

President of the Society



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NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF ANGLO-SAXON SCULPTURE

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In this Presidential address I am speaking as someone who has been engaged in the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture for a long time, but have only comparatively recently turned back my attention to Leicestershire, and I am aware that there is a great deal more to learn about the background to the sculpture and indeed the sculptures of this region themselves since I first wrote about them (Cramp 1977). Since then, I am glad to say that many new scholars have emerged, who have contributed to the understanding of the subject or have seen its value for use in historical or topographical studies. This is therefore in a broad sense my retrospective view of developments in the subject as a whole, and a prospective view of the research I am engaged in with Jo Story – which we intend to publish in the British Academy series, *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture – Leicestershire and Northamptonshire*, thus taking forward the pioneering work of David Parsons who published the last inventory of Leicestershire sculptures (Parsons 1996).

In recent years there has been increased interest in the historiography of many academic subjects, and the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture is no exception. It was not until the later nineteenth and earlier twentieth century, however, that writers such as Romilly Allen, W. G. Collingwood or Baldwin Brown (Allen and Browne 1885; Collingwood 1927; Brown 1937) clarified what *was* Anglo-Saxon. As far as sculpture is concerned, the antiquarians of the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries noted some of the crosses still standing in churchyards: for example, Nichols (1800, pl. cxxix, fig. 2b) noted Rothley (Fig. 1) which stands today prominently in the churchyard, and also recorded the part of the Asfordby cross shaft with the figure of Christ (Fig. 2), then built into an outside wall, as an ‘extremely rude figure with a crucifix’ (Nichols 1800, vol. iii, 117, and pl. iv, fig. 2). Such monuments were either not dated or sometimes designated as medieval or Celtic. Even today, it can be difficult to distinguish late Saxon works of the early eleventh century from Romanesque. (The Norman Conquest was in many ways an unhelpful division.) Not many Leicestershire sculptures were recorded; for example, in Allen and Browne’s *List of Stones with Interlaced Ornament in England*, only the Harston slab (Fig. 3), the Sproxtton cross (Fig. 4), the Asfordby pieces, and the four small Saxon head-stones from Thurnby, are recorded (Allen and Browne 1885, 7). It was not then until the massive rebuilding and reconstruction of churches in the later nineteenth century, when sculptures came tumbling out of the walls into which they had been rebuilt in earlier periods, that there was enough sculptural evidence to be able to propose regional or period groups. (It is noteworthy that nowadays there might be more interest in speculating as to what were the motives for building this material into medieval



Fig. 1. The Rothley cross, in the churchyard of the parish church.



Fig. 2. Part of the Asfordby cross shaft, with the figure of Christ in Majesty.



Fig. 3. Part of the grave-cover built into the exterior of the church of St Michael and All Angels, Harston.

walls than for considering the artistic and social context in the sculptures that were originally constructed.) A detailed study of the historiography of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture is being currently researched by Jane Hawkes, the first fruits of which are already published (Hawkes 2007b).

The opening up of debate concerning Anglo-Saxon sculpture has without doubt invigorated the study. I must, however, declare my position that the basis for any value judgements or speculations depends on a reliable and consistent record of the material such as *The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* (CASSS) is attempting to provide. This series includes the history and provenance of individual monuments and architectural sculptures, as well as detailed description, critical assessment and bibliography. This has always seemed to me – and still seems – a necessary accompaniment to some of the new directions in



Fig. 4. The Sproxton cross, in the churchyard of St Bartholomew's church.

research which the material has generated. The old art historical preoccupations with consistency in record, analysis, comparison and dating, which CASSS has reflected, have come under fire from several directions in the last decade. For art historians its methods seemed too formalistic, whilst for iconographers and liturgists there was too little in-depth questioning as to ‘what does it mean?’. This last question has proved a particularly illuminating development in the study, as images have been interpreted with reference to the commentaries of the church fathers and the history of the liturgy. In addition, some historians and archaeologists have considered that there should have been more questioning as to how sculpture functioned within the political, cultural and spatial milieu of its time. The new studies in meaning have been most often concerned with the grander and earlier (seventh- to ninth-century) Northumbrian and Mercian monuments, where the figural scenes can be related to scriptural exegesis, and which seem to be individually produced by highly-trained stone masons. On the other hand, the questions of function, and the ‘ethnicity’ of sculptures, have been more focused on later monuments and secular involvement, especially in relation to the Viking Age monuments in Northumbria and parts of the Danelaw. These last mentioned stone monuments are more numerous, often more repetitive in their ornament, and seemingly carved in local workshops.

