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Robin Margaret Jensen compares the complexity of understanding 'text' with the problems inherent in understanding an 'image':

_A myriad of considerations and caveats must be laid out before a single interpreter dare say anything with confidence about meaning. Each viewer sees an object afresh, but also through the lens of a mediated tradition, memory, and the culture in which they stand. In the end, all interpreters reveal probably as much about themselves, their values or cultural formation, as they offer some objective statement about the meaning of a single image ... No one explanation exists for any image, and the best a self-conscious historian can do is to try to map out the territory, noting the major arteries and bridges, recognising that there are different routes to the same destination._

---

1 Jensen 2000, p.8
An example of a 14th century 'Easter sepulchre' at All Saints Church, Sandon, Hertfordshire.
ENGLISH EASTER SEPULCHRES: THE HISTORY OF AN IDEA

INTRODUCTION

At first sight it would appear to be relatively easy to define an Easter sepulchre. In pre-Reformation England it was frequently a structure made of wood and hung about with textiles, located close to an altar, erected temporarily for the Holy Week and Easter season and around which a variety of liturgical practices occurred, representing the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

However, even a definition as imprecise and capacious as this one begs a number of questions; for example, about origins, function and meaning. When it comes to permanent Easter sepulchres, the problems of definition become even more acute, simply because so many of the structures claimed to be Easter sepulchres may be open to other interpretations.

What I am hoping to achieve in this thesis is a reasonably clear definition of what might constitute a permanent architectural Easter sepulchre and to explore in detail the development, variety and distribution of such sepulchres throughout England, as well as their cultural, theological and spiritual meaning in medieval society. This will involve an examination of the origins of the Easter sepulchre in the tenth century and a description of the changing relationship between Easter sepulchres and the liturgies in common use during the centuries which followed.

Particular attention will be given to the influence of the thirteenth-century Sarum rite upon how Easter sepulchres were actually used. Focus will be placed on the physical elements required by the liturgies, especially upon the cross. It will be argued that shape, size and topography are important determining factors in deciding what may or may not constitute

---

1 A major study of English Easter sepulchres was published by Pamela Sheingorn in 1987. My own research is deeply indebted to her ground-breaking work. For details of temporary Easter sepulchres, see Sheingorn 1987, pp.34-35.

2 For an outline of some of the liturgical practices in pre-Reformation Europe related to the Easter sepulchres, see Heales 1868, pp.266-289.
a permanent Easter sepulchre, but that the most significant factor is liturgical 'fitness-for-purpose'.

These definitional tools will then be tested against specific examples of putative Easter sepulchres in the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire - lockers and tomb recesses will be examined in detail. The same definitional tools will also be brought to bear upon the 'classic' examples of Easter sepulchres on the Lincolnshire/Nottinghamshire borders.

In addition to this survey of what are claimed to be permanent Easter sepulchres, there will be an analytical exploration of documentary evidence related to Easter sepulchres in wills and inventories of the fifteenth century. This will be used to assess the significance of Easter sepulchres in medieval religious life.

The ways in which the concept of Easter sepulchres has developed over the centuries will run through this entire thesis as an underlying theme. The introduction to this theme will be found in chapter one, where a bibliographical survey will look at scholarly classification of Easter sepulchres. Particular attention will be paid to Veronica Sekules' work on Easter sepulchres in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire and her important questioning of traditional classification criteria\(^3\). Later in the thesis it will be shown that the prominence that has been given to Easter sepulchres by twentieth- and twenty-first-century historians, in their attempt to understand medieval religious and cultural life, is not securely based upon available evidence and that they may have been seriously misled by their dependence upon the work of eighteenth-century antiquarians and nineteenth-century ecclesiologists. It will be argued that the ideological convictions of those antiquarians and ecclesiologists in shaping ideas about Easter sepulchres have been insufficiently taken into account by later scholars.

It will be shown that permanent Easter sepulchres are in fact much rarer than has hitherto been thought and that their significance as markers of medieval religious belief and practice now requires careful re-evaluation.

\(^3\) See Sekules 1986.
THE HISTORY OF AN IDEA: Part I

It is no easy matter to trace the history of an idea back from its current usage to its original source. In the case of Easter sepulchres, however, the chain linking our present understanding of them to the conceptual exploration of sepulchres in the past is fairly straightforward.

One of the most recent scholarly references to Easter sepulchres occurs in *The Stripping of the Altars*¹. In this book Eamon Duffy writes thus

... the most imaginatively compelling of the Good Friday ceremonies, though associated with the cross, came after the solemn liturgy had ended. This was the custom of the 'burial' of Christ in the Easter sepulchre, an observance which left a deep mark not only in the minds of medieval English men and women but in the very structure of many parish churches².

It is interesting to note Duffy's use of the word *many* in relation to parish churches; no evidence is provided to substantiate this quantitative claim. I shall hope to show later in this thesis that the number of permanent Easter sepulchres in English churches may well be far smaller than has hitherto been thought. However, the claim made by Duffy is part of his powerful hypothesis which is predicated upon the centrality of liturgy:

*Any study of late medieval religion must begin with the liturgy, for within that great seasonal cycle of fast and festival, of ritual observance and symbolic gesture, lay Christians found the paradigms and the stories which shaped their perception of the world and their place in it*³.

With that as his foundational statement, it is perhaps not surprising that he then awards very high status to Easter sepulchres:

---

¹ Duffy 1992.
² Ibid, p.29.
³ Ibid, p.11.
The Easter sepulchre and its accompanying ceremonial constitute something of an interpretative crux for any proper understanding of late medieval English religion. And he continues:

The sepulchre was emphatically a central part of the official liturgy of Holy Week, designed to inculcate and give dramatic expression to orthodox teaching, not merely on the saving power of Christ's cross and Passion but on the doctrine of the Eucharist.

In other words, Duffy offers an interpretative analysis of Easter sepulchres which regards them as examples, maybe even the supreme example, of the centrality of the theology of the Mass in the late medieval period.

Duffy himself acknowledges his sources for his writing about Easter sepulchres. He refers to H. J. Feasey, E. K. Chambers, A. Heales, V. Sekules and P. Sheingorn. Some of these names provide the links which form the conceptual chain which it is my purpose to trace. Duffy's work was published in 1992; just five years previously, in 1987, Pamela Sheingorn's major study of Easter sepulchres was published.

Whereas Duffy's work centred on the liturgy and on the importance of the Mass, Sheingorn in the introduction to her study paints on a broader canvas:

The English Easter Sepulchre stands at the intersection of several important aspects of medieval culture: its study impinges upon the fields of drama, liturgy, art history, and social history.

---

4 Duffy 1992, p.31.
5 Ibid, p.31.
6 See Ibid, p.31, footnote 52.
8 Ibid, p.3.
She argues that the re-enactment of the events surrounding the death, burial and resurrection of Christ provided a prototype for the 'theatre's stage'\(^9\), and also suggests that Easter sepulchres bring into focus

\[
\text{... a significant aspect of medieval religion as understood and experienced by ordinary people}^{10}.\]

Her interest in Easter sepulchres and their relationship with the origins of drama are made clear in part of her Introduction:

\[
\text{The Easter Sepulchre, which had great symbolic significance for the English Christian community from the tenth century well into the sixteenth, served not only as a reminder of mortality but also as a promise of resurrection after the example of Christ's own Resurrection which was re-enacted--i.e., which re-occurred in this very place every year. The Easter Sepulchre is thus the appropriate locus for the rebirth of Western drama, since the rites associated with it celebrate that most dramatic of events, the return from death to life, the Resurrection of Christ}^{11}.
\]

Sheingorn draws together a number of themes: the representation of the Holy Sepulchre in art, the development of the liturgy, and the form and iconography of the Easter sepulchre. She traces the roots of English Easter sepulchres to the Anastasis and its rotunda in Jerusalem and provides examples of architectural imitations of the Anastasis/Rotunda across Europe, including St Michael's, Fulda (c. 822), the chapel of St Maurice at Constance (c. 960), Neuvy-Saint-Sépulchre, Paderborn and

\[
\ldots \text{in addition ... (the) buildings at the Krukenburg, St Hubert, Lanleff (near Caen), St Gall, and Mittelzell at Reichenau}\!^{12}.\]

Whilst these replicas may have had some significance for the populations living near them, the rarity of such replica sepulchres calls for an explanation. Sheingorn does not

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\(^9\) Sheingorn 1987, p.3.

\(^{10}\) Ibid, p.3.

\(^{11}\) Ibid, p.3.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, p.9.
provide this but instead argues that new forms of the sepulchre came into being in order to express

... in varying ways the later medieval emphasis on Christ's humanity and consequently on the relationship between Christ's death and Resurrection as well as the death and resurrection to eternal life of his followers.

Having acknowledged the very different ways in which the death-resurrection theme was expressed in architectural or sculptural form in Germany (the 'heiliges Grab' tradition), she turns her attention to the English form:

The 'sepulchrum Domini' described in the 'Regularis Concordia' is of a make-shift nature - one is to find space on an altar and hang a curtain around it.

She asks

Was such a practice indicative ... of the inability of the monks from Fleury and Ghent who attended the synod at Winchester to impress upon their English colleagues the need for a more impressive monument?

Having raised the question, she answers it by saying that a more likely hypothesis is that many continental churches which did not possess holy sepulchres

... performed the rites at altars, drawing both on the equation altar = 'sepulchrum' and on the fact that there was an altar in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Her exploration of the Easter sepulchre in England and its development then turns to topography:

13 Sheingorn 1987, p.33.
14 Ibid, p.33. For details of the origins and the content of the tenth-century document known as the Regularis Concordia, see Chapter 2, pp.19-47, of this thesis.
15 Sheingorn 1987, p.33.
16 Ibid, p.33.
Virtually all texts and monuments agree that by the time the Easter Sepulchre unambiguously surfaced as a physical monument [a physical monument, note - and therefore a permanent Easter sepulchre] in the fourteenth century, it had already found a consistent location not at but near an altar - on the north wall of the chancel, usually just a few feet from the high altar of the church. In such proximity to the high altar, the Easter Sepulchre enjoyed much more prominence than continental 'sepulchra Domini', but its possibilities for development were correspondingly restricted.¹⁷

Her work continues by acknowledging that

By far the largest number of Easter Sepulchres in England were temporary structures.¹⁸

But she is clear that what she calls a 'physical monument' was, indeed, a permanent architectural feature. She attempts to classify permanent Easter sepulchres by subdividing them into seven categories, namely:

1. A simple small recess in the north chancel wall, possibly entirely plain, with or without a door.
2. A large arched recess in the north chancel wall that could have contained an effigy.
3. An elaborate structure set in the north wall with figural sculpture, usually with a small niche, possibly associated with a tomb.
4. A table or chest tomb, with or without a canopy, standing against or near the north wall of the chancel.
5. A stone chest of the same form as the temporary chests.
6. A separate chapel with Easter associations.
7. A crypt beneath the chancel of the church.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sheingorn 1987, p.34.
¹⁸ Ibid, p.34.
¹⁹ Ibid, pp.35-36.
Even a cursory reading of this sevenfold classification will reveal that the 'north wall' is used as a defining and significant feature. This will be examined later in this thesis\textsuperscript{20} where it will be shown that this may be a misleading categorisation.

The greater part of Sheingorn's research does not consist of an exploration in detail of these seven subgroups but is, rather, a catalogue of objects which, based upon her sevenfold categorisation, she suggests might well be Easter sepulchres. The addition of documentary references to Easter sepulchres in her work makes it a unique and invaluable resource.

It was in 1982, just five years prior to Sheingorn's published research, that Veronica Sekules read her paper, entitled \textit{The Tomb of Christ at Lincoln and the Development of the Sacramental Shrine: Easter Sepulchres Reconsidered}, to a conference of the British Archaeological Association\textsuperscript{21}. Unlike Sheingorn, Sekules' work is tightly focussed and is concerned particularly with

\textit{...two adjacent tomb-like moments [sic] built against the inside of the screen enclosing the choir}\textsuperscript{22}

at Lincoln Cathedral. The easternmost of those monuments has been identified as an Easter sepulchre because

\textit{...against the tomb-chest are carved representations of the three sleeping soldiers who guarded the tomb of Christ}\textsuperscript{23}.

The tomb-monuments have been dated on stylistic grounds to the last decade of the thirteenth century. It is the purpose of Sekules' paper to try to re-examine the function of the Lincoln Cathedral monument and those other monuments in that area, at Heckington and Navenby (Lincolnshire), Sibthorpe and Hawton (Nottinghamshire) and Patrington (Yorkshire) which have also been identified as Easter sepulchres. She concentrates her

\textsuperscript{20} See Chapter 5, pp.99-127.
\textsuperscript{21} Sekules 1986. (The conference transactions were not published by the British Archaeological Association until 1986).
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, p.118.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, p.118.
attention on these five but also notes three more\textsuperscript{24}. One of their defining characteristics is that they are all set in the north wall of the chancel. Sekules structures her argument with real elegance; having identified replica tombs of Christ in continental Europe (Fulda, Constanza, Bologna, Neuvy-Saint-Sepulchre, Cambrai, Piacenza, Paderborn, Denkendorf, Eichstätt), she notes that their function was to give spiritual protection to ecclesiastical graves, to confer a status of sanctity on the sites where they were constructed and to increase the devotion of the faithful\textsuperscript{25}. She argues that the tomb of Christ at Lincoln is more like its continental counterparts and is

\begin{quote}
... probably not, strictly speaking, an Easter Sepulchre at all, but a tomb of Christ manifesting interesting parallels with German models and incorporating a number of variations\textsuperscript{26}.
\end{quote}

Further, she claims that the tomb monument in Lincoln Cathedral is probably the only one of its kind in an English cathedral - and because the 'tomb of Christ' is adjacent to the tomb of the founding Bishop of Lincoln, Remigius, its position next to that burial might hold the clue to its purpose, namely to confer spiritual protection upon Remigius and to draw attention to his sanctity\textsuperscript{27}. A similar purpose seems to have been at work at the tomb of Christ at St Michael's, Fulda\textsuperscript{28}.

She continues her analysis of Easter sepulchres in eastern England by arguing that the form of the permanent Easter sepulchres, for example at Hawton and Heckington, derives from changes in liturgical practice:

\begin{quote}
In each case, as well as a tomb of Christ set into the north wall of the chancel, there is a founder's tomb ... access to a sacristy and, in the south wall, a set of sedilia and a piscina\textsuperscript{29}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Arnold, Fledborough and Irnham see Sekules 1986, p.126, note 3.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p.118.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p.122.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, p.122.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid, p.118.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, p.123.
In other words, the Easter sepulchres are part of that major shift in theological understanding and liturgical practice which gave rise to complex sanctuary furnishings - a shift centred on the doctrine of transubstantiation, promulgated by the fourth Lateran Council in 1215:

...the tomb from which he [Christ] rises, the tomb which is visited by the Marys, is not represented by the whole structure, but by an aumbry within the structure. The aumbry is normally a central and prominent feature ... the relationship between Christ's tomb and his living body is made explicit and by implication so is the relationship between Christ's living body and the sacrament for which the tomb/aumbry was intended at Easter.\textsuperscript{30}

As the Feast of Corpus Christi had been universally established by the 1320s and as Corpus Christi guilds in England were first found in the eastern counties, Sekules argues that

...the development of interest in the feast of Corpus Christi in the early 14th century, provides the explanation for the conversion of the Easter Sepulchre into a monument permanently visible in the chancels of these parish churches in eastern England. As permanent monuments, they fall within the established tradition of the tomb of Christ, but the development of the design to feature an aumbry for the sacrament introduces a new element ... Within the framework of the Corpus Christi observance, it is very likely that they were intended as sacrament shrines.\textsuperscript{31}

Sekules' hypothesis is intriguing, but whilst it reinforces the topography of Easter sepulchres (the north side of the chancel wall), it also raises a number of other questions. If the feast of Corpus Christi had such an impact upon the design of permanent Easter sepulchres in England, it seems reasonable to ask how many of these 'aumbry tomb' types exist - and where. And if they do not exist in large numbers, why not?

The questions, inevitably, are easier to raise than to answer. Sixty-five years prior to Sekules' research, in 1921, Neil C. Brooks published a major study entitled The

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{30} Sekules 1986, p.123.
\bibitem{31} Ibid, p.124.
\end{thebibliography}
Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy. In this work Brooks traces the origins of the sepulchre from its earliest appearance in the fourth century. His iconographical analysis of the sepulchre is divided into two major 'streams', the Eastern and the Western. He draws attention to the earliest example, a Syro-Palestinian type in which the sepulchre is shown as

...one side of a quadrangular body, usually with diagonally latticed double doors, completed by a pyramidal or occasionally a cupola-shaped upper part, a sort of ciborium surmounted by a cross or palmette.

Staying, as it were, on the Eastern side of the Church divide, he distinguishes two other types: one he categorises as 'medieval Byzantine' from the tenth or eleventh century, which features an angel seated at the sepulchre carrying a lance-like rod and pointing to the empty tomb. The holy women come towards the tomb bearing myrrh or holding vases in their hands. Sometimes the sarcophagus is shown in front of a rock or is surmounted by a ciborium-like cupola.

The other type he categorises as a 'Psalter' sub-type - a tall, narrow structure, like a sentry box, with a door in front and a gabled roof, surmounted by a cross. It is peculiar to illuminated Psalters when reference to the Resurrection is made.

In the West, he claims that the iconography of the sepulchre begins with the earliest type being in the form of a

...cylindrical tower with a cupola shaped or conical roof.

A later type is what Brooks describes as being like a temple, i.e. a building having two or more storeys. The third Western type he defines as the 'Western Coffer-Tomb' and he claims that in the eleventh century the representation of the sepulchre as an edifice within an edifice began to disappear and the sarcophagus

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32 Brooks 1921.
34 Ibid, p.19.
35 See ibid, p.20.
... began to be represented by itself without architectural construction of any sort over it.\textsuperscript{36}

He turns his attention from iconography to the development of varieties of Easter sepulchres in continental Europe and in England. In the latter he distinguishes between temporary Easter sepulchres, which he describes as probably resembling a hearse

... a foursquare framework of timber from each corner post of which rose a rafter slanting upwards, and all four rafters met at the top covered in a black cloth.\textsuperscript{37}

and permanent Easter sepulchres, which he subdivides into two kinds: those which were designed solely and specifically for the Easter ceremonies and those which were also the tombs of donors. Of the former, he claims that none is earlier than the thirteenth century, and adds that they may vary in structure from low, broad recesses, frequently at floor level, to the more highly decorated forms, such as those at Hawton and Sibthorpe (Nottinghamshire) or those at Bampton (Oxfordshire) and Withybrook (Warwickshire). He also suggests that within the category 'solely and specifically for the Easter ceremonies' should be included the fifteenth-century west Somerset chest tombs.

Brooks, then, takes a long, historical perspective in his approach to Easter sepulchres and, in common with other scholars, attempts a classification system which, incidentally, also includes the north-side category. He pays more attention, perhaps, to their iconographical characteristics than he does to their function, though he is very clear that in England there was no burial of the Host alone,\textsuperscript{38} and that the burial of cross and Host together came about through the influence of the Sarum rite.\textsuperscript{39}

The next link in the chain of studies of the Easter sepulchre is found in Francis Bond's \textit{The Chancel of English Churches}, published in 1916\textsuperscript{40}. He distinguishes three forms of Easter sepulchre: firstly, a temporary structure made of wood; secondly, a special

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Brooks 1921, p.24.}
\footnote{Ibid, p.73.}
\footnote{Ibid, p.37.}
\footnote{Ibid, p.37.}
\footnote{Bond 1916.}
\end{footnotes}
structure of masonry; and thirdly, a chest tomb or canopied tomb with a flat upper slab on which the temporary wooden framework was placed. He notes the absence of wooden Easter sepulchres:

*Of the wooden Easter sepulchres two only are believed to exist; one is or was in Snitterfield vicarage, Warwick. It contains panels of Christ before Pilate, Christ bearing the Cross, the Deposition from the Cross, the Resurrection and the Appearance to St Mary Magdalene; but these panels are framed in a seventeenth-century chest; the panels themselves seem to have been carved between 1380 and 1400. Another is now in private hands in the north of Derbyshire, and is said to have been ignorantly ejected from the church of Hampton, Worcester; it is of fifteenth-century date and table form, with panelled and traceried sides; it is 4 ft. 3 in. long, 2 ft. broad, and nearly 3 ft. high*.

In addition to these wooden examples, he draws attention to the stone chest tombs:

*Very frequently, however, the Easter sepulchre was placed on a stone chest-tomb standing in a canopied recess of the north wall of the chancel, or between the chancel and a northern chapel, as at East Harling and Long Melford*.

He is emphatic that

*Hundreds of such tombs remain*.

He draws attention to South Pool, Devon, where there is a tomb

*... evidently intended as an Easter sepulchre; for the effigy is detached and could be moved away at Easter, and at the back of the arch is a sculptured representation of the Resurrection and the discomfiture of the guard*.

He also cites recesses on the floor level of chancels on the north side as being

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41 Bond 1916, p.234.
42 Ibid, p.234.
43 Ibid, p.236.
44 Ibid, p.236.
but it is noticeable that he does not attempt to describe how such recesses might function liturgically. He then makes a considerable leap in his analysis of Easter sepulchres by saying:

*From the Easter sepulchre resting on a table-tomb it is no long step to that which is placed in a niche of its own in the wall ... It only remains to omit the tomb altogether, and we reach the final development, as exhibited in such examples as Hawton, Navenby, and Patrington*.

The fact that frequently table tombs and canopied tombs postdate the Hawton, Navenby and Patrington examples does not seem to dent his confidence in the validity of his argument.

It is noteworthy that the 'north side' categorisation also features in Francis Bond's work - which, to be fair, is more of a *tour d'horizon* than an academic monograph. In his bibliography, Bond makes clear what his major sources were: they include Richard Gough's paper of 1780 in *Vetusta Monumenta*, Alfred Heales' article of 1868 in *Archaeologia*, and A. W. Pugin's *Glossary* of 1844 (of which Bond gives the date as 1868 – although this was the date of the 3rd edition).

It is the name of Heales which features in every single work quoted thus far - and it is to his groundbreaking study that we must now turn. Heales refers in his introductory paragraph to *Vetusta Monumenta*, describing it as

*... the mine from which other writers have dug their materials*.

He then outlines his purpose:

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45 Bond 1916, p.236.
46 Ibid, p.238-239.
47 Heales 1868.
48 Ibid, p.263.
The subject of Easter sepulchres has never been treated as a whole and it seems a worthy task ... to present, in the form of a monograph, the whole subject in as complete a form as lies in the writer's power.

He proceeds to describe in detail liturgies both in England and in continental Europe and considers the range of Easter sepulchres in England. In his paper he stresses the significance of the north side of the chancel as the locus for Easter sepulchres and, in a subsequent paper published in 1880 in the *Surrey Archaeological Collections* on 'Brasses in Peper Harow Church', he says this:

*The fashion for erecting ... structures to answer at once both Easter sepulchre and monument, set in towards the end of the fifteenth century and continued until the middle of the sixteenth century. It necessitated the horizontal surface of the tomb being flat and the monumental effigy is usually set in the wall face above, all being generally covered by a stone canopy. Whenever we find a monument of this form and period in this situation, namely against the north wall of the chancel to the north-north-west of the altar we may, in the absence of possible evidence to the contrary, have little doubt that it was built to answer the double purpose of a monument and an Easter sepulchre.*

Heales' certainty is significant. It is, however, another of his statements which may well have seriously misled Sheingorn and others in their identification of aumbries as Easter sepulchres - as I shall show shortly.

There can be no doubting the scale, the significance and the influence of Heales in helping to reveal the richness of relationship between liturgy and the Easter sepulchre structures, nor can there be any doubt of the way in which his foundational paper, delivered in 1868, has helped to shape research on this subject ever since.

There is only one other link in the chain which is worth noting before passing to the source and inspiration of Heales' own research, and that is the *Glossary* of A. W. Pugin.

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49 Heales 1868, p.263.

50 Heales 1880, p.37.

51 See later in this thesis, Chapter 5, p.100.
(who also published work under the name A. W. N. Pugin)\textsuperscript{52}. He offers a definition of the Easter sepulchre which is redolent of mid-nineteenth-century ecclesiastical controversies. His definition is simple and to the point:

*A place where the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly reserved from Good Friday till Easter Sunday*\textsuperscript{53}.

He offers only two categories of Easter sepulchre:

1. Permanent, built in the north walls of the choir or chancel and adorned with rich ornamental covering and appropriate imagery. 2. Composed of framework and rich hangings set up for the occasion. Of the first kind, the most beautiful examples are those at Heckington and Navenby Churches, Lincolnshire, and Rawton Church, Nottinghamshire ... but there are few parochial churches which are not provided with a tomb on the north side of the chancel which served for the sepulchre and was adorned on these occasions with hangings and other decorations\textsuperscript{54}.

He brings to the 'north side' categorisation a fresh insight:

*The sepulchre for Holy Week was always placed on the Gospel side of the altar, the position also occupied by the Paschal candle, the emblem of the Resurrection*\textsuperscript{55}.

Pugin's *Glossary* was seen by him as part of that 'mighty movement' which was concerned to bring about the revival of the architecture of the Middle Ages\textsuperscript{56}. He was passionate in wishing to

*... aid the restoration of that truly beautiful furniture and decoration that antiently (sic) adorned every Christian church and of which the combined attacks*
of sacrilege and a revived paganism of the last three centuries have left us such poor remains\textsuperscript{57}.

The Easter sepulchre, in Pugin's eyes, was thus a potent symbol of the 'Age of Faith' and his descriptions are coloured by his heartfelt polemic.

It is a different, calmer tone which characterises the work of Richard Gough, who provides an introduction to the plates of Heckington and Northwold (Norfolk) in \textit{Vetusta Monumenta}\textsuperscript{58}. He acknowledges his artistic source for the plates:

\begin{quote}
[They were] engraved from the drawings of Mr Schnebbelie in the summer of 1789 ... they represent the Holy Sepulchre, the sepulchre of our Lord, in which our Saviour was deposited until his resurrection and which was placed on the north side of the chancel of our cathedral and parochial churches to be used in commemoration of that important event on the day on which it took place, or Easter Day, when the crucifix and pix [sic] which had been deposited in it in a solemn manner on Good Friday, the anniversary of the crucifixion, were taken out by the priest, pronouncing this text: 'Surrexit, non est hic'\textsuperscript{59}.
\end{quote}

Gough quotes Francis Blomefield extensively, especially his \textit{History of Norfolk}, which he describes as

\begin{quote}
...replete with information respecting our ecclesiastical antiquities\textsuperscript{60}.
\end{quote}

It is clear, then, that Gough, like all the other scholars and antiquarians, had his own sources (these will be considered later in the thesis, in Chapters 10 and 11). It is perhaps appropriate and necessary, however, at this point to bring to an end this résumé of major writings about the Easter sepulchre. The résumé has covered over two hundred years of research and has attempted to show, albeit briefly, the main themes and influences on our

\textsuperscript{57} Pugin 1844, p.vii.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Vetusta Monumenta} was a series of occasional publications consisting of plates and text, issued by the Society of Antiquaries, London, during the period 1720-1905, to its subscribers - and these were later bound into seven volumes.


\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Vetusta Monumenta}, vol.3, 1796, plates 31 and 32, p.1.
understanding of the Easter sepulchre phenomenon. It is perhaps worth pointing out what the common threads have been:

1. There has been considerable attention given by most of the authors to a limited range of permanent Easter sepulchres; the churches of Hawton, Heckington, Sibthorpe and Navenby have cropped up with remarkable regularity. This might in itself indicate the paucity of other convincing permanent Easter sepulchres.

2. On the whole, the authors, whilst exploring the liturgies surrounding Easter sepulchres, have not asked many questions in detail about how the sepulchres functioned as liturgical objects. For example, none of them has looked at the dimensions of the cross which was 'buried' during those liturgies, to see whether such an object would actually fit within the structures they have categorised as Easter sepulchres. The cross as a constituent element has been underemphasised, whereas the Host, particularly in the writings of the final decades of the twentieth century, has been overemphasised.

3. Each author has attempted to categorise Easter sepulchres in a way which implies a steady, linear historical development and, with the notable exception of Veronica Sekules, have failed to recognise the possibility of regional rather than chronological variation in the Easter sepulchre types.

4. The topography of the Easter sepulchre from Gough, writing in the late eighteenth century, to Duffy, writing in the late twentieth century, has been consistent. It is described almost invariably as being on the north side of the chancel.

5. But perhaps this historiographical survey has also revealed a certain elusiveness about permanent Easter sepulchres. There is absolute agreement about the ubiquity of temporary Easter sepulchres - but agreement about what permanent objects are or are not Easter sepulchres is noticeably lacking.

In these circumstances it seems essential first to trace the origins of Easter sepulchres in England, in order to see whether any greater clarity of definition can be achieved.
The earliest literary evidence referring to an Easter sepulchre in England is to be found in the *Regularis Concordia* – a document resulting from the Synodal Council held in Winchester possibly in 973 at the invitation of King Edgar (959-975). The reference to the Easter sepulchre occurs in a series of carefully worded instructions about the liturgies which were to be used during Holy Week and Easter in the monasteries of the kingdom:

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1. One of the first Anglo-Saxon synods was the Council of Hertford (672), summoned by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (602-90). For further information on Theodore and the Council of Hertford, and the rôle of the English Church in transcending the frontiers of the English kingdoms, see Carpenter 1988, pp.16-21.

2. Notwithstanding the importance of the Winchester Synodal Council in the reformation of monastic and liturgical life, it is interesting to note that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* does not mention the Council.

3. There appears to be no consensus concerning the date of the Winchester Synod: Pamela Sheingorn describes it (see Sheingorn 1987, p.18) as taking place 'probably in 973.' Knowles (see Knowles 1949, p.42) says:

   *We are ignorant of the precise date, but it must have been in the neighbourhood of the year 970.*

   Janet Burton dates it (see Burton 1994, p.3) to 'around 970,' whereas Yorke says (see Yorke 1988 (b), p.4) 'a date between 970 and 973 seems likely'. Crook, on the other hand, suggests (see Crook 2000, pp.162-163) 964 as the date:

   *The monastic reforms of the tenth century ... reached a symbolic climax with the promulgation of 'Regularis Concordia' at Winchester in around 964.*

   Ogden suggests (see Ogden 2002, p.19):

   *Between the years 965 and 975.*

4. King Edgar, himself, was not present at the Synodal Council. Cubitt traces the complex power struggles which could ensue when both king and archbishop were present (see Cubitt 1995, pp.49-59) and suggests that at the Mercian synods of the eighth and ninth centuries the king took a back seat, unlike the Frankish and Visigoth synods, where (see Cubitt 1995, p.57)

   *[The synods] were convened by the king.*

It would seem that Edgar was thus following the earlier Mercian practice, rather than adopting Continental usage.
... on that part of the altar where there is space for it there shall be a representation as it were of a sepulchre, hung about with a curtain, in which the holy Cross\(^5\), when it has been venerated, shall be placed\(^6\).

The instructions appear simple but, in fact, are very ambiguous. The ninth-century Gallican Council had ordered that nothing should be placed on the altar except for the capsæ and the relics and perhaps the four holy gospels and the pyx containing the eucharistic elements for the viaticum\(^7\). In the light of this it is not surprising that Heales expresses some confusion about the phrase 'in una parte altaris':

\textit{This does not seem very clear; as the early medieval altars appear to have been solid, it may have been a recess beside, not in, the altar}\(^8\).

But Spurrell, in a well-argued analysis, explains that 'altare' is used in the \textit{Regularis Concordia} in two senses; it can mean the table itself or it can also refer to the sanctuary\(^9\).

It needs to be remembered that altars had, of course, been associated with martyrs from the earliest centuries, but then

\ldots in the course of the eighth and ninth centuries especially, the popes decided to transfer the remains of many of the martyrs to places of safety within the city ... soon every church had its own relics and every altar was fitted with a 'sepulchrum' wherein the relics of the saints might be laid\(^10\).

\(^5\) The 'discovery' of the Holy Cross by Helena in 326 and subsequent 'feasts' in the liturgical calendar surrounding the cultus of the Holy Cross were significant themes within this Easter sepulchre rite. See later pages of this chapter, especially Adoratio section, on pp.29-40. See also Cross 1963, p.619.

\(^6\) Symons 1953, p.44:

\ldots sit autem in una parte altaris, qua vacuum fuerit, quaedam assimilatio sepulcri uelamenque quoddam in gyro tensum quo, dum sancta crux adorata fuerit.

\(^7\) See Dix 1942, p.27.

\(^8\) Heales 1868, p.265.


Dunbar Ogden, in his magnificent study of the relationship between Easter sepulchres and medieval drama, describes a variety of places where the sepulchre may have been situated, including the altar itself:

*The focal point of the action in the 'Visitatio Sepulchri' is the tomb ... indicated in play rubrics as the main altar, usually a veiled vessel on the main altar, a coffer, a coffer [sic] or altar surrounded by curtains, a temporary construction large enough to be entered, or a chapel with a receptacle and sometimes a sarcophagus and an altar. Inside churches at Aquileia, Gernrode, and Magdeburg permanent stone structures still survive which may well have been employed in dramatic observances of Easter*¹¹.

