



Shaping Understanding: Form and Order in the Anglo-Saxon World, 400–1100

A Colloquium, *co-organized by Leslie E. Webster and Mildred Budny*

**The British Museum, Stevenson Lecture Theatre in the Clore Centre
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Abstracts of Papers

Anglo-Saxon perceptions of form and order are manifested in their approaches to multiple areas ranging from the visual arts and texts in all forms to religious practice and social structures. The colloquium explores this theme through two broad, interconnected strands: **Texts** of all kinds; and **Art, Architecture and Archaeology**.

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'The "Grand Combinations" of the Anglo-Saxons'

Simon D. Keynes (*Trinity College, Cambridge, and
Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic, University of Cambridge*)

Perceptions of political development in Anglo-Saxon England have not always coincided with the views of the historian Thomas Carlyle, who dismissed the inhabitants of the land as 'a gluttonous race of Jutes and Angles, capable of no grand combinations, lumbering about in potbellied equanimity'. This paper aims to give some account of the ways in which historians of Anglo-Saxon England, from the twelfth century to the present day, have given shape to that world and reduced it to order.

'Revival or Continuity? Fifth Century Elements in the Sutton Hoo Garnet *Cloisonné*

Noël Adams (*London*)

The garnet *cloisonné* ornaments from Sutton Hoo Mound 1 display advanced techniques of garnet cutting, involving not just the shaping of plates, but also faceting and surface carving. As Rupert Bruce-Mitford recognised, these latter techniques have precedents in fifth-century garnet cutting. This leads to the question of whether the appearance of such techniques represents 1) a complete innovation, 2) the continuity of hereditary workshop traditions or 3) a conscious revival of Late Antique styles. From a strictly technological viewpoint, it seems likely that such difficult garnet preparation could only be the result of inherited rather than acquired skills, but where and what would have been the models for observation? There are no satisfactory parallels in sixth-century material from Merovingian or Ostrogothic contexts. As the intervening material may simply be lost to archaeological record, the examination of contemporary parallels throws further light on the subject.

After a brief comparison and review of the Sutton Hoo fifth- and sixth-century material, the paper explores inlaid objects from Avaric and eastern Hunnic contexts. Aspects of these ornaments reveal that a parallel 'revival' of fifth-century garnet technology and inlaying styles took place on the borders of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires in the early seventh century. Although we can only point to the similarities in pattern between the two traditions, taken together, they tend to suggest that, while inherited workshop skills cannot be demonstrated or discounted, there was indeed a conscious *renovatio* of the Late Antique in the seventh century.

'Innovation and Decline: Garnet *Cloisonné* in Early Anglo-Saxon England'

Angela Evans (*Department of Medieval and Modern Europe, British Museum*)

In 1939, the excavation of the early Anglo-Saxon ship burial beneath Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo produced an astonishing array of gold and garnet *cloisonné* 'jewellery'. Finds from cemeteries, particularly in Kent and East Anglia, and more recently from metal detecting suggest that the Anglo-Saxons had a tradition of garnet inlaying that was both more innovative and more long-lived than their Continental neighbours. From the second half of the sixth century, master craftsmen in early Anglo-Saxon England produced metalwork that is distinguished from its continental counterparts both by its free design and by the lavish use of gold inlaid with *cloisonné* garnet. This paper traces the evidence for those traditions from the simple use of single cells filled with garnet in the sixth century to a visible decline in the seventh century via an explosion of innovative metalwork in the early seventh century.

'Medium and Message in Early Anglo-Saxon Animal Art: Some Observations on Salin's Style I in England'

Tania Dickinson (*Department of Archaeology, University of York*)

Style I, originally defined in 1904 by Bernhard Salin, is the first distinctive and widely used animal art in post-Roman Europe. Its hallmark was an emphasis on body-parts rather than body-outline. More or less familiar, Late-Antique animal forms were transformed into quite fantastical creatures, which could be made yet more ambiguous and obscure by adding, abbreviating and even re-assembling the parts. Since Style I spread out from its origins in later fifth-century Scandinavia to parts of Europe and England, it has been studied mostly in relation to chronology and cultural connections. But in the past twenty years, attention has also been directed to deciphering it as an artistic language, i.e. learning 'to read' its difficult formal construction and decoding its iconology. Most of this work, with the notable exception of David Leigh's, has been directed to continental material, and most has also concentrated on the premier carrier of the style, the multi-panelled, relief-decorated, bow brooches, especially those with square headplates.

This paper seeks to widen perceptions of the role Style I played in sixth-century England. It begins with a sketch of the incidence of Style I on grave goods, based on a summary sample of sixteen recently excavated and reported Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. This highlights the numerical importance of saucer brooches as a major alternative to square-headed brooches for the receipt of Style I decoration. Moreover, since saucer brooches were introduced to southern England from northern Germany in the mid-fifth century, with a repertoire of geometric decoration, they provide an opportunity to examine what happens — in form and possibly meaning — to Style I when it is translated, secondarily, to a different artefact-type (in this case, with a single circular plane for relief ornament). In sum, it is argued that while saucer-brooch makers selectively adapted Style I to their own pre-existing design traditions, they also actively exploited and diversified its inherent design principles. In the process, their patrons seem to have absorbed, maintained and manipulated the North Germanic mythic symbolism, which, arguably, lies at the heart of Style I, for their own social purposes.