In both of the considerations of meaning, and function within context, there is variation through time as well as through view point, and I continue to believe that anything which assists the struggle to date these monuments is valuable – even essential – if judgements are not to be anachronistic. Context is temporal, as well as locational, involving social and political events, and both recorded patronage and random contacts – as well as the milieu of the carver. Meaning must be based on what was available knowledge in the mindset of the time, not just anything which might occur to a modern mind. But of course that involves knowing the time of production, and that is not an easy task given the lack of contemporary documentation.

Carvers in stone do not figure as important amongst the craftsmen recorded in pre-Conquest texts (Dodwell 1982, 109–22), and although there is the odd name of the ‘maker’, or the patron, on the stones, as well as the name of the one commemorated, no person named has an independent biography. It has then not proved possible to attribute a single piece of sculpture to the lifespan of a recorded artist or indeed his school or pupils, although sometimes it is possible to identify one hand on several monuments or a local grouping and this has been greatly aided by twentieth-century detailed analysis of units of measurement (Adcock, 1974; 1978) and compositional methods, as well as the attention given to more precise ascription to stone sources. We may get a *terminus post quem* from an archaeological site or documented standing structure, but these are rare opportunities. Nevertheless, sculpture is not as portable as metalwork or manuscripts, and its presence can often be a reliable demonstration of regional and local aspirations and achievements. As far as production is concerned there is a valid view that, in the period late seventh to ninth centuries, individual monastic houses, diocesan centres and royal patronage promoted focal points of production

for architectural sculptures and influential monumental crosses, which continued in Wessex up to the Conquest. Elsewhere, production seems to have become more localised, and with a wider lay patronage. As discussed further below, by the tenth to eleventh centuries it was seemingly the churchyards of the major estate centres which were marked by monuments, some of which were new forms associated with an increase in the opening up of quarries in the late pre-Conquest period.

In considering the religious meaning of sculptures, the way charted by scholars such as Shapiro (1944) has been followed enthusiastically in the last 20 years, particularly in relation to those few Anglo-Saxon sculptures which retain an important repertoire of figural scenes. For this Midland region, Bailey wrote in 1988 on 'The meaning of Mercian sculpture'; his approach has since then been followed in a series of articles by Jane Hawkes which have taken in the Peterborough/Breedon area, and as far west as Sandbach in Cheshire on the Mercian fringe (Hawkes, 2002). Both have, however, acknowledged their indebtedness to Éamon Ó Carragáin, who in 1978 advanced the subject substantially by an in-depth analysis of some details of the Ruthwell cross in Dumfriesshire. This is a richly complex monument, in which figural scenes on the two broad faces are combined with explanatory Latin inscriptions, and on the narrow faces inhabited vine-scrolls are surrounded by an Anglo-Saxon poem in runic script (Fig. 5). Ó Carragáin's work involved seeing the monument not just as a focus for instruction and devotion, but as an active participant in the liturgy of Holy Week and specifically Good Friday, so the figure of Christ over the beasts was linked with the canticle of Habbukuk (3.1–19), sung on that day 'between two living creatures you will become known' (Ó Carragáin 1986). Since then he has developed this view of the liturgical inculturation, demonstrated by that cross and Bewcastle in Cumbria (Fig. 6) in a number of papers, and finally in a substantial monograph (Ó Carragáin 2005).

These two monuments have been indeed the focus for a great deal of almost obsessive research, over the last decade or so, which has involved interpretation of the individual panels as separate images and as part of a whole programme (see bibliographies in Cassidy (ed.) 1992; and Orton, Wood and Lees 2007). The number of panels with female figures on Ruthwell indicated to Carol Farr that the context might have been a female monastery (Farr 1997), the significance of likeness and of difference between these two early eighth-century crosses, was explored by Fred Orton (Orton 1999). No-one would I think dispute the fact that each cross fulfilled different functions, even though (uniquely in the sculpture corpus) they replicated two figural panels and the inhabited plant scrolls. The Ruthwell cross is, however, outstanding as a vehicle for conveying a dense amount of Christian learning, teaching and spiritual energy, through its images and Latin inscriptions, and the famous runic poem – a meditation on the crucifixion – carved on the side panels. The site could have been a monastery, although this is so far unproven. At Bewcastle, pride of place is given to the long inscription on the west face (Fig. 6), which seems to record that the monument was put up by a group of people (possibly laymen) as a memorial to someone, probably a Northumbrian king. It is sited in a Roman fort which had an earlier association with the native

