

# Landscapes of Devotion: Pilgrim Signs in their Wider Context

*Martin Locker and Michael Lewis*

*This paper examines both the positive and negative evidence of Portable Antiquities Scheme data for medieval pilgrim souvenirs, to better understand pilgrimage in relation to three female saints' cults: Our Lady of Walsingham, St Margaret of Antioch and St Winefride. In particular, distributional patterns of these data are analysed to examine issues of movement and variation in usage. For example, suggestions are given for the lack of material evidence for some cults, such as that of St Winefride, considering the possibility that a quantity of pilgrim souvenirs were either organic or were naturally occurring. Also discussed are broader cultural trends across the medieval religious landscape, as well as directions for future study.*

During the medieval period, pilgrimage formed one of the most popular methods of displaying devotion, also offering the laity an opportunity to travel. This paper is the combined fruit of the research interests of both authors. Doctoral research carried out by Martin Locker (2015) has addressed the journeying aspects of medieval pilgrimage in the British context, focussing on the practicalities of devotional travel combined with the extended dialogue between pilgrim and landscape. Research on Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) data for pilgrim souvenirs found in England and Wales has been studied by Michael Lewis (2014), and has revealed some intriguing distribution patterns relating to medieval landscapes. In coming together, and marrying the results of their individual research interests, this paper attempts to contribute to the broader picture of the role of pilgrim souvenirs, in particular addressing deposition trends and the evidence of absence.

As far as items of portable material culture are concerned, objects associated with pilgrimage most visible in the archaeological record are pilgrims' souvenirs, such as ampullae (small leaden vials or flasks for containing holy liquids), badges and pendants, as well as other items sold or acquired at holy sites. Brian Spencer pioneered the study of these artefacts and his

book *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges* (1998) displays the variety of souvenirs found in London prior to the PAS.

Brian Spencer (1998, 3) states that prior to the rise of the souvenir trade, pilgrims used to appropriate objects, such as pieces of masonry, nails or indeed anything which was attached to a shrine, as a talisman. This practice is confirmed by Jacobus de Verona in his *Liber Peregrinationis* (c1335), in which a story is recounted of a pilgrim 'assaulting' the Golden Gate in Jerusalem to prise loose a nail as a keepsake (Monneret de Villard 1950, 44). The response to this problem was to 'devise, manufacture and sell cheap souvenirs', such as ampullae and badges (see Figs 1–2), with the iconography on each object being particular to the saint(s) or relic(s) venerated at the place of sale (Spencer, 1998, 3). Spencer reproduces and cites several contemporary paintings which display the pilgrim badges, customarily worn on the layman's headgear, with such detail that they can be matched to surviving souvenirs.

Brian Spencer was mostly interested in badge typologies, and variation thereof, rather than the wider issues regarding their function and use. More recently a number of works have taken the debate further. For

Fig 1  
*Ampulla showing R motif of the c15th-century cult of Richard Caistor of Norwich (Portable Antiquities Scheme: SF-76AFD7)*

Fig 2  
*Pilgrim badge showing image of Thomas Becket (Portable Antiquities Scheme: LON-027F55)*

example, *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in Honour of Brian Spencer* (Blick 2007) is an attempt to analyse the presence and evolution of these items in relation to saints and cult centres. This volume rigorously examines these artefacts within specific cultural contexts, laying the groundwork for contextual research on pilgrim artefacts which has only recently begun to be taken further, pointing to a promising future in this area of pilgrim studies. Also of note is an earlier essay focussing on late medieval English amulets, which pre-dates Spencer's typological studies on pilgrim badges, by Peter Murray Jones (1984), and addresses the medical applications of some pilgrim souvenirs. More recently, Geoff Egan (2010) has considered the

range of pilgrims' souvenirs recorded through the PAS, examining their distribution in general terms. Pilgrim souvenirs are now analysed not as isolated objects, or as merely links within an artistic or stylistic progression, but instead with the aim of informing on the evolution of pilgrimage trends and industrial growth within western medieval Europe. For instance, this is highlighted by a comparison between pilgrim badge iconography and that of secular and obscene badges of the late medieval period, made by Ostkamp (2009), demonstrating the applications of both types of badge amongst the laity.

In order to understand pilgrim signs in their widest context the authors have examined souvenir data from both historical and archaeological sources, especially PAS data. As noted above, three female saint cults are discussed in this paper: those of Our Lady of Walsingham, St Margaret of Antioch and St Winefride. They were chosen due to their positive and negative presence in the archaeological record, their interesting distribution patterns across potential pilgrimage routes, the questions they raise about the assumed pervasiveness of the manufactured souvenir within the pilgrim cultural landscape of medieval Britain, and the role of the female saint in the broader medieval religious landscape. They are presented in the order above, in keeping with the relative presence of associated pilgrim souvenirs in the archaeological record, that is from abundance to non-existence. Furthermore, the souvenirs of these cults allow this paper to address two distinctive contextual studies: the marked abundance of female saint cults and associated pilgrim shrines in East Anglia and the East Midlands; and the surprising absence of pilgrim souvenir data for one of the longest surviving pilgrim shrines in Britain, whose focus was one of the oldest local female saint cults in Europe.