'The Predictable Wanderer: Individuality and Conformity in Anglo-Saxon England'

John Hines (*School of History and Archaeology, Cardiff University*)

The objective of this paper is to explore how far the Anglo-Saxon period can be regarded as a unit, from which a wide range of material records — texts, artwork, architecture, and the artefactual record — reflect the lives of the people who made up the population, in a consistent way despite the differences in the types of evidence. The discussion will specifically address the question of individuality (as distinct from individualism), in light of (1) a common supposition that individuality is antagonistic to 'order'; (2) historical generalizations that claim 'the individual' only as a later invention, be that of the twelfth century, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, or Modernism; (3) discussions of selfhood in Anglo-Saxon literary studies; and (4) discussions of agency in archaeological theory.

The discussion will be structured by a comparison of burial evidence from the beginning of the period with the Exeter Book elegies from towards its end, arguing that a form of selfhood has a real and significant continuity between these. Age and sex identities are key components of this individual identity. The need to consult archaeological evidence from one end of the period and literary evidence from the other reflects historical and political developments within this time that themselves represent an attempt to impose greater order on the population through the control of cultural media.

'Some Irish Liturgical Spaces'

Michael Ryan (*Chester Beatty Library, Dublin*)

A preliminary statement of an exploration of early-medieval Irish ecclesiastical sites as places in which liturgy was celebrated. In most interpretations of church buildings and monastic lay-outs, liturgical considerations have been given very little consideration; recent work has tended to focus on monasteries as sites of incipient urban growth. A brief survey of the field monuments, some tentative interpretations and an indication of possible future lines of enquiry form the basis of the paper.

'The Past in the Present: Celtic Art in Insular Ornament'

Susan Youngs (*Department of Medieval and Modern Europe, British Museum*)

An examination of what constitutes medieval 'Celtic' ornament and its sources using recent finds of decorative metalwork from Britain and Ireland in the period before and during its appearance in Insular manuscript art. An overview of the motifs subsequently adopted, and how they were deployed, concludes with a final look at their possible significance in ecclesiastical politics of the seventh to eighth centuries.

'Shaping and Reshaping: Aspects of Late Anglo-Saxon and Viking Art'

James Graham-Campbell (*Institute of Archaeology, University College, London*)

My paper is intended to update current views on the relationships between Anglo-Saxon and Viking art in the light of recent finds of ornamental metalwork in England and Denmark.

'Bede and the Ordering of Understanding'

Alan Thacker (*Institute of Historical Research, University of London*)

Bede used to be seen as the schoolmaster of Jarrow, who — apart from his *magnum opus*, the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* — mostly produced 'textbooks', excerpted from the far more creative Christian writings of Late Antiquity. As much recent work has shown, however, such a view scarcely does him justice. In his maturity Bede evolved a clear-cut and in many ways original programme for the ordering and transmission of what he regarded as the central knowledge of his day: the Scriptures, and the commentaries and tools needed to understand them and to implement their teaching. The outcome of this approach was an extensive collection of writings the core of which comprised the most comprehensive corpus of Biblical exegesis ever produced in the early medieval Latin West. Moreover, as he worked on this, Bede's own writings and intellectual approach developed and became more independent and personal.

This paper seeks to assess these developments. It will begin with some consideration of Bede's personal status and contemporary reputation. It will then consider the development of his programme for the ordering of knowledge in his day. In so doing it will take account of the nature of his priorities and how they related to what had gone before, before moving on to examine the development of his scholarly approach in the fields of exegesis, history and computus. It will conclude with an assessment of how Bede used his principal authorities, such as Gregory the Great and Augustine.

'En route with Bedan Cosmology'

Wesley M. Stevens (*Department of History, University of Winnipeg*)

Between towns one could become lost in the forest. Yet, one might also cross a sea or a continent, expecting that the intended goal would be reached. Was it reckless self-confidence, or just luck? Knowledge of heavens and earth was taught in the monastic schools in works of astronomy, computus, and geography. It was incorporated into biblical studies, lurked behind literary analogues and imagery, and applied within monthly calendars. Far from being lower and introductory stuff to be forgotten in the lost liberal arts, such knowledge could be used by educated travellers in early medieval Europe from the second to the eleventh centuries, including mappamundi, the Zodiac, great circles, constellations, terrestrial klimata. With a bit of vellum and a good walking staff, Beda venerabilis will lead us.

'Liturgy and Sacred Space in Anglo-Saxon England'

Helen Gittos (*The Queen's College, Oxford*)

This paper uses liturgical and architectural sources to examine the relationship between liturgy and the space within which it was performed. The links between liturgy and architecture are complex, especially for a period when one does not have detailed evidence for the rites of particular churches. Whilst it is difficult to find precise answers to questions about the function of parts of a building, there is sufficient evidence to begin to explore the rôle of spaces themselves. By approaching the problem from this perspective it is possible to identify some characteristics of 'place' that play an important rôle in ritual. This was something that appears to have been self-consciously manipulated by the early medieval Church in general and by the Anglo-Saxons in particular.