Notwithstanding the ambiguities in the original *Regularis Concordia* instruction about the location of the sepulchre in the Good Friday ceremonies, it is very clear that once the cross had been deposited in 'the place of the Sepulchre', the liturgy itself moved on. A form of Communion followed; the instructions were specific:

*When this has been done [ie, the deposition of the Cross] the deacon and the sub-deacon shall come forth from the sacristy¹² with the Body of the Lord, left over from the previous day, and a chalice with unconsecrated wine, which they shall place on the altar¹³ ... And the abbot shall take a portion of the holy sacrifice and*  

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¹² For the use of the sacristy as a place of Reservation, i.e. where the consecrated Host could be kept, see Dix 1942:

*The earliest certain evidence of the use of the sacristy for Reservation comes from Gaul and is as late as the second half of the sixth century. [p.24]*

Van Dijk and Walker disagree with Dix:

*Reservation in the sacristy is attested from the fourth century onwards. [See Dijk 1957, p.26].*

¹³ For further details on the 'Mass of the pre-sanctified' and the order of proceedings for the preceding day, Maundy Thursday, see King 1965, pp.11-12:

*The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified ... would seem to have been introduced into Syria in the early years of the sixth century by Severus, Bishop of Antioch (d.538) and later adopted at Constantinople and elsewhere ... Its use in Lent was formally prescribed by the Council of Trullo in 692. The Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified probably appeared in the West for use on Good Friday in the following century.*
shall place it in the chalice saying nothing; and all shall communicate in silence. When this has been done the brethren shall say Vespers, each one privately to himself and in his own place, after which they shall go to the refectory.

Whilst in this thesis attention is being focussed upon one small component of the Regularis Concordia – the Easter ceremonies and their attendant structures – it needs to be recognised that bringing order and shape to the Holy Week liturgies was part of a much larger and broader political agenda. The Winchester Council was called by King Edgar at a time when the country was relatively stable and peaceful. The decades leading up to that Council, however, had been anything but peaceful; for the previous one hundred years England had been subject to considerable turbulence and destabilisation resulting from a series of Viking raids and conquests.

From his base on the Isle of Athelney, Alfred the Great (849-899; r.871-899) led a determined and ultimately successful resistance movement, and by 879 had managed to achieve the security of Wessex. In the rest of England (the kingdoms of Mercia, East Anglia and Northumbria) there were three permanent Danish armies - a powerful and threatening occupying force. Nevertheless, by 886, London itself was retaken by the West Saxons and this marked a pivotal moment in the struggle for the control of England.

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14 Symons 1953, p.45.
15 Norwegian raiders had plundered Lindisfarne in 793 and Jarrow in 794. The first Danish attack on southern England was at Sheppey in 835, and that was followed by repeated attacks on various parts of the country for a further thirty years. In 841 Lindsey, East Anglia and Kent were subject to fierce onslaught; in 842 Southampton was plundered and in 855 Viking raiders were in the region of the Wrekin, Shropshire (see Stenton 1971, p.243). Then, from 865 onwards, a large Danish army occupied East Anglia and, in the years that followed, the Danes overran the country northwards and westwards. Such was the cohesion and force exercised by the invaders that by 878 (only thirteen years after their successful conquest of East Anglia and much of the rest of northern and central England) it looked as though Wessex, the sole remaining kingdom in England, might also fall.

16 Stenton 1971, p.259:

To Englishmen at the time, the occupation of London gave the first indication that the lands which had lately passed under Danish rulers might ultimately be re-conquered.
It is interesting to note, in passing, that it was during these most difficult years for Alfred that in 883 Pope Marinus sent Alfred a fragment of wood from the True Cross. It was presumably of such religious value to Alfred that it may have been kept in a place of safety, in the royal palace at Winchester, for instance, but was also (presumably?) received by him as a politico-religious gesture of some significance. It may be verging on the romantic to suggest that the cross carried for Alfred a resonance of the Constantinian vision: 'In hoc signo viacent...' ('In this sign, you will conquer ...') but it would have borne for him and his court a considerable degree of importance. At the very least, it would have been a boost to morale.

The struggle for the political and military supremacy of England continued into the tenth century. There were further serious Viking incursions in 937 and 939 during the reign of Athelstan (925-939). It was the defeat of Eric Bloodaxe in 954 that marked the end

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17 Garmonsway 1954, p.79:

In this year the host went up the Scheldt to Condé, and there remained one year. And pope Marinus sent the 'lignum Domini' to King Alfred.

In a fascinating footnote to this item, Garmonsway cites The Dream of the Rood by Bruce Dickins and A.S.C. Ross, and from it quotes 'It is just conceivable that the Brussels Cross preserves the fragment of the True Cross sent to Alfred by Pope Marinus' (see Dickins 1934, p.15). See also later in this chapter, pp.54-58, for a further exploration of the Brussels Cross.

18 Rollason takes the view that King Alfred took relics with him everywhere (see Rollason 1986, p.91).

19 For a lively study of Alfred's life, see Sturdy 1995.

20 In 937 Olaf, regarded as the leader of the Vikings of eastern Ireland, allied his troops with those of the kings of Scotland and Strathclyde and invaded England. They were defeated by an army led by King Athelstan (ruled 925-939) and his brother Edmund at Brunanburh – a place not yet identified.

21 Stenton 1971, pp.343-344:

The feature which distinguishes the reign of Athelstan from the reigns of Alfred and Edgar is the intimacy of his association with the leading western rulers of his time. A Frankish mission to the court of Athelstan in 926 brought presents, including a number of relics, amongst which were... the sword of Constantine the Great with a nail from the Cross in its hilt, the lance of Charlemagne with which the centurion had pierced our Lord' [sic] side... and fragments of the Cross [Ibid, p.345].
of a particularly long and violent episode in English history\(^{22}\). There were a number of attempts by King Alfred and his successors, once the invasions had been contained, to create stability\(^{23}\).

The political and social context of this new Holy Week and Easter ceremony needs to be considered if we are to try to understand some of its meaning. It is possible to see the Winchester Synod of 973, therefore, not simply as a unique event only concerned with monastic reform\(^{24}\), but as a stage in a long and successful programme, partly military and partly cultural, which was designed to create a stable, governable and defensible nation.

\(^{22}\) There is confusion surrounding the end of Eric Bloodaxe's kingdom. There are those who claim that Eric was expelled by the Northumbrians in 954 and that the kingdom was then taken over by Eadred (946-955), grandson of King Alfred the Great. But there is also a tradition that Eric Bloodaxe was killed at Steinmor (ie, present-day Stainmore). F. M. Stenton, with understandable enjoyment of a good narrative, provides one:

> It is possible that Eric may have been attempting an invasion of his lost kingdom when Oswulf brought about his death, but a battle on the heights of Stainmore, where the Roman road from Catterick to Carlisle drops into Edendale, rather suggests the last stand of a deserted king on the border of his country. (See Stenton 1971, p.362).

\(^{23}\) The Danelaw, for example, was one such attempt.

\(^{24}\) Sarah Foot points out that a certain wariness is required when using the word monastery in relation to the Anglo-Saxon period:

> There is no such thing as a typical Anglo-Saxon monastery, no single standard against which individual houses may be matched, every establishment was organised on idiosyncratic lines, according to the particular interests of its founders and subsequent inmates ... there are no norms governing the practice of monasticism in England before the tenth-century reformers imposed the standards of the Benedictine rule on all monastic houses. [Foot 1992, p213].

Foot also argues that to use the word 'monastery' as a translation of the word 'monasterium' in the Anglo-Saxon period is:

> ... to apply inappropriate standards of monastic observance to early Anglo-Saxon communities [Ibid, p.225]

- although after the tenth-century reform, distinctions might be more reasonably be made between those houses which followed the reformed practices and those places lived in by seculars not following a monastic rule.
The religious context

The *Regularis Concordia*, then, can be seen as an important constituent part of that tenth-century stabilisation programme. But it should also be seen as part of a religious 'quickening' which was making such a significant impact upon northern and western Europe. The origins of that quickening are not difficult to detect; they can be traced directly to the monastic reform movement centred on Cluny which, under the leadership of Abbot Odo (927-942), was to have far-reaching consequences. It was from Cluny that ideas of a reformed monasticism sprang which, within a generation, had had an impact upon England.

David Knowles, in his study of monasticism in England, is very specific about how and where that impact was first felt:

\[
\text{The beginning of the monastic revival in England, which set in being a life that was destined to endure till the Dissolution of the monasteries six hundred years later, may be dated from the year c.943, when King Edmund [939-946], after his narrow escape from death on the cliffs of Cheddar, set Dunstan, still a young man, as 'abbot' in the church of Glastonbury}.^{25}
\]

Dunstan, born at Baltonsborough, within sight of Glastonbury Tor about the year 909, had close connections with the royal court of Wessex. His parents, Heorstan and Cynethrith were 'people of rank and importance'; his paternal uncle, Athelm, was the first bishop of the newly founded See of Wells (909) until he was moved to Canterbury by Alfred's successor, Edward the Elder (899-924) in 923. Two of Dunstan's kinsmen also became bishops: Aelfheah the Bald (934-951), Bishop of Winchester, and Kynesiga

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25 Knowles 1949, p.31.
26 Symons 1953, p.xii.
27 Edward the Elder reorganised the sees in his kingdom, subdiving the two major sees, Winchester and Sherborne. Wiltshire and Berkshire became the diocese of Ramsey; Somerset became the diocese of Wells; Devon and Cornwall became the diocese of Crediton. Winchester continued to care for Hampshire and Surrey, and Sherborne for Dorset. There is evidence that Edward the Elder encouraged his thegns to settle amongst the 'pagans' of East Anglia (there was no bishop for East Anglia until 956).
who was Bishop of Lichfield from 934-964. Another relation, Aethelflaeda, was a niece of King Athelstan. In other words, whilst Dunstan's reforming zeal is not open to question, his capacity to bring about change was not unrelated to the fact that he moved in the most powerful circles. Knowles, himself a Benedictine monk, naturally emphasises Dunstan's spiritual qualities:

[It was] ... a sense of contact with a sanctity at once admirable and lovable, that gave Dunstan his unique position in the eyes of those who knew him, and it was this that enabled him to initiate, to inspire and to organize the new monachism of England.

Kobialka, on the other hand, seeks the causes of Dunstan's success, and the success of Aethelwold and Oswald, in their ability to acquire the institutional sites which then legitimised their 'magisterium'. He argues that the Regularis Concordia was needed both by the monastic reform movement led by Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald, and also by the King himself:

[He] needed them as promoters of royalist propaganda; they needed Edgar to protect them and to reform the Church and its servants.

It is impossible at this distance from the original events to disentangle the motives of those involved – but whether one takes Knowles' view that the monastic reform movement was the result of the charismatic leadership offered by Dunstan, or Kobialka's view that there was a necessarily close and symbiotic relationship between the king and the reformers, what cannot be gainsaid is that politics and religion were inseparable.

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28 For details of Aethelflaeda, see Maddern 1995, p.31. Whilst Dunstan was Abbot of Glastonbury, Aethelflaeda set up a number of cottages on the west side of the church. Dunstan was her spiritual director.

29 Knowles 1949, p.37.

30 Kobialka 1999, p.51. For further debate on the interrelatedness of monarchical and ministerial hopes, see Tellenbach 1993, pp.61-63. Tellenbach argues that the king's support of reform was not born solely of political necessity but grew out of his and his predecessors' notions of what constituted Christian responsibility in a monarch.
King Edgar, for example, was not anointed and crowned until 973 when he was thirty years old, probably because, as Margaret Deanesly says:

Dunstan saw a mystical connexion between the anointing of a king and ordination to the priesthood which would normally be deferred until that age.\(^{31}\)

There is also evidence in the preface to the *Regularis Concordia* itself, where the relationship between the king, God and the people is made explicit:

*Edgar the glorious, by the grace of Christ, illustrious king of the English and of the other peoples dwelling within the bounds of the island of Britain, from his earliest years began to fear, love and worship God with all his heart.*\(^{32}\)

The preface continues:

[The king] moved by the grace of the Lord most gladly set himself to restore them [ie, the monasteries] to their former good estate ... wherefore he drove out the negligent clerks with their abominations, placing in their stead for the service of God ... not only monks, but also nuns under abbots and abbesses; and these out of a gratitude to God he enriched with all good things.\(^{34}\)

The preface, perhaps unsurprisingly, fails to point out that many of the abbots and abbesses may themselves have been related to the royal household.\(^{35}\) The relationship

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\(^{31}\) Deanesly 1961, p.279.

\(^{32}\) Symons 1953, p.1.

\(^{33}\) See Gransden 1989, pp.161-168, in which the author made the case that the monastic reformers' achievements were less momentous than historians had previously suggested, and pointed out that the invective against the old ways in the preface to the *Regularis Concordia* bears a close resemblance to Bede's similar invective.

\(^{34}\) Symons 1953, p.2.

\(^{35}\) Nineham 1993, p.189:

... tenth-century monks and nuns came exclusively from the upper classes.

Elizabeth Gardner develops this theme and argues that whilst the most usual place for a noblemen to be educated was in his household, monasteries and nunneries up to the time of the Dissolution also provided education for young men and women from upper-class households (see Gardner 1996, p.80).
between the royal family and religious reform is given even greater emphasis by the author of the preface (possibly Aethelwold\textsuperscript{36} himself), comparing the rôle of the king with Christ's:

\begin{quote}
Thus, in fulfilment of his royal office, even as the Good Shepherd, he carefully rescued and defended from the savage open mouths of the wicked ... those sheep which by God's grace he had diligently gathered together. And he saw to it wisely that his queen, Aelfthryth, should be the protectress and the fearless guardian of the communities of the nuns\textsuperscript{37}.
\end{quote}

There is a further, perhaps unconscious reference to the relationship between God and the king in the \textit{Regularis Concordia}. The customs, it is said, were designed to create 'uprightness of life and sweetness of observance' and then the suggestion is made that the decrees might be fulfilled

\begin{quote}
... with affectionate devotion by those who would walk humbly and like little ones in the royal way of the Lord's commandments\textsuperscript{38}.
\end{quote}

The royal metaphor is striking.

The \textit{Regularis Concordia}, then, was a document of the highest possible status which had the combined weight and authority of the Monarchy and the Church behind it.

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She suggests that particularly in relation to the nunneries, financial expediency may have been one of the determining factors in this provision:

\begin{quote}
There are ... a few indications that boys were accepted for education and brought up within the monastery with no intention of remaining there as monks. It seems likely that this was a kind of private tuition which was reserved for the sons of distinguished neighbours and benefactors. [Gardner 1996, p.82].
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Aethelwold had trained at Glastonbury under Dunstan and during Edgar's boyhood had been his principal tutor whilst abbot of Abingdon. He went on to become one of the king's closest advisers (see Deanesly 1961, p.304).

The compilation of the \textit{Regularis Concordia} was assigned by Aelfric to Aethelwold (see Knowles 1949, p.43).

\textsuperscript{37} Symons 1953, p.2.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, p.4.
It is in the light of the political and religious circumstances that have been outlined, albeit briefly, thus far, that questions need to be framed which may help to uncover the origins, function and meaning of the Easter sepulchre in England. The questions are these:

1. What were the sources of the Easter ceremony liturgies?
2. Did those ceremonies give rise to any particular developments in architecture on a small or large scale? And if they did, what was the relationship, if any, between those structures and ecclesiastical and royal authority?
3. Is it possible to trace to what extent the Regularis Concordia's instructions concerning the Easter ceremonies were implemented and thus discover a distribution pattern of Easter sepulchres in England in the tenth century?

What were the sources of the Easter ceremony liturgies?

It is clear that the liturgies of Good Friday to Easter can be subdivided into four specific sections:

a) Adoratio
b) Depositio
c) Elevatio
d) Visitatio sepulchri

It is necessary, therefore, to look at each of these in turn.

a) The Adoratio

St Cyril (c.315-386), who was Bishop of Jerusalem from about 349, claimed that the cross on which Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified was discovered in the time of Constantine (d.337) 39. It was also Cyril who gave details of the finding of a cave tomb which they believed to be the tomb of Christ. The Emperor gave orders that the tomb should be preserved and that

... a great church should be erected ... This basilica, known as the Martyrion, 'The Testimony' or 'The Witness', was dedicated on 17 September 335 inside the

39 For a brief description of Constantine, see Cross 1963, pp.334-335.
walls of the Roman veteran colony of Aelia Capitolina, soon again to be known by the ancient name of Jerusalem. It was according to a later tradition that the honour of finding the True Cross was associated with Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine.

An account written by a fourth-century pilgrim to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Etheria, probably a Spanish abbess or nun, is the first document to refer to a service taking place in which the cross is venerated. In the western Church, a feast in honour of the Cross of Christ ('The Exaltation of the Cross' or 'Holy Cross Day', 14 September) was associated with

... the exposition of the supposed true Cross at Jerusalem in 629 by the Emp. Heraclius, after his recovery of it from the Persians into whose hands it had fallen in 614.

It was this mixture of legend, history, hope and longing which inevitably and naturally became associated with Good Friday - and which, by the tenth century in England, had a central place within the liturgies of Holy Week and Easter in the ceremony known as the adoratio, the veneration of the Cross. In a major and painstaking study of tenth- and eleventh-century veneration ceremonies in England, Sarah Keefer establishes that the earliest known complete synaxis of the Good Friday ceremonies is to be found in the Pontifical of Poitiers dating from the mid-ninth century. She does not claim, however.

41 Cross points out (see Cross 1963, p.619) that there was a medieval belief that Helena was a native of England and that Geoffrey of Monmouth described her as the daughter of Coel ('Old King Cole') of Colchester. From the ninth century the abbey of Hautvillers, near Rheims, claimed to possess her body.
42 See Brooks 1921, p.31.
43 Cross 1963, p.480.
44 Keefer 2005.
45 Keefer employs the word synaxis to refer to those acts of worship which were non-eucharistic, and uses the word liturgy only for those services which were eucharistic.
that the *Poitiers* document is a direct precursor of the *Regularis Concordia* Good Friday services, she simply notes that:

... the Veneration of the Cross in the 'Regularis concordia' was by no means an original design; a fairly complete order for this synaxis had been assembled from materials that had hitherto been in separate books, at least a century earlier than the 'Regularis concordia' synod, either near Paris or in the region of Bourges in France.  

She suggests that there might have been some kind of veneration service in Anglo-Saxon England before the ninth century, and that the *Regularis Concordia* synaxis could have been a development of this. She also highlights the fact that there were some events in the early tenth century which could have given rise to a service which acted as a precursor to the one found in the *Regularis Concordia*. For example, the event when King Alfred received a fragment of the True Cross from Pope Marinus:

... could have been an occasion for instituting the more elaborate service known by then on the continent.

Or possibly, when Edward the Elder gave protection to Breton monks fleeing from Viking marauders

... some form of this service might have gained popularity in England at that time.

Such hypotheses are fascinating but, in spite of the most careful and detailed liturgical research, Keefer is unable to trace any definitive and explicit source links between the veneration ceremony in the *Regularis Concordia* and those services of a similar kind which existed on the Continent in the ninth century.

It may therefore not be possible, tempting as it is, to draw lines of descent from continental material - and, in terms of tracing the origins of the Easter sepulchre, that is

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46 Keefer 2005, p.156.
48 Ibid, p.164.
frustrating – but it may be helpful simply to outline that part of the synaxis which the
*Regularis Concordia* provides. This is the *Regularis Concordia* text for the *adoratio*
sequence\(^{49}\) on Good Friday:

On Good Friday the night Office shall be performed as has been said already. The brethren shall then come to Prime, walking barefoot until the Cross has been adored. On that same day at the hour of None, the abbot shall proceed with the brethren to the church and, having prayed awhile with the ministers of the altar, and being vested in the usual way, he shall leave the sacristy and come before the altar for prayer before going to his own seat in silence. Then the subdeacon shall go up into the pulpit and shall read the lesson of Osee the prophet, 'In tribulatione sua'; there follows the respond 'Domine audivi' with its four verses, after which the abbot says the collect 'Deus a quo et Iudas' at which there shall be a genuflection. Then is read a second lesson, 'Dixit Dominus ad Moysen [sic]', followed by the tract 'Eripe me Domine', and the 'Passio Domini nostri Ihesu Christi secundum Iohannem'. At this Passion the deacon shall not say 'Dominus vobiscum' but simply 'Passio Domini' and the rest; nor shall 'Gloria tibi Domine' be given in response. When the words 'Partiti sunt vestimenta mea' and the rest are read in the gospel, straightway and as it were like thieves, two deacons shall strip from the altar the cloth which had before been placed under the book of the gospels. The 'Orationes sollemnes' are then sung, the abbot coming before the altar to go through them in order. The first one, at which there is no genuflection, he shall sing to a simple tone: 'Oremus dilectissimi nobis pro sancta ecclesia Dei' and the rest.

When these prayers have all been said, the Cross shall straightway be set up before the altar, a space being left between it and the altar; and it shall be held up by two deacons, one on either side. Then the deacons shall sing 'Popule meus', two subdeacons standing before the Cross and responding in Greek, 'Agios o Theos, Agios Yschiros, Agios Athanatos eleison ymas', and the schola repeating the same in Latin, 'Sanctus Deus'. The Cross shall then be borne before the altar by the two deacons, an acolyte following with a cushion upon which the holy Cross shall be laid. When that antiphon is finished which the

\(^{49}\) Symons 1953, pp.41-44.
schola has sung in Latin, the deacons shall sing 'Quia eduxi vos per desertum', the subdeacons responding 'Agios' in Greek and the schola 'Sanctus Deus' in Latin as before. Again the deacons, raising up the Cross, sing 'Quid ultra' as before, the subdeacons responding 'Agios' and the schola 'Sanctus Deus' as before. Then, unveiling the Cross and turning towards the clergy, the deacons shall sing the antiphons 'Ecce lignum crucis', 'Crucem tuam adoramus Domine', 'Dum Fabricator mundi' and the verses of Fortunatus, 'Pange lingua'. As soon as it has been unveiled, the abbot shall come before the holy Cross and shall prostrate himself thrice with all the brethren of the right hand side of the choir, that is, seniors and juniors; and with deep and heartfelt sighs shall say the seven Penitential psalms and the prayers in honour of the holy Cross.

For the first prayer there shall be said the first three Penitential psalms with this collect: 'Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee ascending the Cross; I beseech Thee that the Cross may free me from the thruts of the devil. Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee wounded on the Cross; I beseech Thee that Thy wounds may be unto the healing of my soul. Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee laid in the grave; I beseech Thee that Thy death may be my life. Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee descending into hell to set free those in prison there; I beseech Thee not to suffer me to enter there. Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee rising from the grave and ascending into heaven; I beseech Thee to have mercy on me. Lord Jesus Christ, I adore Thee Who art to come in judgment; I beseech Thee, at Thy coming not to enter into judgment with me a sinner, but, I beseech Thee, to forgive rather than to condemn. Who livest and reignest.' For the second prayer there shall be said the next two Penitential psalms with the following collect: 'Lord Jesus Christ, most glorious Creator of the world, splendour of the Father's glory, co-eternal with Him and the Holy Ghost; Who therefore didst deign to take flesh of a spotless virgin and didst allow Thy glorious hands to be fixed to the gibbet of the Cross that Thou mightest overthrow the gates of hell and free the human race from death; look down and have mercy on me, a wretch borne down by the weight of sin and polluted by the stains of my many misdeeds: in Thy mercy forsake me not, most loving Father, but forgive that in which I have sinned most impiously. Hear me, prostrate before Thy adorable and most glorious Cross that I may deserve to stand before Thee pure and pleasing in Thy sight. Who with the Father.' For the third prayer there shall be said the last two Penitential psalms
with this collect: 'Almighty God, Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our sakes didst stretch out Thy pure hands on the cross and didst redeem us with Thy holy and precious Blood, grant me so to feel and understand that I may have true repentance and good perseverance all the days of my life. Amen.' Then humbly kissing the Cross the abbot shall rise; whereupon all the brethren of the left hand side of the choir shall do likewise with devout mind. And when the Cross has been venerated by the abbot and the brethren, the abbot shall return to his seat until all the clergy and people have done in like manner.

It can be seen that the text proffers the following pattern:

1. Walking barefoot, the abbot and the monks proceed to the church.
2. The abbot prays with the altar party (in the sacristy?); enters the church and prays at the altar, and then goes to his own seat in silence.
3. The sub-deacon goes to the pulpit and reads Hosea 6:1-6:

   'Come let us return to the Lord;
   for it is he who has torn, and he will heal us;
   he has struck down, and he will bind us up.
   After two days he will revive us;
   on the third day he will raise us up,
   that we may live before him.
   Let us know, let us press on to know the Lord;
   his appearing is as sure as the dawn;
   he will come to us like the showers,
   like the spring rains that water the earth.'

   What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
   What shall I do with you, O Judah?
   Your love is like a morning cloud,
   like the dew that goes away early.
   Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
   I have killed them by the words of my mouth,
   and my judgment goes forth as the light.
   For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice,
   the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.
4. This is followed by the response *Domine audivi*.

5. The abbot then says the collect.

6. A second lesson follows: Exodus 12: 1-11:

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you make take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord.*

7. This is followed by the tract *Eripe me domine* from Psalm 140:

*Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man ...*

8. Immediately afterwards the story of the Passion is heard from John's gospel, and this includes an acted sequence. When the words 'They parted my garments amongst them' are read, two deacons behaving 'like thieves' strip from the altar the cloth which had been placed under the book of the gospels.

9. The *Orationes sollemnes* are then sung, with the abbot moving from his seat to the altar, and from the altar he intones

*Oremus dilectissimi nobis pro sancta ecclesia Dei...*
(Let us pray to our most beloved for the holy church of God...)

10. It is only at this point, after the readings, psalms, an acted episode from the gospel and intoned prayers, that the next major event happens. It is as though everything has been preparing for this moment, because now the cross is set up before the altar (ante altare) with a space left between it and the altar itself.

11. The cross is held up by two deacons, one on either side (the rubrics are explicit).

12. Those deacons, holding up the cross, sing

Popule meus...
(My people...)

13. Their sung chant elicits a response from two sub-deacons standing in front of the cross who sing, in Greek

Agios o Theos, Agios Yschiros, Agios Athanatos, eleison ymas...
(Holy God, the holy strong one, the holy immortal one, have mercy on us...)

14. Their voices are then echoed by the schola (either the boys of the monastery or the official body of singers) who repeat the chant in Latin

Sanctus Deus...
(Holy God...)

15. Once this is done, the cross is then carried by the two deacons, and they are followed by an acolyte carrying a cushion on which the cross will eventually be laid. (The instructions for the deacons are not at all clear at this point: presumably they are intended to move with the cross closer towards the altar.)

16. Once the schola have finished singing the Sanctus Deus, the deacons then chant

Quia eduxi vos per desertum...

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50 Bedingfield suggests (see Bedingfield 2002, pp.131 and following) that the two deacons may be intended to parallel Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus.

51 Ortenberg claims that the ceremonies carried out by children in the Regularis Concordia derive from Ghent (see Ortenberg 1992, p.24).
There is a response from the sub-deacons: they sing the Agios sequence as before. the schola responding, as before, with Sanctus Deus.

17. For the third time, the deacons raise the cross as previously and sing Quid ultra. and the sub-deacons, as previously, respond with the Agios sequence, followed by the schola with their Sanctus Deus sequence.

18. All the while the cross itself has been veiled because the next stage in this act of worship is the unveiling of the cross. This is done by the deacons who, turning towards the clergy, sing the antiphons Ecce lignum crucis; Crucem tuam adoramus Domine; Deum Fabricator mundi; and the verses of Fortunatus, Pange Lingua.

19. The abbot, once the cross has been unveiled, comes in front of the Holy Cross and prostrates himself three times. In this act of humility and obeisance, he is joined by all the monks on the right-hand side of the choir, seniors and juniors together.

20. The triple prostration completed, the abbot alone ('with deep and heartfelt sighs') says the seven penitential psalms (Psalm 7, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143 [numbering according to the Authorised Version of the Bible]) and the prayers in honour of the cross. The sequence is broken up so that the first three penitential psalms are said and are followed by a collect; the next two penitential psalms are followed by a collect; and, finally, the last two penitential psalms are followed by a collect.

21. The abbot kisses the cross and rises.

22. All the monks on the left-hand side of the choir 'do likewise with devout mind'.

23. The abbot then returns to his seat until everyone has completed the veneration.

* * * * *

It can be seen that liturgically this structure has three 'acts': the first is from the entry of the abbot until the end of the prayers and after the Passion reading; the second centres on the veiled cross; and the third centres on the unveiled cross, with the abbot himself prostrate in front of the cross, praying on behalf of the entire community. The drama is palpable.
But there is also a fascinating theological pattern to this three-act play: the first part itself is divided into three interlocking theological themes. The reading from Hosea 6: 1-6 opens with the verse

_Come, let us return to the Lord; for it is he who has torn and he will heal us: he has struck down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up that we may live before him..._

It is clearly meant to be understood by the monks hearing it as a reference to Good Friday/Easter, and yet inside it is a reminder of the inscrutable judgment and mercy of God directed to each individual:

_It is he who has torn and he will heal us._

The response to the reading is

_Lord, I have heard._

The second reading (Exodus 12: 1-11) is an account of the Passover – and again is intended to reflect the belief (made very explicit in John's gospel, which follows – and not, be it noted, a theme in the other gospels) that Christ is the new Passover lamb; and the response to this reading is

_Deliver me, O Lord, from evil men_

– that is, the Exodus reading and its response call on the hearers to participate in the new Passover.

The third reading, from the gospel of John, explicitly refers to the Passover theme.

_Now it was the day of Preparation for Passover; and it was about noon. He [Pilate] said to the Jews: 'Here is your king!' They said to him: 'Away with him! Crucify him!'_52

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It is a complex and powerful account of Christ's death, to which the response is the *Orationes sollemnes* prayers of reflection, led by the abbot himself. In brief, this first section of the Good Friday Synaxis is a restatement of salvation history, beginning with the mystery of God's judgment (tearing and yet healing), moving through the restoration/salvation motif of Passover, and ending with the apparent failure and triumphant cry ('It is finished') of the Johannine gospel.

The theological mood changes dramatically after this opening section in which attention has focussed via the Bible readings on the sweep of salvation history. Now attention switches to the veiled cross – the cross in the monastic setting being both the True Cross, as it were, and yet only a replica. The cross becomes the carrier, and also the recipient, of the salvation story. It is that story made manifest, made explicit. The response to the veiled cross emphasises the holiness of the event – both the event in history, the death of Christ, and the event in its contemporaneous expression in the liturgy. The response is a sung cry in Greek and Latin, voices echoing each other and calling to each other: *Agios o Theos – Sanctus Deus.*

The mood of mystery and exaltation is then intensified in the third part of this act of worship when the Cross is unveiled and *Behold the wood of the Cross* is sung. Thus far the worship has been profoundly communal – but the mood changes again as the abbot alone walks from his seat and, in full view of the assembled community, throws himself on to the floor, prostrate in front of the cross. He then, alone, recites the penitential psalms and the collects.

Again, theologically, those collects follow a most intriguing sequence. The first emphasises, by repetition, the actions taken by Christ in his redemptive self-offering:

*I adore Thee, ascending the Cross ... I adore Thee, wounded on the Cross ... I adore Thee, laid in the grave ...*
The second collect emphasises Christ's heavenly glory and power, and then the third collect is a quiet, simple, introspective prayer; the richness of language and metaphor in the first two collects gives way to an almost child-like longing:

... grant me so to feel and understand that I may have true repentance and good perseverance all the days of my life.

The words are said, it must be remembered, by the abbot alone, lying prostrate on the floor – that same abbot who, according to the Benedictine rule, was to be obeyed without question by all the monks in his monastery. The contrast between his normal omnipotence and this act of prostrate and broken humility is remarkable – and, no doubt, would have had a profound effect upon those who witnessed it. For they, then, in their turn, were also required to venerate the cross.

The Veneration/Adoratio sequence thus not only had an explicitly dramatic format, its theological and sociological content was also very rich and demanding. But the Veneration/Adoratio then led into a much quieter moment of recollection when the cross was placed in the makeshift sepulchre – and it is to this element that we now turn.

b) The Depositio

The depositio sequence is as follows:

Now since on that day we solemnize the burial of the Body of our Saviour, if anyone should care or think fit to follow in a becoming manner certain religious men in a practice worthy to be imitated for the strengthening of the faith of

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53 M. Bradford Bedingfield, in his discussion of the Adoratio crucis, quotes the collect for Sext in the Leofric Collectar (see Bedingfield 2002, p.123, note 34):

Lord Jesus Christ, who at the sixth hour of the day mounted the wood of the cross for the redemption of the world, so that the whole world which had dwelt in darkness would be illuminated, grant always this same light to us in spirit and in body, through which we may come to eternal life.

The two themes, Christ as a light to drive away darkness, and light emanating from the cross were, he says

quite native to the Anglo-Saxon liturgical audience.

54 Brooks 1921, p.32:

The Regularis Concordia contains the earliest known text of the depositio.
unlearned common persons and neophytes, we have decreed this only: on that part of the altar where there is space for it there shall be a representation as it were of a sepulchre, hung about with a curtain, in which the holy Cross, when it has been venerated, shall be placed in the following manner: the deacons who carried the Cross before shall come forward and, having wrapped the Cross in a napkin there where it was venerated, they shall bear it thence, singing the antiphons 'In pace in idipsum', 'Habitabit' and 'Caro mea requiescet in spe', to the place of the sepulchre. When they have laid the cross therein, in imitation as it were of the burial of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, they shall sing the antiphon 'Sepulto Domino, signatum est monumentum, ponentes milites qui custodirent eum'. In that same place the holy Cross shall be guarded with all reverence until the night of the Lord's Resurrection. And during the night let brethren be chosen by twos and threes, if the community be large enough, who shall keep faithful watch, chanting psalms.