During the 13th century, lead alloy ampullae were the most popular form of souvenir, but seem to decline in use from the 14th century, when pilgrim badges became the souvenir of choice; although ampullae (apparently) enjoyed a renaissance in the 15th to mid-16th centuries (Anderson 2010, 183). Ampullae were made to hold a small quantity of liquid from a holy source attached to a pilgrim shrine, and could have a number of uses for pilgrims; talismanic, curative or votive. Their popularity endured because '*while a badge had only been in contact with the place of pilgrimage, an ampulla actually contained tangible material from the holy place*' (Boertjes 2005, 451). Badges were made of lead alloy, as well as copper alloy and, though rarely, silver or gold. As such, they offer

an insight into the economic status of individuals, as well as to where they journeyed. With regard to the commercial production of these badges, recovery of the moulds from which the badges were cast is rare, but not unknown. One such example, a mould for a Marian Annunciation badge, has been recovered from an excavation in Norwich. Brian Ayers (2009, 2014) argues that the design features of this bear strongly identifiable similarities to those found on a series of pilgrim badges found in connection with the cult of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury, and therefore that this mould was in fact crafted by the same hand as the Becket moulds. If correct, this may suggest that the commercial production of pilgrim badges was a trade in itself, industrial in scale and conducted both by monastic communities who jealously guarded their trade against black market goods but also by skilled entrepreneurial tradesmen who travelled from pilgrim shrine to pilgrim shrine both making and selling their wares in response to pilgrim demand. This opens up interesting possibilities for discussion in future research, regarding the industrial culture of pilgrim souvenir craftsmen. Evidence in the material culture of badge or mould stylistic traits could, potentially, across the record, point towards some being crafted by the same hand and reveal the presence of travelling pilgrim badge artisans in the medieval landscape. That said, there is also some evidence for the likely local production of pilgrim badges through moulds found local to cult centres, such as moulds for badges of John Schorne from Long Marston (Spencer 1998, 9) and of Our Lady of Walsingham (see below). Also it is plausible that badge designs were influenced by one another, and therefore the attribution of badges to specific ‘hands’ of craftsmen might be more complex than at first seems upon a simple visual comparison of badges.

### *Representations of female saints in pilgrim souvenirs: Our Lady of Walsingham and St Margaret of Antioch*

#### *Our Lady of Walsingham*

The cult of Our Lady of Walsingham (Fig 3) was famous throughout Christendom in the Middle Ages, and at its peak rivalled Canterbury as England’s premier pilgrim destination (see Marks 2004, 193–7 and Webb 2000, 99). It was visited by the notable mystic Margery Kempe in about 1433 (Windeatt 2004, 394), and also drew the attention of the pro-reform humanist Desiderus Erasmus in 1512 (Nichols 1849). This cult was sparked by a

Fig 3

*Map of Walsingham and nearby settlements of importance. (Ordnance Survey map data by permission © Crown copyright 2013; additions by authors)*

vision in 1061, when the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared before the wealthy widow Lady Richelde de Faverches, and instructed her to build a wooden replica of the House of the Annunciation – the place where she received the news that she was with the Christ child. This was initially located in a small stone church, which subsequently became a shrine for the laity. In due course a religious house was founded by Edwy, chaplain to Lady de Faverches’ son, which then grew into the Augustinian Priory (Adair 1978, 114) – the remains of which are still visible in Walsingham in the form of the lone standing gable end of the church (Fig 4).

The primary sites at Walsingham were the Slipper Chapel, which was the final and grandest wayside chapel along the approach to the settlement, and Walsingham Priory, wherein lay the shrine of Our Lady. In due course, Walsingham became colloquially known as ‘England’s Nazareth’, a testament to its prestige and reputation. Erasmus records that pilgrims to Walsingham Priory would enter from the west through a narrow wicket and be guided by one of the priory monks first to a holy well, then into the priory church. After this pilgrims were taken to ‘a little house’ which held the shrine with the replicated House of the Annunciation which ‘literally blazed with silver, gold and jewels’, within which were the statues of Mary and Christ fashioned from gold and silver gilt (Nichols 1849, 26). Henry II (1154–89) visited the shrine twelve times during his reign, and both Henry VII (1485–1509) and Henry VIII (1509–47) also went on pilgrimage there. As befits a Marian cult of Walsingham’s status, pilgrim souvenirs, and even badge moulds, have been found in the archaeological record whose iconography indicate links to this holy site; these will be discussed below.



