

# The North Transept Doorway of Lichfield Cathedral: Problems of Style

Malcolm Thurlby

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## Article abstract

Quoique l'entrée du transept nord de la cathédrale de Lichfield ait subi la dégradation des siècles appelant des restaurations, il reste certains éléments de la sculpture originale nous permettant de situer cet ensemble naguère de haute qualité dans un contexte précis de la sculpture anglaise du treizième siècle. Cet article examine rapidement l'iconographie de l'entrée et présente un document attestant son exécution avant 1241. Une analyse stylistique démontre qu'elle ne doit rien à la sculpture gothique française mais qu'elle relève plutôt de l'entreprenante école de sculpture de l'ouest de l'Angleterre et de l'Écosse qui se développa à partir de 1184-1189 depuis la chapelle de la Vierge de l'abbaye de Glastonbury. En outre, certains détails amènent l'auteur à dater exactement cette entrée de la décennie 1231-1241. D'autres observations servent également à appuyer l'idée de Lethaby que cette entrée fut un modèle pour la sculpture de l'abbaye de Westminster après 1245.

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# *The North Transept Doorway of Lichfield Cathedral: Problems of Style*

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MALCOLM THURLBY

*York University*

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FIGURE 1. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).

The north transept doorway of Lichfield Cathedral has been almost totally ignored by historians of English mediaeval sculpture (Figs. 1-2). Apart from brief references in Prior, Prior and Gardner, and Lethaby, the portal is only mentioned in nineteenth-century works of a descriptive nature.<sup>1</sup> With the sole exception of Lethaby, who saw the sculpture as a possible source for Westminster Abbey, no attempt has been made to place it within the development of thirteenth-century sculpture in England. The situation is perhaps not all that surprising in view of the weathered and over-restored state of much of the doorway.<sup>2</sup> However, enough remains to facilitate

study of this work which must have originally been of very high quality.

- 1 Edward S. Prior, *A History of Gothic Art in England* (London, 1900), 281; Edward S. Prior and Arthur Gardner, *An Account of Medieval Figure Sculpture in England* (Cambridge, 1912), 197, 245; William R. Lethaby, *Westminster Abbey Re-examined* (London, 1925), 90; T. Harwood, *The History and Antiquities of the Church and City of Lichfield* (Gloucester, 1806), 74; J.B. Stone, *A History of Lichfield Cathedral* (London, 1870), 46; John Britton, *Cathedral Antiquities*, iv (London, 1836), 39; Sidney Cockerell, *The Iconography of the West Front of Wells Cathedral* (Oxford, 1851), appendix on Lichfield.
- 2 On the restorations of Lichfield Cathedral, see *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Staffordshire*, III (London, 1970), 193.

