



# Kent Academic Repository

**Lewis, Michael John (2004) *The archaeological authority of the Bayeux Tapestry*. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) thesis, University of Kent.**

## Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/94479/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

## The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.22024/UniKent/01.02.94479>

## This document version

UNSPECIFIED

## DOI for this version

## Licence for this version

CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives)

## Additional information

This thesis has been digitised by EThOS, the British Library digitisation service, for purposes of preservation and dissemination. It was uploaded to KAR on 25 April 2022 in order to hold its content and record within University of Kent systems. It is available Open Access using a Creative Commons Attribution, Non-commercial, No Derivatives (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>) licence so that the thesis and its author, can benefit from opportunities for increased readership and citation. This was done in line with University of Kent policies (<https://www.kent.ac.uk/is/strategy/docs/Kent%20Open%20Access%20policy.pdf>). If you ...

## Versions of research works

### Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

### Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

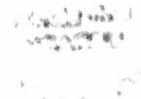
## Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact [ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk](mailto:ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

University

**THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AUTHORITY OF  
THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY**

**MICHAEL JOHN LEWIS**



Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

**University of Kent at Canterbury**

September 2003

Corrections: April 2004 (following *viva*)



F185476

## CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS / TABLES	iii
ABSTRACT	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
CONVENTIONS	xii
INTRODUCTION	1
1. BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE	36
2. ARMS AND ARMOUR	74
3. SHIPS	106
4. DRESS AND CLOTHING	139
5. ANIMALS, BIRDS AND BEASTS	174
6. VEGETATION	212
CONCLUSION	238

## APPENDIX

(bound separately)

ATTRIBUTES IN MANUSCRIPTS CITED	292
MANUSCRIPTS CITED	307
BIBLIOGRAPHY	321
APPENDIX ILLUSTRATIONS	348
FACSIMILE OF THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY	372

## ILLUSTRATIONS

- III.1 Queen Matilda and her ladies embroider the Bayeux Tapestry in a painting by Alfred Gaillard.
- III.2 Edward the Confessor has stern words with Harold upon his return from Normandy in 1064.
- III.3 The stole worked on the order of Queen Ælfflæd for Bishop Frithestan of Winchester.
- III.4 Detail of the Oseberg textile fragment.
- III.5 The chasuble belonging to Bamberg Cathedral.
- III.6 Abraham casting sling-stones at birds in the Old English Hexateuch and a similar scene in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.7 The Last Supper scene in the St Augustine's Gospels and a similar scene in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.8 The Bayeux Tapestry as it may have been displayed in Bayeux Cathedral and in a secular residence, such as Dover Priory.
- III.9 Harold swears an oath at Bayeux.
- III.10 Jan Messent's needlework reconstruction of the end of the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.11 David Smee's 1966 *Punch* cartoon showing the Tapestry designer at work.
- III.12 Psalm 2 as shown in the Utrecht Psalter, the Harley 603 Psalter and the Eadwine Psalter.
- III.13 A building in the Grandval Bible.
- III.14 Bosham Church as it appears today.
- III.15 Parallels between the architectural fabric of St Laurence, Bradford-upon-Avon and the depiction of Bosham Church in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.16 Mont-Saint-Michel in the Bayeux Tapestry and an artistic reconstruction of the Romanesque church based upon extant architectural fabric and archaeological remains.
- III.17 A building depicted in British Library, Royal 15 A. xvi.
- III.18 Steps leading to a building in Junius 11 and Bosham Church in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.19 Westminster Abbey in British Library, Cotton Nero D. ii.

- III.20 An artistic reconstruction of Westminster Abbey in the eleventh century and the depiction in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.21 Hastings Castle in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.22 Similarities in the depiction of Dol in the Bayeux Tapestry and a castle shown on a sculptured capital from Westminster Hall, London.
- III.23 A walled town in the Harley 603 Psalter.
- III.24 Post-holes of a rectangular building excavated at Goltho, Lincolnshire.
- III.25 The scaled roofing fabric of a building in Pierpont Morgan Library M 869.
- III.26 A reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon house at West Stow, Suffolk.
- III.27 A two-storey building in Junius 11 and a similar structure in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.28 The Washingborough helmet.
- III.29 The Middleton (2A) warrior.
- III.30 King David and his attendants wearing Roman armour in the Vivian Bible of Charles the Bald.
- III.31 Soldiers in the Gospel Book of Otto III depicted wearing Phrygian helmets and fighting with a classical style bows and spears.
- III.32 The different designs used to evoke armour in the Bayeux Tapestry: a) scaled, b) triangular/patterned, c) circles, d) half circles, e) crossed horizontal hatch, f) crossed diagonal hatch, and g) variations on a mixture of types c to g.
- III.33 Segmented conical helmets in the Royal Armouries, Leeds, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
- III.34 The segmented conical helmet worn by Goliath in the Tiberius Psalter and a figure in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.35 A conical helmet with nasal guard worn by Edward the Confessor on a silver penny of about 1053-6.
- III.36 The trousered hauberks worn by a king in the Old English Hexateuch and a figure in the Harley 603 Psalter.
- III.37 The trousered hauberk depicted on the stone sculpture fragment from Winchester.
- III.38 Winged spears of the Bury Psalter, the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius and the Bayeux Tapestry.

- III.39 Woodworkers felling trees in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi and the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.40 Archers in the Bayeux Tapestry and an archer using a short bow on the Franks Casket.
- III.41 An archer in the Ebbo Gospels and one of those in the Bayeux Tapestry firing arrows over the right side of the bow stave.
- III.42 One of the Gokstad round-shields and an example in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.43 Kite-shields depicted in the Harley 603 Psalter.
- III.44 Excavation of the Skuldelev ships, Roskilde fjord, Denmark.
- III.45 The Roman galley depicted in the Vivian Bible.
- III.46 The ship of the Hitda Codex.
- III.47 Ships in the Bayeux Tapestry showing their sheer curve.
- III.48 Disembarkation of horses as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry and from the working replica of the Ladby ship.
- III.49 Diagram to illustrate the size of the ships in the Bayeux Tapestry, using the size of an eleventh century horse for scale.
- III.50 A ship in the Bayeux Tapestry with a gap in the gunwale amidships.
- III.51 An artistic reconstruction of Skudelev 3: one of the traders excavated from Roskilde fjord.
- III.52 Vessels in Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch with gaps in the gunwale amidships.
- III.53 The decorative figureheads from the River Scheldt at Zele, Appels and Moerzeke.
- III.54 One of the zoomorphic carvings recovered from the Oseberg ship.
- III.55 Ships with boxed stems (apparently shown with slots) depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.56 Zoomorphic figureheads of the Bayeux Tapestry, Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch.
- III.57 Detail of one of the ships depicted in the Old English Hexateuch showing the scarf joins on its hull planking.

