

CHAPTER VI

ORNAMENTAL REPERTOIRE (TO AD 900)

INTERLACE AND GEOMETRIC ORNAMENT

In the 'Introduction to the Ornamental Repertoire' for the *South-West England* volume in this series, Rosemary Cramp found it necessary to define two broad types of interlace. One was the geometric (grid-based) form so widespread in the north, and the other was a free-running, non-geometric type that was not constructed upon base-grids (Cramp 2006, 41–2). This same phenomenon can be found in the area covered by this volume and, although sometimes it can be suggested that lack of skill might be the reason for not using 'proper' grids (see Gloucester St Oswald 2 below), in most cases the quality of carving does not seem to be affected by the decision to use free or grid-based interlace.

In the later eighth century the first of a group of crosses was erected on the site of the later royal minster at St Oswald's, beside the River Severn in Gloucester (Gloucester St Oswald 1, p. 207, Ills. 265–73). This cross has beautifully carved plant-scrolls inhabited by birds and exotic winged creatures, together with birds and creatures in pairs on either side of a vertical stem (see below). The cross also uses large-scale, median-incised, freely interlacing plant stems, together with more unusual motifs such as three interlaced loops set within a curve-sided lozenge, or interlacing side-shoots that are woven into a square within the volute of one of the plant-scrolls. Gloucester St Oswald 2 (p. 208, Ills. 274–7), a second cross from this prestigious site (probably dated to the end of the eighth century), seems to draw inspiration from the first but, as noted above, this carving is rather less skilfully realised (see the discussion section in the catalogue entry). Here the plant-scroll has collapsed into disorder (see below), while the carpets of median-incised interlace on two faces contain repeated errors in layout. If a grid was used then it was not followed very carefully.

At about the same time a hood-moulding and an impost at Berkeley, Gloucestershire (Berkeley St

Mary 2, p. 129, Ills. 10–12; Berkeley Castle 4, p. 132, Ills. 21–4) were being ornamented with finely-carved panels of very carefully laid-out diagonal key fret, surrounded by narrow, rounded borders. A similarly dated, but rather larger scale, key fret was used on a small cross-shaft from Prestbury, Gloucestershire (no. 1, p. 240, Ills. 415–16).

At Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, there are narrow panels of tightly woven, probably grid-based interlace on a grave-cover that was reused by the late ninth or tenth century as part of a triangular doorhead (Deerhurst St Mary 2, p. 162, Ills. 129–31). Very little can be seen, but the interlace appears to consist of turned patterns with added outer strands and diagonals.

On the heavily weathered face C of the Lypiatt Cross, Gloucestershire (Bisley Lypiatt 1, p. 143, Ill. 60), the upper panel contains a complex pattern of interlace. Its condition will not allow it to be fully resolved, but at least part appears to be an encircling design with diagonal elements (see Fig. 16, p. 48).

By the early to mid ninth century new motifs begin to appear alongside the continuing use of median-incised interlace. Examples of well-conceived, free interlace can be found at Avening, Gloucestershire (no. 1, p. 127, Ill. 4) and Wroxeter, Shropshire (Wroxeter St Andrew 1, p. 314, Ills. 563–4). There are small panels of mirror-image, median-incised, probably grid-based interlace on three faces of Gloucester St Oswald 4 (p. 210, Ills. 288–90) and on the arm from a cross-head at Abson, Gloucestershire (no. 2, p. 126, Ill. 2). On the cross from Wotton Pitch in Gloucester (Gloucester London Road 1, p. 221, Ills. 356–9) one finds complex, median-incised, free interlace in mirror-image patterns with upward-pointing loops that grow from a network of diagonals. On the same cross there are encircled patterns of C-type, used both singly and as a linked pair. These circular knots do not contain free rings but are, in each case, constructed from one continuous strand. The single knot is very similar to two examples from Glastonbury, Somerset,

