

A Study of the Grotesque 14th-Century Sculpture at Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell in its Architectural Context

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SUMMARY

The churches of Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell, all lying within a four-mile radius of Banbury, share in common a very unusual collection of 14th-century sculpture representing animals, monsters, men, symbols and foliage. This rich display, cut onto capitals, corbel tables and doorways, has long caused these churches to be associated. But because the sculpture itself can tell us comparatively little, this study has attempted to look at it in its architectural context, an approach which provides grounds for attributing, dating, accounting for and interpreting it.

The work is divided into five sections: the first three constitute a detailed study of the 14th-century parts of the three respective buildings. Through this I have attempted to date the fabric (and hence the sculpture) of the churches, where possible to establish the names of patrons, and to prove that the sculpture was executed by local masons, active elsewhere, over a period of at least forty years. The fourth section seeks to trace the possible origins for this kind of sculptural display in local architectural models, in particular in shrine architecture and Merton College chapel in Oxford. A fifth and final section considers the possible importance and meaning of the sculpture to its patrons and its contemporary audience.

ADDERBURY

Saint Mary's church at Adderbury (Fig. 3) is one of the largest parish churches in Oxfordshire. It consists of a nave with two wide aisles, transepts, a chancel and a western tower (Fig. 1). The earliest surviving parts of the church are the transepts and the nave arcades which belonged to a 13th-century church on the site. These were incorporated into the subsequent remodelling of the church over the first half of the 14th century – the period that is the subject of this study. Later in the 14th century a clerestory was added to the nave and transepts¹ and between 1408 and 1419 a magnificent new chancel and vestry were constructed. Neither of these later additions will be considered here.

This account has been divided into three sections. The first describes the church and outlines the stages in its development, the second provides an analysis of the sculpture and architectural detail and the third will use this to establish a chronology for the building.

¹ As is obvious from their style and from a masonry break visible in early photographs taken before the arcade was partially plastered this century. The fine roof contemporary with the clerestory also survives.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH

The Church in c. 1300

The exact lay-out of the existing church c. 1300 has been largely obscured by subsequent alterations. That the building had aisles is shown by the present 13th-century north and south nave arcades, each of four arches and with plain moulded capitals. The transepts of this church also survive and although much altered, fragments of their original elevation – a plainly moulded 13th-century blind arcade and infilled lancet windows – can still be seen. There must have been a chancel, but all trace of this has disappeared.

The 14th-century Church

Over the first half of the 14th century this existing church was extensively remodelled in a series of distinct building campaigns. These began with the construction of the western tower with a spire set within the parapet and surrounded by four pinnacles.² This was incorporated into the existing proportions of the church by rebuilding the westernmost arches of the 13th-century arcades with a narrower span and interlaying their masonry with that of the new tower.³

Shortly after this two new aisles were built, first the south and then the north. Each aisle has its own door and porch and their masonry abuts, but does not bond into, that of the tower or either of the transepts. These follow an unusual plan: at the eastern end of both aisles, in place of the western walls of the transepts, is a column with an elaborately carved capital which supports two arches (Fig. 4). This design gives a clue as to the church's interior organization in the 14th century. Facing into the nave on a line with these arches are a pair of corbel heads. It seems probable that these originally carried a screen and that the arches at the east ends of the aisles therefore formed part of a continuous east-west division across the full breadth of the church.

At the same time as the aisles were rebuilt the 13th-century transepts were remodelled. The jamb mouldings of the windows in the south transept are similar to those in the 14th-century aisle (Fig. 2.vi-ix) and this fact would suggest that it was remodelled coevally with it. The details of the north transept however have been obscured by 15th and 19th-century alterations, but the nature of all the various changes to it are clearly visible in the contrasting styles of masonry on the exterior of the building: during the 14th-century new windows were inserted and the pitch of the roof altered. If it was not already the case, the transepts were now used as chapels as the double piscina in south transept and the aumbry in the north transept show.

The arches at the east end of the aisles with their carved capital heads must have formed the entrances to these transept chapels and it is interesting to note in this respect that the north aisle's column bears on its western side the remains of a statue niche carved onto it (Fig. 4) in a manner reminiscent of a trumeaux figure on a large portal. This may indicate that the north chapel was dedicated to a particular saint, as may the female figures carved on the capital (see section 5). The south transept is described as a chapel in antiquarian sources and the considerable quantity of 14th-century heraldic glass may suggest that it served as a family chantry or chapel.⁴ If this was the case the capital is aptly carved in the form of knights with entwined arms (Fig. 5).

² This form has several local parallels including Witney and Bampton though these lack the carved frieze which is found below the parapet on all the faces of the tower at Adderbury.

³ H. Gepp, *Adderbury* (Banbury 1924), 23, explained the existence of this narrow western bay otherwise. He argued that the church arcades were rebuilt and widened in the 14th century, but that the western bay – for some unstated reason – preserved its narrower 13th-century dimensions. The illogicality of this, not to speak of the complexities and inconveniences of such an operation, make this interpretation seem very unlikely to me as does the practical consideration of the interlaid masonry with the later tower.

⁴ For example Bodl. MS. Rawl. b.397, f. 314, which contains notes of a visitation made on 12 December 1659.

THE 14TH-CENTURY WORK

The 14th-century building work employs two types of local stone: a red ironstone and a lighter sandstone. All its carved elements – the doorways, window mouldings, the one surviving fragment of original tracery and all the sculpture – are executed in the lighter stone. The walls are built from the ironstone though blocks of the lighter sandstone do occasionally appear in them.

The Window Tracery

Apart from the intersecting tracery in the tower,⁵ all the window tracery in the church was cut out during a celebrated dispute between the rector and wardens over financial liability for repairs in the late 18th century. What exists today – with the exception of the window frames which seem in the main to be original – is the result of an ingenious reconstruction by Sir George Gilbert Scott in the 1860s.⁶

I have not been able to discover any drawings of the church before its tracery was destroyed and the only reliably authentic window is in the south aisle (window 4).⁷ It includes a fragment of original tracery with the head of Christ carved in the centre of a wheel (Fig. 9b). Scott reconstructed this using an almost identical surviving window in the north aisle at Bloxham (Fig. 22) as his model. The form is so unusual and, as I hope to demonstrate, the two churches so closely connected, that this reconstruction is certainly accurate. Stylistic comparisons with Bloxham, which will be discussed in the section on that church, suggest that this fragment has also been correctly replaced in the south aisle where it originally stood.

The sculpture

The most remarkable surviving features of the 14th-century decoration are the richly carved exterior corbel tables or friezes which run below the parapet along the exterior of the north face of the north aisle, the south face of the south aisle and on each face of the tower. Each frieze is distinct in its style and subject matter. The tower frieze (Fig. 6, 7, 8 and appendix) is decorated with robustly carved heads, grotesques, ballflower and animals. Its western face has been badly weathered. The south aisle frieze (Fig. 9) carries sculptures of flowers, monsters, symbols and an unidentified coat of arms in bastardized heraldry: a 'W' with what appears to be an abbreviation mark stylized into a crozier shape above it set in a border bezanty (Fig. 9d second from the right). These carvings have been deeply undercut and are far more vigorous than those on the north aisle frieze which carries a sequence of monsters and musicians (Fig. 10). Set in this sequence on the north aisle is a scene of the Coronation of the Virgin (which is carved as part of a window hood) (Fig. 10c) and St. Giles protecting the hart from a hunter (a sequence of three figures: from left to right an archer, a dog scratching its ear, and St. Giles with the hart and an arrow in his knee (Fig. 10b)).

The north and south porches also have more modest friezes of heads and ballflowers set in their east and west walls only. In the south porch there remains the broken base of a column with a head carved

⁵ Visible in several early drawings and etchings, for example in Buckler's drawings at the Bodleian, MS. Top. Oxon. a.65, no. 29 (of 1802).

⁶ *Victoria County History, Oxfordshire*, ix, 35.

⁷ Gepp (op. cit. note. 3, 24) says the restoration of the tracery was based on a drawing of the church which predated the loss of the windows. But he had not seen the picture and does not specify what side of the church it showed. For the purposes of argument therefore it must be assumed that all the designs, excepting window 4's, are modern.

on each corner of its base. This is probably the remains of what Skelton noted in the early 19th century:

On the east side of the north and south entrances to the side aisles is a short pillar at each entrance, enriched with gothic tracery . . . they do not appear to have supported any vessel to contain holy water.⁸

Perhaps these were pedestals for statues.

THE DIFFERENT BUILDS IN THE CHURCH

The use of such unusual decorations – carved capitals and exterior corbel tables – has led to the conventional wisdom that the tower and aisles are of one conception and build. This is certainly not the case and the sum of textual, stylistic and fabric evidence shows that the building work was under way over a period of about thirty years.

As already noted, the aisles, the tower and nave arcades, and the transepts are structurally independent of one another as their masonry does not bond together. Inspection of their fabric shows that they are constructed in very different ways: the south aisle uses small blocks of ashlar, the north transept larger ones and the tower quite massive stones (Figs. 6, 9b, 10c). In a craft tradition such as medieval masonry, it is very unlikely that a structure like a wall should be executed in different ways by the same workmen without good reason. The implication is that these structures were erected by different workmen, presumably at different times – a conclusion substantiated by other features in the building.

A plan of the external string courses and base profiles also shows that the tower and the two aisles each have their own distinct plinth mouldings (Fig. 1). Other details of the work in the different parts of the church also contrast. The tower has heavy intersecting tracery in the bell openings and the west door has three plain, piled wave mouldings – a form unique in the church and extremely rare in the locality (Fig. 2.v).⁹ The style of the aisles is more delicate than that of the tower, and their details are distinct from one another too: the south and north window inner jamb mouldings are different, as are their porches and portals. The north portal (Fig. 15) is lavishly decorated in a manner reminiscent of East Anglian Decorated architecture of the 1330s and '40s – for example the choir bays at Ely, probably completed by 1337.¹⁰ The choir arcades at Ely are decorated with squares of foliage in a similar manner, and also have continuous mouldings set between orders of columns – a feature suggested, though not actually carried to conclusion, on the jambs and lower arch mouldings at Adderbury. A further general comparison might be drawn between the ogee niches and castellated corbels concealing the transition between the different mouldings of the jambs and arch on the portal, and the 'tabernacles' applied to the responds of the Octagon at Ely (1322–8)¹¹ which serve the same purpose or the figures set within ogees and applied to the arch mouldings on the Prior's Doorway at Norwich (c. 1330).¹² The north porch doorway has a double wave moulding with lips very shallowly cut into it (this is not a sunk chamfer) (Fig. 2.xii). In contrast, the south portal lacks this wealth of applied foliage and figural decoration, and its porch doorway has a bold double wave separated by a three-quarters hollow (Fig. 2.xiii).

⁸ J. Skelton, *The Antiquities of Oxfordshire* (1823), Bloxham Hundred, 2. Objects he observes 'interesting in an antiquarian point of view, as subjects concerning which information is desirable'.

⁹ R. Morris, 'Development of Later Gothic Mouldings in England c.1250–1400, Part I', *Architectural History*, 21 (1978), 23. Morris records no instances of this form in the area. I must acknowledge the help of Linda Monckton in helping to check some of my work on the profiles in this and in all the other churches. All errors however are my own.

¹⁰ N. Coldstream, 'Ely Cathedral: the 14th-century work', *British Arch. Assoc. Conference Trans.* ii (1979), 28.

¹¹ The stone structure was completed by this date: *ibid.* 28.

¹² E. Fernie & A. Whittingham, *Columnar Rolls of Norwich Cathedral Priory* (Norfolk Rec. Soc. 1972, xli), 33.

These contrasts in the architectural details of the two aisles are underscored by the differences between their sculptural decoration. The external friezes of the two aisles are markedly different in style and subject matter,¹³ as are the internal aisle capitals: the rather stiff south aisle capital with its four knights versus the north aisle's capital with its four female faces framed by deeply undercut foliage (Figs. 4 and 5). The columns on which they stand also have distinct mouldings (Fig. 2.i & ii).

The 14th-century Chancel

Although the existing chancel has destroyed all trace of any older structure, the old chancel arch does survive – its double chamfered moulding clearly does not match the Perpendicular style of the present chancel. Judging from the rubble outline of the 13th-century church's gables, still visible in the transepts, this chancel arch would have been far too large to belong to that building, so it must have been built in the 14th century. The capitals of the chancel arch are carved in the unusual form of a head biting the top of the column (Fig. 11). This motif is also found on the tower at Bloxham (Fig. 12) which, as will be argued, probably dates to the 1340s. This probably dates the chancel arch to about this time.

Dating the different builds

(a) The Tower

The spire and tower at Adderbury share many striking details with the smaller spire of Broughton church about six miles away (Fig. 13). Both use the unusual form (for the locality) of piled wave mouldings in their western doorways (Fig. 18.v),¹⁴ have heavy intersecting window tracery, and a decorated corbel-table which, where not worn away, can be seen to employ many identical decorative motifs in the same relative positions.¹⁵ As will emerge over the course of this study, Bloxham, Broughton and Adderbury all had masons in common, and using Broughton it is possible to date Adderbury tower.

Broughton Church. The church at Broughton comprises a nave, chancel, south aisle and western tower. All but the earlier nave arcade is of 14th-century date, and though the chancel may have been built slightly later than the rest of the church, the nave, aisle and tower appear to belong to one period of construction – there is a single form of string course surrounding the whole building and there are no apparent breaks in the masonry.¹⁶ Also elements of the mouldings and a tracery pattern in the 14th-century windows on both sides of the church match one another.¹⁷

¹³ There is one possible exception to this: the monster on the south aisle (Fig. 9b) and the bat on the north (Fig. 10b, to the left of the hurdy-gurdy player) have very similar faces. As will become apparent in the discussion of Bloxham, these aisles may well have been worked on by some of the same masons.

¹⁴ Cf. footnote 9.

¹⁵ There is still clearly visible on the east face of Broughton tower, which is the only part still reasonably preserved, a chained bear and a figure with a shield. These motifs appear in exactly the same relative positions at Adderbury (Fig. 6). The Broughton tower is too small however ever to have had an identical sequence of sculpture to Adderbury's.

¹⁶ There is a break between the tower and the main body of the church but this is probably for reasons of settlement and is very unlikely to be connected with a different building campaign – the string course around the tower and the size and laying of the masonry is consistent with that in the rest of the church.

¹⁷ The windows on the north side of the nave, like the west window on the south aisle, have a roll and fillet moulding but the fillet has not been cut away on the inner face to make it stand proud (Fig. 18.iii and iv). The aisle and nave also share tracery patterns: an intersecting tracery window with inserted trefoils is common to the three-light windows in the aisle and a two-light window in the nave. The window of the nave may be a restoration and there are no good drawings from the north side to prove that it follows its original pattern. However it does not look new, and Buckler's drawings of the church in 1822 and 1805 (Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 65, nos. 122 and Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 38, f. 19) show the aisle windows have preserved their original tracery patterns through the restoration so it probably is reliable, if not original.

Certain details of the church demonstrate that the masons responsible for it were also engaged in work on the castle in the village which was being undertaken by a certain John de Broughton, presumably after he was granted right of warren in Broughton in 1301.¹⁸ This gives a *terminus ante quem* for the work on the church. De Broughton died in 1315 and his heir was a minor. There was a violent dispute over his wardship which probably intensified the habitually ruthless exploitation of minority lands typical of the period.¹⁹ As a result, until he came of age between 1322 and 1327²⁰ there could have been no building work under way. That the church is built in a single style demonstrates that the work was not interrupted by the minority; in other words that it must have been completed before his father's death in 1315.

Considering the complexity of the archaeology of the castle, which has still not been fully resolved, this argument may seem oversimplified, but there are two pieces of corroborative evidence for this dating. The first is simply the style of the building – the absence of ogees in the window tracery and the occurrence of intersecting and Y-tracery. Though such forms do not preclude a date after 1315, they would fit more comfortably before it than in the 1320s when the minority ended.²¹ The second piece of evidence is an elaborate early 14th-century tomb of a knight built into the south wall of the south aisle. There is a strong case for regarding this as John de Broughton's tomb (Fig. 14). If this is so, taking the minority into account, the church must have been completed to receive it before his death.

That the figure is a de Broughton is shown by the family emblazon cut onto the knight's shield, so the only other realistic contender for the tomb is John de Broughton's son (ob. 1346).²² There is both stylistic and heraldic evidence which would support an attribution of this tomb to John de Broughton (i.e. pre-1315) and I will deal with both separately.

Certain features of the effigy compare with London tombs of the late 13th and early 14th centuries such as that of Edmund Crouchback (ob. 1296) in Westminster Abbey: the figure is cross-legged with the hands pressed together in prayer, and the head is supported on cushions held by awkwardly poised angels. The plain attire of the figure – dressed simply in mail and knee cops with a long surcoat – was becoming increasingly uncommon through the 1320s and 30s and would suggest, though not prove, a dating in the first quarter of the century.²³

The same could be said of the canopy of the tomb. Its essential design – an arch flanked by pinnacles – was popular from the late 13th century onwards; as was the habit of cusping and sub-cusping of the main canopy arch – an example of this can again be seen on the tomb of Edmund Crouchback. Unlike most tombs of this period however it has a crocketed ogee hood, rather than a crocketed gable, over the canopy arch. This crocketed ogee hood, though more generally found on tombs in the 1330s and 1340s, was also current earlier; for example on the tomb of Bishop Simon de Ghent (ob. 1315) at Salisbury or the tomb of Sir Richard de Stapledon (ob. 1320) at Exeter. Both these examples however set the ogee hood over an ogee arch, not over a plain one as at Broughton, and the closest parallels for this are in earlier architecture – for example on the exterior of Wells Chapter house (1290s–1307),²⁴ though there is actually no need to look so far afield – a similar combination appears on the west door of the tower at Broughton church itself.

¹⁸ H. Gordon-Slade, 'Broughton Castle, Oxfordshire', *Archaeological Journal*, 135 (1978), 146. I am also indebted to Dr. Richard Morris for pointing out that the inner moulding of a 14th-century window jamb in the Queen Anne Room shares an unusual internal polygonal moulding with the east window of the south aisle (Fig. 18.i). Linda Monckton and he have also been very generous with their detailed knowledge of the castle. Bodl. MS. Dugdale 11, f. 156, records a donor figure wearing the de Broughton arms in the glass of the south aisle. For John's military career see C. Moor, *Knights of Edward I pt 1* (Harleian Society, lxxx, 1929), 152.

¹⁹ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vi, 207–8.

²⁰ Ibid and *V.C.H. Oxon.* ix, p. 87. He probably only came of age toward the later date because after the execution of his first guardian Thomas, earl of Lancaster in 1322, John was still sufficiently young for the other competitors to consider it worth their while to renew the legal squabble over the wardship.

²¹ J. Bony, *The English Decorated Style* (1979), 11 and 63.

²² *V.C.H. Oxon.* ix, 88.

²³ C. Blair, *European Armour* (London 1958), chapters I and II.

²⁴ P. Draper, 'The sequence and dating of the decorated work at Wells', *B.A.A.C.T.* iv (1981), 19.

This combination of ogee and plain arch is quite unusual and the Broughton tomb also mixes the forms (plain and ogee) in the sub-cusping of the canopy arch where the reverse curves of the ogees have been reduced to a mere tip. Ogees appear in tomb architecture from the 1290s onwards (for example one of the earliest uses can be seen on the tomb of Archbishop Peckham (ob. 1292) in Canterbury) and their form was to become increasingly intrusive and exaggerated over the first half of the 14th century. Its use at Broughton alongside plain arches, and its modest form, might suggest a relatively early date: arches with such ogee 'tips' can be seen on the work of Kentish masons in the first two decades of the 14th century – for example on Prior Eastry's screen at Canterbury (1304–5)²⁵ – or in other early court-connected work, the tracery at Wells chapter house.

These architectural sources would also provide precedents for other details on the tomb. A band of castellations and trefoils along the top of Prior Eastry's screen at Canterbury for example is probably generically related to that of castellations and quatrefoils at Broughton, and the use of angled pinnacles can also be seen on the stalls of at the chapter house at Wells or on the tomb chest of Eleanor of Castille (1291–3) at Westminster.²⁶

Examples of these features are comparatively rare in England so it is worth pointing out that angled pinnacles and micro-architectural crenellations can also be found locally in the 1290s. The former appear at Great Haseley in South Oxfordshire on the elaborate piscina, sedilia and tomb in the chancel. By their date [see below, footnote 27] and form the Great Haseley furnishings would seem to show a direct knowledge of the contemporary work at Merton College Chapel in Oxford with whose piscina, sedilia and priest's door they share a very unusual and distinctive moulding (three miniature quadrants with flanking fillets separated by hollows). Merton's furnishings have polygonal rather than angled pinnacles, but possess a crenellated parapet very similar to the Broughton tomb. I would like to draw particular attention to this connection because Merton is a building of especial importance in this study subsequently.²⁷

²⁵ *The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200–1400*, ed J. Alexander and P. Binski (Royal Academy Exhibition Catalogue 1987) (cat. no. 17), 207.

²⁶ By angled pinnacles I mean pinnacles revolved at 45° to the plane of the wall so that a corner juts out. As far as I can see this arrangement only became common in England from the mid 1320s onwards in England; more usually at this date the outer face of the pinnacle was parallel to the wall.