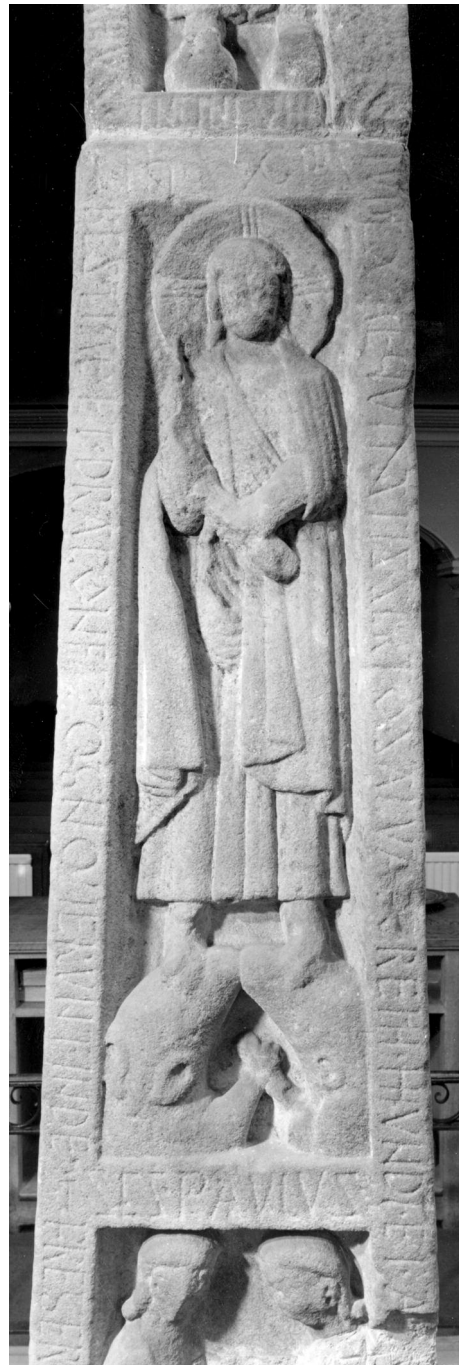


Fig. 5. Cast of the Ruthwell cross (Dumfriesshire) detail of Christ in Majesty and the monks Paul and Anthony.



Fig. 6. East and West faces of the Bewcastle cross (Cumbria).

god Coccidius, and although it also was probably surrounded by a religious community, the significance of the site as a centre of pre-Christian power also probably influenced its location. Both monuments were clearly designed from a centre with a deep knowledge of scriptural interpretation, and were commissioned and executed with specific purposes in mind, but so were all the sculptures of this period. Whether a monument served as an open-air iconostasis and focus for devotion and ritual, to establish boundaries, to christianise a pagan location, to commemorate a person or an event, or was raised to denote political power and status at an important focal site, is probably impossible now to determine, but it is likely that its context combined several of these factors. To understand the intention of those who raised these monuments and how far their programme fulfilled this is especially difficult when one only has fragments – and unfortunately complete monuments or architectural schemes which survive *in situ* are rare.

A group of crosses (some complete) in the Peak District at Eyam, Bakewell Wirksworth and Bradbourne (Fig. 7; and Hawkes 2007a, figs 24–7), along the Derwent valley, have been convincingly interpreted as coinciding with the boundary of the people known as the *Pecsaetan* (Sidebottom 1994, 226, fig. 17; Sidebottom 2000) and as marking out important estates. Nevertheless, they can also be seen to bear complex Christian messages and could be not only foci for devotion, but could have enhanced the message of Christian teaching in their



Fig. 7. The Bradbourne cross, Derbyshire.

region. Their images include the Crucifixion, Virgin and Child, saints and ecclesiastics, and most individually angels, and Jane Hawkes has concluded that 'these figural monuments were the products of a culturally and theologically sophisticated ecclesiastical milieu that wished to present themes expressly concerned with the Church and its pastoral role in the Christian community' (Hawkes 2007a, 448, figs 24–7).

