



CHAPTER I

THE STUDY OF THE ANGLO-SAXON STONE SCULPTURE OF DERBYSHIRE AND STAFFORDSHIRE

by Jane Hawkes

The history of interest in the Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture of Derbyshire and Staffordshire reflects that in the extant material surviving elsewhere in the country. It thus follows a general pattern of early notes made in the immediate post-Reformation period of the mid-sixteenth to seventeenth centuries in which the material tends to be noted as part of itineraries and chorographic accounts of England, by writers such as John Leland in the first half of the sixteenth century (Toulmin Smith 1964) and William Lambarde (1576), and heralds such as William Camden (e.g. 1586; 1610) and William Smith (1585; 1656). In such accounts the material is noted for its apparently ‘eccentric’ nature, and for the most part is not even recognised as Anglo-Saxon (Hawkes 2013b). While none of the monuments in Derbyshire seem to have captured the interest of such chorographers and heralds, those at Checkley in Staffordshire, having been included in Holland’s revised English translation of Camden’s *Britannia* (1610, 587), did draw the attention of Robert Plot, Keeper of the Ashmolean and Professor of ‘Chymistry’ at Oxford, in his *Natural History of Staffordshire* (1686) (Fig. 3). Following such early accounts it is the encounters of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century antiquaries that form the next stage in the ‘pattern of interest’ in Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, with those by figures such as Hayman Rooke (1780; 1796) and Charles Lyttelton ((—) 1743; Lyttelton 1773) being focused on monuments in the Derbyshire Peak District (Fig. 4). It is these observations, made by a retired army major and a high ranking ecclesiast (Nurse 2004; Sweet 2004, xvi)—the one local to the region and the other passing through on his travels round England—that preceded the more systematic studies that emerged with the establishment of academic departments of art history and archaeology, alongside the regional and county

archaeological societies in the course of the nineteenth century, and their various publications throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first century. Increasingly these sought to establish chronologies and dates, modes of production and the intellectual and cultural milieux informing the sculptures, generally from archaeological and art-historical points of view.

The individual and haphazard nature of the early interest in the monuments has long been noted (e.g. Hawkes 2013b), and while it provides a useful insight into the development of the scholarship, in the region under consideration here, it also resulted in a tendency to focus on a small number of monuments and sites. Thus, Plot’s interest in Staffordshire in the late-seventeenth century focussed on the monuments at Leek, Checkley, Chebsey and Ilam in the final chapter of his *Natural History*. This was devoted to the history of antiquities, these ‘being nothing else but Nature restrained, forced, or fashioned, in her matter or motives’ (Plot 1686, 332). In other words, they did not involve ‘the pedigrees or descents either of families or lands, [...] the antiquities or foundations of Religious houses, or any other pious or Civil performances’ (ibid., 392); rather they constituted objects ‘very remote from the present Age, [...] which being all made and fashioned out of Natural Things, may as well be brought under a Natural History as any thing of Art’ (ibid., 392). It was as part of this category, safely removed from that of the early antiquarianism of the chorographers and heralds, that Plot invoked the Anglo-Saxon sculptures at a time when the remits of Art and Science were being critically interrogated, with royal approval having been granted to the Royal Society (of London for Improving Natural Knowledge) in 1663 following its first meeting in November 1660. It was in the pages of its transactions that early archaeological ‘reports’ were