'Anglo-Saxon Art: Some Orderings and their Meanings'

Richard Bailey (*Department of English, University of Newcastle*)

Through much of the third quarter of the twentieth century, approaches to Pre-Norman art were heavily dependent on two books by T.D. Kendrick: *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900* (1938) and *Late Saxon and Viking Art* (1949). In them we find an analysis of English Pre-Conquest art which sees it as an interplay of 'insular barbaric' with 'the more substantial dignities and the gentler graces of the classical tradition.' Twenty-five years later we now understand more of the complex nature of Anglo-Saxon aesthetics, the transmission of forms and the impact of one medium upon another. Equally we are now more alert to the physical and the intellectual contexts of production — and the range of settings in which the Anglo-Saxons encountered the art we study. This paper will show how motifs and their ordering reflect these considerations, and explore some of the meanings expressed through that ordering.

'The Church Triumphant: The Figural Columns of Early Ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon England'

Jane Hawkes (*Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York*)

The much-weathered Anglo-Saxon column standing in the churchyard at Masham (Yorkshire) is one of a comparatively rare group of monuments thought to have been erected in the Anglo-Saxon landscape in the early decades of the ninth century, namely: the columns at Masham and Dewsbury in Yorkshire, and that at Reculver in Kent. All three have been dated by means of stylistic analysis of the animal and figural ornament, and the layout of the decoration. These monuments, unusual in an Anglo-Saxon context in both their form (that of the round monumental stone column) and their apparently heavy dependence on figural decoration, have elicited a steady trickle of academic interest over the last ninety years, but little attention has been paid to the iconographic concerns of their figural scenes. In part this is due to the largely fragmentary condition of the Reculver and Dewsbury stones, but that at Masham is relatively complete.

In attempting to reach some understanding of the rôle these monuments might have played in early ninth-century Anglo-Saxon England, this paper will present an iconographic reading of the figural decoration — concentrating (in the interests of time) on the scenes preserved at Masham, in terms of both the sources apparently available to those responsible for its design and the possible theological significances expressed by them. Through this it will be suggested that (at one level) those responsible for the production of the column were concerned to articulate, by means of Old Testament imagery, a canonical and orthodox definition of the Church and its sacraments. What remains of the fragments at Dewbury displays a similar interest, but here the theme is expressed through images of Christ's ministry.

Thus, while the figural scenes that have survived on all three monuments differ in their iconographic vocabulary, it will be argued that their overall programmes may nevertheless have shared a common concern. This possibility is further suggested by the apparent selection, at the 'top' of the monuments, of a common iconographic scheme: Christ and his apostles, an early Christian scheme that enjoyed something of a 'renaissance' in Carolingian Papal programmes in Rome in the early years of the ninth century.

This potential reference, taken in conjunction with general considerations concerning the monument form, and the apparent imitation of 'Rome' displayed in many of the Anglo-Saxon stone monuments of this period, together point to an attempt to articulate the authority and power of the Church in the land through the form and decoration of these monuments. It is suggested that this is accomplished in a manner that appropriates the public trappings of imperial Rome and articulates them, in highly visible form, in the light of current developments in the Carolingian world and the Rome of the Papal Church in the early ninth century.

'The Sign at the Cross-Roads: The Matthean *Nomen Sacrum* in Gospelbooks before Alfred the Great'

Carol A. Farr (*London*)

Most gospelbooks produced in Britain and Ireland before the late ninth century present decorated and enlarged Greek letters (*chi*, *rho*, *iota*, or *XP I*), an abbreviation of the genitive name *Christi*, at the end of the genealogy of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 1:18). *XP I* is one of the 'holy names,' *nomina sacra*, another being *I H S*, an abbreviation for *Iesus*. Art historians and palaeographers usually refer to the decorated letters *XP I* in Matthew as the '*Chi rho*,' although it is not the sign *XP* which figures in the story of Constantine and in late Roman art in the shape of a cross with the *rho* atop or intersecting it. Also, scholars usually speak of the *Chi rho* as the site of decoration in Insular gospelbooks. This paper, however, will explore its semiosis, the way in which it functioned interpretatively to make vivid and understandable the significance of the genealogy and ensuing Nativity narrative in the contexts of the gospelbook itself, private reading, and liturgical performance. The *nomen sacrum*, in its position at the end of the descent of Christ, became a diagrammatic, multivalent shape which articulated the text's transition from verse-like genealogy to narrative. The group of Greek letters presented a divine sign which was also an image, in a shape that became a cross, the Incarnation, and the world. Moreover, it occupied a liminal space in several respects, between: two textual sections, the genealogy and a narrative, text which was sung in the monastic office and text which was read aloud at mass, and text and visual image.