The same could be said for the Northumbrian monuments already mentioned, but the style of carving of these Midland crosses is quite distinctive and very different from their close neighbours in Yorkshire, which also depict figures under honorific arches on the broad faces and plant scrolls on the narrow faces (Coatsworth 2008, Ills 166–9; 552–8). The Midland style of carving is flatter and more linear and derives from a different workshop tradition. It is interesting therefore that the same style of carving is found on a fragment from Great Glen, which is one of the few examples from Leicestershire of this type of devotional cross. As well as a defaced crucifixion, there is a panel with two figures which Bailey has interpreted as the raising of Lazarus, citing Church Fathers who saw the event as 'an example of the future resurrection' and 'the resurrection of the soul effected by faith' (Bailey 1988, 2–5). It is difficult to separate the drapery folds of the two figures, however, so as to be certain that the figure on the right is in grave clothes, and there is so little left of this scene that it could represent another miracle like the opening of the eyes of the man born blind, in the same way that there is ambiguity in a similar scene from Rothbury in Northumberland (Fig. 8: Rothbury and Glen Christ).

It is noteworthy, as Jill Bourne has shown (Bourne 1996), that there is good historical evidence for Glen to have been an important centre, the place where in AD 849 a charter records the Bishop of Worcester's donation of land to the Mercian king. It could have been the landholder (often the king) who commissioned monuments such as these, but the craftsmen as well as the designers could have come from an episcopal or monastic centre, which were the only contemporary centres commonly building in stone.

Whether such sculptures indicate the presence at that site of a religious community, an episcopal holding, or just an important central place, has been a matter of considerable recent debate, especially in relation to a later period after the Scandinavian settlement (Hadley and Richards (eds) 2000), but lay and ecclesiastical patronage acting together, as spelt out in the inscription at Bewcastle, or the lost inscription from Glastonbury, is something which seems to be a feature throughout the history of pre-Conquest sculpture (Cramp 2006a,70); and it could also apply in this region to later sculptures such as Rothley (Fig. 1) – which is an important royal manor and parish (McLoughlin 2007) – as well as to others discussed below.

New approaches to the interpretation of this sculpture are, it seems to me, not helpful if they consider there is a single solution to a monument's significance, and I share Shirley Alexander's commonsensical view: 'In visual art, when a subject has been selected, composed and appropriately placed on the cross, the meaning assigned to it, the message gained from it are entirely up to the viewer.' This view,



Fig. 8. Fragment from Great Glen and detail from the top of the shaft, Rothbury, Northumberland, showing The Raising of Lazarus, or the opening of the eyes of the man born blind.

she notes, is endorsed by Origen, and she goes on to state, what I think is now widely agreed, that interpretation on different levels, as found in biblical exegesis of the Early Christian world, depends on 'the biblical sophistication of the person making the interpretation'. Her concluding point is that 'the most important requirement for any image was that it be recognisable' (Alexander 1997, 107). She then lists the most easily identifiable episodes from the Old Testament as, for example, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, David composing the psalms or killing the lion, and Daniel in the lions' pit. A few more could be added such as Adam and Eve, with apple and serpent, or the three children in the fiery furnace. These 'help of God' scenes are the commonest Old Testament images on Anglo-Saxon crosses. Some of these scenes persist, carved with less classical skill, into the Viking Age, and it may be significant that they are often located where there had been an earlier religious centre. Dacre in Cumbria was, in the eighth century, an important monastic site, and even in the tenth century, after the Scandinavian settlement of that area, two scenes which are linked in scriptural exegesis – The Fall and the Sacrifice of Isaac – occur on a cross there (Fig. 9). These scenes are also found in Leicestershire on a cross from Breedon, which, like Dacre, was an early monastic site, and where its remarkable series of architectural carvings (see below) provide some of the most outstanding art in Mercia. The architectural sculptures are succeeded by crosses and grave covers in a different style of carving, but the combination of the two themes of Adam and Eve and the sacrifice of Isaac is an interesting comment on the biblical interest of the carvers or patrons. The interpretation of Isaac, as the Old Testament prototype for Christ as the sacrificial victim, has a long history in scriptural exegesis, and Christ's sacrifice was seen as redeeming the original sin of the Fall. As Bailey put it: 'Seen in this manner the juxtaposition of the two scenes at Breedon and Dacre provides a complete Christian statement of Fall and Salvation' (Bailey 1988, 10–12). This significance would not of course be appreciated at first sight by all viewers: for the recently converted the simplest messages from crosses, of the power, courage and love of Christ could have been meaning enough. Nevertheless, such monuments are an important pointer to the survival of Christian teaching in areas where earlier ecclesiastical structures had been disrupted.

