THE RETROSPECTIVE EFFIGIES OF ANGLO-SAXON BISHOPS AT WELLS CATHEDRAL: A REASSESSMENT[1]

BY MATTHEW M. REEVE

INTRODUCTION

This paper offers a reconsideration of the well-known series of seven episcopal effigies, generally thought to have been created in the early thirteenth century, representing the Anglo-Saxon bishops of Wells Cathedral (pl. 1–7). Although the effigies have been considered monographically by J. Armitage Robinson in 1913[2] and more recently by Philip Lindley, the series still poses significant analytical and interpretive problems and has justifiably been called 'the most problematic retrospective effigies in England.'[3] To this caveat we might add that they appear to also be the earliest in England, and the most extensive series of retrospective effigies in Western Europe, prior to the creation of the royal tombs at St Denis in the 1260's[4] and the episcopal effigies at Hereford Cathedral in the early fourteenth century. This paper will open by reviewing the archaeological evidence for the effigies and their architectural context. As authors have long supposed, the effigies were carved in two campaigns, separated by two or three decades. It will be argued—on stylistic and archaeological grounds—that the series witnessed its inception with the carving of the first five effigies c. 1180–4, contemporary with the earliest phase of the rebuilding of the cathedral church. The twelfth century context at Wells will then be addressed: the effigies will be shown to be part of a larger program at twelfth century Wells to remember and articulate the Anglo-Saxon past of the cathedral church, contemporary with the initial constructional campaign. A complicating factor in this reassessment is the loss of the original architectural context of the effigies—the early Gothic eastern sanctuary—almost wholly remodeled in the fourteenth century, demanding that some conclusions reached in this paper remain speculative.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The seven retrospective effigies at Wells are now placed around the east end of the cathedral against the backs of the choir stalls. The effigies can be divided into two clear groups: the first group, composed of five effigies, is characterized by the use of heavy folded drapery and the manner in which the figures are attached firmly to their slab. The second group is of a more advanced type, being partially undercut from their backgrounds and possessing a thinner and more naturalistic, type of drapery. The stylistic evidence of the effigies suggests that they should be separated by a considerable span of time. A common characteristic of the effigies is that in both groups the figures of the bishops are barely differentiated—their physiognomy is almost banally uniform, and their poses show only subtle variation. What

is represented here is not personage, but rather an iconic representation of an episcopal type. The figures are dressed in episcopal vestments and they all show evidence of having once held croziers. A curious aspect of the carving, that might also be extended to the retrospective effigies at Hereford Cathedral, and the sixteenth century monument to Osric at Gloucester, is the relative crudeness of the effigies. For reasons that will be made clear later, it appears that the authors of the Wells effigies were not aiming at artistic virtuosity in their construction, but rather a subtle mode of rustication. Contrary to the more showy high Romanesque taste reflected in the episcopal tombs of bishop Alexander at Ely, or the tombs of bishops Osmund and Roger at Salisbury—all of which are carved in purbeck marble—the retrospective effigies were carved in the same pale Chilcote stone of the majority of the early gothic work. Similarly contrary to prevailing trends in early Gothic church architecture—and particularly that built to commemorate significant saints—the quire at Wells is devoid of structural polychromy.[5] The exact intentions of the author of the Wells choir are far from clear, but it seems certain that the aesthetic of the choir was deliberately intended to be out of step with the visual signifiers of sainthood being concurrently fused into the national aesthetic at Canterbury for the cult of Becket.

The bishops were identified by lead plaques that recorded their names in Latin, each incorporating an archaic Lombardic script[6] [fig. 8]. The texts follow a standard pattern; the inscription on Bishop Giso's tomb reads + GISO: EPC: WELLENSIS. Dr Rodwell's study of the plaques has revealed traces of mortar attached to their backsides, suggesting that they were once attached to a flat surface, perhaps the effigies themselves, their former bases[7] or a previous choir wall. As in the Middle Ages, today the lead plaques are the only keys for identifying the bishops. One bishop still goes unnamed as no plaque has been discovered to identify him. It is not clear that what presently remains of the effigies reflects the original scheme. Comparing the evidence from the lead plaques with the evidence from the *Historiola*[8]—an institutional history written at Wells c. 1176—suggests that either the present series is incomplete, or that only certain bishops were chosen for commemoration while others were not. This short list shows the discrepancy:

Historiola	*Lead Plaques*
Daniel	
Sigarus	Sigarus
Alwynus	(Unnamed bishop?)
Brithelmus	
Burthwoldus	Burhwoldus
Liowyngus	Levericus
Brithtumus	
Elwynus	Eilwinus
Brithwynus	
Duduco	Dudico
Gyso	Giso

Seven or eight bishops were buried at Wells in the Anglo-Saxon period, and the spurious bishop Daniel, who appears to have been a product of the imagination of the canons at Wells, may well have been commemorated with an effigy as he is paid special attention in the *Historiola* as well as in later medieval sources. The destruction of several medieval church monuments at Wells in the early modern period—including the monuments of Jocelyn and Robert Burnell—suggests that the original series may have included further bishops.

There is some evidence to suggest that the effigies themselves were the sites of veneration.

