

CHAPTER I
EARLIER RESEARCH
by Michael Hare and Richard Bryant

Material from the western Midlands has to date played only a minor role in the study of early medieval sculpture. As in other areas of southern and midland England, much of the sculptural evidence from the area has remained unknown. When J. Romilly Allen and G. F. Browne produced a list of stones in England with interlaced ornament in 1885, they included only a single monument (Cropthorne 1, p. 353) from the five counties covered by this volume (Allen 1885, 351–8). Not long before his death in 1932, Baldwin Brown estimated the number of Anglo-Saxon sculptures known from each county in England (published posthumously as Brown 1937, 102, fig. 13); he was able to list 25 monuments from Gloucestershire, but only 8 from the four other counties together (Herefordshire 2, Shropshire 1, Warwickshire 0 and Worcestershire 5).

The first monuments of early medieval date to receive attention were inscriptions. The dedication inscription of Odda's Chapel at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, was discovered *c.* 1675 and promptly published by Prideaux (1676, 309–10) in his account of the Arundel marbles; through Gibson's 1695 edition of Camden's *Britannia*, knowledge of the inscription reached a wider public (Camden 1695, 245; see p. 190 below). Camden's *Britannia* also provided the inspiration for the Welsh antiquary, Edward Lhuyd, to propose a 'Natural History and Antiquities of Wales' (Redknap and Lewis 2007, 7–10); Lhuyd's work is relevant here, as his travels led him to record *c.* 1698 a now lost inscription from Olchon House, Llanveynoe, very close to the Welsh border in Herefordshire (see p. 291).

The only cross-shaft which was known with certainty to have been standing in the eighteenth century was at Wroxeter (Shropshire). Our knowledge of the Wroxeter cross comes from the papers of the Shropshire antiquary, William Mytton, who was collecting materials for a county history. Between

1732 and 1736 Mytton journeyed round Shropshire with an assistant called James Bowen who produced a large number of drawings of antiquities in the county (Baugh 1994, 338). Mytton's materials (and with them Bowen's drawings) are now dispersed, but two original drawings showing three faces of the Wroxeter cross survive (see Wroxeter St Andrew 1, p. 314, Ills. 792–3); not long after the 1730s, the cross was dismantled and in 1763, the remains were built into the new south wall of the nave (Wroxeter St Andrew 1–3, Ills. 562–9).

Other crosses may have remained standing in the eighteenth century, most notably the Lypiatt Cross from Bisley in Gloucestershire (Bisley Lypiatt 1, p. 143), though probably not on its present site, and the plain Llanveynoe St Peter 3 cross, Herefordshire (p. 289), which was re-erected in the early twentieth century. The Newent cross, Gloucestershire (Newent 1, p. 232) was probably also *in situ*, but had become buried by an increase in the ground-level of the churchyard. These crosses seem to have escaped the attention of early antiquaries. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a local antiquary drew the cross-head at Cropthorne, Worcestershire (Cropthorne 1, p. 353), which he had recently discovered built into the south wall of the chancel, while in Gloucestershire Bigland noted (but misunderstood) the prominent figure of Christ built into the south wall of the tower at Beverstone (Beverstone 1, p. 133).

From the early nineteenth century onwards, but gaining pace in the middle of the century, discoveries began to be made on a piecemeal basis during church restorations, enlargements and other works such as the landscaping of churchyards. An early and well-documented find is provided by the discovery in 1822 of fragments of the Bitton rood, Gloucestershire (Bitton 1–4, pp. 147–50); this case also provides a salutary tale since Canon Ellacombe, who was involved in the work as a young man, gave a

different account of events when writing in the 1880s. At Evesham in Worcestershire, Anne Rudge made a drawn record of exceptional quality of a fragment of interlace discovered in the early nineteenth century (Evesham 1, p. 357). Many discoveries made in the middle of the nineteenth century seem to have gone unrecorded; the grave-markers and grave-covers from Bibury, Gloucestershire, are perhaps a case in point (Bibury 1–4, pp. 134–8). The significance of such discoveries frequently went unrecognised at the time. It was only with the publications of scholars like J. Romilly Allen and G. F. Browne that the distinctive character of Anglo-Saxon monuments became apparent to antiquaries, architects, incumbents and others involved in their discovery and care. Thanks to their pioneering work, it has proved much easier to establish provenance for fragments discovered from the 1880s onwards. Browne did indeed become bishop of Bristol from 1897 to 1914, but though he was responsible for recognising some sculptures in south Gloucestershire, he carried out no serious work on the area.