The occurrences of Old Testament scenes on Anglo-Saxon crosses of the pre-Viking Age are very sparse compared with their occurrence on the Irish scripture crosses, and by far the most common figural images are of Christ in Majesty, his life and miracles as well as individual images of the Virgin, Saints and Angels. Often these are just iconic figures in their own frame or are rigidly divided in arcades, and in Mercia they occur not only on crosses, but as the decoration and fittings of churches. Panels, which served as devotional foci, depict the Virgin Mary (Fig. frontispiece), saints or angels, and these figures are replicated at Fletton (Fig. 10) and also on the sides of sarcophagi at Peterborough or Castor (Fig. 11). The form of the panels may be because such frames occurred in the sources of the images, such as wooden panels (icons) or manuscripts, but also in characterising the visual language of Anglo-Saxon art styles; a ground rule seems to be the imposition of a framework within which 'the visual language is

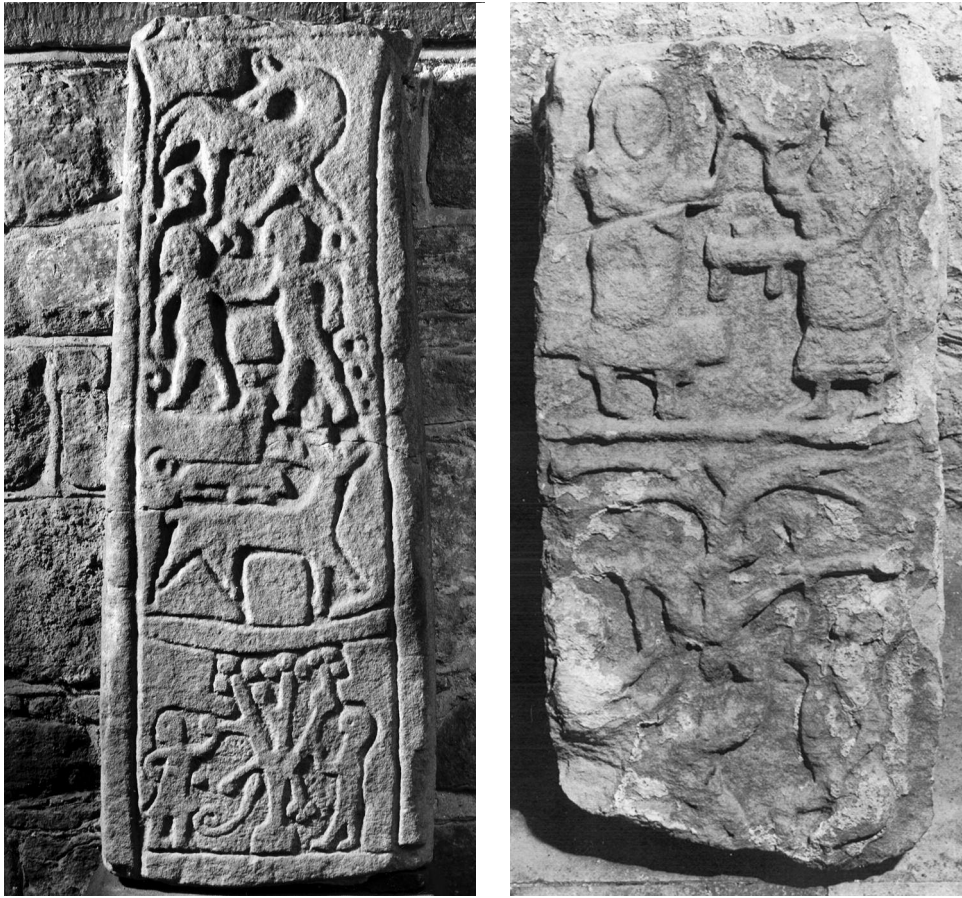


Fig. 9. Abraham and Isaac, and the Fall of Adam and Eve, from the crosses at Dacre (Cumberland) and Breedon (Leicestershire).

departmentalised according to various carefully observed hierarchies' (Webster 2003, 14). This type of ornamental division can apply in all media to the more common non-figural motifs such as plant scrolls and interlace, as is imaginatively shown in the Breedon friezes (Fig. 12). Traces of paint on newly excavated or well-preserved sculptures indicate that it was normal for sculptures to be coloured (Gem and Howe 2008), and Anglo-Saxon crosses could have been variously inspired, some by metal processional crosses, others by Roman funerary stele, or triumphal columns such as the Wolverhampton column (Kendrick 1938, Pl.LXXXVI). It is also of interest to remember that the very earliest Christian symbols the Anglo-Saxons would have encountered were the icon and the metal cross carried by Augustine and his party when they arrived as missionaries to Kent (Bede, *HE*. I. XXV), and that both forms persisted in stone throughout the pre-Conquest period.