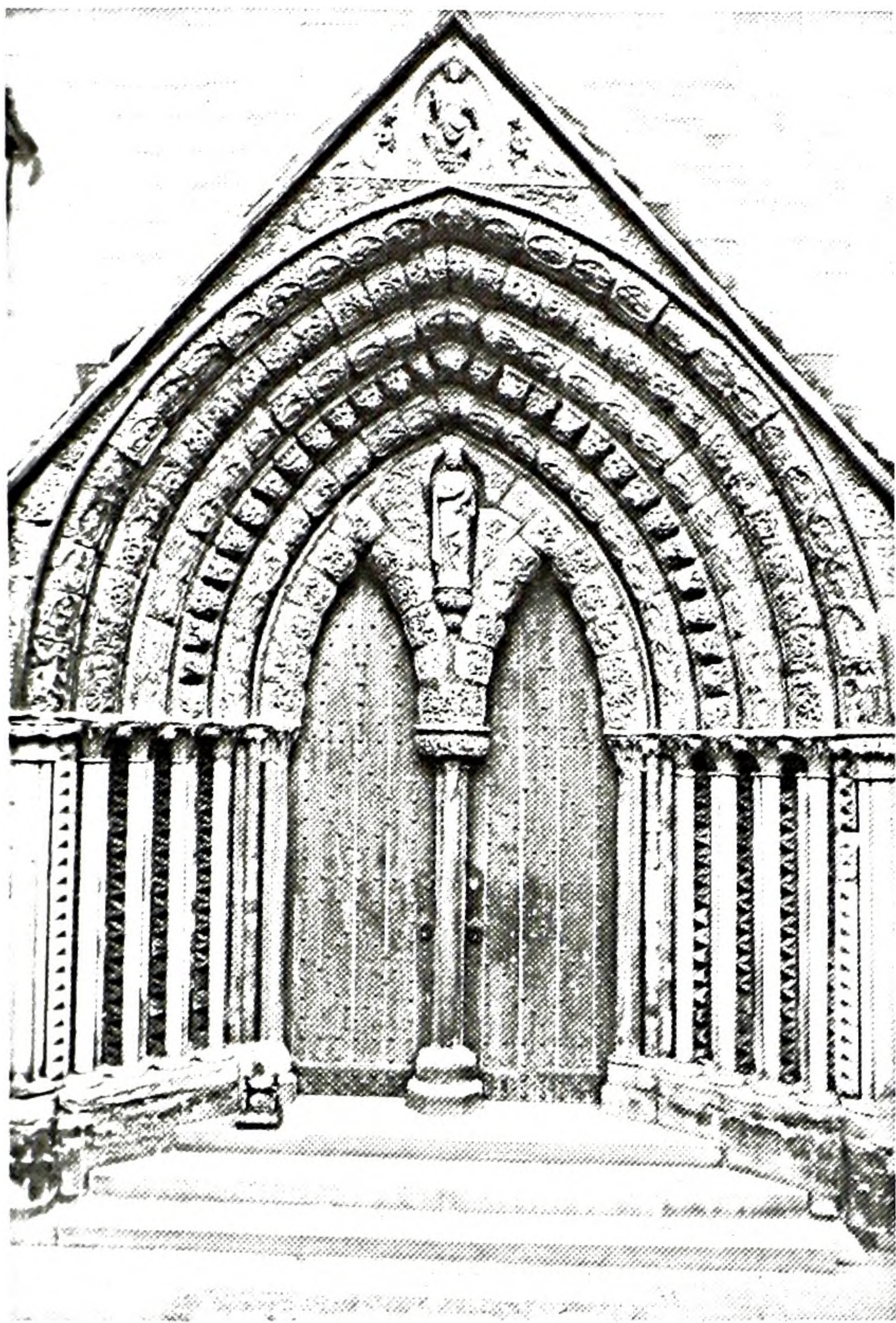


FIGURE 2. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).



FIGURE 3. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway, outer order, detail *Jesse and King David* (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).

The doorway is of six orders supported on *en delit* shafts and stiff leaf capitals and is set within a gable. The inner and outer shafts are treated as triplets while the remainder are circular and arranged in two syncopated rows with dog tooth ornament behind the outer layer. The doorway is subdivided by a trumeau above which the tympanum is adorned with foliage scrolls and a niche containing a modern statue of the Virgin. The orders of the arch alternate between foliate and figured, the figures, with three exceptions, being placed within medallions. The foliage of the first and fifth orders is deeply undercut but remains tight to the curvature of the voussoirs, while that of order three is treated as a series of pyramids.

The description of the figured medallions given by Cockerell is somewhat misleading.<sup>3</sup> He tells us that order two has eighteen medallions, each with a saint, and a scene of the Crucifixion at the apex. He is correct about the setting of the Crucifixion, but the medallions are instead filled with angels, the bottom one on the left holding two suns and the bottom one on the right holding two moons. For order four we are told that twenty-four angels fill the medallions. In fact, twenty-two are carved with standing figures

holding scrolls while the two half-medallions at the apex are occupied by censing angels. The outer order, again according to Cockerell, consists of twenty-five medallions encircling the twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse, with Christ in Majesty appearing at the apex and foliage on the bottom voussoir to the west, with, to the east, the figure of St. Chad converting a heathen. He has reversed the position of the two lower voussoirs and failed to notice that there is a reclining figure, albeit very weathered, in the foliage on the left, correctly interpreted by Harwood as Jesse from whom the Tree grows to encircle the kings on the left and right of the arch (Fig. 3).<sup>4</sup> Cockerell's identification of the Elders of the Apocalypse is also incorrect: the lowest medallion on the left shows a seated, crowned figure playing a harp who may be identified as David (Fig. 3). At the apex of the arch he is quite right in seeing the figure of Christ set in a quatrefoil surrounded by the four evangelist symbols (Fig. 4). In the medallion immediately to the east of Christ is a seated Virgin and Child, and it is possible to make out that the Child is feeding from the Virgin's left breast (Fig. 5). The remaining medallions of this order are filled with figures of kings.

Fortunately, the date of the north transept doorway may be determined with a certain degree of accuracy. Although the starting date for the rebuilding of the Romanesque church is not known for sure,

<sup>3</sup> Cockerell, appendix on Lichfield.

<sup>4</sup> Harwood, 74.



FIGURE 4. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway, outer order, detail *Christ in Majesty* and a king (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).



FIGURE 5. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway, outer order, detail *Virgin and Child* (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).

there are indications, both documentary and stylistic, that work was commenced by 1200.<sup>5</sup> In 1221 Henry III gave twenty oaks from Cannock Forest to the Chapter and Church.<sup>6</sup> In 1231 he gave timber from Ogle Hay for ladders; in 1235 and 1238, permission was given to use a quarry in Hopwas Hay which had already supplied stone for the cathedral.<sup>7</sup> It is very likely that this documentation refers to work on the transepts. The north transept must have been completed by 1241, for in that year Bishop Patteshull was buried before St. Stephen's altar in the east aisle there.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the wooden vault ordered by Henry III for the royal chapel at Windsor in 1243 and intended to look like the new work at Lichfield, was almost certainly based on the transept vault.<sup>9</sup> From this documentation it is clear that the doorway must be dated before 1241. How long before that date is a question to which we will return after stylistic consideration of the sculpture.

<sup>5</sup> *V.C.H. Staffordshire*, III (1970), 149.

<sup>6</sup> *Rot. Lit. Claus* (Rec. Comm.), I, ed. T. Hardy (London, 1883), 465.

<sup>7</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1227-31, 471; 1234-7, 103; 1237-42, 46.

