

CHAPTER VI

ARCHITECTURAL SCULPTURE

We have seen in Chapter III above that there is no shortage of early church sites — both documented and presumed — in Nottinghamshire; but unfortunately not a single stone carrying architectural decoration *sensu strictu* has yet been recognised as belonging to the pre-Viking period. No Nottinghamshire church, for example, retains evidence of external decorative panels to compare with those found in other East Midland counties: at Edenham (Lincolnshire), Breedon-on-the-Hill (Leicestershire), Barnack (Soke of Peterborough) or Earls Barton (Northamptonshire).⁵ Such architectural decoration might have been relatively rare in its time anyway, and Nottinghamshire churches have been subject to much rebuilding, but its complete absence from the county remains disappointing. It is true that, when discovered in 1980, the impressive late eighth- or early ninth-century shaft-collar from South Muskham was initially considered to have been part of a decorated impost (Barley 1983); but it is clearly no such thing (p. 178, Fig. 29, Ills. 111–18).

Wall surfaces of the pre-Viking period could be decorated with other types of sculpture, however, and Nottinghamshire now has a special contribution to make in the study of such material in the important, newly discovered, fragment from a monumental rood at South Leverton (no. 2). It is a fragment that also adds neatly to the evidence from other sources bolstering the claim for a pre-Viking monastery here, to which we have already drawn attention (Everson and Stocker 2007). Although the catalogue entry (p. 174, Ills. 108–10) considers the possibilities that this larger-than-life-size sculpture might have depicted either the Ascension or Lazarus and the raising of the dead, for a number of compelling reasons we feel this stone is best considered as evidence for a monumental rood and furthermore one that is stylistically of pre-

Viking date (Chapter IV, p. 41). As a fragment from a monumental *crucifixus*, South Leverton 2 will have been part of a scene with approximately life-sized figures, and located either — like Bitton, Gloucestershire — over the chancel arch or — like that at Headbourne Worthy, Hampshire — over a west door (Bryant with Hare 2012, 147–50, ill. 67–84; Tweddle *et al.* 1995, 259–60, ill. 448–50). If the relevant church was the fore-runner of the present All Saints at South Leverton, then the structural development of that fabric affords an explanation for the disturbance of the presumed rood sculpture: either from the external west wall through the addition of a west tower in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, or by the removal of the whole chancel-arch wall though the stylish addition of a grand new chancel of slightly later date (Pevsner and Williamson 1979, 315–16). The eccentric position of All Saints church, hard against the western boundary of the early monastic enclosure, might have meant that a rood on its external west wall was visible from the public highway skirting the west side of the enclosure. There, perhaps, it served as a focus for reverence, ritual and instruction. Helen Gittos's recent remarks about the use and symbolism of crucifixions within Anglo-Saxon liturgy are useful and relevant here (Gittos 2013, 207, 232).

This proposed rood at South Leverton stands apart, both stylistically and chronologically, from the group of late Anglo-Saxon monumental roods in southern England that are normally grouped together (Coatsworth 1988; Tweddle *et al.* 1995, 73–6), and belongs more comfortably with depictions of the crucifixion scene in manuscript art and Hiberno-Saxon metalwork of the sixth to ninth centuries (Coatsworth 1979, I, 108). These early parallels suggest a date that locates South Leverton 2 as one of the very earliest examples of a monumental crucifixion scene of the pre-Viking period in the medium of stone sculpture. This claim is a large one; but, if the stylistic arguments we advance are accepted, the sculpture would be another, confirmatory pointer

5. See Clapham 1927; Taylor and Taylor 1965, 43–7, 97–8, 222–6, 227; Taylor and Taylor 1966; Jewell 1986; Everson and Stocker 1999, 160–2.

to the importance of the early church site here, and perhaps even to Northumbrian and Hiberno-Saxon influence on it (Chapter VII, pp. 74–5). Hitherto, the uneven distribution of such monumental roods towards the south of England might have seemed an objection to this interpretation of the South Leverton stone; but the distribution pattern has been revised in recent years with the discovery of a fragment from a monument of similar size and type at Great Hale (Lincolnshire). It, too, was perhaps located over the original west door there (Everson and Stocker 1999, 170–2, *ills.* 185–6; Everson and Stocker 2000). The Great Hale sculpture is cut in Lincolnshire Limestone, however, perhaps originating from the Ancaster area. This demonstrates that such monumental sculptures were indeed produced in the north Midlands as well as further south. We aligned the date of that Great Hale stone to the examples from southern England, however, assigning it with some confidence to the late tenth or early eleventh century, at least a century later than the date we suggest for the monument at South Leverton.