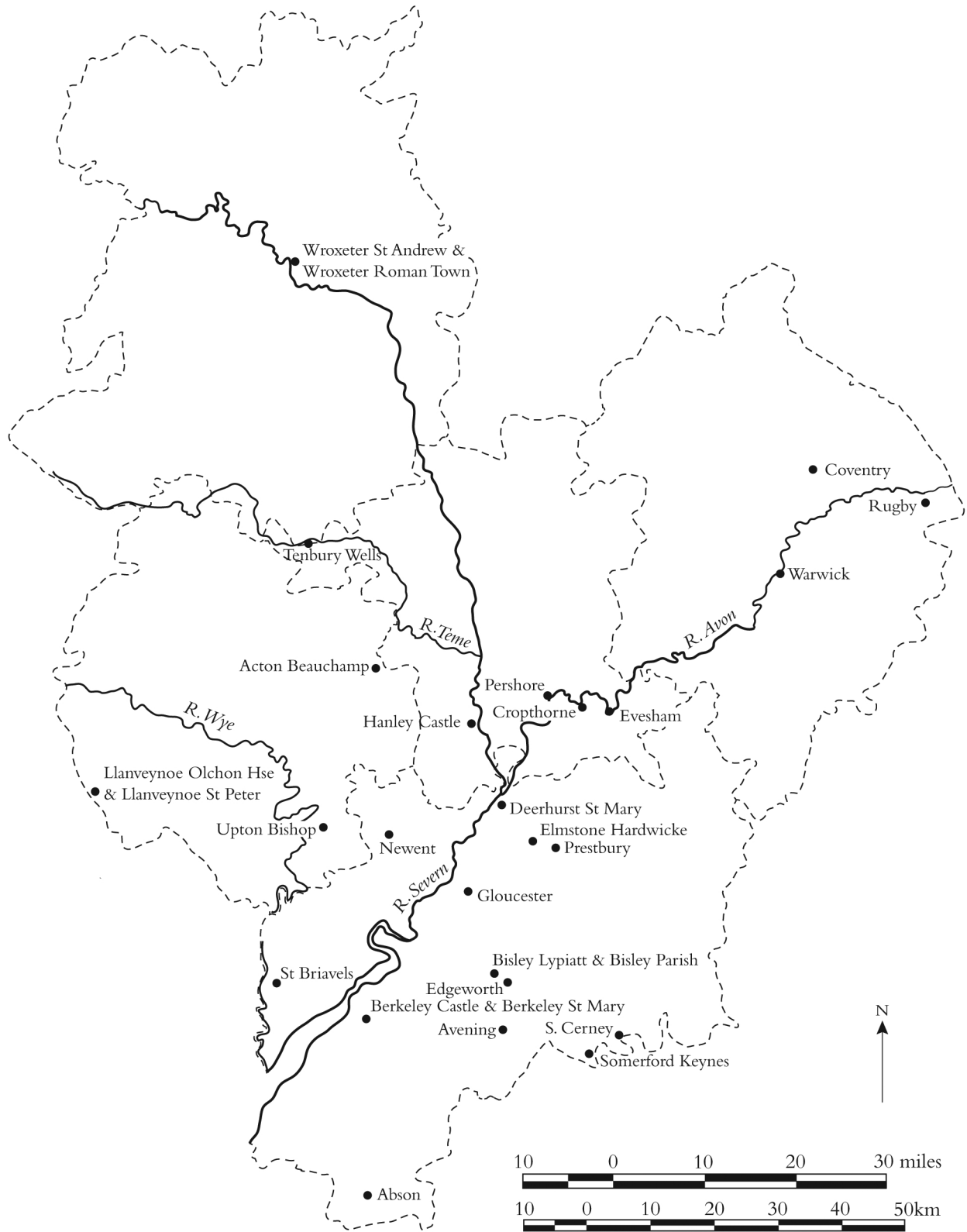


FIGURE 23
Sites with sculpture earlier than *c.* AD 900

and to later examples from Wantage, Berkshire, and Wherwell, Hampshire (Cramp 2006, 153–4, ills. 224, 232; Tweddle *et al.* 1995, 268, 270–1, ills. 474–7, 480).

Meander is used to infill the body of the upper creature on face D of Gloucester St Oswald 3 (p. 209, Ills. 278, 285), while the narrow faces of the cross-head from Cropthorne, Worcestershire (no. 1, p. 353, Ills. 623–4, 626–8), are covered with panels of what might be called ‘square-spiral’ meander.

An unusual geometric motif occurs on the bowl and stem of the font from Deerhurst (Deerhurst St Mary 3a–b, p. 163, Ills. 132–44) and on the nearby fragment of cross-shaft from Elmstone Hardwick (no. 1, p. 198, Fig. 42, Ills. 242–7). Each carving is covered with grids of interlocking, opposed ‘C-curve spirals’. In all three cases the spirals and straight linking lines are carved to an even width, with no swelling as found in trumpet scrolls and pelta, and the term ‘bracketed-spiral’ has been used in the catalogue because it offers a clearer description of the motif.

By the second half of the ninth century free interlace, still usually median-incised, becomes the most common form. Examples can be found at Berkeley St Mary 1 (Ills. 8–9), Edgeworth 1 (Ill. 240) and Gloucester St Mary de Lode 1 (Ills. 261–4), all Gloucestershire, and Warwick Bridge End 1, Warwickshire (Ills. 601–2). Two reused parts of what was probably a ninth- or early tenth-century string-course from Deerhurst (Deerhurst St Mary 21 and 22, Ills. 213, 214) are carved with single strand, median-incised free interlace which, on both fragments, bends sharply back on itself where it meets the border moulding. At Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, the face of the cross that contains what is probably a reliquary recess is decorated with panels containing mirror-image, median-incised, free interlace with similarly sharp angles in the corners of the panels (no. 1, p. 365, Ill. 661).