When this has been done the deacon and subdeacon shall come forth from the sacristy with the Body of the Lord, left over from the previous day, and a chalice with unconsecrated wine, which they shall place on the altar. Then the priest shall come before the altar and shall sing in a clear voice: 'Oremus. Praeceptis salutaribus moniti, the Pater noster' and 'Libera nos quaesumus Domine' up to 'Per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.' And the abbot shall take a portion of the holy sacrifice and shall place it in the chalice saying nothing; and all shall communicate in silence. When this has been done the brethren shall say Vespers, each one privately to himself and in his own place, after which they shall go to the refectory. Then, rising up from table, they shall carry out the remaining duties of the day in the usual way. After the veneration of the Cross, those ministers or children who can shall shave and bath themselves if the number of the community is so great that Saturday, the next day, would not suffice for this. After 'collatio' each one shall say Compline in his own place silently and after the manner of Canons, as we said before: the rest shall be fulfilled in the accustomed manner. On these three days everything shall be carried out with a blessing in the refectory and in the usual way in Chapter 55.

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Symons 1953, pp.44-45.
It is important simply to highlight the stage directions for the *depositio*. It has this pattern:

1. The deacons come forward (it does not specify from where they come. It also assumes that the abbot and the congregation remain seated).

2. They wrap the cross in a napkin.

3. They then carry it from the place where it had been venerated to the place of the sepulchre.

4. As they carry it, they sing three antiphons:
   Psalm 4, verse 9:
   
   *I will both lie down and sleep in peace;*
   *for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.*

   Psalm 15, verse 1:
   
   *O Lord, who may abide in your tent?*
   *Who may dwell on your holy hill?*

   Psalm 16, verse 10:
   
   *Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;*
   *my body also rests secure.*

5. They place the cross in the 'sepulchre' and sing the antiphon *Sepulto Domino.* The stage directions are interrupted at this point with instructions which say that 'the holy Cross should be guarded with all reverence until the night of the Lord's Resurrection.' And if the community is large enough, two or three brothers should keep watch, chanting psalms.

It is clear that in this liturgical act, the cross is treated as though it were the body of Christ. The antiphons, for example, are about a person rather than an object and the Latin phrase *ac si Domini Nostri Ihesu Christi corpore sepulto*, translated by Symons as 'in imitation as it were of the burial of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ' is perhaps more accurately translated as 'as if it were the body of our Lord Jesus Christ having been buried'. The difference in translation could suggest that the cross itself was perceived as

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56 See Symons 1953, p.45.
the body of Christ – a theme which will be explored later in this chapter when we look at Anglo-Saxon crosses. What cannot be gainsaid is that the dominant metaphor is of burial, with the cross acting the part of the crucified and buried Christ.

This burial sequence is then followed by a Mass of the Pre-Sanctified in which the Host, consecrated the previous day (Maundy Thursday) is brought to the altar and everyone, beginning with the abbot, communicates in silence. This is followed by Vespers, each of the brothers saying it 'privately to himself'.

The tone of the depositio sequence is one of great solemnity. Silence is the distinctive feature, broken only by the singing of the antiphons, after which silence descends again. For the community the spiritual mood is one which moves from the great communal activity at the opening stages of the veneratio into the individuality and interiority of the abbot prostrating himself, and moves even further into interiority as each of the brothers receives the broken Host in silence. It is as though the community moves from the collective to the individual, and from the individual into the silence of death, with the Mass containing a hint of the resurrection which will follow.

It is important to recognise that in this tenth-century English synaxis the host is not buried with the cross57 – the cross itself is the bearer of meaning, a meaning which is heightened and given added poignancy as the brothers leave the 'Christ' in the sepulchre guarded only by two or three, waiting in the darkness of the abbey church.

On the following day, Holy Saturday, at the hour of None (3.00 pm) another major liturgy was enacted. It involved the lighting of the new fire from which, in turn, was lit the Paschal candle standing near the altar. Four lessons from the Scriptures then followed in which, beginning with the Creation story in Genesis58 and continuing

57 Brooks 1921, p.32:

The first known instance of the burial of a Host is of practically the same date as the Regulares Concordia ... a passage in the life of St Ulrich (d.973), Bishop of Aixburg, shows that the burial of a Host was in use there and was a customary practice in the latter part of the tenth century.

But he adds

for England [there was] no case of the burial of the Host only. [Ibid, p.37].

58 Genesis 1-2:2.
through the story of Exodus\textsuperscript{59} and an early chapter from Isaiah\textsuperscript{60}. The culmination came with a reading from chapter 54 of Isaiah\textsuperscript{61}. The seven-fold litanies were then sung. That was followed by the abbot singing the five-fold litanies, accompanied by the schola cantorum, going in procession to the font which was then blessed. The return to the altar was accompanied by the singing of the three-fold litanies; then, on a high note (the instructions in the Regularis Concordia are very specific\textsuperscript{62}) the master of the schola sang Accendite ('Go up'), at which point all the lights of the church were lit: and, after the abbot had intoned Gloria in excelsis Deo, all the bells were pealed. The collect and epistle followed and after Laudate Dominum was sung, the gospel itself, surrounded by clouds of incense, was read. The gospel was the story of the women going to the tomb\textsuperscript{63}. After this came the prayers and Communion, and all was rounded off by Vespers. Later that same evening, at 9.00, Compline was said.

Liturgically and theologically we can see that Holy Saturday centred on the Creation and Exodus stories and, accompanied by the blessing of the font, had therefore as its major theme, baptism - with all that that implied about sharing in the death and resurrection of Christ. The mood of the liturgy, set by the lighting of fire, the Paschal candle, the ringing of bells and the billowing incense, was one not of sorrow but of eager anticipation of the triumph of Easter Day. Hence, although it would have in a sense preempted the Easter Day 'drama' at the sepulchre, the gospel referring to the visit of the women to the tomb was a verbal preparation for what was to come in the early hours of the following morning.

It is important to trace these theological, dramatic and liturgical themes running through Good Friday and Holy Saturday because they set the mentality and the theological mood of the Easter sepulchre liturgies. The design of these liturgies, it would seem, was careful - a dramatic element was present throughout. In consequence, simply to claim the Easter sepulchre 'drama' as the fons et origo of western European drama, as some

\textsuperscript{59} Exodus 14:24 - 15:1.
\textsuperscript{60} Isaiah 4.
\textsuperscript{61} Isaiah 54:17 - 55:1- end.
\textsuperscript{62} See Symons 1953, p.48.
\textsuperscript{63} Taken from Mark 16.
have done, is to miss the richness and subtle beauty of the Holy Week liturgy which, to be fully understood, needs to be considered in its entirety.

Once Compline had been completed on Holy Saturday evening, leaving two or three monks still guarding the sepulchre, the monastery would have become quiet.

c) The Elevatio

Then, at some time before Matins (2.00 am) the sacrists came into the church: they took the cross from its place in the sepulchre and

... *set it in its proper place*\(^{64}\).

d) The Visitatio

The monks arrived in the church in darkness with only flickering candlelight to accompany their presence\(^{65}\). Matins began with sung responses and antiphons. Three psalms were chanted and three lessons read. During the reading of the third lesson, four of the brothers put on their robes. One of them, wearing an alb, made his way 'stealthily' to the Easter sepulchre and sat there quietly, holding a palm in his hand\(^{66}\). Whilst the third respond to the lesson was sung, the other three brothers, wearing copes and holding thuribles in their hands, entered and went to the sepulchre

... *step by step, as though searching for something*\(^{67}\).

The *Regularis Concordia* continues with its instructions:

*Now these things are done in imitation of the angel seated on the tomb and of the women coming with perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus*\(^{68}\).

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\(^{64}\) Symons 1953, p.49.

\(^{65}\) Bryan suggests that one of Aethelwold's original contributions to the *Regularis Concordia* was the *visitatio*, which perhaps had been performed in conventual churches since his days at Abingdon (see Bryan 1981, p.61, and ibid, p.93 for a detailed examination of this hypothesis).

\(^{66}\) Symons 1953, p.49.

\(^{67}\) Ibid, p.50.

\(^{68}\) Ibid, p.50.
When the monk/angel saw the three coming closer

... wandering about as it were and seeking something

he began to sing, 'softly and sweetly': Quem quaeritis in sepulchro, O Christicolae. The three answered together: Ihesum Nazarenum. The monk/angel responded by saying

Non est hic. Surrexit sicut praedixerat. Ite, nuntiate quia surrexit a mortuis.

Having received this instruction to 'go and tell that he has risen from the dead', the three turned to the choir and sang: Alleluia. Resurrexit Dominus. The monk/angel

... as though calling them back

said the antiphon Venite at videte locum and then, lifting up the 'veil', he showed them the sepulchre devoid of the cross, with only the linen wrappings in place. The three moved towards the sepulchre, placed their thuribles within it, took the linen, held it up before the clergy and sang the antiphon Surrexit Dominus de sepulchro. They then placed the linen on the altar. The abbot announced the hymn, Te Deum laudamus and all the bells in the church were rung. After that the order of Matins began.

Again, one needs to place this liturgy in its physical context: darkness and flickering candlelight, the smell of incense still in the air from the previous night's liturgy, and the cross, which had been the subject of so much liturgical attention on the previous days, now in its proper place. And surrounding it all as the climax of the drama, the pealing of bells and the singing of Te Deum laudamus. The theological theme is expressed in a single line in the Regularis Concordia's instructions; it refers to

... the triumph of our King in that He had conquered death and was risen.

69 Symons 1953, p.50.
70 Ibid, p.50.
71 For further discussion of the rôle of the women at the sepulchre, see Bedingfield 2002, p.169.
72 Symons 1953, p.50.
Attention, theologically speaking, has moved from the cross itself to the emptiness of the sepulchre. The metaphor is of a royal miracle. It needs to be recognised that unlike the *Rites of Durham*\(^{73}\), there is no procession of a resurrection image in this liturgy - that was clearly a much later development. In the tenth century the liturgy is spare and lean, with the triumph of the resurrection 'explained' by an empty grave and pieces of linen from that grave placed on the altar. The liturgy, whilst visual in some of its elements, relies largely on sound (the pealing of the bells and the *Te Deum*) to convey its doctrines. Its lack of visual effect in fact echoes, either consciously or unconsciously, the understated writing of Mark's account of the Resurrection, with its haunting lines:

> So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.\(^{74}\)

As far as the Easter sepulchre itself is concerned, it is abundantly clear that it was a temporary structure situated near the altar - but we now come to the question of topography, which needs brief attention.

It is known that the Old Minster at Winchester was the setting for the synod at which the *Regularis Concordia* was promulgated\(^{75}\). It is conceivable, therefore, that the structure of that building may have played a significant part in shaping the liturgical instructions surrounding the Easter ceremonies.

\(^{73}\) See Fowler 1903. *The Rites of Durham*, according to its subtitle, was 'a description or brief declaration of all the ancient monuments, rites and customs belonging or being within the monastical church of Durham before the suppression, written in 1593, and provides a vivid description of the Easter ceremonies at Durham in the early sixteenth century. It included:

> ... a marvelous beautifull Image of our Saviour representing the resurrection with a crosse in his hand in the breast thereof was enclosed in bright Christall [sic] the holy sacrament of the altar, through the which christall the blessed host was conspicuous.

[Fowler 1903, p.12].

\(^{74}\) Mark 16:8.

\(^{75}\) For a brief discussion of the relationship between the likely date of the Synod and the use of the Old Minster as the locus for the Synod, see Parsons 1975, pp.5-6.
The Old Minster was 'reformed' institutionally by Aethelwold on 21 February 964. The building, constructed originally by Cenwalh of Wessex in 648 and dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, became a cathedral in 660.

*From Cenwalh onwards the kings of Wessex were usually buried in the Old Minster and some at least were crowned there*\(^76\).

The New Minster, founded on 8 July 901, was built only four metres away from the Old Minster, and its dedication seems to have taken place in 903 when

*... probably at this time ... Alfred's body was translated into the New Minster from his original grave in the Old Minster*\(^77\).

The New Minster became, during the tenth century, the principal burial place of the royal house. Between 979 and 988 the great west tower was added to the New Minster at the expense of King Aethelred. It was a building of six storeys embellished with carvings and sculptures\(^78\).

Meanwhile, the Old Minster was also undergoing expansion, being centred on the site of St Swithun's original burial:

*... the importance of which was emphasised by flanking apses of immense size to north and south*\(^79\).

The building, which was dedicated in 980, implies a west work comparable to the west works of Corvey on the Weser or Werden-on-the-Ruhr. The new west work was 23 metres square and 35 metres high. It provided an axial entrance to the church and a raised western choir which, as Biddle says, provided:

*... a suitable setting for choirs taking part in the Easter liturgy*\(^80\).

\(^76\) Biddle 1975, p.125.

\(^77\) Ibid, p.131.

\(^78\) Ibid, pp.134-136.

\(^79\) Ibid, p.136.

\(^80\) Ibid, p.138.
Whilst Martin Biddle is careful not to make definitive liturgical claims for the use of the west work, he suggests quite strongly that there must have been a close relationship between the architecture and the liturgies:

... the Old Minster was rebuilt in the years between 971 and 994 in a manner which suited the needs of the reformed monastery, and provided a suitable setting both for the liturgy as set out in 'Regularis Concordia' and for the accommodation of the large numbers of pilgrims now congregating at St Swithun's tomb.

There are two further themes within this west work development; the first relates to the influence of Carolingian and Ottonian culture upon the arts and culture of the royal palace and ecclesiastical complex at Winchester.

Richard Gem is unequivocal in his views:

The monument that best displays the influence of Carolingian and Ottonian ideas on late Anglo-Saxon architecture is the great west work built at Winchester Cathedral (sic) in the years between 971 - 980 x 994 under Bishop Aethelwold and possibly Aelfheah.

He describes the building as in plan and scale

... very close to late Carolingian and Ottonian west works on the continent ... and there can be no doubt it derives directly from them.

On a much smaller artistic scale, there are those scholars, for example Wilson, who argue that the acanthus leaf motif which dominated the art of southern England

... arguably, first encountered on the back of the Alfred Jewel ... derived directly from Carolingian sources.

81 Biddle 1975, p.139.
83 Ibid, p.7.
84 Wilson 1984, p.156.
Frank Stenton draws a direct link between the Winchester school of illuminators of the tenth century and their Carolingian predecessors of the ninth century. If further evidence were needed of the Carolingian/Ottonian influences on liturgy and its architectural expression, Klukas provides it. He argues that there was a close liturgical and textual relationship between the Regularis Concordia and the Essen customary. At Essen there was an altar on a raised platform at the west end of the nave and

... since an axial entrance at the west was traditional [in Anglo-Saxon churches]. this western chapel would more than likely have been at an upper level, over the entrance porch.

In his study of the development of Deerhurst Church, Gloucestershire, Klukas claims that

The tenth-century liturgical arrangement would have provided three principal altars on axis: one in the western upper chamber, one dedicated to the Holy Cross at the entrance to the choir, and one dedicated to the Virgin at the chord of the apse.

He draws parallels between the design of Deerhurst (reformed by Oswald c.970) and the design of the Old Minster:

The Old Minster at Winchester ... included all of the features evident at Deerhurst. The altar dedicated to the Virgin was placed in an upper chapel in the westwork on axis with the nave. At the eastern end of the nave was the altar dedicated to the Holy Cross. The high altar [was] dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul.

He draws further links between the architectural style of Anglo-Saxon churches of the late tenth century (some of which had west works) and the monastic reform movement:

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85 See Stenton 1971, p.443.
86 Klukas 1984, p.86.
87 Ibid, p.90.
Of the more than fifty houses reformed from Gorze [near Metz], at least twenty-four dating before 1100 survive in some form. Of these examples all had axial towers to the west with chapels on an upper level, and chambers flanking the choir.\(^{89}\)

He notes that St Dunstan was exiled to St Peter's, Ghent

\textit{at the very moment it was being reformed by Arnold of Gorze with the assistance of Womar of Brogne.}\(^{90}\)

The use of these chapels on an upper level at the west end of Anglo-Saxon and Ottonian churches is a matter of some dispute. At Essen, Klukas maintains that the \textit{visitatio sepulchri} was performed in the western tribune\(^{91}\). It is interesting to note that it was at the crossing of the nave with the eastern transepts that there was an altar to the Holy Cross, with a relic of the Holy Cross placed behind it on a marble column\(^{92}\).

In brief, it can be argued with a high degree of probability that the west works of the Old Minster were deeply influenced by Carolingian/Ottonian models\(^{93}\), but there can be no certainty as yet about the liturgical use of the west works in England. It is an open question whether the ceremonies of Holy Week, including those surrounding the Easter sepulchre, used the west works or not. In favour of this argument that the Easter sepulchre ceremonies were performed there is the example already given from Essen. In addition, in the monastic church of Corvey in the ninth century, it is known that the lowest storey of the great western tower was designed as a deliberate echo of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem\(^{94}\). On the other hand, as Spurrell has pointed out, in the \textit{Regularis Concordia} there was apparently only one altar which could be described as 'the altar' even though there were many others in the church\(^{95}\).

\(^{89}\) Klukas 1984, p.92.

\(^{90}\) Ibid, p.95.

\(^{91}\) Ibid, p.93.

\(^{92}\) Ibid, p.93.

\(^{93}\) For an exploration of this theme, see Ortenberg 1992, p.38.

\(^{94}\) Wood 2001, p.190.

There is, however, a second theme which might swing the argument back in favour of the liturgical use of the west works at the Old Minster during Holy Week. There are those, as Gem says, who claim that the continental west works had a particular rôle in imperial or royal liturgy. Ortenburg, without specifying the rôle of the west works, argues that for tenth-century Anglo-Saxon England:

*Ottonian Germany became a model on account of its concept of Christological kingship.*

Given that Ottonian west works had both a royal and a liturgical function, might the same, therefore, be true of the Old Minster? And might this help to explain the 'royal' metaphor which is found in the *Regularis Concordia* during the Easter sepulchre ceremonies? An illustration of the singular importance of the royal connection with abbeys is provided by St Albans where after its re-foundation in about 970, three royal diplomas were received by the Abbey during the reign of Aethelred (978-1016). one of which provided

... *unshakable evidence that Offa was being hailed as an important benefactor in the generation after [its] refoundation*.

And, as we have seen, the *Regularis Concordia* itself not only had a royal patron, but in the recommendations concerning the relationship between Benedictine abbeys and the king, it ensured that abbots could only be elected *cum regis consensus et consilio*, ie only with the king's consent. The royal theme can be strengthened, albeit in a circuitous way, by noting that in York during the remarkable outpouring of building and liturgical activity at Winchester, there was no sign of any kind of revitalisation and expansion. The link between west works, the monastic reform movement, the liturgy and monarchy, seems to have been a particularly southern English phenomenon.

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98 Crick 2001, p.79.

The underlying questions, then, are these: a) Where in the church building, in the
descriptions of the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies in the *Regularis Concordia*, do the
various component parts occur? b) Did they occur partly in the west work or did they
occur primarily in the main structure of the church? To a certain extent, the questions as
posed depend upon the dating of the west work extensions of the Old Minster and the
dating of the *Regularis Concordia*. If the former were being constructed, as Biddle
suggests, between 971 and 974 and the dedication of the building was not until 980, then
the instructions of the *Regularis Concordia* (itself composed c.970) would seem to
predate construction of the west work. Certainly, as one reads the *Regularis Concordia*
liturgical instructions, there is not a single reference which might lead one to the
conclusion that the west work was in use\(^{100}\). Rather the liturgy, in its very simplicity,
seems to be designed for a relatively simple building. More to the point, the suggestion
that upper chapels in the west work could have been the place for the sepulchre and for
the burial of the cross, makes no dramatic or symbolic sense. 'Burial' does not happen,
as it were, in an upper chamber; it happens at ground level. Further, because the
*Regularis Concordia* is clear that one of the purposes of the ceremony is for

... *the strengthening of the faith of unlearned common persons and neophytes*\(^{101}\)

the visibility of the ceremony would be of the essence. Such visibility could not be
achieved in the small chapels of the upper west work, but would be achieved if the
ceremonies took place in the main body of the church. Notwithstanding all the royal
metaphors, it can be safely concluded that the Easter sepulchre ceremonies themselves.
in England at least, did not take place in the west work of Anglo-Saxon churches but
were centred either at the altar dedicated to the Holy Cross in the nave or, even more
likely, at the high altar in the quire.

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\(^{100}\) Raw makes a claim for the use of the west works for the Easter sepulchre ceremonies, based on
the images of the three Maries in the Benedictionals of Aethelwold and Robert of Jumièges. The
sepulchre is shown in those images as a circular staged tower with a square base and a crypt
beneath which, she says, may have been modelled on the tower of the Old Minster, built by
Bishop Aelfheah and dedicated in 993-4:

'... the ritual tomb must have stood under Aelfheah's tower.' [See Raw 1990, pp.46-17]

It is a claim which is not borne out by the liturgical evidence from the *Regularis Concordia*.

\(^{101}\) Symons 1953, p.44.
If we can then assume that the west works did not feature in the Easter sepulchre liturgies, at least in England, we can now turn our attention to another salient feature in those liturgies, that is, the cross. It was a cross which was adored, a cross which was buried and a cross which featured when the Resurrection itself was represented. What kind of cross might this have been? The *Regularis Concordia* offers us some clues. In the liturgies for Holy Week and Easter, the cross for the *adoratio* sequence was set up before the altar (*ante altare*)\(^{102}\); it was held up by two deacons, one on each side\(^{103}\); it could fit on to one cushion carried by a deacon\(^{104}\); it could be wrapped in linen\(^{105}\) and be thus 'buried' in the Easter sepulchre. Early on Easter Day, before Matins, it was taken from the sepulchre and put 'in its proper place'\(^{106}\). If we assume that the two deacons required at the *adoratio* sequence were there simply to provide dramatic symmetry (and not because the cross was of such a size that it required the strength of two people to hold it upright), all the other characteristics that it has - for example, being able to be accommodated on a cushion - suggest a cross of no great size; yet it would need to be large enough to carry the amount of theological weight placed upon it and to be visible to the onlookers. If that same cross were a reliquary cross containing a relic of the True Cross, then that would make it extremely suitable.

There is one cross still extant, the 'Brussels cross'\(^{107}\) (*see Fig. 2*) which fulfils all these criteria. Measuring 21.5 inches by 10.75 inches (549mm x 277mm), it is constructed from a flat oak core and was originally covered entirely with metal sheeting. Most scholars are agreed that it dates from the early eleventh century\(^{108}\). It is not only its size

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\(^{102}\) Symons 1953, p.42.

\(^{103}\) Ibid, p.42.

\(^{104}\) Ibid, p.42.

\(^{105}\) Ibid, p.44.

\(^{106}\) Ibid, p.49.

\(^{107}\) This is currently located in the Treasury of the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula, Brussels.

\(^{108}\) For example, Webster describes it as early eleventh century (*see Webster 1984, p.90*);
A. S. Cook says (*see Cook 1915, p.157*):

*I presume that no expert, in view of phonology, would date it [the inscription] earlier than 1000.*

Anne van Ypersele de Strihou (*see Strihou 2000, p.35*) offers a date 1000-1100.
Brussels Cross  [Cathedral of St Michael & St Gudula, Brussels]
which makes this such a fascinating and beautiful object, however, it is also its rich and
densely layered iconography. Around the edge of the cross is an inscription:

\[
\text{Cross is my name; once trembling and drenched in blood I bore the mighty king.}
\]

The phrase is

\[
... \text{an allusion to the Old English poem 'The Dream of the Rood'}^{109}.\]

The cross, therefore, through its self-referential verbal imagery is 'personified'. The
other inscription on it, 'Drahmal made me', has a saga-like sonority and beauty. The
cross, it would seem, is not regarded as simply one physical object amongst others but is
seen as having its own inherent vitality. In this sense it echoes the *Dream of the Rood*
where there is a remarkable identification of Christ and his Cross in the poem, and

\[
... \text{both share a significant act of volition. That of the Cross is explicit and that of}
\text{Christ implicit. Both are heroic ... They are seen in intimate and isolated}
\text{association, a heroic and redemptive stasis. The Cross shares Christ's defeat, but}
\text{it is soon to share his glory too}^{110}.\]

The very vitality of the cross is echoed in a similarly heroic, though less poetic, form in
some stories surrounding a cross at the monastery of Abingdon. During the Danish
invasion it was claimed that

\[
... \text{the crucifix came to life and, with its arms, extracted stones from the walls of}
\text{the monastery and drove the Danes away}^{111}.\]

The crucifix also came to life on another auspicious and critical occasion:

\[
\text{During the Council that considered the expulsion of clerics from monasteries that}
\text{took place sometime between 964 and 969 (otherwise known as the Easter}
\text{Council) the Christ figure on the Holy Cross came to life and announced to the}
\text{solemn gathering of abbots and abbesses that the expelled clerics' complaint}
\]

\[109\] See Webster 1984, p.91; see also Gordon 1926, pp.235-238.

\[110\] Fleming 1966, p.59.

\[111\] Kobialka 1999, p.48.
against Dunstan was to be condemned because Dunstan's actions to restore
destroyed monastic churches were exemplary and right.\textsuperscript{112}

The 'vitality' of the Brussels cross, it would seem, was part of a long Anglo-Saxon
tradition expressed in both poetry and propaganda. But there is also on the Brussels
cross a series of theological references. On the reverse of the cross, at the centre, is the
'Agnus Dei', (see Fig. 3), which Webster describes as

\textit{the apocalyptic lamb holding the Book of Judgment}.\textsuperscript{113}

But the 'Agnus Dei' is not only Judge, it is also a symbol of resurrection; the lamb carries
the Cross of Victory. Surrounding the 'Agnus Dei', at the four extremities of the cross,
are the symbols of the four evangelists\textsuperscript{114}: the winged eagle of St John is at the top of the
cross; at the bottom is the winged ox, representing St Luke; to the left-hand side, on the
transverse beam, is the winged man representing St Matthew; and to the right, the
winged lion representing St Mark. These symbolic creatures have more than one
reference; not only do they represent the four evangelists, but they also take the
imagination towards the description of heaven\textsuperscript{115} in the Book of Revelation and to the
ceaseless song about God:

\textit{Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come}.\textsuperscript{116}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{112} Kobialka 1999, p.48.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{113} See Webster 1984, p.91. For a fuller description of the theological symbolism of the lamb, see
Sweet 1979, pp.122-126.
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{114} The winged creatures from the Book of Revelation (Revelation 4:7) were first represented in art
from the fifth century (see Cross 1963, p.812).
\footnotesize\textsuperscript{115} Sweet 1979, pp.115-116:

\textit{The setting of the scene cannot be tied down to any one earthly model. One might think
of Solomon's temple with its cherub throne ... or of the synagogue, with its scroll of the
law in the central place of honour, its elders ... or of a law-court ... one cannot delimit
the intended associations and meanings of the imagery.}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{116} Revelation 4:8.
Brussels Cross (detail)

Fig. 3
That song is directed towards the 'Agnus Dei' lamb, who is seen as both slain and also victorious - a clear reference to the Christ who, through the lamb imagery is seen as the sacrificical victim of Passover and also the one who redeems and heals.

The visual and theological imagery of the Brussels cross is thus very rich indeed, but there are two further details which may add yet more richness. There are some\textsuperscript{117} who have suggested that the garments referred to in the Dream of the Rood, for example:

\begin{quote}
I saw the glorious tree, joyfully gleaming, adorned with garments, decked with gold \textsuperscript{118}
\end{quote}

might represent the

\begin{quote}
... veil or the pall with which the cross is shrouded on Good Friday to be dramatically revealed on Easter Sunday\textsuperscript{119}.
\end{quote}

The second detail relates to the fact that the Brussels cross is not 'simply' a cross - it also houses within itself, in its heart, as it were, a fragment of the True Cross\textsuperscript{120}. This 'Cross within a cross', in addition to all the 'personification' that has already been outlined, would make such a cross a remarkable theological object, if it had been used, in Easter sepulchre ceremonies\textsuperscript{121}.

\textsuperscript{117} See Smith 1975, pp.29-35 for further details.

\textsuperscript{118} Gordon 1926, p.235.


\textsuperscript{120} See Strihou 2000, p.40:  
\begin{quote}
Concernant la relique même, d'Ardenne estimait qu'elle pourrait être un fragment de la vraie croix, offert par le pape Marin [sic] I à Aelfred, roi du Wessex, en 883 ou 885. La relique aurait appartenu à la famille royale anglo-saxonne jusqu'à la fin du x\textsuperscript{e} siècle.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{121} M. B. Bedingfield [see Bedingfield 2002, footnote 58, p.129] quotes Aelfric's instructions about the cross:

\begin{quote}
Christians must truly revere the sanctified cross in the Lord's name, because we do not have the one on which he suffered, but its likeness is holy nevertheless, to which we bow in prayers constantly to the great Lord who suffered for mankind, and the cross is the remembrance of his great passion, holy through him, although it grew up in a forest.
\end{quote}
It cannot be claimed, of course, that the Brussels cross was the one used in the Easter sepulchre ceremonies at Winchester, outlined by the *Regularis Concordia*. but it may well be suggestive of the kinds of crosses used in other places in England for such ceremonies, that is, crosses which were capable of 'personification', that were said to contain relics of the True Cross, that were rich not only in materials but also in theological symbolism. It may even be conjectured that the very 'vivacity' of the cross was a theme which later emerged within the overtly Eucharistic tradition when a Host (the 'Body of Christ') was 'buried' alongside the cross.

In addition to the Anglo-Saxon 'Brussels cross', there are two other crosses extant which deserve brief exploration, namely an Anglo-Saxon reliquary cross and an Anglo-Saxon pectoral cross.

The Anglo-Saxon reliquary cross in the Victoria and Albert museum (see Fig. 4) is 7.2 inches high (18.5 cm) by 5.3 inches wide (13.4 cm) and is constructed of gold plaques on a cedar base, with the Christ figure itself made from walrus ivory; the titulus and the medallions depicting the symbols of the evangelists are made of cloisonné enamel. There would appear to be a fragmentary inscription around the edge of the cross, listing the saints' relics once contained within the cavity beneath the figure of Christ. The cross itself may have been thought to be a relic of the True Cross. Williamson is very clear that the elements on the front of the cross were made at the same time and that the figure of Christ is 'distinctly Anglo-Saxon'. He suggests that it bears a close resemblance to tenth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, such as the Ramsey psalter and the Sherborne

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In other words, even if the cross in the Easter ceremonies did not contain an alleged fragment of the True Cross, by association it had its own inherent holiness.

Aelfric's instructions were written c.955-c.1010, but probably c.1005 - see Bedingfield 2002, p.17.


H. P. Mitchell identifies the inscription as containing the word *ligni*, which refers he says to the reliquary containing a fragment of the True Cross (see Mitchell 1925, p.328). He argues a date for the cross on the basis of the filigree work resembling similar decoration on Essen crosses of 973 and 982, and the walrus ivory as being typical of Anglo-Saxon work of the late tenth century.

Anglo-Saxon ivory reliquary cross  [V & A Museum, London]
pontifical, and that it functioned as a cross which was hung above a reliquary or shrine\textsuperscript{125}. Webster, in 1984, drew attention to the function of the cross:

\textit{... the suspension loop may have been to hang the cross above an altar\textsuperscript{126}.}

Stone, in a much earlier monograph, in 1955, argued that this was not a composite German/Anglo-Saxon artefact, but suggested that it might be of entirely English workmanship\textsuperscript{127}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{All that can be said is that it must have been worked some time between about 990 and 1030 ... Christ is handled in the quieter Winchester manner ... nevertheless ... the droop of the head, the tragic expression on the face, the twisted locks of hair and the knots and swirls of the drapery continue to give the figure the life and grace and the touch of morbid introspection that were the characteristic English contributions to the art of the era\textsuperscript{128}.}
\end{quote}

It should be noted that this reliquary cross is only half the width and one third of the height of the Brussels cross. In that it contained, or was constructed from, a fragment of the True Cross, that element would enable it to carry the theological weight of the Easter ceremonies - but its size (only 7.2 ins by 5.3 ins) suggests that it would not have the visibility to be a public, liturgical piece. It has the 'feel' of a piece constructed for use by an individual for private meditation and prayer, rather than one which was commissioned by a large institution.