Although dedicated to Saint Andrew, Wells was among a handful of English great churches including Bath, Coventry, and Exeter that did not possess the remains of a significant saint, nor a central cathedral shrine. It was this apparent lack that was acknowledged with the attempted canonization of Bishop William de Marchia in 1309, now generally assumed to relate to the fourteenth century rebuilding of the eastern arm.[9] An examination of the contents of the bases of the effigies in 1979 revealed a collection of osteological remains comprising ten individuals, (which would support a claim for a more extensive series of effigies), though it is not clear that all of these men were bishops.[10] The effigies have been tampered with several times, and moved throughout the cathedral, so it is not possible to identify any particular skeleton with any effigy.[11] Several of the skulls were limewashed and revealed places where the skulls had been worn to a polished state from being handled or kissed. Two skulls show that a small disk had been removed from the back of the cranium, perhaps to be used as amulets,[12] and one skull shows that its owner met an unsightly end by being sliced with a sword or a similar sharp object. The latter skull raises the possibility of Wells possessing the remains of a martyred (though apparently uncanonised) proto-saint during the period, although this cannot be confirmed from contemporary documentation. If indeed these remains were used in conjunction with the effigies, it is unclear how they might have functioned liturgically. Strictly speaking, prior to the publication of the 62nd canon of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 in which relics were ordered to be confined to caskets, relics were more openly accessible for veneration in the eastern sanctuary.[13] The 62nd canon also signified something of a 'crack down' on the use of relics; prelates should not allow worshippers to be deceived by "vain fictions or false documents," and it seems possible that the devotional setting of late twelfth century Wells was in line with the subject of these thirteenth century criticisms.

THE DATE OF THE EFFIGIES[14]

The creation of the effigies has traditionally been related to a well-known dispute between the secular canons of Wells and the monks of Bath over the right to hold the episcopal throne of Somerset, and the rights to singly or jointly elect the bishop. Wells had been an episcopal centre since 909 when the Salisbury diocese was divided, and it had apparently flourished during the tenth century, when it was the burial place of its bishops. In the final quarter of the eleventh century, Bishop John of Tours (1088–1122), the first post-Conquest bishop, moved the episcopal seat to Bath, and set about building a new cathedral church. The former cathedral church at Wells was reduced to collegiate status, and bishop John then enriched the new cathedral at Bath by taking money and estates from Wells, and in turn destroying the prebendal buildings built by the Saxon bishop Giso: the pantry, dormitory, refectory and the original cloister. It is clear that Wells then paled in importance after being robbed of its episcopal status, such that in the early twelfth century, William of Malmesbury could churlishly call it an 'inglorious city' compared to its older, and more cosmopolitan sister city at Bath.[15] In 1136, however, with the election of Robert of Lewes, Bishop of Bath (1136–66), Wells was rebuilt and a new constitution provided, following that of Salisbury. The exact reason for this remains unclear. Had bishop Robert intended to move the see back to Wells, there is some question as to why this was not accomplished until the thirteenth century. By the early thirteenth century, if not much earlier, under the episcopate of bishop Jocelyn (1206–42), there are obvious signs of a movement visible to move the episcopal seat back from Bath to Wells. A letter of 1219 from Honorius III ordered the papal legate to search the registers of the church for justification of their claims to having been the older, original episcopal seat of the diocese.[16] Within this historical sequence, the creation of the

effigies becomes a powerful assertion of the canon's interests in establishing their antiquity over their rivals at Bath as the episcopal seat of Somerset.

Hitherto, dates for the retrospective effigies have been based almost solely on this historical record. The long-held thesis for the effigies, recently restated by Simon Keynes, follows that in the early thirteenth century, during the episcopate of bishop Jocelyn, the bones of the Anglo-Saxon founders were translated from the old church to the new as an act of historical appropriation.[17] Two pieces of archaeological evidence however, can be used to provide earlier, and more concise dates of construction. The first in the type of stone used. Both series of effigies were carved from stone from Doulting Quarry.[18] Since Colchester's and Harvey's important essay on the architecture of Wells published in 1974, we have known that Doulting stone was substituted for Chilcote conglomerate stone during the construction of the eastern half of the transepts, probably in 1184.[19] The quarries at Doulting were owned by Glastonbury Abbey which was leveled by a fire in the same year, and it is now accepted that the fire resulted in Glastonbury using Doulting stone for their own church, and Wells seeking stone more locally at Chilcote. Toward the end of the episcopate of Savaric bishop of Wells and Glastonbury (1192–1205), the builders at Wells returned to the use of Doulting Stone. This was most likely due to Savaric's seizing of the abbey and its estates including its quarries, thus in the early years of the thirteenth century making Doulting stone available once again. On the evidence of the stone, we must place the quarrying of the blocks (and most likely the carving) either after c. 1204 or before c. 1184.[20]