ANIMAL AND BIRD MOTIFS

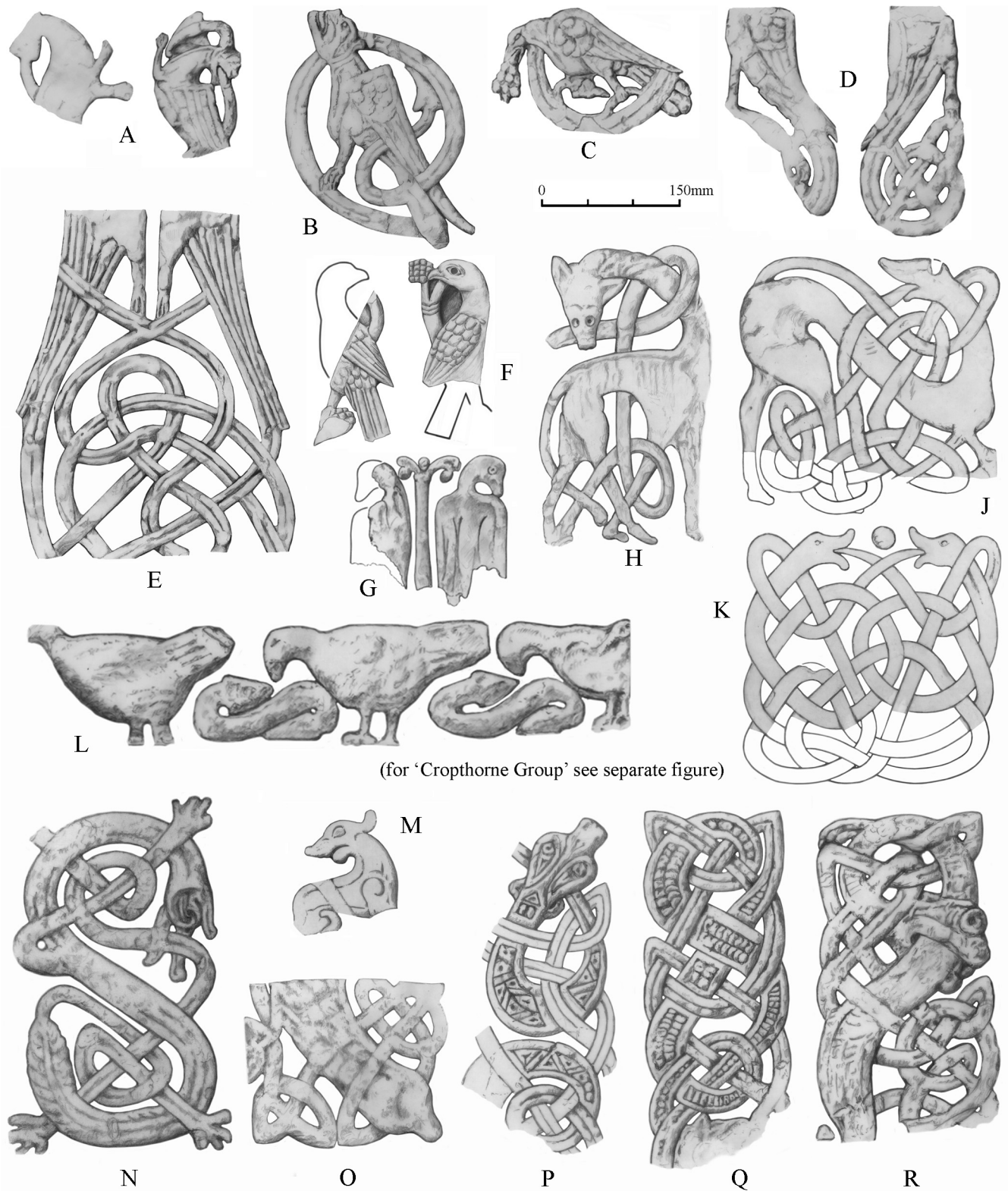
Birds and animals, in a wide variety of shapes and sizes, form a significant element in the developing story of west Mercian carving that persists from the eighth century to beyond the Conquest (Figs. 24 and 25).

In the late eighth century the creatures on the earliest crosses from Gloucester St Oswald (nos. 1 and 2, pp. 207, 208, Figs. 24A–D, E, Ills. 265–6, 268–9, 272–3, 274) are of high quality, lively and well-observed, with naturalistic body musculature and feathers. Here there are paired griffins and long-tailed peacocks, as well as

a delicate thrush and a winged, club-tailed heraldic biped perched on the volutes of a classical vine-scroll. The closest parallels for these creatures are found on early- to mid-eighth-century crosses and slabs from Northumbria, for example at Bewcastle, Jarrow, Jedburgh, Otley and Ruthwell. There is an exact parallel from Jedburgh (Ill. 779) for the grape clusters with elongated terminal tips that are found in the lower volute of St Oswald 1, face B (p. 207, Fig. 24C, Ills. 269, 272). The pairing of birds and beasts either side of a central rib or stem is rather more uncommon but can be paralleled at Jedburgh and Jarrow. In these cases, however, the creatures stand in simple volutes which are missing from the more constrained space available at Gloucester.

The two birds on a panel from Berkeley, Gloucestershire (Berkeley Castle 2, p. 131, Fig. 24F, Ills. 17–18) are carved in a naturalistic manner similar to the birds on the Gloucester St Oswald cross-shafts. They are even adorsed in the same way on either side of a wide, flat, double central rib, while the tight berry clusters on the Berkeley carving are also very like those on St Oswald 1, face B. The eye of the right-hand bird on Berkeley Castle 2 is drilled, perhaps for the insertion of glass or a jewel, and the lack of weathering might indicate that this stone was part of an internal structure — a screen, or perhaps a side panel for an altar or tomb. A date in the second half of the eighth century, similar to Gloucester St Oswald 1, would seem probable.

In the early years of the ninth century the region sees the rise to dominance of the ‘Cropthorne’ group of carvers (see Chapter III, Regional Distribution, p. 25). The carvings come from a fairly widespread area that is roughly centred on Worcester, and this city, or perhaps Gloucester, would offer an appropriate location for a prestigious craft centre. At Gloucester the ‘Great Mercian Beast’ shaft (Gloucester St Oswald 3, p. 209, Figs. 25P–T, Ills. 278–86) is carved with lions, birds, salamanders and exotic heraldic creatures enmeshed in interlace and with bodies heavily hatched and contoured. Some of the creatures have distinctive spiral hip or shoulder joints. Very similar creatures and birds are found on the magnificent cross-head from Cropthorne, Worcestershire (Figs. 25A–H, Ills. 621, 625, 629–33) and also on cross-shafts from Acton Beachamp, Herefordshire (Figs. 25J–L, Ills. 496–501), Wroxeter, Shropshire (Wroxeter St Andrew 1–3, Figs. 25M–O, Ills. 562–6) and Gloucester St Mary de Lode 2 (Ills. 259–60). The birds and animals combine liveliness of movement with dramatic light-and-shade effects of body texturing or more naturalistic



(for 'Croptorne Group' see separate figure)

FIGURE 24

Animals and birds (*late eighth to ninth century*): A–D – Gloucester St Oswald 1; E – Gloucester St Oswald 2; F – Berkeley Castle 2; G, H – Newent 1; J, K – Deerhurst St Mary 3; L – Wroxeter St Andrew 4; M – Coventry 1; N – Gloucester London Road 1; O – Abson 1; P, Q, R – Tenbury Wells 1

body treatment to create impressively dynamic compositions. The plant-scrolls and tree-scrolls that accompany these creatures (see below, p. 71) are similarly treated, sometimes naturalistically and sometime in a highly stylised manner.