The third example (see Fig.5) of a portable Anglo-Saxon cross\textsuperscript{129} is even smaller. Measuring only four inches and eleven sixteenths (11.92 cm) high by one inch and thirteen sixteenths (4.62 cm) wide and with a depth of one inch and one sixteenth (2.7 cm), it is a reliquary cross made of walrus ivory. On the back of the cross are the 'Agnus Dei' and symbols of the four evangelists; on the front of the cross is an archer crouching

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{125} Williamson 1998, p.96. \\
\textsuperscript{126} Webster 1984, p.118. \\
\textsuperscript{127} Stone 1955, p.41. \\
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, pp.41-42. \\
\textsuperscript{129} This cross is to be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
\end{flushright}
Anglo-Saxon reliquary cross  [V & A Museum, London]
amongst foliage, aiming his bow and arrow at a bird. Beckwith claims that this figure represents Ishmael - a figure who also occurs on the mid-eighth-century Ruthwell cross, and on a cross of St Andrew at Bishop Auckland dating from the late eighth century. The 'type' of Ishmael may derive from commentaries of Jerome and Augustine on chapter four of Paul's letter to the Galatians, says Beckwith, where Paul refers to chapter twenty-two in Genesis, and contrasts Isaac and Ishmael where Isaac was seen as a 'type' of the New Testament whereas Ishmael was seen as a 'type' of the Old Testament. The 'Agnus Dei' on the reverse of the reliquary cross is thus interpreted as representing Isaac.\(^{130}\)

However it may be that Beckwith has provided an over-elaborate interpretation - which, for example, takes no cognisance of the bird being the target of the bowman.\(^{131}\) Would not a simpler (and more plausible?) interpretation be that the carver had in mind:

\[
\text{Joseph is a fruitful bough,} \\
\text{a fruitful bough by a spring;} \\
\text{his branches run over the wall.} \\
\text{The archers fiercely attacked him,} \\
\text{shot at him, and harassed him sorely;} \\
\text{yet his bow remained unmoved,} \\
\text{his arms were made agile} \\
\text{by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob} \\
\text{by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel,} \\
\text{by the God of your father who will help you,} \\
\text{by God Almighty who will bless you} \\
\text{with blessings of heaven above,} \\
\text{blessings of the deep that crouches beneath,} \\
\text{blessings of the breasts and of the womb.} \\
\text{The blessings of your father} \\
\text{are mighty beyond the blessings of the eternal mountains,} \\
\text{the bounties of the everlasting hills ...} \(^{132}\)
\]

\(^{130}\) For this interpretation, see Beckwith 1966, pp.117-124.

\(^{131}\) For more detail on archery in the Bible, see Hill 1994.

This is a blessing verse which can be read by any wearer of such a pectoral cross as having protective qualities.

Or, alternatively, the carver might have intended that the archer at the centre of this reliquary cross refer to Psalm 11, in which the overall theme is again one of trust and protection:

In the Lord I take refuge;
how can you say to me, 'Flee like a bird to the mountains;
for lo, the wicked bend the bow, they have fitted their arrow to the string,
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'

The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven;
his eyes behold, his eyelids test, the children of men.
The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked,
and his soul hates him that loves violence.
On the wicked he will rain coals of fire and brimstone;
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.
For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteous deeds;
the upright shall behold his face.

It seems that either interpretation of the archer makes a simpler and less convoluted explanation of the iconography than the Ishmael suggestion. After all, would the wearer be likely to wear the New Testament symbol of the 'Agnus Dei' next to his chest, and therefore hidden, whilst giving status and visibility to an Ishmael motif? Would not a protective/blessing image provide greater interpretative and theological coherence?

The scale of this cross, like the previous one, suggests a private rather than a public use (possibly worn by an abbot or abbess?); it is unlikely, from the point of view of visibility and drama, to have been used in the Easter ceremonies.

133 The Old English will of Wulfwaru (984-1016) includes a grant to St Peter's monastery at Bath for 'two gold crucifixes', see Whitelock 1955, p.524.
What kind of cross, then, might have been used for the Easter ceremonies? On the evidence currently available and taking account of the need for dramatic visibility in the liturgy, and the theological doctrines being carried, the ideal would have been a cross such as the Brussels cross - richly decorated, dense with theological symbolism, capable of stimulating imaginative 'personification' - and, if possible, containing a relic of the True Cross. The reformed monasteries were capable of expending large sums of money to commission such crosses; there is evidence, for example, that Aethelwold

... filled his church at Abingdon with spectacular works in precious metals: a golden wheel with lamps and bells, a retable of gold and silver, three large crosses, two bells, silver candlesticks and a massive chalice.\(^\text{134}\)

On the other hand, one cannot ignore one of the outcomes of such splendid gift giving - the large number of crosses that could be accrued. As Raw points out:

> The importance of the cross in the life of the Anglo-Saxon church can be inferred from the large number of crosses and crucifixes owned by churches; Hereward and his outlaws were able to steal fifteen, all of gold and silver, when they broke into the abbey church of Peterborough in 1070. An inventory of Ely in 1075/6 notes that the abbey possessed nineteen large crosses and eight smaller ones ... At Peterborough a huge crucifix of silver and gold, the gift of Abbot Leofric, towered over the altar. At Harold's church of Holy Cross, Waltham, a figure of the crucified Christ, carved out of flint, or possibly black marble, stood near the altar. It was visible from the doors of the church.\(^\text{135}\)

In these circumstances where the churches seem to have been filled with an array of crosses and crucifixes, how would one be chosen for the Easter sepulchre ceremonies? Presumably it would be the cross most valued, either by age, monetary value, or by association through containing a relic of the True Cross.\(^\text{136}\) The latter seems to me the

\(\text{\textsuperscript{134}}\) Raw 1990, p.9; see also Yorke 1988(b), note 55, p.7.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{135}}\) Ibid, pp.40-41: Anglo-Saxon crucifix iconography.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\) It is possible that monetary value and theological worth were elided as, for example, in the Enger cross, a form of the crux gemmata, which also contained a relic of the True Cross - see Lasko 1994. For the relationship between stone sculpture of the Anglo-Saxon period and metalwork crosses, see Hawkes 2003.
most likely to provide that arresting, entrancing quality needed to enable it to embody the religious beliefs, hopes and fears of the worshipping community.

There is an intriguing problem which relates not so much to the cross as to the actual structure of the Easter sepulchre. As can be seen from the scene of the three Marys at the sepulchre in the Aethelwold Benedictional\textsuperscript{137} (see Fig.6), the form of the tomb is long and narrow with two towers. The linen cloths can be seen at the entrance to the tomb. Is this particular image indicative of the shape and structure of the Regularis Concordia Easter sepulchre? J. J. G. Alexander, whilst acknowledging that the Aethelewold Benedictional sepulchre is not like the

\ldots usual round building with cupola found in the early Christian examples and still in the Utrecht Psalter and in the Drogo Sacramentary\textsuperscript{138}

states that this form can, nevertheless, be found in two ivories of the later Metz school\textsuperscript{139}.

Before drawing any conclusions about the earliest recorded Easter sepulchres in England, there is one further detail which needs to be touched upon and that is the relationship between the ceremonies surrounding the Easter sepulchre and late Anglo-Saxon burial customs. It would appear that at the same time that the Easter sepulchre ceremonies were being described in the Regularis Concordia, new burial and funerary practices were coming into existence\textsuperscript{140}. For example, the rite for consecrating churchyards seems to have emerged during the early tenth century and then to have become

\ldots codified and widely practised by the early eleventh century ... Anglo-Saxon bishops were at the forefront of that development and may have been the architects of a rite that came to be practised throughout the western church. The tenth century was a time of immense change in the organisation of the Anglo-

\textsuperscript{137} For details of the Aethelwold Benedictional, see Prescott 1988.

\textsuperscript{138} Alexander 1975, p.178.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, p.178. Frustratingly, Alexander does not give details of the Metz ivories and thus far I have been unable to trace them.

\textsuperscript{140} Kabir provides a very helpful survey and analysis of Anglo-Saxon beliefs relating to the afterlife (see Kabir 2001).
Fig. 6

Three Marys at the Tomb [Illustration from the ‘Benedictional of St Aethelwold’]
Saxon church and the evolution of a spatial dimension to sanctify was part of that revolution\textsuperscript{141}.

There were also changes to burial practice; whilst many burials appear to have taken place with the corpse wrapped in a shroud (cf. the cross being wrapped in linen), there developed in the late ninth and tenth centuries a custom of outlining and supporting the head with stones in a pillow or earmuff arrangement\textsuperscript{142}. This kind of arrangement was also discovered by Biddle in his archaeological excavations at St Albans\textsuperscript{143}. However, it is intriguing to note that whilst at St Albans head-support stones were the norm, at Winchester only 15\% of the excavated Anglo-Saxon graves had head supports. St Albans was a poorer and more modest abbey in the late Anglo-Saxon period than was the wealthy royal capital, Winchester.

It is possible, nevertheless, that the use of a cushion for the cross in the Easter sepulchre ceremonies may have echoed the developing burial rites of Anglo-Saxon England.

\textbf{Conclusion}

In the light of all the evidence provided in this chapter, what conclusions can be drawn?

This study of the tenth century seems to have shown that:

1. The dominant metaphor of the Easter sepulchre ceremonies was of death and burial.

2. There was no eucharistic element involved in the 'burial' process, that is, the Host was not buried.

3. The sepulchre itself was a temporary structure.

4. The cross was a central and powerful element, having a 'personalised' character and, in some cases, was thought to contain a relic of the True Cross.

5. The locus of the Easter sepulchre was almost certainly the high altar and not the west work, though there may have been some degree of 'travel' between the high altar and the nave-based Holy Cross altar.

\textsuperscript{141} Gittos 2002, p.208.

\textsuperscript{142} Thompson 2002, p.232.

\textsuperscript{143} Biddle 2001(b), pp.71-72.
6. The liturgy surrounding the Easter sepulchre was theologically rich and allusive with much of the emotional and spiritual 'meaning' of the ceremonies carried by non-verbal elements - darkness, lights, peals of bells and incense, for example.

7. The power structures of the abbey were turned upside-down in the liturgies, so that the abbot, for example, became a figure of profound abasement, rather than of dominance and high status.

8. At the visitatio sepulchri the cross did not play any major rôle at all and 'evidence' for the risen Christ was provided by the 'play' and by the demonstration that the sepulchre itself was empty. There was no attempt to elide resurrection with the cross or with a resurrection image.

The question now to be addressed, therefore, is whether all these factors remained stable through subsequent centuries or whether there were any developments.
It would seem not unreasonable to assume that the liturgies of Holy Week formulated at the Winchester Synod with such ecclesiastical and royal authority would have been adopted by those monasteries most closely associated with the monastic reform movement and its proponents, Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald\(^1\). It is, in fact, possible to trace links between some of these monasteries; for example, the hymnal used at Worcester during the abbacy of St Wulfstan\(^2\) in the second half of the eleventh century, was the one used in Winchester at the time of Aethelwold; saints particularly honoured at Winchester in the tenth century (Birinus, Swithun and Judoc), also appear one century later in Wulfstan's *Portiforium*; even the type of script written in both Winchester and Worcester shows marked similarities\(^3\). If details such as these can be found in one setting (Worcester), which have obvious and close links with another (Winchester), it suggests, on the face of it, that the liturgies of the *Regularis Concordia* would also have been used.

Unfortunately, that degree of certainty is not obtainable and, more to the point, it is known that where the *Regularis Concordia* was introduced in other places, e.g. Eynsham

\(^1\) The spheres of influence of Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald were as follows:
- Aethelwold: Abingdon, Winchester, Ely, Peterborough, Thorney, Milton Abbas, and possibly St Neots (see Yorke 1988 (b), pp.1-12) and Chertsey (see Kobialka 1999, p.49).
- Oswald: Westbury-on-Trym, Ramsey, Deerhurst (see Klukas 1984) and Worcester.

For further details of the above, see Knowles 1949, esp. pp.37-42. Symons makes it clear that active participation in the work of reform was not confined to monks:

*Among the principal houses of nuns reformed before the close of the tenth century may be mentioned Nunnaminster, Romsey, Wilton, Wareham, Wherwell, Shaftesbury, Reading, Horton, Berkeley, Exeter and St Mildred’s, Thanet.* (see Symons 1953, p.xxiii).

It is interesting to note that the vast majority of these foundations lay within the old boundaries of the kingdom of Wessex.

\(^2\) St Wulfstan was appointed Prior of the cathedral monastery at Worcester, c.1055, by Bishop Ealdred (1046-1062), see Jones 1998, p.82.

\(^3\) Ibid, pp.85-86.
(Oxfordshire), by Aelfric, a former and devoted student of Aethelwold⁴, it was changed and adapted for local use⁵. Some elements of the Holy Week liturgy, for example, were considerably simplified. Aelfric's instructions about the service involving the veneration of the cross on Good Friday completely omit the depositio crucis (the 'burial' of the cross) and the visitatio sepulchri, one of the dramatic highlights of the Regularis Concordia liturgy⁶.

Aelfric wrote similar instructions about the Holy Week liturgies in the 'pastoral letter' for Wulfsige, Bishop of Sherborne, and for Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York. These letters, written between 992 and 1005, had secular clergy and parishes in mind⁷. Joyce Hill, in her careful study of these letters, adduces evidence for their use in Worcester, Winchester, Canterbury and York, and at diocesan level in Sherborne, but concludes:

... taken, all in all, it has to be admitted that the nature of the surviving manuscripts is such that they do not generally allow us to see the pastoral letters being used in the circles for which they were intended ... what we cannot do with confidence is ... to judge what effect they actually had on the eleventh-century secular church⁸.

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⁴ In the introduction of his letter, Aelfric states that he was a student of Aethelwold, see Jones 1998, p.111.

⁵ Knowles argues [see Knowles 1949, p.66] that the Regularis Concordia was essentially the fruit of a single, great occasion and says:

... it was not in the genius of tenth-century England to conceive of a number of separate bodies as governed by an abstract code.

⁶ Jones 1998, p.39:

Although Aelfric saw the Concordia as a useful model, he was not at all timid about adopting and supplementing the source where necessary. In the preface he claims, with a hint of pride, that to observe all the customs of Aethelwold's Winchester, his own alma mater, would be too much for his present charges.

Jones argues that the omission of the visitatio sepulchri may have been because there were too few participants available for the liturgy at Eynsham, or because the Office was too long.

⁷ For further details, see Hill 1992.

⁸ Ibid, pp.115-116. It is, however, important to recognise the potential influence of the monastic reform movement through the work of bishops in their dioceses. [Footnote cont'd on next page]
Notwithstanding this careful, balanced and negative conclusion, it seems possible (but no more than that) that by tracing the range and impact of Wulfstan's homilies, we might be able to surmise where the Aelfric version of Holy Week liturgies, transmitted to Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester (1002-1016), could have reached.

Julian Wilcox, in his study of the spread of Wulfstan's homilies, makes the following claim:

_The place of copying of the manuscripts and the place of composition of the homilies_ [that is, homilies plundered and used by later sermon writers] _demonstrate the following spread of Wulfstan's works: Worcester, Winchester, Exeter, Ramsey, Canterbury or Rochester._

And he goes on to say:

_Certain patterns are apparent from the evidence and the re-use of Wulfstan's homilies. Wulfstan's diocese of Worcester was clearly vital to the transmission of his homiletic works as, probably, was York. Winchester was also important, as, at a later date, was Exeter. Canterbury, on the other hand, played a strikingly minor rôle._

It would seem that whilst it is possible to trace the theological influences which had an impact upon Aelfric and Wulfstan, it is remarkably difficult to assess the impact they,

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H. R. Loyn makes clear that from the time of Dunstan to the election of Stigand as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1052, all the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and most of the bishops, were monks (see Loyn 1991, p.252).

Farmer, writing of the monastic revival says:

_It has been calculated that until 1042 nine-tenths of the bishops were monks ... The reform thus became a national instead of a sectional movement._ [Farmer 1975, p.13].

10 Ibid, p.213.
12 Barlow 1963, p.286:

_Aelfric and Wulfstan were widely read in the Carolingian theologians and liturgists, such as Firmin (d.753/4), Alcuin and Alcuin's pupil, Rabanus Maurus, Abbot of Fulda and Abbot of Mainz._
themselves, had on the monasteries and churches of England. In relation to the Easter sepulchre, for example, it can only be surmised that Aelfric's simplified version of the liturgies was known, used and transmitted by Wulfstan. But it is reasonably clear that if Aelfric omitted both the burial of the cross (the *depositio*) and the *visitatio sepulchri* from his version, then the likelihood of any permanent physical feature representing such a sepulchre in eleventh-century churches is very, very small. Further, tentative, support for this conclusion comes from a completely different source, from Scandinavia.

Canute (King of England 1016-1035), on coming to England was 'schooled' by Wulfstan (Bishop of Worcester 1002-1016; Archbishop of York 1002-1023) in the ways of Christian kingship. He was taught that

... gratitude to God for his good fortune as well as remorse for the blood he had shed was best expressed on lavish gifts to the church and acts of ostentatious piety. We can read this in Canute's foundation of a minster church on the site of the battle of Ashington (Essex) or in the stagey translation of the murdered Archbishop Alphege (Aelfheah) from London to Canterbury in 1023. Above all, perhaps, we can read it in Canute's pilgrimage to Rome and attendance there at the imperial coronation of Conrad II in 1027.\(^{13}\)

It was one year later that Canute founded the first monastic settlement in Norway at Laurent on Nidarholm, a small island in the Trondheim fjord. That monastery of St Laurent was probably staffed by monks who came from the group of monasteries reformed by Aethelwold.

Lilli Gjerløw, in her study of early Christian liturgy in eleventh-century Norway, refers to a fragment\(^{14}\) of an English missal. This fragment is, she says:

... *one of the earliest extant English missal fragments*\(^{15}\).

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\(^{13}\) Fletcher 1997, pp. 407-408.

\(^{14}\) The Oslo missal fragment is catalogued as Mi 1 in the catalogue of the Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift Institutt, Oslo.
She argues that it was probably written not

... in a great scriptorium like that of the Old Minster, but one of the monastic houses within St Aelthelwold's sphere of influence, where the Old Minster tradition of script may have lingered on well nigh into the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{16}

She makes very clear, however, that

... the find of the early English missal fragment (Mi 1) containing the Good Friday prayers and psalms as prescribed by the Regularis Concordia ... does not imply that the Regularis Concordia itself was ever adopted in Norway.\textsuperscript{17}

She draws attention to the missal (Mi 13), the Nidaros ordinary, in which a sepulchre is mentioned:\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Secondum usum autem quorundam crux a populo adoratur, si post decantationem hymnorum moram fecerit, alia preparatur et accipientes eam in minibus predicti sacerdotes incipient antiphonam 'Super omnia ligna cedrorum' et ponant eam super altare in eminentior loco vel in sepulcro si habetur, conuentu interim cantate responsorium 'Recessit pastor noster' vel responsorium 'Sepulto Domino', si crux in sepulcro collocatur.}

Translation:

According to custom, however, while the cross is adored by the people, if he has made a pause after the singing of hymns, he should prepare [the] other things and taking it in their hands the appointed priests should begin the antiphon 'Super omnia ligna cedrorum' and they should put it on the altar in an eminent place or in the sepulchre if there is one. Meanwhile the convent should sing the responsory 'Recessit pastor noster' or the responsory 'Sepulto domino' if the cross is put in the sepulchre.

\textsuperscript{15} Gjerløw 1961, p.36.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, p.36.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, p.68.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, p.78.
Gjerlow, having drawn attention to the southern German origin of the responsory *Recessit dominus*\(^1\), then makes a significant statement:

*No medieval sepulchre of the English type, a recess in the wall, or a shrine intended for the Host alone, without the cross, has hitherto been discovered in Norwegian medieval churches. Nor would any special construction be needed if the sacristy was used for the 'sepulchre' ... or if the general prescription of the Nidaros ordinary\(^2\) was followed, and the cross simply replaced 'in loco suo'\(^2\).*

Thus if there are no permanent Easter sepulchres in Norway, in spite of the *Regularis Concordia* having a possible influence on that country through the evangelising efforts of eleventh-century monk-bishops, a further plank is put into the argument that permanent Easter sepulchres may not have had any place in eleventh-century churches. There is one further argument to be marshalled in buttressing this case - and to do so it is necessary to return to the tenth century and to England. It is highly likely that Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald and their followers had a significant influence, not only upon the liturgies of the tenth century, but also upon the overall shape and plan of the churches in which those liturgies were celebrated.

The cult of Dunstan, for example, may have played a major part by shaping the design of the Romanesque cathedral at Canterbury. John Crook argues that the Anglo-Saxon cathedral of Canterbury provides:

*... a clear - if late - example of a Carolingian-style ring-crypt that may be linked to the cult of a major local saint ... Eadmer's description seems to indicate a ring-crypt similar to that of S. Crisogono, with a central passage leading to the western 'confessio' containing Dunstan's relics, surmounted by a raised monument ('pyramis')*\(^2\).  

\(^1\) Gjerlow 1961, p.78: 
*The oldest known text where it appears is the breviary of Zurich from the year 1260, Zentralbibl. Ms C.8b.*

\(^2\) The Nidaros ordinary probably originated in the early thirteenth century.

\(^2\) Gjerlow 1961, pp.78-79.

\(^2\) Crook 2000, pp.105-106. For further details concerning ring crypts, see also Gem 1983 (b), for example: 

[Footnote cont'd on next page]
There is no evidence thus far, however, that an Easter sepulchre was given permanent architectural form in that building.

The form of the church adapted at Abingdon, under the abbacy of Aethelwold, was an aisled rotunda, which Gem asserts

... can hardly be interpreted other than as a tower-like rotunda with a surrounding ambulatory and with an apsidal chancel to the east.

Again, there is no evidence to suggest that a permanent Easter sepulchre was created at Abingdon within the rotunda shaped church, although that very shape may have had a deliberate echo of the Jerusalem Anastasis Rotunda centred on the site of the Resurrection.

Oswald, the third in the great triumvirate of tenth-century monastic reformers, built his church at Ramsey (about 969) in a style which deliberately reprised the cross. The Vita St Oswald (about 995) says that Oswald

... began to initiate the foundations of the church. And since he had protected it by the sign of the revered cross ... so also therefore he began to construct the buildings of that place in the fashion of a cross: a porticus on the east, on the

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Brixworth has a ring crypt around its apse ... [but] there is no firm date for the crypt and it may well be secondary to the main fabric of the church ... which itself can be placed no more precisely than a probable bracket in the eighth or ninth or even tenth century.


He continues:

This ... form of the church at Abingdon relates unmistakably to the group of buildings deriving from the early ninth-century Carolingian chapel of the imperial palace at Aachen. [Ibid, p.9].


Gem traces (see Ibid, p.11) the rotunda shape from Aachen (where there was a relic of the Virgin's robe) to the Blachernae palace at Constantinople, where her omphorio was enshrined.

This was in its turn related to

... the church outside Jerusalem sheltering the tomb from which she was assumed into heaven, leaving only her robe behind. [Ibid, p.11].

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24 Gem traces (see Ibid, p.11)
south and on the north; a tower in the middle; in the west he annexed a tower to the church.\footnote{Gem 1983 (b), p. 13. For other cruciform churches, see also Taylor 1974.}

Deerhurst in Gloucestershire, a foundation which may well have been reformed by Oswald about 970, had by the end of the tenth century a heightened western tower: a new tower chamber was created in the north and south walls, in which there are aumbries; the chamber may have served as a chapel. It is likely that following the liturgical arrangements of the tenth century, there would have been

... three principal altars on an axis: one in the western upper chamber, one dedicated to the Holy Cross at the entrance to the choir, and one dedicated to the Virgin at the chord of the apse.\footnote{Klukas 1984, p. 90.}

Whilst Deerhurst may well have been consciously designed to be an appropriate 'theatre' for the Regularis Concordia liturgies, and whilst its design may also have had elements within it which were to be found not only in Winchester but also, for example, in Essen\footnote{The minster for canonesses rebuilt by the Abbess Theophanu (1039-1058) in the eleventh century had a west work combined with a western apse. At the west end of the nave was a raised platform, on the chord of the apse, where the visitatio sepulchri was performed: \emph{At the west side of the crossing stood the altar of the Holy Cross with a relic of the True Cross placed behind it on a marble column. The high altar stood in the square choir over a raised crypt.} [Ibid, p. 93].}, nevertheless there is no evidence that a permanent feature 'labelled' as an Easter sepulchre existed in its structure.

It would thus seem that at the end of the tenth century and in the earliest decades of the eleventh century, whilst some churches may have been designed with the liturgies of the \emph{Regularis Concordia} specifically in mind, none of them actually made provision for a permanent Easter sepulchre. The liturgy, as it were, filled and used the entire building (which by its overall shape may have had overt theological meaning), but the temporary Easter sepulchre, as described in the \emph{Regularis Concordia} (if used at all) would appear to have been an entirely adequate \emph{locus} for the specific part of the Holy Week liturgy centred on Christ's tomb.
In the light of all this, it is possible to come to some interim conclusions about permanent Easter sepulchres in pre-Conquest England:

1. The Synod of Winchester in the *Regularis Concordia* made very clear that the sepulchre was a **temporary** structure near the altar - in which a cross was buried and at which there was a liturgical drama (the *visitatio sepulchri*).

2. In spite of the high status of the *Regularis Concordia* and in spite of his obvious regard for Aethelwold, Aelfric felt free to adapt the Holy Week liturgies according to local need. He omitted the 'burial' of the cross and the *visitatio sepulchri*.

3. When Aelfric passed on the Holy Week liturgies to Wulfsige of Sherborne and Wulfstan of Worcester, those liturgies similarly omitted the burial of the cross and the *visitatio sepulchri*. Where there is no cross burial and no *visitatio sepulchri*, there is no necessity to create a permanent, or even a temporary, Easter sepulchre.

4. Whilst the direct influence of the *Regularis Concordia* on Norway is impossible to determine, the fact that some elements of the *Regularis Concordia* seem, at the least, to have influenced a twelfth-century missal, and the fact that there are no permanent Easter sepulchres in Norwegian medieval churches leads one to suppose that a permanent Easter sepulchre was not a necessary feature of the liturgy.

5. The churches in England influenced in their overall shape and design by the cults of Dunstan, Aethelwold and Oswald, provide no evidence for permanent Easter sepulchres.

In short, in England before the Conquest, there really is no evidence for the existence of permanent Easter sepulchres - and even temporary ones, following the changes to the liturgy suggested by Aelfric, are extremely (and necessarily?) elusive.
The Easter sepulchre liturgy after the Conquest

But what happened to the liturgy of Holy Week and Easter after the Conquest? Evidence for what took place at Canterbury is, fortunately, very clear. Lanfranc (c1005-1089), in his Decretals gives explicit instructions about the Holy Week ceremonies.

On Maundy Thursday after None, the children and those who were to celebrate Mass vested; the priest or abbot wore rich vestments; the deacon, a dalmatic; and the subdeacon, a tunicle. Instructions were given about who was to sing and who was to carry the candlesticks and thurible. The desks were removed from the choir and the Mass began, sung according to the festal rite. Enough Hosts were consecrated for Maundy Thursday as well as reserved for Good Friday. Then further instructions followed:

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28 There were 'crown wearings' at Winchester in 1068, 1069, 1070, 1072 and 1086 (see Bates 1989, p.110 and following pages.) It is interesting to note that the Laudes Regiae, ritual chants sung during Mass at great religious festivals, were also an aspect of the crown wearings:

They honoured the powers wielding authority in heaven and on earth. The Laudes sung in Normandy ... began with the choir singing 'Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat', which was repeated by the congregation. The choir then called on support for the Pope, the King of the Franks, Duke William of the Normans and all bishops ... with the congregation interposing 'Christus vincit' after each appeal ... It is likely that they were instituted after the triumph of Hastings and that they were first sung at Easter 1067. No Laudes are known in England before 1066. [Ibid, p.115].

It can be assumed that the Laudes would necessarily have shaped the structure of the Easter liturgy at Winchester, and were deliberately designed to weave together heavenly and earthly kingship.

29 See Knowles 1951, pp.38-47.

30 Throughout his descriptions of the liturgy, Lanfranc lays great emphasis upon the vestments that were to be worn, for example:

When the litany [Holy Saturday] is begun the brethren shall go to their desks as on feasts of twelve lessons, and after the third invocation the priest shall return to the sacristy, put off his chasuble and stole and return to choir [sic]. When the cantors have sung 'Omnes sancti, orate pro nobis', the priest, deacon, subdeacon and three converses shall leave the choir, and the priest shall vest in a chasuble, the deacon in a dalmatic and the subdeacon in a tunicle. [Ibid, p.45].

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When Mass is ending the desks shall be carried back to the choir and the board be rapped for Vespers \(^{31}\) and when Mass is over the prayer before Vespers shall be said as they kneel at their desks.

Meanwhile, the priest shall approach the altar in procession and go to an appointed place fittingly prepared, and there lay the Body of the Lord, incensing the place before and after he lays down the Host. A lamp shall burn without ceasing before the spot \(^{32}\).

It is to be noted that the 'appointed place fittingly prepared' is not described in any way.

Such drama as there is in this liturgy is reserved for the cloister and the refectory. In the cloister the cellarer and the almoner prepared warm water for the foot washing; the abbot and the monks genuflected and bowed to the poor ('they shall adore Christ in the poor\(^{33}\)'), and having intoned the antiphon *Dominus Jesu*, the abbot and the brothers then washed the feet of the poor, wiped and kissed their feet, and touched them with their foreheads. A gift of drink and money to the poor (two pence) followed. After further prayers the abbot and the prior then washed, dried and kissed the feet of all the brothers, and the day was finally rounded off with Compline.

Whilst the evening of Maundy Thursday witnessed the procession carrying the consecrated Hosts to the 'appointed place', it seems likely that, from a dramatic and theological perspective, the ceremonies of foot and hand washing in the cloister and the refectory would have made a greater impact upon the participants.

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\(^{31}\) Micklethwaite refers to 'clappers':

*The returns of church goods in Lincolnshire in Elizabeth's time ... often include clappers or claps. They were things to make a noise with on the three last days of Holy Week, when by custom the church bells were not used ... I am not sure what a clapper was like here, but I think it was a board hung up by a loop and struck with a mallet. A like machine was used in monastic cloisters. At Rouen they used a horn instead of bells in Holy Week.* [Micklethwaite 1901, pp.58-59].

\(^{32}\) Knowles 1951, p.31.

\(^{33}\) Ibid, p.32.
Good Friday became the setting for the next small episode of drama. After None, the priest, deacon and other ministers vested. (As previously, Lanfranc made explicit what vestments each was to wear: the priest a chasuble and the deacon a stole.) At the reading of the Passion

... when the words are reached 'They have divided my garments among themselves,' two ministers in albs by the altar shall pull off towards themselves on right and left two cloths which were put on the altar before the office. After the reading and the prayers, the ceremony of the Veneration of the Cross took place. Two priests, vested in albs, approached the veiled cross which was ad altare matutinale, that is, at or beside the Morrow Mass altar. Taking the cross, they carried it a little way forward singing Popule meus. Two deacons, robed in albs and standing ad gradus ante altare maius, that is, at the step of the high altar, answered: Agios o theos. The choir sang Sanctus Deus, the priests: Quia eduxi vos and the deacons: Agios. This liturgical and musical responsory chorus was repeated until the priests carrying the cross came to the high altar, where they then unveiled it and began the antiphon Ecce lignum. Everyone then knelt on carpets laid in front of the altar, the abbot and the vested ministers prostrated themselves, praying

... briefly and simply.

The foot of the cross was kissed by everyone who then returned to the choir. If other lay people or clerics were present, the cross was carried to them

... in another place more suitable for their worship.

Once the cross had been honoured by everyone, it was carried

... to the place where they are to set it up.

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34 Knowles 1951, p.40.
36 Ibid, p.41.
37 Ibid, p.41.
The participants knelt on the ground and bowed. At this point the priest and deacon went to the place where the *Corpus Domini* had been placed on Maundy Thursday. There, incense having been placed in the thurible, the priest censed the *Corpus Domini*. It was handed to the deacon, who carried it back to the altar. The instructions continued:

*When they approach the altar all the brethren shall adore the body of the Lord on their knees*\(^38\).

Mass followed, and once all had received communion, the board was struck and the monks, having processed out to the cloisters where their feet were washed in warm water and having put on their day shoes, returned to the church for Vespers.

A comparison of this liturgy with that of the *Regularis Concordia* highlights the following differences:

1. The cross itself no longer has the 'personification' element of the *Regularis Concordia* liturgy. Theologically speaking, there has been a transfer of personification from the cross to the consecrated Host.

2. The foot washing ceremonies have become more important - but the washing, drying and kissing of the feet on Maundy Thursday must have set up some resonances in the minds of the monks when they then kissed the 'foot' of the cross.

3. There is no attempt in Lanfranc's *Constitutions* to create a 'sepulchre'; the cross in this liturgy is not buried - but because the Maundy Thursday Host had been taken in procession to an 'appropriate place', it is easy to see how later rites would conflate the burial of the cross in the *Regularis Concordia* with an apparent 'burial' of the Host which took place on Maundy Thursday rather than on Good Friday.

4. There was in the *Regularis Concordia* liturgy some clarity about narrative chronology: in Lanfranc the chronological clarity of the narrative has been sacrificed for theological doctrines surrounding the consecrated Host. The Host was the 'living' body of Christ and, unlike the cross in the *Regularis Concordia*,

\(^{38}\) Knowles 1951, p.41.
could thus not really be 'buried'. In brief, theology has overtaken and, to some extent confused, the flow of the narrative.

Following the Mass and Vespers on Good Friday, there was a meal which consisted of bread and water and raw herbs, whilst what would have been the brothers' supper was given to the poor. While the community were at their simple meal, the sacristans and as many priests as were needed remained in the church to wash all the altars, firstly with water and then with wine\textsuperscript{39}.

Again, in comparison with the \textit{Regularis Concordia}, the drama of the narrative of Good Friday, when the brothers stayed to keep watch at the 'sepulchre', has been lost. No doubt the cleansing and washing process of the altars would have conveyed the starkness of the evening - and might in later liturgies be transferred, as in Hereford, to the washing of the cross, itself, with wine and water.