- III.58 A working replica of Skuldelev 5 showing shields in a shield rack along the outboard gunwale.
- III.59 A coin from Spangerid, Vest-Auger, which appears to show both round- and kite-shields along the inboard gunwale.
- III.60 Diagram of Ship 3 in the Bayeux Tapestry showing that its sail has been rendered in error.
- III.61 Ships with ‘triangular’ sails in the Harley 603 Psalter.
- III.62 The crossed masthead of the Mora in the Bayeux Tapestry and that on a ship depicted on the Tournai font in Winchester Cathedral.
- III.63 Parallels between the method used to smooth rough planks in the Bayeux Tapestry and Damian Goodburn in an archaeological experiment.
- III.64 The author using wedges to cleave wooden planks.
- III.65 Noah using an axe in the Old English Hexateuch and Junius 11.
- III.66 The stylised clothing of St Matthew in the Book of Durrow.
- III.67 The mix of classical and contemporary attire worn by the characters in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura.
- III.68 The mix of classical and contemporary attire worn by the characters in the Epistolary of Trier.
- III.69 Gowns with a diagonal fold in the Bayeux Tapestry and British Library, Cotton Titus D. xxvi.
- III.70 Embroidered bands and quatrefoil motifs on the gowns of Edward the Confessor in the Bayeux Tapestry and St John in British Library, Arundel 60.
- III.71 Culottes with banding on the inside leg depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Tiberius Psalter.
- III.72 Necklines of tunics in the Bayeux Tapestry and British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v.
- III.73 Tunics with a frill at the knee as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.74 A decorative cloak worn by William in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.75 Rectangular brooches worn by Edward the Confessor in the Bayeux Tapestry and St Benedict in the Arundel 155 Psalter.
- III.76 The square patch adorning ecclesiastical vestments depicted on the gilt cover of the Judith Gospels.



- III.77 Ecclesiastical vestments worn by Stigand in the Bayeux Tapestry and ecclesiastics in Durham Cathedral Library, B. III. 32.
- III.78 Garters worn by a figure in the Bayeux Tapestry and King Edgar in the New Minster Charter.
- III.79 Two late eleventh-century ankle-boots found in London.
- III.80 The Phrygian caps worn by an archer in the Bayeux Tapestry and a figure in the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges.
- III.81 Women in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Winchester Bible wearing long-sleeved overgarments with flared cuffs.
- III.82 The lion illustrated by Villard de Honnecourt.
- III.83 The lion, the Evangelist symbol for St Mark, in the Book of Durrow.
- III.84 The lion in the Codex Aureus.
- III.85 The donkey and goat depicted in the Pericopes Book of Henry II.
- III.86 The stirrup-strap mount from Somerset which depicts a griffin.
- III.87 Odo's horse (A714) in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.88 Horses and horse furniture depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 23.
- III.89 Harold with a hawk in the Bayeux Tapestry and a mounted huntsman in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi.
- III.90 Oxen pulling a plough in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi.
- III.91 Sheep in the Bayeux Tapestry and British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi.
- III.92 A bovine in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Evangelist symbol for St Luke in the Trinity Gospels.
- III.93 Lions rampant in the Bayeux Tapestry and Junius 11.
- III.94 Dragons in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Tiberius Psalter.
- III.95 The Evangelist carpet page of the Codex Aureus.
- III.96 A fig tree in the Gospel Book of Otto III.
- III.97 Decorative leaves or fruit depicted on trees in the Bayeux Tapestry: a) oval leaf with lobed terminal, b) trifoliate pointed leaf, c) trifoliate acanthus leaf,

d) single-sided acanthus leaf, e) trifoliolate rounded leaf, f) heart shaped leaf, g) aroid leaf with lobed terminal, h) chilli shaped leaf, i) serrated leaf, j) multi-lobed leaf, and k) oval lobed leaf.

- Ill.98 Types of vegetal ornament found in the borders of the Bayeux Tapestry (left to right): Type 1 (cruciform), Type 1 derivative (quasi-cruciform), Type 2 (scolled), and Type 3 (cruciform variant).
- Ill.99 Trees in the Museo de S. Ambrogio textile fragment.
- Ill.100 Loose plait of trees in the Bayeux Tapestry and Junius 11.
- Ill.101 Trapezoid node depicted on trees in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Museo de S. Ambrogio textile fragment.
- Ill.102 Cruciform vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Cambridge, Pembroke College 301 Gospels.
- Ill.103 Acanthus elements of vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and Junius 11.
- Ill.104 Scrolled vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and British Library, Cotton Vitellius C. iii.
- Ill.105 Cruciform-scrolled derivative vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and Junius 11.
- Ill.106 A tri-lobed variety of leaf ornament / fruit variety found on some vegetal ornament in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- Ill.107 Trees used as scene dividers in the Grandval Bible.
- Ill.108 The early Norman castle at Pleshey, Essex.
- Ill.109 Odo shown advising William on the construction of the Norman invasion fleet.
- Ill.110 Clerics wearing secular dress at the funeral of Edward the Confessor.
- Ill.111 Spurs worn by a horseman in the Bayeux Tapestry and an eleventh century example from Winchester.
- Ill.112 Parallels between the geometric designs on some of the kite-shields depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry and the Harley 603 Psalter.
- Ill.113 Parallels between the scene where Conan escapes from Dol in the Bayeux Tapestry and an Israelite spy escaping from Jericho in the Old English Hexateuch.
- Ill.114 Part of the Bayeux Tapestry's inscription.

- III.115 Culottes and tunics of matching colour – giving the appearance of a one-piece garment.
- III.116 A mailed hood in the Bayeux Tapestry shown superimposed over a conical helmet.
- III.117 The scene numbering system depicted on the Tapestry’s backing cloth.
- III.118 Guy shown holding an axe.
- III.119 William shown with tassels hanging from his cloak.
- III.120 Axes held by Harold and one of his companions.
- III.121 A copper-alloy brooch with Borre-style decoration from Hemingstone, Suffolk.
- III.122 Psalm 16 in the Harley 603 Psalter where opposing armies are both armed with round-shields.
- III.123 Christ in classical robes greets the people of Jerusalem who wear eleventh-century style tunics in the Tiberius Psalter.
- III.124 Tassels embellish the cloak of the Emperor Lothar in the Lothar Gospels.
- III.125 Parallels between Cain enthroned in Junius 11 and Edward the Confessor and William in the Bayeux Tapestry.
- III.126 Harold shown leading a hunting party in the Bayeux Tapestry.

## **TABLES**

Tab.1 Date of artefacts in the Bayeux Tapestry.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the extent to which artefacts depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry reflect those of the contemporary world of the eleventh-century, comparing them with archaeological evidence on the one hand and with early medieval artistic tradition on the other.

The main body of the work will present a series of ‘test cases’ in which the verisimilitude of different types of artefacts/attributes (architecture, arms and armour, ships, dress and clothing, along with beasts and vegetation) is assessed, by comparing them with objects found archaeologically and with other depictions in contemporary art. Drawing upon these findings the thesis will propose that, although the Tapestry is a depiction of a ‘real’ sequence of events, its artefacts were influenced more by artistic convention than by the contemporary scene, and that we should therefore be wary when using it as a visual source for the appearance of objects in the third-quarter of the eleventh century.

Building on the information and insights thus gained, the thesis will then present new insights into the world of the Tapestry designer and embroiderers, the relationship between the Tapestry’s patron and designer, how the Tapestry was produced, the way in which the designer used symbolism and iconography, the extent to which the Tapestry is typical of art of the period, and – more generally – into the depiction of the ‘real world’ in early medieval art.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to those who have helped in the realisation of this project. In particular I would like to thank Richard Gameson, my supervisor, for his invaluable comments and suggestions and help in guiding this work to fruition. Also, Emma Bingley, who persevered ‘Bayeux talk’ over the last four years, but was ever helpful commenting on drafts and reading through references.

I have been most fortunate to have discussed my work with many scholars and museum professionals, who have either commented on earlier drafts of my thesis or added their knowledge of the subject in other ways. In particular I would like to thank David Bates, John Cherry, Martin Foys, Helen Geake, Gillian Hutchinson, Kevin Leahy, Sylvette Lemagnen, Gale Owen-Crocker, Ole Crumlin Pedersen, Ian Pierce, Tim Tatton-Brown, Dominic Tweddle, Leslie Webster, Ben Withers and Gareth Williams. Also I would like to thank my colleagues at the British Museum (in addition to those mentioned above) and in the Portable Antiquities Scheme. I am also very grateful to Roger Bland, who proof read this thesis, and Tony Rogers, who helped with French translation. Useful comments and suggestions were made by John Blair and Richard Eales at *viva* and have been incorporated into the current work.