A closer date is possible for the first series on the basis of specific stylistic comparisons with the foliage motifs on the effigies against the style of the foliate capitals in the eastern arm and eastern parts of the transepts. Jerry Sampson's recent analysis of the constructional sequence of the early Gothic fabric has shown that the quire at Wells was built up to the completion of the eastern half of the transepts by c. 1184; the transepts were then completed by around 1205, and the first half of the nave finished by 1210.[21] As has often been mentioned, the Wells capitals are the products of several hands, and they reflect a strong acceptance for change as the building developed: moving east to west, the foliage begins in small bud-like clusters and develops outward into dynamic stiff leaf.[22] The dominant foliage motif of the five early effigies is a foliage cluster of three heavy petals with long, tongue-like protrusions, separating into individual leaves from the stalk. The same motif is found throughout the early Gothic foliage on the capitals in the eastern bays of the transepts and in the abutting western choir aisles. Apposite comparisons can be made between the effigy of the unnamed bishop and the sculpture in the south aisle near the crossing, and between the effigy of Levericus and the famous 'Lizard' capital in the eastern part of the north transept (pl. 9–12). The foliage of the tomb of Alwynus, which was clearly authored by a different master, can be closely compared to the foliage buds on the capitals in the north choir aisle (pl. 13–14). As this demonstrates, the style of the effigies is perfectly consistent with the style of the foliage of the early gothic architecture of the first campaign of construction in the eastern arm and the eastern aisle of the transepts. From this evidence, it seems clear that the masons who were constructing the east end of Wells were also responsible for constructing the first series of retrospective effigies before 1184, perhaps around 1180. It is also logical to suppose that they were made for the immediate context: the choir.[23]

The reasons underlying the creation of the later effigies of Giso and Dudoc and the date of their execution are considerably less straightforward. Why were these effigies carved decades after the first series? Did they replace previous effigies? Is there any relevance to the new effigies being of Giso and Dudoc? Like the first series, the later effigies were carved from Doulting stone. However, as the stone itself is of a more porous type that contrasts

with the stone of the first series; the effigies must thus date from the second 'Doulting campaign' beginning in 1205.[24] The slender, elegant drapery style of the figures, and indeed their elongated proportions bespeak the influence of continental ideas in figural design present in the sculptures of the south doorway of the west portal of Reims Cathedral or the south transept figures at Chartres.[25] An approximate date for the effigies is suggested by a comparison with the monumental sculptures from the West front: the drapery style and the foliage motifs that run around the effigies betray an affiliation with the West façade atelier.[26] The style of the effigies should also be compared to the effigy of William Longspee (d. 1226) in Salisbury Cathedral, a work long-known to be connected to the atelier of the West façade sculptors.[27] The foliage that adorns the sides of the tomb of Dudoc closely resembles the trefoils that adorn Longspee's effigy. On the evidence of these comparisons, a date of c. 1220–30 c. is possible.

While the later effigies clearly signal a continuation of the retrospective ethos for the Anglo-Saxon past of the cathedral, the rationale behind the (re)creation of these effigies remains unclear. Unfortunately no documentary evidence exists to further elucidate the problem, but contemporary institutional writing at Wells may provide some clues. The *Historiola* states that in the Anglo-Saxon cathedral, Giso was buried north of the high altar and Dudoc was buried in the middle of the choir by the high altar.[28] The likely reason that the text singles out the two bishops is not only the fact that they were the last Saxon bishops, but also because they were the greatest donors to the previous cathedral. Dudoc is recorded as having given significant grants of land and estates, as well as numerous liturgical vestments, books and saint's relics. Giso, in turn was responsible for the aforementioned rebuilding construction of the Saxon cloister and the prebendal buildings. It is possible to suppose that these two specially venerated figures were buried in similar niches in the east-end of the early Gothic church, thus allowing for an architectural quotation from the old church to the new. Considering that these two figures were paid special attention in the *Historiola*, it is clear that they were considered particularly significant figures in the construction of the pre-Conquest history of the cathedral at twelfth and thirteenth century Wells. Presuming that effigies for Giso and Dudoc originally existed in the first series, it is possible that their updating with the fashionable aesthetic of the West façade was related to the aforementioned search for the registers of the cathedral in 1219.[29]

CONTEXTS: ANTIQUITY AND THE ANGLO-SAXON PAST

A twelfth century date for the first series of effigies demands that we shift the context of our inquiry from the thirteenth to the twelfth century. The rationale behind the creation of funerary monuments are seldom straightforward. Tomb monuments, and particularly those with a retrospective tenor, were essentially proactive, or "goal oriented,"[30] often created at points of crisis when aspects of an institution's history were in question. In furthering this line of inquiry, it is pertinent here to consider the immediate context of the rebuilding of Wells in the later twelfth century.

Following the eleventh century move of the diocese from Wells to Bath, Wells became something of a West Country backwater. The town of Wells witnessed its spurt of rapid growth from the middle of the twelfth century and its growth is now best witnessed along parallel lines of the development of commerce in the town against the fabric of the rising cathedral.[31] Wells was one of a handful of created towns in the twelfth century. Its growth as a cultural and commercial centre is evidenced in the development the bishop's commercial affairs: by 1150, fairs filled three days of the year, but by 1201, they filled nineteen.[32] By 1200, if not before, the urban infrastructure of Wells made it a viable alternative to Bath

as the administrative center of the diocese, not least because it could offer proper amenities to the bishop and his court. A charter of Bishop Savaric (1192–1205) boldly explained his reasons for promoting Wells 'to increase [the town's] honour, dignity and rents.'[33] The evidence from Wells suggests that rather than having something of a corporate 'anxiety complex' about their inferiority as a diocesan center to the older and long established city at Bath, or indeed the particularly venerable Benedictine monastery at Glastonbury, the canons at Wells showed every sign of security in their own position as the (yet unofficially announced) head of Somerset. The creation of the effigies around 1180 suggests a powerful assertion of the antiquity of Wells, an assertion that might have been intended to reflect both the antiquity of the cathedral and the town itself.