This paper will analyse the ways in which decoration and script were used to distinguish the *Chi Rho* as a sign. It will show how motifs (animals, human heads, vinescrolls, and non-figural motifs) used in individual manuscripts may relate to its semiosis and how surviving gospelbooks resemble each other or differ in their treatment of the *XP I*. The discussion and argument will employ evidence of liturgical use seen in the manuscripts (lection notes and other markings), of early liturgical forms from other manuscripts, of exegesis of Matthew 1 and other relevant texts, as well as of the decoration of Anglo-Saxon and contemporary manuscripts. The manuscripts to be discussed include the Stockholm *Codex Aureus* (Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS A.135), the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.IV), and the Barberini Gospels (Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. MS lat. 570).

‘Framing the Book of Durrow Inside/Outside the Anglo-Saxon World’

Nancy Netzer (*Department of Fine Arts and McMullen Art Museum, Boston College*)

The Book of Durrow (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 57 A.4.5), a deluxe Gospel Book of 248 folios illustrated with six carpet pages, evangelist symbol pages, a four-symbols page, canon tables, and elaborate decorated initials introducing portions of the text, remains central to the larger scholarly controversy over the relative contributions of Ireland, Scotland (Iona), and England (Northumbria) to Insular art and culture of the seventh and eighth centuries. The Book of Durrow's precise date, its place of origin, and the origin of the models influencing much of its decoration are still debated. This paper will examine some of the narratives that have been constructed in the twentieth century, beginning with the most influential book of T.D. Kendrick, *Anglo-Saxon Art to A.D. 900*, to frame the Book of Durrow both inside and outside the Anglo-Saxon world. It will consider how the forms of the manuscript's text, script, layout and decoration fit, or do not fit, the ways in which scholars have shaped understanding of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts over the last century.

‘Anglo-Saxon Perspectives on Liturgical Order’

Joyce Hill (*School of English, University of Leeds*)

The conversion to Christianity not only gave early medieval societies the technology of writing; it also introduced new ways of reckoning time and time-sequences, and thus of ordering and recording sequential and cyclical activity: more than one method of pinpointing years; a new means of identifying months; a mode of identifying dates within months; formal time-divisions throughout the day; and a cyclical church year which dovetailed — often with some difficulty — annual rounds of celebration and commemoration based on the lunar and solar calendars.

In this presentation I shall be examining Anglo-Saxon approaches to ordering material within the constraints of the liturgical calendar, with its conflicts between the lunar and solar cycles; the problem of identifying the Sundays in Ordinary Time (i.e. the long post-Pentecost season, continuing to Advent); and the ways in which modern scholars sometimes misinterpret the medieval rationale that is actually at work when what is before them in the manuscript is not correct in relation to the systems of liturgical ordering that they are bringing to bear.

The Anglo-Saxons were influenced, of course, by patristic traditions and subsequently by Carolingian models. Their changing practices can be taken as a case-study of how liturgical order and the means of designating points within that ordered framework were undergoing developments in the early medieval period. At the same time, the analysis is a means of identifying the traditions to which they had access and the influences to which they responded.

'Balanced Asymmetry as a Hallmark of Ninth-Century Anglo-Saxon Art'

Mildred Budny (*Research Group on Manuscript Evidence, Princeton*)

Among modern observers in many disciplines, the practices of variation have long been recognized as occurring, and recurring, in most materials to survive from the Insular world in the early medieval period. Such features appear in media ranging from scripts to texts in prose and verse, from textiles to sculptures both large- and small-scale, and from metalwork to manuscript illuminations. Often, however, the effect of variation seems haphazard or wayward to modern eyes, accustomed to a more standardized symmetry and uniformity characteristic of the post-medieval and largely mass-produced world, in which, for example, printed books contain more-or-less identical letters and spellings as they repeat throughout a given text. Apparently reflecting these habits, assessments of early medieval materials too frequently dismiss multiple varied letter-forms as willful, mistaken, or outright ignorant on the part of their scribes, and asymmetrical configurations as not constituting "patterns" at all.

Such interpretations impose an especial impediment to Anglo-Saxon art of the ninth century, when a hallmark of the style is a *carefully balanced asymmetry*. Over recent decades the detailed study of numerous works both individually and in context, by scholars working in several fields (some of whom present their results at this Colloquium), has advanced the recognition that the principle of variation, artfully controlled according to modes of perception and habits of thought no longer widespread, constitutes a central focus of Anglo-Saxon aesthetics and the sense of order.

Some works carry this approach to a high art, as notably with the Royal Bible of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury. For example, its richly decorated series of arcades for the Eusebian canon tables produces a complex balance through elaborate and intricate means. Such variation governs the structures of the arcades, the alternation of colors and patterns within the set as a whole, and the configurations within individual patterns. The ensemble both enhances and embodies the import of the canon tables, which set out and seek to demonstrate the essential harmony of the four Gospels, despite the seeming discordance between some of their individual accounts. Given the guiding principles of ninth-century Anglo-Saxon aesthetics, particularly in the hands of an outstanding master, it can be no accident that one of the most superb and "iconographically sound" renditions of Eusebian canon arcades to survive from the early medieval world, both East and West, comes from Canterbury in the mid-ninth century.