²⁷ For a full discussion of Merton and its importance see section 4. I am very grateful to Tim Ayers for pointing the similarity of moulding between the furnishings at Great Haseley and Merton out to me. The tracery of these buildings is also very similar: the east window at Great Haseley – five lights and a roundel in the head filled with three cusped spherical triangles (restored but accurately so, cf. Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 67, no. 302 for a pre-restoration drawing) – is closely comparable to tracery at Merton. (The general similarities of this form are discussed in section 4, where this overall design of window recurs in connection with Merton in about 1320 at Wellingborough, Northants.). But the Great Haseley east window also shares several distinctive details with Merton's great east window: intersecting tracery patterns to the sides of the central roundel; trefoil daggers filling the spaces between the springs of the arches of the main lights; and the main lights having tracery set within each head – in this case trefoil cusping pushed up against a trefoil. For its close relationship with Merton as well as for its rich and curious detailing the chancel at Great Haseley undoubtedly deserves greater attention than I can give it here. My dating to the 1290s is suggested both by the style of the work (for example the absence of ogees in the tracery); its close similarity in detail to Merton, roofed in 1296/7; and by the heraldic evidence of the lost glass in the east window (see F.N. Davis, *Parochial Collections of Oxfordshire* (Oxford Record Society, ii, iv, xi; 1920), 169). Amongst the arms which appear are those of the Pippards (Argent, two bars on a canton of the second a cinquefoil or). Sir Ralph Pippard was granted right of free warren in Great Haseley in 1284 which he held from the Earl of Cornwall, and in turn granted it, and the advowson of the church away on 5 June 1301. No claim to it is mentioned in the inquisition at his death. (C. Moor, op. cit. note 18, part 4, p. 72–3). There also appeared the arms of the Earl of Cornwall (Argent, a lion rampant gules with a border sable bezanty – arms disused after the death of the last of this line of the earls in 1308), presumably to celebrate the feudal connection with the Pippards; and the arms of Castille (probably for Eleanor of Castille, ob. 1290). The dating and sum of architectural similarities might suggest that masons from Merton actually worked at Great Haseley or, at the least, had a close knowledge of the building. It is worth adding in parenthesis, quite apart from this discussion, that Tim Ayres has also pointed out the occurrence of extraordinarily similar tracery patterns to those at Great Haseley at Trumpington chancel in Cambridgeshire – probably dating to c. 1300 (N. Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire* (1954), 387–8). The implication is of some close connection between these two lavish commissions, though what it is remains to be established. All heraldic identifications have been made using C. Humphrey-Smith, *Anglo-Norman Heraldry Two* (1984), and the heraldic indexes in the Royal Society of Antiquaries.

The use of floral decoration in the cusping of the tomb at Broughton, and the rich carving of the pinnacles with busy foliage and grotesque heads could be compared to the work on Crouchback's tomb in Westminster, as could the application of squares of foliage to form a band across the canopy arch at Broughton: this perhaps recalls the diaper patterns found commonly on London tombs of this period.²⁸ A more exact parallel can be seen however on the inner arch of St Augustine's Abbey gatehouse at Canterbury (complete by c. 1308).²⁹

This stylistic analysis of the tomb shows that its details would be consonant with a pre-1315 date, but the attribution to John de Broughton is most forcibly suggested by the heraldic evidence. The emblazons on the tomb have been repainted but they were recorded in the 17th century by Dugdale who tricked all but one of the shields on the tomb.³⁰ From this and Skelton's engraving of the tomb made in the 1820s³¹ it is possible to determine the precise organization of the shields and also a logic to their disposition which would suggest an association with John de Broughton.

The Broughton arms appeared at the apex of the tomb arch, and flanking it, two on either side from left to right, Arden (9 [see blazons in footnote 30]), Bereford (10) Basset (12), and Arden (13) – all important local families in the early 14th century. A further eight shields appear in the quatrefoils above the tomb, four a side from left to right, untricked (1), Bohun (2), unidentified (3), unidentified (4), Seagrave (5), Mohun (6), Basset (7) and Stafford (8). The Stafford and Mohun families have no connections with the area and judging by what I have been able to identify, I would suggest that these were intended to be read in pairs as celebrations of marriages that occurred around the turn of the 14th century: Lord Stafford (ob. 1308) married the daughter of Lord Basset of Drayton in, or before, 1298³² and in 1305 the heir apparent of the Mohun family, John de Mohun (ob. pre-1330),³³ married the daughter of Sir John de Seagrave.³⁴

These matches would seem to have a double significance as marriages of local importance involving men who had served prominently in Edward I's military campaigns. John de Broughton had probably received land from Sir John de Seagrave (ob. 1325), an important local landowner and a general of Edward I who had shared his military experience.³⁵ Lord Basset had fought as a soldier in France and Scotland and was a powerful immediate neighbour at Drayton.³⁶ This military theme might also help explain the Bohun arms. The shield's position – to the right of the pair – would suggest this celebrates the male party in the marriage in question. This family seem to have had no local connections, but a certain Sir Humphrey Bohun (ob. 1322) owned land in Oxfordshire. As would be appropriate in this context, he was also a commander and married the sister of Edward I in 1302.³⁷ Moreover, if the lost

²⁸ The Crouchback tomb gables for example.

²⁹ *Age of Chivalry* (cat. no. 327), 339.

³⁰ Bodl. MS. Dugdale 11, f. 156. In this order (1) blank shield. (2) Azure a bend (argent if my identification below is correct, but untricked in MS.) between two cotises or and six lions rampant or. (3) Or two fesses gules and three martlets in chief. (4) Gules a fess Or between three horseshoes Or. (5) Sable a lion rampant Argent with crown Or. (6) Or a cross engrailed Sable. (7) Or three piles gules a canton ermine. (8) Or a chevron gules. (9) Ermine a fess chequy Or and Azure. (10) Argent seme of cross crosslets Sable and three fleur de lys Sable. (11) Azure a cross Argent. (12) Nebule Argent and Sable (other MS. have Azure but both tinctures are recorded as being used by the Arden family, probably because they are sometimes confused). (13) Sable five lozenges in a bend argent. I must add my thanks to my namesake John Goodall who has been very kind in helping me establish the identity or anonymity of the emblazons. Most antiquarians only listed nine shields, for example Bodl. MS. Rawl B 400.b, ff. 144 and 146. All heraldic identifications have been made using C. Humphrey-Smith, *Anglo-Norman Heraldry Two* (1984), and the heraldic indexes in the Royal Society of Antiquaries.

³¹ Skelton, op. cit. note. 8, plate vii, Bloxham Hundred.

³² *The Complete Peerage*, xii, 173.

³³ The exact date is unknown: *The Complete Peerage* ix, 23.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 23.

³⁵ We know this because John's son was described in 1316 as lord of Newington, previously a Seagrave manor. Presumably Sir John Seagrave would not have given land to the son while his estates were in minority so Newington must have been exchanged before his father's death: *Feudal Aids*, iv, 166. Dugdale also records his arms twice in the east window of the south aisle along with those of the Clavering family – probably a reference to Lord Fitzroger (ob. 1310) who distinguished himself in the Scottish Wars (*Complete Peerage*, iii, 274–5).

³⁶ *Complete Peerage*, ii, 2.

³⁷ C. Moor, op. cit. note. 18, 108.

coat were the differenced royal coat of his consort it might explain two curious things. Firstly, a royal match would explain why this family with few local links should begin the sequence of heraldry, and secondly why Dugdale tricked all the shields on the tomb bar this – an unusual royal coat might have caused him to be suspicious of the shield's authenticity. I would suggest that shields 3 and 4 celebrate another such match with both local and military associations for John de Broughton though it is frustrating not to be able to trace it.

The evidence pointing towards the attribution to John de Broughton is as strong as that pointing against his son. He died in 1346 and there is an unidentified effigy of mid 14th-century date in the church which, in the circumstances, would seem very likely to be his. If we discount this however, the details of the tomb that have been described could not reasonably be dated so late, and nor could its heraldry: by 1330 both the men in the Seagrave and Stafford family marriages were dead. Moreover, John de Mohun never acceded to the family estates, so in medieval terms the connection was, in retrospect, rather a dud and unlikely to be celebrated after his death.

In dating the church at Broughton through the arguments that have been rehearsed here, we are also dating Adderbury's stylistically similar west tower to between c. 1301 and 1315.

(b) *The South Aisle*

The south aisle at Adderbury must have been built later than the tower to have been built against it, but work on that must have followed soon after. Antiquarian accounts of the heraldic glass at Adderbury list the arms of the Mohun family as being in the south side of the church.³⁸ The Mohuns had no connections with this part of Oxfordshire, and in the circumstances it seems very likely that this again referred to the Mohun/Seagrave marriage, mentioned in relation to Broughton above. As was also argued, the match was unlikely to be celebrated posthumously so the south aisle was presumably glazed and finished between his marriage to Christian Seagrave in 1305 and his death before 1330. Given that the tower was under construction c. 1315 the aisle was probably under construction and the transept remodelled in the 1320s.

This dating would be further corroborated by the head of Christ window in the south aisle. As will be discussed it would seem to belong to a group of such windows in Oxfordshire. One of these, at Kidlington, can also be dated by its heraldry to between c. 1317 and 1330 (cf. p. 318 and footnote 78).

(c) *The North Aisle*

In 1344 the bishop of Winchester sent a petition to the papacy asking for the appointment of his nephew Thomas de Trilleck as rector of Adderbury to be validated. The appointment had been challenged by the papacy who claimed the advowson; but the bishop asked for confirmation on two grounds: because he had been unaware of the papacy's right to the benefice, and because Thomas had, after being inducted into the rectory, 'spent 300 marks in restoring the buildings'.³⁹ This could be taken to mean that he simply paid to restore subsidiary rectory buildings, but this would be an immense sum to spend in this way alone. Some idea of the probable cost of estate building can be gained from the New College accounts of improvements to the rectory properties between 1421 and 1423. These included the construction of a substantial stone tithe barn, kiln, bakehouse, pig shelter and sheep shelter, all completed at a cost of £86, less than half the amount de Trilleck had spent.⁴⁰ It should also be noted that the rectory at Adderbury was valued at £46 13s. 4d. in 1291 and £48 15s. 2d. in 1341⁴¹ – so Thomas de Trilleck had spent more than four times its annual worth in 'restoring' it.

³⁸ Footnote 4 and Bodl. MS. Rawl B 400b, f.126. The former describes the glass as being in the aisle's east window, but since I have argued that the transept was remodelled contemporaneously with the aisle, this does not affect my dating.

³⁹ *Calendar of Papal Registers. Petitions 1342-1419*, 52. The actual document is in the Vatican so I have been unable to discover the Latin wording. No date is given for Thomas de Trilleck's appointment.

⁴⁰ T. Hobson (ed.), *Adderbury Rectoria* (Oxon. Rec. Soc. viii 1926), 75-6.

⁴¹ *V.C.H. Oxon.* ix, 30 (from *Tax. Eccl.* (Records Commission), 31b and 215b).

Distinct forms of plinth and string course are marked with different symbols drawn parallel to the walls in which they run.

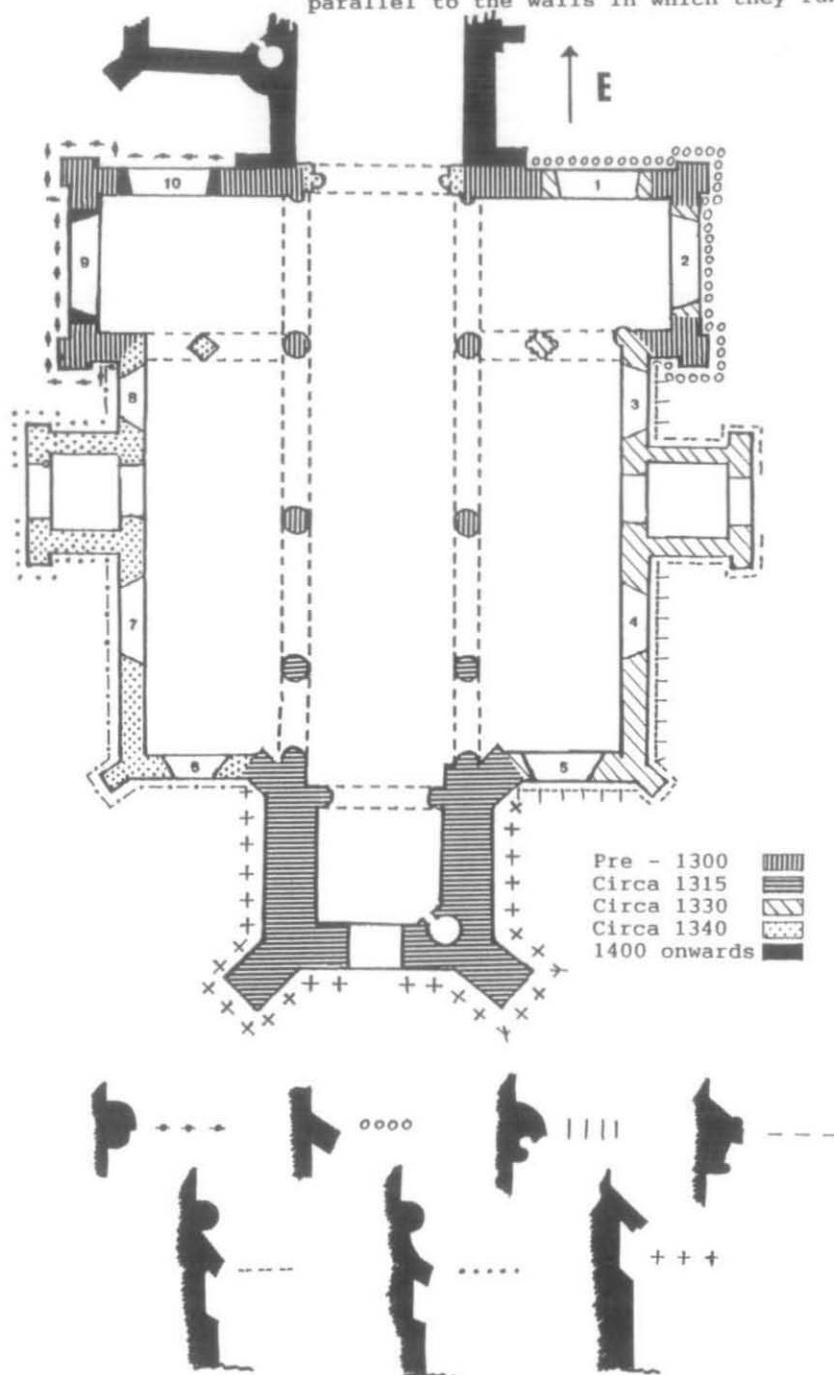


Fig. 1. St. Mary's church, Adderbury: plan. Not to scale.

all profiles are sketched, not measured.

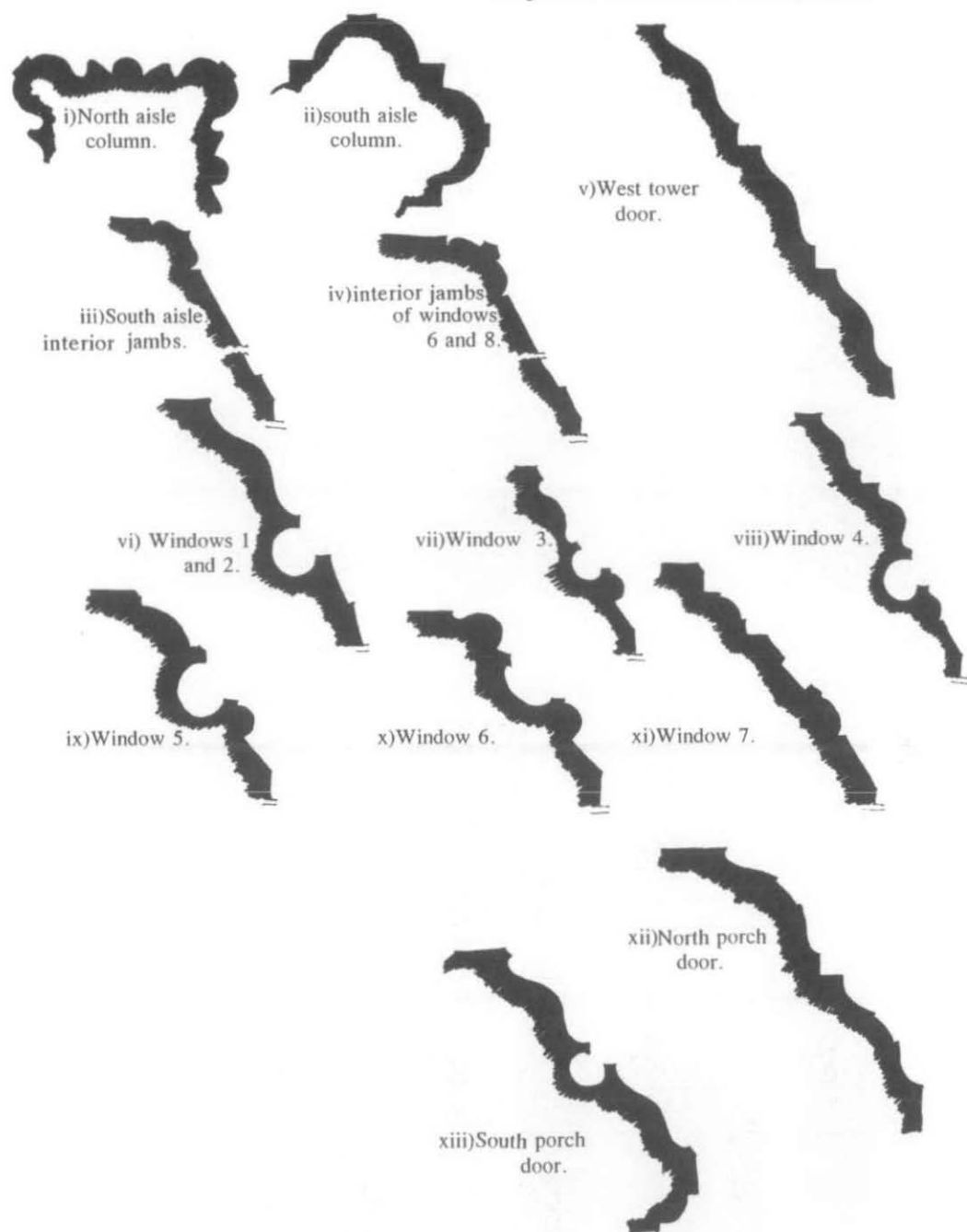


Fig. 2. Adderbury church: moulding profiles.

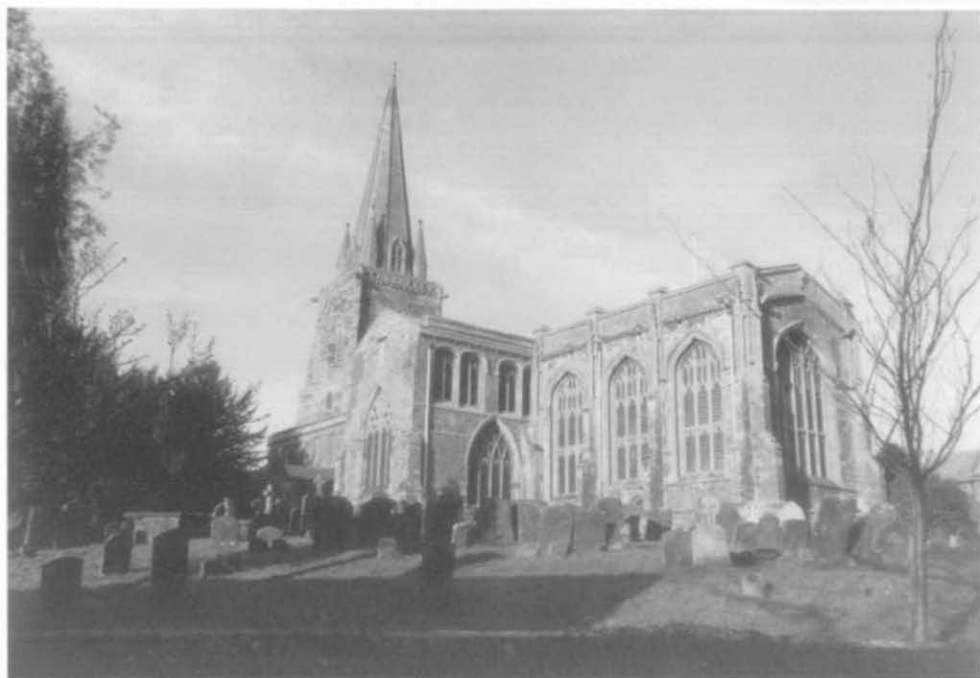


Fig. 3. Adderbury church from SE.



Fig. 4. Adderbury: N. aisle column.



Fig. 5. Adderbury: S. aisle capital (detail).



Fig. 6. Adderbury: tower frieze (E).



Fig. 7a-b (top and bottom). Tower frieze (N).



Fig. 8a-b (top and bottom). Tower frieze (S).

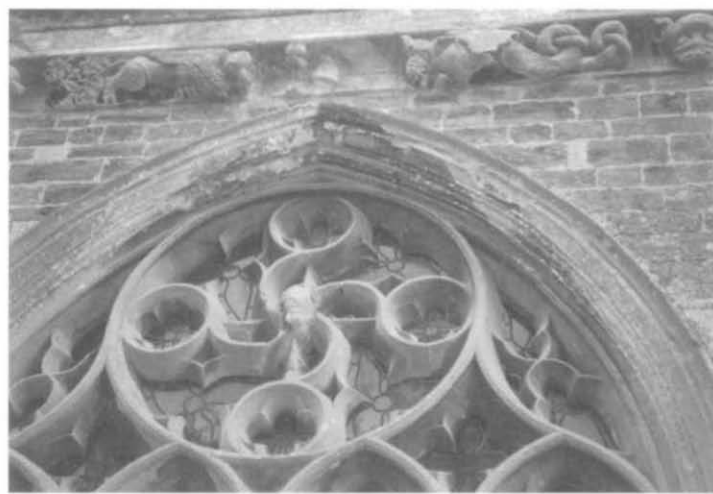


Fig. 9a-d. Adderbury: S frieze. *Top left:* W end. *Top right:* window with tracery. *Bottom left:* bell ringer. *Bottom right:* E end.



Fig. 10a-c. Adderbury: N frieze. *Top*: E end. *Middle*: middle. *Bottom*: W end.



Fig. 11. Adderbury: chancel arch capital.



Fig. 12. Bloxham: W door.



Fig. 13. Broughton: tower.



Fig. 14. Broughton: tomb.



Fig. 15. Adderbury: N door.

It is hard to imagine in other words that so much money could be spent unless one assumes that there was some reconstruction of the church under way.

The assumption that the north aisle – and of course the lost chancel – is the work in question seems justified for a number of reasons. As we have seen, both the south aisle and tower were built previous to *c.* 1330 so they could not be referred to here. The north aisle with its portal bearing resemblance to East Anglian Decorated architecture of the 1330s (as has been discussed) has not however been accounted for. If Thomas de Trilleck constructed the north aisle before 1344, this would account for these features. Moreover, a 1340s date for the north aisle would marry with a similar date which will be suggested for the tower of Bloxham – a structure which shares many stylistic features in common with the north aisle (see discussion of Bloxham below).

One final corroborative detail which lends support to this attribution is that the north door has four figures in niches carved just above the capitals. Those on the right represent a man and woman – quite possibly decorative stereotypes. The two on the left are a man wearing a hood (of mail?) and a cleric (the latter figure is tonsured) who is passing an object to his neighbour (Fig. 15). The object is unfortunately too badly damaged to be identified but it does seem more than likely in the context of the textual and stylistic arguments I have adduced that this is a portrayal of Thomas de Trilleck as a patron.

