

CHAPTER VIII

OVERLAP AND THE CONTINUING TRADITION

Nottinghamshire resembles its neighbouring counties of the eastern Midlands in retaining a good deal of sculptural material from the middle and later parts of the eleventh century and just into the following century. It seems to have come quickly and firmly under the Conqueror's grip, with a royal castle created at Nottingham itself and major lordships — such as Tickhill in the north — swiftly put in place and easing the transfer of power with minimum disruption to a new economy. Several major stimuli to the county's stone quarrying capacity and building activity also occurred early in the post-Conquest era with major ecclesiastical projects at Blyth Priory in the later eleventh century and Lenton Priory and Southwell Minster soon after the turn of the century, and secular work at Nottingham and at Newark castles, at the latter of which impressive early Norman work survives or has been recovered. There is ample evidence of local church building in stone in this period (as usefully reviewed, for example, by Keyser 1907), and it seems clear that local stone resources were opened up and consistently worked in response to this demand, rather in contrast to the evidence from pre-Conquest monuments of the importation of stone from out of county and/or using re-cycled Roman *spolia*. For this Corpus, however, the items identified as of a continuing tradition do not comprise all early Norman items: the lintel at Kirklington or tympanum at Everton might otherwise appear here, rather than in Appendix B as items claimed to be pre-Conquest but not (p. 208). Nor does this chapter have as its objective a broad review of Romanesque stone sculpture in Nottinghamshire. Rather it focuses narrowly on monument types and decorative styles and ornamentation that are the mainstays of the pre-Conquest material, which do — or in some cases do not — continue and evolve. In a number of significant cases, stylistic and ornamental forms are such that the items have been judged pre-Conquest by some scholars.

In contrast to neighbouring Lincolnshire, where something of a concentration of cross-shafts in a

continuing tradition can be catalogued, and exhibit distinctive decorative characteristics such as acanthus trails, paterae and inscriptions (Everson and Stocker 1999, 89–91, 319–29), there is little or no comparably distinctive material of this type in Nottinghamshire. This is despite Alfred Stapleton, with the support and guidance of William Stevenson, gathering and publishing basic information about all forms and dates of crosses in the county. He also collected miscellaneous other material mistakenly taken to be crosses, in a manner typical of the local antiquarian efforts in the last decade of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries (see Chapter I). This enthusiasm generated a notoriously complex and repetitive bibliography but no clear examples falling within the remit of Corpus cataloguing as 'continuing tradition'.

Perhaps the latest of the pre-Conquest shafts — the ill-starred Rolleston 1 — belongs to the middle years of the eleventh century and once deployed the only inscription in the county that may be plausibly (by David Parsons' assessment in the catalogue entry) of pre-Conquest date (pp. 138–45, Fig. 21, Ills. 70–5). If an otherwise plain shaft and angle rolls relate it to a regional overlap and continuing tradition, the cross-head form and its decoration have clear pre-Conquest analogies. As a continuing tradition in Nottinghamshire, inscriptions occur not on shafts but on prominently displayed architectural sculpture, such as the tympanum at Hawksworth (Hawksworth 2 in Appendix B, p. 208) and perhaps the tympanum at Hoveringham (Appendix G, p. 226, Ill. 168). What Rolleston 1 does share with a number of Lincolnshire examples in the continuing tradition is, as we argue, a function as a topographical marker rather than in marking an individual's burial. But that, in Nottinghamshire, seems to be a long-standing tradition, especially in marking Trent crossings — as in the cases of Stapleford 1 and 2, Shelford 1 and South Muskham 1 — in circumstances where the river formed a major political and/or ecclesiastical boundary (see the discussion in Chapter VII, p. 76 above, and Fig. 12).

The fragment probably from a sculpture of cross-head form at Cuckney (Appendix A, p. 201, Fig. 31, Ills. 149–50) is unlikely to be the head of a standing cross or a marker, rather than a gable cross, and there seems no obvious reason for a lack of shafts assignable to this era, when good examples exist both immediately to the north at Thrybergh in south Yorkshire (Collingwood 1915, 249; Brown 1937, 142–8, pl. XXXVIII) and to the south at Sproxtton in Leicestershire and Stanground in Huntingdonshire (Brown 1937, 110, 276, pls. XXXI, CV). No doubt local stone quarries came more to the fore after the Conquest, and that might have had some influence on this pattern, but south Nottinghamshire (at least) stood at the edge of the distribution of the ubiquitous products of the Barnack quarries, which also supplied shafts. But if not a consequence of the vagaries of survival and a relatively small county area, this absence of overlap shafts may be a significant phenomenon.