Fig 4  
The surviving remains of Walsingham Priory, which housed the Walsingham cult (Photo: Martin Locker)

With regard to ‘England’s Nazareth’, and its ampullae and pilgrim badges, PAS data alone has been used to map distribution, since this covers most finds and includes reliable find spots. The data from the PAS records some 100 ampullae possibly connected with the Walsingham cult (Anderson 2010). This connection is achieved primarily through the iconography on the body of the object. Motifs such as a lily or lily pot and moon, associated with the Virgin; ‘W’ beneath a crown, for Walsingham; an ‘R’ (Fig 1), taken to indicate Lady Richeldis, the founder of the shrine; and a downward facing arrow, perhaps an analogy for the word of God (eg Psalms 64:7), are usually accompanied by a scallop shell relief on the reverse side (Spencer 1990, 145–7). Anderson (2010, 190) points out that there is a tendency to attach all pilgrim artefacts bearing Marian insignia to the Walsingham cult. Therefore prudence is needed when addressing origin, as the cult of Mary was universally important across Christendom, and not just restricted to north Norfolk. Whilst it is right to be cautious, Walsingham was *the* premium Marian cult in Britain, and so it is reasonable to suggest that the majority of these artefacts (especially when engraved

with a crowned ‘W’, a motif which makes up 14% of the entire ampullae record for Britain) are highly likely to relate to Walsingham. This is given further weight from their distribution pattern (Fig 5), which is heavily slanted towards the east of England; more specifically towards rural Norfolk and Suffolk. Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Norfolk bear the highest tally of ampullae bearing iconography which relates to the Walsingham cult, notwithstanding the obvious bias in data, given that East Anglia is popular for metal-detecting and these areas account for a significant proportion of PAS recorded finds. It should also be noted that ampullae are amongst the sturdiest of pilgrim souvenirs and therefore survive better in the plough-soil than many badges, which (especially if made of lead) tend to be more delicate. Recent research has indicated that there is a strong statistical correlation between the findspots for ampullae, rural communities and agricultural regions (Anderson, 2010, 184). These objects are sometimes found purposefully broken open or ‘torn’ in an agricultural context, but given their spiritual value for their owners, it might be thought unlikely that such items were casually discarded or broken in such a fashion. Instead it is suggested that their function was more some sort of votive behaviour such as sprinkling holy water amongst a field and crops to ensure a good harvest, and this is supported by the fact that ‘several bear signs of deliberate damage, including crimping, fissures and tooth marks, and where the owners have broken the seal to release the vessels’ contents’ (Anderson, 2010, 184). That said, given metal-detecting is a rural phenomenon, and mostly one that takes place on cultivated land, it is wise to be aware that there is an element of circular logic to this argument. If the locations given in the PAS data do represent genuine patterns of medieval deposition, then they fall highest in Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Norfolk during the height of the cult’s popularity with pilgrims, thus tying the ampullae of Walsingham into the theory of apparent field blessing with the waters taken from the Priory’s wells.

Thirty-seven percent of Walsingham ampullae have been found in Norfolk. Thus the northern, central and eastern parishes of the county could have supplied a substantial portion of pilgrim traffic towards Walsingham – along the surviving Roman roads and trade routes, which crossed to the east of Norfolk via centres such as Billingford, Brampton, Crownthorpe, Norwich and Great Yarmouth (Gurney, 1995, 34). The cluster of ampullae finds in northern Suffolk are located very close to Thetford and the route which typically led pilgrims from London to Walsingham, ‘The Walsingham

*Fig 5*

*Distribution map for ampullae connected to Walsingham cult by iconography; data taken from the PAS database (Ordnance Survey map data by permission © Crown copyright 2013; additions by authors)*

Way', by which they travelled to and from the shrine prior to potentially scattering their ampulla's contents upon their fields. The reasons for depositing not only the ampulla's contents but also the container itself are unknown, however it may be that the ampulla itself had sacred properties due to its production around the pilgrimage site and its proximity to the sacred liquids held within itself or, in contrast, that once broken open the ampulla itself was no longer considered as valuable, having fulfilled its purpose as a vessel. However, despite a lack of evidence on pricing for these souvenirs, it is reasonable to assume that such items would not be discarded carelessly simply because they no longer contained blessed waters or oils. Many ampullae were decorated with sacred imagery and would possibly have been retained for ornamental and/or curative purposes thanks to their iconography, and so the process of deliberate deposition in the fields must have been thought to enhance the effect of the blessed substances therein, otherwise these artefacts would have merited being kept by their owners.

*Fig 6*

*Pilgrim badge displaying the crowned and sceptred Virgin with child, beneath an arched canopy, found in London (British Museum no. 1856, 0701.2059)*

Pilgrim badges associated with Walsingham are of several main types, and constitute a significantly smaller part of the surviving pilgrim souvenir record. This may be due to the fact that there was a preference for souvenirs which fulfilled a practical or votive function, such as the ampullae or, perhaps, due to their more ornamental function, they were less likely to be discarded in the first place. Many relate to the statue of Our Lady of Walsingham, typically showing the crowned Virgin with sceptre and holding the Christ child; occasionally she is seated within a canopy (as in Fig 6). However, since these badges of Virgin and child usually have no inscription, as noted above, it is impossible to be certain whether or not they were made for the Norfolk cult. Also produced were badges of the Holy House at Walsingham, normally showing the statue of Our Lady of the Annunciation within the shrine itself. Other Walsingham badges of the Annunciation show the Virgin (normally on the left) receiving the divine message (that she is to give birth to Jesus) from Gabriel. Between them stands a lily pot, the symbol of the Virgin's purity. Such badges are normally framed. Moulds for a badge of the annunciation within a six-pointed star, and also this motif on the shaft of an arrow, have been found at Little Walsingham (Spencer 1990, 14–5; Spencer 1998, 141), providing good evidence that these badges were made for the Norfolk cult, but other types were surely made elsewhere, as suggested above.