CONCLUSION

The 14th-century church at Adderbury was not a single, well integrated design executed over a few years. Instead the church saw three major building phases over a period of perhaps thirty years – between c. 1315 and 1344. This dating has obvious implications for the sculpture. It cannot be by any single hand over such a long period of time, nor is it the product of a single patron's demands. Rather, different patrons have requested their new building to imitate this unusual local style of carving. These issues of dating and authorship can be carried further by a comparison with Bloxham.

BLOXHAM

Bloxham village lies about two and a half miles west of Adderbury. The church (Fig. 16), dedicated to St. Mary, is as grand in scale as Adderbury's and its fabric remains much as it did in the mid 14th-century when it comprised a chancel, a nave, two aisles (each with its own porch and doorway), a northern transept and a spectacular western tower and spire with an elaborately carved Last Judgement portal in its western face. A clerestorey was added to the nave in the late 14th century,⁴² and in the 15th century the Milcombe Chapel – an astonishing piece of Perpendicular architecture – was built onto the eastern end of the south transept.

The 14th-century building work employed the same local stone as St. Mary's Adderbury, although the distinction between the use of the lighter stone for carving and the ironstone for walls was not so strictly observed: the ironstone can be seen for example in the window frame of the west window of the north aisle, and in some of the sculpture on the tower.

The church underwent a major restoration in the late 19th century but it is clear from earlier drawings that the exterior of the church and the tracery in particular, where it was replaced, were accurately restored.⁴³ Also a detailed set of pre-restoration drawings of the exterior and interior carvings show that they were not touched.⁴⁴

The building sequence (Fig. 16)

As at Adderbury, the 14th-century work incorporates the remains of an earlier church. Most of what survives of this is 13th-century: the nave arcades, with stiff leaf capitals on the south side and plain abaci on the north, the chancel and the door of the south aisle. The 13th-century work is distinctive for its habit of re-using Romanesque voussoirs – visible in the chancel and south door (which has been re-used again in the 14th-century work) – which presumably came from a 12th-century church on the site. This 13th-century church with its chancel, nave and aisles (but probably no transepts) formed the basis for the 14th-century alterations.

These began with the construction of the north transept and the rebuilding of the south aisle and south porch. These two parts of the building share a number of features which prove their common

⁴² The ashlar of this addition contrasts with the rubble of the earlier building. That this postdates the work with which this study is concerned is demonstrated by the fact that the clerestory raised the roof well above the original roof line which is marked on the tower. As I will argue the tower is the last addition in the early 14th century remodelling of the church so the current clerestory must be a later addition.

⁴³ See for example Buckler's drawings of the church: Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 65, nos. 104–6.

⁴⁴ Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 38, ff. 3–18.

origin: the north window (window 7) in the north transept has identical tracery to that in window 2 in the south aisle, and both share the same plinth moulding profile. The south porch is vaulted and the supporting corbels are so neatly laid into the stone courses that it seems reasonable to deduce that the vault is contemporary with it. Today there is an upper storey to this porch but this is a much later addition and the full extent of the original proportions are clearly visible on the exterior in the contrasting styles of cutting and laying the stone.

It is possible that the south aisle was also given a transept at this time which was subsequently destroyed by the Milcombe Chapel, but no evidence for this now remains, and the south arcade shows no signs of having received a western transept wall in the manner of the north transept.

Dating the north transept and south aisle

The western window of the southern aisle contains a six-pointed star composed of two equilateral triangles superimposed upon one another (Fig. 19). It is one of three such windows in the immediate locality: another example existed in the destroyed church at Banbury where old prints show it at the west end of the south aisle,⁴⁵ and another at Broughton still survives with identical mouldings (Figs. 17.iv, 18.i and 20). This double comparison between a tracery pattern and a moulding profile must point to common authorship and dating; i.e. c. 1315 if Broughton was finished by that date.

The North Aisle

The north aisle is of a single build – there are no masonry breaks and an internal string course runs round its entirety (Fig. 16). Stylistically it bears many striking resemblances to the south aisle at Adderbury, most noticeably in the manner in which sculpture is incorporated into the architecture: there is a corbel table running beneath the parapet on the exterior (Fig. 21); a free-standing pillar with a carved capital at the eastern end of the aisle supporting two arches which open into the north transept; and, in the west window of the north aisle, the face of Christ surrounded by the beasts of the evangelists in a wheel of tracery (Fig. 22).

This last comparison serves to date the aisle and suggest that the Head of Christ fragment of tracery at Adderbury has been restored correctly in the south aisle of that church, and possibly even in the right window. The mouldings of the Bloxham window have no exact counterparts at Adderbury but the sequence of a roll with fillet, a three-quarters hollow roll and a wave which is found in this window [window 4, fig. 17.v] finds several close parallels in the south aisle and south transept at Adderbury (Fig. 2.vii and, of marked similarity, the present head of Christ window, 2.viii).

The stylistic similarities between the decoration of the two aisles should not conceal the differences between them. The sculpture at Bloxham is far less ambitious than the contemporary work on the south aisle at Adderbury; the idiosyncratic representation of different kinds of flowers is replaced by skilful but uninteresting squares of foliage, and the large monsters and beasts by small scenes of animals, two very tame monsters and two human figures.

Whereas at Adderbury the carvings seem unrelated to their neighbours, here individuals or groups of figures are organized to form coherent scenes: a game of chess, or swordsmen fighting (see last section). This has also apparently been done with the interior carved capital at the east end of the transept. The figures here are not generic but specific and have been treated very differently from the stereotyped knights at Adderbury. Four different figures have been represented – a knight with a shield (blazoned with St. George's cross) and lance; a woman crowned with flowers and holding foliage inhabited by a crow (to her left) and a cow? (to her right); a bearded man holding foliage and with a dragon peering over his right shoulder; and a woman with a fleur de lys crown and holding sprays of

⁴⁵ Godfrey's 1757 engraving of the church. An example in Bodl. G.A. Oxon a. 76, f. 10a.

foliage (specifically oak to her right) – with lank intertwined arms. There is an abacus decorated with ballflower and grotesque heads (Fig. 23).⁴⁶

Unlike at Adderbury the north porch has no corbel table on its exterior and the doorway is decorated with naturalistic strings of foliage running through its orders (Fig. 24). One distinctive feature of the portal is the carving of a continuous foliage band through its capitals, a peculiarity which finds a parallel at Everdon (Northants.). The north aisle also has one window with a very unusual tracery pattern which has no surviving parallel at Adderbury: window 5 contains a crocket finial carved into its upper central panel (Fig. 30). There are local precedents for this in the east windows at Dorchester and Merton College Chapel in Oxford (see section 4).

Given the striking similarities between the south aisle of Adderbury and the north aisle of Bloxham – which must point towards some relationship between the craftsmen working on the two churches – what are we to make of these differences? The answer may lie in another comparison between the two aisles at Bloxham.

I have described the north and south aisles at Bloxham as belonging to two different building campaigns, and indeed they do seem very different – one with and one without sculpture, one with elaborate curvilinear tracery, the other with a geometric, 'Star of David' window – but these differences are perhaps cosmetic. The mouldings of windows 3, 5 and 6 (Fig. 17) in the two aisles share a common vocabulary of forms: a semi-circular roll followed by a fillet and then a smaller roll. In one case – windows 3 (incidentally the window so closely comparable to Broughton's) and 6 – the mouldings actually look identical. Does this imply that both the aisles are by the same, very flexible, craftsmen? I have already tentatively dated the two aisles separately – the south to c. 1315 on the grounds of the star-shaped window at Broughton, and the north to c. 1330 due to the near identical tracery in the south aisle of Adderbury. However, if, as this evidence implies, the two parts of the church are by the same craftsmen the two campaigns must be close in time and possibly contiguous. In this case the body of Bloxham church can be dated as follows: pre-1300, the arcades and chancel; and then roughly between 1315 and 1330 the south aisle and north transept and then subsequently (c. 1330) the north aisle.

A complicated picture of connections between Adderbury, Bloxham and Broughton begins to emerge: Adderbury and Bloxham have in common an unusual tracery pattern with the head of Christ set in a wheel of tracery; Broughton and Bloxham have 'Star of David' windows with identical moulding profiles in common (a profile that also occurs in different windows in both aisles at Bloxham); and Adderbury and Broughton seem to have related towers.

The Tower and Spire

The last in this series of alterations to Bloxham church which we are concerned with was the addition of the tower and spire. This is really the show piece of Bloxham. Not only does it stand magnificently but its details are very rich and unusual.

In the west face of the tower there is a Last Judgement portal (Fig. 25): Christ is carved in majesty with the instruments of the Passion around him at the apex of the arch. The disciples sit below him while the dead rise on His right, and fall into Hell on His left. The archivolts of the arch are carved with foliage, animals and birds, and cut into the buttresses round the door are a series of statue niches for an exterior iconography of some scale. This probably extended up into the blind arches with plinths further up the tower. On top of the buttresses at each angle of the tower there stands a figure: a man apparently contorted in agony (on the SE corner), a soldier dressed in a mail hood with a shield hurling a stone down from his castellated parapet (NE corner), a fife and drum player (NW corner) and a man firing a crossbow, again wearing a mail hood (Fig. 26) (SW corner).⁴⁷ Beneath the tower

⁴⁶ Is this some cryptic iconography? It should be added that this column has four heads carved on the angles of its base. These do not appear in the 19th-century drawings of the carvings in the church; a fact which suggests that they are entirely new – as indeed they look.

⁴⁷ Some are badly weathered but they are clearly identifiable with the help of the 1805 drawings: *op. cit.* note 44.

parapet, which is carved into fine tracery roundels, is another carved frieze of musicians, monsters, men and animals (Figs. 27 and 28).

The tower has been considered contemporaneous with the northern aisle largely because it shares with it the feature of a sculpted corbel table, but this cannot really be the case. The main reason for objecting to this conventional assessment is that the mouldings, the lucerne tracery (Fig. 27a), and the massive plinth profiles (Fig. 16) share nothing in common with those in the rest of the church.⁴⁸

In many ways the tower and spire present a baffling problem: the square tower with an octagonal spire drum is an extremely advanced structural form which finds no local and few national contemporary surviving parallels.⁴⁹ However in its decoration it would seem to belong to the Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire traditions of steeple building. Amongst the details which demonstrate this are the use of single blind quatrefoils to decorate the exterior walls of the upper section of the tower (Fig. 27b). Examples of this occur in the wider locality, for example on the late 13th-century steeple tower at Raunds in Northants. Another distinctive detail are three-light windows, whose central opening has been filled in to receive sculpture (Fig. 26). The tower at Aynho (Northants.) is a particularly close parallel,⁵⁰ and a development of the form can be seen at Irthlingborough in the same county.⁵¹

It is also possible that the rich sculptural display was inspired by the late 13th-century tradition of such work in Northamptonshire. There are various examples of grand west portals set in western towers, including the famous doorway carved with scenes from the life of Christ at Higham Ferrers.⁵² The upper parts of the tower at Higham Ferrers once carried a considerable collection of exterior sculpture set on figural corbels (now lost), and figures were cut in the upper panels of two 'Y'-tracery windows: a pipe and tabor player on the north side of the tower, and God the Father in the west window; presiding above the main door, like the figure at Bloxham.⁵³

The tower at Raunds presents an equally intriguing parallel. Here the blind arcade running round the second storey of the tower has been filled with sculpture rather in the manner of a corbel table. On the north side there are figural corbels supporting the central mullions of the 'Y'-tracery in the arcade arches, busts in the tracery panels, and busts in a row of quatrefoils in the spandrels between them. At either extreme of the arcade the spandrel is filled by a musician figure – one playing the pipe and tabor, the other a viol – and between them a knight, a lady and a man. The west face of the tower has carvings only in the spandrels and these are so badly weathered that only the figures of angels with censers, in the spandrels at each extreme, are distinguishable today. The south side of the tower has the figure of a single harpist in the westernmost spandrel.

That the exterior displays of sculpture found on these steeples at Raunds and Higham Ferrers compare with that at Bloxham in organization and subject matter – notably the prominence of musicians – is most intriguing. Given the other references to Northamptonshire work in the decoration of the structure, it is possible that Bloxham's steeple with its elaborate west door and musician figures is self-consciously referring to a local tradition of sculptural decoration of spires.

⁴⁸ Study of the western tower's masonry shows it to have been independently constructed from the nave arcade and aisles around it so a separate dating is not problematic.

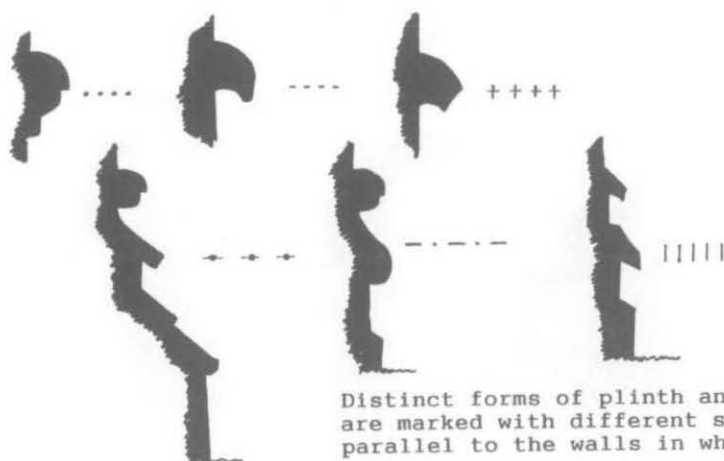
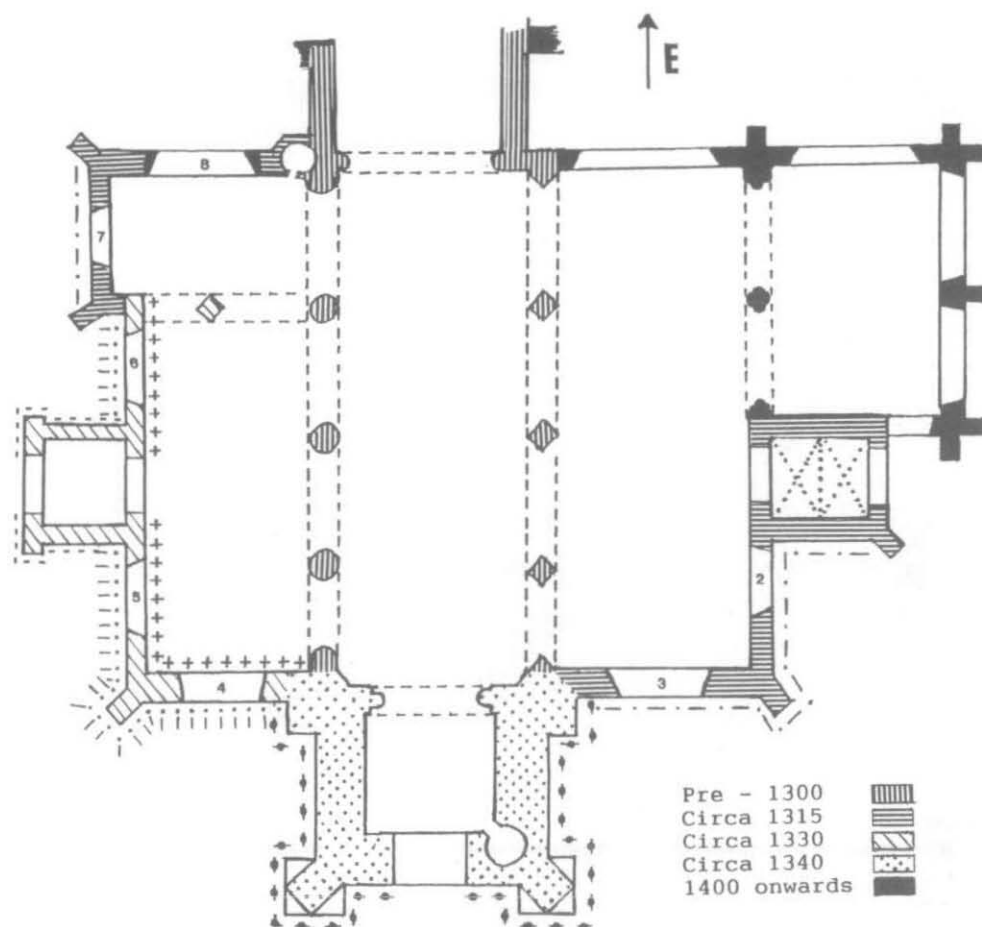
⁴⁹ Exton in Rutland, Grafham in Cambridgeshire, and Patrington in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Of these only Patrington matches the splendour of Bloxham and its octagon is not structural but a stone screen added for effect. There is an earlier comparison at Barnack in Huntingdonshire where a Saxon tower had an octagonal drum and spire added in the early 13th century. It is probably coincidental that Barnack's early 14th-century east window tracery contains the rare motif of crocketing which is also found at Bloxham. There is a late 13th-century octagonal spire at St. Lawrence at Stanwick, Northants. This has a single octofoil in its tower – perhaps another source for Bloxham's quatrefoils (cf. below).

⁵⁰ The tracery and the figure of a dragon carved on the statue plinth at Aynho (was the statue of St Margaret?) evokes Bloxham's style of rich sculptural decoration very strongly.

⁵¹ Rebuilt to its medieval design and reusing the original stone in 1887: *V.C.H. Northants*, iii, 210.

⁵² Other examples include Oundle, Raunds and Little Addington (all Northants.) and Keystone (Hunts.).

⁵³ Fragments of more contemporary sculpture also survive higher in the tower, but they are set in areas that were rebuilt in the 14th and 17th centuries, and though they may always have belonged here, they are not in their original places today.



Distinct forms of plinth and string course are marked with different symbols drawn parallel to the walls in which they run.

Fig. 16. St. Mary's church, Bloxham: plan. Not to scale.

all profiles are sketched, not measured.

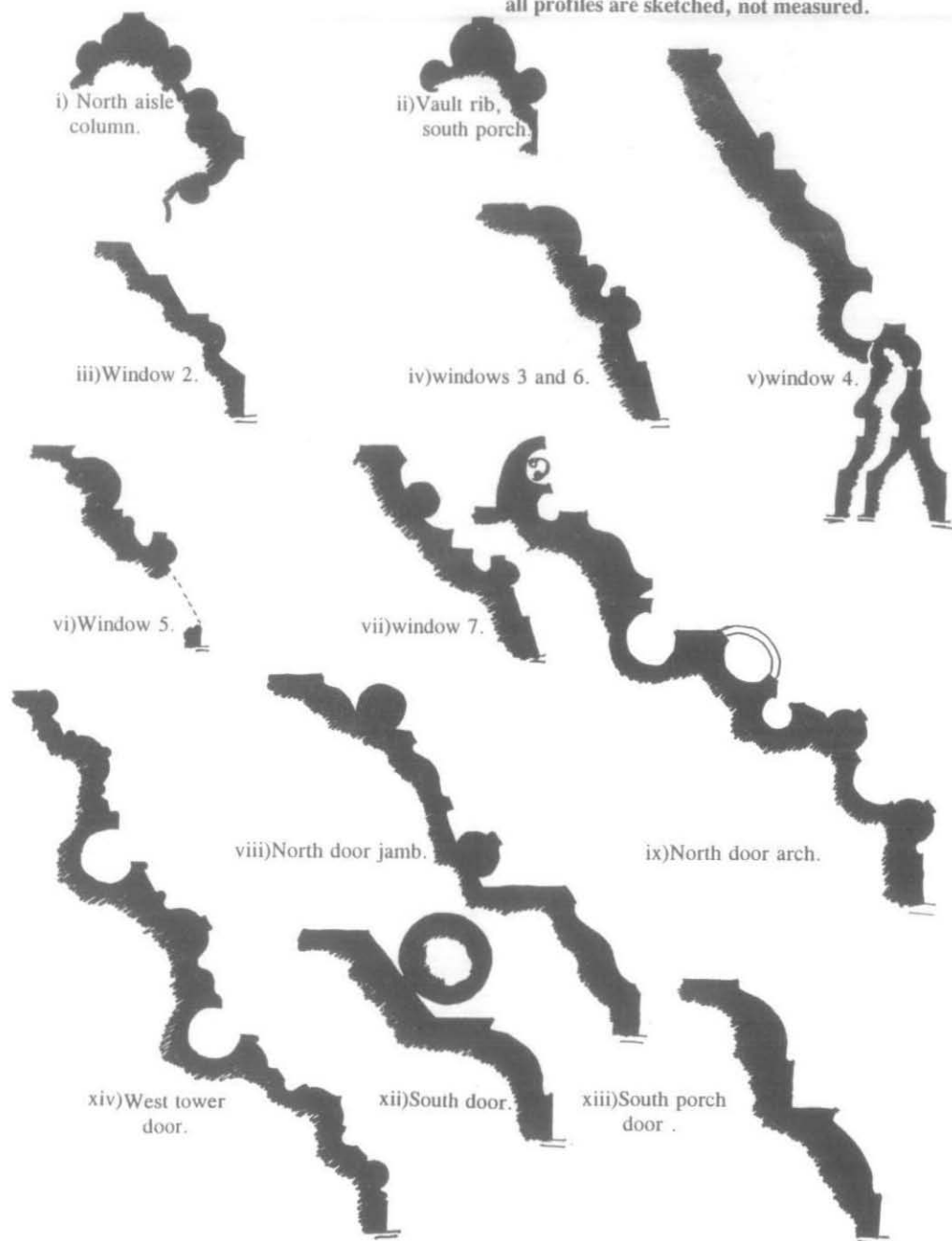
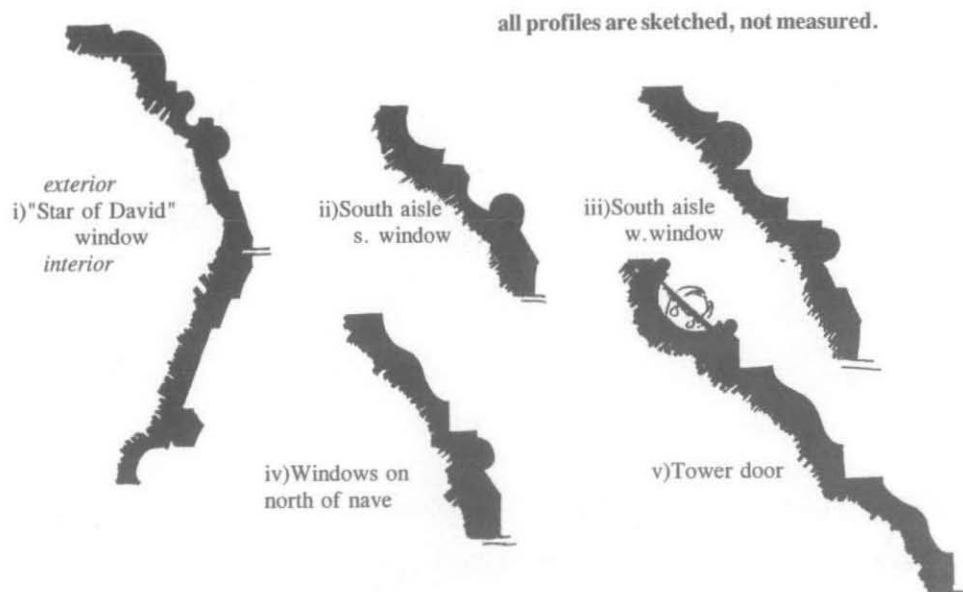


Fig. 17. Bloxham church: moulding profiles.