Finally, I wish to thank Mary Lewis, Robert Lewis, the National Maritime Museum, Kent County Council, and the Museums, Archives and Libraries Council, who have given valuable financial support.

## CONVENTIONS

The following conventions are used in this work:

### **Bayeux Tapestry**

Section numbers (Section 0) refer to the appropriate part, of the eight surviving lengths from which the Tapestry was constructed. Scene numbers (Scene 00) refer to the numerals that were ‘hand-painted’ on to the Tapestry’s nineteenth-century backing fabric. All individual characters within the Tapestry have been given a Figure reference number (Figure 00), as indicated in the facsimile accompanying this work. Likewise all buildings (B00), ships (S00), beasts (A00) and vegetal (V00) ornament have been given a unique reference number, also indicated on the facsimile.

### **Manuscripts**

All references to illuminated manuscripts are given in full on their first citation, but thereafter are shortened to i) library abbreviation, ii) shelf mark, and iii) folio. Full references to the manuscripts cited, including date, origin (where known) and common name are given in the ‘manuscripts cited’ section of the appendix.

The dates of manuscripts and objects have been cited according to the following conventions:

x/xi	late tenth century/early eleventh century
xi	eleventh century
xi <sup>in</sup>	early eleventh century
xi <sup>1</sup>	first half of the eleventh century
xi <sup>1/4</sup>	first quarter of the eleventh century
xi <sup>2/4</sup>	second quarter of the eleventh century
xi <sup>med</sup>	middle of the eleventh century
xi <sup>2</sup>	second half of the eleventh century

xi <sup>3/4</sup>	third quarter of the eleventh century
xi <sup>4/4</sup>	fourth quarter of the eleventh century
xi <sup>ex</sup>	end of the eleventh century

### **Printed Sources**

Printed sources, primary and secondary alike are abbreviated to author/s, and short title. Full references are given in the bibliography.

### **Illustrations**

All illustrations (Ill. 00) referred to within the text are shown with caption in close proximity to the textual citation. Illustrations of 'general interest' appear in an appendix with a reference in the text.

## INTRODUCTION

No eleventh-century work of art is more famous or controversial than the Bayeux Tapestry; even its name is misleading, for it is not a tapestry.<sup>1</sup> Though an extremely well-known artefact, depicting one of the most famous events of English history, and the subject of numerous studies, many aspects of the Tapestry remain contentious even enigmatic. Whilst debate has raged around the interpretation of certain scenes, such as the mysterious *Ælfgyva* incident,<sup>2</sup> or where, why and about what Harold swore a sacred oath,<sup>3</sup> the value of the work as a contemporary, albeit stylised, record of eleventh-century life has seemed less problematic. However, this ‘orthodoxy’ has become established by default rather than as a result of systematic investigation, and appearances can be deceptive. A detailed examination of the extent to which artefacts in the Tapestry reflect those of the contemporary world is thus long overdue. The following investigation is designed to set our knowledge of the authority of the Bayeux Tapestry in this respect on a new and – for the first time – firm footing. In addition, it will enlarge our understanding of the Tapestry’s designer, how the work was produced and, more generally, the importance of the Tapestry for understanding the depiction of the ‘real world’ in medieval art. It will be helpful to begin with a survey of what is known – and assumed – about the work as a whole.

---

<sup>1</sup> The BT is embroidery, carried out in laid and couched work defined by an outline stitch, and worked onto linen cloth (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 10). To call it by any other name now – given its fame and reputation – would seem pedantic (Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, ix).

<sup>2</sup> Scene 15; for a selection of comment see Prentout, ‘Unknown Characters’, 22-5; Freeman, ‘*Ælfgyva*’, 15-8; McNulty, ‘*Aelfgyva*’, 659-68; Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 87; Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Scene 23; discussed by Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 180, 198, 202-3; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 115-7; Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 146-55, amongst others. Other scenes whose precise interpretation is debatable include Harold’s voyage to Normandy (Scene 4-6), the Breton campaign (Scene 16-21) and Harold’s death (Scene 57).



## Description

The Bayeux Tapestry is now about 68.38 m long; its height varies between 45.7 and 53.6 cm.<sup>4</sup> It comprises eight conjoined strips of embroidered linen of different lengths – the individual strips vary between 5.25 m and 13.75 m.<sup>5</sup> The joins between lengths are barely visible, with the exception of that between Sections 1 and 2.<sup>6</sup>

The Tapestry was embroidered onto white linen in coloured wools in laid and couched work, defined by an outline stitch. The colours used are black, blue, blue-green, ochre, olive green, sage green and terracotta.<sup>7</sup> They are not applied naturalistically: so horses have limbs of different colours, and human hair can be blue or green. Instead they are used to provide a dimension of space, to add clarity to the design, and, of course, for decorative effect. The Tapestry's style is bold, colourful and lively, reminiscent of contemporary manuscript illuminations. It also demonstrates great attention to detail - within the limitations of the medium.

The events shown in the main frieze unfold, for the most part, chronologically, though a few scenes are reversed for particular effect or as a result of conflicting pressures on the designer.<sup>8</sup> The Tapestry's characters 'appear' to wear contemporary clothing, mostly comprising tunics and tight-fitting trousers. Most, especially the

---

<sup>4</sup> These measurements were taken by the Sous-Direction des Monuments Historiques when the Tapestry was remounted in 1983 (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 10).

<sup>5</sup> Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 24, gives the measurements of each length as follows: Section 1) 13.65 m, Section 2) 13.75 m, Section 3) 8.35 m, Section 4) 7.75 m, Section 5) 6.60, Section 6) 7.05 m, Section 7) 7.15 m, and Section 8) (which is incomplete) 5.25 m. Since these measurements were taken before the Tapestry was remounted in 1983 there may be need for revision (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 228). For some refinement see Short, 'Inscription', 268.

<sup>6</sup> Short, 'Inscription', 268, alluded to this in his evidence when arguing that the Tapestry was produced in more than workshop – a view which will be challenged here.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 10, also noted that many of the later repairs are carried out in light yellow, orange and light greens (see also Rud, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 11-2). See also Bertrand, 'Study', 32-7.

<sup>8</sup> An example is the depiction of Edward's burial shown before his death (Scene 26-8) Here the scene seems to be reversed so that the Witan in Scene 29 can point to the dead Confessor whilst offering Harold the crown (see also Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 57; McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 16-9).

leading characters, gesticulate enthusiastically, thereby indicating both movement and emotion. The ground upon which they stand is sometimes shown as small bumps, but more generally it is the edge of the lower border. Where water is illustrated it appears as wavy parallel lines; hillocks are embellished with scrolls. Buildings are stylised so as to frame the characters who act within them, whilst being decorated and adorned with other features for effect. Scenes are generally divided by highly stylised trees or sub-classical architecture. Otherwise, however, there is little extraneous detail in the main frieze.

The main narrative is surrounded by a border,<sup>9</sup> decorated with various anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and vegetal embellishments. These are not generally related to the content of the main frieze.<sup>10</sup> Occasionally, however, details from the main frieze do ‘spill into’ the borders.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the Tapestry there are Latin inscriptions.<sup>12</sup> They are often abbreviated. Moreover separate words are sometimes joined together, while individual words may be split apart, reflecting contemporary conventions for display script in the context of art works.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes words seem to be squeezed into the

---

<sup>9</sup> In its current condition only the upper, lower, and left-hand side borders (i.e. that at the beginning) survive. If the Tapestry were complete, we might also expect a border on its right side length.