The publication of discoveries of Anglo-Saxon monuments remained haphazard, taking place sometimes in the major county journals (archaeological societies existed for all five counties by 1877), but on other occasions (if at all) in more obscure local journals or ephemeral guide books. Although every attempt has been made in the context of the present volume to provide adequate provenances, it is likely that further sources will come to light in future for the circumstances in which some fragments were first discovered.

Only in Gloucestershire has sufficient material existed in the past for detailed studies to have been made on a county-wide basis. A first attempt at a synthesis of Anglo-Saxon architecture and sculpture in Gloucestershire was made by Dina Portway Dobson (1933), who also carried out similar work in Dorset in the 1930s (Cramp 2006, 29). Dobson noted a good number of sculptures, and her paper is a useful if by no means comprehensive list of what was known at the time. Some of the carvings carry quite extensive descriptions (for example the Newent 2 ‘pillow stone’, p. 236), and there are some suggested groupings and comparisons. Thirty years later T. F. MacKay (1963) wrote a paper concerning Anglo-Saxon architecture and sculpture in the Cotswolds, mostly using Gloucestershire examples, but also extending into southern Worcestershire and eastern Oxfordshire. This paper reaches a rather erratic set of conclusions based on an eclectic set of comparanda, and the section on sculpture

seems to be something of an afterthought describing relatively few, rather randomly chosen, pieces. In the late 1970s Michael Hare, who had recently arrived in the county, visited every church in Gloucestershire of medieval origin and produced a provisional list of Anglo-Saxon sculpture, which included a number of previously unknown fragments. This list has formed the basis of the catalogue for Gloucestershire in this volume.

For the other four counties in the study area, a similar survey on a church by church basis has not been practical. Bridges has completed a study of the Worcestershire churches, although it is rather more architecturally focused (Bridges 2005), and Leonard has recently completed similar studies for Herefordshire and Shropshire (Leonard 2005 and 2004). Additional material has been derived from the literature published in county journals, from local contacts, and from sources such as the lists provided by the Corpus team in Durham and the British Museum card-index. Two undergraduate dissertations supervised by Durham members of the Corpus team have also drawn on material from Herefordshire and Shropshire (Dales 2005 and Toogood 2004). Experience elsewhere strongly suggests that a more systematic survey would produce at least some additional material and that even the large Gloucestershire collection is probably not complete (see also Chapter III, p. 19).

Herefordshire is the one county in the study area to have been the subject of a survey by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (R.C.H.M.(E.) 1931–4). The Commission’s survey brought a number of early stones to light for the first time, including such obscurely-placed pieces as the interlace fragment from Clifford (no. 1, p. 284). Among the 20 or so surviving monuments discussed in the present volume, only a small number were not previously noted by the Royal Commission, in one case (Clodock 1, p. 285) doubtless because the fragment was already in the cupboard in which it was found in 1959. It is likely that the presence of Alfred Clapham on the staff of the Royal Commission was a major factor in the recognition of early fragments in Herefordshire, and this is made explicit in the case of the recognition of the importance of the cross-shaft fragment at Acton Beauchamp ((—) 1930–2, lxx; see p. 281).

Shropshire has by comparison been less well served. The Rev. W. A. Leighton (1882) published a useful survey of incised and sculptured grave-covers in the county, and this survey includes a few examples of pre-Conquest date. The starting point for most re-

search into the churches of Shropshire is, however, the massive and magisterial *An Architectural Account of the Churches of Shropshire* published by the Rev. D. H. S. Cranage (1894–1912). Cranage's main focus was on the architectural evolution of the churches of the county, and stone monuments of Anglo-Saxon date do not seem to have interested him greatly; he provides some useful information, but many early monuments are passed over in silence or receive only a passing mention.