<sup>8</sup> John Wharton, *Anglia Sacra* (London, 1691), 439.

<sup>9</sup> *Close Rolls*, 1242-7, 103. On the transepts see Malcolm Thurlby, 'The Early Gothic Elevation of Lichfield Cathedral,' *Transactions of the Third Canadian Conference of Medieval Art Historians* (London: The University of Western Ontario, 1985), 71-9, with further bibliography.

The arrangement of the voussoirs of the doorway is of a purely English tradition having nothing to do with the development of early Gothic sculpture in France from the west portals of Saint-Denis.<sup>10</sup> Setting figures in medallions was very popular in England throughout the twelfth-century.<sup>11</sup> For our purposes, however, the West Country provides the best parallels. The alternation between figured and foliated orders is found initially on the arch to the south porch and on the west doorway at Malmesbury Abbey (Wiltshire), and the same arrangement was intended, although not completed, on the south doorway of Glastonbury Abbey Lady Chapel, 1184-89.<sup>12</sup> The north portal of the Glastonbury Lady Chapel has an arrangement of oval figured medallions surrounded by foliage very similar to the Lichfield doorway. Furthermore, it is the sculpture of this Glastonbury doorway that stands at the beginning of the school leading to Lichfield. The figure of Christ in Majesty at the apex of the outer order at Lichfield is closely related to the figure of Herod Ordering the Massacre of the Innocents at Glastonbury (Figs. 4 and 6). The pose and the arrangement of the draperies over the legs are similar. At first sight one is tempted to assign the works to the same period, but,

quite apart from documentary evidence to the contrary, there are subtle stylistic differences which place the Lichfield *Christ* later than the Glastonbury Herod; the draperies over the legs, although similar, are more angular at Lichfield; and the garments spread to either side of the figure to cover the throne which they do not at Glastonbury. Enough sculpture survives in the West Country for us to trace the stylistic development from Glastonbury to Lichfield. The angel on the side of St. Dyfrig's tomb at Llandaff Cathedral, ca. 1200, shows a certain advance on the Glastonbury Herod (Fig. 7).<sup>13</sup> The draperies over the legs of both figures are arranged in a similar manner but those of the Llandaff angel have a crisper, more crystalline quality. Also, the garments of the angel spread on to the throne, a motif that is further exploited in the Virgin and Child on the tympanum of the central doorway of the west front of Wells Cathedral, ca. 1213-20 (Fig. 8).<sup>14</sup> Here the sharpness of the deeply channeled folds between the legs of the Virgin and the way they are gathered around the right shin and pulled up the side of the leg are so close to the Llandaff angel that the same atelier must have been responsible for both figures. From the Wells Virgin and Child it is but a small step to the

10 On the decorative nature of English sculpture see George Zarnecki, 'The Transition from Romanesque to Gothic in English Sculpture,' *Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, 1 (Princeton, 1963), 152-158; George Zarnecki, 'English 12th-Century Sculpture and its Resistance to St. Denis,' *Tribute to an Antiquary*, ed. Frederick Emmison and Roy Stephens (London: Leopard's Head Press, 1976), 83-92.

11 For example, Kilpeck, Herefordshire (George Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture* [London, 1953], fig. 19); Alne, Yorkshire (Zarnecki, figs. 81-2); Fishlake, Yorkshire (Zarnecki, figs. 83-4); Brayton, Yorkshire (Zarnecki, fig. 75); Barfreston, Kent (Zarnecki, figs. 87-9); Malmesbury, Wiltshire (Zarnecki, figs. 94 and 96); Iffley, Oxfordshire (Zarnecki, fig. 104); Glastonbury, Somerset (Zarnecki, figs. 129-30).

12 After the fire (St. Urban's Day 25 May 1184) which consumed the whole monastery of Glastonbury except a bell tower and chamber in which the monks took refuge, the Lady Chapel was rebuilt by Ralph FitzStephen, who held the abbey on behalf of the king. He completed the structure 'omitting no possible ornament' before the end of his custodianship, with the death of Henry II, in 1189; Adam de Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus*, ed. T. Hearne (Oxford, 1727), 335; J. Armitage Robinson, 'On the rebuilding of Glastonbury after the fire of 1184,' *Archaeological Journal*, LXXXV (1928), 18-22. The sculptures of the Glastonbury Lady Chapel portals have frequently been dated later than the building: Fritz Saxl, *English Sculptures of the Twelfth Century* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), 75, n. 64, regarded ca. 1185 as 'a little too early for the carvings in the voussoirs'; Thomas S.R. Boase, *English Art 1100-1216* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 220-1, says that 'it is hard not to think that this sculpture is later work'; Lawrence Stone, *Sculpture in Britain: The Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), 106, gives a date in the third decade of the thirteenth century; Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, South and West Somerset* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 173-4, states that the sculpture is 'hardly possible before 1230'; George Zarnecki (pp. 50, 63, figs. 129-30), offers a ca. 1210 date. Internal analysis of all the sculptural decoration of the Lady Chapel

completed for my B.A. Report, University of East Anglia, 1971, demonstrated the sculpture to be contemporary with the architecture. This conclusion was accepted by George Zarnecki ('The West Doorway of the Temple Church in London,' *Beiträge zur Kunst des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Hans Wentzel zum 60. Geburtstag* [Berlin, 1975], 250), and was reinforced with external stylistic comparisons in Malcolm Thurlby, 'Transitional Sculpture in England,' unpublished PhD dissertation, University of East Anglia (1976).