The central liturgical motif of Holy Saturday was the lighting of the new fire and the ceremony of light:

\begin{quote}
\textit{When the litany is done the cantors shall sing thrice in a loud voice 'Kindle the lights,' and then, and not before, shall the candles and other lights before and about the altar be lighted ... and the bells shall then begin to be rung, not ceasing till the end of the Kyrie}\textsuperscript{40}.
\end{quote}

After Vespers came another innovation:

\begin{quote}
\textit{... they shall go in procession to the crucifix}\textsuperscript{41}.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{39} The stripping and washing of the altars is mentioned from the seventh century onwards (see Tyrer 1932, p.107) but the ritual was normally carried out on Maundy Thursday and not on Good Friday. \textit{See also} Tyrer 1932, p.118:

\begin{quote}
In some churches, especially those served by Canons, the Washing of the Altars took place, not on Maundy Thursday, but on Good Friday. We have found one instance of this in England - at Canterbury, where Lanfranc orders the Altars to be washed today [Maundy Thursday] after Vespers.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{40} Knowles 1951, pp.45-46.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p.46.
This instruction is probably meant to refer to the great crucifix set up by Lanfranc on a beam which stretched north-south across the nave at its eastern end42. The crucifix would have had the figures of Mary and St John on each side of it.

Again, this Holy Saturday post-Vespers procession marks a break in the narrative. The storyline is interrupted; the crucifixion is revisited. In the Regularis Concordia liturgy the emphasis was upon light, certainly, but also, through the presence of the sepulchre and because of the reading of the story of the three Marys, the emphasis was upon the resurrection of Easter day.

The instructions in Lanfranc's Constitutions for Easter day itself are almost anticlimactic:

... before the night choirs, all the bells shall be rung for Matins, then by two and two as usual. At the invitatory there shall be four in cope, and the psalms as in the Rule, that is 'Domine in virtute tua' and the rest. During the lessons thuribles shall be borne round43.

There was no elevatio, no visitatio sepulchri - and therefore, of course, no Easter sepulchre. It is significant that during the days that followed, after Lauds and Vespers, a procession was made to the crucifix. One is left with the distinct impression that the saga-like theology of the Regularis Concordia has begun to give way to new theological

42 See Gibson 1978, pp.164-165:

Stigand had given such a group to his other cathedral of Winchester and to Ely, and a 'great cross' to St. Augustine's, Canterbury; archbishop Ealdred gave a cross 'of German work' to Beverley minster; and a resourceful abbot of Bury St. Edmunds in the same period took the exact measurements of the Volto Santo of Lucca and had it reproduced to scale by his own craftsmen at home. These wonders have all vanished; they are the early expression of a devotion that was to find its way into every parish church, growing banal through repetition. In the 1070s however such crucifixes were unfamiliar in Normandy and France: they could be found in the Rhineland, where perhaps they originated, northern Italy and England. The crucifix in Lanfranc's cathedral was English, with a difference. Above it were two cherubim, one on either side, as the cherubim that watched over the ark of the covenant. They were complemented by the cherubim on the central tower, who guarded the ark-like nave of Christ Church itself.

43 Knowles 1951, p.47.
doctrines surrounding the Mass, the Corpus Domini and the crucifix. And in Lanfranc, of Easter sepulchres there is not a word.

It is known that the Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc were introduced, as Gjerløw says, at Rochester (Lanfranc's own foundation):

... at St Albans with the abbacy of Lanfranc's nephew, Paul of Caen, and in the newly reorganised cathedral priory of Durham. Worcester possessed a copy of the Decreta, and their influence can be traced in the late medieval Westminster customs. From St Albans they were, in the 1130s, introduced in Croyland Abbey.

But Lanfranc also made explicit in the preface to the Monastic Constitutions that he did not expect his instructions to be followed slavishly:

... we are all free to add or to take away or to make changes if we think alteration to be an advantage, following right reason or the judgment of those better informed; for however far a man advance, it is the worst of failings for him to suppose that he can go no further. An increase or decrease in the number of monks, conditions in different places and the inevitable changes of circumstance, added to diversity of opinion shown in this or that way of thinking - all these often make for changes in matters which have long been unaltered. Hence it is that no one church can exactly imitate the practices of another.

It would seem, then, that Lanfranc took a fairly tolerant and liberal view of liturgical development.

In other monasteries, for example at Glastonbury, the introduction of new liturgies by Abbot Thurstan in 1083 sparked a monastic rebellion. Whereas in Winchester

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44 Gjerløw 1961, p.95.
45 Knowles 1951, p.1.
46 It is nevertheless intriguing to discover that in the Romanesque cathedral of Old Sarum, dedicated in 1092, there would appear to have been an Easter sepulchre. At least, to be more accurate, Richard Gem, writing about that cathedral, includes an area to the north side of the presbytery, which is described as an Easter sepulchre, on a detailed plan of excavation drawn by D. Montague between 1912 and 1924. (see Gem 1990, p.11).
... the old liturgy of the Regularis Concordia completed one hundred years earlier survived unchanged. Winchester proclaimed continuity. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, therefore, there would appear to have been no fixed and unalterable liturgy across the nation; the Decreta Lanfranci jostled with the Regularis Concordia, perhaps to the mutual enrichment of both or to the perplexity of those who travelled from monastery to monastery. In such a mixed liturgical economy the question is: were there any permanent Easter sepulchres in the eleventh and twelfth centuries? As the Regularis Concordia liturgy required only the creation of a temporary sepulchre and Lanfranc's liturgy had nothing within it which necessitated even a temporary structure, the answer to the question posed must be 'No.'

Some degree of clarity in things liturgical only begins to emerge in the thirteenth century with the birth of what came to be known as the Sarum rite.

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The Sarum Rite

One of the complexities surrounding this attempt to trace the use and development of Easter sepulchres is the number of gaps which seem to exist between the rites already outlined - the Regularis Concordia of the tenth century and Lanfranc's Decretals of the eleventh century - and those which are to be found in the thirteenth-century Sarum rites. Some comfort may be taken from the words of A. A. King who, in attempting to trace the origins of the Sarum rite, concludes:

... when all is said and done, and in spite of what has been discovered in the way of similarities with other uses, it must be confessed that with our present knowledge it is quite impossible to identify any specific 'ancestor' for the Sarum use. Its essential framework is ... in the same line of development as Lanfranc's statutes for Canterbury, the Ecclesiastical Offices of John of Avranches and ultimately, perhaps, the 'Ordines Romani'.

In other words, the trajectory of the use is reasonably clear but its origins are not.

King places the Sarum ordinal and the consuetudinary as

... twin products of the early 13th century.

If he is correct in doing so, then there is a significant and unfilled (and unfillable?) gap between the rites of Holy Week, as outlined by Lanfranc, in the latter part of the eleventh century and the arrival on the scene of Sarum in the early thirteenth century - a gap of

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1 For a careful analysis of late Anglo-Saxon service books, see Hohler 1975:

... tenth- and eleventh-century English books do not present a neat picture of continental usages being adopted, but rather stages in the adjustment, by fairly stupid men most of the time, of some pre-existing body of texts and usages of Italian origin current in England to what, by the tenth century, was fashionable in Northern Europe. [Ibid, p.81].

2 King 1959, p.307.

3 Ibid, p.306.

some one hundred and forty years or so. King expresses his difficulties with the task of trying to trace the origins and development of Sarum thus:

[It] is the more perplexing in that the liturgy of each particular Church was not stereotyped in the Middle Ages; each use was from time to time borrowing from its neighbours, adding, retrenching, changing.

It would seem that any attempt to trace a cause-and-effect chain from the rites of the Regularis Concordia, via Lanfranc, to the Sarum rite is doomed to end in melancholy failure. And if this be the case, then trying to trace evidence-based theological shifts and their outworking in liturgy is also bound to be very difficult. The best one can do is make broad-brush assumptions and hope that by doing so, assertion is not taking the place of the painstaking building of a case.

What can be said with real certainty is that the Sarum use became increasingly popular from the thirteenth century onwards, and it is to that rite and its provisions for the ceremonies of Holy Week that we now turn.

The Maundy Thursday rite begins after the singing of None with a procession to the west door of the church where, in the vestibule, penitents have gathered. After being admonished and after the hearing of a lesson, the penitents kneel and rise three times and are then led in procession, having been...

... restored to the bosom of the Church.

Collects, prayers and an absolution follow, and the solemn Mass begins. At the offertory, the rubric gives this instruction:

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5 King 1959, p.305. It is interesting to note that the phrase ‘adding, retrenching, changing’ was used by Edmund Bishop (see Bishop 1918 (a), p.300), but King seems not to have acknowledged the derivation.

6 See King 1959, especially pp.284-302, for a detailed study of this.

Three hosts should be placed by the sub-deacon for consecration; of which two should be reserved for the following day, one to be received by the priest, the other to be deposited with the cross in the sepulchre.

There are no instructions about how the two Hosts set aside for Good Friday are to be treated, nor where they are to be kept overnight. At communion on Maundy Thursday the pax was not given, nor the Agnus Dei sung; but if a bishop were present, then the Agnus Dei was said 'solemnly' and the vessel containing the holy chrism was kissed instead of the pax. Once Mass and Vespers were concluded, the clergy assembled in the church:

... to wash the altars, to perform the Maundy, and to say Compline.

The water having been previously blessed, a procession consisting of two high-ranking priests, accompanied by a deacon, a subdeacon and a candle bearer robed in albs and amices, and two clerks carrying wine and water, moved to the high altar. There wine and water were poured over it and as this was happening, the choir sang the following responsory:

On the mount of Olives I prayed unto the Father:
Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;
the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

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8 The custom of reserving a Host for use on Good Friday seems to have originated in Rome in the seventh century (see Tyrer 1932, p.105).

In the Mozarabic rite:

... a cross, a missal (or bible), a censer, a small bell, and an incense-boat containing incense are placed with the host in the sepulchre (here called 'monumentum'), and this is locked with two keys and sealed with two seals. [Tyrer 1932, pp.106-107].


11 Ibid, p.245.

12 The stripping and washing of the altars is mentioned in the seventh century: Sixteenth Council of Toledo, canon 8:

... except on the day of the Lord's Passion when the altars remain stripped. [Tyrer 1932, pp.107-108.]
Thy will be done.

The versicle was:

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.
Thy will be done\textsuperscript{13}.

In turn, each altar in the church was washed with water and wine, with a separate responsory for each, and the collect prayer read for the saint in whose honour the altar was dedicated. The final responsory to be used at the last altar to be washed was:

Lying men compassed me about; they scourged me without a cause.
But thou, O Lord, my defender, avenge me

with its accompanying versicle:

For trouble is hard at hand, and there is no one to help.
But thou, O Lord, etc\textsuperscript{14}.

It is interesting to note that whereas in the Regularis Concordia of the tenth century it was the cross itself which was personified, in the Sarum use, whilst the altars themselves are not personified in quite the same way, an element of personification is nevertheless present.

The washing of the altars was followed by the procession into the Chapter House where, after the reading of the gospel (John 13:1-15) the ceremony of foot washing took place\textsuperscript{15}. Unlike the Maundy ceremony in Lanfranc, the foot washing is solely for the members of the community - the poor, and gifts to the poor, have been abandoned.

\textsuperscript{13} Warren 1913, vol.1, p.245.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p.245. The reference in the versicle is to Psalm 22.

\textsuperscript{15} In the Hereford rite, the foot washing is carried out by the bishop and dean; in Rouen, by the archbishop (see Bishop 1918, p.294).

In York, the foot washing took place before the stripping of the altars (see Tyrer 1932, p.109).
On Good Friday, after None, the priest robed in a red chasuble and accompanied by deacon and subdeacon robed in amices and albs, processed to the altar. Lessons and responses (including Hosea 6:1-6 and Exodus 12:1-11) and the Passion according to John (John 18 - 19:1-37) were read. The only dramatic element (also found in Lanfranc and the Regularis Concordia) occurred at the phrase 'They parted my garments amongst them,' when two acolytes approached the altar and took from it two linen cloths which had been placed there for that purpose. A series of collects was then read and, on completion, the priest celebrant divested himself of his red chasuble and took his seat near the altar, accompanied by deacon and subdeacon. At which point two other priests, 'of higher rank' 16, barefoot and vested in albs, without apparels, solemnly held aloft between them the veiled cross and took their position behind the high altar, on the right-hand side, and chanted these verses:

O my people, what have I done unto thee, or wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. Because I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a cross for thy Saviour 17.

The priests, as it were, interrogate the congregation, taking to themselves the part of God. The deacons respond to the 'interrogation' with the 'Thrice Holy', namely

Agyos o Theos, Agyos Iskyros, Agyos Athanatos, Eleyson ymas

and the choir echo the song with the English translation

Holy God, Holy and Strong, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us 18.

This interrogative sequence is followed by the priests who, all the while, have been holding the cross aloft, unveiling it and singing

Behold the wood of the cross, on which hung the salvation of the world. O come, let us adore 19.

17 Ibid, p.258.
18 Ibid, p.258.
19 Ibid, p.259.
The choir respond with the anthem

We adore thy cross, O Lord, and we praise and glorify thy holy resurrection; for, lo, by the cross joy hath come to the world\(^{20}\).

Psalm 67 is sung with the anthem above interspersed between each verse; at the anthem everyone genuflects. The rubric then gives explicit instructions:

Meanwhile the cross shall be solemnly placed on the third step of the altar, two priests being seated close to it, one on the right hand, the other on the left\(^{21}\).

Unfortunately, what is not made clear is whether the cross is laid at an angle on the altar steps or whether it is placed on a processional shaft.

The members of the community, barefoot, proceed to adore the cross

beginning with those of highest rank\(^{22}\).

The priests seated by the cross sing the first verse of the hymn 'Faithful cross, above all other', with the choir repeating each verse of the hymn after the priests.

Once the hymn is ended, the cross is carried through the choir to

... a spot where it may be adored by the people before some altar\(^{23}\).

Once this is completed, the cross is carried back to the high altar and the Mass begins. The priest having put back on his red chasuble. The Host used at the Mass is the one set aside on Maundy Thursday - but no instructions are given, either about where it is kept or how it is to be taken to the altar. At the Mass, of course, only the priest communicates; the rest of the community participate by observing and listening.


\(^{21}\) Ibid, p.259.

\(^{22}\) Ibid, p.259. For a brief description of the origins of the veneration ceremony, see Gjerlo\text{\`o} 1961, pp.14-17.

\(^{23}\) Ibid, p.261.
Vespers follow Mass, then the priest divesting himself of his red chasuble and
accompanied by 'one of superior rank'\textsuperscript{24}, both wearing surplices and barefoot, place the
cross in the sepulchre\textsuperscript{25}. In that sepulchre, in a pyx, is the remaining Host that had been
consecrated on Maundy Thursday. The priest celebrant alone then says the responsory:

\begin{quote}
I am counted as one of them that go down into the pit:
and I have been even as a man that hath no strength,
free among the dead\textsuperscript{26}.
\end{quote}

The versicle in response is:

\begin{quote}
Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
in a place of darkness, and in the deep.
I have been even as a man that hath no strength,
free among the dead.
\end{quote}

The rubrics instruct the priest and his companion to genuflect and rise during each
responsory\textsuperscript{27}. The choir meanwhile remains kneeling. The sepulchre is censed and the
door\textsuperscript{28} shut (sic) and a further responsory is sung:

\begin{quote}
The Lord being buried, the sepulchre was sealed: rolling a stone to the door of
the sepulchre: setting soldiers to watch it.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Warren 1913, vol.1, p.263.

\textsuperscript{25} At Rouen and Hereford, the cross is placed in the sepulchre between the adoratio and the
procession to bring the reserved sacrament to the altar. In the Sarum rite, as can be seen, the
ceremony takes place after Vespers. Also at Rouen and at Hereford, only the cross was 'buried'
whereas in Sarum, the cross is 'buried' together with the Host (see Bishop 1918, pp.295-296). In
York the cross was 'buried' immediately after the adoratio (see Tyrer 1932, p.132).

\textsuperscript{26} Psalm 88: 4-5a.

\textsuperscript{27} Warren 1913, vol.1, p.264.

\textsuperscript{28} In the Hereford rite there is also a reference to a door related to the sepulchre:

\begin{quote}
Let the holy cross be carried to the door of the sepulchre \textsuperscript{[Bishop 1918, p.295]}
\end{quote}

As the instruction is specific about the door, it seems to imply a large structure, for example, a
side chapel (?), rather than an aumbry, or possibly a specially created temporary structure.
At the sepulchre the cross was washed with wine and water and dried with a towel.
Lest peradventure his disciples should come and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead.\(^{29}\)

Three further anthems follow. Firstly:

I will lay me down in peace and take my rest: for it is thou, Lord, only that makest me dwell in safety.

Secondly:

At Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling in Sion.

Thirdly:

My flesh also shall rest in hope.

A period of silence and private prayer is then succeeded by the clergy going back

... as they please, in no fixed order.\(^{30}\)

except for the priest celebrant, who puts on his red chasuble again and leaves in procession accompanied by deacon, subdeacon and the other ministers of the altar.

A wax candle at the sepulchre is mentioned in the rubrics:

From that time one wax candle at least shall burn continually before the sepulchre, until the procession of the Lord's Resurrection on Easter Day.\(^{31}\)

It is very noticeable what a different ethos there is in this rite, compared with the Regularis Concordia ceremonies. In the Sarum rite the liturgy is much more closely choreographed; the celebrant priest is careful to robe in particular garments and divest himself of his chasuble from time to time; the processions are precisely delineated. likewise the responsories and accompanying genuflections. From a dramatic point of

\(^{29}\) Warren 1913, vol.1, p.264.  
\(^{30}\) Ibid, p.264.  
\(^{31}\) Ibid, p.265.
view, it is orderly and contained. There is no expectation that the drama will run out of control. It is elegant rather than robust, self-consciously theological rather than being driven along by the inherent complexities and dynamics of the human drama. Narrative remains but is less central than liturgical propriety.

Theologically, two things have happened. First, the cross itself, whilst retaining some of its centrality – at the veneration, for example, and at the depositio – is now having to share the stage with the pyx-and-Host. Secondly, the doctrine of transubstantiation, given the highest authority by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, is given physical expression in the rite by the Host being treated as the Body of Christ. There is, however, within this, a narrative difficulty: if the body is 'substantial' (in the theological sense) and thus represents the eternally living body of Christ, to 'bury' it, as though it were 'dead' is to create a narrative difficulty - though not necessarily a theological one.

From a social-anthropological viewpoint, it is also clear that the priesthood has increased in significance compared with the situation in the tenth century (hence all the emphasis upon robing and processions); the Maundy foot washing has become a drama internal to the church community (the poor no longer feature); the sense of the powerful abbot, as in the Regularis Concordia, prostrating himself before the cross has given way to a procession of clergy adoring the cross briefly before resuming their places.

Meanwhile, as far as the Easter sepulchre is concerned, the rubrics and the rite are not as prescriptive as one might hope. The sepulchre itself is not described nor is its place within the topography of the church delineated. All that one can deduce is that it is capable of receiving a cross and a pyx with a Host, and that it has a door. This suggests that it does need to have a distinct structure, though this could easily be a wooden and fabric one. This raises, inevitably, a question about the structure itself and might, on the face of it, suggest that an aumbry was indeed the sepulchre. (This issue will be explored in the following chapter.)

The ceremonies for Easter Eve are centred on the blessing of the new fire. The prayer accompanying the ceremony itself explores the metaphor of light:

... thou, who lightest every man that cometh into this world, enlighten the consciences of our hearts with the fire of thy love; that we being inflamed by thy
fire, and illuminated by thy light, and having the darkness of sin expelled from our hearts, may by thy guiding light be deemed worthy to come to light eternal.\textsuperscript{32}

Incense is blessed and is regarded as having properties suitable for exorcism:

\begin{quote}
I exorcise thee, most unclean spirit, and every illusion of the enemy ... that wheresoever this incense or frankincense shall be, there thou shalt in no wise dare to approach.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

The exorcism then continues in a second prayer:

\begin{quote}
... that wherever the smoke of its sweet scent shall spread abroad, it may miraculously prevail, in virtue of thy holy name, to put to flight all phantastic assaults of unclean spirits, and to drive away all diseases, and to restore health.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

Following a hymn, the blessing of the paschal candle takes place, with prayers being chanted\textsuperscript{35}; incense grains are then inserted into the candle in the shape of a cross, the candle is lit from the new fire - and candles are then lit throughout the church. Lessons, collects and litanies follow. After this a procession is formed, including an acolyte carrying a cross, candle bearers, thurifer, a boy carrying a book and another boy a candle with which the font will be blessed, two deacons carrying oil and chrism, subdeacon, deacon and priest. As they process down the south side of the church, another litany is sung invoking the prayers of all the saints\textsuperscript{36}.

At the font, the water is blessed, the priest dividing the water with his hand in the form of a cross; he also throws water from the font into the four quarters; and then he breathes upon the water, again in the form of a cross; candle wax from a lighted candle is dropped into the font in a cross shape, and finally the candle is dipped into the middle of the font and a cross shape made.

\textsuperscript{32} Warren 1913, vol.1, p.266.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.267.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, p.268.
\textsuperscript{35} See Ibid, pp.270-272.
\textsuperscript{36} See Ibid, pp.279-280.
Having blessed the font, the procession returns to the altar, singing a litany ('Thou. the holy angels' king'), and at the altar Mass begins. When the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* is sung, the bells of the church are rung in a great cacophony, and once Mass is ended and Vespers completed, the ceremonies come to their conclusion.

All the while the Easter sepulchre has been ignored, as has the cross and Host which it contains. There is much movement, processions take place, there are rubrics, for example, about where ministers and candle bearers shall stand at the high altar - but no suggestion that they are having to move in such a way as to avoid the sepulchre. It may be safe to assume that the sepulchre is not in the sanctuary but perhaps close by, between the sanctuary and the choir. The only hint of the Resurrection itself comes in an anthem almost at the very end of the Mass:

\[
\text{In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.}
\]

Even in the prayer at the blessing of the font, the resurrection theme is absent; instead there is much emphasis upon cleansing, rebirth and purification.

It is at the beginning of the Easter day ceremonies that the sepulchre, quite briefly, becomes the centre of attention. In the church, before Mass, and with the entire building lit by candles, the community assembles. Then the rubric says:

\[
\text{Two clerks of higher rank, with candle-bearers, thurifers, and the clergy around them, shall go to the sepulchre, and after first censing the sepulchre with great veneration, that is to say, with genuflection, they shall speedily and with privacy place the body of the Lord upon the altar.}
\]

The phrase 'speedily and with privacy' is not easy to interpret, but it presumably means, as has been suggested above, that the sepulchre itself is not in the sanctuary but close by. (There would be no need to specify haste if the sepulchre were the aumbry on the north wall of the chancel next to the altar.)


\[\text{\textsuperscript{38}}\] Ibid, p.289.
Having placed the Host on the altar, they then return to the sepulchre and from it take out the cross. The actual phrase in the rubric concerning the subsequent procession is 'the cross which has been raised from the sepulchre' - which might imply a coffer rather than an aumbry. You would not raise a cross from a cupboard. The anthem 'Christ being raised' is sung and, meanwhile, the procession advances:

... by the south door of the presbytery through the middle of the quire\(^{39}\).

The instructions are written with a particular church in mind - but, nevertheless, they are not unambiguous. It may be safe to assume that the sepulchre is somewhere between the choir and the sanctuary on the north side. The procession, perhaps leaving by the south door of the presbytery, then walks westwards down the south presbytery aisle and makes its way through the centre of the choir before exiting via the north door of the presbytery. The cross in the procession is carried by the two priests who took it originally from the sepulchre, with thurifers and candle bearers preceding them. The procession then moves to an altar on the north side of the church.

Meanwhile, at the high altar, the sub-treasurer has taken the pyx and suspends it (still enclosing the consecrated Host) in a 'tabernacle'\(^{40}\). All the bells of the church are rung 'in a clash'\(^{41}\) and the anthem 'Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more' is sung. The anthem is couched in terms of a challenging, forensic debate; the words following 'Christ being raised', etc, being:

\[\text{Now let the Jews declare how the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre lost the king when the stone was placed, wherefore they kept not the rock of righteousness; let them either produce him buried, or adore him rising, saying with us, (the quire shall answer thus) Alleluia, alleluia}^{42}.\]


\(^{40}\) Ibid, p.289. For further details concerning the means of reservation of the Host in a pyx, see Micklethwaite 1901, pp.30-31.

\(^{41}\) Warren 1913, vol.1, p.289.

\(^{42}\) Ibid, p.289.
In the north-side chapel a prayer is said. Then the rubric asserts what should happen next:

... all shall genuflect with joy in the same place, and adore the cross, especially those of higher rank, and then they shall return quietly, without procession, to the quire.\(^{43}\)

The instruction about returning 'without procession' is specific - and in a rite where the details and orders of processions are such a feature, a moment of disorder is unexpected. Presumably it not only echoed the similar instruction on Good Friday evening after the deposition at the sepulchre:

... all others shall go back as they please, in no fixed order.\(^{44}\)

but was also intended to convey something of the confusion of the earliest New Testament witnesses of the resurrected Christ.

Following the placing of the cross on the north-side altar and the return of the participants to the choir, all the images and crosses throughout the church were uncovered, and the bells rung for Matins.

After the singing of Sext a great procession formed, which then made its way around the church and the cloisters as the choir sang 'Hail, festal day'. On returning to the church a station - focus point for special prayer - was kept at the cross, that is, at the great rood which, as in Lanfranc's Canterbury, would have been placed on a beam to the east of the nave. There the precentor began the anthem:

An angel stood at the sepulchre of the Lord, clad in shining raiment: the women beholding him, filled with exceeding terror, stood afar off. Then the angel spake, and said unto them, 'Fear not, I say unto you, for he whom ye seek among the dead now liveth, and the life of mankind has risen with him. Alleluia.\(^{45}\)

\(^{43}\) Warren 1913, vol.1, p.290.

\(^{44}\) Ibid, p.264.

\(^{45}\) Ibid, p.292.
The words 'Fear not', etc, of the anthem then formed a responsory for this further statement proclaiming the glory of the Christ:

\[ Praise \text{ him who was crucified in the flesh;} \text{ and glorify him who was buried on our behalf; and adore him who rose from the dead.}\]

The procession made its way into the choir - and Mass followed.

From the description of the Sarum rite for Easter day, it can be seen that, apart from the processions, there are three powerful visual elements - the cross, laid in the sepulchre, later carried to a north-side chapel; the Host, taken from the sepulchre in its pyx to the tabernacle above the high altar; and the great rood\footnote{The rood was also one of the major 'stations' in the Hereford/Rouen Palm Sunday rite - see Bishop 1918, p.292.}, which became the station where the New Testament story of the angel and the Marys was rehearsed. In brief, the sepulchre itself, although a candle burned beside it, was not the focus of the Easter theological narrative - that had now become located in three different parts of the church.

In these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that the Easter sepulchre, as a permanent and embellished piece of architectural furniture, is so elusive. It actually plays only a fleeting part in the Sarum Holy Week liturgies and 'resurrection' is centred elsewhere: on a cross, on the elevated Host and on the rood.

At the risk of oversimplification, it might be helpful at this stage to draw a comparison between the liturgies for Holy Week specified by the Regularis Concordia, the Decreta Lanfranci and the Sarum rite, as they relate to the Easter sepulchre.

1. **Regularis Concordia**

In the *Regularis Concordia* the narrative element of the liturgy is strong; one 'act' follows another in an orderly but vigorous fashion. It is the cross which carries the theological weight of the drama; it is adored (*adoratio*), buried (*depositio*) and raised (*elevatio*). The temporary sepulchre provides the locus not only for the *depositio* and *elevatio* but also

\footnote{Warren 1913, vol.1, p.292.}
for the visitatio sepulchri. The cross 'personifies' the dead and risen Christ; there is no 'burial' or 'resurrection' of a consecrated Host.

2. Decreta of Lanfranc

In Lanfranc, the narrative drive of the Holy Week story has been sacrificed in the interests of a more cerebral exploration of the theological doctrine of the Mass. The Host becomes the carrier of theological weight; it is laid in 'an appropriate place' on Maundy Thursday and carried solemnly from that place to the altar on Good Friday. It should be noted that although there has been an adoratio ceremony of the cross on Good Friday, there is no depositio and no visitatio sepulchri. On Holy Saturday the great crucifix is the centre of attention, not the cross which was 'adored' on Good Friday. In these liturgical and theological circumstances, where attention has shifted to the Host and the rood, there is no need for an Easter sepulchre, either temporary or permanent.

3. Sarum rite

In the Sarum rite, elements from the Regularis Concordia and Lanfranc are combined, the narrative flow of the Regularis Concordia has, to a very limited extent, been rediscovered. The cross is 'adored' and 'buried' on Good Friday and 'raised', with much rejoicing and a solemn procession, on Easter Day. There is, however, no visitatio sepulchri.

The Host is 'buried' in the sepulchre with the cross on Good Friday and on Easter Day is placed centrally on the high altar - though, be it noted, not with as much solemnity or ritual as is accorded to the cross. The procession to the great rood, which in Lanfranc took place on Holy Saturday, has now become part of the Easter Day celebration.

The theology of Easter Day is centred visually on the 'risen cross' (in its special place in the north side chapel), on the elevated Host at the high altar and on the great rood at the junction of the nave and the chancel. The unifying theological factor is, of course, the person of Christ: 'adored' in the cross, 'seen' in the Host and 'gazed at' on the rood. In these circumstances, especially when the reception of the Host at communion was such a significant and rare event for the participants, it is perhaps understandable that the Easter sepulchre itself should play such a secondary rôle. The theme of death and burial (shared by both cross and Host) is strong but perhaps not so dominant, and certainly not so
visually or theologically compelling as to require the creation of a permanent sepulchre. A temporary sepulchre would be a useful and honoured 'prop' - but perhaps no more than that. It could be argued that it played a similar rôle in late medieval liturgy to that played by the Christmas crib in contemporary worship - honoured and enjoyed, but then put away for another year.

Between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries it can be seen that theological attention has shifted from the centrality given to the cross in the Regularis Concordia to an increasing but not monopolistic attention given to the Host. The cross itself, however, remained a significant bearer of religious belief and emotional commitment, especially at the adoratio, for almost six centuries, that is until the reforms of the sixteenth century. The great rood came on to the liturgical scene in the eleventh century, presumably reflecting that shift towards affective spirituality which can be traced to Anselm (c1033-1109), amongst others.

The cross in the tenth and eleventh centuries was, essentially, personified. But in the twelfth century it began to be loaded with other cultural and doctrinal meanings - and therefore, presumably, the liturgies surrounding the Easter sepulchre took on a new colour. In the Sarum rite it is evident that the cross itself played a critical rôle. It was 'buried' with due reverence in the sepulchre on Good Friday. It was raised from the sepulchre on Easter Day and was carried by two priests in a procession, and was thus given a place of honour. The climax of the procession was arrived at when the cross was placed on a north side altar and was there adored, with accompanying genuflections.

In terms not only of its theological and liturgical function, but also because of its shape and size, the cross would have continued to play a determinative rôle in the Easter sepulchre structures, whether temporary or permanent.
Having outlined the liturgy (and its inherent theology) in the *Sarum* rite, the question of the nature and form of the Easter sepulchre used in that rite inevitably arises.

It has been shown that in the original rubrics the Easter sepulchre was said to have a door and was capable of receiving a pyx with a Host and a cross. But it also needs to be remembered that the rubrics were written for their original architectural setting, that is, Salisbury, and whereas that sepulchre, and the one in Hereford, presumably, had a door, it does not necessarily follow that all churches using the *Sarum* or the *Hereford* rites had exactly the same architectural provision. Indeed, if the references within the *Sarum* rite to the existence of a north-side chapel, where the cross was adored, are assumed to imply, or require, that every church using that rite had such a north-side chapel, the untenability of that assumption can be easily demonstrated by looking at the architectural configuration of many medieval churches. In other words, the *Sarum* rite rubrics would have had to be interpreted and adapted according to the vagaries of the architectural space available in each church using the rite.

But the question that follows from the description of the *Sarum* rite outlined in the previous pages is whether that rite might have necessitated or made desirable any form of permanent Easter sepulchre. In particular, were aumbries the *earliest* form? It is possible to see why Sheingorn, in trying to bring some degree of order and pattern to the story of Easter sepulchres in England, argues that the prototype of permanent Easter sepulchres was

*A simple small recess in the north chancel wall, possibly entirely plain, with or without a door*.

Following the lead of Heales she begins to lay the foundations for her hypothesis about the significance of the north wall of the chancel as the classical locus for Easter sepulchres. She suggests that aumbries/lockers on the north wall may have functioned as such sepulchres:

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1 Sheingorn 1985, p.35.

2 For a detailed history of the aumbry, *see* Dix 1942.

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Given that the location of this recess is the same as that of an Easter Sepulchre and that its function in general centered on the safekeeping of sacred objects, Alfred Heales is surely correct in suggesting that such a recess could well have been used as an Easter Sepulchre.

It may be that Heales in his undoubted enthusiasm for Easter sepulchres has misled Sheingorn and others who have accepted, unchallenged, his original statement. Writing in 1868 and describing tomb recesses, Heales states:

In the overwhelming majority of churches there is no such tomb-like recess, but we do find, very frequently indeed, a small arched or square headed recess to the north-west of the altar, sometimes with a modern door remaining, and always with the marks of hinges and bolts; this, which we commonly call an aumbry, would be extremely suitable as the depository for the pyx or the pyx and crucifix, and it seems exceedingly likely that it was intended to receive them in Holy Week, rather than to entrust them (as must elsewhere have been the case) to the temporary wooden structure.