Both Herefordshire and Shropshire are border counties, and these counties have therefore received attention from Welsh as well as English antiquaries. Thus the portable sundial from Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire, was first published in the pages of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* (W[ilson] 1868; du Noyer 1869; see p. 328). It is, however, the Ewyas district of Herefordshire (most of which was in the diocese of St David's until 1852) which has received most attention from Welsh scholars. In this area Nash-Williams included in his *Early Christian Monuments of Wales* the lost Llanveynoe, Olchon House stone (based on Lhuyd's sketches), together with Llanveynoe St Peter 1 and 2 (Nash-Williams 1950, nos. 409–11; see pp. 287, 291); the recent *Corpus of Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales* has included the same Llanveynoe pieces, plus the inscription from Clodock and a lost stone from Walterstone (pp. 285, 300), both also in Ewyas, together with monuments from Kenderchurch and Garway a few miles to the east (pp. 295, 296; Redknapp and Lewis 2007, 529–36, 555–6). In Shropshire the Welsh *Corpus* has included two fairly recent discoveries, the Wroxeter inscription (Wroxeter Roman Town 1) and the Oswestry, River Morda fragment (pp. 307, 318; Redknapp and Lewis 2007, 537–9).

In Warwickshire and Worcestershire, the amount of surviving sculpture is very limited if the capitals and bases from the eastern slype at Worcester Cathedral are left out of the equation for the moment (see pp. 57, 369). J. Romilly Allen contributed a chapter on 'Early Christian Art' in Worcestershire to one of the thematic volumes of the Victoria County History, but as regards early stone sculpture this chapter is confined to a discussion of the Cropthorne cross-head and the slab at Rous Lench (no. 1, p. 363) plus a brief reference to the stones at Wyre Piddle (nos. 1–3, p. 371), which he had evidently not seen (Allen 1906, 183–8). In Warwickshire the recent chance find of a fragment at Whitchurch (p. 342) resulted in a first attempt to provide a list of the known Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures in the county (Hingley *et al.* 1995).

In the last 35 years or so, controlled excavation has added to the body of material (see below, Chapter IX, p. 105).

Turning to modern art-historical study, it is the carvings of the ninth century in the western Midlands which have received most detailed attention. Frank Cottrill's 1935 paper was a seminal study (Cottrill 1935a). Most of the examples of the 'Colerne School' of sculpture which he described were located in Wessex, but he also drew attention to an important outlier at Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (p. 365), and noted the close links between this group and the Gloucester St Oswald 3 shaft (p. 209). Steven Plunkett's unpublished 1984 thesis added two further examples in the western Midlands, Abson 1 and the stem of the Deerhurst 3 font (Plunkett 1984, I, 182–3; see pp. 125, 163); the group has recently received further discussion by Rosemary Cramp (2006, 42–8). Cottrill's paper also considered the related group of carvings with Mercian birds and beasts, termed the 'Cropthorne' group of carvings in the present volume (see below, Chapters III and V, pp. 25, 67). T. D. Kendrick included carvings from this group, together with other examples of similar date from the region, in sculpture that he believed showed ninth-century West Saxon influence (Kendrick 1938, 186–8). Cramp, as part of a wider survey of Mercian sculpture, suggested that 'although they have not survived, it would seem that there were earlier Insular traditions of art in the west Midlands on to which the [late eighth- to early ninth-century] styles were grafted' (Cramp 1977, 192, 225–30).

General surveys of tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon art have made comparatively little use of material from the western Midlands. Thus Kendrick's 1949 volume on *Late Saxon and Viking Art* mentions only four sites in the area, all from Gloucestershire, namely the pieces from Bibury (nos. 1–2, p. 134) and Somerford Keynes (no. 1, p. 243) with clear indications of Ringerike influence, plus the panels from South Cerney (no. 2, p. 247) and Daglingworth (nos. 1–4, p. 155) (Kendrick 1949, 43, 50–1, 102–3). Talbot Rice's 1952 volume on *English Art 871–1100* is rather more generous to the area, including figure sculptures from Deerhurst (Deerhurst St Mary 4, 5), Wormington, Beverstone, Bristol and Daglingworth, as well as the Deerhurst 3 font and the Rous Lench carving from Worcestershire (Rice 1952a, 85, 92–3, 96, 99–101, 107, 124–5, 128, 148). The panels at Daglingworth have received frequent attention from scholars, though many have followed Kendrick's lead in ignoring the evidence of the archaeological context in which the sculptures were found and attributing