To demonstrate these principles, my paper examines a series of matching, but carefully varied and asymmetrically balanced, sets which occur in several media dating from about the late eighth century to the early tenth. These sets include: canon arcades; monumental inscriptions; initial pages for multiple Books in a variety of texts both religious and secular; and decorative devices mixing animate, foliate, and geometric elements in various settings. Notable cases, more and less magnificent, occur in the Royal Bible; the Vespasian Psalter Gloss in Old English, written by the master scribe of that Bible; the Book of Cerne, modelled upon that Bible or a close relative; the Maaseik embroideries; and many specimens of the "Trehwiddle Style" of metalwork, which flourished widely in the ninth century.

The shared approaches which these materials exhibit to design and layout, despite their different functions and techniques of production, reveal that the prevalent practice of variation, at its best carefully balanced according to asymmetrical, but yet harmonious, patterns, forms a guiding principle of the art of their time. They also demonstrate a little-recognized continuity in the course of Anglo-Saxon art and cultural life through the ninth century — a century marked, and supposedly mostly marred, by the Viking incursions.

'Anglo-Saxon Reception of Carolingian and Ottonian Books'

David Ganz (*Departments of English and Classics, King's College, London, and Centre for Palaeography in the School of Advanced Studies, University of London*)

This paper will explore instances of continental manuscripts and models in the book production of tenth- and eleventh-century England, and raise questions about the reception of continental influence in canon law, liturgy and learning on the basis of manuscript evidence.

“King Athelstan’s *Imperium* and the (Re-)Ordering of Anglo-Saxon England”

Michael Wood (London)

The tenth-century Anglo-Saxon Kings saw their job as ‘making the England Alfred dreamed’, it has been said. But they also saw this (re-)ordering as a *renovatio*, in that it looked back to the seventh century to Theodore, as told by Bede. This lecture will try to give an overview of the creation of the empire in the late 920’s and 930’s. It will look at the practical construction of the wider order — military force, hostages, tribute, fostering, baptism — and make reference also to arrangements within ‘England’, including the restoration of endowments and sees. But order was more than a practical issue for the tenth-century people, and the paper will also look at the way this earthly order was seen to connect with the divine order. It will make special reference to the cult of saints, arguing that Abbo’s famous story about St Edmund took place during a ‘national’ tour in which the King sought out evidence for the tales of the English saints. It will also look at the patronage of manuscripts and at the King’s ‘think tank’ of scholars, with special reference to Israel of Trier. It will argue that the translation of the Old English gospels was ordered in 930, to be done by a group of scholars at Canterbury under Archbishop Wulfhelm. Finally, the paper will attempt to draw these themes together through two manuscripts which may have belonged to the King himself: British Library Cotton Galba AXVIII and Bodleian Library Rawlinson C 697.

‘Shaping an Historical Event: The Anglo-Saxons’ Arrival in Great Britain according to Anglo-Saxon and Britonic Historians’

Olivier Szerwiniack (Faculté des Lettres, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, Amiens)

The question of origin has always been essential for every ethnic group and it was indeed the case for Anglo-Saxons and Britons. In this paper, I will examine how all historians in the British Isles from the sixth century to the twelfth — Gildas, Bede, the author of the *Historia Brittonum* (Nennius?), the authors of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Henry of Huntingdon — dealt with this question and shaped their own versions of the Anglo-Saxons’ arrival in Great Britain (*adventus Saxonum* in Latin texts). I will show how each of these historians, by turns, variously followed the earlier versions or contradicted previous historians.

In surveying this process, I will consider in particular how Bede, the first Anglo-Saxon historian, shaped a plausible picture of the Anglo-Saxons’ arrival with very few documents at his disposal: a few sentences from Gildas’ *De excidio Britonum* and Constantius’ *Life of Saint Germanus* added to some oral traditions. The shaping of this event was, of course, a matter of debate between Anglo-Saxon and Britonic historians. For the former, the Anglo-Saxons were ancestors, while for the latter they were invaders. I shall demonstrate that, while there are certain differences between the accounts and approaches of every historian, it is possible nevertheless to conclude that, in general terms, the Anglo-Saxon and Britonic historians differed in important respects based upon their ethnic perspectives. The Anglo-Saxon historians insisted that Anglo-Saxons had been invited by the Britonic leader ‘Vortigern’, and had defeated the Britons because of their strength and God’s will to punish the Britons’ wickedness. The picture is completely different among Britonic historians, who insisted that the Anglo-Saxons, driven from Germany by lack of food and by overcrowding, had asked Vortigern for hospitality and then took control over most of the island little by little by treachery.

Examining the various historiographical renderings of this important episode in the history exemplifies how little medieval British historians aimed at the investigation of historical truth. By shaping their histories, and defining the crucial question of ‘origin’ from the point of view of their own people, they sought rather to legitimate or to question the political situation of their own time.

‘The Last *Chi-Rho* in the West: From Insular to Anglo-Saxon in the Boulogne 10 Gospels’

Richard Gameson (*School of History, University of Kent at Canterbury*)

A study of the little-known gospel book, Boulogne, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 10 (and, in particular, of its Incarnation initial), provides a lens through which to examine the nature, affiliations and significance of Anglo-Saxon book production and decoration in the first half of the tenth century.