The 'head of Christ' window at Kidlington Church (Oxon) with a Star of David imposed on the wheel of tracery to show the possible geometric basis of the design. The overall and geometric comparisons which can be drawn between this window and the circa 1315 'Star of David' windows at Broughton, Banbury and Bloxham may show this to be the link between them and the 1330s 'head of Christ' windows at Adderbury and Bloxham

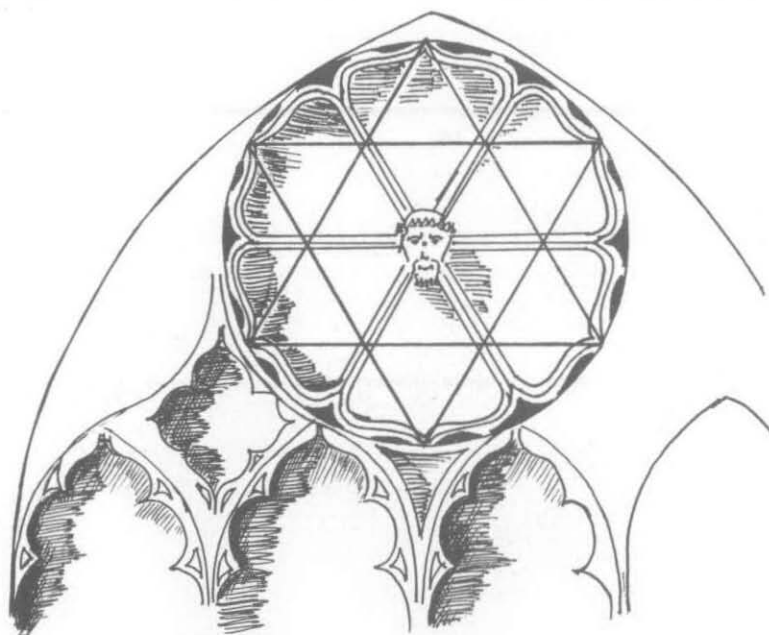


Fig. 18. Broughton church: moulding profiles and 'Head of Christ' window.

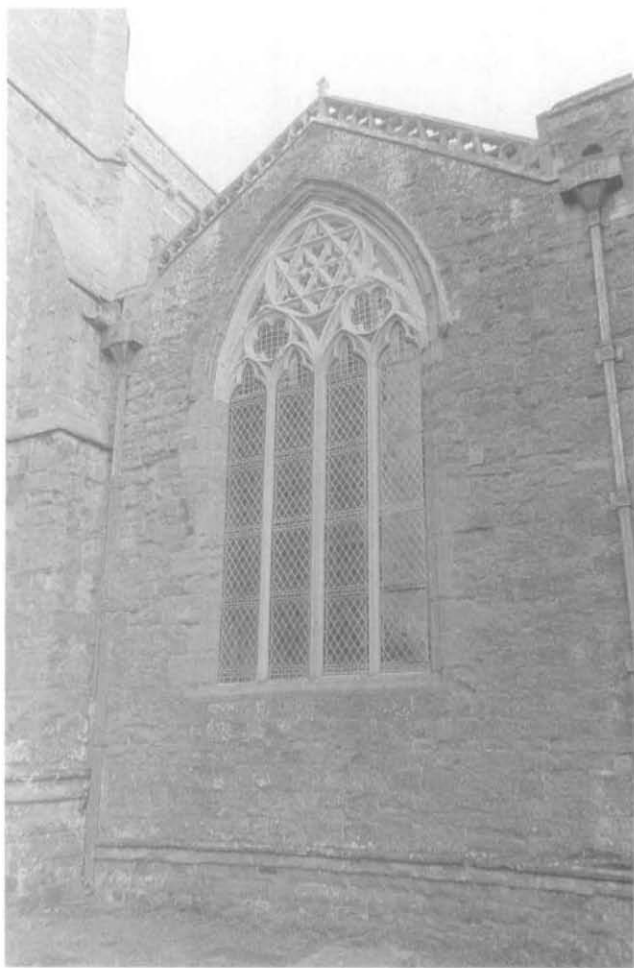


Fig. 19. Bloxham: W.window of S aisle.



Fig. 20. Broughton: E window of S aisle.

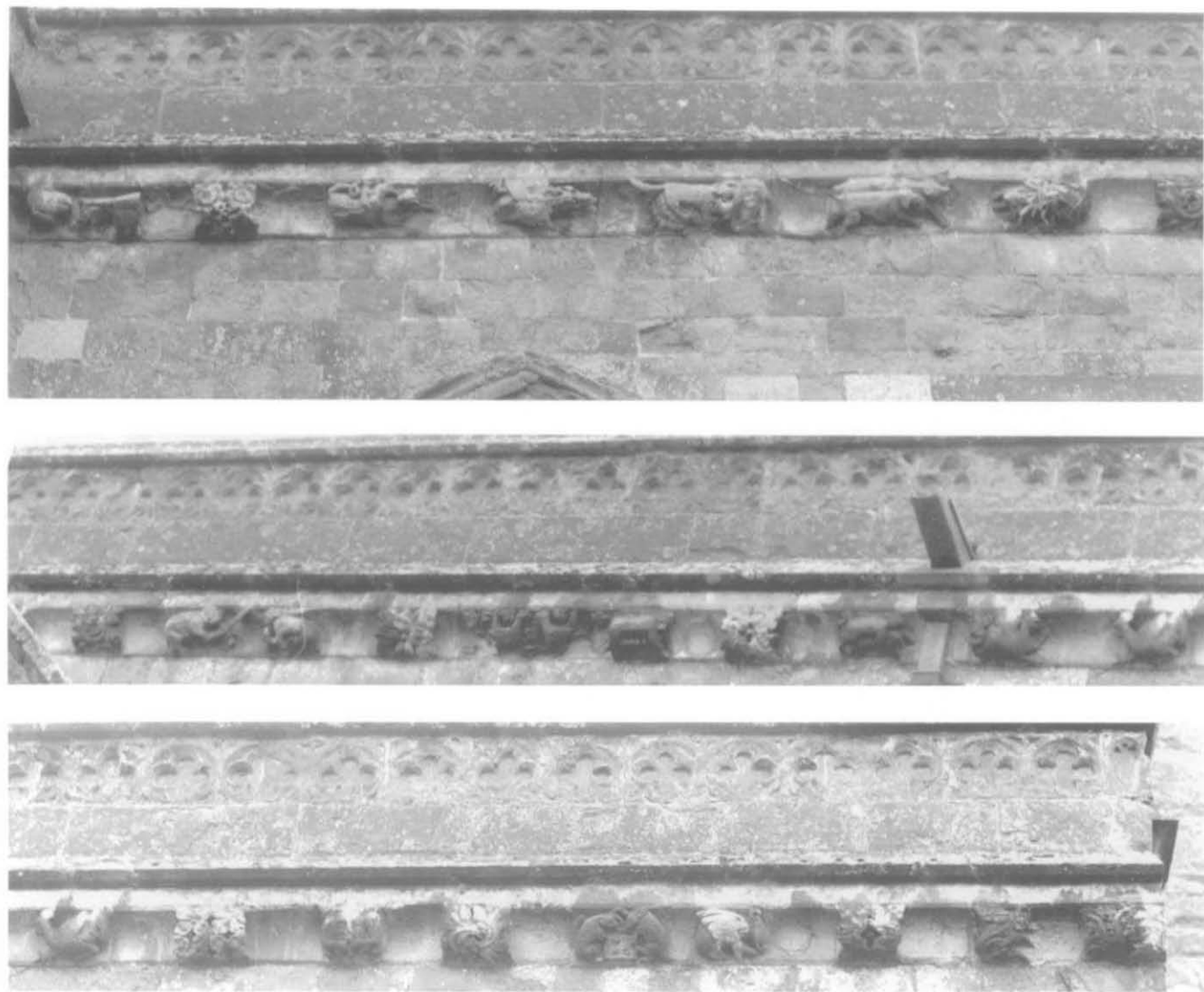


Fig. 21a-c. Bloxham: N aisle frieze. *Top*: E end. *Middle*: middle. *Bottom*: W end.

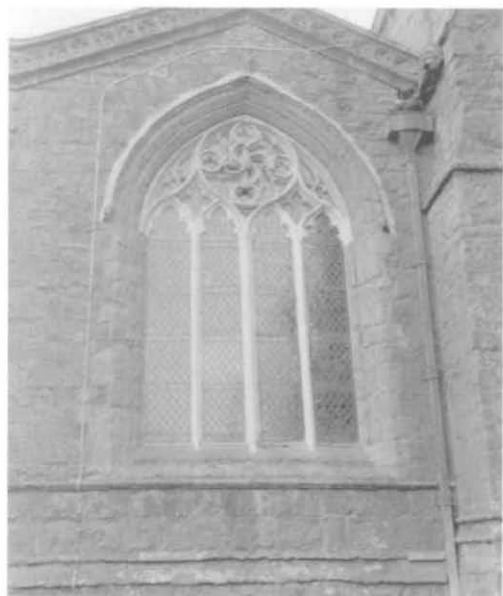


Fig. 22. Bloxham: W window of N aisle.

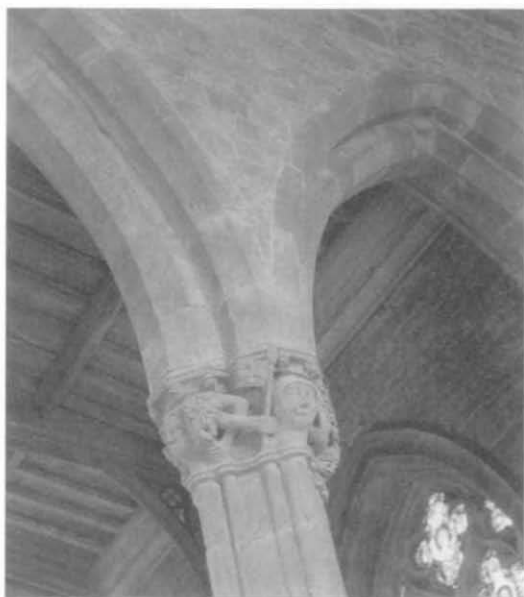


Fig. 23a-c (top right, bottom). Bloxham: N aisle capital.



Fig. 24. Bloxham: N door.

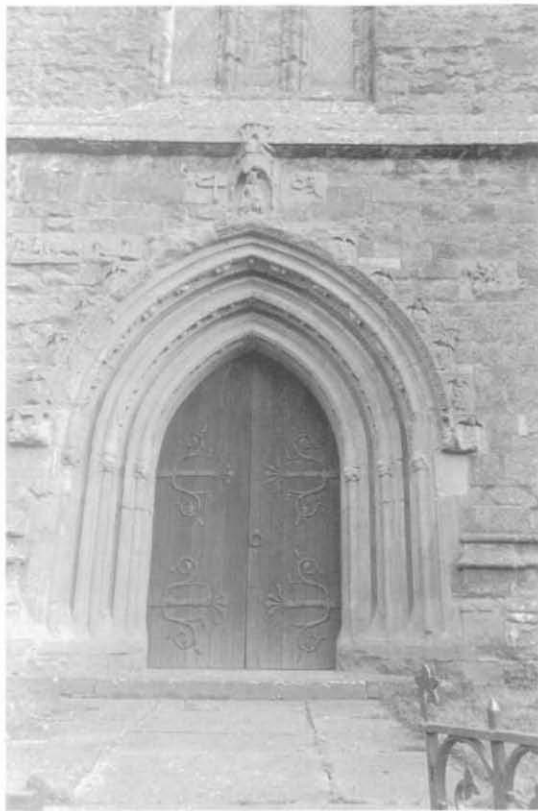


Fig. 25. Bloxham: W door.



Fig. 26. Bloxham: tower (crossbow).

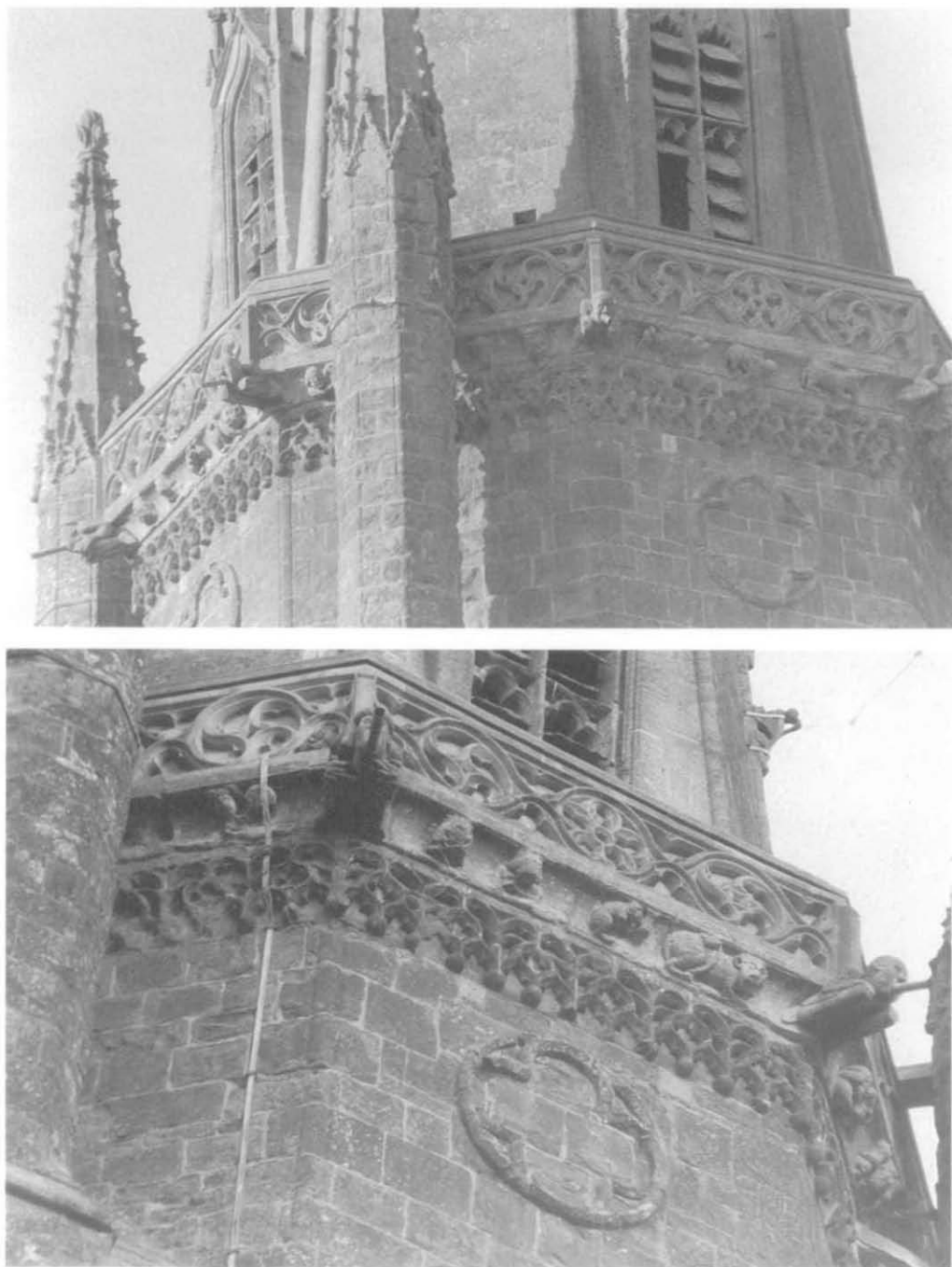


Fig. 27a-b (top and bottom). Bloxham: tower.

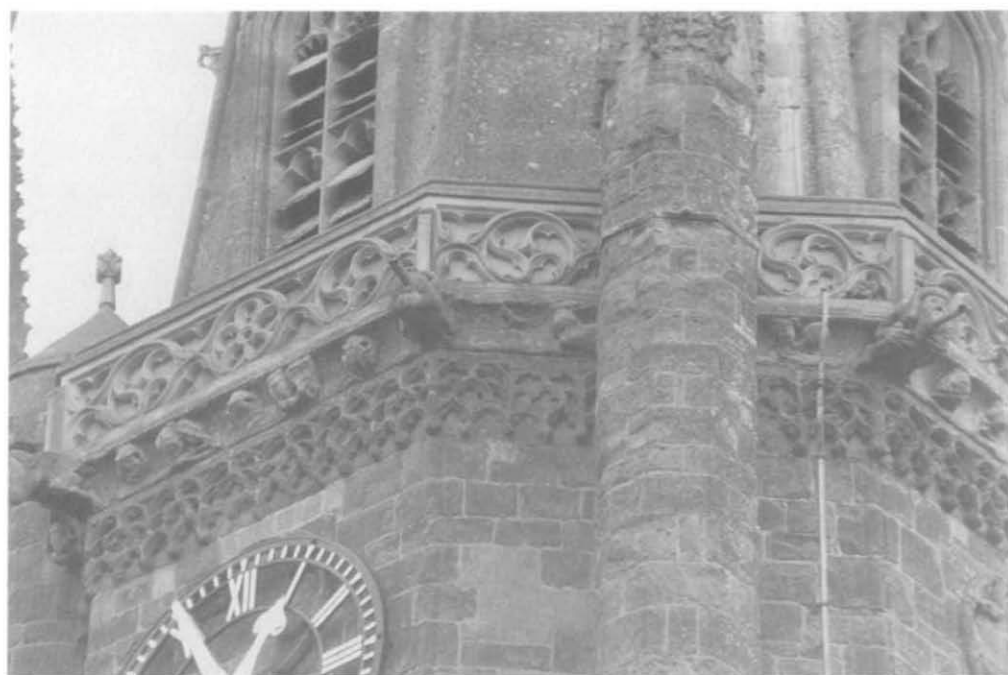


Fig. 28a-b (top and bottom). Bloxham: tower.



Fig. 29. Bloxham: tower canopy.



Fig. 31. Adderbury: N. aisle capital.

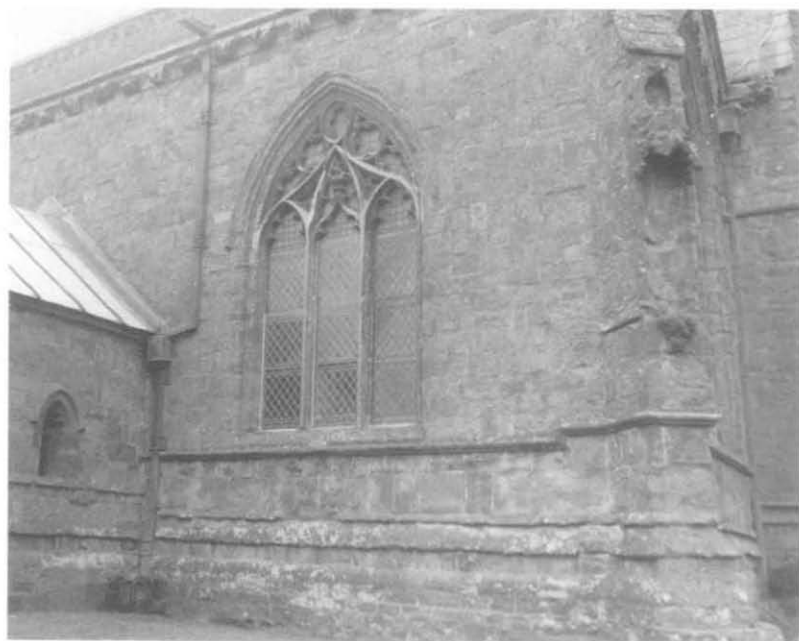


Fig. 30. Bloxham: N. aisle.

Dating the Tower

The Last Judgement western door may actually give clues as to a rough date for the tower and spire. Both the very deeply scalloped moulding profile and the continuous, capital-less jamb mouldings rising into the arch (Figs. 17.xiv and 25) are features typical of 1330s and 1340s architecture.⁵⁴ Interestingly some of its details are very close to those found on the 1340s work at Adderbury. Its capitals are cut as heads biting the tops of the columns – a very unusual feature, found as I have mentioned on the Adderbury chancel arch (Fig. 11 and 12). This feature is – as far as I know – without other parallel in this locality and very unusual beyond. Also, like the north portal at Adderbury the arch of the west portal at Bloxham is filled with strings of foliage, and one rather unusual form in particular – a cone with two strings of foliage springing from its base – appears in both (Figs. 25 and 15).

A number of other close stylistic parallels between the north aisle of Adderbury and Bloxham tower would seem to substantiate this association. The niches in the tower at Bloxham are stocky with squat, crocketed roofs over them, large foliage finials and two pinnacles set on either side. The actual canopy is formed by a single extended ogee arch (Fig. 29) – quite different from the exterior niche in the north-west buttress of the north aisle of Bloxham (Fig. 30), but very similar to the niche on the free standing column in the north aisle of Adderbury (Fig. 31).⁵⁵

The sculptural frieze on Bloxham's tower also forms an interesting basis for comparisons and contrasts. The carving is quite different in style and organization from the rather small-scale and regimented decoration of the aisle at Bloxham. The figures are very large, perhaps in order to make them clearly visible from the ground. The existence of musicians on this frieze immediately calls to mind the north aisle of Adderbury, as does the unusual manner of their representation from the waist upwards.