In this respect it is important to note two other significant 'retrospective episodes' at twelfth century Wells that illustrate something of this consciousness. The first is the creation of the *Historiola* around 1176, in the episcopate of bishop Reginald.[34] The *Historiola* narrates the history of Wells from its supposed recorded beginnings in the 8th century up to the year 1175, and provides an account of the deeds and gifts of the bishops of the former cathedral. In his invocation, the author states that he has long been curious to know why the Episcopal seat was moved from Wells to Bath, and he clearly states his intention to reveal his researches through the annalists and the "writing of ancient fathers" so that "future generations may know the truth, and that our posterity may see clearly what is, in a great measure, concealed from the eyes of most persons living at this present time."[35] In his discussion of the Anglo-Saxon past, the author of the *Historiola* adopted conventions derived from romance literature, as well as including an unintegrated, and supposedly Anglo-Saxon biography of bishop Giso. It has recently been suggested (and I think rightly) that the Anglo-Saxon biography of Giso, which records his various contributions to the see and the loss and recovery of revenues belonging to the cathedral, was not Anglo-Saxon at all, but rather a retrospective creation of the later twelfth century.[36] The *Historiola* provided something of a literary counterpart to the contemporary creation of the Episcopal effigies: if the tomb effigies created an historical mausoleum of the Anglo-Saxon bishops, the *Historiola* provided textual evidence of their deeds and gifts. The second 'retrospective episode' involved the deliberate maintenance of an original Anglo-Saxon eastern chapel into the fabric of the Gothic church.[37] The original Saxon church was placed immediately to the south of the present church, some 15 degrees off east-west axis, and the original eastern chapel of the Saxon church was incorporated into the north cloister arm of the Gothic church by 1196. The presence of the Saxon chapel, which considerably altered the root 2 geometry of the cathedral, must have provided a solid, if visually incongruous connection between the Gothic and Anglo-Saxon churches of Wells, and a temporal connection to the ancient traditions of the episcopal see.[38] The effigies must be considered only one significant stage in a wider program to articulate and express the Anglo-Saxon ancestry of the church in the last quarter of the twelfth century. The apparently 'modern' Gothic idiom of twelfth century Wells was undercut by signs of continuity with the Anglo-Saxon past[39], evident in both the fabric of the church and its literature. The 'retrospective episodes' at Wells amount to nothing less than a conscious *renovatio* of the venerable history of the cathedral, and a revived memory of the episcopal status of the Anglo-Saxon church.

Within a national context, the retrospective effigies can be usefully understood as survivals of what was an expansive, (though now largely invisible), movement most evident in the mid-to-late twelfth century to replace and restore Anglo-Saxon saints to places of spiritual prominence—particularly on or around the high altars—of English churches. Although the Wells bishops were not canonized, their translation and commemoration enjoy

a context, particularly evident among the older and most venerable pre-Conquest foundations in the twelfth century. At Ely, at some point in the 1150's, the bodies of certain Anglo-Saxon benefactors were exhumed 'with great difficulty,' and were moved to a better place (in melior locum)—undoubtedly in the eastern end of the newly built cathedral.[40] The text and events of the translation at Ely can be fitfully compared with a contemporary translation at Winchester under Henry of Blois: "In the year of our Lord's incarnation 1158 the lord Henry b[isho]p of W[inchester] raised up from an unseemly place (ab indecenti loco) the bodies of kings and bishops which were translated from the Old Minster to the New Church, and had them bestowed more honorably (honorificientius collocari) about the high altar of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul."[41] The bones of the Anglo-Saxon founders were placed in reliquary chests positioned on a stone wall around the high altar.[42] The circumstances of these translations, and particularly the wording of their narratives suggest of not only a broader movement toward the commemoration of indigenous saints, but also, a codified, tropological language to express it. It is implied that the bones were raised from their dishonorable burial place and located with appropriate splendour in positions of spiritual sanctity in the church. Within these passages we catch a scent of history: the present is seemingly making up for the past by (re)placing the remains of the English saints in their rightful place of burial.[43] The translation of the remains of the Anglo-Saxon bishops around 1180, which likely corresponded to the moment when the eastern arm was rendered serviceable as a sanctuary space, was quite certainly informed by a wider twelfth century movement to restore and venerate indigenous founders.