A collared shaft from Newent, Gloucestershire (no. 1, p. 232, Figs. 24G–H, Ills. 392–400), bears a graceful, long-necked creature very similar in shape to that on the Wroxeter shaft, but without the body texturing. There is also a tree-scroll on the same face of the Newent shaft that can be compared to that on face C of Gloucester St Oswald 3 (see below). However in all other aspects the Newent shaft is different, with figured scenes on three faces depicting Adam and Eve, David and Goliath and Abraham and Isaac (see Chapter VIII, p. 100). This is perhaps an example of a carver being inspired by the ‘Crophthorne’ group rather than being a product of that centre, as is the animal in a plant-scroll on a carved jamb from Warwickshire, Coventry 1 (Fig. 24M, Ills. 565–8).

On the shaft of the Deerhurst font (Deerhurst St Mary 3a–b, p. 163, Figs. 24J–K, Ills. 132–43), alternating with panels of C-curve bracketed-spiral ornament, there are panels containing ribbon-bodied creatures enmeshed in interlace. The detail on these panels is difficult to disentangle due to the heavily eroded surface of the stone. However, drawings made by Steven Plunkett based upon rubbings show quite clearly the main outlines of the designs (Plunkett 1984, II, pl. 69; published in Bailey 2005, pl. 8). Two of the panels contain pairs of opposed snake-like creatures, while in the third panel there is a single creature with at least two legs. This creature is carved in a sinuous, horizontal S-shape with a rounded rump and well-formed hind leg, a long thin body and a smallish head twisted back to bite on a strand of interlace. The front shoulder joint cannot be defined.

By the middle of the ninth century, a further progression can be traced away from the subtleties of surface texture and natural or semi-natural forms towards greater abstraction. Serpentine creatures are joined by lacertine forms. This progression can be seen on the Wotton Pitch shaft from Gloucester (Gloucester London Road 1, p. 221, Fig. 24N, Ills. 356–9), possibly part of the same cross as Gloucester St Oswald 4 (see Chapter IX, p. 105). One face is dominated by a creature with a long thin body, twisted into a vertical S-shape, and thin legs that have become little more than diagonal lines. The other faces of this shaft are carved with ring-knots and interlace (see above) and a stiff-skirted figure (see Chapter VIII, p. 104). Below the panel of looped interlace there is the rounded head

of a creature with a small snout that is very similar to the head of an animal enmeshed in interlace on a fragment of cross-shaft from Gloucestershire, Abson 1 (Fig. 24 o, Ill. 1).

As the century progresses, although many creatures from the earlier menagerie still appear, the carving becomes harsher, and twisted, elongated ribbon-animal forms begin to dominate. The shaft from Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire (no. 1, p. 365, Figs. 24P–R, Ills. 660–7) offers an example of this development. Sharp-edged serpentine and lacertine creatures with rudimentary legs appear on three faces of the cross. The creatures’ bodies are covered with inscribed geometrical shapes (triangles, dots, and chevrons) rather than contoured hatching. A tiny fragment from Gloucester (Gloucester St Mary de Lode 1, Ills. 261–4) with sharp-cornered interlace is probably also of similar date.

There are clear parallels for this ninth-century development in the style of carving in western Mercia with animal carvings of the ninth and early tenth century from south and south-west England where they are often referred to as ‘Colerne’-type creatures. These parallels have been the subject of a number of significant studies, most recently by Plunkett (1984, I, 180–202), Tweddle (Tweddle *et al.* 1995, 35–40) and Cramp (2006, 42–8, 71–2). Examples occur at Colyton and Dolton (Devon); Shaftsbury (Dorset); Chew Stoke, Frome, Glastonbury, Keynsham, Rowberrow, Wells and West Camel (Somerset); Bradford-on-Avon, Colerne and Ramsbury (Wiltshire); Little Somborne, Steventon and Winchester (Hampshire) (Cramp 2006, 42–8). Indeed the closest parallel for the Tenbury Wells shaft is, in fact, the ninth- to tenth-century cross-shaft from Ramsbury (Wiltshire) (Ramsbury 3 in Cramp 2006, 230, ill. 485–7, 495–7). Not only are the bodies of the creatures on the Ramsbury shaft covered with incised geometric shapes, but on face B there is a large serpentine creature bending back to bite its own body like the face B creature at Tenbury Wells (Ill. 662), while the head of the creature on face A of the Ramsbury cross is also very similar to that of the creature on Tenbury Wells, face C (Ill. 663).

