of the vowess Dame Joan Thurescrosse (d1523) of Hull (Yorkshire). She requested that:

*my executors shall cause a bawkyn or a pell of
blake velvett to be maide to covere the herse
with all in our Lady church, and theroppon
I will have an ymage of the Blissid Trinitie*

*wrought with golde, and a ded man lyeng before
Hym in a wyndding shete; and at the sides I will
have 4 anggels wrought with golde and nedill
warke, with candilstikkes in ther handes, as
thought they gave reverence to the Trinitie; and
my name writtyn under the fette of the dede
man, for a memorial [author's italics, here plain
text]*

(Raine 1884, 171–72)

Draped over the coffin at the funerals of parishioners of the churches concerned, these pallis provided a repeated reminder of the donors' patronage, in a sense turning every funeral into a commemoration of them also.

Plate was another common bequest in wills and surviving inventories of church goods sometimes note the donor, suggesting that they carried some sort of identifier. Chalices were the most usual type of plate donated in wills, probably because of their use in the most solemn part of the Mass by the priest whose prayers would be prompted thereby. In his will Sir Nicholas Twyford (d1391), citizen and goldsmith, buried at St John Zachary, London, left a cup of silver gilt to the church 'to keep him in perpetual remembrance' (McMurray 1925, 217). One rare surviving example which was the gift of an identifiable individual, on loan from St Martin Ludgate to the Museum of London, is a chalice with an inscription reading 'praye for the salles of stewyn pekoc & marget hys wyff wyche gave thys in the wusseppe of the sacrement'. Sir Stephen Peacock, a haberdasher and lord mayor of London was buried in St Martin Ludgate. The stem and base of the chalice were originally part of a box to hold the mass wafers, which was bequeathed to the church by Sir Stephen in his will dated 1535 (Walters 1939, 27). This box was made into a communion cup around 1559. Although there are few extant examples from the medieval period, there are a number of testamentary bequests for chalices with inscriptions. Sir John Barnaby (d1517), clerk of London, left to the church at Sherborne

*a chales parcell gilt weing 12 unces writtyn in
the fote 'Jhu have mercy one the soule of John
Barnaby' and a convenient vestement price 40s
making mensione of my name in the bake
thereof and these to be used by the seide priste
the space of one yer and then to remayne to the
church for evermore.*

(Darlington 1967, 44–45)

The inscription on the chalice would have been visible only to the priest at the taking of the sacrament, but the priest's prayers would have been regarded as of especial merit. In contrast, the inscription on the back of the chasuble would have been clearly seen through much of the service, prompting general prayers for Barnaby's soul. Thus Sir John's gifts appear to have been carefully chosen to ensure both clergy and congregation were reminded of him at every mass.

Promotion and piety

There are many other such examples, demonstrating that the advertising of sponsors which marks many a sporting and cultural event today is by no means a modern phenomenon, even if in the medieval period the motivation behind such advertising was different. The blatant commercialism of this approach did not escape criticism, even long before the Reformation. In Passus III (the Debate of Mede the Maiden and Conscience) of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, a poem written by William Langland in the late 14th century that is part theological allegory, part social satire, Mede has an encounter with a confessor coped as a friar who, after absolving her from her sins, put to her a proposition:

*We have a wyndow in werchyng, wole stonden
us ful hye;
Woldestow glaze that gable and grave therinne
they name,
Sykir shoulde thi soul be hevene to have.
We have a window being worked on that will
cost us a lot;
If you would glaze the gable and engrave your
name there
Your soul will be certain to reach Heaven*

Mede's response was enthusiastic:

*Have mercy ...
And I shal covere youre kirk, youre cloistre do
maken,
Woves do whiten and wyndowes glazen,
Do peynten and portraye [who paid] for the
makinge,
That every segge shall see I am suster of youre
house.
Have mercy ...
and I will find funds for your church roof,
provide you with a cloister,*

Have your walls white-washed and your
windows glazed,
And have painted and portrayed who paid for
the work
So that every soul shall see that I am sister of
your house
(Pearsall 2008, Passus III, lines 48–63)

Some may have paid heed to Langland's satirical reproof and diverted their money instead into charitable good works which would benefit the community as a whole or the poor and infirm in particular, but massive sums of money continued to be poured into enriching parish churches where prayers might be more likely to be said for donor's souls.

In summary, this paper aims to demonstrate how many parishioners arranged for a wide range of visual mnemonics in addition to their tomb monuments to be provided in their parish churches. Yet it is important to recognise that these were not intended to operate in isolation. Their effect would have been strengthened by the regular recitation of the donors' names, be it in connection with bede-rolls, annual 'General Minds', obits, other short-term soul prayers or perpetual chantries. The two categories of *memoria*, spoken and material, thus interacted and reinforced each other over a long period. Successive generations of parishioners would be regularly reminded both visually and aurally of the benefactors, with the aim of ensuring that they were prayed for long after they themselves had passed from living memory. So, for all those mentioned in this paper, may God have mercy on their souls.

Sally Badham was President of the Church Monuments Society 2008–2013 and has written many books and articles on monuments. She is currently working on a book on commemoration of the dead in the late medieval English parish.

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SRO, Suffolk Record Office, Bury Wills Reg. Boner, fo 136
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