<sup>10</sup> An exception includes the nude male (Figure 137) whose posture mimics that of the priest in the main frieze (Figures 136). Also see Cowdrey, ‘Interpretation’, 56. For an alternative view see McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. the sails of ships, the depiction of Mont-Saint-Michel and some of the soldiers at Hastings (from Scene 52).

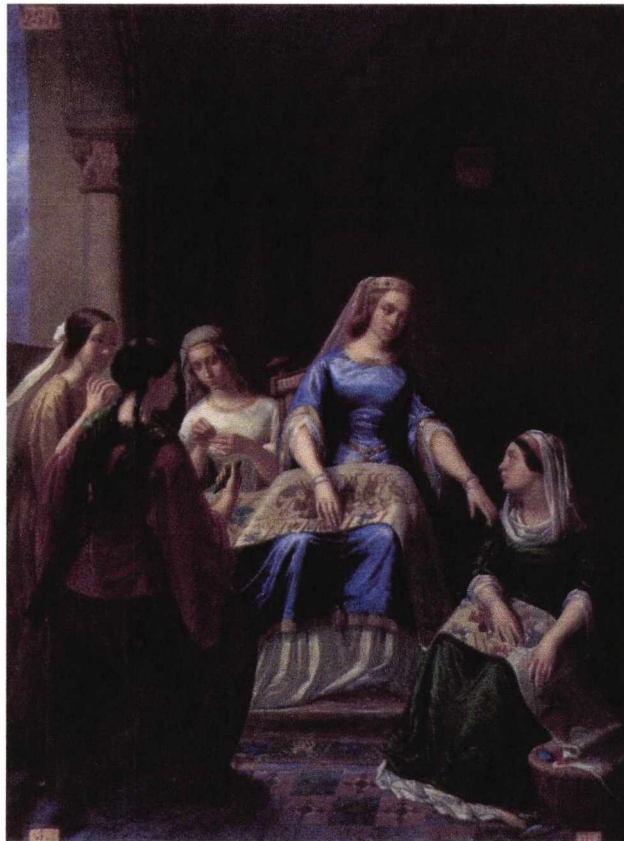
<sup>12</sup> Wormald, ‘Inscriptions’, 177-80; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 181-91.

<sup>13</sup> Gameson, *Role of Art*, 94-104; Okasha, *Hand-List*, 45 (also see catalogue for numerous examples). McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 49, believed that ‘the running over’ of inscriptions from scene to scene was a linking device to physically connect one scene to the next. See also Bernstein, ‘Bayeux Tapestry’, 45.

available space between the pictorial subject matter, though this need not imply that they were an afterthought.<sup>14</sup>

### **Patron**

By 1730 it was widely believed that the Conqueror's wife, Matilda (who died in 1083), had embroidered the Tapestry with her own hands (Ill.1 - below).<sup>15</sup>



**Illustration 1**

**Queen Matilda and her ladies embroider the Bayeux Tapestry  
in a painting by Alfred Gaillard.**

---

<sup>14</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 56, thought that no particular space was allocated to the inscription, believing that it was added to the Tapestry at a later stage. Short, 'Inscription', 270, disagreed, correctly arguing that the inscriptions were 'an original and integral part of the...design'.

<sup>15</sup> In 1730 in *Les monuments de la monarchie française* Dom Bernard de Montfaucon related the local tradition that the Tapestry was worked by Matilda and her ladies (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 25, 46-7; Fowke, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 22; Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 21-2). In 1732 Antoine Lancelot, 'Suite de l'explication d'un monument de Guillaume le Conquérant', believed that the Tapestry had been created by Queen Matilda for presentation to Odo as decoration for his cathedral at Bayeux (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 46-7). To this day a sign outside the Centre Guillaume le Conquérant (where the Tapestry is exhibited) directs tourists to 'Tapissierie de la Reine Mathilde'.

This was later questioned by Lord Lyttelton, and thereafter by the Abbé de La Rue, who suggested that Matilda (1102 to 1167), daughter of Henry I and wife of Geoffrey Plantagenet, was a more likely candidate.<sup>16</sup> It was Delauney who in 1824 first presented the hypothesis that Odo bishop of Bayeux, half brother of William I, and not either of the two Matildas, commissioned the Tapestry.<sup>17</sup> It is this view which remains current, for the reasons explained below.

Odo was born in about 1032/3,<sup>18</sup> the illegitimate child of Herluin de Conteville and Harleva (Arlette).<sup>19</sup> When aged about eighteen, Duke William bestowed upon him - his maternal half brother - the bishopric of Bayeux (in 1049/50) and shortly after the Norman Conquest the earldom of Kent,<sup>20</sup> often leaving him *de facto* ruler in his absence.<sup>21</sup> It was a position which afforded Odo great wealth.<sup>22</sup> However, in 1082, in circumstances which remain obscure, Odo fell from grace and was imprisoned in Rouen until the Conqueror's death in 1087.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> George Lyttelton in his *History of King Henry the Second*, dated 1769, and the Abbé Gervais de La Rue, 'Sur la tapisserie de Bayeux' in 1811 (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 26, 48, 54).

<sup>17</sup> *Origine de la tapisserie de Bayeux prouvée par elle-même* (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 32, 57; Wormald, 'Style and Design', 33).

<sup>18</sup> Bates, *Odo*, 2-3, 311-3.

<sup>19</sup> Harleva, who was formerly the mistress of Duke Robert I of Normandy, probably married Herluin de Conteville soon after Robert's death on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1035 (Bates, *Odo*, 1).

<sup>20</sup> Odo probably received the earldom of Kent in or shortly after 1067, although the first certain use of the title 'Earl of Kent' does not appear until 1072 (Bates, *Odo*, 49, 88).

<sup>21</sup> Bates, *Odo*, 30.

<sup>22</sup> Domesday records that Odo was one of England's largest landowners, second only to the King (Williams and Martin, *Domesday*, *passim*).

<sup>23</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, iii. 277. 2, eds. and trans. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, 506-7, suggests that Odo was 'trying to bribe his way to the Papacy and was mustering a private army in England'. Upon his release from prison Odo conspired with his brother, Robert of Mortain, and others against William II and consequently was expelled from England in 1088 with the loss of all his English possessions. In 1097 Odo died at Palermo *en route* to the First Crusade. See also Bates, 'Odo', *passim* and *Odo*, ii, 247-8, 264-9.

The case for Odo's patronage of the Tapestry is substantial. Most significantly, the work highlights Odo's role in events to an extent which greatly exceeds that in any other account of the Conquest.<sup>24</sup> Besides the major historical characters only four others are mentioned by name, three of which - Turolde, Wadard and Vital - are believed to have been retainers of Odo.<sup>25</sup> As early as 1838 Bolton Corney demonstrated that these men held lands in Kent, the centre of Odo's lordship in England.<sup>26</sup> They are not referred to in any other account of the Norman Conquest, and more importantly their presence does not significantly add to the narrative (so far as we can now judge).<sup>27</sup> Odo's association with the Tapestry is further strengthened by the fact that his bishopric is the setting for a central point in the narrative.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to the accounts of contemporary and near contemporary chroniclers, it is at

---

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 76, described the Tapestry as having 'an Odonian view of the Conquest'. In the Tapestry, Odo advises William to build his fleet (Scene 35), says grace at the banquet after the landing (Scene 43), dominates the subsequent council of war (Scene 44), and in a critical moment of battle rallies the 'young men' (Scene 54). Robert, Count of Mortain, also features in the Tapestry - though in fewer instances and with notably less prominence. See further Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 50-1.

<sup>25</sup> Turolde (Scene 10), Wadard (Scene 41) and Vital (Scene 49).