The difficulties with the Heales/Sheingorn hypothesis - that lockers on the north wall of the chancel were 'exceedingly likely' to have been used as Easter sepulchres - are, firstly, that it fails to take seriously enough the dominant metaphor of 'burial' within the Sarum rite version of the Easter sepulchre liturgy and, secondly, that it also fails to analyse the great variety of places within church buildings in which lockers are actually found.

To take the latter point first – I drew up a database of such lockers within the counties of Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Westmorland, and using the RCHM survey of each of those counties as the main source of information, the statistics of lockers in each county are as follows:

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3 Sheingorn 1987, p.36.
4 Heales 1868.
5 Amongst the others is A. A. King, who states:
Many of the aumbries to be met with in parish churches and cathedrals would have served as Easter sepulchres, reliquaries or receptacles for books and sacred vessels.
[King 1965, p.97.]
6 Heales 1868, p.296.
1. Buckinghamshire has a total of 52 lockers, of which only 23 (44.4%) are in the north wall of the chancel, 7 are in the south wall of the chancel and the remainder are in other parts of the church.

2. Herefordshire has a total of 49 lockers, of which only 13 (26.5%) are in the north wall of the chancel, 5 are in the south wall and the remainder (31) are found elsewhere in the church.

3. Hertfordshire has a total of 18 lockers of which only 6 (33.3%) are in the north wall of the chancel, 1 is in the south wall and the remainder (11) are found in a variety of settings in the church.

4. Westmorland has a total of 7 lockers of which only 3 are in the north wall of the chancel.

Thus of the 126 lockers in the churches of these four counties, only 45 (35.7%) are in the north wall of the chancel, 13 are in the south wall; ie 46% of all lockers are in the chancel whereas the remainder, 54%, are scattered in various parts of the church. Weston-under-Penyard and Fownhope in Herefordshire, for example, both have lockers in the second stage of a tower. Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire, and St Michael's, St Albans, in Hertfordshire, have lockers on what is now the outside walls of their churches – perhaps used by anchorites? A number of churches, for example, St Ippolyts in Hertfordshire and Marsh Gibbon in Buckinghamshire, have double lockers, and there are others, such as St James, Hanslope, in Buckinghamshire and Houghton Conquest in Bedfordshire, where there are no fewer than three lockers in the chancel.

This would seem, on the face of it, to suggest that lockers were multipurpose storage cupboards whose location in the liturgical topography of the churches was not necessarily very significant. Van Dijk and Hazelden Walker refer in their work on eucharistic reservation to a 'miracle' related to an aumbry (locker) which reveals the use to which such lockers may have been put:

Rupert of Deutz, d.1135, records how a wooden pyx with the sacrament was in its usual place near the altar in a wooden cupboard with a door and lock. With the pyx were other vessels destined for the sacred ministry, namely another pyx with

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Flood 1993, p.83.
unconsecrated hosts, cruets, a censer, candles and some linen. All was burnt [in a fire] except the pyx with the sacrament.

It needs to be noted that there is an irresolvable dispute between Dix who claimed that in England the reserved sacrament, from the twelfth century onwards, was invariably kept in a pyx suspended above the high altar and Van Dijk and Hazelden Walker, who claim that

_Eucharistic reservation has varied greatly throughout the centuries and at no time and in no place should uniformity be expected_.

They then go on to say

_There must have been many exceptions to the suspended pyx style of reservation_.

They do acknowledge, however, that

_those [aumbries] which survive and, in one way or another, show their eucharistic purpose appear to date from the fifteenth century onwards._

As for the function of aumbries, they see that function in multipurpose terms:

_The purpose of aumbries is obvious ... the storage of valuables for the ministry, such as holy oils, candles, cruets, incense, linen, etc, and the holy eucharist as well._

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8 Dijk 1957, p.40.
9 Dix 1942, p.25:
   *Suspension* [of the pyx containing the reserved sacrament, ie consecrated hosts] _was common but not the universal rule in France; it was never very common in Germany outside the Rhineland ... from the twelfth century onwards the suspension of the sacrament over the high altar was the universal rule in Ecclesia Anglicana ... and there is no reason to suppose that it had ever varied since before the Norman Conquest._

10 Dijk 1957, p.25.
11 Ibid, p.43.
12 Ibid, p.43.
Miri Rubin, in her major study of the Corpus Christi festival in northern Europe, draws attention to an order from Bishop Walpole of Ely in 1300:

*We ordain that henceforth the pyx with Christ's body and the chrismatory containing the oil for the sick be placed in the new chapel situated near the old bell-tower, and there it should be kept respectfully under the safe custody of keys, so that day and night the secular priests who will be in charge of administration of sacraments at the time, will be able to lay hands on them easily, and to fulfil their duties without any danger.*

His ordinance could be taken to imply that aumbries/lockers were the place where the reserved sacrament was kept (though it is clear that he has a particular building in mind) and might refute Dix's bold assertion that hanging pyxes were the invariable means of reservation in England. Miri Rubin points out that

*Pyxes were meant to be closed and with a lock; the requirements of Bishop Quivil of Exeter in 1287 were: 'The eucharist pyx should be of silver or at least of ivory with a lock'.*

It is possible, therefore, that Bishop Walpole's edict refers not to an aumbry but to a pyx, though an aumbry seems the most likely interpretation of his instructions.

If lockers really are cupboards for storage, does it not suggest that they would be unlikely to be used as Easter sepulchres because they neither had the physical characteristics which lent themselves to the 'burial' metaphor of the Good Friday rites, nor did they have that sense of being supremely and uniquely important from a dramatic and theological point of view? A cupboard, used daily for other things, would hardly convey the notion of 'tomb', let alone 'the Lord's tomb' to anyone.

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13 Dijk 1957, p.42.
15 Ibid, p.45.
Further evidence in favour of the suggestion that aumbries were simply multifunctional cupboards is provided by Francis Bond in *The Chancel of English Churches* \(^{16}\). In a chapter of that book devoted to aumbries, he argues that aumbries and the parish chest were the equivalent of what would later become the vestry, i.e., a place for storage for a variety of objects, including valuable silverware and liturgical garments. He quotes extensively from the *Rites of Durham*, thus:

> At Durham every altar had 'several aumbrie [sic] and some two' ... 'In the north side of the quire there is an Almerye, near to the High Altar, fastened in the wall, for to lay anything pertaining to the High Altar. Likewise there is another Almerye in the south wall of the quire, nigh the High Altar, enclosed in the wall, to set the chalices, the basons and the crewetts in ...' \(^{17}\).

In the *Rites of Durham*, the very detailed description of the Easter ceremonies, including an account of the *Christus* monstrance figure, is followed immediately by a description of the aumbries. It might have been expected that if any of the aumbries were used at Durham as an Easter sepulchre, that would have been mentioned but, in fact, no connection is made.

In the colour plates of the lockers which follow (they have been collected as the result of personal visits to churches in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire for the purposes of research for this thesis), it is possible to see quite clearly that the metaphor of burial, so prevalent within the Holy Week liturgy, is not given plastic form; rather, the lockers by their design speak loudly and simply of their functionality. They do not appear to have any architectural features to indicate that they might have been prototypical Easter sepulchres.

**Locker images, details and measurements**

These locker images, together with information concerning details and measurements, have been extracted from a database specially compiled for this research. The prints consist of identified lockers where both images and measurements have been acquired. Each locker has been categorised into the following types: 1) simple, square, open

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\(^{16}\) Bond 1916.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, pp.206-208.
recess; 2) simple, square, rebated for door; 3) double lockers, rebated; 4) triple lockers; 5) arched lockers; and 6) others.

**Locker categories**

1. Simple, square, open recess

Examples of this type of locker may be found at:

a) **Luton, St Mary, Bedfordshire** *(Fig. 7)*

Measuring 17" by 18" by 13", this locker is in the south aisle, west of the south transept.

Pevsner does not identify or comment upon this locker; neither does Cobbe.

b) **Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire** *(Fig. 8)*

This is a 13" square recess in the north wall of the tower.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments states:

_MSG: in N. wall of tower, rectangular [sic], without rebate_20.

2) **Tring, St Peter and St Paul, Hertfordshire** *(Fig. 9)*

Undated, this locker measures 19" by 15" by 11" and is positioned 13" above floor level in the north wall of the chancel below a thirteenth-century window.

Pevsner does not mention this locker.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments states:

_MSG: in N. wall of chancel small recess_22.

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19 See Cobbe 1899.
20 Royal Commission 1912, p.264.
22 Royal Commission 1910, p.223.
Square locker [Luton, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
Square locker [Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]
Square locker [Tring, St Peter & St Paul, Hertfordshire]

Measuring 16" by 14" by 11", this locker/recess is to be found in the north chancel.

Pevener does not mention this locker.6

Shelingham does not include this church in her survey.

Upper Dean, All Hallows, Bedfordshire (Fig. 12)
Placed in the north wall of the thirteenth-century chancel, this locker measures 16" by 20" by 12".


G. P. K. Winlaw in his nobled church guide: The History of All Saints Church, p.A.

Sheingorn speculates that this might be an Easter sepulchre:

?ESp; rectangular recess in N wall of chancel below 13c lancet window\(^\text{23}\).

2. **Lockers: simple, rebated for door**

Examples may be found at:

a) **Houghton Conquest, All Saints, Bedfordshire (Fig.10)**

This is a (possibly) fifteenth-century locker in the south aisle wall, measuring 12" by 12" by 9½".

Pevsner does not identify or comment upon this locker in the south aisle wall, nor upon the other two lockers in the chancel\(^\text{24}\).

Winlaw writes:

... *in the south aisle there are evidences of a small piscina and another aumbry*\(^\text{25}\).

b) **Swineshead, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire (Fig.11)**

Measuring 16" by 14" by 11", this locker/recess is to be found in the north chancel.

Pevsner does not mention this locker\(^\text{26}\).

Sheingorn does not include this church in her survey.

c) **Upper Dean, All Hallows, Bedfordshire (Fig.12)**

Placed in the north wall of the thirteenth-century chancel, this locker measures 26" by 20" by 12".

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\(^{25}\) G. P. K. Winlaw in his undated church guide: *The History of All Saints Church*, p.4.

Simple locker, rebated  \[Houghton Conquest, All Saints, Bedfordshire\]
Simple locker, rebated [Swineshead, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire]
Simple locker, rebated  [Upper Dean, All Hallows, Bedfordshire]
Pevsner does not identify or refer to this locker in the chancel\(^{27}\).

Sheingorn refers to the parish as Dean (Nether) and also states that it is dedicated to All Saints. She describes the locker as

\( ?ESp/locker \text{ in } N \text{ wall of a 13c chancel} \)^{28}.

(Pevsner dates the chancel to the early fourteenth century\(^{29}\).)

Wade, in the parish guide, does not identify or refer to the locker.

d) Yelden, St Mary, Bedfordshire (Fig. 13)

There would originally have been two adjacent lockers in the north chancel wall. The larger, measuring 17" by 18", has an unknown depth, owing to a memorial brass covering. The smaller and still useable locker/recess, measuring 15" by 10" by 11", extends irregularly inwards, westward, towards the inner wall of the larger recess.

Pevsner does not identify or comment upon the existing locker in the north wall of the chancel\(^{30}\).

Sheingorn does not identify or comment upon either of these recesses. She does however refer to

\( ESp \text{ in } N \text{ wall of chancel; recess with trefoiled arch that has 2 pinholes in cusps} \)^{31}.

e) Clothall, St Mary, Hertfordshire (Fig. 14)

This is an undated locker, measuring 23" by 23" by 14½", in the north chancel at the east end.

The locker is not noted nor identified by Pevsner\(^{32}\).

\(^{27}\) See Pevsner 2002 (a), p.74.

\(^{28}\) Sheingorn 1987, p.80.

\(^{29}\) Pevsner 2002 (a), p.74.

\(^{30}\) See Ibid, p.177.

\(^{31}\) Sheingorn 1987, p.86.

\(^{32}\) See Pevsner 2002 (b), p.132.
Fig. 13

Simple locker(s), rebated [Yelden, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
Simple locker, rebated  [Clothall, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments mentions a locker:

... in chancel, on N.E., square [and] in chapel, on N.W., square\textsuperscript{33}. 

- but I have been unable to discover the latter.

f) St Albans Abbey, Hertfordshire \textit{(Fig. 15)}

This is an undated recess in the eleventh-century north wall of the south ambulatory; it measures 23" by 21" by 20".

Pevsner does not mention this locker in his description of the Abbey\textsuperscript{34}.

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments sites the locker

\textit{In the N. respond of the arch between the S. aisle of the presbytery and the S. transept}\textsuperscript{35}.

Neale in his work of 1877\textsuperscript{36} does not identify or comment upon the locker illustrated (in Fig. 15).

The HMSO guide\textsuperscript{37} does not identify or comment upon the locker illustrated – and using the plan\textsuperscript{38} provided in the guide of the positions of medieval altars, it may be seen that the locker is not near any of the known medieval altars.

g) Sarratt, Holy Cross, Hertfordshire \textit{(Fig. 16)}

This locker, with an actual internal recess measuring 23" by 24" (depth unknown) has a modern safe door measuring 14" by 14". It is situated 27" above the floor in the fourteenth century north wall of the chancel, which was lengthened in the fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{33} Royal Commission 1910, p.81.

\textsuperscript{34} See Pevsner 2002 (b), pp.297-306.

\textsuperscript{35} Royal Commission 1910, p.185.

\textsuperscript{36} See Neale 1877.

\textsuperscript{37} See Royal Commission 1982.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, opposite p.34.
Fig. 15

Simple locker, rebated  [St Albans, Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, Hertfordshire]
Simple locker, rebated  [Sarratt, Holy Cross, Hertfordshire]
There is no mention of this locker by Pevsner in his description of the church\textsuperscript{39}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments does mention this locker:

\begin{quote}
... in N. wall of chancel, small, square\textsuperscript{40}.
\end{quote}

Sheingorn describes this locker:

\begin{quote}
ESp & square-headed aumbry in N wall of chancel both date from 14c when chancel was lengthened; ESp has modern trefoiled head\textsuperscript{41}. [See also Fig 37]
\end{quote}

\textbf{h)} \textit{Aston Sandford, St Michael, Buckinghamshire} (Fig. 17)

This undated recess, measuring 17" by 18" by 12", is in the east wall of the chancel which was rebuilt in the fifteenth century.

The locker is not referred to by Pevsner in his description of the church\textsuperscript{42}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments states:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The Chancel} ... appears to have been rebuilt in the 13th century ... \\
\textit{Locker:} in N. wall of the chancel, rectangular [sic]. with rebated edges\textsuperscript{43}.
\end{quote}

Sheingorn does not include this church in her survey.

\textbf{i)} \textit{Dinton, St Peter and St Paul, Buckinghamshire} (Fig. 18)

Nearly square, measuring 20" by 19" by 13½" deep, this simple recess with rebated edges is in the north wall of what is probably a thirteenth-century chancel.

\textsuperscript{39} See Pevsner 2002 (b), pp.332-333.
\textsuperscript{40} Royal Commission 1910, p.201.
\textsuperscript{41} Sheingorn 1987, p.166. She attributes her information to volume 2 of the \textit{Victoria History of the County of Hertford}.
\textsuperscript{42} See Pevsner 1960, p.53.
\textsuperscript{43} Royal Commission 1912, p.22.
Simple locker, rebated  [Aston Sandford, St Michael, Buckinghamshire]
Simple locker, rebated  [Dinton, St Peter & St Paul, Buckinghamshire]
Pevsner does not refer to this locker\textsuperscript{44}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments describes the recess as being

\textit{Locker: in N. wall of chancel, square, with rebated edges, probably old, re-tooled.} [Chancel is thirteenth century]\textsuperscript{45}.

Sheingorn does not include this church in her survey.

\textbf{j)} \textbf{Hulcott, All Saints, Buckinghamshire} (Fig. 19)

This is a simple, rebated locker with a modern door placed in the northeast wall of the south chapel, measuring a nominal 30" by 30" by 19" (it narrows internally to a wedge shape).

There is no note of the locker in Pevsner\textsuperscript{46}.

\textbf{k)} \textbf{Little Brickhill, St Mary Magdalene, Buckinghamshire} (See Fig. 20)

This simple rebated locker measures 19" x 20" x 17" and dates from the sixteenth century or later. It is positioned in the east wall of the south chapel to the north of the east window.

There is no mention of this locker in Pevsner's work\textsuperscript{47}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments describes this as

\textit{Locker: in S. chapel - in E. wall, below string-course N. of E. window, square, 16th-century or later date, oak door made from 17th-century panel}\textsuperscript{48}.

Sheingorn does not include this locker in her survey.

\textsuperscript{44} See Pevsner 1960, pp.106-107.

\textsuperscript{45} Royal Commission 1912, p.125.

\textsuperscript{46} See Pevsner 1960, pp.173-174.

\textsuperscript{47} See ibid, p.189.

\textsuperscript{48} Royal Commission 1913, p.175.
Simple locker, rebated  [Hulcott, All Saints, Buckinghamshire]
Simple locker, rebated  [Little Brickhill, St Mary Magdalene, Buckinghamshire]
I) Pitstone, St Mary, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 21)
This rebated locker recess measures 24" by 14" by 19" and is situated in
the north chapel between the north windows. It is undated.

Pevsner does not mention the locker\textsuperscript{49}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments states:

\textit{Locker: In N. chapel - between the N. windows, square, with deep
rebate, hinges, and hasp for lock}\textsuperscript{50}.

Sheingorn does not include this church in her survey.

m) Upper Winchendon, St Mary Magdalene, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 22)
This is a medieval recess/locker, measuring 16" x 19" x 18", in the north
wall of the chancel.

The recess is not mentioned by Pevsner in his general description of the
church\textsuperscript{51}.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, however, notes the
following:

\textit{Locker: in N. wall of chancel, plain, square, with old wooden
lining}\textsuperscript{52}.

Sheingorn does not include this locker in her survey.

3. \textbf{Double lockers, rebated}

Examples may be found at:

\textsuperscript{49} See Pevsner 1960, p.224.
\textsuperscript{50} Royal Commission 1913, p.238.
\textsuperscript{51} See Pevsner 1960, p.273.
\textsuperscript{52} Royal Commission 1912, p.300.
Simple locker, rebated  [*Pitstone, St Mary, Buckinghamshire*]
Simple locker, rebated [Upper Winchendon, St Mary Magdalene, Buckinghamshire]
a) St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire (Fig. 23)

This is an undated pair of simple rebated lockers, found in the north wall of the chancel. The left-hand recess measures 16" x 13" x 13" and is 56" above floor; the right-hand one measures 25" x 29½" x 13½" and is 49" above floor.

Pevsner does not identify or refer to these lockers 53.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments refers to the lockers:

... two, in the N. wall of the chancel 54.

Sheingorn does not refer to this church in her survey.

b) Irchester, St Katherine, Northants (Fig. 24)

This pair of double rebated locker recesses are in the south chancel wall and both measure 22" x 16" x 14".

Sheingorn draws attention to another feature in Irchester church, namely

... niche with straight-sided pediment enclosing quatrefoil near NE corner of chancel 55

- but she makes no reference to this pair of lockers (double aumbry) on the south wall of the chancel.

4. Triple lockers

An example may be found at:

Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire (Fig. 25)

These three locker recesses are in the south wall of the chancel and are stacked one on top of the other. The two top ones measure 9½" by 13" by 11" and the one at the bottom measures 10" by 8" by 11". The recesses are undated but appear retooled.


54 Royal Commission 1910, p.130.

Double lockers, rebated  [St Ippolyts, St Ippolyts, Hertfordshire]
Fig. 24

Double lockers, rebated  [Irchester, St Katherine, Northamptonshire]
Fig. 25

Triple lockers [Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]
Pevsner does not refer to this set of triple locker recesses\textsuperscript{56} and neither does the 
RCHM inventory for Buckinghamshire, nor Sheingorn.

5. \textbf{Arched lockers}

Examples may be found at:

a) \textit{Arlesey, St Peter, Bedfordshire} \textit{(Fig. 26)}

This undated arched locker/aumbry, measuring 26" (to peak) by 21" by 17", is in the north chancel wall.

Pevsner does not refer to this locker in his description of the church\textsuperscript{57}.

b) \textit{King's Langley, All Saints, Hertfordshire} \textit{(Fig. 27)}

This is a pair of thirteenth-century arched double recesses, measuring 34" to peak by 19" by 18\text{$\frac{1}{2}$}" - one a piscina and one a locker (?) - in the south wall of the chancel.

Pevsner only identifies and comments on the piscina:

\begin{quote}
\textit{The only indications of pre-C15 architecture are the C13 PISCINA in the chancel wall}\textsuperscript{58}.
\end{quote}

He does not refer to it as a double piscina because only one of the recesses is clearly a piscina.

The Royal Commission on Historic Monuments refers to the recesses as a piscina

\begin{quote}
\textit{... in the S. wall of the chancel, 13th-century, with locker}\textsuperscript{59}.
\end{quote}

The Parish Guide also makes reference to the recesses but describes them (inaccurately) as being a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} See Pevsner 1960, pp.218-219.
\item \textsuperscript{57} See Pevsner 2002 (a), p.42.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Pevsner 2002 (b), p.217.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Royal Commission 1910, p.134.
\end{itemize}
Arched locker [Arlesey, St Peter, Bedfordshire]
Fig. 27

Arched double lockers  [Kings Langley, All Saints, Hertfordshire]
...fine double piscina, probably of the late thirteenth century, which is a little overwhelmed by its striking neighbour, the reredos' (erected in 1878)⁶⁰.

It is possible that one of the recesses was changed from being a piscina to a locker at a date later than the thirteenth century.

c) Stagsden, St Leonard, Bedfordshire (Fig. 28)
This arched locker recess measures 11" by 14" by 10" and is in the south chancel wall.

Pevsner does not mention this recess in his description of the church⁶¹.

Sheingorn refers to an arched recess which, in her categorisation, she suggests might possibly be an Easter sepulchre:

?ESp/aumbry; shoulder-arched recess in wall of N chancel near E end; 13c⁶².

The Parish Guide draws attention to the arched recess:

On the south wall a fourteenth-century piscina ... and a small arched recess in the wall⁶³.

d) Shelton, St Mary, Bedfordshire (Fig. 29)
This arched recess is in the north wall of the chancel and measures 20" by 21" by 11". It may be observed that the inner surface is irregular with sunken two-level rectangular cut-outs. The recess is datable to the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

Pevsner does not mention this recess in his description of the church⁶⁴.

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⁶⁰ W. C. R. Hicks: *All Saints Church, King's Langley: Tomb of Edmund of Langley and Isabel of Castile*, [Langley PCC], 1976, pp.4-5.

⁶¹ See Pevsner 2002 (a), p.147.

⁶² Sheingorn 1987, p.85.

⁶³ The undated church guide, to which no author is attributed: *St Leonard's Church, Stagsden*, [St Leonard's PCC]. p.2.
Arched locker  [Stagsden, St Leonard, Bedfordshire]
Arched locker  \([\text{Shelton, St Mary, Bedfordshire}]\)
Sheingorn refers to this locker recess in her work:

\[ ?ESp: \text{triangular-arched recess in N wall of chancel; W half of sill has rectangular sinking}^{65}. \]

In fact the west half of the sill has two rectangular cut-outs, one inside the other.

6. **Others**

These include the following at:

a) **Tingrith, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire (Fig. 30)**

This locker recess, measuring 20" by 10" by 9", does not fit into any of the preceding categories and I have therefore listed it under 'others'. Situated in the north wall of the chancel, the recess penetrates through to the vestry.

Pevsner does not mention this locker recess in his brief description of the church\(^66\).

Sheingorn describes this recess as

\[ ?ESp: \text{small cinquefoiled opening in N wall of chancel blocked by buttress; 1450-1500}^{67}. \]

In fact the opening referred to by Sheingorn is continuous from the chancel to the vestry, where the opening has been extended and now houses a Victorian (?) safe. Because the floor level of the chancel has been raised (the vestry floor to the north side is much lower), it is difficult to imagine what the function of the opening might have been. It is conceivable that it was a squint (but it would be rare for a squint to be given an elaborate cinquefoiled treatment). Also it might just possibly

\(^{64}\) See Pevsner 2002 (a), pp.142-143.

\(^{65}\) Sheingorn 1987, p.84.

\(^{66}\) See Pevsner 2002 (a), p.156.

\(^{67}\) Sheingorn 1987, p.85.
Fig. 30

Locker recess  [Tingrith, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire]
have been a 'low-side' window from which, it is said, the clerk rang a hand-bell at the elevation of the Mass.

b) Irchester, St Katherine, Northants  *(Fig.31)*
This recess measures 20" by 19" by 18" (the depth is irregular, being deeper to the left).

Sheingorn refers to this locker recess:

> ?ESp; niche with straight-sided pediment enclosing quatrefoil near NE corner of chancel; ledge or bowl below, now at floor level, but floor has been raised 2 feet; hole in wall at back of niche has suggested use for baking altar-breads; use as ESp also possible ... 13c.¹⁶

* * * * *

Having looked carefully at the Sarum rite (taking due cognisance of the fact that the liturgy would have had a determinative effect upon the design of Easter sepulchres) and having looked at a wide variety of lockers, it is possible to come to some tentative conclusions:

1. Lockers were used as multipurpose cupboards – the very design and the variety of locations of lockers seems to bear this out.

2. To extrapolate from sixteenth-century written accounts (in which the testator requests that his body be buried on the north side of the altar where the sepulchre was 'wont to stand') a hypothesis that therefore any niche, locker or recess on the north side of the altar would have been an Easter sepulchre is not supported by the visual or liturgical evidence.

3. The primary liturgical act essential to the Sarum rite concerning Easter sepulchres was the 'burial' of a cross and a consecrated Host. This suggests very strongly that the ruling metaphor of the ceremonies was 'burial and resurrection', in which

Locker recess  [Irchester, St Katherine, Northamptonshire]
case a multipurpose cupboard would not adequately give expression to that concept.

4. If lockers were Easter sepulchres, one might have expected them to have been given more significant architectural treatment than is in fact the case in the vast majority of instances. The lockers that have been described and illustrated thus far are remarkably plain and undifferentiated.

However, there are five lockers which have not yet featured but which have been described by others from time to time as Easter sepulchres – and thus, before coming to any final and firm conclusion, it is necessary to look at each of them in turn.

a) Aston Clinton, St Michael

The niche featured in Fig. 32 has been heavily restored over the years. It was first noted as an Easter sepulchre by 'P' (Samuel Pegge), a contributor to the Gentleman's Magazine in 1796. He wrote:

In the North wall ... is a small niche with a flowered arch, bouquet point and on top of the pillars two figures, that on the West broken, on the East a female. On each side of the pillars is a very narrow slit. Whether this is the remains of a holy sepulchre must be left to the determination of better judges.

George Lipscomb, visiting Aston Clinton fifty-one years later, in 1847, described this recess as

... an arched niche with a canopy ornamented with trefoils, a flowered finial between two small mutilated statues, one on the dexter side with both legs broken off and only a small portion of the drapery remaining, the other decapitated.

It is to be noted that Lipscomb did not venture an opinion about whether it was an Easter sepulchre or not.

69 Gentleman's Magazine 1796, p.841.

Fig. 32

Locker, restored  [Aston Clinton, St Michael, Buckinghamshire]
On 8th August 1895 the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archaelogical Society made an excursion to the church and noted that on the north side of the chancel there was

... a beautiful ogee arch\textsuperscript{71}

but, like Lipscomb, did not suggest that the niche might be an Easter sepulchre.

The \textit{Victoria History for the County of Buckingham} simply referred to it as

... much restored\textsuperscript{72}

but stated that it was 'possibly' an Easter sepulchre\textsuperscript{73}. A few years later, in 1912, the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments classified it as an Easter sepulchre:

\textit{Easter Sepulchre: in N. wall of chancel (2ft. 2in. wide, 10 in. deep), with trefoiled, ogee head, crocketed label and carved finial, pilasters at the sides with corbels carved as heads of knights in mail coifs, late 14th-century, much restored; the tops of knights' coifs, pilasters above them, with carved angel finials, modern\textsuperscript{74}.}

Pevsner, several decades later, also referred to the chancel as being heavily restored [by E. B. Lamb, 1849-50] but merely refers to the niche as a recess\textsuperscript{75}.

Previous scholars, then, are not agreed about its function, though it would seem from the brightly painted angels of a recent restoration, that there is an attempt to ensure that it should be 'read' as an Easter sepulchre.

\textsuperscript{71} Downs 1897, p.468.
\textsuperscript{72} Page 1908 (b), p.317.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, p.317.
\textsuperscript{74} Royal Commission 1912, p.20.
\textsuperscript{75} Pevsner 1960, p.53.
The difficulty of agreeing with that interpretation relates to its dimensions. It is thirty-six inches high, twenty-six inches wide but only fourteen inches deep, and it is designed around a vertical axis - and, as a result, it does not, by its design, make any reference to the death and burial theme of the Sarum rite. Any cross in this niche would have to be placed vertically rather than horizontally - and this could therefore mean that it was the niche in which the 'raised' cross was placed on Easter Day (in the Sarum rite, it will be recalled, the cross was venerated in a north-side chapel).

The restoration has been so heavy and so clumsily didactic that it makes analysis quite complicated. Whilst the recess might originally have functioned as the niche for the venerated cross, it might equally well have been used simply as an image niche (the carved corbel of a knight's head in a mailed hood was part of the restoration programme; it was not part of the engraving in the Gentleman's Magazine article of 1796). What the niche speaks of most clearly is the determination of a zealous and heavy-handed restorer to ensure that it should be regarded as an Easter sepulchre - and one can only guess at the motivation lying behind that.

b) Furneux Pelham, St Mary (Fig. 33)

This, like Aston Clinton, has also been heavily restored, though not with such exuberant didacticism. Again, the interpretation of this particular niche over the centuries is interesting. Chauncy, visiting Furneux Pelham in the early eighteenth century, does not refer to the niche\textsuperscript{76}, nor does Salmon in 1728; the latter wrote simply:

\textit{The Church consists of a Chancel and three Isles [sic] and a Chapel open to the rest, East of the South Isle}\textsuperscript{77}.

\textsuperscript{76} See Chauncy 1826, vol.1, p.289:
\textit{The Church is situated upon an Hill near the Town in a small Churchyard, has two fair Isles divided from the Body; the Roof of the Church is covered with Lead, but the Chancel with Tyle.}

\textsuperscript{77} Salmon 1728, p.287.
Fig. 33

Locker, restored  [Furneux Pelham, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
Cussans, in 1872, refers to the niche as a

... lancet-headed aumbrey\textsuperscript{78}

In 1910, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' inventory for Hertfordshire expresses certainty about the niche being an Easter sepulchre:

\textit{Easter Sepulchre: in N. wall of chancel, recess with modern arch}\textsuperscript{79}.

In contrast, the \textit{Victoria History of the County of Hertford}, a few years later in 1914, is not quite so positive in its assertion. It first describes the chancel as being of late thirteenth-century date and then later states:

\textit{In the north wall is a small recess with trefoil-arched head, all of modern stonework, possibly an Easter sepulchre}\textsuperscript{80}.

However, the certainty of the Royal Commission report is echoed by some later writers. G. H. Cameron, writing in 1939-1940, says:

\textit{Other things of interest in the chancel include the Easter Sepulchre which, except the stone work at the back, has been entirely renewed}\textsuperscript{81}.

And Whitelaw, writing in 1990, also describes the niche as an Easter sepulchre:

\textit{Inside are the thirteenth-century three-fold sedilia with piscina, together with an Easter sepulchre in the chancel}\textsuperscript{82}.

Pevsner, however, does not categorise the niche as an Easter sepulchre\textsuperscript{83}.

The pattern of interpretation, therefore, moves from no comment in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, to certainty in the second decade

\textsuperscript{78} Cussans 1872, p.150.
\textsuperscript{79} Royal Commission 1910, p.91.
\textsuperscript{80} Page 1914, p.104.
\textsuperscript{81} Cameron 1940, p.176.
\textsuperscript{82} Whitelaw 1990, p.95.
\textsuperscript{83} See Pevsner 2002 (b), p.144.
of the twentieth century. But apart from noticing that pattern (it will be explored further in Chapter 10 of this thesis), it is also important to recognise that this niche was part of the restoration programme in the nineteenth century. It has to be asked whether that programme, perhaps like Aston Clinton's, was influenced by those Victorian ecclesiologists who wished to discover Easter sepulchres in medieval churches (see later, in Chapter 11).

The main question to be asked, however, also relates to its design. It has a marked vertical axis and, as has been suggested in relation to Aston Clinton, this does not fit easily with the death and burial theme of the Sarum rite. Is it not possibly more plausible to read this niche as either an aumbry or a credence or as an image recess? A comparison of the illustration with that of a fresco by Taddeo Gaddi (Fig. 34) of two fictive niches c.1328-1334, at the base of the east wall of the Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence 84, suggests that to describe the niche as a kind of aumbry/credence is probably more accurate than positing its use as an Easter sepulchre.

c) Redbourn, St Mary (Fig. 35)

The interpretation of this niche follows the pattern outlined in relation to Aston Clinton and Furneux Pelham; neither Chauncey nor Salmon, writing in the eighteenth century about Redbourn, mention the recess. Clutterbuck, however, in 1815, refers in some detail to two recesses on the south wall of the chancel 85 but fails to refer to the niche opposite. Cussans, writing in 1881, states very firmly that the niche is an Easter sepulchre:

*In the south chancel wall ... is a large double sedile ... and on the north side is an Easter Sepulchre* 86.