“*Facta velut infecta*”: History, Vergil and the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*’

Elizabeth Tyler (*Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York*)

Placed in the context of the complex dynastic and familial politics of the early 1040's, this paper sets out the significance of the role of Vergil in the preface and argument of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*. In particular, it examines the Encomiast's appeal to Vergil in the light of the author's distinctive approach to the relationship between fiction and historiography and thereby provides a fresh perspective from which to assess the author's bold use of fiction to further the interests of Queen Emma.

‘The “Orchestration” of Verse Patterns in Old English Meter’

Geoffrey Russom (*Department of English, Brown University*)

Some time ago, R.P.M. Lehmann noticed that Old English meter avoids sequential repetition of verse patterns, unlike *roscadh*, an Old Irish meter that is otherwise strikingly similar. In this paper, I offer an explanation for Lehmann's finding and for other findings derived from electronic scansions of *Beowulf*, the poems with Cynewulf signatures, and *The Battle of Maldon*. The basic principle for distribution of verse types within an Old English poem — what I call ‘orchestration’ — appears to be principled deviation from metrical norms. Deviant or complex verses are introduced at regular intervals to provide metrical variety. Regular employment of simpler verses at an appropriately high frequency maintains that sense of the norm without which deviation would be perceived as chaotic rather than interesting. Given the dynamic character of a deviation-and-return model, frequencies of verse patterns should be comparable in any sample of significant size, even perhaps in a fairly small sample. Exploring relative frequencies in samples of one hundred lines can sharpen our understanding of the poet's aesthetic, and may also provide encouragement for specialists who use metrical distributions to research a variety of important problems, such as problems of date or authorship.

‘Accumulated Geometry: Harmony of Form in Anglo-Saxon Texts and Design’

Robert D. Stevick (*Department of English, University of Washington*)

‘Accumulated geometry’ is a phrase I have calqued from ‘accumulated counterpoint,’ which served for J.S. Bach as the definition of *harmony* (C. Wolff, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, p. 171). This kind of harmony is much more than an agreeable combination of simultaneous sounds in music, having to do with the full form of an entire work, just as the harmony of form eventuating from accumulated geometry embraces whole texts and designs in Anglo-Saxon and contemporary Irish works. The achievement of harmonious forms again and again, in manuscript illumination, in vernacular verse texts, in stone sculpture, in fine metalwork will never be understood and appreciated for its intrinsic greatness until its geometrical basis is grasped — fully, operationally, intellectually. Why understanding of this achievement has been slow to develop will be described first, as a preface to an attempt to show that accumulated geometry was a conceptual and tactile mode — a cosmic agency — by which form and order were given embodiment in some of the Irish and Anglo-Saxon artifacts most valued today.

‘Order and Design in Anglo-Saxon Glossaries’

Philip Rusche (*Department of English, University of Nevada, Las Vegas*)

The order of words in the surviving Anglo-Saxon Glossaries seems at first sight to be fairly straightforward. They are either alphabetical or arranged according to subject, or remain in the order of the specific literary text from which they were originally taken. Yet within these larger classifications, there are conflicts and problems that the compilers of the glossaries faced in their aim to make their glossaries useful to a varied audience. In this paper I will examine some of these tensions in the glossaries, as the compilers struggled to maintain an order and layout that is at once rational and at the same time practical and useful. For example, how does a compiler who is rearranging a glossary from textual order to alphabetical order maintain the usefulness of the original layout; what rationale lies behind the ordering of sources in a glossary compiled from multiple literary texts; what types of page layouts and scripts did the scribes experiment with to allow for the easiest distinction between lemma and gloss; and in adapting glossaries from originally pagan sources, how does an Anglo-Saxon compiler alter and rearrange the text of the glossary to reflect a Christian worldview? By examining such questions, I hope to show the skill and care with which the compilers of Anglo-Saxon glossaries, an often-maligned group of scholars, arranged and ordered their compositions.

‘Emphasis and Visual Rhetoric in Anglo-Saxon Inscriptions’

John Higgitt (*Department of Fine Art, University of Edinburgh*)

This paper is concerned with the visual devices that were used in some Anglo-Saxon inscriptions to enhance or amplify the meaning of the text. Anglo-Saxon inscriptions vary greatly in form and no one uniform pattern emerges. It is also almost certainly the case that the inscriptions that survive are not fully representative of the original range of inscription types, the more ambitious inscriptions from major churches having, for example, very largely disappeared. Furthermore, what does survive often does so in a fragmentary condition, making it difficult to judge the intended visual effect. In spite of these difficulties, enough remains to show that the designers of some, but certainly not all, Anglo-Saxon inscriptions made use of a range of visual devices, some very simple, others more sophisticated.

The aspect of the design that most clearly affects how an inscription is seen — and read — is its position (and scale) in relation to the monument or object on which it is set. Decisions about the layout of the text within the inscribed space may be related to the overall design. This aspect of the design also provides an opportunity for emphasizing elements within the text. This can be seen in some inscriptions where the positioning of key words (mainly personal names) seems to be the result of deliberate planning. The placing of the name of an important individual at the beginning of an inscription is an obvious means of drawing attention to it. The intention may be different when a name appears at the end, or, in one case, at the exact centre of an inscription. Symmetrical pairings of names within an inscription are also unlikely to be accidental and may be significant. Normally, the positioning was perhaps simply intended to emphasize the name of the patron, or of the person commemorated in a funerary inscription. In a few cases, the placing of names may perhaps be explained as an expression of religious humility, or as a way of marking spiritual or secular power. Some of these effects would only have been noticed by a fully literate reader. For the illiterate or the more modestly literate, finding and seeing the principal names may have had a particular importance, and the prominent and memorable placing of these names may therefore have had a particular importance for such viewers.