<sup>26</sup> Bolton Corney, *Researches and Conjectures on the Bayeux Tapestry*, *passim* (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 61). Wadard held lands from St Augustine's in an arrangement made under Abbot Scotland. Vital's English lands were to be found in eastern Kent, and subsequently he is referred to as Vital of Canterbury. Vital is also known to have held properties from Odo in Caen, and before the Conquest is mentioned in association with Wadard. Wadard himself held lands in six counties, including Kent, and is nine times referred to as 'homo episcopi Baiocensis' (Fowke, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 102-3). Whilst Turolde is a common name, it is known that a Ralf, son of Turolde, lost his English lands and joined Odo in Normandy after the Bishop was banished in 1088. See also Bates, Odo, 119-48; Prentout, 'Unknown Characters', 25-30; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 30; Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 8; Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 50; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 171; Hirokazu, 'Three Knights', 38-74).

<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, these men may be significant for reasons unknown to the modern viewer. Werckmeister, 'The Political Ideology of the Bayeux Tapestry' (cf. Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 18) suggested that the work may have been produced at the request of these men, between 1082 and 1086, in an attempt to rehabilitate Odo. However, it seems unlikely that they had either the financial resources or inclination to undertake such a commission - which might in any case have had precisely the reverse effect (*ibid.*).

<sup>28</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 171. The Tapestry seems to imply that this 'oath was the crux of the Norman claim to the English throne' (Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 8).

Bayeux, and upon its holy relics, that Harold swears an oath to William;<sup>29</sup> though it is intriguing that Odo himself does not appear.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Odo undoubtedly possessed the financial resources and political power to commission such a work.

## Provenance

Early commentators assumed the Tapestry was produced in Normandy, which is unsurprising given that Queen Matilda was believed to have been its patron and that it has resided in France for all of its known history.<sup>31</sup> In the modern period this view has been maintained by Wolfgang Grape who believed that the Tapestry was a clever piece of propaganda produced in Normandy for a Norman patron.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, its narrative has much in common with early Norman accounts of the Conquest.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et regis Anglorum*, i. 42, ed. Davis and Chibnall, 70-1, places the oath at Bonneville, whilst Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, 3.ii.117, ed. Chibnall, vol. II, 134-5, places it at Rouen (*Denique ipse Heraldus apud Rotomagum Willelmo duci coram optimatibus Normanniæ sacramentum fecerat*) - assuming these chroniclers are referring to the same oath shown in the BT. Bayeux has been the Tapestry's home since at least 1476, when it is documented that the Tapestry was displayed around the nave of Bayeux Cathedral on the Octave and the Feast of the Relics - July 1 (Wormald, 'Style and Design', 33).

<sup>30</sup> As we have seen Odo (Figure 264) first appears in Scene 35. It is intriguing that he appears so late in the Tapestry, given there are opportunities to emphasise his role in earlier scenes - of which the oath at Bayeux seems the ideal occasion. The most likely explanation is that Odo, as patron, wished to emphasise his role in the conquest of England, rather than in the preceding political negotiations with Harold, which were less fruitful.

<sup>31</sup> The first documentary reference concerning the BT and hence the earliest evidence for its provenance is an inventory of Bayeux Cathedral dated 1476. A less certain reference to what may be the Tapestry is found in an inventory of the Court of Burgundy in 1420 (Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 33). For much of its known life the Tapestry stayed in Normandy, but was exhibited in Paris in 1803 and again in 1945 - after spending much of the war at various 'safe places' in France.

<sup>32</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23. However, the fact that the Tapestry tells of an Anglo-Saxon defeat does not in itself prove Norman bias, let alone Norman manufacture. This is shown by the famous poem composed to apotheosise the defeat of Byrhtnoth, ealdorman of Essex, in 991. It is known that Byrhtnoth's wife, Ælflæd presented Ely with a hanging, though it is not certain - perhaps unlikely - that this actually commemorated his defeat (Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 135-6; Budny, 'Byrhtnoth Tapestry', 264).

<sup>33</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 5, believed that both William of Jumièges and William of Poitiers 'reflect a version of the events of the years 1064-6 that was current among and acceptable to the Norman ruling class'. McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 76, agreed, forwarding the view that 'the Tapestry expresses a generally Norman conception of the Conquest'. The Tapestry has also been paralleled with French *Chansons de geste*. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 58, for example believed *Chansons de geste* - at times - 'show startling analogies with the Tapestry in both the presentation of the



**Illustration 2**

**Edward the Confessor has stern words with Harold upon his return from Normandy in 1064.**

Nonetheless, on ‘certain issues crucial for the interpretation of the years 1064 to 1066 the Tapestry abandons the Norman version and appears to be following traditions that are found in some of the English sources’.<sup>34</sup> For example, Eadmer in his *Historia Novorum* (compiled in 1093-1100 and written after 1109) takes the view that Harold persuaded a reluctant Edward to allow him to go to Normandy to recover his brother Wulfnoth and his nephew Hakon, who were being held as hostages by William, and that upon his return Edward had stern words with him.<sup>35</sup> This version of events seems to be recreated in the Tapestry (Ill.2 - above).<sup>36</sup>

---

characters and in their motivation and characterization’. However, whilst the *Chansons de geste* ‘reveal a far more pronounced sense of national mission than...the Anglo-Saxon poems’ (*ibid.*) it is difficult to demonstrate – as opposed to hypothesise – their currency in the s. xi. About 100 *Chansons de geste* survive, dating from the s. xii - xiv. Also see Cowdrey, ‘Interpretation’, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 10; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 111.

<sup>35</sup> According to Eadmer, *Historia Novorum*, I. 8, trans. Bosanquet, ix-xi, 6-8, Edward says to Harold: ‘Did I not tell you that I knew William, and that your going (to Normandy) might bring untold calamity

Similarly, whereas Norman chroniclers refer to the ‘indecent haste of the proceedings’ in which Harold procured the throne, the Tapestry highlights Edward’s role in Harold’s nomination.<sup>37</sup> Here there are parallels in the account given in the *Vita Eadwardi*.<sup>38</sup> Further, the Tapestry’s account of Harold’s death seems closer to the later English accounts of the battle offered by William of Malmesbury (c.1095 to c.1143) in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (the first edition of which was written about 1125) and Henry of Huntington (c.1088 to c. 1156-64) in his *Historia Anglorum* (written between 1129 and 1154).<sup>39</sup>

---

upon this kingdom’? See also Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 10. For a full account of the composition of the *Historia Novorum* see Southern, *St Anselm*, 298-300.

<sup>36</sup> Scene 25.

<sup>37</sup> Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 21. However, Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 56, suggested that this scene had ironic overtones: ‘Harold, the violator of an oath sworn on holy relics...seen side by side with a reprobate archbishop (Stigand), a persistent offender against Canon law’. Further, he believed the title REX ‘acquires the significance of oath-breaker, rebel and usurper’. On the contrary this surely demonstrates his legitimacy.

<sup>38</sup> The *Vita Eadwardi*, ii. II, f.56v, ed. Barlow, 122-3, states that when Edward ‘addressed his last words to the queen...and stretching forth his hand to his governor, her brother, Harold, he said, I commend this woman and all the kingdom to your protection’ (...*porrectaque manu ad predictum nutricium suum fratrem Haroldum, Hanc, inquit, cum omni regno tutandam tibi commendo*). Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 12, were convinced that ‘the parallel between the *Life* and the Tapestry - in the position of the queen at the king’s feet, and in Edward’s gesture of designation by stretching out and touching Harold with his finger tips – cannot be a coincidence’. Indeed, they go on to say (p.21) that the Tapestry ‘conveys the close connection between the death of Edward and Harold’s accession by illustrating them next to each other – at the cost of reversing the natural order of the two previous scenes...the designer of the Tapestry emphasizes the connection of the death-bed designation of Harold with his elevation to the throne by making one of the nobles point back to the death-scene with one hand, whilst he holds out the crown to Harold with the other’. See also Cowdrey, ‘Interpretation’, 62-3.