the panels to the twelfth century (see below Chapter IX, pp. 108–10). There have been important studies of individual pieces, which cannot all be mentioned here: examples include the discussions by George Zarnecki of the Bibury 8 and 9 capitals (pp. 140–1: Zarnecki 1955), by Jeffrey West of the slab (probably a grave-cover) from St Oswald's, Gloucester (no. 5, p. 211: West 1983), by Richard Bryant of the Lypiatt Cross (Bisley Lypiatt 1, p. 143: Bryant 1990), and by Victoria Thompson of the Newent pillow stone (no. 2, p. 236: Thompson 2004, 88–91).

Architectural sculpture was considered by Joan and Harold Taylor (1966); the main thrust of their studies lay on remains surviving *in situ*, such as the Bibury 6–7 and Bitton 1–4 roods (pp. 138, 147), though a few *ex situ* fragments were discussed in their paper including the Daglingworth 1–4 panels and the Wormington 1 crucifixion (pp. 155, 251). Crucifixion iconography has been the subject of studies by Elizabeth Coatsworth (1988 and 2000). The early sundials of the area were considered by Arthur Green (1928 and 1932). Martyn Jope's (1964) paper on the geology of stones used in Anglo-Saxon building and sculpture was a pioneering study; even though it can no longer be relied on in detail, it demonstrated the potential of this field for the first time and mentioned many stones in the study area.

Thus far, very little has been said about St Mary's church at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire (pp. 161–90). Yet this building is of the highest importance for students of Anglo-Saxon art. There are substantial remains of Anglo-Saxon sculpture *in situ*, together with considerable remains of early paintwork on dressed stone surfaces (see p. 112). Quite simply there is more surviving early art *in situ* at Deerhurst than at any other building from the period before the Norman Conquest. Deerhurst first came to scholarly attention in the 1840s (Haigh 1846), and a large number of additional features came to light during the restoration of 1861–2 (Butterworth 1862; id. 1890). In the 1970s Deerhurst was the subject of detailed architectural

and archaeological investigations, the final results of which were published in 1997 (Rahtz 1976; Rahtz *et al.* 1997); the excavation report does, however, make little use of the evidence from art-historical study.

Until recently there has indeed been a marked reluctance to engage in any detailed art-historical discussion of the extensive sculptural remains at Deerhurst. A notable early exception was the study by the Byzantinist, Stanley Casson (1933), of the carving of the Virgin and Child (Deerhurst St Mary 5, p. 170). As long ago as 1904, J. Romilly Allen noted a close parallel for the beast-head label-stops (nos. 9–19, pp. 175–85) in an early silver-gilt mount from the River Thames (Allen 1904); both David Wilson and Richard Gem have also drawn attention to the metalwork parallels for the beast heads in the late eighth and ninth centuries (Wilson 1964, 15, 34; Gem 1991, 188). More recently María Muñoz de Miguel (1997) has argued for a ninth-century date for the Virgin and Child and for the Angel (no. 4, p. 168). Many other dates have, however, been proposed by other scholars over the last century. It was not until the early years of the present century that Richard Bailey (2005) considered the Deerhurst sculpture as a group and discussed it in the context of the architectural and archaeological studies carried out in the 1970s. Bailey's study, proposing a date for most of the architectural sculpture and thus for the principal building phase (Phase IV) in the first half of the ninth century, has revolutionised Deerhurst studies. Other work has already been built on his foundation, such as Gem's (2008) detailed exploration of the iconography of the Virgin and Child, and Michael Hare's study of the Elmstone Hardwicke cross, a work evidently carved by the same hand as the Deerhurst 3 font (pp. 163, 198: Hare 2010). At the same time, work has proceeded on the painted remains (see below, Chapter X, p. 112). The context now provided for the art at Deerhurst is one of the most important developments on the part of the current generation of scholars.