13 The Llandaff angel is not dated by any precise documentary evidence. Circa 1200 is given on the basis of comparison of the draperies with the figures on the left capital of the west doorway of the cathedral. It seems likely that the early Gothic building programme, which progressed from west to east, was commenced soon after Bishop Henry of Abergavenny took office in 1193, thus putting the west doorway capitals to the last years of the twelfth century; on Henry of Abergavenny see, Walter de Gray Birch, *Memorials of the See and Cathedral of Llandaff* (Neath, 1912), 278-80. This date agrees happily with the occurrence of a similar historiated style of capital sculpture at Wells Cathedral, ca. 1185-1205; see Arthur Gardner, *Wells Capitals* (Wells: Friends of Wells Cathedral, 1962). For the early Gothic phases of Llandaff, see E.W. Lovegrove, 'The Cathedral Church of Llandaff,' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, n.s. xxxv (1929), 75-101. A full bibliography is given in F.J. North, *The Stones of Llandaff Cathedral* (Cardiff, 1957), 118-9.

14 For the documentation relating to the west front of Wells Cathedral see Linzee S. Clochester and John Harvey, 'Wells Cathedral,' *Archaeological Journal*, CXXXI (1974), 203-4. The starting for the west front is normally given as 1220. In that year Henry III granted '60 oaks in our woods of Cheddar to make a kiln for the work of the church at Wells' (*Close Rolls*, 1220, 7 Aug.). The general assumption that this gift represents the commencement of the façade is not valid, it simply indicates that the work was in hand. More important in determining the starting date is the connection with St. Augustine's, Bristol, which is to be made with reference to both documents and style. A letter in the British Library (Cotton Charter, iv, letter n° 36) from Abbot David of Bristol to the dean of Wells asks for the loan



FIGURE 6. Glastonbury Abbey, Lady Chapel, north doorway, detail *Herod Ordering the Massacre of the Innocents*, 1184-89.



FIGURE 7. Llandaff Cathedral, detail of angel on the side of St. Dyfrig's Tomb, ca. 1200 (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Llandaff Cathedral).

of the servant 'L' to work on the Lady Chapel at St. Augustine's; R. Hill, 'A Letter Book of St. Augustine's, Bristol,' *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, LXV (1944), 152. The letter is undated but falls within a group dateable between 1218 and 1222. Along with this letter there is another, n° 38, in which the abbot asks the incumbents of abbey lands to send their contributions for the completion of the Lady Chapel which are now two years overdue. This implies that the letter to the dean of Wells should be dated 1218-20. Turning to style there can be no doubt that at least one sculptor worked at both Wells and Bristol Elder Lady Chapel. Parallels for the Bristol sculpture are found at Wells before the 'Break' and therefore have no direct bearing on the dating of the cathedral west front; on the 'Break' at Wells see John Bilson, 'Notes on the Earlier Architectural History of Wells Cathedral,' *Archaeological Journal*, LXXXV (1928), 23-88. Some of the parallels between the Wells and Bristol sculptures are given by Linzee S. Colchester in the *Report of the Friends of Wells Cathedral* (1969), and the relationships are examined in detail in Thurlby, 'Transitional Sculpture in England' (1976). All the architectural detailing of the Elder Lady Chapel, however, is paralleled with the west front of Wells. In many cases the mouldings are identical indicating that the same templates were used in both places; (Colchester and Harvey, 203-4). Now as the abbot of St. Augustine's wrote to the dean of Wells to recruit the services of 'L' it may be assumed that the influence passed from Wells to Bristol. Therefore before 1220, and probably by 1218, the west front of Wells had been designed. It further seems likely that after the return of Bishop Jocelin from exile in 1213 work pressed on immediately with the west bays of the nave, and at the same time the design for the west front was evolved.

FIGURE 8. Wells Cathedral, west front, central doorway, detail tympanum, *Virgin and Child*, ca. 1213-20 (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral).





FIGURE 9. Wells Cathedral, west front, detail *Coronation of the Virgin*, ca. 1220-30 (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral).

Lichfield *Christ*. The sail-like mantle and the fine folds over the chest being identical, one merely has to render the draperies over the throne more broadly, along the lines of the Wells *Coronation of the Virgin* (Fig. 9), and the formal vocabulary of the Lichfield *Christ* is created.<sup>15</sup>

Other motifs and figures on the Lichfield voussiors serve to substantiate the relationship with the West Country School of Sculpture.<sup>16</sup> The Virgin and Child in the medallion to Christ's right has several features in common with Wells (Figs. 5 and 8). The draperies

FIGURE 10. Worcester Cathedral, Lady Chapel, high vault boss, *Virgin and Child*, 1224-32 (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral).