published, following Robert Boyle's 'list' of the topics that could be usefully considered in discussions of the 'Natural History of a Countrey, Great or Small' (Boyle 1665–6), which considered only three 'general heads' to be relevant: the 'Supraterraneous', 'Terrestrial' and 'Subterraneous'; in other words, 'those things that respect the *Heavens*, or concern the *Air*, the *Water*, or the *Earth*' (Boyle 1665–6, 186). To these 'General Articles of inquiries' Boyle did admit that '*Inquiries* about *Traditions* concerning all particular things, relating to that Country, as either peculiar to it, or at least, uncommon elsewhere' could be added. This allowed for archaeological 'inquiries' and for Plot to include his account of Anglo-Saxon sculptures as 'peculiar' to the county of Staffordshire. Organising his *Natural History* in strict accordance with Boyle's instructions for the 'general heads' under which the subject of Natural History could be considered, Plot introduced his inquiry into the sculptures at Checkley (Ill. 519). He deemed them to be examples of funerary monuments of 'the Danes' whom he understood to have introduced the practice of erecting 'tall pyramidal stones' over the graves of 'all persons of quality' (Plot 1686, 432). It was the monuments at Checkley that enabled him to confirm the function of these 'epistylia of so many crosses' as funerary, for they were reported by the local inhabitants to be 'the memorials of 3 Bishops slain in a battle fought [...] in a place call'd Naked Field, for that the bodies lay there naked and unburied for some time after the fight' (Plot 1686, 432). Unable to corroborate this (oral) tradition, Plot associated the Staffordshire sculptures with others of antiquity (such as that at Bewcastle in Cumberland), that had been established in the scholarship through Camden's *Britannia* (1610), as having funerary and memorial functions (Hawkes 2013b). In this context he provided a verbal and visual account of the decoration, including the first published illustration of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture (Plot 1686, Tab. XXXIII), which is presented in the company of other 'oddities' from the region (Fig. 3).

In the context of the emergence of the Royal Society and his concern to produce a scientific account of the Natural History of Staffordshire, Plot makes it clear that the monuments are to be identified with a culture of local legend—with '*Inquiries* about *Traditions* concerning all particular things, relating to [Staffordshire], as ... peculiar to it'. This was, unfortunately, a distinction that subsequent writers failed to make, with the result that they tended to assume a common set of associations relating to the date and production of the sculptures and to focus

on the monuments at the same sites invoked by Plot (Ilam, Checkley, Chebsey and Leek), to the exclusion of all others. This went so far as to include a putative monument from Draycott-in-the-Moors, Staffordshire, which even Plot admitted he never saw (Plot 1686, 432). It is, nevertheless, repeatedly invoked as existing at the site by subsequent authors, including those re-editing Camden's *Britannia*, through to the twentieth century—despite never having been seen (e.g. Cox, T. 1730, 101; Pegge 1779, 97; Camden 1806, II, 515; Dugdale 1819, IV, 261; Erdeswick 1820, 102, 189; Allen and Browne 1885, 356; Pape 1945–6, 25; Pape 1946–7, 25).

Overall, therefore, interest in the early stone monuments of the region evident from the late sixteenth century onwards follows a pattern of haphazard encounters by which the sculptures at Bakewell, Bradbourne and Eyam are the focus of attention in Derbyshire, while those at Chebsey, Checkley, Ilam and Leek in Staffordshire are subjected to repeated visits and commentaries. By the eighteenth century some writers were cognisant of the early Christian nature of the monuments (at Bakewell and Eyam), and provided some of the first evidence for the existence of the sculptures standing in their current locations at that time. The language used, however, led to some confusion in later commentaries. Thus at Eyam, early references to the 'cross' lying in the graveyard, apparently contradicting Lyttleton's illustration of the cross-*shaft* standing in its current setting following his visit in 1743 ((—) 1832), were intended to indicate that it was the cross-*head* that lay in the churchyard until it was reset on the shaft—rather than the entire monument (see Eyam 1). Furthermore, interest in the antiquities of the (classical) past being rekindled as a result of the Grand Tour and increased tourism throughout both Britain and Europe, allowed other writers, such as Rooke, to feel secure in viewing the Anglo-Saxon stones at Bakewell, Bradbourne and Eyam (Fig. 4a–d) as Roman, as part of the continuing interest of the early chorographers in recording Roman activity in the region. Another result of the trend in tourism was the publication of numerous guides to England, including the counties of Derbyshire and Staffordshire, which preserved the various attitudes to the monuments found in the antiquarian literature, as well as the promotion of those long-established in that literature, at the expense of others—even if they could be accessed in close association with monuments that were highlighted as being worthy of note. Thus, the cross at Eyam, which stands next to the tomb of Catherine Maupasson (wife of the Revd. Maupasson