Henry of Blois' replacement of the Anglo-Saxon founders of Winchester is pertinent to this discussion for another reason. A close connection between the retrospective effigies and the Anglo-Saxon founders at Winchester is also suggested by their apparent devotional setting. In the later twelfth century, the gifts of the Anglo-Saxon kings and bishops at Winchester were recorded on a series of inscribed stone texts that formed part of the architectural context of the eastern sanctuary. John Crook's reconstructed arrangement for the Romanesque eastern arm of Winchester suggests that these inscriptions were part of a stone retaining wall, built between the piers surrounding the high altar.[44] The texts follow a standard formula, relating the Anglo-Saxon founders to their gifts: *Hic iacet Alwinus episcopus, qui dedit huic ecclesiae Stan[e]ham, duas Meon[es, Hentone, Witeneye, Hel[i]nge* etc.[45] The inscriptions, white-washed and highlighted with ochre, faced the outside of the sanctuary space reminding the readers in Latin and Anglo-Norman French of the gifts of the Saxon ancestors of Winchester. The stone inscriptions can be closely compared with a scrap of masonry from Wells, originally discovered in one of the tombs during an *ad hoc* exhumation of the remains of the Saxon bishops (pl. 15)[46] The extant stone has the remains of five complete letters 'WOLD', which likely indicates the Saxon bishop Burwoldus. The paleographic evidence of the lead plaques and the inscribed stones of Winchester and Wells—all of which use a Lombardic script—are suggestive of a late twelfth-century date.[47] The stones, even in their fragmentary states, are uncannily similar, and they provide substantial evidence to suggest that a comparable, text-based tradition informed the original architectural context of the Wells effigies. The destruction of the eastern arm demands that discussions of the textual components remain speculative. A low wall with texts recalling the gifts and deeds of the Anglo-Saxon founders is an attractive possibility, particularly given the evidence at Winchester; it is also possible that these texts formed part of the original bases of the effigies, or perhaps part of the twelfth century choir screen. While there is insufficient architectural evidence to elucidate the nature of this arrangement, there is considerable evidence for a text-based commemoration in the aforementioned *Historiola* as a kind of textual counterpart, recording the gifts and deeds of the Saxon founders.[48]

ARCHAISM AND ICONOGRAPHY

The Wells effigies have long been considered unusual, if not palpably uncanny monuments. Though their general stylistic treatment is coherent within the immediate contexts of late twelfth century and early thirteenth century English and Continental art, aspects of the iconography and treatment of the effigies defy affiliation with contemporary monuments. The first series of effigies show the figures standing in frames of wildly overgrown foliage that threatens to overpower the figures. The frames are clearly differentiated with curious combinations of architectural aedicules and foliage sprays. The architecture of the canopies cannot be easily paralleled in contemporary Gothic art, but the frankly 'baroque' quality of the canopies and the foliage does evoke something of the decorative character of the Anglo-Saxon manuscript illumination. The architectural features of the canopies, and indeed the unkempt foliage recalls the tradition in Anglo-Saxon illumination of differentiating the canopies of standing or seated figures, that is all but absent in the more formalized Gothic idiom. The architectural frames of first series of bishops may be compared to the canopies of the evangelists in the 'Warsaw Gospels' c. 1000 (Biblioteka Narodowa MS I 3311): the canopies of St Luke and Levericus make a telling comparison[49] (pl. 16). Anglo-Saxon features seem also to have been incorporated into the architectural details of the frames. The architectural capitals of the unnamed bishop (pl. 19) reflect a conscious denial of the contemporary trend in stiff-leaf foliage evident in the early gothic choir and transepts, and refer rather to an Anglo-Saxon form of moulded capital design as on the chancel arches of St. Benet's Cambridge (pl. 18), and Bosham, Sussex.[50] Attention should also be drawn to the foliage motifs. The swirling foliage around the canopy of bishop Eilwinus adheres to the more floral, ultimately classically-derived designs of the early eleventh century Anglo-Saxon Homilies at Corpus Christi, Cambridge (MS 421)[51] (pl. 18–19).

There is some evidence also to suggest that the sculptors of the Wells effigies sought a particularly ungothic mode of physiognomic verism. Far from being strictly classicising, the faces of the bishops are 'crude', shriveled portraits. Deeply incised lines crease the faces of the bishops like 'crows' feet', and their eyes are sunken within pronounced eye sockets. The veristic portraits of the Wells bishops evoke what Francis Wormald called the tradition of 'violent caricature' of Anglo-Saxon art.[52] The effect achieved here was to show the ancient and venerable fathers of the cathedral as wizened, aged men, and thus to evoke a sense of *auctoritas*.[53]

The second series reflects an obvious shift in intention. The updating of the effigies in the thirteenth century, if indeed this was the case, involved a rethinking of the use of the effigies, and their style was brought up to date with contemporary fashions. However, there is evidence that a related, if somewhat toned down archaism was evident in the later series. The effigies of Giso and Dudoc seem to reflect a revival of a particularly squat, Anglo-Saxon head type[54] and, as Armitage Robinson pointed out, the effigies of Giso and Dudoc wear a stout form of mitre representative of vestments of the Anglo-Saxon period.[55]

Parallels in Anglo-Saxon art abound for the style of the effigies, leaving little doubt that the rhetoric of archaism inherent in these effigies ran deeper than simply providing representations of ancient bishops.[56] This mode of cultural importation may be symptomatic of retrospective monuments as a genre. Anne Prache has demonstrated that the sculptor of the twelfth century monument to Hincmar, the Carolingian archbishop of Reims, turned to Carolingian sources to archaize, or perhaps 'historicize' the monument.[57] Such a suggestion could be extended to a number of retrospective monuments, including the effigy of Osric at Gloucester who is represented holding a miniature model of Gloucester that adheres to Romanesque architectural traditions.[58] Though forgery (and thus keen observation) of his-