Decorated grave-markers, too, were produced in the years before the Conquest, as at Carlton-in-Lindrick and Church Warsop (pp. 93, 95, Ills. 3–4, 5–6), and in local stone types; and the excavations of the pre-castle cemetery at Newark revealed stone markers, of which it seems only the below-ground parts survived *in situ*, in use for a number of the graves (Newark 1–6 in Appendix C, p. 214, and Ill. 200) but not a single grave-cover. This could be the result of the social structure of the part of the cemetery excavated, or of covers having been cleared for recycling because they represented significant reusable stone, just as the upper sections of the markers did. It certainly contrasts with the evidence from the Cambridge Castle burial ground, which was similarly sealed by the new Norman castle mound there in 1068 and where covers predominated in a range of funerary sculpture that also included shafts and markers (Kerrich 1814). But, just as the pre-Conquest tradition of stone markers appears limited in number and variety in Nottinghamshire, certainly as compared with the evidence from neighbouring Lincolnshire (Everson and Stocker 1999, 58–62), so too it is difficult to identify a continuing tradition of this monument type. The simplest cross-marked forms, which excavations at St Mark's, Lincoln have demonstrated were part of the East Midlands repertoire (Stocker 1986) are not in evidence. It might reasonably be objected that the simplest of those markers perhaps are difficult to identify outside excavation. Just possibly Cuckney 1 might have been from a grave-marker (p. 201, Fig. 31, Ill. 150), but we put forward an argument that it is more probably a twelfth-century gable cross (see

Chapter VI, p. 68). Only in the twelfth and thirteenth century and in the tradition of decoration with cross pattée and its variations can well-made markers again be identified with confidence, as at East Bridgford, Rolleston, South Wilford, Southwell (Appendix F, p. 223) or, later still a rare example at Bilsthorpe (Appendix B, p. 207).

Horizontal rather than upright funerary monuments are therefore more typical of the Nottinghamshire overlap and the immediate continuing tradition. For the most part, these are large flat grave-covers in local stone types. One type, represented by Blyth 1, Halloughton 1, Mattersey Priory 1 and North Muskham 1 (see Appendix A, p. 199, and Ills. 145–6, 151, 153–4, 156–9), is certainly an approximately rectangular slab decorated with either a flat or an angle-roll moulding all round its upper arris, but the upper surface may be otherwise undecorated. All are quite standard products in Permian limestone from quarries of the Cadeby formation.

Of a similar later eleventh- to twelfth-century date and presenting a sparseness of decoration that is found as interlace and animal forms disappear, are covers from Bramcote and West Leake (pp. 200, 205, Ills. 148, 160–2). Both are markedly tapered and ornamented only with an axial rib and lozenge forms, on a pattern well known in the contemporary output from the quarries at Barnack, which produced large covers of just this character (Butler 1961; 1964). But West Leake 1, though visually a 'Barnack cover', is worked in Cadeby limestone; and, while Bramcote 1 does not survive, we presume that it too is likely to have been from local quarry sources. With a Barnack-style cover of slightly later decorative pattern coming from Lambley (Appendix F, p. 223), it is just this area of southern Nottinghamshire that Barnack products might have reached; but the awkward overland carriage or the long alternative water route via the coast and the Trent–Soar river network was evidently too much, and local quarries supplied a good-quality substitute, which at the same time acknowledged the prestige of Barnack products. Clearly this phenomenon is not confined to Nottinghamshire, since comparable local copies of Barnack covers have been noted at Sleaford in Lincolnshire and Aston Flamville in western Leicestershire (Everson and Stocker 1999, 290; Trubshaw 2004, 24), and it represents important, if unsurprising, evidence of quarry and masons' practices.

Later developments in the unbroken tradition of covers as funerary monuments include many that adopt a variation of cross pattée decoration from as early as the early twelfth century (as selectively noted

in Appendix F, p. 223) and some that deploy a Corpus type of cross but with some form of elaboration that signals a post-Conquest date, like one of the many covers reused internally at St Mary's, Nottingham which deploys an incised A1-type cross-head but with a stem elaborated with a knop (Nottingham St Mary 1 in Appendix G, p. 229, Ill. 169). A very distinctive cover at Nuthall has a special interest in that its unusual form of cross may indicate a twelfth-century date — perhaps an early twelfth-century date — and make it a particularly early example of the large group of generally later medieval covers that deploy occupational symbols (p. 230, Ill. 170). Its stone type exemplifies the developing exploitation of the Dolomitic limestone of the Bulwell quarries, seen also at Selston (p. 230, Ill. 171) and elsewhere in the western part of the county. In the case of Nuthall 1 the symbols are a chalice and a book, signalling a priestly burial, and it may be thought plausible that priests should have led the way in this decorative innovation. Chalices have been found in some numbers in graveyard excavations in contexts dating from the early twelfth century onwards, and details of the circumstances have sometimes pointed to a significant graveside ritual involving these vessels, which is also evidenced in the late twelfth-century manuscript *Life of St Cuthbert* (Gilchrist and Sloane 2005, 126–7, 160–5; Taylor, A. 2001, pl. 34). The existence of such distinctive practices might make the permanent visible commemoration of an individual's priestly profession on his grave-cover a short and obvious step.