These comparisons, which place the work in the 1340s, might also suggest one possible patron for this unusually magnificent work: Roger de Beauchamp. He was promised the manor of Bloxham in 1338⁵⁶ and received it in 1343 after the death of a certain John of Weston in that year.⁵⁷ Roger was embarking on his political career at this date and belonged to an influential and rich family.⁵⁸ What makes this hypothesis particularly attractive is the fact that the advowson of Bloxham was held by the abbess of Godstow who was at this time Roger de Beauchamp's aunt. Roger endowed the abbey with more tithes from Bloxham in 1346.⁵⁹ She had in turn received endowments from Edward III for her abbey,⁶⁰ and it is possible that the exceptionally ambitious project at Bloxham was undertaken by this great family with royal encouragement.

From the surviving evidence it seems that the work on the churches at Bloxham and Adderbury is very closely linked stylistically. As at Adderbury, building work must have been going on at Bloxham for at least twenty-five years under different patrons. Judging by the proximity and the size of the two churches – they are amongst the largest parish churches in Oxfordshire – their similar decorative carving is not perhaps too surprising. However, this carving is also paralleled closely at the much more modest church of St. Peter's at Hanwell.

⁵⁴ Like the north portal at Adderbury – with which I will argue this is closely associated – comparisons for these features can be found in East Anglian Decorated of this period, for example the gallery of Ely Choir, finished by 1337. See footnote 10.

⁵⁵ The canopy is badly damaged but it shares the same rather stocky proportions, is framed by a pair of pinnacles and the hood does appear to have had a single ogee arch supporting it.

⁵⁶ *Calendar of Fine Rolls 1337–47*, 68.

⁵⁷ *Calendar of Close Rolls 1343–1346*, 189.

⁵⁸ *The Complete Peerage*, ii, 44–5 notes that he was possibly linked to the Earls of Warwick by marriage. At this date his court career was just beginning too; he was described as the 'king's yeoman' in 1337 and was granted the post of Keeper of Devizes Castle by Queen Philippa on 26 October 1340.

⁵⁹ *The English Register of Godstow Abbey*, ed. A. Clark, 231.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 549; in 1341/2 she was granted three cartloads of faggots every week by Edward III.

HANWELL

Hanwell lies about seven miles north of Adderbury and Bloxham, on the other side of Banbury. The church there, dedicated to St. Peter (Figs. 32 and 34), has a nave with a western tower, a chancel, and two aisles, the south significantly wider than the north. There are two collections of carving here: an exterior corbel table on the chancel and a set of figural capitals in the nave arcades. With the exception of the nave capitals and one or two pieces of restored masonry cut in a lighter stone, the local red ironstone has been used throughout.

The church is of early 14th-century build although there is, in the east wall of the south aisle, some rubble masonry and broken string courses which probably belong to an earlier, undated structure (Fig. 32). There are also one or two elements that are of later date – the nave clerestory with its square-headed windows, and the priest's door in the chancel with its four-centred arch. These belong to a later 14th-century restoration of the church.

Leaving this restoration aside, the existing fabric was erected in two stages. The first stage saw the construction of the nave, tower and aisles. The plans for these changed over the course of the construction work which, as will be argued, was undertaken by at least two separate groups of masons. The second stage involved the construction of the chancel. The division between the two stages of the building work is marked by a masonry break at the juncture of the chancel and nave, and a slightly different orientation of the two parts of the church. Let us discuss these two phases of construction separately.

The Nave, Aisles and Tower (Fig. 35)

The nave, aisles and tower were apparently constructed by two different groups of masons working to different plans. The first group completed the north arcade, the second rebuilt part of this in order to incorporate a tower into a new overall design which they then finished. Evidence for this can be found in the arcades.

Both the north and south arcades (Fig. 32) consist of three arches which abut on the tower piers at their western end. Their capitals are carved, similarly to those at Adderbury and Bloxham, to portray four figures. Here each column represents a type (young men, queens etc.) from the waist up with their arms overlapping or simply touching. The arcades also have carved headstops. On the southern side these portray musicians, on the north fine human heads. Not all the carvings in the nave arcade have been completed: the capitals set in the tower piers and their responds in the west wall of the church are roughly shaped blocks of stone prepared for carving (Fig. 38). The inclusion of incomplete capital heads suggest that the capitals were carved *in situ* and after the completion of the structure.

The capitals of the two arcades were clearly carved by different craftsmen: stylistically the north arcade is much subtler in execution, where the hands in particular are much more sensitively treated and the capitals are topped by a row of castellations (Fig. 36). The south arcade capitals lack this abaci of castellations and the figures on them face the cardinal axes of the church (Fig. 37); whereas those on the north are set at an angle to them.

Each arcade is also proportioned rather differently. The easternmost two arches of the north arcade are of equal span but the last arch is of a very wide span and the arrangement of its capital in the tower pier is awkward: the ring of castellations has been crudely cut and set apart from the capital stone (Fig. 39). This capital actually seems to have been made by the masons who worked on the south arcade because the bulges in the stone (which were presumably intended to form the heads of the figures) face the axes of the church in the manner typical of that (the south) arcade.

In contrast the south arcade is much more regularly organized. Here each arch moving westwards is wider in span than its neighbour and there is no awkward setting of the capitals in the tower pier (Fig. 38). This suggests that the westernmost arch of the north arcade was altered by the masons working on the south arcade to accommodate the tower, whereas the south arcade's dimensions were established

with the tower already in mind. In other words, the decision to build a tower was taken before work on the south aisle began, but after the two first arches (at least) of the north aisle had been constructed.

Great effort was made by the new masons to prevent this change of plan from disturbing the unity of the design. They sprung the westernmost arch of the north arcade low in the tower pier so that the arch could span the added space while preserving the same curvature, and keeping its apex at the same height, as those of its neighbours. It was probably in order to conceal the great inequality in the springing point of the arch that the abacus of castellations in the north tower pier was introduced. By inserting the ring of castellations at the same level as those in the neighbouring capitals a visual unity of height was created. The design of each consecutive arch in the south arcade with a greater span also prevented the different proportions of the two arcades from becoming too apparent, although it also necessitated the lowering of the spring of the last arch in the tower pier slightly.

Despite the different workmanship of the two arcades and the change of plan, the two must have been constructed within a few years of each other. The south arcade is contemporaneous with the construction of the tower and integral with the tower is the whole west end of the church and the north wall of the north aisle: there is an external string course which runs round the whole western end of the church and along the north aisle wall (Fig. 32) and the masonry of both these walls is consistent in size and so interlaid that it must be of one construction. The second campaign would seem therefore to be a completion of a rebuilding of the church which was begun by the masons working on the north aisle.

The Southern and Eastern Walls of South Aisle

Of the fabric of the body of the church only the southern and eastern walls of the south aisle lack a position in the relative chronology. They have been so much altered that it is not now possible to date them reliably. They must have been built together because they share a particular interior string course (Fig. 32), but in other details the design varies confusingly. Window 7 possesses figural hood stops of very similar appearance to those in the rest of the building, but windows 5 and 6 have the only hood stops in the church not carved with heads. None of the mouldings really match with those in the rest of the church either.

What we can say however is that the western wall – part of the second building campaign – was laid out to fit the proportions of the aisle as it now stands. This does not help us date the existing walls because judging by the fragments of other string courses in the walls, they are built on older foundations. It is possible that prior to the 14th century the church had a nave and a single aisle whose dimensions were preserved in subsequent building work.

Dating the nave aisles and tower

Nothing now remains to date the body of the church accurately. Of the tracery, only that in the tower, and of windows 8, 9 and 10 appears to be unrestored.⁶¹ Judging by its unambitious use of ogee forms, it probably dates to the early 14th-century. None of the other windows can suggest a dating: all those in the north aisle were infilled in the 16th century apart from window 14 which, although it may be accurately reconstructed, is probably a restoration because, in a manner uncharacteristic of the other surviving windows, it uses the lighter stone in its tracery. Those in the south aisle are all certainly restored – in the case of window 7 the window jambs do not even match the tracery mouldings. For this reason, and because the stone of the restored tracery does not match the ironstone of the jambs, the jambs however are probably original.

⁶¹ The tracery of these windows appears in its present form in Buckler's 1824 sketch of the church: Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon a. 67, no. 299.

Other details of the work would seem to confirm an early 14th-century date, but give no help in narrowing the margin of time when the building might have been undertaken. The south door has rather a solid moulding profile and the colonnettes on it are topped with moulded capitals typical of 13th and early 14th-century work (Fig. 33.viii). So too the north which has a depressed trefoil in its tympanum. The rings of castellations used on the capitals of the north arcade may have been ultimately inspired by the castellated capitals supporting the statue plinths on the interior north face of the upper chapel of St. Stephen's Chapel Westminster (1292–1348)⁶² or any of the other court forms which were perhaps derived from this: for example the castellated capitals in the choir (finished 1337) and in the angles of the octagon at Ely (1322–8).⁶³

Dugdale's detailed account of the armorial glass in the church gives no further clues either. The arms include the various arms of the Vernons, the lords of the manor, which were celebrated in the nave. So too were the arms of the Ardens, another family too closely associated with the locality in the 13th and 14th century to suggest any dates. Most of the arms he describes are unidentifiable.⁶⁴

The Vernons might have been the patrons of the work if, as appears possible, the north aisle was intended as a family chapel: built into the rere-arch of the north aisle's east window is a fragment of a pinnacle – perhaps from a destroyed tomb canopy which originally stood there. Also a piscina still exists in the adjacent pier of the north arcade indicating that an altar once stood in this area. An effigy and a band of mourners from an early 14th-century tomb do still survive but it is not known where they stood. The south aisle was also a chapel and contains a crudely carved corbel table, a piscina and several fragments of medieval paint work.⁶⁵

The Chancel

The chancel is of a single build – there are no irregularities in the masonry of the structure and the window mouldings and string courses are identical throughout (Figs. 32 and 33).

A fabulous array of sculpture, situated on an exterior corbel table beneath the eaves of the roof, decorates the length of the north (Fig. 40) and south (Fig. 41) sides of the building. It includes representations of monsters, hunting scenes and human figures intertwined with fronds of foliage. The designs are deeply undercut in places and the figures – portrayed horizontally on the frieze so that they can be represented whole on the narrow band of stone – are executed with great virtuosity.

The chancel has been much altered since its construction. A Buckler drawing of 1823 shows the side windows filled with perpendicular tracery, which was probably inserted into the chancel in the late 14th century along with the surviving priest's door that has a four-centred arch.⁶⁶ Despite these changes many of the original architectural details, such as the piscina, sedilia, squints and window jambs, survive.⁶⁷

These employ some forms found on the building work at Adderbury and Bloxham in the 1320s or 1330s – the piscina has a wave moulding followed by a three-quarter hollow (Fig. 33.iii) found on the south aisle at Adderbury (Fig. 2.vi–viii) and the north aisle at Bloxham (Fig. 17.v); the rere-arches of the chancel (Fig. 33.i)

⁶² For St. Stephen's complex chronology see M. Hastings, *Parliament House* (1950), 54–63, and for an idea of St. Stephen's influence see C. Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral* (1990), 192–204.

⁶³ See footnote 10.

⁶⁴ Bodl. Dugdale 11, f. 155. One curiosity is the Massey coat (quarterly or and gules with a lion passant guardant argent in chief) in the chancel. This Cheshire family was somehow related to the Vernons because Sir Richard Massey was described as the nephew of Ralph Vernon, the head of the family, in 1292 (G. Ormerod, *History of Cheshire* (London 1882), iii, 248.). But since Old Sir Ralph, as he was called, lived for over a century this connection is not helpful in dating the building.

⁶⁵ A very faint diaper of stars and letters.

⁶⁶ Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 67, no. 298. A 19th-century visitor observed that the intersecting tracery of the east window shown in this picture looked restored and was 'Caroline?': A. Beesley, *The History of Banbury* (1841), 118.

⁶⁷ The existing jamb mouldings (cut from the local ironstone) are evidently not Perpendicular in style, nor are they 19th-century because the existing tracery, which Buckler's drawing shows to be new, is cut from a very pale stone: they are probably original therefore.

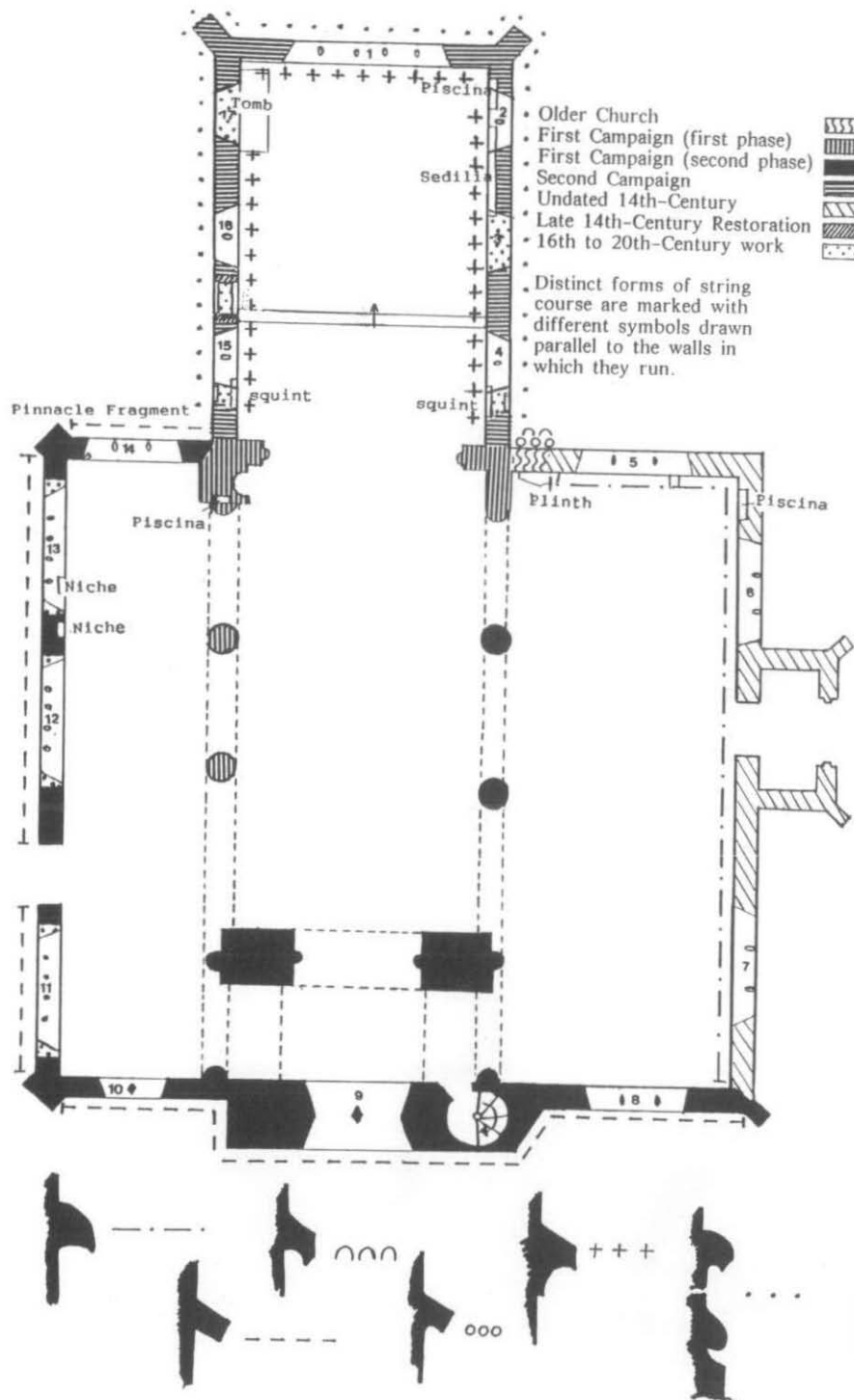


Fig. 32. St. Peter's church, Hanwell: plan. Not to scale.

all profiles are sketched, not measured.

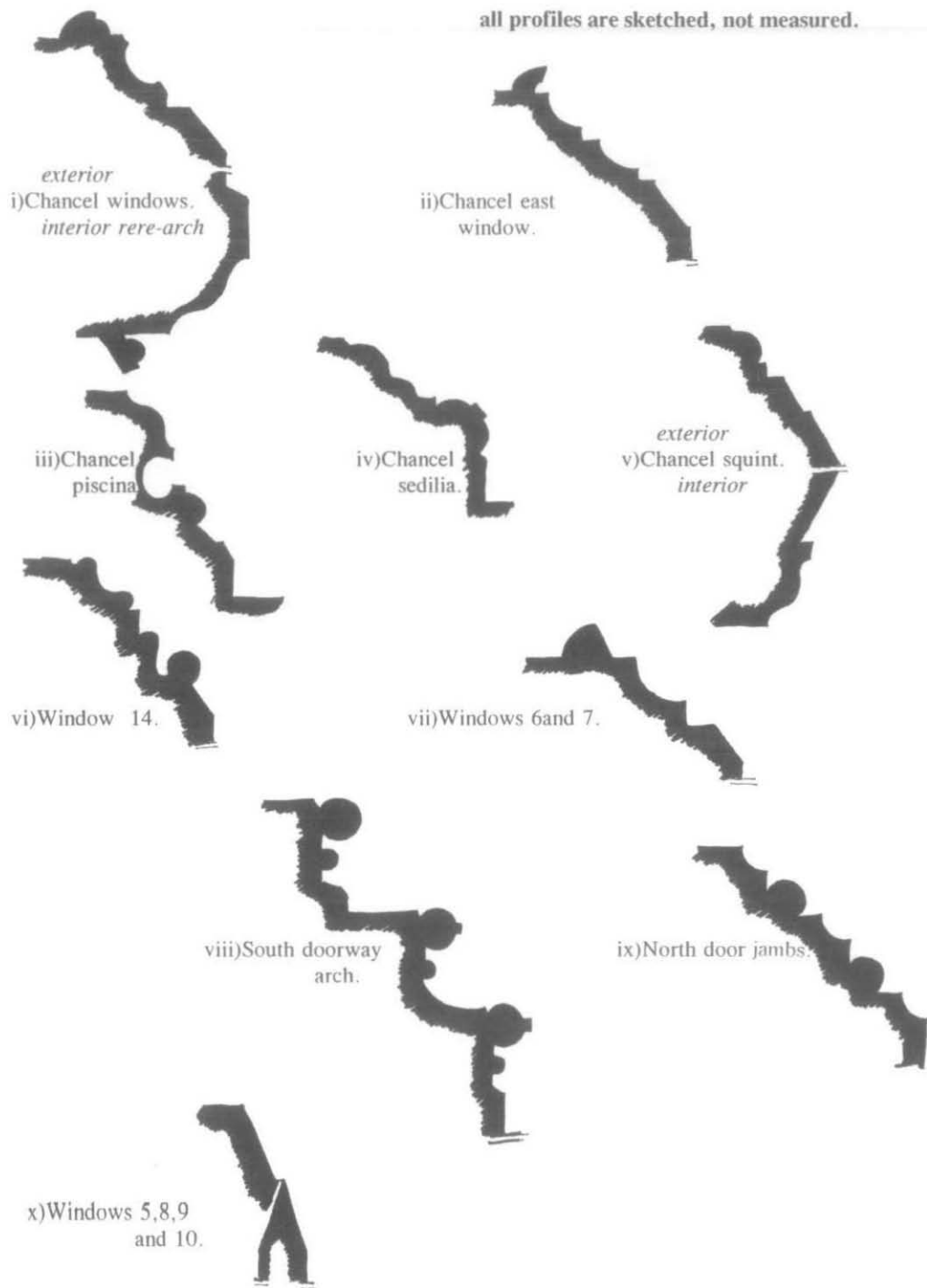


Fig. 33. Hanwell church: moulding profiles.



Fig. 34. Hanwell church from SW.

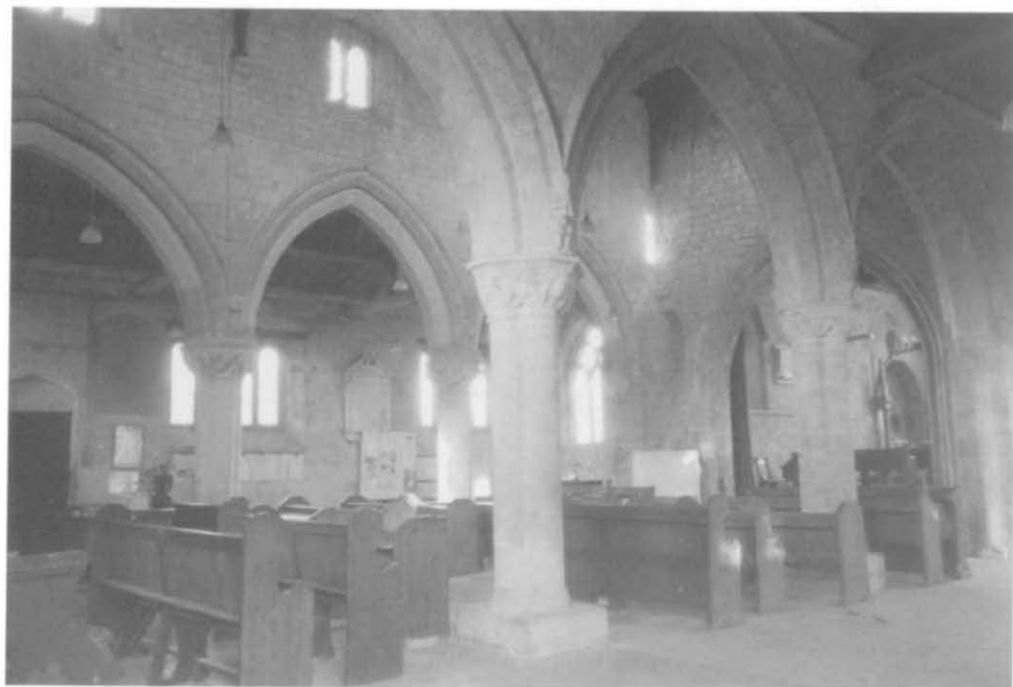


Fig. 35. Hanwell church: interior.



Fig. 36. Hanwell: N capital.



Fig. 37. S capital.