Perhaps, surprisingly, neither the *Victoria History of the County of Hertford* of 1908 nor the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' inventory for Hertfordshire of 1910, claim that the recess is an Easter sepulchre. Similarly, in

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84 For an essay on the Baroncelli Chapel, see Norman 1995 (b), esp. pp.169-179.
85 Clutterbuck 1815, p.183.
86 Cussans 1881, p.234.
Fig. 34

From a fresco by Taddeo Gaddi  [Baroncelli Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence]
Fig. 35

Locker  [Redbourn, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
the first edition of 1953, Pevsner does not speculate on its function, merely stating:

_The Piscina and Sedilia and a recess in the N chancel wall are ogee-headed._\(^{87}\)

However, the second edition of 1977 Pevsner, revised by Bridget Cherry, continues the quotation above:

_... perhaps of c.1350, above an earlier Purbeck shaft and capital of the C13. - EASTERN SEPULCHRE, also C14._\(^{88}\)

Whitelaw also claims that the recess is an Easter sepulchre:\(^{89}\)

A careful examination of the recess is necessary because its form tends, again, to suggest that it has a strong vertical axis. In fact, its horizontal axis is greater than its vertical axis (twenty-three inches long; seventeen and a half inches high). It is capable therefore of receiving a cross laid flat, as though for burial. Compared with the other lockers in the church its horizontality is quite marked. Patently it did not have a door (there are no rebates) and was, therefore, not a multipurpose cupboard. It could have been an image niche, though its lack of verticality would argue against that. It could have been a credence but in this case, where it is also designed as a niche of some significance, it seems reasonable to conclude that it might be an Easter sepulchre. From a liturgical point of view, it fits all the requirements. However, the lack of detail at the base of the mouldings might suggest that this niche could be a nineteenth-century antiquarian reconstruction, having used materials that were to hand during the nineteenth-century refurbishment of the church.

\(^{87}\) Pevsner 1953, p.190.

\(^{88}\) Pevsner 2002 (b), p.276. The information relating to the Easter sepulchre is stated as being supplied by a Mr. A. Featherstone.

\(^{89}\) Whitelaw 1990, p.115.
Sandon, All Saints (Fig. 36)

The antiquarian pattern of interpretation is the same as that for Funeux Pelham and Redbourn; neither Chauncy nor Salmon, writing in the eighteenth century, make any reference to the niche, and nor does Clutterbuck, writing in 1815; but, by the 1880s, the definition of the purpose of the niche as an Easter sepulchre has made its first appearance:

There is an aperture in the wall under a single widely-splayed arch ... It is difficult to determine the purpose it was intended to serve. It is not in the place where aumbreys are usually to be met with, and may have been devised as an Easter sepulchre.

It is almost possible to hear Cussans thinking aloud as he goes through the options of what the recess might be.

In 1905, F. W. Low gave a paper about Sandon Church to the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society; in it he wrote:

But the most interesting feature is undoubtedly the crocketted recess in the north wall within the Communion area. It originally had a door in front, (the hole for the hinge may be seen at the bottom), and it seems most likely that it was intended as an 'Easter Sepulchre', in which the reserved Host was kept from Maundy Thursday until Easter Day.

Again, the measurement of this recess may be significant. As can be seen, it is twelve inches high, twenty-three and a half inches wide and only eleven inches deep. It is designed on a horizontal axis and thus echoes the death and burial motif of the Sarum rite. The treatment of the finials indicates that this recess was regarded as having significance – a comparison with examples of multipurpose cupboards makes this quite clear. But whilst a cross could be laid horizontally in such a chamber, it would, of necessity, be quite small, that is, it could only have a maximum cross-arm width of ten inches and a height, when standing, of twenty inches.

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90 Cussans 1873, p.156.
91 Low 1906, pp.45-46.
Fig. 36
[see also Frontispiece, Fig. 1]

Locker [Sandon, All Saints, Hertfordshire]
Nevertheless, if this particular locker is seen within its original liturgical context, it seems sensible to designate it as a possible Easter sepulchre.

e) Sarratt, Holy Cross  (Figs. 16 and 37)

Sarrat has the distinction of having two recesses on the north side of the chancel, in close proximity. The first is a square-headed aumbry (see earlier in this chapter, page 108) with a recess for a door, measuring twenty-three inches by twenty-four (the depth is unknown); the second recess, within twelve inches of the square-headed aumbry, is twenty-six inches high, eighteen inches wide and seventeen inches in depth, and has a strong vertical axis.

Chauncy does not record the existence of either of these niches; Salmon remarks that in the chancel there is

... a Nich [sic] for holy Water, and two others for Images at half Length.\(^{92}\)

Clutterbuck does not record the recesses on the north side of the chancel but does refer to the piscina on the south side.\(^{93}\)

Cussans, in 1881, says:

*In the north wall of the chancel is a deep apsidal niche, which may have been an Easter sepulchre.*\(^{94}\)

In 1895, F. T. Davys wrote a paper for the St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society about Sarratt Church:

*On the North side of the Chancel is a small apsidal trefoiled niche, 1ft. 6½ins. wide by 1ft. 11½in. high, and 1ft. 3½in. deep. It has been*

\(^{92}\) Salmon 1728, p.112.

\(^{93}\) Clutterbuck 1815, p.226.

\(^{94}\) Cussans 1881, p.112.
Fig. 37

Locker [Sarratt, Holy Cross, Hertfordshire]
suggested that this was an Easter sepulchre, as among the furniture of the church is 'a cloth of yellow silk for the Sepulchre'\textsuperscript{95}.

He continued his description:

\textit{Adjacent to this niche is a locker in which the sacred vessels were kept. but the door and ironwork are now missing}\textsuperscript{96}.

(The door has now been replaced by a safe.) The \textit{Victoria History of the County of Hertford} states:

\textit{In the north wall are two recesses, one having a modern trefoiled head; it is probably that one served as the loculus for the Easter Sepulchre}\textsuperscript{97}.

The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments' 1910 \textit{Inventory} for Hertfordshire follows the Victoria County History lead and seems like a direct quotation from it:

\textit{Recess: in N. wall of chancel, small, with modern head, possibly loculus for Easter Sepulchre}\textsuperscript{98}.

Pevsner does not mention the recess\textsuperscript{99}, whereas Whitelaw states:

\textit{A piscina and sedilia of the fifteenth century remain in the chancel as well as a recess which is probably an Easter sepulchre}\textsuperscript{100}.

Was this vertical recess an Easter sepulchre? Its apsidal structure means that if it was designed to receive a cross, that cross could not have been laid in it horizontally, and instead would have had to stand upright. But this is not in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{95} Davys 1898, p.70.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Ibid, p.70.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Page 1908 (c), p.441.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Royal Commission 1910, p.202.
\item \textsuperscript{99} See Pevsner 2002 (b), pp.332-333.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Whitelaw 1990, p.119.
\end{itemize}
conformity with the death and burial motif of the *Sarum* rite. It is possible, though unlikely, that it might have been the place equivalent to the north-side chapel where the cross could be venerated once it had been 'raised' from the tomb – but even in a church as small as Sarratt, that would be to obscure its visibility. It seems more likely, therefore, that it was an image niche (for an image of Our Lady), before which lights would have burnt. It is another example of a late Victorian, early Edwardian, antiquarian attempt to 'see' it as an Easter sepulchre – and thus its original purpose has probably been significantly redefined.

Of the five lockers which have been examined and illustrated in this section, it can be seen that two (Aston Clinton and Furneux Pelham) have been so heavily restored that to make any unequivocal claims about their status as Easter sepulchres is fraught with difficulty. One of the recesses (Sarratt), whilst only lightly restored, does not lend itself to the liturgy of the *Sarum* rite; but the purpose of two of the lockers (Redbourn and Sandon) seems, when all other options have been explored, to remain reasonably uncontroversial. These two can, with a degree of safety, be regarded as permanent Easter sepulchres, though Redbourn could have been designed as a credence. What are the characteristics which these two recesses have which lead to a possible Easter sepulchre definition? It is partly because of their architectural treatment; they have been given a heightened degree of significance compared with the other lockers that have been examined and it is also, partly, because they are designed on a horizontal axis and are therefore capable of fulfilling the theological and liturgical demands of the *Sarum* rite. In brief, from a liturgical perspective, they work; they fulfill their task.

From the analysis of lockers in this survey, then, what firm conclusions may be drawn? It would appear that for a locker recess to be regarded as an Easter sepulchre, it needs to have three distinguishing and distinctive characteristics:

- Firstly, it needs to have an architectural treatment which is consonant with the theological doctrines it is trying to convey.
- Secondly, it has to be capable of being used in such a way that the death and burial theme is given appropriate expression. It is likely, therefore, to have a horizontal axis.
- Thirdly it has to be *liturgically* as well as aesthetically 'fit-for-purpose'.
What this conclusion suggests, therefore, is that only those lockers which have those three significant characteristics can safely be said to be Easter sepulchres – and it implies, clearly, that to argue that any locker on the north side of a chancel is likely to have been an Easter sepulchre is not at all persuasive.

If this conclusion is correct, it follows that permanent Easter sepulchres actually are very rare indeed. Only two lockers in this survey really match the criteria outlined above, namely Redbourn and Sandon in Hertfordshire. But, as will be shown in Chapter 10 of this thesis, and as has been strongly hinted at already, the influence of nineteenth-century antiquarians and ecclesiologists, in trying to discover and discern large numbers of Easter sepulchres in English churches, has been very significant - not least in our understanding of late medieval religious and cultural history.

But if most lockers in English churches were not Easter sepulchres, is it possible that tomb recesses and altar tombs provided a more credible locus for parts of the Easter liturgy? This will be explored in the next chapter.
It will be recalled that in the first chapter of this thesis a number of authors were quoted who referred to tombs and tomb recesses as places which might have been used, or especially created, for the Easter ceremonies. Sheingorn, for example, in her classification system, posited three tomb categories¹, as follows:

1. A large arched recess in the north chancel wall that could have contained an effigy.
2. An elaborate structure set in the north wall with figural sculpture, usually with a small niche, possibly associated with a tomb.
3. A table or chest tomb, with or without a canopy, standing against or near the north wall of the chancel.

The categorisation is a very clear one and the first category will form the basis for this chapter, but because the north side of the chancel is used as one of the defining features of an Easter sepulchre, it will be important, as it was in the preceding chapter on lockers, to look at that particular feature in some detail.

**Tomb recesses**

Using the same database as for the locker survey - that is, the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHM) surveys of Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Westmoreland, and taking as the parameters c.1200-1500, the statistics relating to tomb recesses are as follows:

In **Buckinghamshire** there are 32 tomb recesses of which only 11 are in the north wall of the chancel, that is, 21 are in places in the church other than the north wall.

In **Herefordshire** there are 14 tomb recesses, of which only 2 are in the north wall of the chancel; the remainder are elsewhere.

In **Hertfordshire** there are 19 tomb recesses, of which only 2 are in the north wall of the chancel. Of the remainder, 1 is in the chancel on the south side: Tewin; 4 are in the south aisle: St Albans Abbey (1), St Ippolytts (1) and Great Munden (2); 4 are in the

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¹ Sheingorn 1987, p.35.
nave: Datchworth (1) and Little Munden (3); four are in the exterior walls of the church: Baldock (3) and St Michael's, St Albans (1); three are in south side chapels and one is in the north aisle.

In **Westmoreland** only four recesses are recorded, none of which is on the north side of the chancel.

And, to complete this survey, but using Pevsner as the database (there has been no RCHM survey for this county) for **Bedfordshire**, there are 30 tomb recesses, 11 of which are in the north wall of the chancel, including Podington, which has 4 recesses in the north wall; the others are widely scattered in various locations in churches. The thirty Bedfordshire tomb recesses are found in only 19 churches, which means that in Bedfordshire, only approximately 20% of churches have any tomb recesses.

In total, therefore, in these five English counties (Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Hertfordshire and Westmoreland) there are 99 tomb recesses, of which just over 25% are in the north wall of the chancel, and just under 75% are in other locations in churches. These statistics seem, on the face of it, to suggest that the primary function of a tomb recess was, as its name implies, to be the housing for a tomb. It could well be argued that unless tomb recesses in churches have some iconographical or other means of differentiating themselves so that they may be seen as emphatically designed to accommodate the Easter liturgies, it would be safer to assume that they really are simply tomb recesses and nothing else. It might be helpful to consider a few examples to illustrate this.

**Tomb Recesses in Bedfordshire**

1. **Arlesey, St Peter** (*Fig. 38*)

   This tomb recess is located at the western end of the north wall of the nave, and measures 36 inches to the peak of the arch, 73 inches in width and 13.5 inches in depth. Pevsner describes this tomb recess as being of the fourteenth century\(^2\).

\(^2\) Pevsner 2002 (a), p.42.
Tomb recess  [Arlesey, St Peter, Bedfordshire]
There is another recess in Arlesey (Fig. 39) which some have claimed might be an Easter sepulchre. Bonney, writing in his historical notices of churches, about 1820-1840, refers to both recesses:

\[\text{At the West End of the North Aisle is an ancient Tomb, under an Arch in the Wall, without any inscription or Armorial Bearing; and another, under a Compartment at the East End of the same Aisle; and near to this, are two canopies for Statues}^3.\]

Archdeacon Bonney\(^4\), in his visitations of Bedfordshire churches in the early decades of the nineteenth century, was certainly aware of Easter sepulchres – but in the case of Arlesey, he did not suggest that either of the recesses illustrated might have been designed or used for that purpose.

However, in 1848, the Revd Henry Addington wrote this of Arlesey:

\[\text{The east end of the north aisle presents a curious combination of niches and brackets worthy of notice, with what is apparently an Easter sepulchre in the north wall, well worthy of notice}^5.\]

Glynne, in 1855, also commented upon the recess at the east end of the north aisle:

\[\text{The East end of the North aisle forms the Chapel of St Mary ... In this chapel are several niches & brackets, worthy of notice. In the North wall a fine moulded niche cinquefoiled, with shafts & hood moulding which may have been an Easter Sepulchre}^6.\]

The Victoria County History (VCH) series for Bedfordshire is hesitant about its definition:

\(^3\) Pickford 1994, p.50.

\(^4\) For details of Bonney, see later in this thesis, chapter 10, pp.288-289.

\(^5\) Addington 1848, paragraph 104 (pages not numbered).

\(^6\) Pickford 1994, p.52.
Recess  [Arlesey, St Peter, Bedfordshire]
... a square recess, perhaps sepulchral, with a filleted edge-roll round head and jambs, ending on moulded bases. The sill of the recess has a projecting edge, on which is a diaper pattern of fourteenth-century style.

St Peter's, Arlesey, thus provides a complex challenge to the accepted theories surrounding Easter sepulchres – it has a fourteenth-century tomb recess in the west bay of the north nave wall, it has a recess in the east bay of the north nave wall and, in addition, it has a locker (see Chapter 5, page 113 - Fig. 26) in the north wall of the chancel. All three could, if the usual definitions are applied, be described as an Easter sepulchre, and that, patently, is unlikely. Is it possible, therefore, to decide which, if any of them, might have functioned as an Easter sepulchre? If the Sarum liturgy is borne in mind, in which the burial of a host and a cross was central, than it is fairly clear that the chancel locker could not have provided a suitable receptacle. The north wall, west bay, tomb recess would seem to be liturgically too far distant from the central focus of the Mass at the high altar to have been useful. And thus we are left with the curious recess in the east bay of the north nave aisle wall (Fig. 39). Its dimensions (36 inches high by 60 inches wide and 30 inches deep) give it a strong horizontal axis and so it would be capable of receiving a large cross (the head of a processional cross and the top part of the shaft). It has been given a design treatment which marks it out as being of some significance. It is not a multipurpose cupboard; it seems quite possible, therefore, that it might well be an Easter sepulchre, though the lack (the loss?) of any Easter iconographical detail could be evidence against such an attribution. The fact that the advowson of Arlesey was owned by Waltham Abbey in the thirteenth century, and that Waltham Abbey had a special devotion to the Holy Cross in the eleventh century, may add some weight in favour of this recess being an Easter sepulchre, on the grounds that the size of the recess indicates that it was capable of taking a large (and therefore significant) cross.

There is one other feature of this particular recess which may also be of significance: its dimensions. The width of this recess is 60 inches (approximately 153cm). This measurement is very similar to the dimension of the wooden Easter sepulchre of Cowthorpe (Fig. 40); the width of that Easter sepulchre is

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7 Page 1908 (a), p. 265.
Wooden, free standing, Easter sepulchre  \textit{[Cowthorpe, St Michael, Yorkshire]}
approximately 63.5 inches (161cm) and its depth is approximately 25.5 inches (65cm). The depth of the Arlesey recess is approximately 30 inches (approximately 76cm). The similarity of the measurements may be a matter of pure coincidence, but it may point to a distinctive feature in tomb recesses which might enable an Easter sepulchre to be distinguished from a 'normal' tomb recess.

2. Barton-le-Cley, St Nicholas (Fig.41)

The chancel of St Nicholas, Barton-le-Cley, was largely rebuilt in the last decades of the nineteenth century by William Oswald Milne, pupil of Sir A. W. Blomfield, during the incumbency of the Revd Arthur Blomfield. Sir A. W. Blomfield's cousin. It is noticeable, however, that the tomb recess, which is 41 inches high by 83 inches wide by 13 inches in depth, was in existence before the Victorian restoration – that is, it is not an ecclesiological 'construction'. It was noted in the early nineteenth century by Archdeacon Bonney in his historical notices of churches:

In the North Wall of the Chancel is a low Arch over an Ancient Tomb, which has neither Inscription nor Ornament. It might possibly be designed for 'The Tomb', on which in the Romish Church the Effigy of our Saviour is laid, particularly for the Service of Good Friday.

The VCH for Bedfordshire refers to this tomb recess thus:

At the east end of the north wall is a tomb recess of the middle of the thirteenth century, with an elaborately moulded segmental head and double shafted jambs with moulded capitals and bases.

It does not define the recess as an Easter sepulchre, although Pevsner, himself does so:

Chancel late c13, see particularly the SEDILIA, PISCINA, and EASTER SEPULCHRE.

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8 See Pickford 1994, p.73; see also later in this thesis, chapter 10, pp.288-289.
9 Page 1908 (a), p.311.
10 Pevsner 2002 (a), p.45.
in the north wall of the chancel of the church at Barton-le-Cley. The chancel itself (now divided) is shown in plan in the photograph above, perhaps offering some idea of the form and function of the north chancel-wall.
If it is safe to assume that the tomb recess, sedilia and piscina were all part of the thirteenth-century construction of the chancel and the nave (the arcades are Early English), then it seems more likely that the recess was the tomb of the founder/benefactor than that it was constructed especially for the Easter ceremonies. The dimensions of the recess (41 inches high, by 83 inches wide and 13 inches deep) seem to support this hypothesis.

The difficulty with assuming that tomb recesses of a normal adult tomb size were Easter sepulchres is that the scale of the construction is out of proportion to their posited liturgical use. There is simply no need to construct a large tomb recess at floor level when all that it had to accommodate was a pyx, and an altar or processional cross. If there was any evidence that life-sized effigies of a Christ figure were used in the English Easter ceremonies, then it would be reasonable to assume that tomb recesses could well have been constructed for the Easter rites, but I have been unable to find any surviving documentary or sculptural evidence for the existence of such effigies in England.\(^\text{11}\)

3. **Bletsoe, St Mary's (Figs. 42 and 43)**

Bonney, in his historical notices of churches referred to a

* ... deep Monumental Arch*

in the north wall of the chancel\(^\text{12}\) but did not speculate, as he had done at Barton-le-Cley about whether it might have been an Easter sepulchre. The chancel itself (now disused; see Figs. 42 and 43) was restored in 1865-66, which perhaps explains why the VCH for Bedfordshire refers to the tomb recess in the north chancel wall as

\(^{11}\) See also pages 147-148 in this chapter. In an unpublished paper on the Mercer's Hall Christ (a paper delivered to the conference held 21-23 November 2003 on the *Gothic: Art for England 1400-1547* exhibition at the V & A Museum, London, 9 October 2003 - 18 January 2004), Dr Kim Woods has argued that the Mercer's Hall Christ was possibly a cadaver-type effigy which might have formed part of an altar complex. It does not have any characteristics to suggest that it might have been part of an Easter sepulchre.

\(^{12}\) Pickford 1994, p.131.
Tomb recess  [Bletsoe, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
Tomb recess  
[Bletsoe, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
... a poor modern imitation of 14th-century work\textsuperscript{13}.

Pevsner, in 1968, wrote:

\begin{quote}
The chancel has Dec tomb recesses: with crocketed gable in the N wall, with rather bleak cusping in the S wall\textsuperscript{14}.
\end{quote}

A pair of tomb recesses, each measuring 60 inches high by 84 inches long by 22 inches deep, either side of the chancel, would appear to suggest that there was no intention to create an Easter sepulchre; rather, these recesses should be regarded as providing appropriate space for high status tombs. The dimensions are within the normal range for burial recesses\textsuperscript{15}.

4. **Blunham, St Edmund** (Fig. 44)

The dimensions of this tomb recess at St Edmund's, Blunham, are 61 inches high by 80 inches wide by 30 inches deep, and the historiographical sequence of descriptions makes fascinating reading. The Lyson brothers, in 1806, wrote:

\begin{quote}
In the north wall of the chancel in Blunham and Little Staughton churches are altar tombs under Gothic arches ornamented with quatrefoils\textsuperscript{16}.
\end{quote}

Archdeacon Bonney, in his historical notices of churches (c. 1820-1840) expatiated at some length about the tomb:

\begin{quote}
On the North side of the Chancel under an Ogee Arch, richly adorned, is a Tomb containing Nine Shields in as many Quatrefoils, on one of which
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[13] Page 1912 (a), p.42.
\item[14] Pevsner 2002 (a), p.57.
\item[15] There is one reference to an Easter sepulchre at Bletsoe, namely, the will of John Lane in 1505:
\begin{quote}
to the sepulchre light 2s \ [Bell 1966, p.74]
\end{quote}
but that does not of itself prove that the Easter sepulchre at Bletsoe was of permanent architectural form; it is evidence only of the use of a sepulchre and as there is no iconographical or other evidence to suggest that either of the tomb recesses in Bletsoe was an Easter sepulchre, it is probably much wiser to assume that the Easter sepulchre in Bletsoe was, like most other parishes in England, a temporary construction.
\item[16] Lysons 1806, p.33.
\end{footnotes}
Tomb recess  [Blunham, St Edmund, Bedfordshire]
in 1823 was a spread Eagle. Subsequent to that time, the tomb has been repaired, and the Shield incautiously removed & replaced by a plain one. This Tomb is reputed to be to the Memory of a De Valence formerly Proprietor of the Manor and the circumstance of the Spread Eagle being found on one of the Shield [sic], which was one of their Bearings (see the Tomb of De Valence at Westminster) is in favour of the Supposition.

A few years later, in 1848, Addington simply said:

There is a fine tomb of the founder.

In 1852, someone using the initials W.A. wrote:

A fine altar tomb, unmutilated, save by whitewash, yet remains.

In 1912, the VCH for Bedfordshire described the tomb thus:

... a richly-carved canopied recessed tomb, c. 1350, having a cinquefoiled ogee arch and a crocketed label with a large foliate finial.

And Pevsner, in 1968, wrote:

Dec cusped and subcusped tomb recess ... with a spreading ogee arch and crockets on it. Leaf spandrels.

In other churches in Bedfordshire, Pevsner, the VCH and Bonney posited other tomb recesses as Easter sepulchres – but none of them made a similar suggestion about this recess, in spite of it having a number of the 'normal' defining features of an Easter sepulchre, particularly its siting on the north side of the altar.
It is possible that the recess was used as the locus for an Easter sepulchre, but there is no iconographical or other evidence to suggest that the recess was originally designed with the Easter ceremonies in mind.

5. **Dean, All Saints (Fig. 45)**

Whereas the tomb recess at Blunham was commented upon by most of Bedfordshire's architectural and ecclesiastical historians, the tomb recess at All Saints, Dean, has not been accorded the same scrutiny. In the nineteenth century Archdeacon Bonney, the Lysons brothers and 'W.A.' did not refer to it at all, although Addington did so in 1848:

> In the N aisle is a cinquefoiled sepulchral recess.\(^{23}\)

In 1912 the VCH for Bedfordshire merely noted the locker in the north wall of the chancel but described the tomb recess in some detail:

> At the east end of the north aisle is a 14th-century canopied recess inclosing [sic] a tomb, ornamented with conquefoils between blank shields, and having on its Purbeck marble covering slab the remains of an inscription 'PRIJES POR SA ALME DEU MER[CI]'\(^{24}\).

In 1968 Pevsner referred to the

> Dec tomb recess in the N aisle. The tomb-chest has six quatrefoils. The recess is high, and cusped and sub-cusped. On the tomb-chest a c13 slab with inscription in Lombardic lettering.\(^{25}\)

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\(^{23}\) Addington 1848, paragraph 87 (pages not numbered).

\(^{24}\) Page 1912 (a), p.135.

\(^{25}\) See Pevsner 2002 (a), p.75.
Tomb recess [Dean, All Hallows, Bedfordshire]
The tomb recess measures 84 inches high, by 80 inches wide and is 18 inches deep. In its proximity to the rood screen, although outside the chancel, it is possible to imagine that, in principle, it could have functioned as an Easter sepulchre – but its height and design suggest that this would have been very unlikely. It looks like what, in fact, it is – a fourteenth-century canopied tomb recess.

6. **Hockliffe, St Nicholas (Fig. 46)**

St Nicholas, Hockliffe, dates back to the thirteenth century, with additions and alterations in subsequent centuries. A fairly major restoration took place in 1859-1861 and the chancel was refurbished in 1877. An antiquarian who wrote under the pseudonym 'W.A.', on visiting Hockliffe prior to these restorations, reported that the mouldings of piscina, sedilia and niches were heavily encrusted with whitewash, and noted that

... a sepulchre on the north side, from the external appearance, appeared to remain, buried, in all probability, under lath and plaster.\(^{26}\)

The 1912 VCH for Bedfordshire referred to the

... 14th-century tomb recess under a low cinquefoiled arch.\(^{27}\)

Pevsner unequivocally, in 2002, describes the recess as an Easter sepulchre.\(^{28}\)

The recess measures 39 inches high, by 79 inches wide by 17 inches deep, and its size strongly suggests that it was designed to be the housing for a tomb. Such a tomb would be likely to have upon it an effigy, no longer extant, and if it did, then it would be singularly difficult to use it as an Easter sepulchre. Whilst its position, close to the altar, would have made it liturgically useful in the Easter ceremonies, there is no explicit iconographical or other evidence to indicate that this might have been its original purpose.

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\(^{26}\) Pickford 1998, p.361.

\(^{27}\) Page 1912 (a), p.385.

\(^{28}\) Pevsner 2002 (a), p.100:

*In the chancel C14 PISCINA and EASTER SEPULCHRE.*

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Tomb recess  [Hockliffe, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire]
7. **Luton, St Mary (Fig. 47)**

In the nineteenth century, neither Bonney, Lysons nor Addington make any reference to the recess in their work on St Mary's, Luton, though Glynne, without suggesting that it could have been an Easter sepulchre, describes it as

... *a mutilated niche with crocketed canopy & band of flowers*\(^{29}\).

However, in the early twentieth century, the VCH for Bedfordshire described it as

... *an early fourteenth-century tomb recess, with a well moulded ogee arch with crockets and a finial; its position suggests that it may have been used for the Easter sepulchre*\(^{30}\).

Its dimensions, namely 45 inches high by 52 inches wide by 7½ inches deep, do not immediately suggest that it was likely to have been designed as a tomb recess – unless for a child or for a miniature effigy, and that seems highly unlikely. It would certainly be capable, however, of receiving a horizontal altar cross or processional cross, assuming that the rear wall was further away than is currently the case. Unfortunately, the chancel area of St Mary's and the Wenlock chapel on the north side of the chancel have been subject to so much restoration and repair, that it is impossible to have complete confidence that this 'tomb' recess might have been specifically designed for the Easter ceremonies.

8. **Milton Ernest, All Saints (Fig. 48)**

The chancel of Milton Ernest was built in the late eleventh century; the nave and aisle were later fourteenth-century additions. In the north aisle is what Pevsner describes as

... *a splendid tomb recess, with crocketing and large cusping and subcusping and big leaves in the cusps*\(^{31}\).

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\(^{29}\) See Pickford 1998, p.455.

\(^{30}\) Page 1908 (a), p.369.

\(^{31}\) Pevsner 2002 (a), p.126.
Fig. 47

Recess [Luton, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
Tomb recess  [Milton Ernest, All Saints, Bedfordshire]

The Church of St Mary's, Penegoes, was extensively and skilfully restored by John Diode Bolingbroke in the 1930s. In the north wall of the chancel is a tomb recess, measuring 24 inches high by 22 inches wide by 12 inches deep. As can be seen from the illustration, under the two ledges, voids measuring 11½ inches by 12½ inches by 12 inches are observable. As the owner, Bolingbroke does not refer to the recess in his article, which concludes with the statement, as follows:

Ref. 1979, p. 313.

Archdeacon Donney also refers to the recess, but he does not mention its use as a tomb recess.
Archdeacon Bonney also referred to

... a fine Decorated Monumental Arch, with Cusps, and crooked [sic] Moulding and a finial\textsuperscript{32}.

It was presumably this same tomb recess, measuring 86 inches to the highest point by 72 inches long by 8 inches deep, to which 'W.A.' referred when, in a particularly pungent piece of invective, he wrote:

\begin{quote}
On the monument of a benefactor is placed a cupboard containing the tattered remains of the children's books [he was referring to the use of the aisle as a Sunday School], &.: dirty green curtains hardly conceal this wanton irreverence. Can we wonder at the desecration of sepulchral memorials, when in their infancy children are taught to pay so little respect to them\textsuperscript{33}.
\end{quote}

Again, it is notable that neither nineteenth nor twentieth-century architectural historians referred to this tomb recess as an Easter sepulchre. Whilst it would have been possible, liturgically, to have used this recess for the Easter ceremonies, the balance of probability means that it was unlikely to have been so used – it is simply too far away from the altar and, again, its dimensions and its lack of iconographical features suggest that it was simply a tomb recess, and nothing else.

\textbf{9. Potsgrove, St Mary (Fig.49)}

The Church of St Mary's, Potsgrove, now redundant, was heavily restored by John Dando Sedding in the 1880s. In the north wall of the chancel is a tomb recess, measuring 38 inches high by 88 inches wide by 12 inches depth. As can be seen from the illustration, there are two lockers (each measuring 11½ inches by 12½ inches by 12 inches) on either side of the recess. Pevsner does not refer to the recess at all, and describes St Mary's, laconically, as being

\textsuperscript{32} Pickford 1998, p. 510.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, p.512.
Tomb recess  [Potsgrove, St Mary, Bedfordshire]
... by J. D. Sedding, but with some old masonry.\textsuperscript{34}

but Richard Marks, in a recent study, wrote:

\textit{At first sight it could be taken for a wholly Victorian building. Sedding, however, included elements of the original fabric and furnishings.}\textsuperscript{35}

Marks is clear, however, that Sedding certainly left his imprint upon the building:

\textit{None of the chancel roof is original and the internal fittings and furnishings he treated with a heavy hand ... the sedilia are entirely Sedding's work and so are almost all of the tomb recess and the nave stoups and piscinae.}\textsuperscript{36}

It is noteworthy that neither Archdeacon Bonney in his historical notes, nor the antiquary 'W.A.' referred to the recess, though if this recess, with its striking and unusual arrangement of flanking lockers, had existed prior to Sedding's restoration, it would surely have elicited comment.

This particular recess, or at least its architectural treatment, might well represent, therefore, a late Victorian ecclesiological construct – an attempt to create an idealised medieval church.

\textbf{Swineshead, St Nicholas (Fig.50)}

Whereas Pevsner was laconic about Potsgrove, he was positively effusive about Swineshead and the tomb recess, which measures 82 inches high by 76 inches wide by 6 inches deep:

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{34} Pevsner 2002 (a), p.135.
\textsuperscript{35} Marks 1993, p.39.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, p. 39.
\end{flushright}
Fig. 50

Tomb recess  [Swineshead, St Nicholas, Bedfordshire]

Conclusion: Bedfordshire

The tomb recesses that have been illustrated represent 33.3% of the total of such recesses in Bedfordshire. It would appear that Arlesey and St Mary’s, Luton, might have some claim to be examples of permanent Easter sepulchres but, in both cases, heavy alterations to the interiors of the churches mean that a definite and unequivocal attribution cannot be made. The other two claimants, Potsgrove and Swineshead, have revealed in the one case a form of medievalism in its restoration and, in the other, a piece of mid-Victorian reconstruction. Neither of them has any claim to be an Easter sepulchre.


See Albee 1851, pp.372-379; see also later in this thesis, chapter 18, pp.294-295.

Page 1912 (s), p.169.
In the N wall a sumptuous EASTER SEPULCHRE or tomb recess, cusped and subcusped, with much leaf. A tiny stair and passage connects it with the former vestry\textsuperscript{37}.