Several of these, including Nuthall 1, Selston 1, the local Halloughton type and the Barnack-style covers, are physically impressive monuments, intended to be visible on or to stand up from the surface. They might be termed 'chest-like' but not to the extent that their sides afford a field for enhancement and decoration. That tradition, which predominates in the tenth and early eleventh centuries through the sequence of 'Trent Valley' hogbacks, Hickling 1, and the mid-Kesteven covers (see Chapter V), has a group of continuators in the north-east Midlands, but one which — on their wider evidence as later Romanesque items — may represent a revival rather than a continuous tradition (Stocker 1988; Everson and Stocker 1999, 90). Staunton-in-the-Vale 1 is the Nottinghamshire example of that group, and its likely dating fits that pattern (Appendix G, p. 237, Ills. 176–8). Most interestingly, its emblematic reuse in the later medieval period marks out not only its higher quality but also its status as a dynastic image.

As was the case in Lincolnshire, but to a lesser

degree, a quantity of the overlap and continuing tradition in stone sculpture is architectural sculpture, represented by items in Appendix E (pp. 220–2) as well as Appendix G. The impressive west tower at Carlton-in-Lindrick (Ills. 197–8), which with its decorated tower arch capitals and imposts has persistently been promoted as a pre-Conquest structure, has had its position as an early Romanesque construction clarified by the larger study of Lincolnshire towers belonging to the first half century after the Conquest (Stocker and Everson 2006; and Chapter VI above, p. 71). The early tower arch at Church Warsop, and parochial work at Finningley and Littleborough clearly fall within that later eleventh-century slot, too. The effectively full survival of nave arcades and clerestorey at Blyth Priory church also bears witness to a major initiative of the late eleventh century, which finds comparison in its simple sculptural detailing in capitals and bases with the earliest Romanesque work nationally, including St John's chapel at the White Tower in London (Zarnecki 1951, 12; Crook, J. 2008, 115). One of the arcade bases at Blyth and the back-plates of the capitals at Finningley display forms of interlace that indicate their connexion to an earlier local sculptural tradition (see Appendix E).

But it is the lintel and tympanum at Hoveringham (no. 1) and Southwell (no. 15) that in practice bear witness most clearly to a continuing stylistic tradition of Scandinavian art forms in the county and the region (Appendix G, pp. 226, 231, Ills. 168, 174–5). Other local tympana and lintels — at Carlton-in-Lindrick, Everton, Hawksworth and Kirklington — may in some cases be similar to or earlier in absolute date than these two, but their decoration does not in any sense represent a continuing tradition and they are merely referenced in Appendix B (p. 207) because they have, with varying degrees of plausibility, been claimed as pre-Conquest. By contrast, Hoveringham 1 and Southwell 15 represent a late stage of what has been called the English Urnes style. This does not get going until the mid eleventh century (Wilson and Klindt-Jensen 1966, 154; Wilson 1984, 211), and — in contrast to the Urnes style as it is encountered in the decoration and fittings of Norwegian wooden churches (Hohler 1999) — tends in stone sculpture to retain features of earlier Anglo-Scandinavian styles, such as a substantial rather than extremely attenuated body for the enmeshed beast, and contoured outlines and spiral joints. So direct is the link that these two items have not only been strongly and authoritatively promoted as pre-Conquest work in the past (Kendrick 1949, 121–2), but the case is periodically and persuasively

re-made (e.g. Tudor-Craig 1990). By the early twelfth century, beasts and fantastical creatures in this style became part of the repertoire that contemporary sculptors and artists might draw on, as seen within the region decorating what may be part of a major tomb chest at Birstall north of Leicester (Dare 1930; Parsons 1996, 17). Most recent commentators agree, as we do, in dating the Hovingham and Southwell sculptures to the second decade of the twelfth century and associating them with the reconstruction of Southwell Minster at that time. But beyond the style-critical niceties of this pair of sculptures themselves, one can see beasts and fantastical creatures of the same form and style in churches of central and eastern Derbyshire, as on the early Romanesque tower-nave at Bradbourne or at Ault Hucknall (Pevsner 1953, 49, 66), indicating a continuing local tradition.

The two items are found only a few miles apart, and

are linked not just stylistically but iconographically, in showing a combat scene between St Michael and the Beast. Whereas this combat has commonly been understood generically as the struggle between good and evil, a sharper interpretation might understand the scenes as portraying the archangel in his role as psychopomp fighting for the human soul at death and shepherding it to salvation. Since this idea was promulgated with reforming vigour by the Norman senior clergy in the half century following the Conquest (Stocker and Everson 2006, 82–4, 86), its occurrence in Nottinghamshire in the early decades of the twelfth century would fit well and tend to confirm style-critical dating. The long-lived image of the Mercian ‘great beast’ in combat was thus purposefully re-cycled into a modern post-Conquest church teaching, promoted for the benefit of the individual Christian’s eternal soul.