A related phenomenon that first appears in the first half of the ninth century is the development of fully three-dimensional animal-head carvings for use as *prokrossoi* or hood-moulding label stops. As indicated in Chapter V (Architectural Carving, p. 54), the church of St Mary at Deerhurst, Gloucestershire, possesses a unique collection of such animal heads, with most still in their original positions in the surviving Anglo-Saxon fabric (Fig. 26, Ills. 153–210). There are three



FIGURE 25

Animals and birds from the 'Cropton' group of carvings (first quarter ninth century): A-H – Cropton 1; J-L – Acton Beachamp 1; M, N, O – Wroxeter St Andrew 1, 2, 3; P-T – Gloucester St Oswald 3

large *prokrossoi* set above the southern and two western doorways (Deerhurst St Mary 9, 10, 15, Figs. 26PA–PB, Ills. 153–64, 188–90). One *prokrossos*, set above the high level doorway in the west wall of the tower/porch, is rather angular and lacks surface detailing. The others are damaged, but they are clearly rounder in shape and, on the *prokrossos* above the main west door, enough remains of the double-outlined mouth to show that the beast was open-jawed. Above the mouth, on the north side of the head, is a double-line incised ‘moustache’ that terminates in a tight curl, and above this is a tightening spiral carved in relief. This is probably the terminal of a brow-ridge.

There are eight animal-head label stops at Deerhurst (nos. 11–14, 16–19, Ills. 165–87, 191–210). Two are pendant to the square hood-moulding above the high-level western doorway in the tower/porch and, like the *prokrossos* at this level, these two heads are merely blocked-out shapes with very little additional detail (nos. 11–12, Figs. 26G–H). Four of the others are elaborately carved and, of these, two have been reset inside the west door but two are still *in situ* on the hood-moulding over the south door (nos. 13, 14, 16, 17, Figs. 26A–D). Deerhurst St Mary 13 is in the best condition (Fig. 26A, Ills. 175–81) and can be used to describe all four, although there are in each case detailed differences. The muzzle and forehead of no. 13 are covered with close-set, concentric incised grooves, while the eyes are surmounted by sweeping brows with tightly curving terminals. The eyes themselves are round at one end and pointed at the other, with large, perfectly circular pupils. The fangs are enormous, and the rest of the creature’s teeth are square. The concentric grooves of the forehead are extended into ovals around the base of the ears, which are long and pointed, with hollowed-out centres and in-turning, comma-like tips. Above the ears there is a wide crest or mane that is carried along the top (back) of the head to the wall line as roll-mouldings. Between the ears this crest or mane is decorated with a delicately carved trefoil consisting of a central round-topped element flanked by two with outward curling tips. The remains of red paint survives in the mouth of this animal and its pair to the north, but not on the two beasts above the southern doorway.

The final two animal heads at Deerhurst (nos. 18 and 19, Figs. 26E–F, Ills. 200–5, 206–10), also *in situ*, act as label stops to the hood-moulding over the chancel arch. These are much larger beasts, and while they were less elaborately carved (especially the southern beast), they were instead much more fully painted. It seems reasonable to assume that the

bold ninth-century scheme of decoration in red, yellow, white and black paint, which survives almost completely on the northern beast, Deerhurst St Mary 18 (see colour *frontispiece*, Plate 1), was also applied to the southern beast where now only washed-out traces of paint survive. Indeed it would have looked very strange if this was not the case. The concentric lines and enhancement of details that are incised on the faces of the other four animal-heads at Deerhurst are not incised on the northern chancel beast. Instead they are painted in beautifully-controlled red lines. Three concentric lines sweep across the muzzle, bending downwards between the creature’s nostrils. The carved eyes and ears are outlined in red line and the brow ridges are accentuated with sweeping red line. On both sides of the creature’s head the brow ridge and the back of the eye are drawn out into an exceptionally large, double-line spiral terminal, while the jaw is outlined with a double red line. The medium used is iron oxide red, and this was also used to paint across the fangs and teeth in the open jaws, and inside the nostrils, pupils and ears. An overall wash of iron oxide yellow was then applied to the head, over a carbonate white ground in some areas such as the eyes. The centres of the pupils of the eyes were further enhanced with charcoal black (see Chapter X, p. 112).

PLANT MOTIFS

The plant motifs on west Mercian carving dated to the period from the late eighth to the beginning of the ninth century are generally naturalistic in treatment. The inhabited vine-scroll on face B of Gloucester St Oswald 1a–b (p. 207), similar to those on many of the eighth-century crosses from Northumbria, is a clear example of this style (Ills. 266, 269). The cross-shaft survives as two unconnected fragments, and on the lower stone a beautiful little bird perches on a tendril and a berry bunch, and pecks at one of the berry bunches with elongated tips that fill the rest of the volute (Fig. 27A, Ills. 269, 272). Triangular, curling-tipped leaves fall across the spaces between the volutes or act as terminals to the spiralling plant stems. On face C there is a tangle of median-incised interlacing stems in which sits what is probably a large bird (Ills. 270–1). Only the lower part of face D survives (Fig. 27B, Ill. 267) but here, while there are still triangular leaves and curling-tipped tendrils, the treatment of the surviving volute is slightly different in that there is a whorl of leaves spinning round inside the spiralling