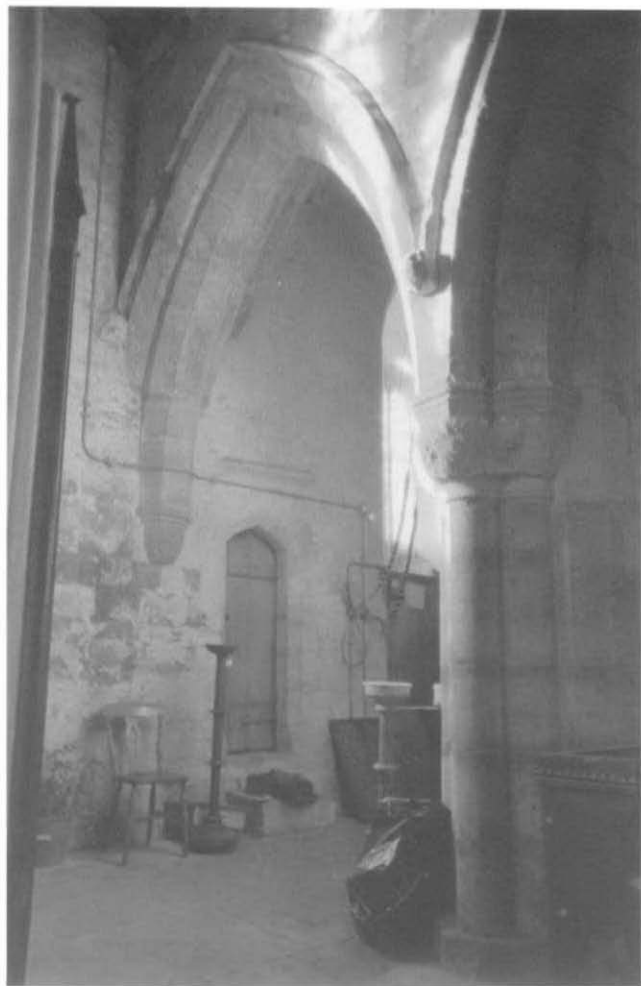


Fig. 38. Hanwell: SW capital.



Fig. 39. NW capital.



Fig. 40a-c. Hanwell: chancel frieze (N). *Top*: E end. *Middle*: middle. *Bottom*: W end.

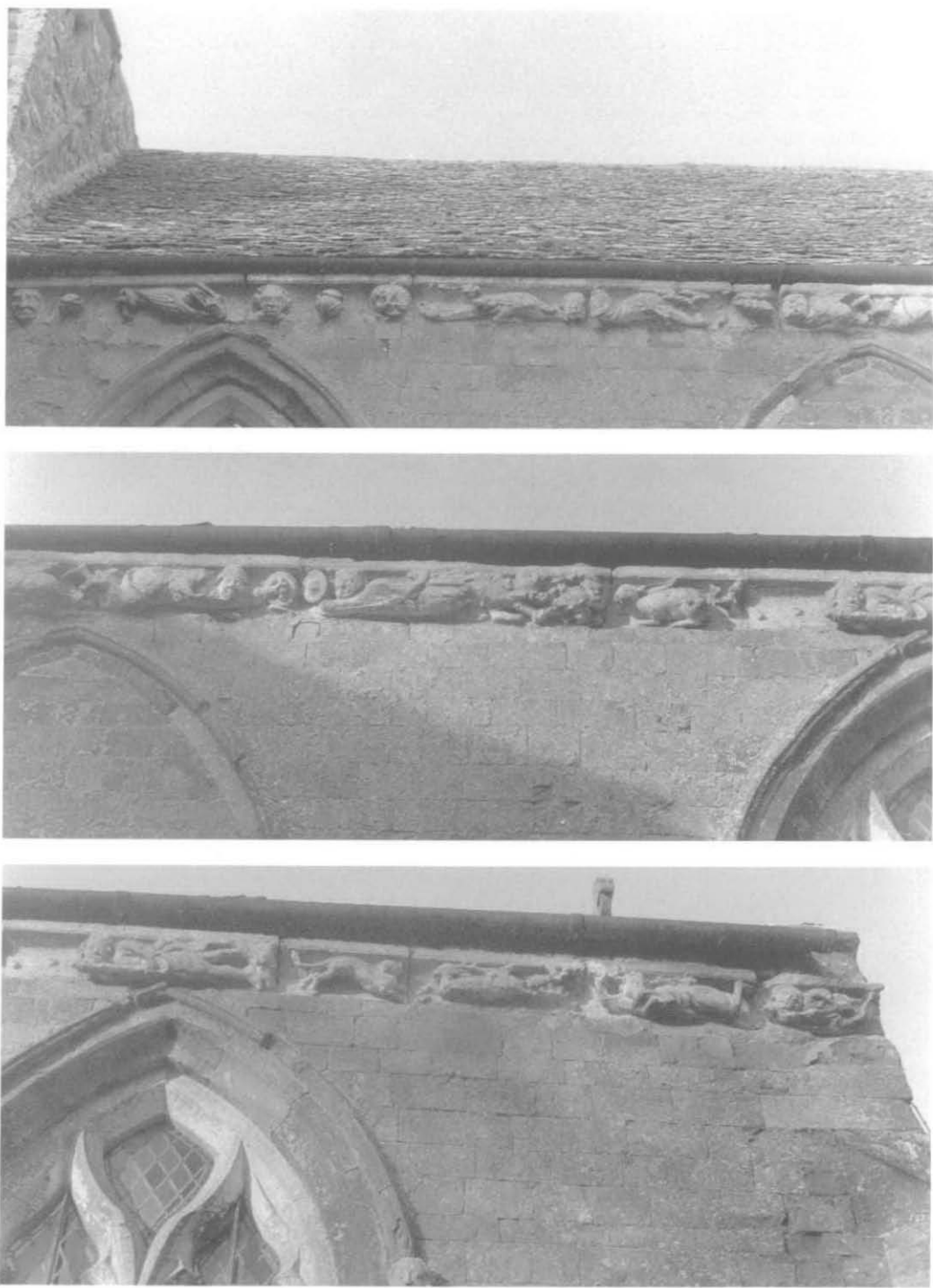


Fig. 41a-c. Hanwell: chancel frieze (S). *Top*: W end. *Middle*: middle. *Bottom*: E end.

contain a wave moulding which appears at Adderbury and Broughton; and their exterior mouldings use a hollow chamfer which is also found in some of the windows at Broughton (Fig. 18.ii, iii.).

These features amount to little more than similarities, certainly not to a direct connection of the kind that evidently existed between Bloxham and Adderbury. They may however suggest that all these churches were drawing from a common architectural background. This might allow a tentative dating of the chancel to the 1320s or 1330s.

The circumstances of Hanwell's construction remain disappointingly elusive. But in view of such close architectural similarities between Adderbury, Bloxham and Broughton, the difference of Hanwell's detailing would strongly suggest that more than one workshop of masons was carving figural corbel tables and capitals. In order to understand why, it is necessary to explore the origins of the sculptural motifs these churches share.

PLAGIARISM AND CREATIVITY: THE ORIGINS OF THE CARVING

C.E. Keyser, writing the only comparative study to date of the corpus of sculpture considered here, discussed it and the carving in two other churches – Alkerton and Brailes – in reverent isolation. He felt that they stood out in contrast to local architecture to such a degree that they could only be the product of an idiosyncratic genius.⁶⁸ But as the discussion of the fabric of these churches has made clear, the sculpture is not the preserve of an individual, rather it was being carved over a long period of time, at the request of different patrons and by different masons. Nor, when one looks harder, is the application of rich sculptural decoration to architectural details like tracery, capitals, friezes and doorways especially unusual in the period – though admittedly Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell have taken this idea to astonishing lengths. These carvings therefore need to be studied in the context of the other local and national architectural developments which gave them birth.

Carved corbel tables were very popular in north Oxfordshire and the adjacent locality in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Quite apart from many small-scale friezes restricted to towers, as at Pilton and St. Peter's Aldwinkle (Northants.) or St. Mary's Oxford,⁶⁹ there are elaborate friezes at Alkerton and Cogges (an interior frieze) in Oxfordshire, Crick and Everdon in Warwickshire, Olney and Emberton in Buckinghamshire, and Brailes, Oundle and Stanion in Northamptonshire, to name but the most notable examples. Our inability to date these accurately makes it impossible to trace the development of the motif with any certainty, but it is interesting that their popularity is paralleled in the mainstream of contemporary architectural fashion.

Both the gatehouse of St. Augustines, Canterbury (completed c. 1308)⁷⁰ and Exeter Cathedral (begun by 1279)⁷¹ have exterior corbel tables of rather staid heads, and the upper

⁶⁸ C.E. Keyser, 'Sculpted cornices in churches near Banbury and their connection with William of Wykeham', *Antiquaries Journal*, iv (1924), 1–10. The thrust of his argument can be summarized without too much injustice as follows: the carving on these buildings is so vivacious and unusual that it must be the product of a genius. There is an initial 'W' on the Adderbury frieze; and William of Wykeham was a young man of genius living in the locality; and so they must be the product of his hands or mind. It has been recognized for some time that this attribution is impossible for a number of reasons, not least chronological ones.

⁶⁹ Friezes of this date on towers are particularly numerous in Northamptonshire where examples include Irchester, Denford, Oundle, Sudborough, Warmington, Brackley, Great Brington.

⁷⁰ *Age of Chivalry* (cat. no. 327), 339.

⁷¹ A.M. Erskine, *Accounts of the fabric of Exeter Cathedral 1279–1353*, Parts 1 & 2 (Torquay 1981). There were several changes in design in the earliest parts of the work, but the complete elevation of the eastern chapels, and therefore their corbel tables, was probably complete by 1288–9: V. Jansen 'The design and building sequence of the eastern arm of Exeter Cathedral', *B.A.A.C.T.*, xi (1991), 38.

chapel of St. Stephen's Chapel Westminster (1292 onwards, see note 62) had an interior cornice composed of squares of foliage and green men. The chapel at Merton College, Oxford (1289–96/7)⁷² also carries a prominent frieze with heads and sprays of foliage – a unique combination in surviving work – running alternately along its south side (Fig. 44).

This parallel development of parochial and 'national' architecture is certainly not coincidental. All patrons wished their commissions to be up to date and there can be no doubt that fashionable architecture was copied at a parochial level to that end. This process of imitation can actually be seen in action in one instance. The above mentioned churches of Olney and Emberton have chancels which are very closely related to one another. They have an exterior corbel table set with heads and sprays of foliage – like modest versions of Merton's corbel table. Both churches also have east windows which would seem to be – with a miniature wheel set in the head of each and curiously designed heads to the main lights – stylized copies of Merton's east window (Fig. 42 and 43); and at Olney there are spherical triangles in the tracery of the side windows – in one configuration almost identical to a Merton window pattern (Fig. 44). The sum of these similarities suggest that Olney and Emberton have tried to copy Merton by imitating its distinctive details.

Fashionable models therefore evidently did play a part in popularizing the motif but since Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell elude such close architectural comparison, and indeed employ a much wider variety of imagery than any great contemporary buildings, what are we to make of their friezes? One possibility of course is that they are modelled on a lost church, but in my view this is neither a satisfactory nor a particularly plausible explanation. Rather it seems that while they were equally indebted to fashionable models, their architecture and detailing is the product of a much more inventive and thorough fusion between it and local architectural tradition.

Though I have drawn attention to carved friezes in the locality from the late 13th century onwards there are occasional examples earlier in the century. These are very modest and are usually restricted to towers at places like Great Brington, Polebrooke (where there is a chancel frieze of grimacing heads) and Spratton in Northamptonshire, or Brize Norton in west Oxfordshire, but they suggest that this tradition of carving is continuous through the century, perhaps even back to the Romanesque tradition of sculptural friezes. Could the example of a building like Merton have stimulated a revival of interest in sculptural friezes and encouraged masons to look back to this established tradition? I have already suggested that the tower of Bloxham may show an awareness of earlier Northamptonshire steeples, so this retrospective quotation of local forms recast in an up-to-date style would not necessarily seem improbable.

Merton may have been one of several local models to pioneer a prominent exterior frieze in the area – so many great churches disappeared in this locality in the aftermath of the Reformation – but it is equally possible that it was the first. The chapel was begun in 1289, the same year that the body of St. Frideswide – Oxford's local saint – was translated to Christ Church. Fragments of the Purbeck Marble shrine cover, thought to have been made for the translation, survive in Oxford Cathedral. They show that the cover was carved with human heads and rich naturalistic foliage. Amongst the fragments there is part of a corbel table which possibly formed the plinth to a structure on top of the main cover.⁷³ This has heads carved onto a trail of foliage (Fig. 45) – could this be the source for Merton's frieze? The passage of ideas from micro-architecture to full-scale architecture is well documented in

⁷² N. Pevsner and J. Sherwood, *The Buildings of England, Oxfordshire* (1974), 160.

⁷³ I am very grateful to Dr. John Blair for making me aware of this.

this period and the quotation of St. Frideswide's shrine on the grand new Oxford college chapel would be most appropriate. Also such a source would explain why Merton, of all the fashionable examples, includes foliage as well as heads in the frieze. If this was the case Merton not only popularized the motif of a prominent external frieze in the locality, it also linked it with shrine architecture, and this connection underpins the further development of the motif in parochial architecture.

Because there was already a tradition of carved corbel tables, Merton's example may have been accommodated more quickly and freely into the local architectural vocabulary. This would explain the rapid increase in the variety of imagery on the friezes to include symbols, musicians, grotesques etc. as well as foliage and heads. Of course there could be equally good reasons for the diversity of display which would hold good if this was the case or not. Corbel tables gave an excuse for promiscuous and fashionable display – good sculpture reflected lavish patronage and gave the opportunity for the incorporation of grotesques, popular in other contemporary art forms, into architecture. (The debts of the imagery on the corbel tables to manuscript and other traditions will be discussed in the concluding section of this study.)⁷⁴

Once a parish church adopted the design successfully, masons and patrons no doubt wished to imitate it. This did not however signal the end of the motif's development. The variables of parochial architecture – the need to tailor each commission to suit the existing church, a patron's whims and his purse – meant that the motif had to be reinvented every time it was used. The tailoring of the friezes is most evident in their subject matter (which will be discussed in the last section of this study) but a good example of the processes in architectural terms can be found in the Coronation of the Virgin scene which both forms a finial of a crocketed window hood (over window 7) and part of the corbel table in Adderbury's north aisle (Fig. 10c).

In one way the conceit is reminiscent of shrine architecture: the shrine base of St. Edburg (1294–1312) from Bicester Priory⁷⁵ – another local saint – has ogee arches with crocketed hoods whose finials break into a corbel table of heads to form an alternating pattern of heads and finials of foliage. (Incidentally, this design may well have inspired the corbel tables at Crick (Northants.) and Astley (Warws.), where the fleur de lys finials of the ogee chancel windows form part of a rather crude corbel table). But the Adderbury window also seems to follow the local habit of carving statue niche finials for window hoods (for example in the east window at Crick or as may have existed over window 4 at Bloxham (Fig. 22)). By fusing these ideas, the mason has created a new one.

This hybridizing of local and court-connected architectural models is also apparent in the

⁷⁴ It is just possible that the corbel table on Exeter Cathedral also had an influence in Oxfordshire, though the evidence is tenuous in the extreme. The corbel table on the south aisle of Adderbury church still bears a coat of arms emblazoned with the letter 'W', what appears to be an abbreviation mark stylized into a crozier shape above it and a border bezanty (plate 9d, the second carving from the right; today much damaged). The border bezanty was made popular in English heraldry by the Earls of Cornwall whose feudatories and allies adopted it. The coat of arms at Adderbury is actually bastard heraldry since a letter is not a proper blazon: it probably belongs to a craftsman or merchant and the border bezanty hints at the possibility of some connection with the south-west. Thomas of Witney, an Oxfordshire man, was master mason at Exeter in the 1330s and, rather more intriguingly, the fabric rolls of the cathedral mention a certain Thomas of (variously) Abbedesbiri, Abbedesbyry and Abbodesbiri at work as a mason. (A.M. Erskine, op. cit. note 71, pt.1, 175–195). Adderbury itself appears spelt in other contemporary records variously as Abberburi, Abdesburi and Eadburbury (to quote just three examples).

⁷⁵ N. Coldstream, 'English Decorated Shrine Bases', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, cxxix (3rd Series xxxviii) (1976), 19; and also in *The Decorated Style* (1994), 44.

unusual tracery patterns found at Adderbury and Bloxham. The influence of Merton is again evident in these tracery designs, most particularly in window 5 at Bloxham which has a foliage finial carved into the tracery of its central light (Fig. 30). Such a detail is highly unusual and has few parallels – St. Albans, Barnack (Hunts.), Merton (Fig. 42) and, probably inspired by this latter example, Dorchester Abbey (Oxon.).⁷⁶ The Bloxham example matches Merton closely: its crocket forms the finial of an arch set within the main light in the manner found in the college chapel's east window. But the links between the tracery types at Bloxham and Adderbury and Merton do not end here.

Given the relationship between Merton and Dorchester, it is also interesting to note that the most famous contemporary examples of tracery inhabited by figural carving are found in that abbey's windows. Though the sculptural display at Dorchester is internal, and illustrates the narrative of the glass,⁷⁷ it may well be generically related to the 'Head of Christ' windows at Adderbury and Bloxham. Its connection with them is illustrated by the unusually rich five-light east window of Wellingborough church in Northamptonshire (Fig. 43). This window, perhaps dating to the 1320s if one were to judge by the rather stiff trefoil decoration, also seems to look towards Merton for its inspiration: like Merton's east window it has a roundel filled with three trefoils in the centre of its head, elaborate sub-cusping, and a central light with an inner arch. (Incidentally this overall design of tracery – a roundel filled with three spherical triangles above five lights with inner arches – found at Wellingborough, also appears in the earlier chancel of Great Haseley, a church with very strong connections with Merton: see note 27). The window's most unusual feature however is a sequence of heads and sprigs of foliage cut into the exterior mouldings round the entire arch. Given its other similarities this bizarre detail seems likely to be drawn from Merton's frieze – the frieze literally remade to suit a window. The Beasts of the Evangelists have also been sculpted on the outside of the window: two at its bottom corners, and two at the springs of the arch hood. In this feature the Wellingborough window bears close comparison with the 'Head of Christ' window (window 4) at Bloxham which has the evangelists carved onto the exterior of the tracery (Fig. 22). Incidentally the wheel of tracery in the head of both these windows has also been treated similarly – the asymmetrical trefoils in both are closely comparable. Could this window help explain the iconography of the 'Head of Christ' and show that it, like window 5 and the Dorchester windows, belongs to a local school of tracery design that ultimately derived from Merton?

Quite why the Evangelist symbols have been so prominently incorporated at either Wellingborough or around the head of window 4 at Bloxham is unclear, but the 'Head of Christ' in the latter may be explicable in terms of other local tracery designs. There are two other 'Head of Christ' windows which, by their style and architectural context, would seem to belong to the early 14th century – one at St. Giles' (Oxford) and the other at Kidlington

⁷⁶ I am grateful for Tim Ayers' opinion of this matter. He argues in his M.A. thesis on Dorchester that the abbey's east window with its great wheel is probably inspired by Merton. 'The sanctuary of Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire, its design and iconography' (Courtauld Institute M.A. thesis, 1991). I have not researched the matter, but the insertion of pinnacles in tracery may ultimately derive from Rayonnant models (such as those in the side chapels and lower parts of the east end windows at St Urbain at Troyes, begun 1262).

⁷⁷ There are three windows in the east end: on the north side a stem of Jesse; in the east window a Passion cycle and scenes from the life of St. Eustace; and in the south what is probably St. Birinus' funeral procession: *ibid.* Such internal figure sculpture on tracery is almost without parallel in my experience – a much more modest window, in the east end of the north aisle of St. Peter's church, Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire), with a Crucifixion scene of what I would judge the 1330s or 1340s, is the only other instance I have come across.

church (Oxon.), the latter perhaps more specifically dateable to between c. 1317 and 1330.⁷⁸ They are rather plainer than the Bloxham and Adderbury examples but bear close comparison to them, comprising a wheel of ogee arches with a head in the centre set above four lights, and it is tempting to infer that they are all linked together.

The wheel of tracery in the Kidlington and St Giles' windows is reminiscent of that found at Olney and Emberton, so perhaps these also belong to this tradition of figural tracery carving stemming from Merton. But there may be other influences at play too – it is possible that they used two superimposed equilateral triangles as their geometric basis [see fig. 18] and they could therefore be linked directly to that tracery pattern which appears at Bloxham and Broughton. This would provide a link between the designs on the two aisles of Bloxham church which, as I have argued, seem to be executed by the same masons working in very different styles.

Such a development may in turn explain something of the iconography of these windows. The 'Star of David', also known as the seal of Solomon and the shield of David, inherent in both designs, was believed a talisman for protection and the exorcism of spirits.⁷⁹ We know from descriptions of the original glass that the star-shaped windows in Banbury and Broughton contained large amounts of armorial glass,⁸⁰ and it is possible that

⁷⁸ That at St. Giles' is heavily restored and the central head has been re-cut as a ram – a very improbable reconstruction. That the window follows the original design in other respects is shown by a Buckler drawing made in 1804: Bodl. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 32, no. 18. The Kidlington window still looks original, and would anyway be an improbable Victorian invention. Bodl. MS. Dugdale 11 records seven shields in the window. (1) Argent seven amulets Gules (Plescy) (2) Gules a bend Or between seven cross crosslets Or (Bello Campo i.e. Beauchamp) (3) As 1. (4) Or two bends Gules (Harcourt) (5) As 1. (6) Azure three lions Or (Fiennes) (7) Gules three bezants Or (Zouche). Other sources record an eighth Plescy shield. The surviving glass has already been dated to the early 14th century on the grounds of the absence of yellow stain (P. Newton, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi Great Britain*, i (1979), 126), but the heraldry provides more specific dating. The Plescys were lords of the manor in the 13th and 14th centuries – hence the repetition of their arms. None of the other arms have been satisfactorily accounted for by scholars – the families celebrated have no apparent connections with the Plescys or the locality. I would suggest that the key to the display are the Harcourt arms (4), previously misidentified as Maudit (in P. Newton, op. cit., and E.A. Greening Lamborn, *The Armorial Glass of the Oxfordshire Diocese*, (1949)). A certain Sir John Harcourt (ob. 1330) was custodian of Hugh de Plescy when the young man proved his age in 1317 after a sixteen-year minority (*Inquisition Post Mortem*, vi, no. 124). Quite how Sir John acquired this position is unclear – he has no known family connections with the Plescys, and Hugh had been the ward of Sir John Seagrave (ob. 1325) in 1304 (*Calendar of Patent Rolls 1301–7*, 224). Whatever his connection, two of the other shields would fit well into Sir John's political and family nexus: he held fees of Guy Beauchamp, earl of Warwick in 1315 (C. Moor, op. cit. note 18, ii, 183–4) (shield 2), and his grandfather (ob. circa 1280) had married Alice Zouche (Inq. Post. Mort. ii, 173) (7). I can find no apparent explanation for the Fiennes' arms. There is the possibility, though the fact is pure speculation, of an undocumented marriage between them and a local family, possibly the Harcourts: Sir John Fiennes (still alive in 1322) is the first of his branch of the family who is recorded to have land in Oxfordshire (Moor, op. cit. note 18, ii, 22) – perhaps his father married into the Harcourts. Since the heraldry seems to celebrate a short-lived association between the Harcourt and Plescy families in terms of Sir John Harcourt's own particular connections, I would argue that the window was made in the latter's life or at his death in 1330. Sir John's acquisition of the wardship at some stage after 1304 would suggest a *terminus ante quem* to the work but I would tentatively date it rather later: the repeated Plescy arms would imply that a patron of that family was responsible, as would the ambition of the contemporary rebuilding of Kidlington church to which the window belongs – more likely to be undertaken by the lords of a manor than by a guardian. Given the family circumstances it would seem most probable that Hugh de Plescy built the window after he came of age in 1317. I would therefore date the window to between 1317 and c. 1330. All heraldic identifications have been made using C. Humphrey-Smith, *Anglo-Norman Heraldry Two* (1984), and the heraldic indexes in the Royal Society of Antiquaries.