What he would seem not to have known was that the tiny stair and passageway were a nineteenth-century construction made by the incumbent, the Reverend W. Airey, who did not hazard the suggestion that the tomb recess itself might have been an Easter sepulchre\textsuperscript{38}. It is interesting to note that neither Addington in 1848, nor the VCH for Bedfordshire in 1912 referred to the tomb recess as an Easter sepulchre. In fact the VCH makes its definition of its purpose very clear:

\begin{quote}
In the north wall is a fine 14th-century tomb recess with a moulded arch, the inner order cinquefoiled with feathered cusps and carved spandrels, and shafts in each jamb with foliate capitals; through the west end of the recess a shouldered doorway opens to a narrow passage running westward outside the chancel wall to the vestry at the east end of the north aisle\textsuperscript{39}.
\end{quote}

What at first sight, therefore, appears to be a very unusual and exciting Easter sepulchre, turns out to be nothing of the sort.

Conclusions: Bedfordshire

The tomb recesses that have been illustrated represent 33.3\% of the total of such recesses in Bedfordshire. It would appear that Arlesey and St Mary’s, Luton, might have some claim to be examples of permanent Easter sepulchres but, in both cases, heavy alterations to the interiors of the churches mean that a definite and unequivocal attribution cannot be made. The other two claimants, Potsgrove and Swineshead, have revealed in the one case a form of medievalism in its restoration and, in the other, a piece of mid-Victorian reconstruction. Neither of them has any claim to be an Easter sepulchre.

\textsuperscript{37} Pevsner 2002 (a), p.153.
\textsuperscript{38} See Airey 1851, pp.372-379; see also later in this thesis, chapter 10, pp.294-295.
\textsuperscript{39} Page 1912 (a), p.169.
This lack of positive identification in a county where, as will be shown in the following chapter, there was a higher than average devotion to the Easter sepulchre cult, suggests that the assumption that tomb recesses were also frequently Easter sepulchres is open to serious challenge.

**Tomb Recesses in Buckinghamshire**

1. **Ashendon, St Mary (Fig.51)**

   Careful scrutiny of the effigy reveals a knight with an inordinately long neck. It is likely, therefore, that the effigy - as a notice near the tomb explains - had its head broken off, which was then later replaced. Robert Gibbs, writing in the *Buckinghamshire Miscellany*, describes the effigy thus:

   ... the head of the statue having been broken, has been replaced on a new neck lengthened into hideous disproportion.  

   The RCHM survey covering Buckinghamshire described this recess, which measures 27 inches high by 88 inches wide by 26 inches deep, thus:

   In chancel - in recess on N. side, recumbent effigy of knight, possibly of the Cheyndutt family, in chain mail, surcoat to knee, with sword, shield bearing arms – a chevron [sic] – legs crossed, feet on lion, of Purbeck marble, probably late 13th-century ... in N. wall of chancel, long, low, with chamfered depressed ogee arch, moulded label with foliated crockets and finial, 15th-century, carvings choked with whitewash.

   Pevsner, with considerable economy of style, says:

   **Effigy of a Knight, cross-legged, defaced, late c13**

   The length of the recess is fairly unusual, being 88 inches long, and whilst it is obvious to state that the thirteenth-century effigy could not have been designed for this fifteenth-century tomb, it is not at all clear that the recess might have

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40 Gibbs 1891, p.205.

41 Royal Commission 1912, p.15.

42 Pevsner 1960, p.52.
Fig. 51

Tomb recess  [Ashendon, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]

...recklessly restored by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1898-99. Only the north wall is genuine. It has three tall shafted corner columns set in shafted arcing beneath below the arcing an Easter sepulchre. This arch is very depressed two-centred and starts with short tension stones at top of the short shafts 1 and v.

The dimensions of the recess (47 inches high by 84 inches wide and 13 inches deep) would seem to suggest, for reasons already stated, that it was designed to act as a tomb rather than as an Easter sepulchre. As can be seen from the Illustration (Fig. 52) containing a nativity scene, it lends itself very well to staging.

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For further details of the restoration, see Brandwood 1985, pp.13-14.
been designed for an Easter sepulchre. As has been said in the previous comments on Bedfordshire recesses, there is no need for a recess of this length (7ft 4in) simply to house an altar cross and a pyx. It is wiser to assume that it was a tomb recess from which the original effigy must have been removed.

2. **Aylesbury, St Mary (Fig.52)**

The restoration of St Mary's, Aylesbury, by Sir George Gilbert Scott began in 1849. Gibbs, in the *Buckinghamshire Miscellany*, condenses a paper originally published by 'Dr Lee of Lambeth' in 1889, in *The Building News*, in which occurred the following description:

> There is an aumbrey on the north side of the chancel sanctuary, an Easter sepulchre and a piscina.

The VCH for Buckinghamshire in 1908 described the recess as

> ... a late thirteenth-century tomb recess which may have served as an Easter sepulchre.

Pevsner was less reticent:

> ... recklessly restored by Sir George Gilbert Scott in 1850-69 ... Only the N wall is genuine. It has three tall shafted lancet windows set in shafted arcading inside ... below the arcading an Easter Sepulchre. The arch is very depressed two-centred and starts with short vertical pieces on top of the short shafts l. and r.

The dimensions of the recess (47 inches high by 84 inches wide and 13 inches deep) would seem to suggest, for reasons already outlined, that it was designed to act as a tomb rather than as an Easter sepulchre. As can be seen from the illustration (Fig.52) containing a nativity scene, it lends itself very well to staging

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43 For further details of the restoration, see Brandwood 1992, pp.1-10.
44 Gibbs 1891, p.290.
46 Pevsner 1960, p.54.
Tomb recess [Aylesbury, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]
a tableau set, and whilst it is tempting to argue that it might, therefore, have been used for a similar tableau purpose during the Easter ceremonies, such evidence as exists for small-scale figures suggests that they were monstrances rather than tableau figures. The Christus figure in the accounts of the *Rites of Durham* is clearly designed to be a kind of monstrance:

... a marvelous beautiful Image of our Saviour representinge the resurrection with a crosse in his hand in the breast whereof was enclosed in bright Christall the holy sacrament of the altar\(^{47}\)

and, as a monstrance, it would have been carried in procession, rather than have been used in a tableau.

It is possible, however, that at St Mary's, Redcliffe, Bristol, free-standing images were used for its Easter sepulchre:

*Item iiiij knyghtes Armed kepynge the Sepulchre with hes wepyns in hare handes that is to sey ij speris ij Axes with ij pavyes*\(^{48}\).

These examples from Durham and Bristol come from very wealthy churches - but there is no evidence extant that poorer and more provincial churches had images of that quality, if they had any at all.

Alyesbury also has two further tomb recesses, each measuring 55 inches high by 84 inches wide by 16 inches deep (*Fig. 53*) in the north aisle:

... *in N. wall of N. aisle chapel, two [recesses], each with elaborately moulded two-centred drop arch and label*\(^{49}\).

And in the north wall of the north transept, there is another tomb recess:

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\(^{47}\) Fowler 1903, p.12. This Christus figure was carried in procession in the Durham Easter ceremonies.

\(^{48}\) Sheingorn 1987, p.151.

\(^{49}\) Royal Commission 1912, p.27.
Fig. 53

Tomb recesses  [Aylesbury, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]

An object that came to light was a stone effigy which lay within a low-arched recess on the north chancel wall. No one referred to the recess as an Easter sepulchre. However, when the society visited Hingham again, in 1913, the concept of Easter sepulchres had become part of their observational toolkit.

... a low arched recess in the north wall may have been intended for an Easter sepulchre but how long it contained a stone effigy of a priest, earlier than the arch ... the niche itself is zero-depth and its four steps have each full treaded; the upperOrder is a double one, this inner a hollow shaper. The larger label is of a plain section fairly common in the...
... low down, with two-centred cinquefoiled drop arch, elaborately moulded ... contains effigy of knight\textsuperscript{50}.

In a church with four tomb recesses, where the only evidence put forward that one of them might have been an Easter sepulchre is that it is on the north side of the chancel, and where that factor has already been shown to be of less consequence than has been hitherto been claimed, the hard evidence to back the claim that this tomb recess is an actual Easter sepulchre, is very elusive.

3. **Ivinghoe, St Mary (Fig. 54)**

In 1847, Lipscomb wrote of the tomb recess at Ivinghoe:

\begin{quote}
In the north wall, under a low pointed arch, with a plain moulding ... is a stone statue of a man, in the habit of a monk\textsuperscript{51}.
\end{quote}

Almost forty years later, the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archaeological Society visited the church and spent some time looking at the effigy and the recess:

\begin{quote}
An object that came in for a good deal of curious inspection was the ancient stone effigy which lies within a low trefoiled recess on the north chancel wall\textsuperscript{52}.
\end{quote}

No one referred to the recess as an Easter sepulchre. However, when the society visited Ivinghoe again, in 1913, the concept of Easter sepulchres had become part of their observational toolkit:

\begin{quote}
... a low arched recess in the north wall may have been intended for an Easter sepulchre but has long contained a rude effigy of a priest, earlier than the arch ... the arch itself is four-centred and its four cusps have each foil trefoiled; the outer order is a double ogee, thin inner a hollow chamfer. The large label is of a plain section fairly common in the
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{50} Royal Commission 1912, p.27.
\textsuperscript{51} Lipscomb 1847, vol 3, p.397.
\textsuperscript{52} Downs 1897, p.473.
Tomb recess  [Ivinghoe, St Mary the Virgin, Buckinghamshire]

On the north side of the chancel, close to the roof-level rails, is a plain stone slab, coffin shaped, slightly raised under an arch, supposed to be the tomb of the Founder, whoever he might have been. It is supposed to...
fifteenth century ... the date of the recess is probably little, if at all, after 1400.\textsuperscript{53}

The suggestion that it might have been intended to be an Easter sepulchre was repeated by R. P. Hagerty in 1990:

*The recess is in the usual position in the north wall of the chancel near the altar to house an Easter sepulchre and this was most probably its original purpose.*\textsuperscript{54}

The dimensions of this fifteenth-century recess are fairly standard for tomb recesses. In this case, the recess is 43 inches high by 84 inches long and 22 inches deep, but what has not been taken into account in the proposals by the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archaeological Society or by Hagerty are the corbels on either side of the recess. Lipscomb described them as

... *female and male, with very large and coarse features.*\textsuperscript{55}

From an iconographical point of view, these corbels simply do not fit the Easter story. It seems very unlikely that this tomb recess, therefore, when originally constructed, had any purpose in the Easter ceremonies.

4. **Lillingstone Dayrell (Fig. 55)**

When the Buckinghamshire Architectural and Archaeological Society visited Lillingstone Dayrell, they were given a talk about the church by the incumbent, the Revd R. Dayrell (sic). He said:

*On the north side of the chancel, close to the communion rails, is a plain stone slab, coffin shaped, slightly raised under an arch, supposed to be the tomb of the Founder, whoever he might have been. It is supposed to*  

\textsuperscript{53} Gurney 1916, p.264. This paper was originally delivered in 1913.

\textsuperscript{54} Hagerty 1990, p.106.

\textsuperscript{55} Lipscomb 1847, vol.3, p.397.
Tomb recess  [Lillingstone Dayrell, St Nicholas, Buckinghamshire]
have been used as an Easter sepulchre, and a similar one is to be seen at Northwold, in Cambridgeshire [sic] \textsuperscript{56}.

Sixteen years later, in 1913, the RCHM for Buckinghamshire stated:

\textit{Easter Sepulchre}: In chancel – in N. wall, recess with drop arch of one filleted and hollow-chamfered order, with similar ribs springing from a corbel-capital in the middle, shafted jambs, all of rough workmanship, similar to arcade on S. Wall, late 13\textsuperscript{th}-century \textsuperscript{57}.

In 1927, the VCH for Buckinghamshire described the work as

... very rough, and the junction of the ribs with the main head is clumsy in the extreme \textsuperscript{58}.

The author speculated that the work might have been the result of unskilful rebuilding (the whole of the north wall of the chancel was probably rebuilt in the late fourteenth century). There is no reason to assume that this was designed originally as an Easter sepulchre; there are no iconographical markers, and the dimensions (80 inches high by 80 inches wide by 13 inches deep) suggest that it was a tomb recess.

Sheingorn suggests that this recess might have

... facilitated use of recess as depository for life-sized fig [sic] of Christ in Easter rites or for corpse in funeral services \textsuperscript{59}.

There are two difficulties with this assertion; firstly, there would appear to be no literary evidence for the use of a life-sized figure of Christ ever being used in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[56] Dayrell 1897, p.84.
\item[57] Royal Commission 1913, p.169.
\item[58] Page 1927, p.190.
\item[59] Sheingorn 1987, pp.95-96.
\end{footnotes}
English Easter ceremonies\textsuperscript{60}, and certainly there are no references to such figures in either the Edwardian inventories or, for example, in the descriptions of William Dowsing's iconoclastic forays in the seventeenth century\textsuperscript{61}. Secondly, the physical impracticality of manoeuvring a corpse into and out of an arched recess, such as this one at Lillingstone Dayrell, during a funeral service, suggests its use for this purpose would be highly unlikely.

\textbf{5. Oakley, St Mary (Figs. 56 and 57)}

Oakley has the distinction of having three tomb recesses. Two are in the north aisle wall and have the following dimensions: 52 inches high by 80 inches wide by 21 inches deep, and 48 inches high by 79 inches wide by 29 inches deep. On both, the tomb slabs are engraved with a cross - a tradition which began in the twelfth century\textsuperscript{62}.

In the exterior wall of the south transept there is a large tomb recess (Fig. 57):

\textit{In S. transept - in S. wall, outside, niche for tomb, with cinquefoiled chamfered head, large stone slab in niche}\textsuperscript{63}.

The dimensions of this tomb are 60 inches high by 86 inches wide by 26 inches deep. As this recess, like others which will be examined shortly, is patently a recess for a tomb, its dimensions may be significant in providing a determining factor in trying to discern which recesses, internal to a church, might have had an Easter sepulchre use. It seems sensible to assume that recesses which are internal to a church and which have dimensions not radically dissimilar from those of external tomb recesses, should be assumed to be tombs and not Easter sepulchres.

\textsuperscript{60} For a fascinating description of life-sized wooden figures of an entombed Christ in Germany and Denmark, see Grinder-Hansen 2004, pp.235-239.

\textsuperscript{61} See Dowsing 1786; there are 'matter of fact' but brutal descriptions of the destruction of crosses, 'holy pictures' and images, but not once in his journal does Dowsing record the destruction of a life-sized figure of Christ.

\textsuperscript{62} See Hadley 2001, p.146:

\textit{... the elaborate grave covers of the Anglo-Saxon period gave way in the twelfth century to plainer flat or coped grave slabs, usually decorated with a cross.}

\textsuperscript{63} Royal Commission 1912, p.264.
Tomb recesses [Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]
Tomb recess [Oakley, St Mary, Buckinghamshire]

The restoration was carried out by G. A. Scott in 1914.

A few yards to the east of this tomb recess is an antrum — which raises an interesting question. Where the north wall of a chancel has an antrum as well as a tomb recess, if being on the north side is the only distinguishing feature of a putative Easter sepulchre, which of the two recesses is to be chosen as the most likely Easter sepulchre? Posing the question in this form suggests that 'north-sidesness' is really a weak distinguishing feature — and where, as in Olney, the dimensions of the tomb recess are very similar to those of other tomb recesses, does this not suggest that the simplest definition, namely 'north antrum', is the most likely one? It is, of course, possible that the Olney tomb recess was used for the Easter celebration, though its depth (3½ inches) means that only a very, very, tiny cross would have been able to be accommodated — and that, in a church the size of Olney, seems inherently unlikely.
6. Olney, St Peter and St Paul (Fig. 58)

It would appear that this tomb recess (measuring 44 inches high by 86 inches wide by 8½ inches deep) was given its Easter sepulchre status in the early decades of the twentieth century. The VCH for Buckinghamshire in 1927, for example, described it thus:

*On the north, opposite the sedilia, is an original wide tomb recess, which was probably used as an Easter sepulchre*\(^6^4\).

Fourteen years previously, in 1913, the RCHM had suggested that the recess might have been an Easter sepulchre:

*In chancel - partly under N.E. window, tomb recess, possibly used for Easter Sepulchre, with continuously moulded jambs and segmented pointed head; in recess shallow altar tomb, front carved with quatrefoils in square panels, styles and rails with small flowers; all of c.1330, much restored*\(^6^5\).

The restoration was carried out by G. G. Scott in 1874.

A few yards to the east of this tomb recess is an aumbry – which raises an interesting question. Where the north wall of a chancel has an aumbry as well as a tomb recess, if being on the north side is the only distinguishing feature of a putative Easter sepulchre, which of the two recesses is to be chosen as the most likely Easter sepulchre? Phrasing the question in this form suggests that 'north-sidedness' is really a weak determining feature – and where, as in Olney, the dimensions of the tomb recess are very similar to those of other tomb recesses, does this not suggest that the simplest definition, namely 'tomb recess', is the most likely one? It is, of course, possible that the Olney tomb recess was used for the Easter ceremonies, though its depth (8½ inches) means that only a very, very, tiny cross would have been able to be accommodated – and that, in a church the size of Olney, seems inherently unlikely.

\(^4\) Page 1927, p.437.

\(^5\) Royal Commission 1913, p.228.
Conclusions: Buckinghamshire

The tomb recesses illustrated represent approximately 33.3% of all tomb recesses in Buckinghamshire. As has been shown, not one of them can make any explicit claim to have been an Easter sepulchre – and, in each case, the dimensions of the recesses (varying in width from 79 inches to 88 inches) seem to strongly suggest that the original purpose of these recesses was for burial.

It is also interesting to note that several of these churches were restored in the nineteenth century by ecclesiologically influenced architects. Sir G. G. Scott, for example, who restored St Mary's, Aylesbury, in 1849, is known to have been profoundly influenced by Pugin. He was a reader of the Ecclesiologist and was well acquainted with the Cambridge Camden Society. He is recorded as describing what was almost like a religious conversion, when he read Pugin's articles in The Dublin Review:

Pugin's articles excited me almost to a fury and I suddenly found myself awakened like a person from a long, feverish dream ... I cared for nothing, as regards my art, but the revival of Gothic architecture 66.

The impact of mid- and late Victorian thinking upon the notion of Easter sepulchres will be examined later in Chapter 11, but what can be said, with some degree of certainty at this point, is that tomb recesses in Buckinghamshire do not, by their design or by their iconographical treatment, seem to have any features which would lead one to suppose that they were specifically designed as Easter sepulchres.

Tomb Recesses in Hertfordshire

1. Aldbury, St John the Baptist (Fig. 59)

Cussans, writing in the last decades of the nineteenth century, described this recess, which is sited 31½ inches above the floor, thus:

On the north side of the chancel is a recess, which appears to have been an Easter Sepulchre 67.

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66 Clarke 1969, p.163.
67 Cussans 1879, p.32.
Recess  [Aldbury, St John the Baptist, Hertfordshire]
The VCH for Hertfordshire, in the early twentieth century, did not describe it as an Easter sepulchre but said that it was

... a four centred recess, probably of the fifteenth century.\(^{68}\)

The RCHM inventory in 1910 for Hertfordshire did not refer to the recess at all, neither did Pevsner, though he argued that the chancel was

... the oldest part of the church, as proved by a small C13 lancet window in the N wall and a low-side lancet in the S wall.\(^{69}\)

The church was restored in 1867, and the current pristine state of the stonework strongly suggests that the recess was part of that restoration – but if that had been the case, it seems odd that Cussans, writing only a few years after the restoration, did not spot its glaring newness.

Its dimensions (29½ inches high by 64 inches wide by 15 inches deep) and its lack of ornamentation suggest that it is unlikely to have been a tomb recess. Its shape and size would lend itself well to liturgical use as an Easter sepulchre. But it looks and feels like an ecclesiologist's version of what an Easter sepulchre should look like.

2. **Ardeley, St Lawrence (Fig. 60)**

In the *East Herts Archaeological Transactions* of 1907, H. P. Pollard provides a detailed description of the tomb recess (dimensions: 78 inches high by 66 inches wide by 38 inches depth - measured to apparent rear of original structure):

... a low and broad Early English arch, which originally covered a founder's tomb; the latter may have had a figure of the founder in armour. ... or a slab with an ornamental cross ... the tomb has now disappeared, and the arch has been cut through the wall to form a seat for the organist.

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\(^{68}\) Page 1908 (c), p.146.

\(^{69}\) Pevsner 2002 (b), p.64.
Tomb recess [Ardeley, St Lawrence, Hertfordshire]

In 1851, A. P. Pollard published the results of excavations at the Man Henry Yeade in York. In 1889, Theodora, daughter of Henry Yeade, died and he remained in post until 1907. In 1890, he was elected a fellow in the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society, in which he remained active.

...the greater part of the work was done by the north window...and the north wall is partly modern, with two small modern windows, one at the south end...and the other at the north end.
... the greater part of the moulding under the arch on the west side is modern, and the small column at each side has been restored.

Pollard also quoted from a Visitation of Ardeley in 1297:

... found in the church of Erdeley on the day of St Calixtus, the Pope ... One ordinal of the use of Sarum ... processional cross of enamel, another of wood ... An ivory pyx, silver-mounted, unfastened for the Eucharist.

The 1910 RCHM for Hertfordshire also referred to the

... 13th-century tomb recess with shafted jambs and dog-tooth ornament, may have been used as an Easter Sepulchre.

The description of the enamel processional cross and the wooden cross in the thirteenth century, plus an ivory pyx, brings the Easter ceremonies alive – but the existence of those articles, and the existence of a tomb recess, do not of themselves imply that the recess was designed to be an Easter sepulchre. Proximity and causality are not necessarily correlated.

3. Aspenden, St Mary (Fig. 61)

In 1851, A. P. Sanderson became the curate of Aspenden to the Hon Henry Yorke. In 1859, Sanderson became the Rector of the parish and he remained in post until 1905. In 1902, he gave a paper to the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society in which he referred to the recess:

In the north wall of the sanctuary there is an altar-tomb, or Easter sepulchre, the date of which is probably (about) 1400, or somewhat later.

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70 Pollard 1907, p. 287.
72 Royal Commission 1910, p. 36.
73 Sanderson 1903, p. 62.
Fig. 61

Tomb recess  [Aspenden, St Mary, Hertfordshire]

This recess could, theoretically, have functioned as an altar niche, though its dimensions might argue against such a use.
That same recess had been mentioned in a small booklet\textsuperscript{74}:

\begin{quote}
Against the north wall by side [sic] the altar is an old arched and carved monument three parts hid by wainscotin\textsuperscript{g}\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

but nowhere in that booklet was the recess described as an Easter sepulchre.

In 1914 the VCH for Hertfordshire claimed that the recess

\[ ... \textit{may have been used as an Easter sepulchre} \textsuperscript{76}. \]

Then in the \textit{East Hertfordshire Archaeological Transactions} of 1928-33, Archibald Jackson wrote an article arguing that the Easter sepulchre, or altar tomb, might have been the altar tomb of the Fitz-Ralphs who, as

\[ ... \textit{Lords of Aspenden for two centuries to 1428 ... constructed the nave arcade and added the original south aisle c.1340-50} \textsuperscript{77}. \]

The recess is positioned 26 inches above the ground and its dimensions are 70 inches high by 70 inches wide and 12 inches deep, and are thus within the range of normal tomb recess dimensions. The depth of 12 inches from the front of the tomb to the rear wall, whilst somewhat narrow, could, nevertheless, be used as the surface for an altar but would provide housing for only a small cross (say, 10 inches wide), if such a cross were 'buried' in the Easter ceremonies.

This recess could, therefore, have functioned liturgically as an Easter sepulchre, though its dimensions might argue against such a use.

\textsuperscript{74} This was entitled \textit{A Survey of the Present State of Aspeden Church, Herts. June 1793}; it was published in 1796, London, printed for Henry Chapman. [See Minet 1927].

\textsuperscript{75} Minet 1927, p.330.

\textsuperscript{76} Page 1914 (b), p.22.

\textsuperscript{77} Jackson 1934, pp.58-59.
Tomb recesses  [Balock, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
Tomb recess  [Baldock, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
Tomb recess  [Brent Pelham, St Mary, Hertfordshire]

This tomb has the following dimensions: At Michael from the ground, by 72 inches long by 14 inches deep. The St. John's Inventory for Hertfordshire, in 1910, described the tomb as follows:

"In a recess in N. wall of nave, was placed a chest, that was 15th century, described as high altar-side chest made, on top, ledge of the Evangelist, and other figures, and had evidently been placed on the back of the chest, which is of oak, 15th century, time.""
4. **Baldock, St Mary the Virgin (Figs. 62 and 63)**

St Mary's, Baldock, has three tomb recesses, each of them in the external walls of the church. Two of the recesses are identical (14 inches high by 62 inches wide by 6 inches deep) and one of them is much larger, measuring 36 inches high by 112 inches wide by 15 inches deep. That these recesses have a burial purpose cannot be denied – and it is obvious that none of them, liturgically, would have featured in the Easter sepulchre ceremonies.

The main phenomenon to note is the size of the twin recesses; 62 inches width is very little different from the internal recess at Aldbury (Hertfordshire) and at Arlesey (Bedfordshire) and, in both of those cases, their use as Easter sepulchres has been mooted on the grounds that their dimensions are close to those of the wooden Easter sepulchre of Cowthorpe (63½ inches wide). The question this raises about defining characteristics will be explored further in the conclusions at the end of this chapter.

5. **Brent Pelham, St Mary (Fig. 64)**

The nave and chancel of St Mary's, Brent Pelham, were built c.1350 but were extensively restored in 1861 by E. Christian, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.

This tomb has the following dimensions: 42 inches from the ground, by 72 inches long by 14 inches deep. The RCHM inventory for Hertfordshire, in 1910, described the tomb as follows:

> ... in a recess in N. wall of nave, large black marble slab, late 13th-century, decorated in high relief with foliate cross, the symbols of the Evangelists, and other figures; an 18th-century inscription painted on the back of the recess ascribes it to Piers Shonks, 1086.

None of the many authors writing about Brent Pelham (Chauncy, Salmon, Clutterbuck, Cussans, A. Whitford Anderson) has suggested that this recess could

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78 See Cussans 1872, p.140.

79 Royal Commission 1910, p.70.
possibly have been intended for use as an Easter sepulchre - and, of course, the high-relief foliate cross on the upper surface of the tomb would make such a use impossible. This inevitably raises the question, where there are now recesses without effigies, whether in their original state, the form of those effigies would, in any case, have prevented their use for the Easter ceremonies.

6. **Bygrave, St Margaret of Antioch (Fig. 65)**

Bygrave suffers from the distinction of having a tomb recess, measuring 42 inches high by 72 inches wide by 12 inches deep, on the north side of the chancel wall, in the 'classic' position, yet not one single author has suggested its use as an Easter sepulchre.

Cussans was the first of the nineteenth-century antiquarians to refer to the recess:

*There was recently discovered in the north wall of the chancel, under an Early English arch, a stone coffin ... hollowed within with a circular head so as to exactly receive the body. This niche, the form of the chancel arch, and the arch and moulding over the piscina indicate with tolerable precision the first quarter of the fourteenth century to be the period of the building of the church.*

If the stone coffin and the arch are of the same period, such that it could be argued that the one was made for the other, it might provide evidence to indicate that many tomb recesses would originally have had stone coffins within them — and would, therefore, not have been designed primarily for Easter sepulchres. In the case of the stone coffin at Bygrave, it would seem that no dating of the coffin by experts has been attempted, and as head niches in stone coffins came into fashion in England between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, no conclusions can be satisfactorily drawn about the original relationship between the coffin and the recess, though the foliate cross (?) might suggest a twelfth-century or thirteenth-century date.

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80 Cussans 1873, p.52.
Tomb recess  [Bygrave, St Margaret, Hertfordshire]
7. Hunsdon, St Dunstan (Fig. 66)

None of the eighteenth or nineteenth-century antiquarian writers on Hertfordshire suggest that this tomb recess might have been an Easter sepulchre. That suggestion was first published by J. E. Morris in 1902, in a paper concerning Hunsdon which was delivered to the East Hertfordshire Archaeology Society:

*Mr Gerish says the recess in the north wall is probably an Easter sepulchre, and the inscription is of a later date than the tomb itself. This, however, is open to controversy. It consists of a single Tudor arched recess, the arch splayed and panelled, with Perpendicular tracery, surmounted by three shields bearing coats of arms. The tablet records in Latin that 'Francis Poynz, Knight, lies here. He was distinguished by letters, by friends, by favour of his King, and by piety.' The date is 1528*…Sir Francis Poynz was Henry VIII's Ambassador to Germany*

Whilst the recess could undoubtedly have been used for the Easter ceremonies, and its dimensions (58 inches high by 58 inches wide by 15 inches deep) would have made this possible, there is no iconographical detail, in what is otherwise a very sculpted monument, which makes reference to Good Friday or Easter Day. In these circumstances, it seems wiser to treat it as a funerary monument, rather than as an Easter sepulchre.

8. Much Hadham, St Andrew (Fig. 67)

This tomb recess is situated on the north wall of the chancel. Chauncy (1632-1719) referred to Much Hadham in his *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire*, which was first published in 1700, thus:

*Hadham Magna ... This was a Seat, which the Bishops of London did usually reserve for their own Habitation, and has been of great Esteem in the Opinion of some Princes*.

In common with other Hertfordshire churches, as has already been noted, none of the eighteenth- or nineteenth-century antiquarians described the tomb recess as an

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82 Morris 1903, p.48.
83 Chauncy 1826, vol 1, p.315.
Tomb recess/monument [Hunsdon, St Dunstan, Hertfordshire]
Tomb recess  [Much Hadham, St Andrew, Hertfordshire]

Fig. 67

The dimensions, however [67], though, 26'2" x 11'4" x 5'10" deep, are not excessive. The recess should be considered as a tomb recess rather than an enclosure for a bishop. The recess was described as the base of a column. This column supported the cross and Host.
Easter sepulchre. It was in the first years of the twentieth century that that ascription came to be made. For example, the VCH for Hertfordshire in 1914 gave this assessment:

*Between the old doorway to the vestry and the doorway to the organ chamber is a recess, probably used as an Easter sepulchre, with continuously moulded arch and jambs and moulded label forming an ogee arch above, with a mutilated carved filial and stops with shields; it is of 15th-century date.*

The members of the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society had been told by R. S. Gregory in 1903 that it was an Easter sepulchre:

*Perhaps the most noticeable monument is an Easter sepulchre cut into the chancel wall on the north side.*

The RCHM described the tomb recess as 'possibly' used also as an Easter sepulchre. Although Pevsner did not mention this recess in the 1953 edition, the 1977 revision stated confidently:

*EASTER SEPULCHRE, also Dec.*

The dimensions, however (56 inches high by 68 inches wide by 9 inches deep), seem to suggest much more strongly that this recess should be interpreted as a tomb recess rather than as an Easter sepulchre - for all the reasons outlined previously concerning the size of a recess required for the burial of a cross and Host.

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84 Page 1914 (b), p.65.
85 Gregory 1903, p.137.
87 See Pevsner 1953, pp.172-173.
9. St Albans, St Michael (Fig. 68)

This tomb recess, measuring 38 inches high by 84 inches wide by 15 inches deep, is on the exterior south wall of St Michael's church. As has been said of the tomb recesses on the exterior of church walls at Oakley (Buckinghamshire) and Baldock (Hertfordshire), it is obvious that such a recess was designed specifically for a tomb (the remains of the tomb slab are clearly visible in the illustration). The dimensions of this exterior tomb mirror the dimensions of a number of interior recesses - suggesting that the latter were designed originally to have a funerary, rather than an Easter liturgical, function.

10. Ware, St Mary (Fig. 69)

This arched recess, with continuous mouldings, measures 60 inches high by 74 inches wide by 15 inches deep, and is situated in the north aisle. It is too far distant from the high altar to have been able to play a part in the Easter liturgies, and this, plus its dimensions and its lack of iconographical detail, all suggest that it was not intended to be an Easter sepulchre but was designed purposefully as a tomb recess.

Conclusions: Hertfordshire

In spite of the claims made by some Hertfordshire local historians in the early twentieth century, there is very little evidence, if any, that the recesses that have been commented upon and illustrated, had any Easter sepulchral purpose at all. They have followed the pattern that has been outlined in the comments made about tomb recesses in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, namely, that neither the dimensions, nor the architectural treatment, nor the iconography, have suggested an Easter sepulchre purpose in their original construction and design.

Tomb Recesses - Conclusions

In this chapter approximately 33.3% of all the tomb recesses in the three counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire have been commented upon and illustrated.

With the exception of Arlesey (Bedfordshire), St Mary's, Luton (Bedfordshire) and Aldbury (Hertfordshire), no evidence has been discovered to show that any of the tomb
Tomb recess  [St Albans, St Michael, Hertfordshire]
Tomb recess  [Ware, St Mary, Hertfordshire]
recesses are likely to have been designed originally with an Easter sepulchre purpose in mind. Their dimensions have suggested that their primary purpose was for burial. In the case of the three exceptions, the dimensions related to their width have led to the tentative possibility that they might have had an Easter sepulchre purpose but, in each case, Victorian or earlier restoration of the fabric has meant that certainty about their original use is unattainable. If 'probability' is allowed into the equation, however, and if their liturgical 'fitness for purpose' is taken into account, then an Easter sepulchre use cannot be entirely ruled out.

Such a very modest conclusion, added to the equally modest conclusion concerning lockers as Easter sepulchres, can only add to the growing evidence that permanent Easter sepulchres really are very elusive and extremely rare.