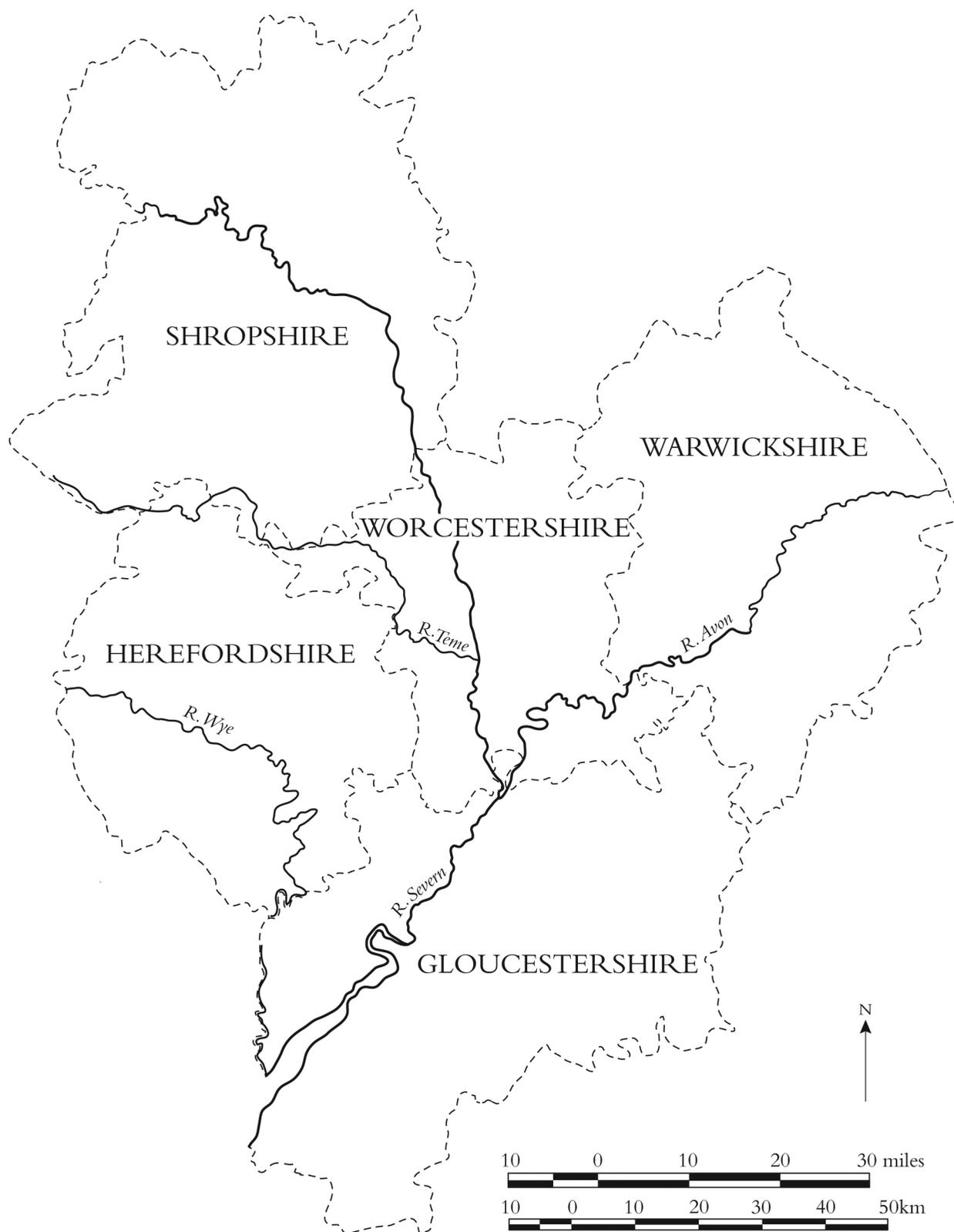


FIGURE 1
The counties included in Volume X, *The Western Midlands*



FIGURE 2
 Sites with Anglo-Saxon sculpture in the western Midlands