<sup>15</sup> The hypothesis that the Coronation of the Virgin 'is certainly an interpolation, possibly made towards the end of the episcopate of William Bytton (1248-64)' is not tenable; cf. Pamela Tudor-Craig, *Courtauld Institute Illustration Archives, Archive 1, Cathedrals and Monastic Buildings in the British Isles, Part 2, Wells* (London: Harvey Miller, 1977), v, and Pamela Tudor-Craig, *One half of our noblest art* (Wells: The Friends of Wells Cathedral, 1976), cat. 11. That the drapery style is broader and bulkier than in the Virgin and Child is undeniable, but as Lawrence Stone has demonstrated (Stone, 111) both styles are witnessed, either singly or intermingled, on the statues and quatrefoil figures of the façade thus suggesting that the Coronation group is indeed contemporary. Furthermore, the frame of the group has the same capitals, bases and arch mouldings as elsewhere on the façade, and the arch itself springs from the very same stones as the adjacent quatrefoils.

<sup>16</sup> The West Country School of Sculpture is discussed in detail in my unpublished PhD dissertation (*supra*, n. 12).

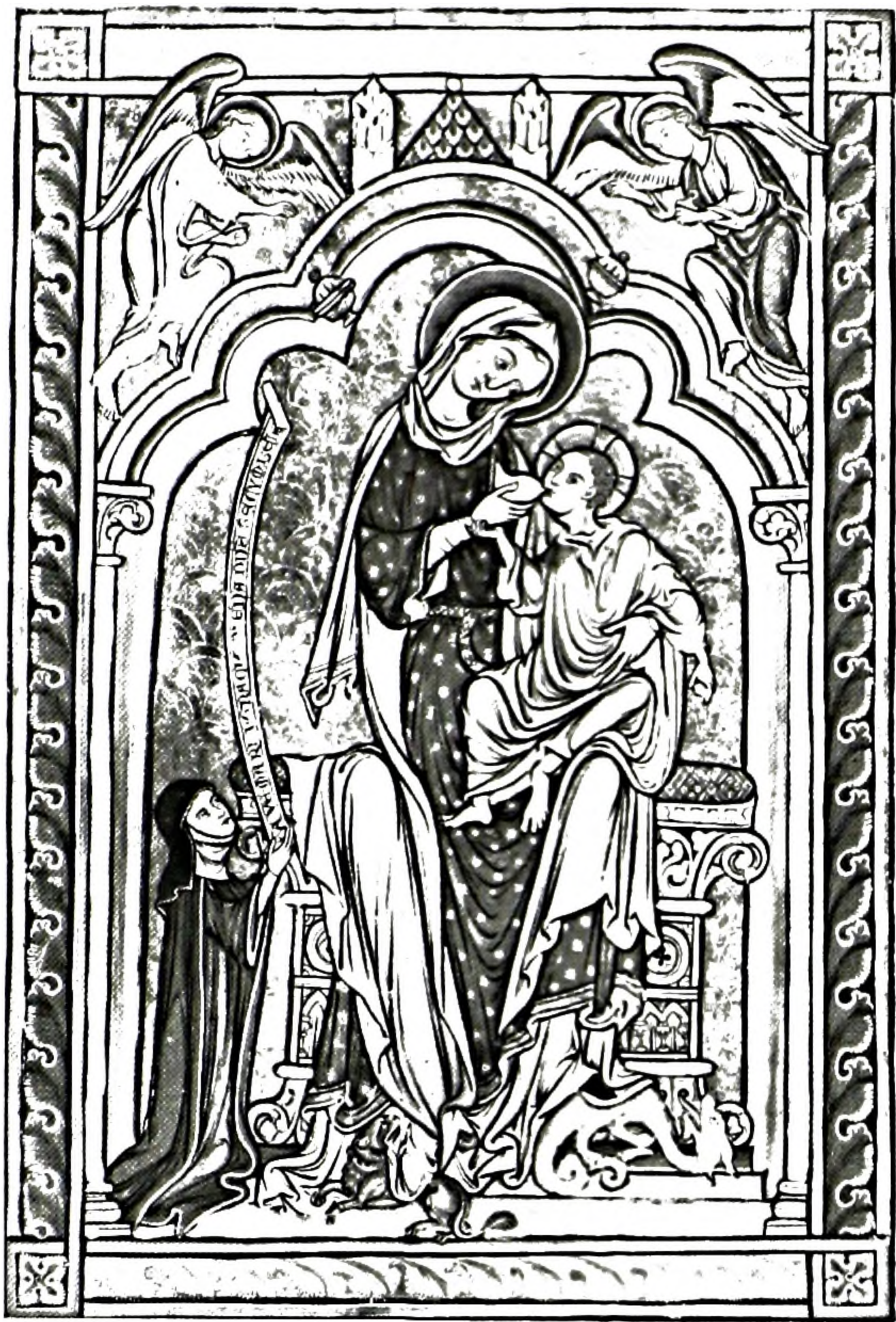


FIGURE 11. Amesbury Psalter, Oxford, All Souls College, ms. 6, fol. 4, *Virgin and Child* (By courtesy, the Warden and Fellows of All Souls College).