Whereas Brian Spencer (1998) lists most archaeological discoveries of Walsingham badges from London, excavated finds from the rest of the country are less apparent, and this is worthy of some brief explanation. The discovery of pilgrim badges from watery contexts, such as the Thames foreshore in London, suggests they may have been deliberately deposited. Work by Michael Garcia (2003) and Michael Lewis examines possible reasons for this phenomenon. In summary, it is thought possible that pilgrims may have thrown badges into watery contexts before (or perhaps after) long journeys, to ensure or give thanks for a safe voyage. One of the largest collections of such souvenirs outside London, approximately 230 badges found in the River Stour, Canterbury, near Eastbridge Hospital, by a group of metal-detectorists, contained a high proportion of Becket badges, highlighting the fact that the items had been deposited soon after (certainly in close geographic proximity to where) they were acquired (Spencer 2010, 316–26; Egan, 2007, 74). It is generally believed that once touched to holy relics such badges became 'infused' with holy properties associated with the saint to whom contact

had been made. Therefore the reasons for such an early deposition are not entirely clear, and perhaps are quite complex, as surely an old badge would have been discarded in preference to a new one, especially so soon on a journey – if this was the reason for deposition. Alternatively it might be that the badges at Eastbridge have a closer association with practices at the hospital there than previously thought, or that the relationship between the badges and the hospital is coincidental, given the site of deposition is next to a bridge leading out of the city. Further study is clearly needed of this interesting assemblage.

Ignoring those found on the Thames foreshore, the PAS data records only ten pilgrim badges with iconography that can be reliably related to the Walsingham cult. Nonetheless, the distribution is of interest, since (like that of ampullae) there is a notable bias towards central and eastern parts of England (Fig 7). Is it possible, therefore, that whilst Walsingham's cult was celebrated widely, it was most popular amongst local pilgrims rather than those that travelled afar: perhaps rival Marian cults elsewhere catered for other pilgrims; an example of such a cult (though later in date) was Our Lady of Willesden (London). Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, maybe Walsingham badges (unlike some others) were less prone to loss or deliberate disposition. It is also apparent that many intricate badge types survive best in the waterlogged conditions of the Thames mud, rather than on arable farmland, where (as already noted) most metal-detecting takes place; though the numbers of Marian badges are dwarfed by other cults, such as St Thomas (Becket) of Canterbury, for example. Furthermore, those that search the Thames foreshore are more accustomed to carefully analysing lead scraps, knowing that many lead artefacts such as pilgrim badges are found incomplete or fragmentary. Indeed, it seems likely many badge fragments found by less knowledgeable detectorists have been unintentionally thrown away.

### *St Margaret of Antioch*

The cult of Margaret of Antioch was also to be one of the most popular of the medieval period – an image of her graced the altar at Walsingham next to the Virgin (Hill, 2010, 105). Despite the fact that few associated badges have been found and recorded with the PAS, their distribution is intriguing. According to legend, Margaret was the daughter of a pagan priest who scorned her Christian faith. The local Roman Governor offered her marriage if she renounced Christianity, but she refused and was tortured, during which various

Fig 7

*Distribution map for pilgrim badges connected to Walsingham cult by iconography; data taken from the PAS database (Ordnance Survey map data by permission © Crown copyright 2013; additions by authors)*

miraculous incidents occurred. One of these involved Margaret being swallowed by Satan (in the form of a dragon) from which she was spat out when the cross she carried aggravated the dragon's innards. It is specifically this miracle which influenced the design on pilgrim badges in her name (Fig 8). Her souvenirs recorded with the PAS are all circular and made of lead (see also Lewis 2013). They depict Margaret with a spear surmounted by a cross (in her right hand), holding a book (in her left hand), and standing upon a dragon; all but two have the letters IHC (*Jesus Hominum Salvator*) on the reverse. St Margaret has been traditionally associated with King's Lynn, but Brian Spencer (1990, 55–6) notes that her cult '*was particularly strong in the East Midlands*' and these badges '*were as least as likely to be associated with the former church of St Margaret at Ketsby [Lincolnshire], where an image of St Margaret was still attracting notable offerings in 1529*'. This seems to be reflected in the distribution of PAS recorded souvenirs associated with St Margaret, particularly those with the IHC

Fig 8

*Pilgrim souvenir relating to the cult of Margaret of Antioch (Portable Antiquities Scheme: LIN-FD4722)*

legend (Fig 9).