torical documents was a marked characteristic of the period, retrospective effigies can hardly be understood on the same continuum with forged charters, but rather as expressions of an historically informed antiquarianism. The effigies, despite their archaisms, are wholly Gothic works of art: the sculptural references reflect an almost academic, bookish awareness of the Anglo-Saxon past that might have been learned from an abundance of extant sculpture or architecture, or from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts remaining at Wells.[59] And it follows that the recognition of these motifs demanded a related, if less intellectual, awareness of these signs as representatives of the English past. There can be little doubt that the distinctions between old and 'old fashioned' were known by medieval viewers, particularly among the elite classes.[60] The iconographic significance of the Wells effigies lies exactly in the fact that their rather deliberate 'distressing' with archaic features was readily obvious. In connection with this idea, we must also question the material used: the effigies at Wells, unlike contemporary trends in episcopal effigies, are not carved from marble, but from local freestone, and it is at least possible that the curious use of a cruder, less elegant type of material could significantly inform their retrospective flavor. If my arguments are convincing, the Wells effigies—and particularly the first five figures—are reflective of a late twelfth century conception of the Anglo-Saxon past, employed at Wells to significantly inform a wider program of reflection and commemoration, and to allow the figures to be located within an understood historical spectrum.

CONCLUSIONS

Carved around 1180, the retrospective effigies at Wells were part of a wider program at Wells to remember and celebrate the Anglo-Saxon heritage of the cathedral. The creation of the effigies as a kind of retrospective mausoleum provided an implicit assertion of the former status of Wells as cathedral and a burial place of its Anglo-Saxon bishops. From the 1240's, when Wells regained its Episcopal status, it once again became the burial place of its bishops. The (now lost) monument of bishop Jocelyn (d. 1242), located in the choir, signified the continuation of what was perceived as an ancient tradition of burial at Wells, and a reassertion of Wells' claims to supremacy and antiquity. Like the process of writing down history in the forms of narratives or charters, the act of forging retrospective effigies was akin to the act of committing otherwise unstable or intangible facts to the realms of historical certainty.[61] In this respect it cannot be coincidental that the retrospective monuments at Wells were produced in the Medusan medium of life-size, stone effigies. The historical record of medieval Wells suggests that the cathedral and town grew in tandem, and they may remind us of any number of new communities that bolster their image and emphasize their heritage (real or imagined) against their older and more prestigious counterparts. The evidence from twelfth century Wells may suggest that from the laying of the foundation stones in the 1170's, Wells had already been singled out as the new centre of the diocese, with a ready and convenient heritage in hand. However, beyond the creation of the retrospective effigies, perhaps the best supporting evidence Wells' new-found prominence is the sheer size and grandeur of the great church itself.

Matthew M. Reeve
Gonville and Caius College
Cambridge CB2 1TA

REFERENCES

1 Thanks to Julian Luxford, Dr Paul Binski and Professor Malcolm Thurlby for their help and advice with this paper. I should also like to thank Dr Rodwell for kindly providing me with a copy of the negatives of the original copies of the photographs for publication, and for discussing various aspects of the archaeology and history of Wells. Thanks to Michael Clifford of Cambridge University for digitally correcting the flaws in the original photos. This short paper is a precis of a wider study of retrospective funerary art, in progress at Cambridge University with Julian Luxford. A version of this paper was presented at the 'West Country Gothic' conference at Cambridge University, December 2000.

2 J. A. Robinson, 'Effigies of the Saxon Bishops at Wells', *Archaeologia* 65 (1913), 95–112.

3 P. Lindley, 'Retrospective Effigies, the Past and Lies', *Medieval Art and Architecture at Hereford: British Archaeological Association Transactions XV*, Ed. D. Whitehead, 1995, 111–121, 115.

4 G. Sommers Wright, 'A Royal Tomb Program in the Reign of St Louis', *Art Bulletin* LVI (1974), 224–243.

5 On the eccentricities of the architecture of early Gothic Wells see, Peter Draper, 'Interpreting the Architecture of Wells Cathedral' in V. Chieffo Raguin, K. Brush, P. Draper (eds.), *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, (Toronto, 1995), 114–130.

6 W. Rodwell, 'Lead Plaques from the tombs of the Saxon bishops of Wells', *The Antiquaries Journal* 59 (1979), 407–10. On archaism in medieval paleography see M. B. Parkes, 'Archaising Hands in English Manuscripts' in J. P. Carley and C. G. C. Tite (eds.), *Books and Collectors 1200–1700: Essays presented to Andrew Watson* (London, 1997), 101–44.

7 The present bases are modern additions. Robinson 1913, 100.

8 *Ecclesiastical Documents*, J. Hunter (ed.), London, 1840), 8–28. Hereafter '*Historiola*'.

9 Peter Draper, 'The Sequence and Dating of the Decorating Work at Wells', *Medieval Art and Architecture at Wells and Glastonbury: British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions IV*, Eds. N. Coldstream and P. Draper, 1981, 18–29.

10 W. Rodwell, 'Above and Below Ground: Archaeology at Wells Cathedral' in T. Tatton Brown and J. Munby (eds.), *The Archaeology of Cathedrals* (Oxford Committee for Archaeology Report) 42, 1996), 115–33, 122–3. Dr Rodwell's examination of the bones suggests that they are those of the Saxon bishops. He is now preparing an extended report on the corporeal remains.

11 The movements of the effigies throughout the cathedral is chronicled in Robinson 1913.

12 Rodwell 1996, 123. *Ibid.*, 'The Anglo-Saxon and Norman Churches at Wells' in L. S. Colchester (ed.), *Wells Cathedral: a history* (Somerset, 1982), 1–23, 20–1. It may also be possible that these were the result of medical intervention.