Unequivocal examples of architectural decoration from the Anglo-Scandinavian period, rather than the later eleventh century, are also rare in Nottinghamshire. Any discussion focuses on baluster shafts. The one impressive fragment of undoubtedly pre-Conquest architectural sculpture *sensu strictu* is the monumental baluster shaft from Southwell Minster (no. 2, p. 185, *Fig.* 30, *Ills.* 120–2), about which much can be said. First, in terms of date, it is clearly a member of that group of Midland architectural details that originate in the upper openings of exceptional towers. Unlike the earlier group of balusters from the north east, at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, which are delicately lathe-turned (Cramp 1984, 24–5, *figs.* 6–10), the Southwell stone is crudely re-carved from an earlier column of square section, and it clearly belongs to the group of sculpted — rather than turned — bulbous shafts found in openings at St Peter's, Barton-upon-Humber in Lincolnshire and Earls Barton in Northamptonshire, to which an authoritative date somewhat after the year 1000 has recently been applied (Rodwell with Atkins 2011, 286–7, 336–7). Like the shafts at Barton, Southwell 2 is also of a Pennine gritstone. The balusters at Earls Barton fill large openings, but the size of the example at Southwell indicates an even larger structure. The tower from which it came was a notable specimen, then, and it is very tempting to associate it with the gift of bells to Southwell by Archbishop Cynesige of York (1050–1060). It is even possible that the tower from which

the shaft (and perhaps the bells also) originated was a member of the same class of building as those at Barton and Earls Barton; that is to say a high-status 'tower-nave' church, of the type that has been the subject of recent detailed assessment (Shapland 2012). However, it seems likely that this centrally planned church was more similar to that at Stow-in-Lindsey (Lincolnshire) than to Barton or Earls Barton, and that the fortuitous reference suggesting a bell tower of the period 1050–60 associates it with the newly established collegiate church on the site of today's Minster. Certainly, the existence of a separate church on the Southwell site, in addition to the turriform structure indicated by the baluster, remains to be demonstrated (Everson and Stocker forthcoming, and see p. 33 above).

This fine baluster came to light at precisely the moment of well-intentioned antiquarian activity that resulted in many of the earliest records of our Nottinghamshire stones (Chapter I above). Consequently, we suspect contemporary antiquaries were very much inclined to call all newly discovered fragments from shafts 'balusters'. This seems to have been du Boulay Hill's inclination, for example, when he jumped to the conclusion that fragments discovered at East Bridgford belonged to this class of artifact (East Bridgford 2, p. 109). Unfortunately these stones have now disappeared; but the inadequate drawings first published in 1903 (Hill 1903, pl. 3A; reprinted in Hill 1932a, *fig.* 3; see *Ills.* 25–6) look like conventional Romanesque forms of at least a century later. The architectural shafts from Owthorpe, which were reported discovered in 1816, are equally unlikely to represent genuine Anglo-Saxon balusters (Robertson 1910, 82; Owthorpe 1 in Appendix C, p. 216).

Apart from the Southwell 2 baluster, the remains of architectural sculpture from before the Norman Conquest are thinly spread in Nottinghamshire. The unusual fragment built into the nave wall at Cuckney (p. 201, *Ills.* 149–50) is best interpreted as a gable-cross of 'cross-pattée' form (see *Fig.* 31), and it is suggested below that its date is similar to the burial monuments that take this form in the East Midlands — i.e. probably the earlier part of the twelfth century. An earlier date for Cuckney cannot be entirely ruled out, however, because such architectural components so rarely survive.