Beyond the purely depositional data it is possible to suggest that a high number of these pilgrim badges

Fig 9

*Map showing distribution of pilgrim souvenirs (both confirmed and potential) relating to the cult of Margaret of Antioch (Ordnance Survey map data by permission © Crown copyright 2013; additions by authors)*

bearing St Margaret's iconography were procured by or for, women, due to the saint's linkage with pregnancy and childbirth – the pains of which were linked to the sins committed by Eve. Carole Hill suggests that:

*Women, once pregnant, turned to St Margaret in an attempt to gain, as she had done, some control over their bodies. It should be no surprise to find her image with that of the Virgin on the altar at Walsingham, as it is no coincidence that the most frequently found name among female testators in Norwich between 1370 and 1532 was Margaret. The name was sometimes interpreted as meaning 'pearl', and was associated with that of the Virgin Mother, that 'gem of virginity' (Hill, 2010, 105).*

Our Lady of Walsingham may have been viewed as a 'sister' of Margaret, both linked with foreign lands, virginity and feminine sanctity; however, it was St Margaret to whom one prayed to when dealing with pregnancy. This local association with the Virgin, Walsingham and the Norwich area suggests a strong predilection in the eyes of the East Anglian laity for

concerns surrounding childbirth, and the deposition data clearly show a focus on this geographical area as well. Her place, adjacent to the Virgin on the altar at Walsingham shrine, modelled on the House of Annunciation, in the 'Nazareth' of England emphasises an already present link to conception (albeit immaculate in Mary's case), pregnancy, virginity and birth. Her cult was especially strong across the landscape of Medieval Norfolk, as attested by her being the fifth most popular choice in church dedication, and adoption by King's Lynn as their patron saint (Hill 2012, 105). The cult of St Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin, also enjoyed a 'pre-eminence ...in late Medieval Norwich and across Norfolk' (Hill 2010, 99). Farnhill (2001, 44) has calculated that women made up one third of the membership of religious guilds in East Anglia, and in Walsingham they constituted half of the membership of the three religious guilds present. This suggests that there was a broader cultural association – at least during the Middle Ages – between femininity and sacrality in the eyes of the local laity, further supported by the reverence shown towards Norwich's own patron, the anchorite and mystic St Julian.

### ***Marked Strange by its Absence: St Winefride of Holywell and her (lack of) souvenir data***

Moving the focus to Wales (Fig 10), Holywell possesses all the hallmarks of a medieval (and indeed continuous) pilgrim centre. Holywell is a major cult centre which escaped closure during the Reformation and, therefore, unusually has seen continuous recorded use since the 7th century. As its name suggests, Holywell is a well site, which is dedicated to St Winefride (d c660), a Welsh noblewoman who was martyred after refusing the advances of her suitor, the king's son, Caradog. He decapitated her in a fury and her head rolled downhill; where it came to rest a healing spring bubbled forth and became St Winefride's Well. After her head was miraculously rejoined to her body by her uncle, St Beuno – the renowned Welsh saint, who had his own monastery at Clynnog Fawr, Gwynedd (north-west Wales) – Winefride lived for another fifteen years. When St Beuno went to Clynnog, Winefride went to St Deifr at Bodfari, and then to St Sadwrn at Henllan. Here she was directed by the latter to St Eleri at Gwytherin, in a remote valley in the mountains, where she became a nun (Charles-Edwards 1962, 3). During the 15th century a chapel was built which housed a



Fig 10

Map displaying Holywell in Wales & Flintshire (Ordnance Survey map data by permission © Crown copyright 2013; additions by authors)

pool fed by the spring, where devotees bathed in the holy waters (Adair 1978, 162), and which soon became famed for its healing properties (Fig 11).

The *Life of St Winefride* records some of the miraculous tales of healing, particularly for those afflicted with agues or fevers, as well as cripples and sickly children. Practices at the well are recorded in this text, including that of removing a stone from the well and placing it in a body of spring water at home, thereby sacralising those waters for future cures (Fleetwood 1713, 85); this phenomenon (of the transfer of the holy properties from one item to another) is explored further below. There are also a number of primary sources and itineraries for Winefride's Well, and the surrounding region, to draw upon to use in conjunction with archaeological evidence. The most obvious building in the complex of St Winefride's Well is the vaulted well house and bathing pool, but there also remains St Winefride's chapel, St James' church, and the Cistercian abbey of Basingwerk, a mile to the north, which has a historical link to the well complex, especially in the custodial sense – being a source of accommodation for pilgrims, a haven for the sick and staffed by the monks who also maintained the well. Although the actual well has its origins as a natural spring, a basin was constructed to capture the 'holy waters' as they emerged from the earth and flowed down the Greenfield valley towards Basingwerk Abbey and the Dee Estuary (Charles-Edwards 1962, 22). There are no records telling us what structure or open air arrangement surrounded the well