⁷⁹ Cirlot, *A Dict. of Symbols* (1962), 268. On occasion it can be found in manuscripts in rather a suggestive way – decorating the 'D' of 'Domine ne in furore tuo arguas me, neque in ira tuo &c . . .', Gorleston Psalter, B.L. Add. MS. 49622, f. 51r, or in the 'C' of 'Conserua me Domine', Bodl. MS. Douce. 6, f. 42.

⁸⁰ Bodl. MS. Rawl B 440b, ff. 72–3, and Dugdale 11, ff. 152 and 156.

the windows were thought to protect those recorded in them. Perhaps the 'Head of Christ' windows served the same purpose.

If this analysis of the tracery designs is correct therefore, the tracery at Adderbury and Bloxham also falls under Merton's long shadow. As in the case of the sculptural friezes Merton's example has been elaborately adapted and its features blended with conceits from the local architectural tradition. This approach reflects the evident desire of local masons to treat their models, not as unalterable paragons of style, but as the starting point for new ideas.

By a way of a postscript to this discussion of the origins of these sculpted tracery and corbel table motifs, I would also like to suggest one other possible subsequent stage in their development. The chantry chapel of Lady Grey at Cogges Priory (Oxon.), probably built in the 1440s, has already been listed as possessing a figural frieze.⁸¹ Carved with slightly crudely cut figures of animals and monsters (playing instruments and fighting) and set beneath the roof on the interior of the chapel, this frieze does not compare with the work on the north Oxfordshire churches very closely. Nor does the chapel's tracery – the side windows are square-headed and the east window follows an elaborate curvilinear design of four lights under a four point arch. One odd detail however might make the combined appearance of a figural frieze and rich tracery designs seem significant in the present context. The exterior hood of the east window, as well as having two large stops carved as male heads, also has the very unusual feature of a prominent bearded head with a halo set at its apex. Might this be another 'Head of Christ' window re-adapted to suit changing tastes in tracery design? If that is the case – and the argument is admittedly tentative – its appearance alongside a corbel table becomes far from coincidental. Far from coincidental too would be the occurrence of rich sculptural displays in the context of windows in two nearby churches that have been associated with Cogges for the close resemblance of their tracery patterns: Ducklington and Witney. The former has tombs set in the window of the north transept and a modest exterior corbel table of human and animal heads; the latter a very bizarre sculptural program relating scenes from the life of the Virgin set beneath the roof and in the tracery (a coronation of the Virgin scene) of the interior of the north aisle. These displays need not be directly linked to the north Oxfordshire group, but they may be generically related to it and, like them, look back ultimately to Merton for the seeds of their ideas.

The last decorative feature which requires discussion is the figural capital. There are a large number of late 13th- and early 14th-century examples of figural capitals which testify to the popularity of the motif in the locality. They seem to take a number of distinctive forms. Firstly, capitals with a line of heads set round them: these appear for example at Steeple Barton in the early 14th century and in the south arcade of Woodstock, which has a number of faces set in the stiff leaf foliage of the capitals. Secondly, busts with arms which touch or overlap but which do not entwine as at Hanwell: two other early 14th-century examples can be seen at Ludgershall (Bucks.) and Hampton Poyle. Thirdly, four human heads as exist on the north aisle capital at Adderbury where the faces are set in foliage. This has parallels at Ludgershall (Warws.), Steeple Barton and Bampton, where the figures of saints on the late 13th-century spire stand on capitals composed of grotesque heads. Finally, capitals which represent figures from the torso up with linked arms as are found on the

⁸¹ For photographs, dating and a full discussion of this building see J. Blair and J. Steane, 'Investigations at Cogges, Oxfordshire 1978–81, the Priory and Parish Church', *Oxoniensia*, xlvii (1982); most germane to this discussion are 91–5 and appendix C.

north aisle capital at Bloxham and the south aisle capital at Adderbury. The Bloxham capital is the only one of a number of these capitals – found also at Ludgershall (Warws.) and Drayton – not to portray knights.

Despite their different forms, the examples in the north transepts at Adderbury and Bloxham could be plausibly understood as friezes cut onto capitals. Adderbury's carving of heads set in foliage is reminiscent of what had become a common style of shrine and micro-architectural corbel table in which heads were interspersed with the finials of crocketed hoods that obtruded between them (for example as has been described above on St. Edburg's shrine). Truncate this design by removing the hoods – a sequence of arches would be hard to fit on a column – and the Adderbury capital might be the result. Bloxham's capital too perhaps looks to shrine models – St. Edburg's shrine has a female head crowned with flowers in its corbel table that is virtually identical to that on the Bloxham's north aisle capital (Fig. 23c).

There are obvious parallels between a chapel and a shrine which would make this kind of quotation – if it is the one being made – most apposite, but where did the idea of making it in this way come from? The Bloxham capital provides one possible explanation. In carving its figures with intertwined arms it may suggest that these capitals were combining decoration from shrine bases with a conceit from the local architectural vocabulary. As mentioned, there are three other examples of capitals with entwined arms, all of which portray knights. Though the form does occur in churches with other figural capitals, the motif of entwined arms is never reproduced twice in the same church.

It is pure speculation, but this could imply that these capitals marked something specific within the building – perhaps lost family chapels or tombs. The example in the south aisle at Adderbury would certainly seem to accord with this interpretation. Simply by changing the kinds of figures represented – to types borrowed from shrine architecture – the Bloxham capital could identify a chapel which was not associated with a family but a saint. This reference to shrine architecture is possibly being made more explicitly at Adderbury, and perhaps also in the context of other local ideas – is it coincidental that the similar pedestals on the spire at Bampton support the statues of saints?

The quantity of figural capitals at Hanwell and their situation precludes such an explanation. Here none of the capitals have interlocking arms and it is possible that the local tradition of figural carving was being influenced by corbel figure carving. Figural corbels were becoming popular in the early 14th century⁸² and the work at Hanwell closely resembles corbel carving in some ways: the figures have been carved as though they were standing back to back in the cylinder of the column, bent over by the weight of their burden and pressing their hands against the rim of the column to support themselves.

The sculpture at Hanwell, Bloxham and Adderbury then is the product of a complicated synthesis of the masonic tradition of the area and court-connected architecture. Its eclecticism did not create a sterile half-caste version of architecture which was neither sufficiently polished to be grand or crude enough to be pleasingly rustic. Rather it inventively fused the two, but in such a way that the relationship between them was continually being reassessed. The result was a rapid development and a varied interpretation of forms – a fact which can also be seen in a study of the meaning and subject matter of the sculptures themselves.

⁸² For a case study see N. Coldstream, 'Fourteenth-Century Corbel Heads in the Bishop's Palace, Ely', in F.H. Thompson (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Sculpture* (1983), 165–76.

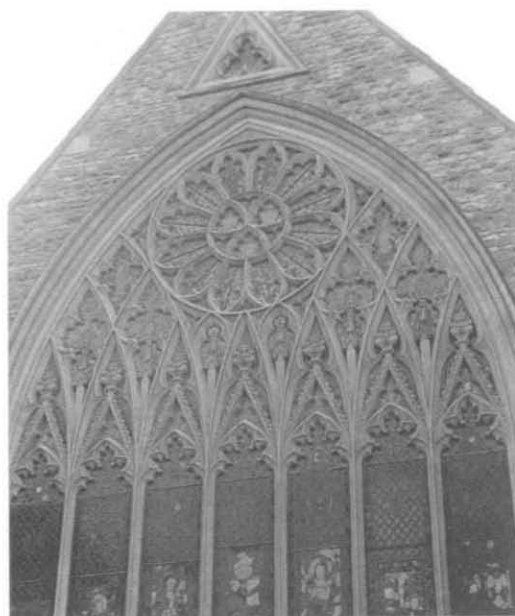


Fig. 42. Merton College chapel: E end.

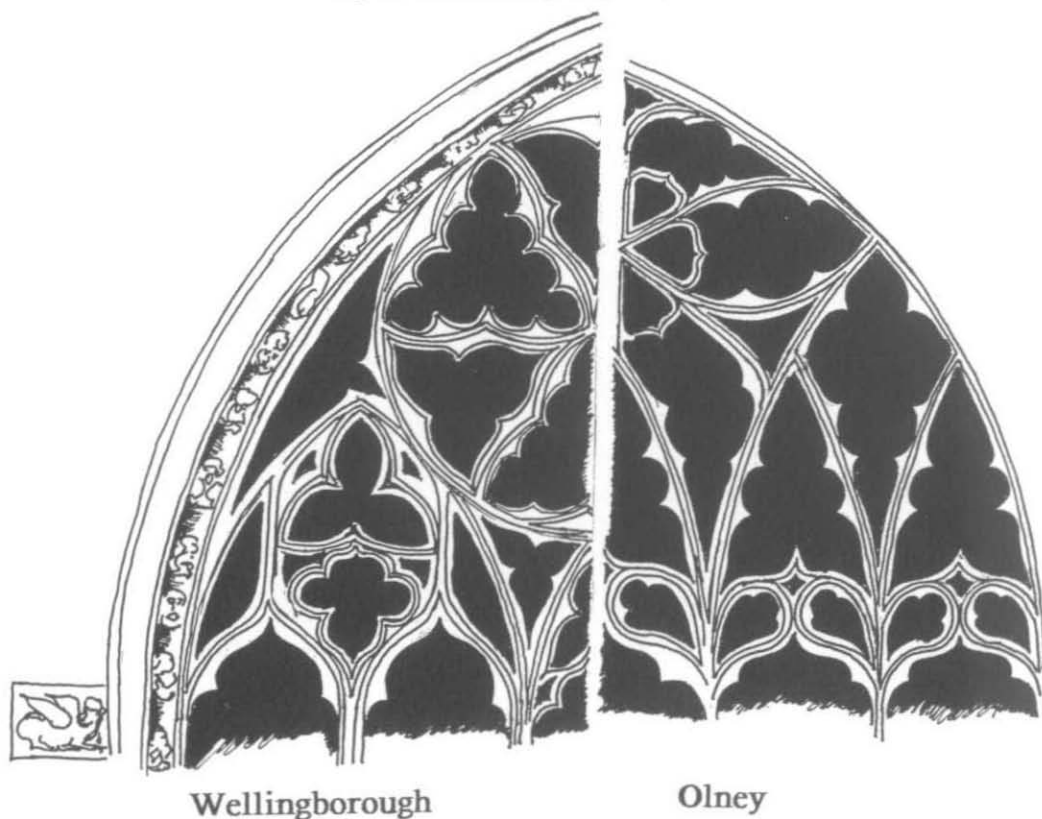


Fig. 43. Wellingborough (Northants.) and Olney (Bucks.); tracery.

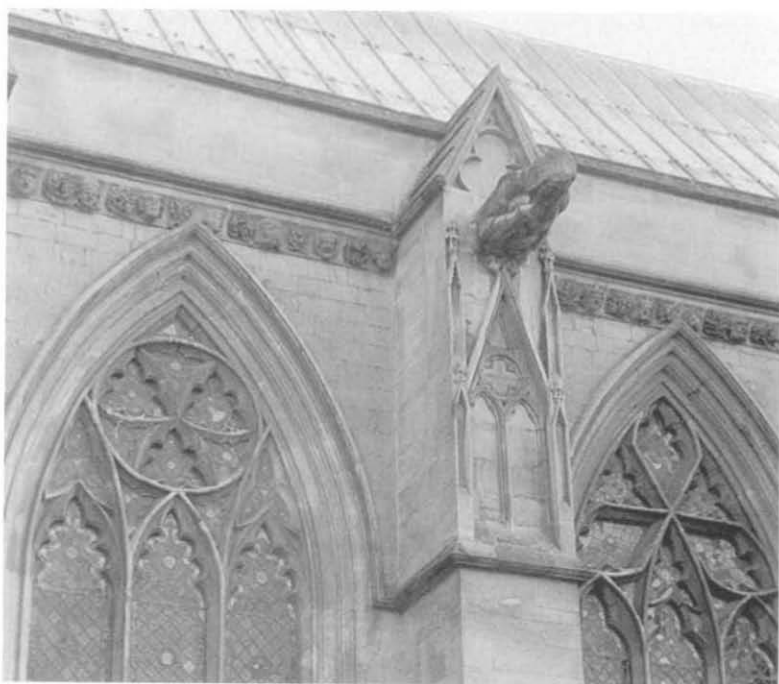


Fig. 44. Merton College chapel: frieze.



Fig. 45. Oxford cathedral: Frideswide frieze.

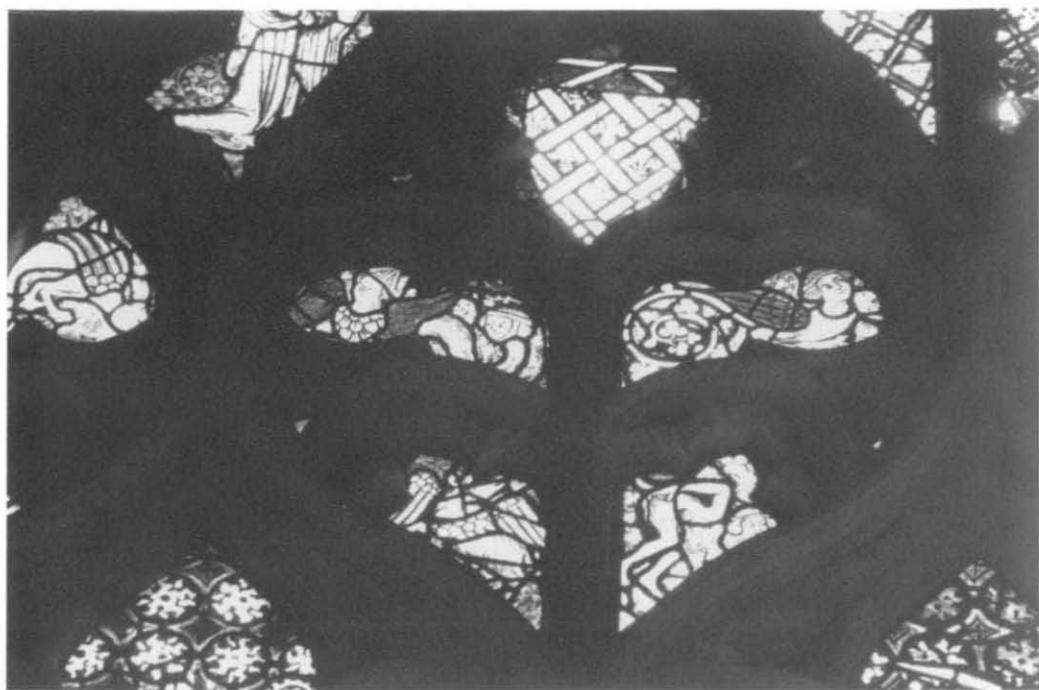


Fig. 46. Oxford Cathedral: glass in St. Lucy chapel.

THE SCULPTURE AND ITS MEANING

In discussing the architectural origins of the sculpted friezes this study has largely ignored the question of their function and iconography. Why was such a diversity of imagery – fantastic monsters, floral designs, symbols, grotesques, and scenes of human and animal activity – considered necessary or desirable for exterior sculptural display? Did it serve a purpose? The sculpture seems to reflect a contemporary fashion for curious, ludicrous or grotesque imagery which can be encountered in all contemporary art forms from stained glass to floor tiles and from musical instruments to metalwork. Though treated until recently as a lavish form of decoration, this genre of art has become the subject of considerable scholarly attention which has demonstrated its importance to our understanding of the works of art it is applied to.⁸³

The work of interpreting this sculpture is fraught with difficulties, not least because it has lost much of its contemporary context that might have been critical to an appreciation of its

⁸³ Most famous is M. Camille, *Image on the Edge* (1992). Together with G. Hamburger's review in *Art Bulletin*, lxxv (1993), 319–27, it forms a good introduction to this subject and its enormous bibliography. Camille's work has gained currency by being provocative and accessible but it should not be allowed to eclipse other considered and thorough approaches to the subject. L. Randall gives an interesting introduction to the genre in manuscripts along with an index of marginal images in *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (1966) and of particular relevance in an architectural context is V. Sekules, 'The Sculpture and Liturgical Furnishings of Heckington Church and related Monuments: Masons and Benefactors in early 14th-century Lincolnshire' (Univ. of London Ph.D. thesis, 1990). I am very grateful to Margot McIlwain for her suggestions on reading this section.

meaning: paint work,⁸⁴ the original furnishings of the church and other imagery in statuary and glass.⁸⁵ These losses are important because, as will be discussed, this genre of art is referential in its meaning – the full implications of this will become apparent, but essentially what I mean is that it derives its meaning from its context.

This process of reference can be most clearly understood in manuscript art where marginalia – as the genre is here termed – survives in its original context. Alongside a text marginal illustrations were not just pictures, but could serve as glosses at the same time, wittily illustrating an idea in a passage by depicting or parodying it. The reason that marginalia were misunderstood as decoration is that their terms of reference to the text are potentially very broad.

Whatever the sophistications of an individual's outlook on the world in the Middle Ages, there was a belief in the transcendence of divine order. Order was apparent everywhere: in the structure of society, in the natural orders of creation and in the hierarchies of heaven. But the notion of all-encompassing order demanded a similarly complex conception of chaos – a vision of what God's order preserved the world from. In fact everything in creation had a chaotic counterpart, and it is this fact that marginalia seem to play upon: because of this law of opposites there were two ways of portraying any given subject – it could be depicted as it appeared in God's creation, or as it existed outside it; its negative persona as it were.⁸⁶ It was this fact that grotesque and ridiculous imagery played upon – it represented nature by parodying or inverting it. By themselves these images might be amusing, but when juxtaposed to a text, which of course was ultimately concerned with the same theme as the marginalia – the truth of God's order – they took on a new resonance. Because both text and picture were celebrating the same subject, the reader is challenged to explain how the bizarre image reflects the truth of the text it illustrates. The paradox that reality could be depicted through fantasy meant that marginalia could accommodate amusing or incongruous images which made this process more diverting.

This interpretation of marginalia as a deliberately convoluted intellectual game may seem to trivialise it and I should not wish to do that, but simply to emphasize its ability to convey profound truths without recourse to solemnity. Also that in doing so it defies straightforward explanation, being at once fantastical but real, decorative but meaningful, relevant but irrelevant. It flirts with the onlooker, demanding his attention, offering construction, but eluding definitive explanation. This does not make matters easy when it is being discussed, but if the playfulness and the countless interpretations which could be imposed on the imagery are taken for granted as being part of their importance, it is possible to try discussing it in a different manner.

The multifariousness of marginalia was useful in practical terms because it could be tailored to suit the aesthetic, iconographic and financial needs of any commission. A patron might wish to give prominence to a theme in his work in order to emphasize a particular idea or make some iconographic association. Because marginalia could be interpreted on many different levels anyway, this was not a reduction but an enhancement of the art form, and a means of giving it

⁸⁴ There is no proof that it was painted but it does not seem unlikely in view of the medieval habit of painting exterior sculpture. It may also have been labelled in paint to clarify iconography. For an interesting example of a head which, but for its surviving identifying inscription, would probably have been considered a generic exterior grotesque see V. Sekules 'Beauty and the Beast: Ridicule and Orthodoxy in architectural Marginalia in early 14th century Lincolnshire', *Art History*, 18 (1995), 46.

⁸⁵ Either freestanding in niches – for example on Bloxham tower and north aisle – or attached to tracery in the manner distinctive of Adderbury's and Bloxham's windows. Could there have been more such windows at Adderbury?

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the terms and limits of this imagery see L. Sandler, 'Reflections on the construction of Hybrids in English Gothic Marginal Illustration', *Art the Ape of Nature: Studies in Honour of H.W. Janson* (1981), 55–62.

an added importance and coherence that it might otherwise lack. Some of the friezes on these churches seem to show evidence of such themes, and it is these that I would like to discuss.

But before doing this it is important to consider how the emphasis of the sculpture on these churches might differ from marginalia. A church, unlike a page, can be entered and it physically contains Christ in the form of the consecrated host. Lining its exterior with grotesques was one way perhaps of emphasizing the sacred character of the building: it was a visual statement that evil was actually displaced from it. The sculpture could also serve another purpose. In the Middle Ages images were believed, in some sense, actually to be the objects they represented; they were not simply lines on a page or shapes in stone but could be suffused with the power of their models. Hence the veneration of images; the individual was not simply praying to stone and paint – that would be idolatrous – but to the saint or divinity which they represented that had somehow become manifest in the image.⁸⁷ When considered in this light, these friezes are actually alive: frightening beasts might scare away spirits, and staring faces forever watch the exterior of the church and protect it from harm. At Hanwell for example it is probably not coincidental that the friezes above the chancel squints are set with heads which stare out over passers-by (Figs. 40c and 41a). It is probably intended that these windows which once afforded a view of the consecrated host should be perpetually watched by these guardians.