More clearly contemporary with the Norman Conquest are the exceptional pair of crosses on a stone at Costock (no. 1, p. 102, *Ills.* 14–17). Although their elucidation is not straightforward, we have proposed with some confidence that they represent early consecration crosses. While documentary evidence for

carved consecration crosses is not really found until the thirteenth century, a number of painted examples from the twelfth century are known (Park 1990, 230, 238 n.71 and 72, 241). Furthermore, we were ourselves able to identify a very simple example on the north-east quoin of the church at Cranwell and another in the form of a crucifixion at Ropsley (both Lincolnshire), both carved into quoins of 'long-and-short' work and therefore of putatively late Anglo-Saxon date (Everson and Stocker 1999, 139, 241–2). Recent work on contemporary liturgy has confirmed that the making of consecration crosses was an Anglo-Saxon practice, and has pointed to a handful of potential extant examples located externally on churches (Gittos 2013, 231, 239). With such evidence for the existence of consecration crosses in the eleventh century, then, and with clear stylistic associations relating Costock 1 to late pre-Conquest Hiberno-Norse sculpture in northern England, as well as Scotland, Ireland and Man, Costock may be offered as an exceptionally early and elaborate example of this form of architectural sculpture.

The same cannot be said for the incised cross of so-called 'swastika-peltae' form on the pier in the north arcade at Broughton Sulney (no. 2 in Appendix G, p. 225, Ills. 165–6). Although the form of this stylish motif certainly dates back to the period around the Conquest locally, if not earlier still, there is good reason to assign this example a thirteenth-century date, although whether it should be catalogued as a graffito rather than a sculpture is uncertain.

In Lincolnshire, the 'swastika-peltae' motif is found carved into the early tympana at Rowston and Haltham-on-Bain (Everson and Stocker 1999, 311, 314, ill. 493–4), and Nottinghamshire also has a number of tympana that have also been occasionally associated with the pre-Conquest period. The examples at Carlton-in-Lindrick (no. 2), Everton (no. 1) and Kirklington (no. 1), seem clear-cut examples of Romanesque sculpture, for all that the Everton example is unusual iconographically (see Appendix B, pp. 207–8). The fine tympanum at Hawksworth (no. 2), similarly, must be associated with the first half of the twelfth century (p. 208). Nottinghamshire's two most famous tympana, at Southwell (no. 15) and Hoveringham (no. 1), deserve more careful consideration, however. The stone from which the Southwell Minster 'tympanum', correctly described as a lintel, was cut would be included in the Nottinghamshire corpus of pre-Conquest material in any case, as the lintel was created out of an earlier grave-cover (Southwell Minster 1, p. 182, Ills. 119, 172; Stocker 2001b, fig. 13.2). But the 'Urnes' style of

carving of its secondary phase, converting the grave-cover into the lintel bearing the magnificent image of St Michael and the dragon and David and the lion, has also previously been considered of tenth- or eleventh-century date, and therefore the item merits consideration at length in this volume (Appendix G, p. 231, Fig. 32, Ills. 172–5). In our reconsideration of the complex micro- and macro-archaeology of this famous monument, we have concluded that the date put forward by the most recent scholarly appraisal of this carving (Owen 2001b) is probably correct and that Southwell Minster 15 is a genuine example of English Urnes-style sculpture employed in a major decorative scheme of the second decade of the twelfth century (Chapter VIII, p. 89).

Several of the most authoritative assessments of the style of carving of the re-located tympanum at Hoveringham, too, have not only explained that it deploys this Urnes style, but that it is so close in style and technique to the lintel at Southwell that it was probably produced by the same hand or workshop. We concur with this judgment, and with the implied date for Hoveringham 1 of the second decade of the twelfth century also (Appendix G, p. 226, Ill. 168, and Chapter VIII, p. 89). However, such an assessment raises the question whether this fine carving did not also originate from Southwell Minster itself. There is, after all, little indication that the church at Hoveringham was itself of great importance in the early twelfth century: its topographical location is unremarkable, since it evidently sat within the D'Aincourt manorial curia there — according to a map of c.1745 — which was the only manor in the vill at Domesday (Foulds 1994, 274–5). It was then donated to Thurgarton Priory at, or shortly after, the latter's foundation in the 1130s (*ibid.*, 261). However, this suggestion remains unsubstantiated, and it may be that we underestimate the quality of the early church in this small Trent-side village.