FIGURE 12. Worcester Cathedral, south east transept high vault boss, 1224-32 (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Worcester Cathedral).

spreading around her feet and on to the throne, the deep furrows of the tunic between her legs are all closely related, as is the 'sail' mantle, a detail which, along with the position of the Child's legs, is also found on the Virgin and Child next the gatehouse of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Bristol (ca. 1220-30), the ivory Virgin and Child in Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, and the Virgin and Child on order four of Glastonbury Lady Chapel north doorway.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, like the figure of Christ, the Virgin and Child group demonstrates that the sculptor received his training in the West Country. There is also in this composition a clear indication that it is later than the other examples to which reference has been made. The Glastonbury, Wells, Bristol and Hamburg groups are all strictly frontal in pose, a hieratic arrangement further witnessed in the closely dated Virgin and Child on the east boss of the high vault of Worcester Cathedral Lady Chapel, executed immediately before 1232 (Fig. 10).<sup>18</sup> At Lichfield the relationship between mother and Child is more human, for she inclines her head towards the Child whom she feeds with her left breast. An interesting comparison for the Virgin with suckling Child as part of a Tree of Jesse is in Dijon Bib. Mun. ms. 641, fol. 40<sup>19</sup>, but by far the closest parallel is with the Virgin and Child in the Amesbury Psalter (Oxford, All Souls College, ms. 6, fol. 4) (Fig. 11), the work of the Sarum Illuminator (ca. 1250), which further shares many stylistic features with the West Country

- 17 The relationship between the Bristol Virgin and Child and Wells has been pointed out by Aaron Andersson, *English Influence in Norwegian and Swedish Figure Sculpture in Wood, 1220-70* (Stockholm, 1949), 52. The Hamburg ivory is illustrated in Konrad Hoffmann, *The Year 1200* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1, 1970), 48, cat. 55. My paper demonstrating the West Country provenance of the Hamburg Virgin and Child is forthcoming. The Glastonbury Virgin and Child is illustrated in Stone, pl. 77B.
- 18 Work on the east arm of Worcester Cathedral, the Lady Chapel, east transept and choir, commenced in 1224 (*Annales Monastici*, iv, Rolls Series, 415), and would have been completed for the burial of King John in his new tomb in 1232 (*Annales Monastici*, i, Rolls Series, 84). For the east end of Worcester see Robert Willis, 'The Architectural History of the Cathedral and Monastery at Worcester,' *Archaeological Journal*, xx (1863), 99-108; Barrie Singleton, 'The Remodelling of the East End of Worcester Cathedral in the Earlier part of the Thirteenth Century,' *Medieval Art and Architecture at Worcester Cathedral: The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions for the year 1975*, 1 (1978), 105-115. The figured roof bosses of Worcester Cathedral Lady Chapel and eastern transepts have been largely ignored by historians of English mediaeval sculpture seemingly because they have been regarded as products of the restoration between 1857 and 1874 (C.J.P. Cave, 'The Roof Bosses in Worcester Cathedral,' *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society*, xi [1934], 75-86). But quite apart from the obvious differences between the roof bosses and the nineteenth-century sculpture by Mr. Boulton, there exists a description of the bosses and illustrations of two of them by Charles Wild, *An Illustration of the Architecture and Sculpture of the Cathedral Church of Worcester* (London, 1823), 11, pl. vii, figs. 7 & 8, which demonstrate that they must be original.



School of Sculpture.<sup>20</sup> The suckling Child, the inclination of the Virgin's head, the 'sail' mantle falling from the slim shoulders, and the draperies spreading on to the throne and ground are all directly analogous. These details suggest that the Lichfield *Virgin and Child* should be placed between the Worcester and Amesbury Psalter examples, that is between 1232 and ca. 1250, which agrees happily with the 1241 *terminus ante quem* for the doorway. Indeed, a date in the thirties is substantiated with reference to the figured boss of the south-east transept high vault at Worcester Cathedral (1224-32) (Fig. 12).<sup>21</sup> The figure, perhaps representing St. John the Evangelist, shares with the Lichfield Virgin a similar pose with inclined head and a distinct kinship in the rendition of the drapery details.

On the lowest voussoir on the right of the outer order of the Lichfield doorway the scene, traditionally identified as *St. Chad baptising Wulfere*, is set within stiff leaf foliage in exactly the same way as the earliest gospel narrative scenes on the Glastonbury Lady Chapel north doorway (Figs. 13 and 14).<sup>22</sup> Stylistically it is interesting to compare the pull of the drapery over the legs of Wulfere with Wells west front king N.67.<sup>23</sup> The west front of Wells provides several other detail parallels for the Lichfield work. These empha-



FIGURE 13. Lichfield Cathedral, north transept doorway, *St. Chad baptising Wulfere* (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lichfield Cathedral).

19 Charles R. Dodwell, *Painting in Europe 800-1200* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), pl. 205.

20 For the Sarum Illuminator see Albert Hollaender, 'The Sarum Illuminator and His School,' *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, I (1942-4), 230-62. The Amesbury Psalter Virgin and Child shares with the Glastonbury and Bristol groups the 'sail' mantle and arrangement of the Child's legs; with the Worcester example the loosely channeled folds between the legs of the Virgin and the Child's leg pose; with the Wells group the 'sail' mantle and the stiff leaf foliage on the throne; and with the Hamburg ivory the position of the Child's legs, the 'sail' mantle, the lion and dragon trodden underfoot, the stiff leaf on the throne, and even exactly the same pattern on the cushion. The illumination is therefore clearly related to the West Country School of Sculpture. For further discussion of this relationship see Malcolm Thurlby, 'The Thirteenth-Century Font at Hope-under-Dinmore,' *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, XLIII (1980, II), 160-163.