prior to the building of the surviving well house. The votive poetry or 'cwyddys' by Lolo Goch (c1320–98), and Tudor Aled (c1465–1525), however, seem to suggest it was primarily outdoors, with the spring bubbling up through the earth into the (now interior) basin, and then flowing down the valley. Goch says that the spring '*ran from the earth*', and describes it as a '*clear shining river from the hillside, its water is seen from the meadows, as a wave above its gravelly bed*' (Charles-Edwards 1962, 8). He makes no mention of a well house or any sort of imposing structure, even saying that the spring and its subsequent stream or river was visible from the valley – which under the current series of arches, bathing pools and concrete is impossible. As at many popular shrines, pilgrims would have been guided around the basin by the monks from Basingwerk Abbey, while the outer pool was reserved for actual interaction and immersion (Adair 1978, 163). Curiously, despite the potential market for ampullae (in particular), no manufactured pilgrim souvenirs are known in connection with the cult of St Winefride in either the archaeological or historical record, although the *Vitae St Winefredae* does detail a practice of acquiring natural 'souvenirs', which will be discussed presently. Firstly let us examine what evidence does survive of the pilgrim presence at Holywell.

Fig 11

*Holywell: St Winefride's Well (inner basin) and view of building complex (photos: Martin Locker and Paul Everson)*

During the Middle Ages the town possessed inns offering accommodation; St Winefride's Convent provided beds to poorer pilgrims, and there are records indicating a short lived hospital in the 14th century. A mile north-east along the Greenfield Valley is Basingwerk Abbey, whose Cistercian monks cared for the holy well. It is also known that various monarchs visited the shrine: Richard I travelled there in 1189; Edward I's itinerary indicates a visit to Basingwerk (and presumably St Winefride's Well) on the 15th March 1283 (Gough 1900, 153); Adam of Usk records Henry V visiting in 1416 to give thanks for Agincourt (Given-Wilson 1997, 263); and the Welsh poet Tudor Aled records a visit by Edward IV, who placed some earth taken from beside the well onto his crown (Charles-Edwards 1962, 26). By the time of the Reformation, the Well was such a popular destination that its annual revenue was £157 15s 2d (Lewis 1849, 134). During the reign of Henry V, Pope Martin V '*furnished the abbey of Basingwerk with pardons and indulgences to sell to the devotees*', which was a sure method to boost revenue and reputation for any pilgrim site (Lewis 1849, 436). However, despite all these impressive attributes and numerous documentary sources detailing donations and illustrious visitors, the material culture of souvenirs remains utterly absent in the record. Pilgrim souvenirs and their distribution have commonly been used to point towards the origin or shrine sites of individual pilgrimages but the archaeological record reveals no Winefride souvenirs. Whilst clearly this does not dismiss Holywell from the pilgrim roster, its absence in the material record is a mystery. Possibly, then, we are dealing with a cultural difference, a mixed approach towards pilgrimage material culture where the idea of 'souvenirs' or 'talismans' take many forms,

ie not solely manufactured trinkets. Working with this concept, some medieval pilgrims returning from the Holy Land in the early 7th century are recorded as possessing souvenirs such as '*dried flowers from the garden of Gethsemane, stones or dirt from Golgotha, [and] pinches of dust from places Christ had walked*' (Janin, 2006, 67), and indeed it is a practice that took place in more recent times: when in Rome, St Thérèse of Lisieux, and her sister Céline, '*scooped up some of the earth*' where had lain the remains of St Cecilia. Even the soil from the grave from which St Thérèse herself was exhumed was offered to the faithful, and venerated.

Since the time of the early Church there have been purpose-made souvenirs to contain holy water from the river Jordan and liquids from other biblical sites. Historical writings suggest that these not only fulfilled a spiritual need for the pilgrims, but also saved some sacred sites from rather zealous vandalism. One example of this refers to the principal gates of Jerusalem, which were originally covered in stout nails; however, by the time that Niccolo of Poggibonsi visited the city between 1346 and 1350, most of these had been prised loose and pocketed by pilgrims who wanted a keepsake of their visit (Niccolo 1945, 45–6). Also Arnold von Harff wrote in 1498 '*the gate [of Jerusalem] is of cypress wood covered with copper and is much cut and mutilated... We broke and cut off many pieces of the wood and copper which I carefully carried back with me*' (Letts 1946, 211). It is likely that the idea of producing pilgrim badges, ampullae and tokens as souvenirs found favour not only with industrious monks, but also with civic authorities.

The most famous souvenir was the scallop shell, which originated with the cult of St James in

Santiago, but gradually came to be a general symbol of pilgrimage across Christendom. There was also evidently a desire for a souvenir which was both free, with a personal interaction between the pilgrim and the site beyond commercial exchange. Whilst a logical reason for Holywell's lack of souvenirs in the archaeological record may be due to poor preservation, or undiscovered depositions, it seems curious that no ampullae are attributed to the Winefride Well site in the historical record – a souvenir associated with well sites and a potential source of considerable income. It may be the case that Holywell had badges of a very intricate nature that did not survive due to their fragility or that pilgrims used generic ampullae to transport holy water. However, more likely is the possibility that the souvenirs were organic in nature, and thus almost invisible in the archaeological record.