The finely sculpted figural panel, Papplewick 1, which depicts St Peter in his guise as bishop of Rome, is an important, though widely overlooked, little sculpture and no doubt had an architectural function. The striking surviving figure was clearly part of a larger scene; in his authoritative, enthroned pose he is looking down and to his right as if engaging with action in that quarter (p. 130, Ills. 64–7). There is no certainty about what that might be; but a kneeling donor figure is certainly plausible. Though the sculpture is stylistically pre-Romanesque, and — as we propose — probably of eleventh-century date, suggestive parallels for the type of overall scene are inevitably more readily found

in slightly later and clearly Romanesque material. A good near-contemporary sculptural parallel for just this scenario in an unprepossessing rural location is afforded by a tympanum from the parish church of St-Fiacre at Mervilliers, Eure-et-Loir, in northern France. There the enthroned central figure, with a sceptre or palm held in the 'sloping arms' manner against his left shoulder, is identified as St George and is clearly the patron saint of a recipient monastery. A knight, in mail and with his horse and squire behind him, kneels and holds up his gift, and the whole process is blessed by the figure of Christ above and recorded in an enrolled inscription, saying 'Renbaudus the knight ... has granted me earthly riches in order to acquire those that have no end' (Vergnolle 1994, 39, fig. 26). This type of involvement of minor local landholders in church foundation and monastic endowment was no doubt an essential process in eleventh- and twelfth-century Nottinghamshire as it was in the diocese of Orleans, but rarely enters the documentary record. If the iconographic analogy is correct (and other priestly and episcopal functions are possible — see the catalogue entry), then Papplewick 1 may have an interesting relevance to a commonplace process of local lordly church foundation in the immediate pre- and post-Conquest period; and St Peter's role was as emblematic patron and recipient of the gift. If a correct interpretation, it would be notable that such an action was permanently and publicly commemorated within the local community in such architectural sculpture. There is no direct evidence in the fragmentary survival at Papplewick to indicate that it was actually a tympanum like the scene from Mervilliers rather than a commemorative panel; but if a tympanum, then that would clearly locate this as an immediately post-Conquest rather than a pre-Conquest piece. Nevertheless it remains one of the finest items of early sculpture in the county and deserves to be better known. It is also of importance in a broader landscape sense, as it provides evidence for a church of some significance at Papplewick, which was eventually to become the core holding of Newstead Augustinian Priory in the reign of Henry II.

As is explained below, an ecclesiastical revival took place across the northern East Midlands following the arrival of a Norman episcopacy, enthusiastically pursuing development and reform. If it is just post-Conquest, the fine figure of St Peter at Papplewick may be one sign of that. Stone sculpture also contributes further evidence for this ecclesiastical enthusiasm in the cases of a small handful of churches which have preserved architectural sculpture of earliest

Norman character. As in Lincolnshire, this material in Nottinghamshire has sometimes been called Anglo-Saxon, and accordingly we have made detailed records of it. As in Lincolnshire also (Everson and Stocker 1999, 308–15, Appendix E), we have produced only summary Corpus entries for the six sites affected (here Appendix E, pp. 220–2). Whilst they fall short of a complete catalogue, these might offer a starting point for subsequent studies.