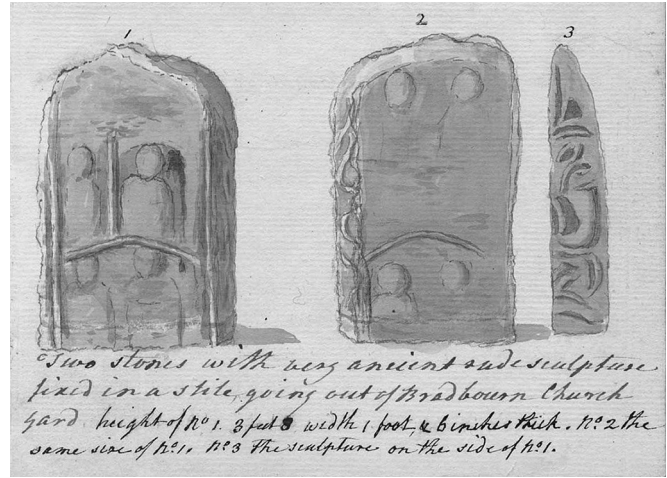


FIGURE 3

A plate from Robert Plot's *Natural History of Staffordshire*, recording the monuments at Checkley amongst other 'oddities' (Plot 1686, Tab. XXX.9-11). See also Ill. 519.

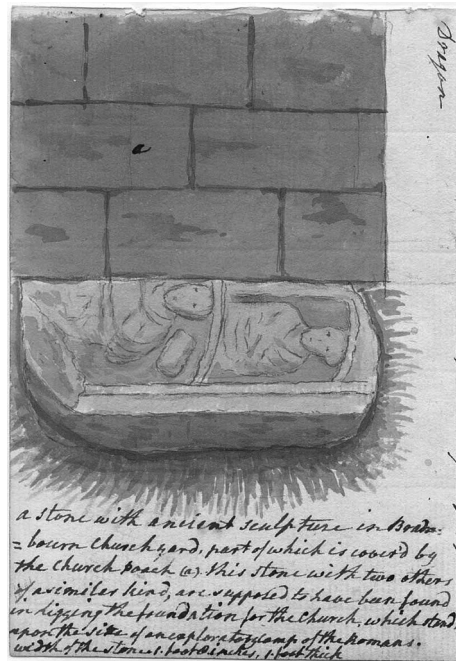


A



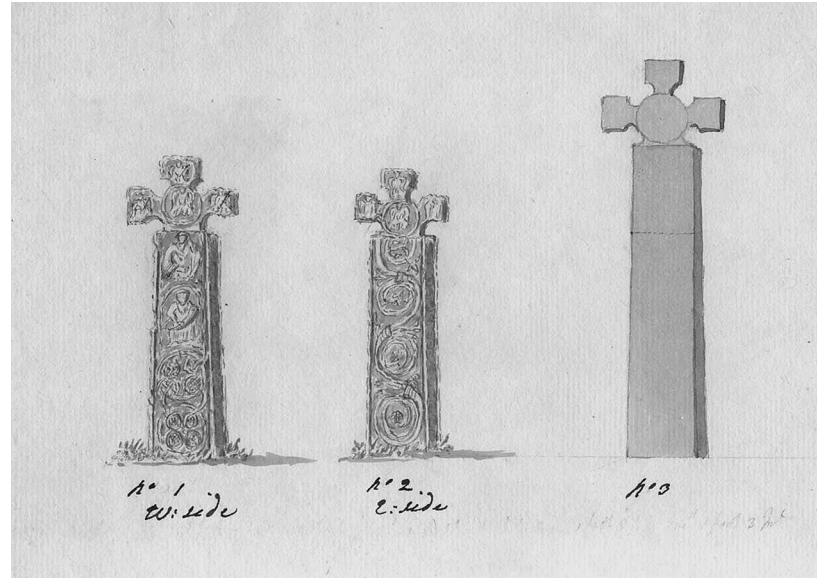
Two stones with very ancient side sculpture
 fixed in a stile going out of Bradbourn Church
 yard height of No. 1. 3 feet 6 width 1 foot, 6 inches thick. No. 2 the
 same size of No. 1. No. 3 the sculpture on the side of No. 1.