The *Life of St Winefride* records that people were in the habit of removing a stone from St Winefride's Well and placing it in a body of spring water in their houses, thereby sacralising those waters for future cures (Fleetwood 1713, 85). With a lack of material evidence for manufactured souvenirs, it is possible that a preference existed (at least prior to the 15th-century well house construction) for natural and personally chosen artefacts which had a direct link to the miraculous source. From this example it is worth briefly considering other possibilities for 'found souvenirs', and the folkloric record points towards flowers and herbs as being closely linked with hagiographies, cures, and emblems of certain saints. This 'found' aspect may well reinforce the localism of a saint's cult in the mind of the pilgrim, since a plant may be very particular to that area, or grow in abundance either around the shrine site or at sites which are linked to events from a saint's life. By selecting a natural object associated with the saint or site the pilgrim has a tactile link to the site which may represent a more intimate connection than a bought object, such as an ampulla or badge. Through folk medicine, folklore and the presence of flora and fauna in Christian scripture (transmitted through sermons), the varied symbolism of plants would have been commonly known during the medieval period. For example, in Henry Friend's 'Flowerlore' (1887) we find St Agnes closely linked in folklore to the 'Christmas Rose' (*helleborus niger*), due to her association with purity and the correspondingly white petals of the flower. At Leighton Bromswold in Huntingdon, a chapel and well of St Helen is situated in 'Alycon Payne Close', a corruption of 'Elecampane', an anglicised term for *inula helenium*, and this herb is also known

as 'Elen's Spignel' in Wales as a cure for stomach ache. The Shamrock (*trifolium repens*) is famously associated with St Patrick in Ireland, where it is said to have formed a teaching aid for the saint when explaining the mystery of the trinity. Marigold (*tagetes erecta*) is one of the principal flowers dedicated to the Virgin, and on the feast day of the Annunciation or 'Lady-Day' (25th March), they were used as decoration inside churches – it is also claimed that the marigold owes its name to Mary ie 'Mary-Gold'. Within English meadows, another flower bearing a strong Marian association and a candidate for a 'found souvenir' from an 'Our Lady' shrine is lady's slipper (*lotus corniculatusis*), a flower which whilst now rare, used to be found in open woodlands, but currently survives at a single site in Yorkshire (Mabey 1996, 439). Therefore despite the abundance of crafted pilgrim souvenirs available at the Marian centre itself, a pilgrim travelling along towards Walsingham might also pick a stem of marigold or lady's slipper to serve as both a reminder of Mary's presence in the local landscape and as a symbol of her Walsingham shrine.

### Conclusions

Through different research mechanisms this paper has attempted to better understand medieval pilgrim souvenirs and their roles in the hands of the laity, particularly from the underexplored PAS dataset. The results are understandably variable, due to the nature of the surviving evidence, but do offer both a more detailed appreciation of pilgrim souvenirs as religious and practical artefacts, and glimpses of broader cultural trends within the cults of saints and the religious landscapes of Medieval Britain.

Walsingham was clearly a major cult centre, as attested by historical accounts and the size of the priory, and it is apparent there was a sizable industry in related pilgrim badges. Unfortunately the general popularity of the Virgin Mary at cult centres across the country makes it difficult to be sure exactly which of the badge types known can be ascribed to Walsingham with certainty; excluding those with moulds found locally. Nonetheless, the general eastern bias of the badges known is of interest, since it does suggest the cult was more localised than previously thought; a statement made with some caution. An inkling of this is apparent through the distribution of ampullae, which imply an arable connection between saints' cults and the local laity, although this too is tentatively suggested.

Likewise, badges deposited at watery sites are clearly important to consider, and again suggest complex rituals (frustratingly) not explained in contemporary accounts. The distribution of St Margaret's pilgrim souvenirs in the PAS database also indicates an eastern bias, which, combined with her presence at the Walsingham shrine may point towards a greater collaboration between these two female saints in the minds of the laity. In a broader cultural context, the high number of female saint cults, deposition clusters and church dedications across medieval Norfolk indicates a distinct level of appreciation for links between femininity, virginity and sanctity in the East Anglian landscape; this may, with further study, be found to extend towards the East Midlands.

Holywell on the other hand does not seem to have any associated badge making industry, which is perhaps explained by other souvenirs being collected. The lack of pilgrim badges found in Wales (in general) is intriguing and may suggest a completely different approach to pilgrimage, without the commercial enterprises found at other sites, notably Canterbury. This concept of alternative or 'found' souvenirs would benefit from further research, as not only would it provide another class of souvenir artefact for pilgrim studies, but could also point towards a possible cultural trend within Wales, and expand our understanding about the commercial aspect of pilgrimage and how it was perceived by pilgrims. It would seem likely that certain classes of craftsmen dedicated themselves towards pilgrim souvenirs, given their demand and profitability, and the evidence of moulds, which betray the hand that made them, point towards an interesting line of research towards identifying specific artisans and their wares, some of which may have been more valued than others in term of quality. The fact that this appears not to be the case for Holywell is both unusual and intriguing, and deserves further attention.