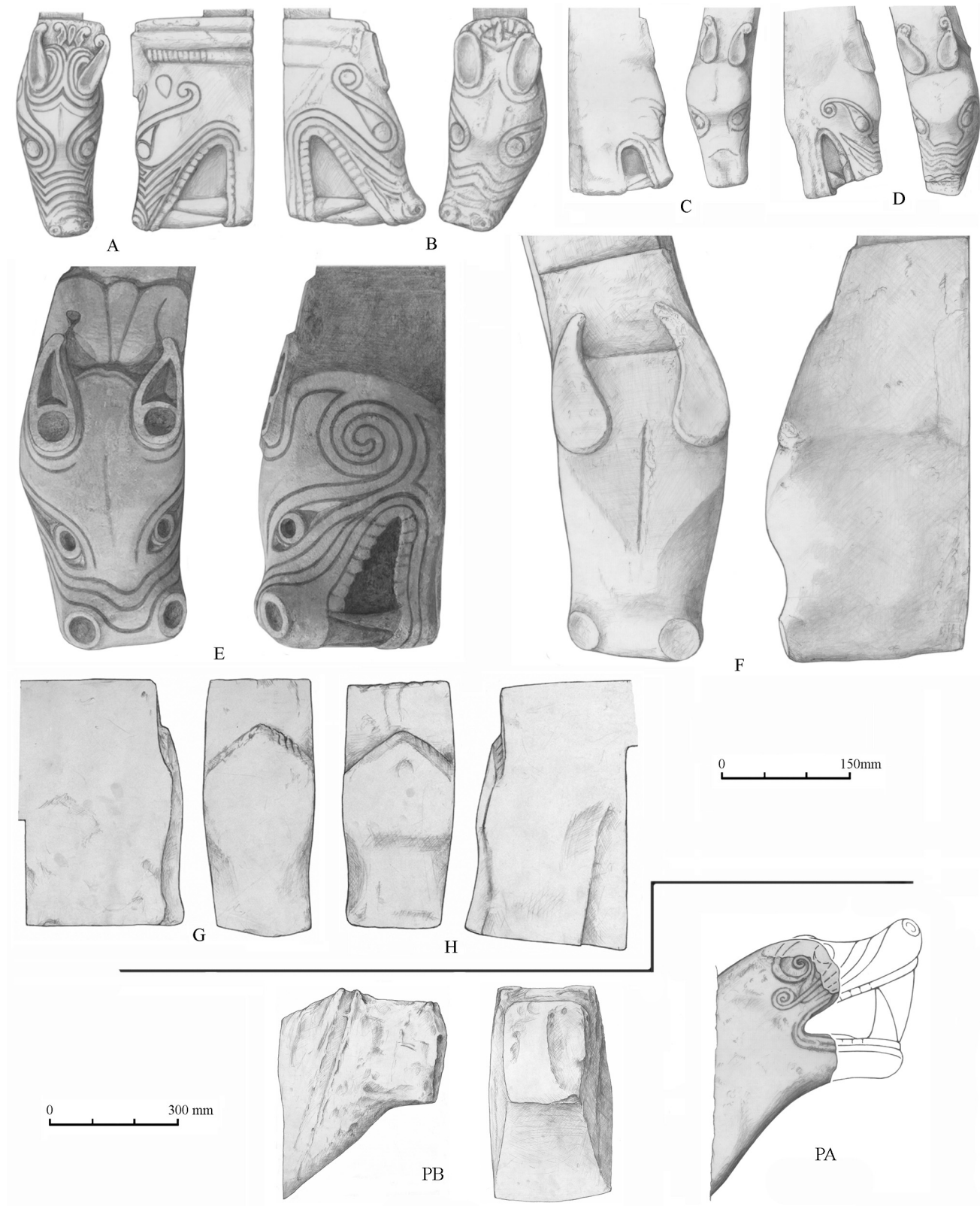


FIGURE 26
Deerhurst St Mary animal-head label stops and *prokrossoi* (first half ninth century): A – 13; B – 14; C – 17; D – 16;
E – 18; F – 19; G – 12; H – 11; PA – 9; PB – 10

stem, around a central motif that is a more geometric interlace pattern consisting of four superimposed, crook-shaped stems.

Face A of the second cross-shaft from St Oswald's (Gloucester St Oswald 2, p. 208, Ill. 274) is covered with a tangle of plant stems that is very similar to face C of no. 1. Two facing birds stand on the loose median-incised interlace and their long tails are drawn out to interweave with the plant stems. Face B of this shaft carries a development of the vine scroll, in which the classical clarity and simplicity of no. 1 has been lost and the volutes have become overwhelmed by a tangle of knotted tendrils (Fig. 27C, Ill. 275).

A broken section of cross-shaft was found in Gloucester during excavations on the site of the Tanners' Guild Hall (Gloucester Tanners' Hall 1, p. 225). This shaft is dated to the late eighth century or perhaps the early part of the ninth century, and bears the finely carved figure of a man (see Chapter VIII, p. 102) on the front face, while on the other two surviving faces there are well-carved, median-incised plant-scrolls with upward-pointing veined leaves on one face and dropped veined leaves on the other (Fig. 27E, Ills. 365–6, 369).

A finial from Berkeley, Gloucestershire (Berkeley Castle 1, p. 130) is probably of similar date. The Berkeley finial bears on one side a complex plant form which consists of a twin-stemmed plant which rises through a collar flanked by out-turning, hollow-centred leaves (Fig. 27H, Ills. 13, 15). The plant stems then pass behind a pair of downward-pointing leaves before terminating in two pods. The pods have split to reveal rows of well-rounded peas or seeds. The upward-pointing tips of the pods curl out to fill the 'horn' terminals of this delicately carved piece.

A small fragment of wheel-headed cross, excavated at Deerhurst and subsequently stolen from a display case (Deerhurst St Mary 1, p. 161) was carved on one side with a seed-pod design that is very similar to the Berkeley finial (Fig. 27J, Ills. 125, 128). Traces of red, white and probably yellow paint survived on this carving and it is suggested (p. 162) that this may have been part of a reliquary or tomb from the first half of the ninth century, a period to which so much of the Anglo-Saxon carving in this church belongs. The pod and leaf decoration is difficult to parallel, but it is similar to a small early ninth-century trial piece from St Augustine's in Canterbury (Tweddle *et al.* 1995, 134–5, ill. 54–5).