B



a stone with an ancient sculpture in Brad-
 bourne Churchyard, part of which is covered by
 the Church porch (a). This stone with two others
 of a similar kind, are supposed to have been found
 in digging the foundation for the Church, which stood
 upon the site of an ancient Roman camp of the Romans.
 width of the stone 1 foot 6 inches, 1 foot thick

C



D

FIGURE 4

Manuscript sketches by Hayman Rooke in 1780 recording the monuments at (a) Bakewell, (b-c) Bradbourne, and (d) Eyam (Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Archive: Rooke 2002-98)

celebrated in the narratives of the ‘plague village’), is often ignored in the guides that focus on the tomb. It is a factor that may have put the cross at risk: in the early-twentieth century it was noted that ‘sharrabangs’ of tourists from the city were to be seen clambering all over it.

It was only in the later nineteenth century, with interest in Anglo-Saxon sculptures growing among those working in art-historical and archaeological circles, such as George Forrest Browne (1833–1930), Disney Professor of Archaeology at Cambridge, that the Anglo-Saxon stone monuments in Derbyshire and Staffordshire began to be considered as a corpus of material, alongside continued expressions of interest in individual monuments at a select number of sites (Hawkes forthcoming). At Bradbourne, for instance, interest in the shaft fragments at the site led to their reconstruction as a single monument (Bradbourne 1), with Browne (1888b) providing a detailed account of where the different pieces were distributed prior to their being reunited. Likewise Charles Lynam, the prominent antiquarian and prolific contributor to the proceedings of the *North Staffordshire Field Club and Archaeological Society*, pursuing the long-standing scholarly interest in the sculptures at Leek, provides evidence of the loss of part of the cross-head from the site (Leek 5a–b), following its display at the 1872 meeting of the British Archaeological Association at Wolverhampton ((—) 1873, 320–1). A drawing of the cross-head was included in Sleigh’s *History of Leek*, the first edition of which was published in 1862, but the arm seems to have ‘disappeared’ following its display in 1872, although it was illustrated in the second edition of Sleigh’s *History* (in 1883; see Ill. 581), and is nowhere recorded by Lynam in his subsequent discussions of the sculptures at the site (e.g. Lynam 1875; 1877a; 1896–7).

While maintaining the profile of carvings so long established in the literature, such writers also began considering them as part of regional groups of Anglo-Saxon monuments, with Lynam and Browne producing some of the earliest of such publications on the material as regional corpora: Lynam separating out the sculptures of Staffordshire as either sepulchral monuments (Lynam 1875) or churchyard crosses (Lynam 1877a), and Browne (1886) providing a detailed account of all the pre-Norman sculptures then extant in Derbyshire (see also Browne 1888a). In its comprehensive coverage of the Derbyshire carvings, Browne’s article set the stage for the surveys of ‘pre-Norman’ sculpture that would appear at the turn of the twentieth century, with W. G. Collingwood’s

extended studies of the Yorkshire stones being perhaps the best known (Collingwood 1907; 1909; 1915).

Unlike Collingwood (1854–1932), however, an artist trained at the Slade School of Art under Alphonse Legros (1837–1911), Browne was keen to ensure that his observations were supported by ‘accurate’ images: reproductions of the rubbings he made of the faces of each monument. These, he explained, were then outlined in pencil or ink (‘the latter giving the clear effect’), photographed ‘on a scale of one inch to the foot’ or, in the case of larger monuments, such as those at Bakewell and Eyam: on a scale of ‘one inch to a foot and a half’ (Browne 1886, 164–5), and then reproduced to scale on printers blocks (see Ills. 410, 427, 472). It was a process deliberately employed by Browne on the grounds that not only did it ensure ‘accuracy of the proportion’ (ibid., 165), it also ensured accuracy of detail: for even ‘the most careful draughtsman must in some cases interpret what he sees, and thus the result of his skill is a picture of what he thinks he sees’. The following year, 1887, Browne was elected Disney Professor of Art and Archaeology and in December that year it was announced that the subject of his Disney Lectures would be the sculptured stones of pre-Norman type in the British Isles ((—) 1887, 413); these were accompanied by over 350 such illustrations (e.g. Ill. 434), the reproduction of which cost him his entire professorial allowance.