In Nottinghamshire this material is largely confined to carved capitals and bases. Numerically, the great majority of these items are from the main arcades and the clerestory arcades of the surviving nave of Blyth Priory (nos. 2–4, p. 220, comprising 65 individual items), an important and early Benedictine foundation made in 1087–8 by Roger de Busli (Coffman and Thurlby 2001). The architectural details of the nave, including sculpted volute capitals, have always been placed shortly after the priory's foundation and fit comfortably into a typology of dated examples of such capitals. They can confidently be dated either to the final decade of the eleventh century or to the subsequent one. The larger group of very similar architectural details to which they belong has many members in Lincolnshire, where they have also been recently dated to the final quarter of the eleventh century (Stocker and Everson 2006, 37–43). Other Nottinghamshire examples of this type of capital are also mostly found in the north of the county. In their simplicity, the capitals of the tower arch at Church Warsop (no. 2, p. 221) are perhaps closest to those at Blyth, but they also incorporate extravagant 'coiled' volutes quite unlike those at the Benedictine monastery, but similar to those at Bracebridge in Lincolnshire, for example (*ibid.*, 40), and indeed to those in the crossing at Southwell Minster of 1110–20 (Thompson 1912, 22). The newly discovered loose capital at Costock (no. 3, p. 221) has had its volutes broken away, but they would perhaps have been of similar type to those at Church Warsop, though of somewhat greater projection. Like some of the Blyth examples, a sculpted 'mask' is centrally placed at the junction of the two notional 'leaves' that give rise to them. The neck of the Costock capital is decorated with trails of foliage and leaves of impeccable Romanesque acanthus type, which look very similar to those adorning — for example — the eastern crossing pier of Southwell Minster. The Costock capital, then, is also likely to belong to the decades either side of 1100 and its decoration might have been particularly indebted to the new Romanesque work at Southwell of the second decade of the twelfth century. Volute

have also been knocked off the angles of the capitals in the south door at Finningley (no. 1, pp. 221–2), though we cannot say much about their form. The Finningley capitals, however, have ‘chequerboard’ decoration on their abaci, similar to that seen in several Lincolnshire examples (Stocker and Everson 2006, 49), and also very debased interlace runs on their back-plates. Most distinctively, they have necks decorated with the remains of forms resembling the upright leaf type or ‘palmettes’, which are such a feature of late eleventh-century architectural decoration in Lincolnshire (ibid., 41), though here they are not articulated and are little different from early scallop forms.

Much more similar to the Lincolnshire palmettes are the bands of leaves that decorate the necks of the capitals in the chancel arch at Littleborough (no. 1, p. 222) and in the tower arch of Carlton-in-Lindrick (no. 5, p. 221). At both places the leaves stand stiffly upright and are fully articulated. The capitals at Littleborough (Ill. 199), in particular, are strikingly similar to those from St Peter-at-Gowts in Lincoln, even to the extent that the zones of the capital are separated by bands of cable moulding and an upright fillet decorated in a similar manner between the miniscule volutes. We have previously advanced reasons why, on stylistic grounds alone, the capitals in the tower at St Peter-at-Gowts might be the earliest of the entire Lincolnshire group, dating perhaps from *c.* 1080 (Stocker and Everson 2006, 55). This suggests a date prior to 1100 for those at Littleborough. The capitals on the tower arch at Carlton-in-Lindrick (Ill. 198) have very similar leaves adorning their necks, as indeed does the southern of the arch’s two hoodmould stops. But the capitals themselves lack the geometrical and sculptural complexity of those at Littleborough; they have no volutes and the leaves rise to an abacus cut in a separate stone.

Few of the bases paired with these early capitals survive in good condition, but where they do — as, for example, some of those at Blyth — they take the form of a lower torus below a simple scotia, with only a minimal fillet between.

The capitals at Carlton-in-Lindrick are critical in dating the entire tower, whose archway into the nave they support. This tower (Ill. 197), or at least the section below the additional late medieval belfry, is the one substantial building in Nottinghamshire that is regularly described as Anglo-Saxon in text books, largely on the basis of its belfry openings (Fisher 1962, 225–6; Taylor and Taylor 1965, I, 149–52; Fisher 1969, 155 etc.). In our study of towers of this category, we noted that the Carlton tower differed from the