The Deerhurst font (Deerhurst St Mary 3a–b, p. 163, Ills. 132–44) was also carved in the first half of the ninth century and, as well as the panels containing

interlocking grids of opposed 'C-curve spirals' or 'bracketed-spirals', the font bowl carries an upper and lower border of delicate spiral plant-scrolls which are carved with sinuous, sweeping stems and loose simple spirals, at the centre of each of which there is a 'fruit plus multiple leaf' cruciform motif or, less frequently, a berry bunch (Fig. 27L, Ills. 134, 137). Side shoots ending in lobed leaves with curling tips grow from the outer curves of the volutes to fill the interstices between the spirals, while the junctions between the volutes and the main stems are marked by simple oval node-buds or buds with flanking leaves. Very similar spiral plant-scrolls decorate the sides and top of the Lechmere Stone from Hanley Castle, Worcestershire (Hanley Castle 1, p. 357, Figs. 27D, G, Ills. 638–41). Here the deeply cut plant-scrolls rise up each side to meet on the top. The lower parts of the side stems have complete volutes, while, on the narrower upper part of the stone, the main stems become sinuous curves. Long, narrow, serrated leaves hang down from the volutes and from the main stems. Round fruit sprout from the stalks of the leaves in opposed pairs or in clusters. The interstices at the stem junctions are filled with oval, pointed-oval or figure-of-eight fruits.

The 'Crophthorne' group of carvings, dated to the early years of the ninth century (see Chapter III, Regional Distribution, p. 25), display a range of different treatments for foliate ornament as they do for the treatment of animals and birds (see above under Animal and Bird Motifs). On the shaft from Gloucester (St Oswald 3, Ills. 278–81), animals and birds are enmeshed in plant stems that end in round-tipped hollow leaves or triangular leaves which are either plain or outlined, with hatched or plain infills. Face C of this shaft (Fig. 27F, Ill. 281) is covered by a bifurcated tree-scroll, the main branches of which are twisted round on themselves and then turned upwards to become a carefully balanced pair of volutes enmeshed in interlace. 'Eye-shaped' fruits or seeds grow from the point at which the main stem splits.

The Newent 1 cross in Gloucestershire displays a much simpler tree-scroll on face D (Fig. 27R, Ill. 396), while on another cross-shaft in the group (Wroxeter St Andrew 1, Shropshire) there is a median-incised plant-scroll with hollow-centred, tri-lobed leaf or berry bunches in the middle of the volutes (Fig. 27K, Ills. 563–4), that are very similar to those on the narrow frieze at Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, dated to the beginning of the ninth century (Jewell 1986, pl. XLII). The Wroxeter plant grows from a small, hatched, horseshoe-shaped object, rather like the domed clips which attach foliate ornament to the