Fig. 10. Panel with angel figure from Fletton.

A considerable amount of recent research has also been concerned with the functional location of stone crosses. Phil Sidebottom has stated that it ‘seems strange (although, admittedly, not impossible) that the first examples of Mercian free-standing monumental art in stone were restricted to a marginal region of such a great kingdom and not displayed at its principal centres such as Tamworth, Lichfield (Staffs) or Repton (Derbys)’ (Sidebottom 2000, 215–16). What may be distinctive of such centres, however, could be the architecture of their churches,



Fig. 11. Ecclesiastic or Apostle figure, probably from a shrine or sarcophagus from Castor.

their decoration and fittings – as certainly is the case at Repton – and the remarkable group of figural panels and friezes (mentioned above), centred on Peterborough, and reflected at Breedon, Castor and Fletton, with, most recently, the sculptured shrine at Lichfield (Rodwell *et al.* 2008). The style of these panels, sarcophagi and friezes were something totally new in Anglo-Saxon art, and I



Fig. 12. Breedon friezes.

reiterate my earlier view that they demonstrate patronage at the highest level involving the introduction of not only new images, but different ways of cutting and carving from anything seen before. The figural styles have been clearly influenced by late antique images, and the depictions of the exotic birds and beasts, which seem to be inspired by East Christian art (Cramp 1977; Jewell 1986 and 2001), combine with the abstract indigenous art which is also fine-drawn and deeply cut. The heads at the end of the friezes at Breedon are unique, and could be an early example of including the patrons of this work (Figs 12 or 13). The most recent and substantial discussion of these remarkable carvings has considered them in relation to the Lichfield Angel, as mentioned above. The angel carving on this painted panel from a sarcophagus is probably nearer to classical prototypes than anything else in the Midlands, but whether Lichfield or Peterborough was the centre for production of this and the Breedon group is uncertain.

In discussing the location and context of major crosses, one should note how often in the seventh to ninth centuries they are in liminal positions: Ruthwell and Bewcastle, mentioned above, are on the borders of the Anglo-Saxon and British provinces in the seventh to eighth centuries, and this applies also to outstanding sculpture on the Northumbrian frontier with Picts in the north – such as Abercorn and Aberlady. As already pointed out, the Peak District crosses of *c.* AD 800 are located on the borders of Northumbria and Mercia, and Sidebottom has pointed out other groupings in the Midlands which border on other territories (Sidebottom 2000, fig. 16).

Discussion of boundaries or borders is now a current preoccupation in archaeology, and crosses as well as barrows can signify territorial power as well as ideological statement. Some major monuments may have marked the limits of monastic boundaries, as in Ireland (Turner 2003, 188), and some defined sanctuary, but there is also evidence, particularly in the tenth to eleventh centuries, that a single cross in a churchyard (usually to the south of the church) could have been raised as a signification of lay status and territorial control, possibly, as suggested for the excavated site at Raunds (Northants), marking the 'founder's' grave (Boddington 1996, 67). We usually do not know who the landowner was at the time a monument was raised, but its presence points to the importance of the site. Nevertheless, there are inter-leavings of power, and many monasteries were also royal possessions and at focal border centres, as I have discussed in relation, for example, to Glastonbury or Bath (Cramp 2006a, 141). Such monuments were then a useful tool for a variety of interests: they are meant to impress and to influence, perhaps also converting the viewer to new ways of Christian understanding.

Finally mention should be made of another type of memorial, the recumbent slab or grave cover, which was particularly common in the East Midlands and East Anglia in the tenth to eleventh centuries. From the first acceptance of Christianity, long-tapering grave covers were common on the continent, although not in England. In Northumbria in the seventh to eighth centuries small rectangular memorial stones are found, often on monastic sites, ornamented with geometric incised crosses, but similar slabs with relief crosses became more

common, and the crosses on these can be distinctive in form, relating site to site, as in those which link Wearmouth / Jarrow, Lindisfarne and Hartlepool, or Whitby and Hackness in Yorkshire. Often though there is not enough evidence from sites to make such links. Plain grave covers with central crosses occur sporadically throughout the pre-Conquest period, but from the late eighth to early ninth centuries the most elaborate seem to indicate a high status for a grave and to reflect the stylistic fashions of the age. For example, it is in the context of the great ecclesiastical sites in Wessex, such as Bath, Wells, or Gloucester, that one finds grave covers decorated with acanthus ornament closely allied to the ornamentation of tenth-century manuscripts (West 1993). Despite some opinions to the contrary, I do think that there are period fashions of ornament, and the Gloucester pieces having been excavated in a stratified context support this view.