‘Lincolnshire specification’ for such structures in several telling ways (Stocker and Everson 2006, 7). Although Carlton’s belfry openings are superficially similar to many Lincolnshire examples, the mid-wall shafts have no capitals. The proportions of the two stages of the Carlton tower are also somewhat different to most of the Lincolnshire examples, with the belfry stage being apparently much taller by comparison with the stage below; whilst those two stages of Carlton’s tower are not separated visually by a string course, as is the case with all the Lincolnshire examples, with the single exception of the individualistic tower at Great Hale. Consequently, Carlton’s tower is better considered alongside the large group of towers of this type in the province of York, rather than with the Lincolnshire examples. That northern group of towers has nevertheless also been considered to be of similar late eleventh-century date to those we have studied in Lincolnshire (Cambridge 1994), and the close resemblance between the upright leaves of the tower-arch capitals and other members of the ‘upright leaf’ type in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire seems to confirm this date precisely.

The capitals of the tower arch at Carlton-in-Lindrick are completed in the proper Romanesque fashion with an abacus bearing a pronounced hollow chamfer, in this case carved on a separate stone. Two stones, though very much larger in scale, have emerged from the excavations to the east of the Minster at Southwell (Southwell 3 and 4 in Appendix B, p. 208). Understanding of these two stones remains sketchy, in the absence of a published account of their archaeological context, but the excavators wondered if they might not be abacus sections from an Anglo-Saxon church (Rowe 2010). On the basis of the evidence available at the time of writing, we feel that this suggestion is unsubstantiated. As noted in Chapter III above, p. 26) we would suggest that these major architectural fragments are Roman in origin. Fortunately, we can return a more confident verdict on the remaining excavated, though now missing, stones from Southwell Minster which have been previously claimed as items of Anglo-Saxon architectural decoration (Southwell 5–14 in Appendix C, p. 216; Ill. 201). Close comparison with architectural details still *in situ* in the nave makes it extremely likely that these fragments came from the Minster’s choir and are of early twelfth-century date.

Crude items of early sculpture which, on the one hand are undoubtedly of early Romanesque character but, on the other hand, probably decorated architectural features in churches of similar date to

Carlton and Southwell, have been noted at Kirkby-in-Ashfield (Bonser 1908, pl. 1) and in the south porch at Broughton Sulney (Appendix B, p. 207). The former may represent the decoration surrounding the tympanum of a minor window, whilst the latter remains truly puzzling.

As tends to be the case around the country, a number of Nottinghamshire font-stones have been claimed as Anglo-Saxon or more generally 'early' (Keyser 1907, 237–8). The small and elaborately decorated bowl at Hoveringham is an example, which might be a Romanesque mortar. We have thought it worth considering only two Nottinghamshire fonts as candidates for inclusion within our discussion of sculpture of this date in the county: those at Carlton-in-Lindrick and at Bilsthorpe. However, these are considered here for somewhat different reasons. The font at Carlton (no. 3 in Appendix B, p. 208) is repeatedly said to be Anglo-Saxon in date, but without detailed justification ever having been advanced for this claim. It has a carefully carved circular bowl, standing on a modern pedestal, and a precisely cut rim-moulding with a hollow chamfer. This moulding is very similar indeed to those above the capitals in

the tower arch, which we have already grouped with a number of other early Norman features. Around the base of the bowl is a precisely cut fringe of lunettes, of a type which must surely also owe their origin to early Norman architectural decoration.

On the other hand, the simple (and probably seventeenth- or eighteenth-century) font at Bilsthorpe, was first said to be standing on a reused Anglo-Saxon cross-shaft by Stretton (Robertson 1910, 2) and his opinion has been followed by many writers subsequently, including by J. C. Cox in correspondence with Romilly Allen that records his excavation below floor level around the font's base in 1904 (BL, Add. MS 37552, ff. 172–4). It is a mistaken opinion. The elaborately carved artefact supporting the Bilsthorpe font is quite clearly an earlier font decorated with bold chevron ornamentation (no. 2 in Appendix B, p. 207). The earlier of the two Bilsthorpe fonts was evidently very similar to the Romanesque example still in use at Woodborough, less than ten miles away, whilst the burial of a previous font beneath its successor is a well-documented phenomenon (Stocker 1997). At Bilsthorpe, then, we can see Nottinghamshire evidence for this now-defunct practice.