<sup>39</sup> Scene 57 in the BT - that is to say showing him hit by an arrow in the eye and then being cut down by a Norman knight (see Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 23-34; Bernstein, ‘Bayeux Tapestry’, *passim*). Earlier, continental, accounts of Harold’s death by an arrow (although not necessarily in his eye), such as Baudri of Bourgueil’s poem, *Adelae Comitissae*, ed. Herren, 174, omit that Harold was despatched by a Norman knight - a point upon which Malmesbury, Huntington and the Tapestry seem to agree (Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 27, 34). This is in contrast to the ‘only other detailed account of Harold’s death’ in the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, 544, ed. Barlow, 32-3, which illustrates how four Norman knights ‘compelled Harold by many blows’. Interestingly, the *Le roman de Rou*, II. 3161-6, 8805-7, 8811-18, ed. Holden, ii, 189, 213-4, credited to Wace, - a canon of Bayeux writing in the s. xii – follows the Tapestry account better than the two English writers, suggesting that Harold died from an arrow wound below the right eye (for a discussion of this source see Bennett, ‘Roman de Rou’, *passim*).



Mistakes in the depiction of individual events have also led some to believe that the Tapestry was manufactured in England. Examples include the Tapestry's incorrect account of the Brittany campaign,<sup>40</sup> cavalry techniques,<sup>41</sup> and mailed hauberks.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, Grape suggested the Tapestry's depiction of Mont-Saint-Michel reveals that it was produced in Normandy.<sup>43</sup> It may be the case that such a mix of influences reflects the political situation in England immediately following the Norman Conquest. It is not inconceivable that the Tapestry could have been interpreted in one way by its Norman audience and another by Anglo-Saxons.<sup>44</sup>

### *Textiles*

In the early nineteenth century it was first suggested that the Tapestry may have been manufactured by English women, on account of the fame of Anglo-Saxon

---

<sup>40</sup> See William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et Regis Anglorum*, i. 43-6, ed. Davis and Chibnall, 70-7 – discussed below.

<sup>41</sup> The Tapestry shows 'some Norman cavalry couching their lances, some throwing them and some thrusting them overhand' which may suggest that the designer was ignorant of Norman warfare, although parallels for this mixture of methods can be found in contemporary continental illuminations (Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 19). Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 25, in contrast, believed that the designer was in fact an expert on Norman cavalry techniques.

<sup>42</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 19, discussed the fact that Normans knights are shown wearing trousered hauberks even though these would have caused severe discomfort to both rider and horse. They saw in this 'the ignorance of the English designer of Norman warfare': he had drawn Anglo-Saxon mail on both English and Norman soldiers. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 25, quite rightly did not accept this simplistic argument, suggesting that if we accept that 'the English rode their horses not in battle but to battle...are we to suppose that the warriors in mail shirts put on their iron trousers only at the beginning of a battle?' Likewise, Norman accounts, such as William of Poitiers, the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* and Baudri of Bourgueil, suggest crossbows were used at Hastings, even though it seems that this weapon was unknown to the Anglo-Saxons, and does not appear in either the Tapestry or other English sources (Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 20).

<sup>43</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 27, noted that 'around 1060, or shortly thereafter', the nave of the church was 'built with a novel system of decorative arcading', which seems to be illustrated in the Tapestry. Grape believed that 'a Norman artist would be far more likely than an Anglo-Saxon to interest himself in a new church at this important Norman pilgrimage centre'. Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 172, argued that the appointment of Scollandus (Scotland), from Mont-Saint-Michel, as abbot of St Augustine's may also explain the appearance of his old foundation in the Tapestry. This is further discussed below.

<sup>44</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 11.

embroidery.<sup>45</sup> Extant examples of such work are now rare, but include the stole, girdle and maniple worked on the order of Queen Ælfflæd, wife of Edward the Elder, for Bishop Frithestan of Winchester' in the period 909 to 916 (Ill.3 - below).<sup>46</sup>



**Illustration 3**

**The stole worked on the order of Queen Ælfflæd for Bishop Frithestan of Winchester.**

---

<sup>45</sup> First expressed by 'S. L' in a 'Letter concerning Queen Matilda's Tapestry' in *Gentleman's Magazine*, of 1803, 1225-6 (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 52). Goscelin - a Fleming, resident in England in the s. xi<sup>2</sup> - noted in the *Vita S. Augustini, Pat. Lat.*, LXXX, cols. 51-2, that English women were skilled in gold embroidery and commented 'on how they embellish garments of the princes of the church and the princes of the realm with gold-work and gems and with English pearls that shone like stars against the gold' (cf. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 45). Likewise, William of Poitiers in his *Gesta Guillelmi*, ii. 42, ed. Davis and Chibnall, 176-7, notes that 'the women of the English people are very skilled in needlework and weaving gold thread' (*Anglicae nationis feminae multum acu et auri textura egregie*). See further Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 170-87.

<sup>46</sup> It is also well known that the Anglo-Saxons imported textiles from Rome and beyond, and were influenced by both these and Byzantine textiles (Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 129, 149-50). Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204, noted a rarely discussed s. x English textile fragment in the Museo di S. Ambrogio, Milan, which favourably compares with the BT in terms of medium, style and subject matter. Budny, 'Byrhtnoth Tapestry', 267, 277, thought that this textile was Italian not English.

Examples of narrative needlework surviving from the early Middle Ages are rare.<sup>47</sup>



**Illustration 4**

**Detail of the Oseberg textile fragment.**

There are a number of Scandinavian textiles, such as the Oseberg fragment (Ill.4 - above), which can be credibly compared with the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>48</sup> However, relevant examples are mostly comparatively late in date,<sup>49</sup> and whilst these may have

---

<sup>47</sup> But include the Gerberga embroidery of about 960 in Köln, Hohe Domkirche, Schatzkammer (Inv. Nr. Clemen 132; see Puhle, *Otto der Grosse*, cat. vi, 40), which commemorates Gerberga's victor over Reginar: Reginar III had tried to claim Gerberga's estates when she was widowed in 954; Gerberga and her brother, Bruno of Köln, resisted this and in 958 Otto I deprived Reginar of his lands and exiled him.

<sup>48</sup> Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 48, noted that 'points of resemblance (between the BT and the Oseberg fragment) are the narrative style in a long narrow band framed between borders and the treatment of architecture opened up to show a scene being enacted within'. There are also thematic similarities, such as the depiction of soldiers and horses within a decorative border. Unlike the BT the Oseberg textile is tapestry work and therefore its narrow form was possibly dictated by the size of the loom. Also similar is a s. ix/x small tapestry fragment from Rolvsøy, Norway, which shows a ship's stem as well as soldiers, and also has a lower border (Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 21).