There was clearly a lot of experimentation in Anglo-Saxon monuments, as well as (as already discussed) varieties of function. Inscriptions show that many were commemorative, but those with figural ornament could serve as foci for private devotion or public liturgy; and of course the cross form itself had sufficient depth of meaning to serve this function without the images. However, was there any reflection of iconoclasm in England – for example, in those monuments which were solely decorated with vegetal or interlace ornament? This is probably an unanswerable question, but the vine-scroll could, with its Christological and Eucharistic symbolism, be as potent a source of devotion as a figure. Recently Carol Neuman de Vegvar has proposed additional interpretations, such as that crosses with vine-scroll ornament could be seen as ‘weather crosses’, protecting against bad weather, or be involved as stations in rogation processions (2007, 410–26). But does acanthus ornament support a similar weight of possible interpretation? It is possible that this ornament endorses a link with a classical past, but its playful variation in Anglo-Saxon art is very unclassical, and most likely it is a period fashion which is mainly current (in all forms of sculpture) in the greater West Saxon kingdom, but is remotely reflected into the Midlands in features such as the tendrilled scrolls surrounding the Christ in Majesty on the Asfordby cross.

Does the choice of decoration tell us anything about the context of patronage? This is a much discussed, but actually poorly understood, feature. Crosses with just vine/plant scrolls or animal and interlace could signify different types of affiliation, either between organisations and their beliefs or a class of person. I have recently suggested that the group of Wessex crosses with interlaced reptiles signified lay affiliation, and may indeed have been influenced by the renewed contacts with Scandinavian art in the Viking Age (Cramp 2006a, 71–2).

Indeed, how much influence and cross fertilisation there was between Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian art has been a longstanding preoccupation in these studies (see Lang 1978; Bailey 1980, 67–74). And when remembering Alexander’s ‘clearly recognisable images’, some of the great unsolved problems concern how the new Scandinavian Christians of the ninth to eleventh centuries interpreted the figures they saw on earlier sculptures and whether non-biblical figures were also to be found on sculptures before the Viking Age, as they were later. Certainly,

non-biblical figures are difficult to identify before the early ninth century, when persons in what could be contemporary secular dress appear, for example, at York and Urswick, Cumbria (Bailey and Cramp 1988, 150), but by the tenth century there are many figures in non-classical dress and a wider range of imagery on tenth-century monuments in the areas of Scandinavian settlement. What was new and what was inherited? How did the stone monuments reflect the new contexts? In the past, crosses with Anglo-Scandinavian ornament were mapped to chart the direction and density of Scandinavian settlement, but most of these monuments reflect an amalgamation of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon art forms, which seem appropriate for the fusion of cultures which is now considered the norm. Within the Danelaw and Northumbria there does seem to be more localised production at this period, the content of which could be a reflection of lay taste amongst the new Anglo-Scandinavian elite, but this could have been a process already begun in the early ninth century.

The identification of new patronage has been given added impetus recently; for example, David Stocker in his discussion of the standardised stone grave covers of the tenth to eleventh centuries, particularly in Lincolnshire, has seen these as proclaiming the new Scandinavian elite minority (Stocker 2000). These covers reflect the new mass productions of the quarries along the Barnack outcrops in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and their forms and distributions have been re-evaluated by Everson and Stocker (1999, 27–62), providing new classifications and distributions. The distribution of these monuments extends westwards into Leicestershire; for example, at Harston (Fig. 3). The earlier Kesteven group is only known at Stathern, built into the base of the tower, whilst the Fenland grave-cover type is found at Redmile (Fig. 13), and at Raunds, Peterborough Cathedral and Barnack. Examples of the South Kesteven cross shaft group (which is a group which spans the Conquest) are found at Helpston, Longthorpe and Sproxton (Fig. 4). Sproxton is an important site and it is worth noting that if it is the seat of the new elite landholders there is no evidence for Scandinavian ornament on its cross. The leaping animal on its broad face derives from the indigenous Anglian tradition found on earlier crosses such as Derby or Breedon (Cramp 1977, 229, fig. 63).