21 See *supra*, n. 18.

22 The identification of the scene of St. Chad baptising Wulfere is taken from Stebbing Shaw, *The History and Antiquities of Staffordshire* (London, 1798), I, pl. xxiv.

23 The numbering of the Wells statuary follows William H. St. John Hope and William R. Lethaby, 'The Imagery and Sculptures on the West Front of Wells Cathedral,' *Archaeologia*, LIX (1904), 143-206. Wells king N.67 is illustrated in Arthur Gardner, *A Handbook of English Medieval Sculpture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), fig. 183.

24 Foliage pyramids are also used on the left doorway of the west front of Dunstable Priory (Bedfordshire) after 1222.

25 For the Wells west central doorway see *Archaeologia*, LIX (1904). The figured recess of the Lichfield tympanum is even more closely paralleled on the west front of Llandaff Cathedral (Prior and Gardner, fig. 313), which is closely related to Wells.

26 Harold Brakspear, 'A West Country Group of Masons,' *Archaeologia*, LXXXI (1931), 1-18.

size the importance of the West Country background for Lichfield and, because of the continuous building activity on the Wells façade between 1220 and 1240, agree happily with the date in the thirties for the Lichfield portal. The king seated on Christ's left on the outer order of the Lichfield doorway comes close in the execution of the broad, looping draperies to bishop s.g on Wells west front (Figs. 4 and 15). The finely channeled draperies of the Lichfield angels are a ubiquitous feature of the Wells façade figures. The rare motif of foliage pyramids on the third order of the Lichfield portal is found in the voussoirs of the central doorway of Wells west front (Figs. 1 and 16).<sup>24</sup> The division of the doorway with a trumeau is a feature shared by both works as is the setting of the figure in a recess in the tympanum.<sup>25</sup> To either side of the Lichfield doorway is a modern figure set within a niche with a nodding trefoil canopy. This motif is taken directly from Wells west front although it will be noticed that the Lichfield examples have pointed rather than rounded heads (Figs. 1 and 15). The inner and outer orders of the Lichfield doorway are supported by triple grouped shafts, a motif already employed in the early Gothic rebuilding of the cathedral and a particular favourite with the West Country Group of Masons.<sup>26</sup> The employment of syncopated detached shafts may be related to the central portal of Wells west front (Figs. 1 and 16), but the dog tooth ornament behind the outer layer is not