Illustrated in this way Browne’s ‘catalogue’ of the Derbyshire stones systematically set out to provide the reader with a brief ‘bibliography’ of each stone (limited largely to J. C. Cox’s work, almost the only publication available to Browne at the time); a record of where the stone came from and where it could currently be found; an account of its condition, a description of its decoration, face by face; a discussion of the possible identity and symbolic significance of its carvings; and mention of monuments elsewhere in Britain, Ireland and continental Europe that he considered relevant comparanda. Many of his deductions were, of course, those of a nineteenth-century ecclesiast, albeit one who had devoted decades to the study of the early Church in Anglo-Saxon England and its arts (e.g. Browne 1879; see Hawkes forthcoming), but his methodology was clearly foundational in the formation of such studies and his interpretations have continued to provide scholars with inspiration about how the carvings might be understood (e.g. Stetka 2009; Stetka *et al.* 2009; Mora-Ottomano *et al.* 2012).

The structure of his catalogue was also that which was carried forward by subsequent scholars, including those presenting surveys of the sculptured stones of

Derbyshire and Staffordshire. In 1937, for instance, T. E. Routh, taking inspiration from both Browne and Collingwood, updated and expanded Browne's catalogue of the Derbyshire stones, listing them by site alphabetically and assigning them identifying numbers, providing information about their location, describing the decoration of each, and illustrating almost all by means of photographs and line drawings. A decade later, in 1945–7 T. Pape, following the precedent set by Lynam, considered the Staffordshire monuments in two consecutive publications on round- and rectangular-shafted crosses, which systematically considered the stone sculptures (according to monument form) alphabetically and numerically, citing previous publications, identifying their location, providing their measurements and describing their decoration: this demonstrated that uniquely among the round-shafted monuments, those of Staffordshire did not include figural ornament in their repertoire of carved ornament (Pape 1945–6). Having presented the material in this manner Pape then set the Staffordshire pieces in the context of other Anglo-Saxon comparanda (including those in Derbyshire), and—in keeping with what was by then a major concern of the scholarship—concluded his surveys with a discussion of the chronology of the stones established through their form and the style of the carved motifs.

Thus, while much of the information in the early studies was dependent on the earlier antiquarian literature, it was also based on archaeological and art-historical concerns and provided the basis of the modern scholarship. In this respect, one of the first scholars to introduce the subject of the Anglo-Saxon sculpture of Derbyshire and Staffordshire into explicitly art-historical scholarship in the twentieth century, and so remove it from the general pattern of general observation and catalogues published in local antiquarian and archaeological journals, was a slightly younger contemporary of George Forrest Browne, Gerard Baldwin Brown (1849–1932), nephew of the Victorian sculptor Henry Leifchild (1823–84) and professor of Fine Art at Edinburgh until 1930. His six-volume study of *The Arts in Early England* celebrated the learning and arts of the Anglo-Saxon Church in a manner not unlike that articulated by Forrest Browne (e.g. Brown 1903, 209–16), but was more heavily influenced by the approach promoted by Aby Warburg (1866–1929) which prioritised the cultural history of art and the transmission of antique iconography in other cultures (Gombrich 1970). Brown thus regarded the sculpture as exhibiting 'necessary variations in artistic

merit' and sought to consider 'the good pieces and the inferior ones together in the mass ... as an element in the life of Anglo-Saxon England' (1903, 98), rather than establish a chronology of the material or a series of comparisons. The last (posthumous) volume of his series, devoted to Anglo-Saxon sculpture specifically, included discussion of the Derbyshire material—such as that at Bakewell—which he recognised as having been brought together as a collection which made it 'fortuitously available for study' (Brown 1937, 94–5). Like other such collections, he considered these to display admirably the main characteristic of the material: variety, which he deemed to be 'everywhere the dominant impression' (ibid., 95). For Brown it was the 'multiform' nature of the 'intersecting patterns' or 'entrelacs' that most visibly illustrated this variation, and while his account of these patterns included acceptance of a 'course upon the down grade', the generally 'carefully and skilfully executed' style of the sculpture meant 'it would be difficult to speak of a "decline"' (ibid., 97). Working from this (cultural) point of view which consciously set out to avoid the creation of a hierarchy of monuments, Brown described what he considered the varying functions served by the sculptures, primarily funerary and boundary markers, and then turned to discuss their different forms, the type of decoration and its placement. In this survey the general tendency to set the Crucifixion on the shaft rather than the cross-head he considered reflective of the Anglo-Saxon 'easy-going habits of work where not much attention was paid to logic or consistency', the shaft enabling subjects to be 'disposed much more easily and with better artistic effect'. In his wider considerations of the shaft, round and square, he found much to say about the monuments of Staffordshire, particularly those at Ilam and Leek, but also the column at Wolverhampton where the nature of the (ultimately classical) acanthus leaf motif drew his attention and enabled him to suggest a late tenth-century date for the monument—rather than any presumed historical associations (ibid., 272–3).

