

PREFACE

THIS, the tenth volume of the British Academy's Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, investigates and catalogues material from the Western Midlands, an important region of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia, the sculpture of which has never before been properly investigated as a whole. Although major sites, such as Gloucester and Deerhurst, have received a great deal of attention in recent years, the authors of this volume have uncovered a considerable body of unfamiliar material — often published, if at all, in obscure or disparate publications over the last century. While the most important carvings emanate from the old county of Gloucestershire, the addition of much widely-scattered material from the neighbouring counties rounds off a picture which makes a great deal of sense in both art-historical and historical terms, and links it neatly with the sculpture published in Volume VII of the Corpus which covered the South-West of England. Such is the importance of this material that it was felt necessary to ask Michael Hare to expand the historical chapter to a length which does justice to the complicated political and ecclesiastical structure and character of the region, to form a coherent background to the sculptural evidence.

Our chief thanks must, of course, go to Richard Bryant, the main author of the volume, whose knowledge of the material and technical expertise in both photography and book-production have made the task of the General Editor and her colleagues a great deal simpler, and has enabled the book to be brought to birth more quickly than has been possible with earlier volumes in the series. This promptness is also due to the major grant that was received from the Headley Trust, which has funded not only the production of this volume, but will also enable us to bring some of the future volumes towards a similar speedy conclusion. To this Trust we are exceedingly grateful — they, in fact, rescued the Corpus at the time of extreme economic hardship, which I outlined in the preface to Volume IX of the series. The Pilgrim Trust also came to our rescue and generously provided short-term funding towards the salary of our editorial Research Fellow. As always, our sheet anchor has been the British Academy which has given us once again an annual grant which covers the expenses — particularly travelling and photographic — of all the participants in the series.

We must once again pay tribute to the hard work — and seemingly boundless energy — of our General Editor, Rosemary Cramp, who during the period of the preparation of this book was awarded the DBE, an honour which we feel partly reflected on the work she has done for the Corpus. The Research Fellow, Derek Craig, has once again brought meticulous and dedicated effort to the editing and checking of the text, the ordering of the catalogue, and the creation of the index. As has been mentioned, Richard Bryant also provided many of the drawings and photographs himself (the unique images of Bitton, for example, bear witness to his skill in this area), but we must also thank Richard for his typographic skills which enabled the process of setting to be much easier. Once again we are deeply grateful to Roger Bristow and also Ted Freshney for their geological input in relation to this important freestone area. Sarah Semple has carried a great deal of the administrative weight of the Corpus in between a heavy teaching load — for this relief much thanks!

Lastly we must express our deep gratitude to Durham University, and particularly the Department of Archaeology, which has not only provided a home for the Corpus, but has helped us discreetly in many other ways, as it has from the outset of the project. The Corpus Committee feels confident that their continuing support will enable us to complete the project in a reasonable time.

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*Chairman, British Academy Committee for
the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, 2011*