Stocker tellingly contrasts the new types of monument in areas where there has not been much stone sculpture before with those monuments in an area such as York, where the new patrons modified existing monument types to signify a takeover of lay power (Stocker 2000, 192–7). His suggestion that the archbishop of York may have exercised influence here (together with the new rulers), to use monuments to convey conversion messages, seems reasonable in the light of other evidence for dual power such as the coinage of York.

Several other authors in *Cultures in Contact* (Hadley and Richards (eds) 2000) attest the value of sculpture for considering the inter-relationships of natives and incoming Scandinavians, and the process of acculturation, including the Christianisation, of the Vikings. Hadley considers the complexities which underlie the ways in which the new Scandinavian lords established their authority and integrated themselves into English society, whilst the difficulties of understanding the nature and processes of conversion in the Danelaw have been tellingly



Fig. 13. Redmile grave cover.

explored by Lesley Abrams. In addition, in a series of essays in *The Cross Goes North* (Carver (ed.) 2003), conversion processes are considered across northern Europe.

That sculptures were used in the process of conversion is not a new idea, but more recent discussion of their ‘biographies’ and active lives throughout time has widened their context of influence. John Moreland (1999, 198), in discussing the vicissitudes in the history of the Bradbourne cross (Fig. 7), asserts that ‘it is now commonly accepted monuments like people have biographies’; and ‘crosses not only had lives of their own but directly affected the lives and after lives of those who created them or venerated them’. I would agree with the latter half of that statement but not the former – ‘lives of their own’ – or that the material world of the past was actively embroiled in the production and reproduction of social relationships. It may be old-fashioned to see monuments as more passive, but, to me, ‘biographies’ can only belong to living organisms, and it is human behaviour that shapes, reshapes and interprets monuments, and, indeed, Moreland’s examples do not contradict this view. Citing the destruction of crosses in the edicts of the sixteenth century, he sees this as a desire to destroy the past. The same could be said for the destruction of monuments built into walls of medieval churches, or, as at Jarrow, for the arm of an Anglo-Saxon cross used for the edging of Norman drains (Cramp 2006b, 199). The re-use of Roman stones in Anglo-Saxon churches has been interpreted by some as a desire to embrace the Roman heritage, but it is just as likely the builders wished to transform the Roman past or even to dismiss it as irrelevant. Unless there is documentary evidence, it is difficult to decide between the possible attitudes to memorials of the past, which can include the outright wish to obliterate, to transform their meaning into something relevant to the present, or to dismiss them as valueless.

The concentration on meaning and context in recent studies has indeed enlarged and enriched the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, and encouraged wider

speculation. Some of the new approaches were opened up by simple changes in nomenclature – often taken over from post-modernist archaeology – and, in this money-conscious age, we consider ‘investment’ in sculpture, and quantify investment of effort, as in a recent article when Megan Gondek considered resources invested in stone as symbolic capital, and created a weighted system to compare the relative investment of time and production skills in a group of Scottish sculptures (Gondek 2006). The results are interesting, but she admits that the foundation for dating (and so valid comparison) is the relative chronology as defined elsewhere ‘by art historical methods’.

Speculation is fun. Asking questions is fun, but speculations have to be based on a solid foundation, which can take a long time to construct. Moreover, some questions are unanswerable, and this has to be admitted. In truth, we still know very little about the processes of production, or how stone sculptures were viewed and valued in their time. Their dating is precarious, but the sheer quantity of evidence which can be reasonably closely located can give hope for the future, and new finds from excavations can change perceptions considerably, as the recent discovery of the colourful Lichfield angel has demonstrated. It is not surprising that major ecclesiastical sites are often marked out by high-quality monuments, or indeed that some impressive crosses may identify focal lay sites. Crosses still provide the greatest body of evidence for Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, but in the future it may be more widely demonstrated that the highest quality of carving was not on crosses, but internal sculptures such as the shrines which are often mentioned in the literature of the time, but are rare survivals despite the recently discovered examples at Congresbury (Cramp 2006a, Ills. 214–20) or Lichfield. As more excavation takes place in and around churches, it may be from the remnants of their rich and colourful interiors that we will obtain the most exciting new evidence of the achievement of Anglo-Saxon carvers.

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