By these means a selection of the Derbyshire and Staffordshire sculptures was established in what was one of the first explicitly art-historical publications on the arts of Anglo-Saxon England where consideration of monument form, the type of decorative motif used, and the placement of motifs on the monuments were all invoked to situate them within a general cultural (art) history of early medieval England. A year later, in 1938, Thomas Kendrick (1895–1979) was to publish his single-volume monograph on

Anglo-Saxon Art: to A.D. 900 in full anticipation of the second volume (*Late Saxon and Viking Art*) which would appear over a decade later, after World War II, in 1949. This too focussed on the influence of the antique, but in such a way that the art of Anglo-Saxon England was 'best understood ... as being in the main the recital of a protracted series of conflicts between the mutually irreconcilable principles of the barbaric and the classical aesthetic systems' (Kendrick 1938, 1). By this means a series of comparisons were made and a chronology established. Thus the Derbyshire sculptures were set against the more classicised monuments of Northumbria, a comparison that led Kendrick to perceive them 'ponderous', 'heavy' and 'uncouth', with plant-scrolls that were 'a direct continuation of the Northumbrian series', but which were 'sadly coarsened into close pipe-like coils', while the beast set in the upper reaches of the cross at Bakewell (Bakewell 1C) was reduced to 'a graceless afterthought'. The figural decoration was also found wanting, having its own 'midland character, flat, silhouetted, linear, with thin fanning drapery' (ibid., 164). By means of such comparisons the Derbyshire sculptures were assigned a date 'as late as c. 800 or the first quarter of the ninth century' (ibid.). Here, the comparative methodology for establishing a chronology, established by Collingwood in his work on the monuments of Yorkshire and Northumbria (Collingwood 1927), which has received adverse criticism in more recent scholarship (e.g. Orton 1999; Sidebottom 1999; cf. Hawkes 2007c), was brought to bear on the stone sculpture of the Derbyshire Peak District.

Perhaps (in part) reacting to this type of scholarship, that of the second half of the twentieth century became noticeably more interdisciplinary, drawing on information available, not only from archaeology and history (secular and ecclesiastical), but also language and literary studies (vernacular and Latin), art history, geography and geology. In this, a concern with dating the material has been primary, and formalist methods of establishing chronologies through typologies and distribution have continued to play a significant role, but this has been accomplished alongside other

considerations: such as the technologies of carving and most recently, quarrying. By these means Cramp (1977), working from an archaeological background, was able to identify various 'schools' of Merican sculpture, with those of the Derbyshire Peak District being recognised as a distinct group produced at the turn of the ninth century, while Farr (1999, 386–8), working as an art historian, examined the figural carvings (of Eyam, Bakewell and Bradbourne) in the light of manuscript art and located them in time to a similar date, and drew attention to the sculptures as the products of ecclesiastical centres responsible for a wide range of visual material. Drawing more heavily on archaeological, historical, geographical and geological evidence, alongside a close analysis of the carved motifs, Sidebottom (1994) also emphasised the localised groupings of the monuments and, significantly in the history of the scholarship of the stone sculptures of this region, drew attention to the ways in which sculptural production flourished in the Scandinavian period and can be understood to both reflect and contribute to 'distinct social groupings' in Derbyshire at this time (Sidebottom 2000; cf. Hadley 2000; see further Chapters III and VII).

Coinciding with these approaches throughout the twentieth, and into the twenty-first century, has been a return to overtly art-historical interest in the carvings: in their symbolic significances, for example, and their effects on the 'phenomenology of perception' (Merleau-Ponty 1945; 2012; see further Chapter VI). Through a series of studies of individual monuments, and small groups of monuments, largely focussed on those of the Peak District (e.g. Kurth 1945; Rix 1960; Bailey 1990; 1996; Hawkes 1995b; 2007a), the sophisticated and theologically informed nature of the Church in the region has been elucidated and identified as intimately involved in the ecclesiastical issues of Anglo-Saxon England and the wider European Church more generally. The current volume, and indeed the Corpus project as a whole, continues this varied approach to the material, allowing for a synthesis of current knowledge to be brought to bear on the Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures of Derbyshire and Staffordshire.