<sup>49</sup> E.g. a s. xii<sup>ex</sup> – xiii<sup>in</sup> textile fragment from Røn, Norway, in Universitetets Oldsaksamling, Oslo, which is similar to the BT 'in technique and subject matter' and is 'worked in laid and couched wool

come from a tradition which produced the Tapestry, most are too fragmentary 'for an opinion to be formed of' in terms of 'style and character'.<sup>50</sup>

There are also Continental European works which have points of comparison with the Tapestry. Of particular interest is a tapestry described by Baudri, Abbot of Bourgueil, which - like that of Bayeux - is said to represent the Conquest of England and also has inscriptions; though it is not certain that this existed, nor - if it did - do we know where it was made.<sup>51</sup> Extant materials includes the eleventh-century Bamberg textiles, whose borders have aspects in common with the Bayeux Tapestry (Ill.5 - below),<sup>52</sup> and the woollen embroidery in Gerona Cathedral, depicting the Creation.<sup>53</sup>

---

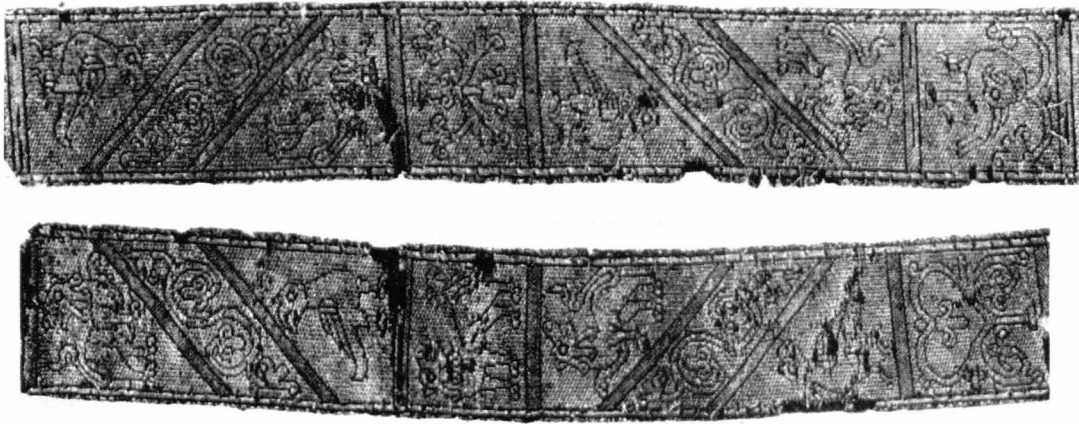
on a linen ground, with a similar outline stitch' (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204; Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 49). Like the Tapestry it illustrates a horse, dead soldiers (which have also been thought to be clerics), trees with acanthus leaves and has a lower border (Lasko, 'Space', 27). See also Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 49. Of similar date is another fragment from Baldishol, in Norway, now in the Kunstindustrimuseet, Oslo. This is similar to the BT in style, if not technique. It has been observed that the mounted knight, in particular, 'has a specious resemblance' to those in the BT (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 206; Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 21, 24-5); attention can also be drawn towards the similar use of textual narrative, borders and architecture.

Also noteworthy are three minute textile fragments from the old stave-church at Urnes and a group of Icelandic examples, though perhaps quite late in date, which are dispersed between the Reykjavik Museum, the National Museum in Copenhagen and the Cluny Museum in Paris. Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 49, describes the piece in the Reykjavik Museum as a frontal embroidered 'with three sainted bishops between angels swinging censers', whilst the others show 'scenes in a roundel pattern'. Other examples which offer limited parallels to the BT include an s. xii<sup>ex</sup> embroidery from Høyland showing the Adoration of the Magi. This has been compared with the BT primarily since it is long and narrow, although in technique and style it is quite dissimilar (*ibid.*; Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 48). Also of interest are a later group of s. xii and s. xiii textiles, known as tjell, which are worked in a technique similar to the laid and couched work of the BT and, similarly, depict secular scenes (Bernstein, *Mystery*, 91).

<sup>50</sup> Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 48.

<sup>51</sup> Budny, 'Byrhtnoth Tapestry', 263-78. Baudri de Bourgueil, in his *Adelae Comitissae*, ed. Herren, 167, makes it clear that this is a true tapestry, woven of gold, silver and silk thread and encrusted with pearls and jewels, not embroidery. See Brown and Herren 'Adelae Comitissae', 55-73, for a discussion of the relationship between the *Adelae Comitissae* and the BT.

<sup>52</sup> These are a girdle found in the tomb of Pope Clement II of about 1047, a chasuble belonging to Bamberg Cathedral and the Reitermantel of the Emperor Henry II (Kirmeier, Schneidmüller, Weinfurter and Brockhoff, *Kaiser Heinrich II*, Cat. no. 204), which have similar arrangements of birds and beasts alternating with leaf-work in their woven borders. Similar creatures to those found in the BT occur on textiles imported to Western Europe from Byzantium and the East (Wormald, 'Style and Design', 27). Examples include those depicted in illuminations of the Echternach school, dating to



**Illustration 5**

**The chasuble belonging to Bamberg Cathedral.**

Yet such analogous details are a far cry from true parallels. Therefore, whilst it is ‘theoretically possible’ that the Bayeux Tapestry could have been produced outside England, even in France or Normandy, the evidence is lacking: the notable textile centres in France, such as Poitiers and Limoges, were too far from Normandy, and/or late-flourishing, to rival seriously any English claim to expertise.<sup>54</sup>

### *Illuminated Manuscripts*

Since there are few surviving eleventh-century textiles, illuminated manuscripts - which are rather more plentiful - offer a useful tool for evaluating the art and style of the Tapestry.<sup>55</sup> Most agree that the best general parallels are provided by English manuscripts of the first half of the eleventh century,<sup>56</sup> such as the Old English

---

about 1030 to 1060 (Nordenfalk, *Codex Caesareus*, 97-102; Metz, *Golden Gospels*, pls. i, 27-8, 47-8, 65-6).

<sup>53</sup> Also of interest are fragments of a s. xi/xii tapestry found at the church of St Gereon in Köln, which has a border that is entirely Romanesque in character (Palol and Hirmer, *Early Medieval Art*, pls. xxxv-vi and 132), and three s. xii or xiii<sup>m</sup> tapestries from Halberstadt Cathedral in Westphalia.

<sup>54</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 164.

<sup>55</sup> Whilst it seems likely that textile designs would have been ‘furnished by an artist of repute’, there are differences in medium which should be considered carefully when making parallels between textiles and manuscript illuminations (Maclagen, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 18-9; Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 25-6).

Hexateuch,<sup>57</sup> the poetry codex Junius 11,<sup>58</sup> and the Harley 603 Psalter,<sup>59</sup> which will be examined in more detail below. It has been fairly said that 'in comparing the style of the Tapestry with contemporary illuminations, the identification of its place of origin is handicapped by the fact that both English and Norman manuscripts of the second half of the eleventh century were deeply indebted to the great Anglo-Saxon school of illumination which had flourished in the second half of the tenth and in the first half of the eleventh centuries'.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the examples noted above - and others that will be discussed in due course - show that where a distinction can be made, it is in Anglo-Saxon manuscript art that the best parallels are found. Significantly, there are also some stylistic parallels in post-Conquest illuminations:<sup>61</sup> reflecting the

---

<sup>56</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Dodwell and Clemons, *Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 58, believed that London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B. iv - probably produced at St Augustine's Abbey in s. xi<sup>2/4</sup> - was one of several similar works produced for lay patrons (Emms, 'Scribe', 182).

<sup>58</sup> Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, 76-7, believed that Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11 was produced at Christ Church, Canterbury: Prior Eastry's s. xiv<sup>th</sup> catalogue of Christ Church's library includes a *genesis anglie depicta* which may refer to this manuscript. Further, Temple (p.77) thought that the second artist of Junius 11 was also the artist of CCCC 23 which was produced at Christ Church. However, Junius 11 does not use Canterbury house style of script and initials, and has nothing else in common with other Canterbury manuscripts. Traditionally Junius 11 is dated s. x/xi, but recently, Lockett, 'Junius 11', 141-73, has persuasively argued that it was produced between c.960 and c.990.

<sup>59</sup> London, British Library, Harley 603 is a complex book - a copy of Utrecht, Universiteits Bibliotheek, 32, that was started in about 1000 (this part decorated by artists A-D), continued in about ?1020 by artists F, then E, with further text written by Eadwig Basan in about 1030. A few drawings were added to Basan's text in about 1070, by artist G, then more, by artist H (or R), in the s. xii.