‘Recasting the Anglo-Saxon Runes’

David Parsons (*School of English Studies, University of Nottingham*)

I will argue that there is evidence for a seventh-century reform of the runic alphabet in England, and discuss its implications for early Anglo-Saxon literacy.

‘ . . . And Pretty Coins All in a Row’

Anna Gannon (*Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum,
and Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge*)

The paper deals with the Anglo-Saxon early silver pennies of the first half of the eighth century, the so-called ‘sceattas’. This is a really beautiful and unusual coinage, surviving in more than a hundred different designs, providing a large repository of iconography and offering important testimony to many motifs that are now lost.

The coins have been extensively studied from the numismatic point of view. Their find-places have been mapped, they have been weighed, their metal content analysed, their relative chronology worked out, and they have been grouped by scholars in seemingly endless series, types, classes and varieties. In coin cabinets, they indeed are ‘pretty coins all in a row’.

It is my contention that, whilst this is excellent numismatic work, its ‘order’ only considers the material as abstract and detached from the world in which it was used and appreciated. None of these classifications would make any sense to the Anglo-Saxons, so that ordering the coins in a different way, by considering the designs and their meaning, allows us to perceive different connections, and hopefully to grasp how their makers and users would have ordered them and understood them.

To exemplify my new approach to the coinage, I shall particularly concentrate on coins using the design of lions, and show how the iconography fits in the context of the time and the range of meanings it portrays.

‘Enigma Variations: Mutual Influence in the Anglo-Latin and Old English Riddle Traditions’

Andy Orchard (*Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto*)

This paper seeks to explore the craft and artistry of generations of Anglo-Saxons who chose to compose verse-riddles either in Old English or in Latin. Particular attention will be paid to the use of word- and sound-play, and to the use of repeated formulas and other patterns of expression. While it is often asserted that the Latin *enigma*-tradition, beginning with Symphosius and popularised by Aldhelm, had a deep influence on the surviving body of vernacular *Riddles*, this paper will seek to explore the reverse context, and assess the extent to which vernacular themes and techniques of composition may have influenced Anglo-Saxons writing in Latin.

‘Learned Games: The Ludic Principle in the Visual Arts’

Leslie E. Webster (*Department of Medieval and Modern Europe, British Museum*)

The paper will explore the particular ways in which certain of the Anglo-Saxon visual arts — especially metalwork and bone carving — examine and interpret the experience of the physical and spiritual worlds. This particular shaping of understanding operates in a way very similar to that in which the Anglo-Saxon poetic riddles offer a means of reading the experienced world through paradox, antithesis and transformational images.

This tradition has its roots back in the artistic repertoire and conventions of the late Roman period, but these were transformed both in form and content into a distinctively Germanic aesthetic. The emphasis on dualities, hybrids, oppositions and other strategic mystifications was an enduring tradition which continued to inform the art of the Christian period in significant ways — indeed, was probably one of the reasons why the multi-layered iconographies and narrative symbols of the Late Antique and Early Christian tradition were so quickly and inventively assimilated by Anglo-Saxons in the seventh and eighth centuries. A few selected examples of secular and religious metalwork and bone carving from the sixth to the tenth centuries will briefly illustrate this serious game-playing — among them, of course, the Franks Casket and Braunschweig chrismal, as well as less well-known pieces.

'Letter and Number and Musical Note: Literary Languages and Cosmic Order'

David Howlett (*Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources, Oxford*)

I shall consider several cultural phenomena as attempts to represent in human compositions what artists, as sub-creators, imagined God to have done in Creation: the forming of Medieval Latin as a *Schriftsprache*, a machine for communicating across vast distances of space and time, three separate attempts to forge Old English as a literary language with the same architectonic features as Latin, the expansion of the common Germanic futhorc into the Old English futhorc, and a few fixed compositions in Anglo-Latin and Old English that relate particular men at a specific time to the eternal order of the cosmos.

'Irish Manuscripts and Anglo-Saxon Studies: The CALAMUS Project'

Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (*School of History, National University of Ireland, Galway*)

Work on the Catalogue of Latin Manuscripts of Irish Origin on the Continent, A.D. 600–800 (CALAMUS) has much to offer Anglo-Saxon studies, by comparison, contrast, and example. This project provides powerful groundwork for reassessing the state of knowledge about the evidence for Irish 'versus' English palaeography and book production and use. The report presented here describes the approach and scope of the project with reference, for example, to Helmut Gneuss's *Handlist of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England to 1100*, J.D.A. Ogilvy's *Books Known to the English, 597–1066*, and other studies, and seeks to encourage researchers to join its work.