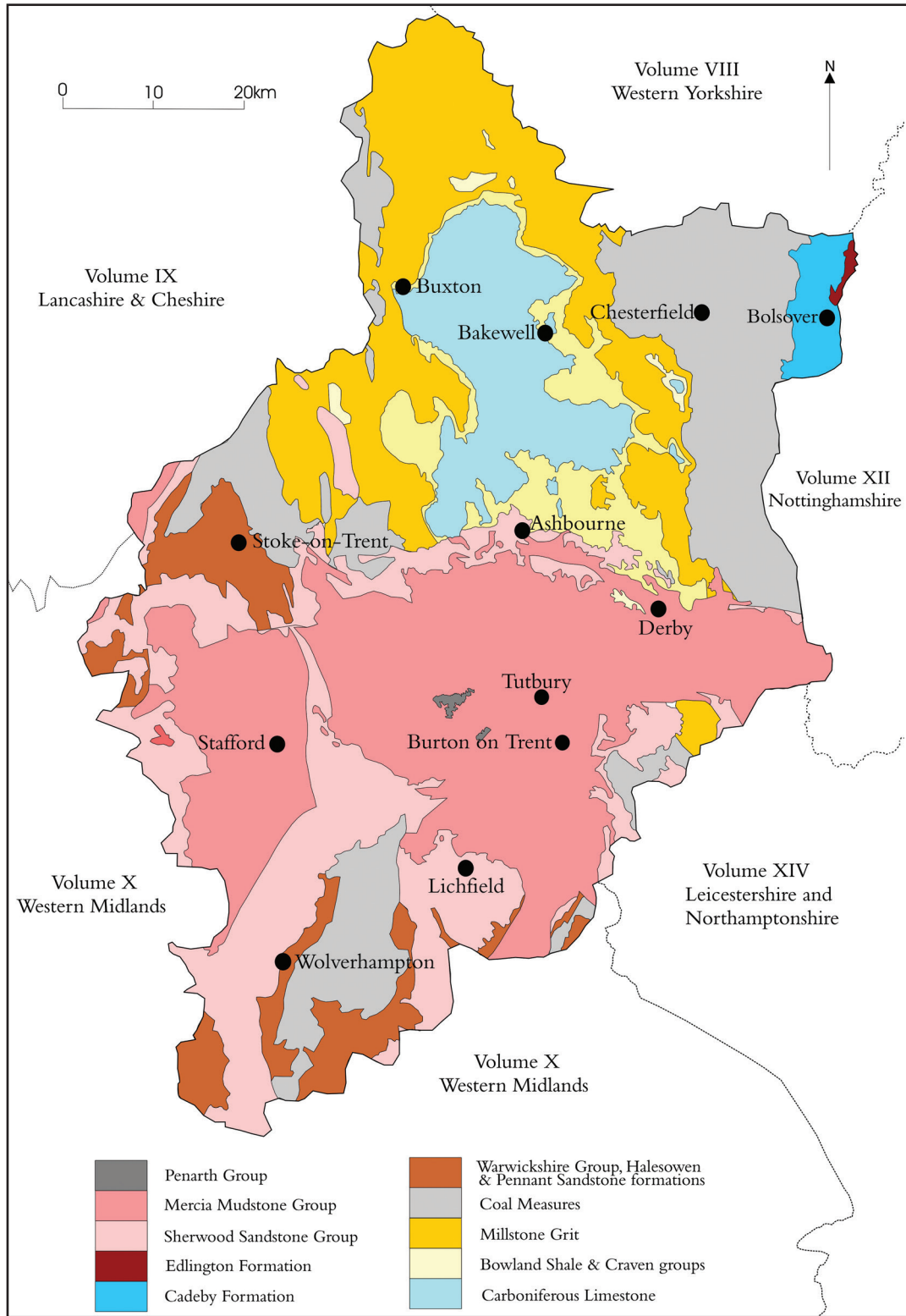


FIGURE 5
The solid geology of Derbyshire and Staffordshire