Finally, a more holistic research approach, especially where PAS data shows interesting patterns, offers opportunities for future research. The work within this paper highlights the great potential for the PAS dataset when used in combination with an interdisciplinary approach to the practice and perception of pilgrimage within the cultural and geographical medieval landscape.

*Martin Locker completed his doctoral research on Medieval Pilgrimage with UCL in 2013; his research interests revolve around sacred landscapes, religious culture, spatial transition and the Medieval imagination. Michael Lewis is Head of Portable Antiquities and Treasure at the British Museum, with a particular interest in the material culture of the early medieval and medieval periods.*

## Bibliography

- Adair, J, 1978. *The Pilgrims' Way*, London
- Anderson, W, 2010, 'Blessing the fields? A study of late-medieval ampullae from England and Wales' *Medieval Archaeology* 54, 182–204
- Ayers, B, 2009, *Norwich. Archaeology of a Fine City*, Stroud
- Blick, S (ed), 2007, *Beyond Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Essays in Honour of Brian Spencer*, Oxford
- Boertjes, K, 2005, 'Pilgrim ampullae from Vendôme : souvenirs from a pilgrimage to the Holy Tear of Christ' in S Blick and R Tekeippe (eds), *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles Vol 1*, Michigan, 443–73
- Charles-Edwards, T, 1962, *Saint Winefride and Her Well: The Historical Background*, Holywell
- Egan, G, 2007, 'Material culture of care for the sick: some excavated evidence from English medieval hospitals and other sites' in B Bowers (ed), *A Non-Natural Environment: Medicine without Doctors and the Medieval European Hospital*, Farnham, 70–83
- Egan, G, 2010, 'Widespread devotion: new insights from the Portable Antiquities Scheme into medieval pilgrim trinkets', in S Worrell, G Egan, J Naylor, K Leahy, and M Lewis (eds), *A Decade of Discovery: proceedings of the Portable Antiquities Scheme Conference 2007*, Oxford, 115–30
- Farnhill, K, 2001, *Guilds and the Parish Community in Late Medieval East Anglia, 1470–1550*, Woodbridge
- Fleetwood, W, 1713, *The Life and Miracles of St Winefride with Historical Observations Therein as Related by Robert, Prior of Shrewsbury 1167*, London

- Garcia, M, 2003, 'Medieval medicine, magic and water. The dilemma of deliberate deposition of pilgrim signs', *Peregrinations* 1, 1–13
- Given-Wilson, C (ed and trans), 1997, *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377–1421*, Oxford
- Gough, H, 1900, *The Itinerary of Edward the First Throughout His Reign, AD 1272–1307, Exhibiting His Movements From Time to Time So Far as They Are Recorded*, London
- Gurney, D, 1995, 'Small towns and villages of Roman Norfolk' in A Brown (ed), *Roman Towns in Eastern England and Beyond*, Oxford, 62–75
- Hill, C, 2010, 'St Anne and her Walsingham daughter' in D Janes and G Waller (eds), *Walsingham in Literature and Culture from the Middle Ages to Modernity*, Farnham, 99–113
- Hill, C, 2012, 'Here be dragons: the cult of St Margaret of Antioch and strategies for survival' in C Hill (ed), *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia: From Prehistory to the Present*, London
- Janin, H, 2006, *Four Paths to Jerusalem: Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Secular Pilgrimages, 1000 BCE to 2001 BCE*, Carolina
- Jones, P, 1984, *Medieval Medical Miniatures*, London
- Letts, M, 1946, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff*, London
- Lewis, M, 2013, 'Pilgrim signs of St Margaret of Antioch: some thoughts on their spatial distribution', in J Naylor (ed) 'Portable Antiquities Scheme', *Medieval Archaeology* 57, 280–3
- Lewis, M, 2014, *Saints and their Badges*, Witham
- Lewis, S, 1849, *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, London
- Locker, M, 2015, *Landscapes of Pilgrimage in Medieval Britain*, Oxford
- Mabey, R, 1996, *Flora Britannica*, London
- Marks, R, 2004, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, Stroud
- Monneret de Villard, U (ed), 1950, *Liber Peregrinationis di Jacapo de Verona*, Rome
- Niccolò of Poggibonsi, 1945, *A Voyage beyond the Seas (1346–1350)*, trans T Bellorini and E Hoade, Jerusalem
- Nichols, J, 1849, *Pilgrimages to Saint Mary of Walsingham and St Thomas of Canterbury by Desiderius Erasmus*, London
- Ostkamp, S, 2009, 'The world upside down: secular badges and the iconography of the late medieval period', *Journal of Archaeology in the Low Countries* 1, 107–25
- Spencer, B, 1990, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges, Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum Medieval Catalogue Part 2*, Salisbury
- Spencer, B, 1998, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges: Medieval Finds from Excavations in London: 7*, London
- Spencer, B, 2010, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, London.
- Webb, D, 2000, *Pilgrimage in Medieval England*, London
- Windeatt, BA (trans), 2004, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, London