13 For the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council see *English Historical Documents 1189–1327*, H. Rothwell (ed.), (London, 1975), 643–76, 669–70. We can glean something of the nature of contemporary devotion to relics in the passages of the hagiography of Hugh of Lincoln. *The Life of Hugh of Lincoln*, 2 vols, (Ed. and trans. D. L. Douie and Dom H. Farmer), (London, 1962), ii, 153–4, 167–70.

14 J. A. Robinson 1913, 108 thought that the effigies should be dated to 1200–1210, and the second series to 1230; P. Tudor Craig, 'Wells Sculpture', in Colchester, 1982, 123–4 posited "c.1200" for the first series; A. Fryer, 'Monumental Effigies in Somerset', *PSANHS* LXI (1915), 18–19 thought c. 1200/20; L. Stone, *Sculpture in Britain: the Middle Ages* (Middlesex, 1972), 106 stated: "The earlier group may be taken as representing work of the first, and the later of the second or third decade of the [thirteenth] century"; P. Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture 1140–1300* (New Haven, 1995), 105 thought that the first series of effigies were dated to c. 1206 following Jocelyn's election, and the second "around 1220–30"; J. Sampson, *Wells Cathedral West Front: Construction, Sculpture and Conservation* (Stroud, 1998), 77 suggested 1206–9 for the first series and 1220 for the second; Lindley, 1995 dated the first series to the first decade of the thirteenth century and the second series to the second or third.

15 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* Ed Hamilton, Rolls Series 52 (London 1870), 194.

16 *Calendar of Papal Registers I: 1198–1304*, Ed W. H. Bliss (London, 1893), 70. "He [Bishop Jocelyn] states that the church is anciently by apostolic privilege, a cathedral, though he has been

unable to find the privilege in a register, and if it be found, on enquiry, that this is so, the legate is to grant the bishops the desired faculty."

17 Simon Keynes, 'Giso, Bishop of Wells (1061–88)' in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Anglo-Norman Studies XIX: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, (Woodbridge, 1997), 216.

18 Stone 1972, 106.

19 L. S. Colchester and J. Harvey, 'Wells Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal* 131 (1974), 200–14.

20 The size and shape of the stone blocks themselves suggest clearly that they were originally quarried for the purpose of carving the effigies. It cannot be supposed that they were carved at later date from stone at the building site, as there is no place in the early gothic church where stone of this size could have been used.

21 Sampson 1998, 11–73, esp. 14. It is possible that the date of the Western half of the transepts is too late. A comparison with the related work at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin may suggest a date at the very end of the twelfth century, rather than the beginning of the thirteenth. See M. Thurlby, 'The Lady Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey', *The Antiquaries Journal* 75 (1995), 107–170, 156 n. 54.

22 A. Gardner, *Wells Capitals*. 5th ed. Wells, 1985.

23 The closest English comparisons to the first Wells bishops must be the Old Testament figures at St Mary's Abbey, York which have been recently dated to c. 1190, that is roughly contemporary with their relatives at Wells. C. Wilson, 'The Original Setting of the Apostle and Prophet figures from St Mary's Abbey, York', in F. H. Thompson (ed.), *Studies in Medieval Sculpture*, (Society of Antiquaries Occasional Paper, n.s. III, 1983), 100–121, 50. See also Williamson 1995, 105 for a reconsideration of this problem.

24 Thanks to Jerry Sampson for discussing this with me.

25 Williamson, 1995, fig. 67, 90.

26 Williamson, 1995, 105. Sampson 1998, 77. This comparison has been treated sceptically, but numerous details can be cited to show a connection. The differences between the treatment of the West façade figures and those at Wells are perhaps due more to idiom and context. See below for my discussion of the archaizing features of the effigies.

27 Most recently see S. Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd* (London: RCHM, 1999), 116, fig. 91. Stone 1972, 115. Williamson 1995, 111.

28 "sepultus est in ecclesia quam rexerat, et emicielo facto in pariete a parte aquilonali prope altare, sicut Dudoco praedecessor ejus sepultus est a meridie juxta altare." *Historiola*, 21.

29 As suggested in Lindley, 1995, 116.

30 P. Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London, 1996), 72.

31 G. Shaw, *The Creation of a Community: The City of Wells in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993), Ch. 1.

32 *Ibid.*, 30.

33 *Ibid.*, 29.

34 The date of the *Historiola* is probably just after c. 1175 as we are told of Reginald's consecration in June of that year. It is also clear that the cathedral church was either not underway in 1175 or in the very early stages of construction and it is not mentioned in the text. The *Historiola* is riddled with the keen description of architectural details that recall the archaeological astuteness of William of Malmesbury, and thus if the church was rising our author would have informed us. Robinson 1913, 110 suggested a date of c. 1175. A. Gransden, 'The History of Wells Cathedral c. 1190–1547', in Colchester, 1982, 24–52, 28 advocated a date of c. 1178. In all probability, the writing of the *Historiola* corresponds with the initial interest in building the cathedral church anew. The text might have been composed to foster enthusiasm for the building of the new church and the replacement of the episcopal seat to its 'rightful' place.

35 *Historiola*, 9.

36 Keynes, 213–26. For a transcription and translation of Giso's 'autobiography' see *Ibid.*, 263–8.

37 W. St. John Hope, 'On the First Cathedral Church of Wells and the Site thereof', *PSANHS* 55 (1909), 85–96, Rodwell 1981, 1982.