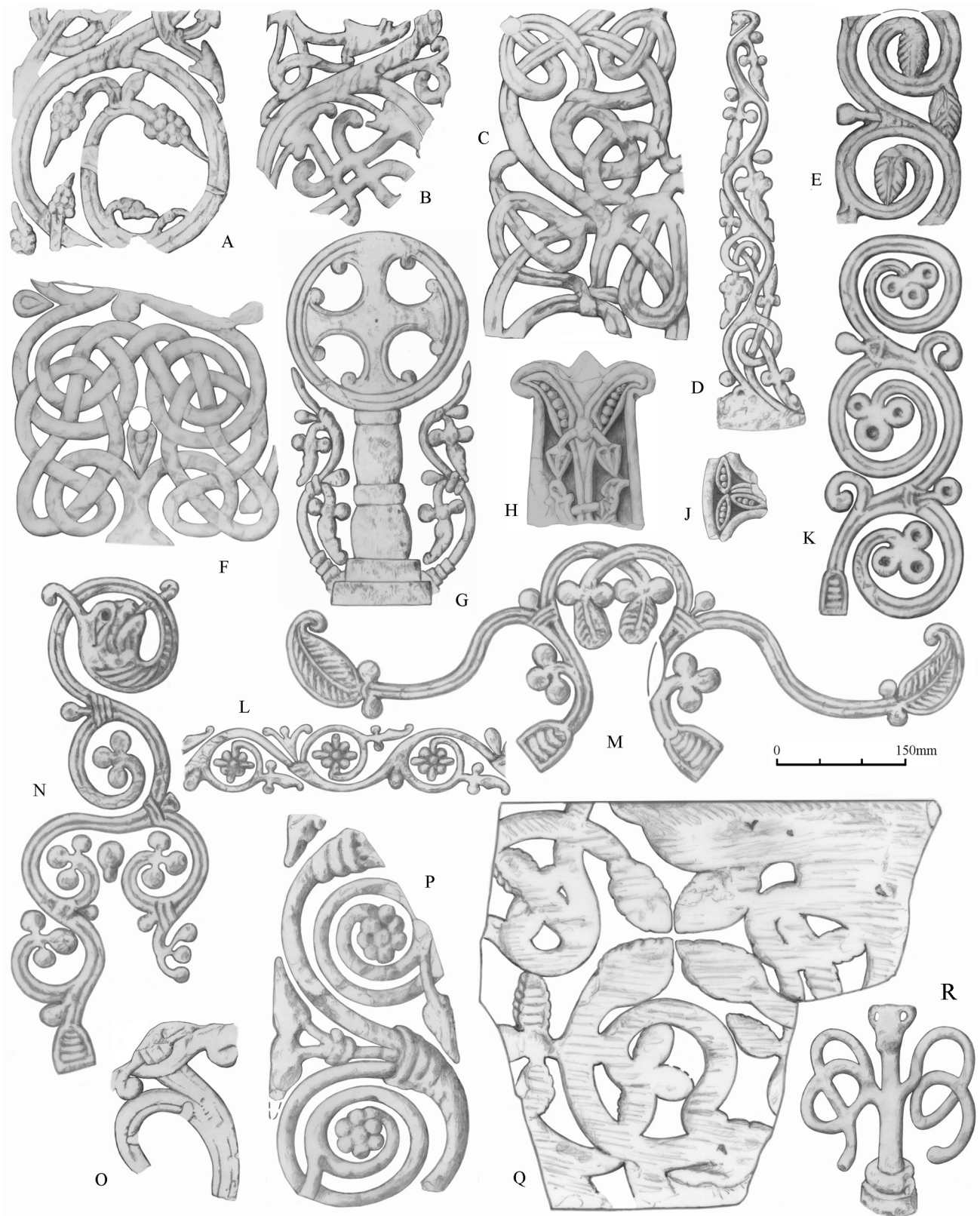


FIGURE 27

Plant motifs (*late eighth to ninth century*): A, B – Gloucester St Oswald 1; C – Gloucester St Oswald 2; D, G – Hanley Castle 1; E – Gloucester Tanner’s Hall 1; F – Gloucester St Oswald 3; H – Berkeley Castle 1; J – Deerhurst St Mary 1; K – Wroxeter St Andrew 1; L – Deerhurst St Mary 3 (part); M, N – Cropthorne 1; O – Coventry 1; P – Rugby 1; Q – Gloucester Cathedral 1; R – Newent 1

side frames on some West Saxon carvings, and very similar to those which perform similar functions on the Cropthorne 1 cross-head in Worcestershire and the Acton Beauchamp 1 shaft, Herefordshire, two more members of this west Mercian group.

On the Cropthorne cross-head, median-incised, bifurcating plant stems grow from the hatched, horseshoe-shapes mentioned above. Single round fruit on straight stalks and clusters of three fruits grow out from the main stems and from ridged nodes (Figs. 27M–N, Ills. 621, 625, 633). As with other carvings in this group there are lobed, curling-tipped leaves with plain borders and hatched infill.

At Acton Beauchamp the reused cross-shaft is covered with three volutes of a plant-scroll, inhabited by a bird and two beasts (Ills. 498–501). Again the plant-scroll rises from a hatched, horseshoe-shaped object in the lower corner, but in this case the stem broadens before each point of bifurcation and the broadened area is outlined and covered with incised parallel hatching. The volute stems are median incised and end in curling tipped, lobed leaves with hatched centres, or tri-lobed leaves or berry bunches.

On the back of the double-sided ninth-century panel from Gloucester Cathedral, which shows Christ in a roundel on the front, are the cut-back remains of a large scale foliate design (p. 203, Fig. 27Q, Ill. 253). Four broad, curving tendrils are drawn into a focal point just above the centre of the stone where they meet tip-to-tip as rounded, serrated leaves or perhaps berry clusters. Below the focal point a curving side-shoot ends in a 'bud' that rises from an opposed pair of serrated leaves. Similar buds and paired serrated leaves terminate further side-shoots to the left and right of the central point. Spreading across two-thirds of the upper right-hand part of this face there is a large, raised area from which most of the detail has been cut away but across which it is still possible to trace fragments of further curves. This area may be the last remains of a larger element enmeshed in the tangle of tendrils, perhaps a creature or a figure. This panel was probably part of a screen in the Anglo-Saxon minster.

A carving from Coventry, Warwickshire (no. 1, p. 336) also offers a small indication of the decoration to be found in a ninth-century church. It is part of the carved jamb for a doorway or opening and almost certainly comes from a pre-Conquest minster. Faces A and D are carved in low relief, while face B is plain. On face A there is a creature enmeshed in a wide plant-scroll outlined with incised lines (Fig. 27 o, Ills. 586, 588). The stem splits just above the creature's head, one half twisting round to form the inhabited volute and the other half curving upwards to pass over the almost horizontal strands of what seems to be a second plant. The plant-stems terminate in small, tight, round buds or leaves. Face D carries a very similar design in which a broad-stemmed plant, outlined with incised lines, splits in two at a node which is enhanced with three short parallel grooves (Ill. 585). One half of the stem twists to the left to form what is probably a volute, while the other half of the stem curves upwards to pass under a separate plant-stem which end in a fleshy, club-tipped, downward-pointing leaf and part of an upward-curving tendril.

The final carving from the area that can be dated to the ninth century is a cross-shaft fragment from Warwickshire, Rugby 1 (p. 340, Ills. 597–600). The shaft is cut in a shallow curve obliquely across faces B and D with none of face C surviving. On face A there are two figures set one above the other within arched frames (see Chapter VIII, p. 98). Face B carries a well-carved spiral plant-scroll with sweeping stems and narrow-stemmed volutes from which spring downward-curving side shoots (Fig. 27P, Ill. 599). At the centres of the volutes are rosette berry-bunches, and paired triangular leaves grow on straight stems from the heavily ridged nodes. Face D also carries a spiral plant-scroll but the only surviving volute is squashed into the frame and one side is very distorted (Ill. 597). At the centre of this volute sits a small bird with a rather long neck. A pair of curling-tipped leaves grow on a long straight stem from the node at the bifurcation point between the volutes.