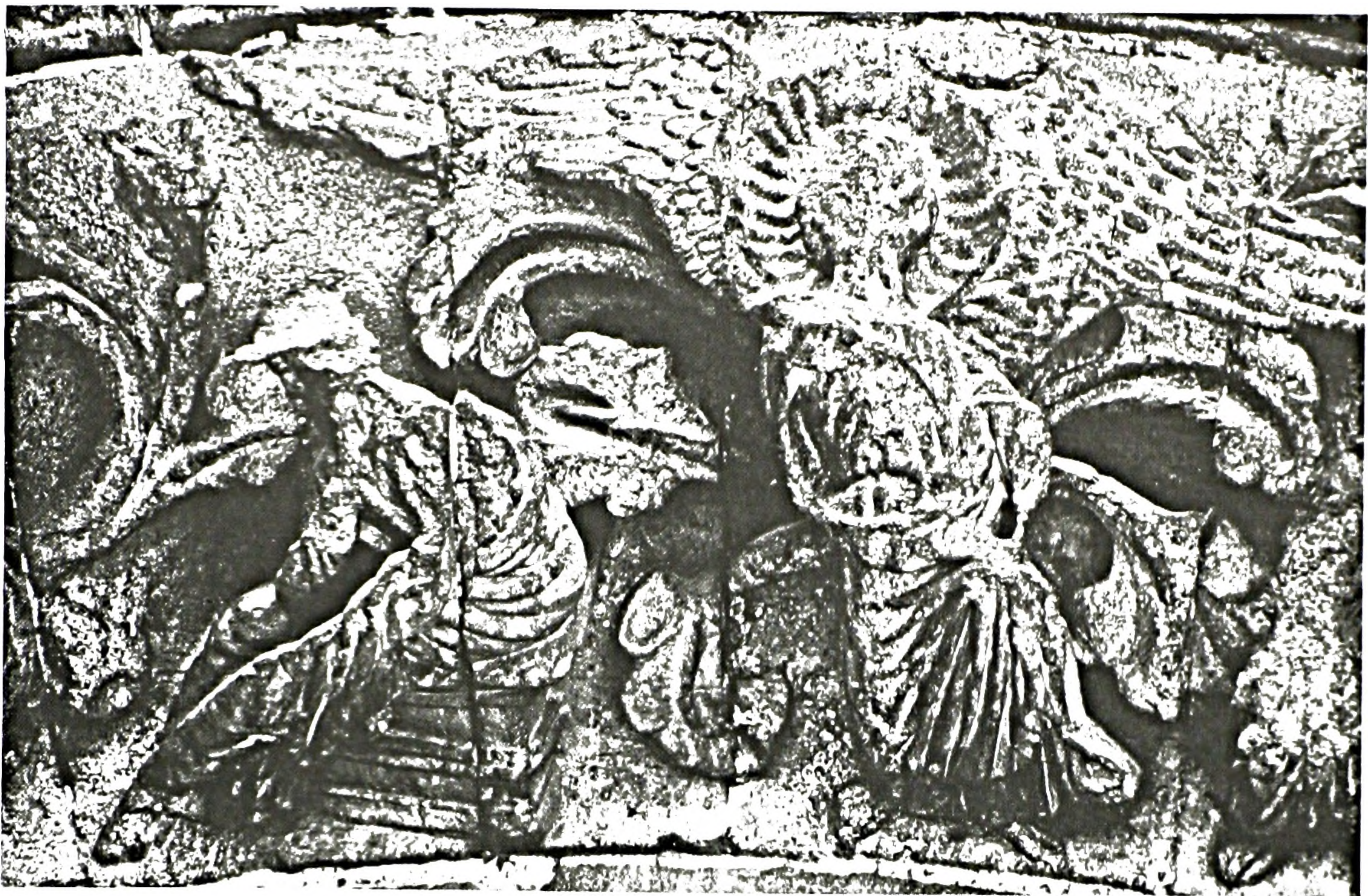


FIGURE 14. Glastonbury Abbey, Lady Chapel, north doorway, detail second order, Joseph of *Nativity* (left), Angel of the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (right), 1184-89.

FIGURE 15. Wells Cathedral, west front, bishop s.g (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral).



FIGURE 16. Wells Cathedral, west front, central doorway, detail right jamb (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Wells Cathedral).



a West Country motif. Here one must look to the other side of the country and especially to Lincoln Cathedral where on the chapter house doorway one finds dog tooth behind detached shafts (Fig. 17). The inclusion of such detail from the Eastern Counties along with West Country motifs at Lichfield is not that surprising given its Midlands location. Indeed, the contribution of Lincoln is seen again at Lichfield in the plan of the chapter house, while the Y-tracery of this Lichfield structure is almost certainly derived from the south-west chapel of the Lincoln nave.

Passing reference has been made to Lethaby's suggestion that the Lichfield north transept doorway was a source for the post-1245 sculpture of Westminster Abbey.<sup>27</sup> I concur with Lethaby's view. A detailed examination of the relationship is beyond the scope of this paper, although some basic observations can be made. Like the Lichfield doorway, the arch leading from the cloister to the vestibule of the chapter house at Westminster Abbey is carved with a Tree of Jesse. The small scale of the ancestors is the same in both works, and although precise judgement on the style of the Westminster figures is hampered by their poor condition, the entrance arch to the chapter house retains well-preserved sculptures which are clearly related to the Lichfield work. One further detail suggests a connection between Westminster and Lichfield. On the basis of old descriptions, drawings and his own observations, Lethaby reconstructed the tympanum of the Westminster vestibule doorway with a central standing Virgin and Child flanked by angels – all set against a foliage scroll background.<sup>28</sup> The rarity of the latter motif serves to connect the two works; indeed, it might not be too much to suggest that the Lichfield tympanum originally held a statue of the Virgin and Child with an angel in each of the niches to either side of the doorway.

<sup>27</sup> See *supra*, n. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Lethaby, 121, fig. 73.



FIGURE 17. Lincoln Cathedral, chapter house, doorway, inner right jamb (By courtesy, the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral).

In sum, the north transept doorway of Lichfield Cathedral was surely executed between 1230 and 1241 by artists trained in the west of England. With the exception of the dog tooth jambs introduced from Lincoln, its formal vocabulary is to be traced to the West Country School. The figure style has its ultimate origin in the Glastonbury Lady Chapel north portal (mid 1180s) and, while subtle differences of detail set it apart, there can be no denying the importance of such late twelfth-century classicism for West Country figurative art of the first half of the thirteenth century.

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## RÉSUMÉ

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Quoique l'entrée du transept nord de la cathédrale de Lichfield ait subi la dégradation des siècles appelant des restaurations, il reste certains éléments de la sculpture originale nous permettant de situer cet ensemble naguère de haute qualité dans un contexte précis de la sculpture anglaise du treizième siècle. Cet article examine rapidement l'iconographie de l'entrée et présente un document attestant son exécution avant 1241. Une analyse stylistique démontre qu'elle ne doit rien à la sculpture gothique française mais qu'elle relève plutôt de l'entreprenante école de sculpture de l'ouest de l'Angleterre et de l'Écosse qui se développa à partir de 1184-1189 depuis la chapelle de la Vierge de l'abbaye de Glastonbury. En outre, certains détails amènent l'auteur à dater exactement cette entrée de la décennie 1231-1241. D'autres observations servent également à appuyer l'idée de Lethaby que cette entrée fut un modèle pour la sculpture de l'abbaye de Westminster après 1245.

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