38 B. Singleton, 'Proportions in the Design of the Early Gothic Cathedral at Wells', in N. Coldstream and P. Draper 1981, 10–17.

39 On the use of 'spolia' and antique elements in twelfth century buildings, see W. W. Clark,

'Defining national historical memory in Parisian architecture (1130–1160)', *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace gaulois, actes du congrès international* (Tours, 1997), 341–358.

40 *Liber Eliensis*, E. O. Blake (ed.), (Camden Society, 3rd series, 92) (1962), ii 87, 155–7.

41 *The Cartulary of Winchester Cathedral*, A. W. Goodman (ed.) (Winchester, 1927), 3. "Anno incarnationis Domini MCLVIII Dominus Henricus Wytoniensis episcopus corpora regum et pontificum quae a uetere monasterio in nouam ecclesiam translata fuerunt ab indecenti loco eleuata circa magnum altare betorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli honorificientius collocari fecit".

42 J. Crook, 'St Swithun of Winchester', in J. Crook (ed.), *Winchester Cathedral: 900 Years*. (Winchester, 1993), 57–67.

43 By way of an ideological and temporal contrast, this mid-to-late twelfth century ethos can be palpably compared to the situation at late eleventh century Saint Albans where Abbot Paul (1077–93) destroyed the ancient tombs of his venerable Anglo-Saxon ancestors: 'Tumbas venerabilium antecessorum suorum Abbatum nobilium-quos rudes et idiotas consuevit appellare-delevit." C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo Saxon Art: a New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982), 220, n. 29.

44 J. Crook, The Architectural Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West c. 1300–c. 1200 (Oxford, 2000) 218–33, Figs. 92–3.

45 Crook, 2000, 230.

46 Robinson, 1913, 101–2.

47 Crook, 2000, 229 n. 66.

48 As John Crook has demonstrated, the carved texts at Winchester relate closely to the later Winchester *Liber Historialis*. Crook, 2000, 230.

49 Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa MS I. 3311, f. 15r, f. 55r, E. Temple, *Anglo Saxon Manuscripts 900–1066*. (London, 1976), Cat. No. 92.

50 For Bosham, see G. Webb, *Architecture in Britain: the Middle Ages* (Middlesex, 1956), pl. 18.

51 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 421, f.1. Temple 1976, cat. No. 82. It appears that a closely related design figured in the painted decoration of the west front. See Sampson 1998, 117.

52 F. Wormald, 'The Survival of Anglo-Saxon Illumination after the Norman Conquest', *Collected Writings I: studied in medieval art from the sixth to the twelfth centuries*. Eds. J. Alexander, et al. (Oxford, 1984), 153–71, 164.

53 On perceptions on age and physical decay see S. Shahar, 'The Old in Medieval Culture', in. *Framing Medieval Bodies*, Eds. M. Robin and S. Kay, (Manchester, 1994), 160–86.

54 Thurlby 1995, 134 n. 31.

55 Robinson 1913, 107–8, Lindley 1995, 115. Lindley argues that archaism in the Wells effigies is confined to the two later effigies.

56 Unfortunately there is precious little surviving from Wells that is Anglo-Saxon in date, and as such, connecting the Anglo-Saxon motifs to Wells prototypes is impossible. However, at the date of the carving of the effigies, the original church probably still stood, and as such it is possible that the motifs on the retrospective effigies follow from the visual sources of the first church. On the Saxon remains from Wells see W. Rodwell, 'The Anglo Saxon and Norman Churches at Wells', in Colchester 1982, 1–23.

57 Anne Prache, 'Les monuments funéraires des Carolingiens éléves à Saint-Remi de Reims au XII siècle', *Revue de l'art* 6 (1969), 68–76.

58 As recently discussed by Julian Luxford in a paper at the 'West Country Gothic' conference at Cambridge University.

59 I am aware of only one illustrated manuscript of Anglo-Saxon date that is attributable to Wells, the Lanalet Pontifical, (Bibliotheque municipale de Rouen, MS A27). *The Lanalet Pontifical*, G. H. Doble, (ed.), (Henry Bradshaw Society, vol. 74, 1936). It has been suggested that the pen and wash drawing on f. 2v represents the Anglo-Saxon church at Wells. See Rodwell 1982, plate 5, 8–9. On the relationship between observation and representation in the period see A. Gransden, "Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England", in *Ibid., Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992), 175–97.

60 Sargent-Baur 1996, 35 has argued along similar lines concerning the relationship of 'real' to 'romantic' history in the literature of the period. Also see T. H. Heslop, 'Late twelfth-century

writing about art and aesthetic relativity', *Medieval Art: recent prespectives. A memorial tribute to C. R. Dodwell*, G. R. Owen-Crocker, T. Graham, (eds.), (Manchester, 1998), 129–141.

61 M. Clanchy, " 'Tenacious Letters': Archives and Memory in the Middle Ages", *Archivaria* 11 (1980–1), 115–25.

Fig. 1 Unamed bishop

Fig. 2 Bishop Elwinus

Fig. 3 Burhwoldus

Fig. 4 Levericus

Fig. 5 Sigarus

Fig. 6 Dudoc

Fig. 7 Giso

Fig. 8

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Fig. 19