The interpretation of some of the friezes must be left at this. The tower and south aisle friezes at Adderbury, while evidently delighting in the decorative possibilities of monstrous, floral, human and animal carving, show no sign of greater sophistication in the form of a theme. This is not to say they never had any, but rather, the evidence or understanding to see it is lost. This is not true of the other friezes, albeit that it is not always possible to do more than guess at what the common theme might have been.

In some instances the parish liturgy might have helped determine the subject matter and iconography of the frieze – for example in the case of the north aisle frieze at Adderbury. As has been described it portrays monsters, musicians, a scene from the life of St. Giles, and the Coronation of the Virgin – the latter scene filling a finial decoration of a window which juts into the frieze [see fig. 10]. At a first glance the figures of musicians and monsters appear to have been set alternately down the frieze, but the pattern is actually broken in four places: at the western end of the aisle, where three musicians are crushed together, at the eastern end where six monsters appear together, and around the scenes of St. Giles and the Coronation of the Virgin. The former replaces an instrumentalist in the sequence, being itself set between two monsters, while the latter is set between two musicians.

Though this disposition of figures may not seem particularly rigorous it throws up some curious juxtapositions which may be deliberate and which would suggest that the Coronation of the Virgin scene is the focus of the frieze. The Coronation is frequently depicted in the period with surrounding angelic musicians, and in the frieze it appears between a harpist and viol player, the two instruments most favoured for ecclesiastical use. Each alternate carving working outwards on the frieze is also a musician. One possible reading of the frieze is that all the musicians, and the legend of St. Giles which takes the place of one in the sequence, were intended to be read with the Coronation scene as an apposite addition to its iconography (musicians and a saint in attendance of the Virgin), their 'goodness' thrown into relief by the evil monsters interspersed between them.

⁸⁷ This belief in the potency of imagery was not limited to the religious sphere of life either. There was a belief for example that a woman in the act of adultery who imagined her husband would mother his child rather than her lover's: M. Camille, *Image on the Edge* (1992), 90.

Incidentally this association of the instrumentalists with the Coronation would also explain the irregularities in the design: because the scene is towards the western end of the aisle it was necessary to fit more musicians in at that end to match the numbers on the eastern end of the frieze – hence the omission of alternating monsters at that end.

This iconography might have had a liturgical dimension, because Adderbury church was dedicated to Our Lady, and we know that in late medieval tradition various feasts like Palm Sunday were celebrated with a procession beginning at the church cross, usually situated on the north side of the church.⁸⁸ Adderbury's churchyard cross no longer exists, but if it was on the north side of the church this carving may have faced it and formed an appropriate backdrop for such ceremonies. A later 14th-century parallel for this kind of iconography can be found at Exeter Cathedral. The minstrels' gallery above the nave arcade contains an array of angels playing instruments. Directly below it were two statues – now destroyed – of the patrons of the church, Our Lady and St. Peter. The Palm Sunday responses were sung from this gallery to the procession which stopped beneath it while half inside and half outside the church.⁸⁹

If this interpretation is correct there may be another theme suggested by this frieze. Though the viol, harp, gittern, organ and trumpet (complete with crosses on its pennon) might all refer to instruments used in church processions, other instruments are more secular in character – the bag pipes, hurdy-gurdy and drums, the latter played by a jester. On the surface this would seem very inappropriate to the religious theme of the frieze, but it may be a way of emphasizing the chasm between humanity and heaven. These men celebrate a celestial coronation but are themselves gross, not divine. Though we may associate them with the scene in heaven, they truly belong amidst the monsters that they share the frieze with.⁹⁰

In the light of the possible significance of the Adderbury frieze it is interesting to note the clustering of musicians over the Last Judgement portal in the tower at Bloxham – there are four musicians on the west and south-west sections of its frieze, and a pipe and tabor player surmounting its north-west corner buttress. As has been discussed, this organization of musicians on the exterior of a western tower finds earlier parallels at Raunds and Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire. Such displays set on a steeple would also have been well suited to the Palm Sunday procession when the priest leading his parishioners symbolically entered the church with his congregation in a metaphor for Christ's entry at once into Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Heaven. Given the connection between the masons on both commissions, might the Adderbury frieze be an adaptation of such a traditional local tower iconography which was reproduced more conventionally at Bloxham?

Because these parish churches were the focus for the life of the village community, these friezes may also have been intended to be morally instructive. Just as depictions of vices could be painted in the interior of churches, so these exterior carvings may have been intended to depict particular evils and serve as warnings to parishioners.⁹¹

⁸⁸ E. Duffy, *Stripping the Altars* (1992), 23.

⁸⁹ E. Prideaux, *The Carvings of Musical Instruments in Exeter Cathedral Church* (1915), 8.

⁹⁰ In some instances the representation of instrumentalists may be intended as an attack on disturbances in churchyards during secular festivities. This may constitute yet another layer of meaning in the frieze. V. Sekules, *op. cit.* note 84, 47–8.

⁹¹ For a fuller discussion of an architectural audience see Sekules, *op. cit.* note 84, 38. The exempla that illustrated sermons were popular sources for manuscript marginalia (L. Randall, 'Exempla as a source of Gothic Marginal Illumination', *Art Bulletin*, xxxix (1957), 97–107), so it is possible that some of these carvings also look to the same source and were intended to be overtly didactic.

Hanwell juxtaposes images in a way that might reflect such an intention. On the north side a man leads the hounds out to the chase (Fig. 40c). Next to this is a mermaid with two fishes in her hands – according to the Bestiaries an image which represented the capture of souls (the fishes) through the pleasures of life. This in turn faces a sculpture of a hare riding a hound. Could this be a parody of the hunt to which the neighbouring man is proceeding, or a mockery of the other two hunting scenes which appear on the opposite side of the chancel (Fig. 41b and c)?⁹²

Also on the north side of the chancel there is a knight holding a triangular shield. His legs are crossed in what might be a loose imitation of a funeral effigy and he is fighting a monster (Fig. 40a). A similar scene (now smashed) which showed a monster being attacked by a minute figure appeared further down the frieze. Possibly these represent the struggle against sin – the former at death, the latter in life.

The other figures are open to countless similar interpretations of which a few should be rehearsed to give an impression of the symbolism that might be being employed: another smashed figure may have represented a camel – what could be the remains of an hump can still be seen on the north side – credited in the Bestiaries for its humility. The dragon appears (Fig. 41a) with his symbolically knotted tail – the entangling vices of the world.⁹³ Reynard the Fox is chased by the farmer's wife along the north side of the chancel as he steals Chauntecleer the cock – a very popular scene in contemporary art and a fable which could be used to illustrate most human vices, especially pride. Facing, and possibly related to it, is an ape (often a foil for Reynard's tricks) who peers through the vine leaves eating grapes (or perhaps biting his nails in anticipation of the chase's outcome) (Fig. 40a and b).

The carvings on the north aisle of Bloxham (Fig. 21) may also be concerned with vice and sin. They appear to follow a more rigorous organization than those on the chancel at Hanwell. The trumpeter at the east end of the frieze heralds the display: portrayed from the waist up he leans out from the frieze at right angles and sounds his instrument in its direction – a reference perhaps to the biblical notion of the trumpets of the law or the Last Trumpet. As if to complement the trumpeter, another half figure peers from behind some leaves at the western end of the frieze to signal its end.⁹⁴

The body of the frieze is composed of monsters and scenes of activity interspersed with squares of foliage. The use of the foliage here is very intriguing. On the roughly contemporary work on the south aisle at Adderbury foliage and figures are alternated along the length of the frieze (at the east end of the frieze a pentalpha symbol and a coat of arms replace the flowers in this alternating sequence). In only one place is this organization relaxed: a dragon (Fig. 9b) and what appears to be a portrait of its head are set together. The implication is that this is supposed to be read as one motif and the foliage is literally being used to punctuate the frieze.

The foliage at Bloxham is not so regularly disposed but it does seem to be of some significance: not only does the frieze begin and end with foliage – the first piece comes after the trumpeter and the last at the westernmost end where it combines with a human figure

⁹² M. Camille has argued that images of everyday life in the Luttrell Psalter are representations of an idealized social order: "Labouring for the Lord"; the ploughman and the social order in the Luttrell Psalter, *Art History*, x (1987), 423–54. The hunting scenes at Hanwell could be socially didactic in the same manner, the hunt being of almost ritualistic importance to the nobility.

⁹³ A. Payne, *Medieval Beasts* (1990), 82.

⁹⁴ A very similar figure appears at the end of the roughly contemporaneous frieze on the east side of Adderbury's south porch.

which peers from behind it – but one motif of two figures which is certainly meant to be read as one – the two men fighting – is bracketed with foliage. If it is being used here as punctuation, its division of the other subjects into seven groups is likely to be significant – perhaps a reference to the number of virtues and vices.⁹⁵

Unfortunately, though there may be a precise iconography being applied here, I have not been able to unravel it. But the themes of sin or vice do seem to be implied in some of the sculptures: a cat playing with a mouse, a dragon, a fox whispering in a woman's ear and, in another scene, playing chess with a rabbit(?). The cat and the mouse were described in the Bestiaries as metaphors of the devil hunting souls and the dragon as representing the evils of the world, entangling and poisoning men.⁹⁶ The activities of the guileful fox immediately suggest deception: the fox and the rabbit (often portrayed as a gullible creatures in stories of Reynard the Fox) playing chess is perhaps a parody of the common motif of lovers playing board games or a symbol of the folly of games,⁹⁷ and his whispering to a woman would suggest evil council offered to an easily beguiled victim.⁹⁸

Other carvings on the frieze could be similarly construed. There are three separate representations of pigs or hogs (two hogs side by side, a sow with piglets and what could be two hogs copulating). Hogs were described in Bestiaries as wallowing in mud like sinners in their iniquity.⁹⁹ The motif of hens fighting over a worm could be derived from a very ancient Christian iconography of cocks fighting over gold nuggets or between themselves, the cockatrice is described in the Bestiaries as having a deadly stare and the cockerel it faces was attributed with both positive and negative attributes including aggressiveness.¹⁰⁰ As for the lizard-like creature with a tiny figure on its back at the western extreme of the frieze, while it appears very sinister I can find no comparison or explanation for it. Perhaps its situation at the end of the frieze could suggest that it is a soul being carried off to damnation after a life of debauchery.¹⁰¹

The discussion so far has attempted to explain something of the logic behind the decorative imagery found on these churches, how they may be understood in many different ways and therefore be at once functional, decorative and iconographic. What has not been given due emphasis is the variety of ways in which the masons have designed these friezes. This is not a comparison of style or quality but of convention. In this the friezes vary widely: the figures in some are only portrayed from the waist upwards (Adderbury north aisle and Bloxham tower), in others they appear in their entirety (Hanwell and Bloxham north aisle – though the bracketing figures at either end of this latter frieze are only portrayed from the waist up). Whereas at Adderbury each carving appears to be unaware of its neighbour, at Hanwell or Bloxham tower different figures interact to portray 'scenes' of life, and on Bloxham's north aisle several figures are marshalled together into a single carving to the same end.

⁹⁵ The seven vices are pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth.

⁹⁶ Op. cit. note 93: the cat, p. 58, the dragon, p. 82.

⁹⁷ B.L. MS. Stowe 17, f. 111v: for example portrays the raving loser of a game of chess being seized by the Devil.

⁹⁸ Interestingly, I have found no manuscript parallels for this though there are examples of the fox whispering over the shoulder of a hare to deceive him – for example, B.L. MS. B.B.R. 10607, f.86 – a similar theme.

⁹⁹ G. Druce, 'The Sow and Pigs: a study in metaphor', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xlv (1933), 1–7. Druce points out that despite their unfavourable descriptions, the Bestiaries never portrayed swine actually wallowing in mud. They either provided straightforward drawings of them or, more unusually, depicted sows suckling piglets. Accordingly, though these carvings may appear innocuous it may be that mere representation of pigs conveys a moral message.

¹⁰⁰ B. Rowland, 'The Wisdom of the Cock', *The Third International Beast Epic, Fable, and Fabliau Colloquium, Munster*, ed. J. Goosesens and T. Sodmann (Vienna 1981), 340–51.

¹⁰¹ V. Sekules, op. cit. note 84, 56. At Heckington many of the exterior figures are portrayed in the act of sinning and may be awaiting Christ's Judgement, represented on the south porch.

These differences in the conventions of representation and organization are really quite surprising given the common origins of the friezes and I would suggest this variety might be a reflection of the various sources which have been referred to in the creation of these displays.

Marginalia are tailored to harmonize with the lay-out of a page: creatures spring out of letters or fill line spaces. Associations between figures are made apparent by coupling connected objects through a parity of scale, eye contact, or an embracing structure like a letter. The carvings at Hanwell emulate manuscript art in some of these respects: figures are portrayed in their entirety, elegantly filling the space afforded by the corbel table, and carvings that relate to one another – like Reynard the Fox stealing a hen and pursued by the farmer's wife under the watchful gaze of the ape (Fig. 40b) – are commensurate in scale and juxtaposed to make their association clear. It would not be surprising if manuscript art had inspired these, and it is probably no coincidence that the subjects depicted at Hanwell are all common in marginalia: the hunt, fighting men, the mermaid holding two fishes, and men fighting monsters. The same could be said of the 'scenes' of life on the north aisle at Bloxham.

But the rest of the sculpture at Bloxham, and that at Adderbury, is very different in character from this. Here the figures do not harmonize with the architecture but are abruptly chopped in half by it – the depiction of Reynard the Fox being chased by the farmer and his wife on Bloxham tower makes an excellent comparison with Hanwell's treatment of the same theme, and shows just how strange this mode of representation from the waist up is (Fig. 28b). Nor are related figures, like those in the scene from the life of St. Giles on the north aisle of Adderbury (Fig. 10b), necessarily on a parity of scale.

This mode of representation quite probably looks back to that found on the friezes at Merton and St. Frideswide's shrine which, as has been argued, were important architectural sources for this sculptural display. It is pure speculation, but the system of foliage punctuation used on the south aisle of Adderbury and the north aisle at Bloxham may also derive from these models. As we have seen Merton and St. Frideswide's shrine alternate heads and foliage in their friezes, and it is possible that the masons working on the south aisle at Adderbury embellished this convention and that at Bloxham, assuming it was built later, it was further adapted to suit the needs of a more complex iconography.

But this free adaptation of masonic convention may have been encouraged by exposure to yet another source of ideas. As we have seen the masons at Adderbury and Bloxham were involved in the creation of very unusual tracery designs. These also seem to descend from Merton and must have developed in parallel with the motif of prominent exterior friezes. Indeed in two cases friezes and windows are integrally linked: at Wellingborough where the frieze runs round the window frame (see previous section), and at Adderbury where the focus of the frieze, the Coronation of the Virgin scene, is carved onto the finial of a window hood. The iconography of this latter example is established through patterning the images – that is to say by alternating musicians and monsters. The closest parallel to this use of pattern to organize a full-scale iconography is to be found in glass iconography: tracery physically separates the panels of glass in a window but provides a framework into which the various subjects can be positioned in accord with their importance in the iconography as a whole. The logic of glass iconography tends therefore to emphasize the geometric lay-out of parts because individual panels of glass cannot be related together in any other way.

Could the shared interest of the masons in friezes and ornate window design have encouraged an exchange of ideas between the glass and masonic traditions? Though in comparison to manuscripts very little glass has survived with which to make a case, the monsters in the magnificent 14th-century glass in the St. Lucy Chapel in Oxford Cathedral (Fig. 46) – which actually form quite a close comparison with some of the Adderbury, south

aisle monsters – though they may themselves owe much to manuscript art, show that the influence of glass models in creating the conventions and even the imagery of these friezes, is not at all improbable.

These friezes are an immensely complicated creation which could serve many purposes at once. That they could be both functional and decorative would explain why they received such careful and lavish patronage. It probably also explains why they vary so much in character and subject matter – patrons wished them to serve particular purposes, and the masons had to tailor each frieze to suit the specific needs of a commission.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to demonstrate that although the sculpture on the churches at Adderbury, Bloxham and Hanwell is most uncommonly rich and unusual, this fact alone neither helps us understand it, nor illustrates its importance. The sculpture must be understood as part of a local tradition of carving in which the ideas of a sculpted frieze and figural capital had long been current. What distinguishes it is the manner in which it has been enriched with ideas borrowed from fashionable or local architectural models and perhaps even from other crafts like stained glass.

This eclecticism was probably encouraged by many factors, but not least the unusual demands and circumstances of parish church building. Parishes had eccentric needs and patrons were no doubt pressing hard to squeeze the greatest degree of fashionable splendour from their limited stock of money. Workshops too must have been quite small, so workmen of different trades were acting in close proximity, perhaps under the supervision of only a single master craftsman, presumably a mason.

The precise practical circumstances of the construction of these churches unfortunately remains shrouded in mystery. In particular two related questions stand out: how were workshops formed, and how did particular stylistic details gain currency? For example, in the case of the close relationship between Adderbury, Bloxham and Broughton, it is easy to show what constitutes their association – shared details, tracery patterns and mouldings – but impossible to explain the process of how they came to share them. Is it the case, as is just possible given the time scale of about forty years, that they were all built by the same workshop with permanent masons? If so, what happened to it after Bloxham tower was completed? If the workshop was organized on a more casual basis, what explains the coherence of the architectural style as it developed in this tiny geographical area?

It will probably never be possible to answer such questions, but this sculpture is a testament to the skill and sheer flair of these craftsmen. Continually open to new ideas and happy to treat admired details from models with an irreverent familiarity, the work of these masons reflects the sophistication and vigour of parochial art and architecture in this period.

APPENDIX

Trying to describe what some of this sculpture 'represents' seems such a subjective matter that I was inclined just to leave the photographs to speak for themselves. However a brief description of each will probably facilitate even the study of the photographs. Each sculpture in the list is separated from its neighbour by a semi-colon. Some of the lost sculpture visible on earlier photographs in the Conway Library in the Courtauld Institute are also included in the list.

ADDERBURY

*Tower**North face (east to west fig. 7a):*

?King's head; ballflower; bishop's head; jester's head; owl; ?monk; knight's head and shield blazoned with St. George's cross; grimacing (?female) head; ballflower; monstrous face; ?head; head with twisted mouth.

South face (west to east fig. 8):

Head in mail hood; ballflower; dragon with knotted tail; leering face; bird (a peacock?); head; lost; pelican in her piety; grotesque head; head; ballflower.

East face (south to north fig. 6):

Head with wings; bear's head in a muzzle with a hand holding chain; head; ?head; ?knight with shield; head; ballflower; grotesque jester's head; beast with wings and a man's head; grotesque head; animal's head; ?head.

West face (south to north):

Worn away apart from two grotesque heads and a woman's head in a wimple.

South aisle (west to east):

Monster with man's head on his tail; ballflower; monster with man's head and a head on his tail; flower; lost head; flower; woman's head; flower; head; foliage; attached to the legs of a beast with wings and a bird's head; clover or flower; dragon; dragon's head; flower; damaged head; lost ?foliage; jester's head; flower; bell ringer; flowers; two piglets with heads down; sunflower; dog handler with two dogs; bluebells; beast with ox or horse's body and man's head; pentalpha symbol; beast with ox's body and woman's head; coat of arms, what appears to be an abbreviation mark stylized into a crozier shape above it and a border bezanty; man's face.

North aisle (east to west):

Eagle with spread wings; cyclops' head; grotesque woman's head; two heads joined back to back; mermaid with two tails; bird with folded wings; grotesque head between knees; organ player; owl; timbrel or snare drum player; beaked head; bagpiper; monster; [hunter with bow; dog scratching ear; St. Giles with the hind and arrow in knee (St. Giles scene)]; bat; hurdy-gurdy player; two dragons with entwined heads; gittern player; female monster; harpist; Coronation of the Virgin; viol player; monster with scorpion's tail; trumpeter; jester drummer; trumpeter with 5 crosses on the pennon of his instrument; dragon with two bodies; cymbalist; monster two heads – a horse's and a man's.

BLOXHAM

North side (east to west):

Trumpeter; foliage; cat playing with mice; dragon; fox whispering to woman; two pigs; hare under foliage; foliage; two men fighting; foliage; two hens fighting; pig suckling piglets; foliage; copulating pigs; cockatrice; cockerel; foliage; grotesque pulling a face; foliage; fox and rabbit playing chess; grotesque holding urinary jar; foliage; lizard with tiny human figure on its back; foliage with man peering from behind it.

Tower:

West face (Reading from right to left): Ballflower; harpist; ballflower; viol player; ballflower; *NW face*: a torso of a man (? a monopod); [stair turret] man's head; *N face*: Reynard the Fox carrying Chauntecleer and chased by the farmer and his wife with a spindle; *NE face*: beaked monster with wings; face with mouth pulled open; *E face*: unicorn; beast with wings; dragon with knotted tail; *SE face*: animals face; pigs head; bell ringer; gittern player; *S face*: lion; Monkey with phial; king's head; Woman's face with wimple; *SW face*: pipe and tabor player; bagpiper (lost).

HANWELL

North side of chancel from east to west (fig. 40)

Man (? a mason with a hammer); woman with flagon and drinking cup; foliage; monster with wings – bird's legs, a foliage tail and a ?female head; (facing) knight with drawn sword; ape eating and peering from behind vine leaves; (facing) Reynard the Fox with Chauntecleer; the farmer's wife with spindle; monster with man's head and foliage tail; monster with wings, birds legs, a foliage tail and a female head; ? a camel; (facing) a damaged monster with staring human face (once attacked from behind by a small man now lost); hare riding a hound; mermaid with fishes in hands; hunter leading out two hounds; head; ball flower; head.

South side of chancel from east to west (fig. 41.)

Hunter; hunter blowing horn and holding staff; stag; (facing) hound; hunter with staff; lost; hare under cover; fighting man with foliage at feet; (facing) fighting man; monster with lion's body, wings and a man's head; lost; monster with wings, bird's legs, a foliage tail and a bearded head; (facing) monster with wings, bird's legs, a foliage tail and a man's bearded head; head; ball flower; head; dragon with knotted tail; ballflower; man's face.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This piece of work could not have been written without the help and advice of several people. In particular I must thank Richard Morris, my namesake John Goodall, Margot Mcillwain, Linda Monckton, the Goodall family and Tim Ayers. John Blair made many invaluable contributions and suggestions regarding this article and also encouraged me to publish it. My greatest debt however must go to Paul Crossley who oversaw its creation. His meticulous care and constructive criticism have shaped it and purged it of innumerable errors. I am also very grateful for the help of the Conway Library in preparing some of the illustrations for this article.

The Society is grateful to the Greening Lamborn Trust for a grant towards publication of this paper.