'The Power of Command: Pre-Conquest England as a "Developing" Society'

Patrick Wormald (*Wolfson College, Oxford*)

Power is the staple of most modern historical discourse — whether within family, village, religious community, or kingdom itself. It falls naturally from our lips as a *datum*. Yet historians begin to look shifty when asked quite what they *mean* by power. The answer is obvious enough in one sense: an individual or regime's ability to get people to do what they want, but what their subjects may not always wish to do themselves. That being granted, however, *how do they manage this?* Wherein consists that capacity to exercise command, to exact obedience? Are we to be thrown back on the lamely modern notion of 'consensus' against which Foucault warns us at such not uncharacteristic length? If not, wherein resides force? The answer can hardly be mere weaponry, because no army or police force before 1789 (or 1917) could use simply coercion against vastly more numerous subjects. Power is a fact, but *how* is it a fact?

I would suggest that the levers of power, as perceived historically, are broadly three. The first is the one *we* instantly recognize, institutions. People do things because the structures in which they are involuntarily (and sometimes even voluntarily) enrolled, expect it of them; apart from anything else, delinquents are unlikely to be looked upon with favour by fellow-members of the community on which the relevant burdens then fall disproportionately. The whingeing cities of the later Roman Empire (or English county communities) are cases in point. Second, there is patronage, mutual back-scratching. People obey because of what they get out of it from their lord and master. Disobedience means instant discountenance, or worse: Wiglaf has memorable words to this effect towards the end of *Beowulf*; and another king in that poem came to grief simply because he ran out of the wherewithal (or perhaps the will) to reward. Third, most elusively, there is charisma. Rulers are obeyed because they strike awe — not just fear, which we have covered already, but majesty: the sense that it is '*they who must be obeyed*'. (Saints, of course, have this quality too.)

Now it is obvious enough, indeed natural, that there will always be any amount of overlap between these categories. What was a later Roman emperor if not charismatic, commanding though he did the largest military force seen in history before Louis XIV at the earliest? Was it charisma or now near-invisible institutions that made Persia the first great empire? The Queen has charisma — or Princess Di did; yet

the operations of modern English government are inconceivable without their rooted institutional base. Hitler had charisma (we now gather); institutionally, his government may (unlike the *Wehrmacht*) have been a shambles, but his party was a mighty machine — and one, furthermore, that dealt out its accumulated goodies to its own members on a pretty thoroughgoing basis. Medieval saints, royal and otherwise, had nothing if not charisma. But they also had immense institutional power, which they too knew how to use to attract and keep followings. One cannot, in fact, break down power into my three neat constituents, however the balance between them might vary in any one instance.

Nevertheless, I shall argue here that our inimitable legacy from Ancient Civilization and its self-styled heirs has formed in our minds a polarity, whereby institutionalized government is essentially *modern, efficient*, in a word civilized, while the modes of patronage and charisma are *traditional*, ultimately *inefficient* (not to say corrupt), and so in the last resort barbaric. I shall suggest that the understanding of early English history even before 800, let alone post-900, has as a result been consistently misrepresented; or, in a phrase, that there was always a rigorous institutional structure in pre-conquest England (or throughout western Europe for that matter), which was what made its very predatoriness possible, and on which charisma sat like a gloss. This, in short, is another of the Wormald (I should of course say Campbell-Wormald) studies in the degree to which we have hugely underestimated the governmental capacities of our most distant ancestors, Romanized or no.

It is a matter, I think, of angles — or perhaps I should say ‘voices’. Start Old English history with the Laws, or with *Beowulf*, or with Bede, and you get three very different results: the proof being the vastly contrasting tones of those three very great books, Stubbs’s *Constitutional History*, Chadwick’s *Heroic Age*, or Stenton’s *Anglo-Saxon England*, chapters 1-8. My argument here is that the ascendancy of Old English Literature, especially in America (and of what has become its intellectual heir, highly sophisticated art-history), alongside the heavily Bedan perspective dictated in England by Stenton and his disciples, has eclipsed the so much less spectacularly documented structures of English government and society. Historians, indeed, have hardly known what to *do* with these monuments, especially after 900. As a result, the essential foundations of all else have been missed. Without Byrhtnoth’s revenues, services and sheer local prestige, there would have been no Maldon army. Without the resources so carefully accumulated by the bishop of Winchester and patron of Ely, there would not even have been a *Benedictional of Æthelwold*. Yet it is here, where wealth and power were garnered and concentrated, that historians have been looking least hard, because they have either not known what to look for, or hardly dared believe what they found. In the process, they have missed the bed-rock which underlies the most enduring political and social culture in human history. We have been looking at branches and flowers, when we could and should have been looking, like Stubbs, at roots.

So I going to spend the rest of my time on roots. I shall argue that it is only by appreciating that societies like early England’s have extremely robust and ancient structures that anything much else emerged from them at all. It will follow that Old English governmental institutions were extremely formidable, and had almost certainly been so for many centuries. I am afraid that this (needless to say) means quite a lot of law. But then, if you’d done the work in the first place, you’d now be able to listen to me talking about something also less rebarbative, like the *Benedictional of Æthelwold*.