<sup>60</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 30.

<sup>61</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 53, believed that following the Norman Conquest England was increasingly penetrated by art from the 'Continental seaboard' that was 'largely unfamiliar' to English artists. He thought that this 'radically transformed the local tradition and ultimately formed the rootstock of art, that of the Anglo-Norman Romanesque'. Further, Grape believed that Anglo-Norman Romanesque was eventually to evolve into something stylistically similar to the Tapestry, but believed that in England - at the time the Tapestry was produced - this had not developed. Hence he concluded the only common features between English illuminations are Continental in origin. His view of these issues is surely incorrect.

intertwining traditions of Normandy and England in English manuscripts of the first generation after the Norman Conquest.<sup>62</sup>

### *Inscriptions*

The Tapestry's inscriptions seem to add credibility to the view that it was produced in England. Old English letter forms, such as 'Ð' in 'GYRÐ',<sup>63</sup> 'Æ' in Ælfgyva,<sup>64</sup> and (less diagnostic) the occasional Tironian 'et' ('7'),<sup>65</sup> seem to indicate English work.<sup>66</sup> It is also generally agreed that 'English proper names are mostly spelt in an English way'.<sup>67</sup> Although 'a study of the language of the inscription has identified certain French elements' there seem to be more English ones.<sup>68</sup> For example, William's name appears in a variety of forms, but 'only three times is the Norman form of *Wilhelm* used,<sup>69</sup> compared with fifteen instances in the way it is found in Anglo-Saxon texts -

---

<sup>62</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 173.

<sup>63</sup> Scene 52. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204, dismissed the possibility that the 'cross-element' of this character may have been a later 'Anglo-Saxon' addition, since Montfaucon (1729) and Stothard (1819) 'who first recorded it would surely have questioned it if it had been doubtful'.

<sup>64</sup> Scene 15.

<sup>65</sup> Scene 9. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 60, doubted the significance of this character as proof of where the Tapestry was produced. He noted that '7' appears in the text of Avranches, Bibliothèque municipale E. Le Héricher, 78, a Norman manuscript of s. x<sup>4/4</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> See also Musset, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 34-5; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 203; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 181-191.

<sup>67</sup> E.g. ÆLFGYVA (Scene 15) and EADWARDVS (Scene 27-8). However, Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 59, noted that Edward's name appears twice in the Norman form, EDWARDVS. Likewise, Förster believed that words such as 'Caballus', 'Ceastra', 'Eadwardus' and 'Bagias' drew attention to 'French taints' (cf. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204).

<sup>68</sup> This was vigorously disputed by Short, 'Inscription', 268-74, who believed 'that the vernacular underlying the Latin of the inscription is... demonstrably French and not English', and even argued that 'if we are to assume that the original designer of the Tapestry was responsible also for the inscription, then we are surely justified in concluding that that person was a French speaker'. Likewise, Lapidge, argued that 'parabolant' (in Scene 9), from the verb 'parabolare', takes 'the natural Latin form to be used by a speaker of French' (cf. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204).

<sup>69</sup> In the earlier part of the Tapestry: WILGELMVM in Scene 12, VVILGELMVM in Scene 13, and VVILGELM in Scene 14.

*Willelm*'.<sup>70</sup> Such a modest coexistence of English and French forms, evident in the inscriptions, is indicative of that which we may expect in the post-Conquest period.<sup>71</sup> In general terms, the letter-forms used in the Tapestry were fairly widely used in England, France and Normandy and can be paralleled in manuscripts, for example, from St. Augustine's, Mont-Saint-Michael, Jumièges and Christ Church.<sup>72</sup> Likewise, whilst multi-coloured script – found in the Tapestry – is more pronounced in Normandy than England, the use of inscriptions with pictorial matter is better represented in English material.<sup>73</sup>

### *Canterbury*

The drawing of both faces and figures in Canterbury illuminations of the second half of the eleventh century show a number of stylistic similarities to the Tapestry. Examples include the drawings in the Canterbury computistical collection of Egerton 3314 and Cotton Caligula A. xv, and the Harley 603 Psalter.<sup>74</sup> However, rather than

---

<sup>70</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 39. However, Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 59-60, disputed this as evidence of English manufacture, noting that *Willelm* appears commonly in Normandy.

<sup>71</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 10, believed that the inscriptions 'reflect the influence both of vernacular English and to a lesser extent of vernacular French – a mixture that one finds in post-conquest England rather than Normandy'. Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 184, seemed to agree – 'because of its brevity and simplicity, there are few diagnostically national features'. See also Lepelley, 'Inscriptions', 39-45.

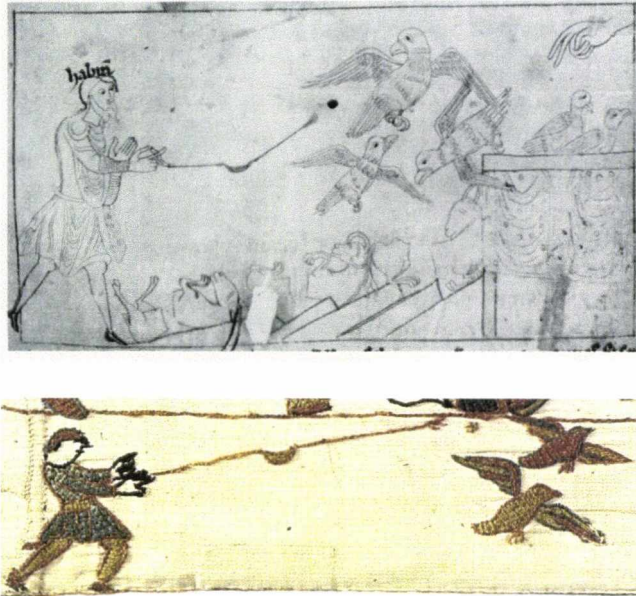
<sup>72</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 183.

<sup>73</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 182-91, also studied the co-existence and alternation of the uncial-based letter forms and square capitals in the Tapestry. He believed the radical inconsistencies and variation between the different letter forms was particularly interesting, since they suggest that the designer was copying letters and words from a number of exemplars.

<sup>74</sup> Depictions of heads are noted for their round features and big jaws. Wormald, 'Style and Design', 31, believed that this style derived from the s. ix<sup>1</sup> Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, UB, 32) and its descendents. Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 169, agreed, noting that 'these are the hallmarks of the Utrecht Psalter derived style that was prominent in late Anglo-Saxon art, especially at Canterbury'. Bernstein, *Mystery*, 66 was also convinced by this, and was a protagonist of the view that the BT was indebted to the Harley Psalter (BL, Harley 603), an Anglo-Saxon copy of the Utrecht Psalter: 'despite the obvious differences occasioned by a shift in medium...the Tapestry continues the Utrecht style of extremely active, animated figures who make their points with dramatic gestures'. The Tapestry 'also uses a technique of coloured outline and lettering within a limited colour range that reminds one of the Harley



style it is the striking parallels between the imagery of the Tapestry and some Canterbury produced illuminations which are particularly revealing.<sup>75</sup> For example, the figure casting sling-stones at birds in the Tapestry is matched by the depiction of Abraham in the Old English Hexateuch (Ill.6 - below).<sup>76</sup>



**Illustration 6**

**Abraham casting sling-stones at birds in the Old English Hexateuch (top)  
and a similar scene in the Bayeux Tapestry (bottom).**

---

Psalter'. Bernstein, *Mystery*, 66, likened specific mannerisms in the Tapestry, such as distinctive rounded shoulders, large open hands, large head and square jaws, to those in London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A. xv and BL, Harley 603.

<sup>75</sup> Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 129-63. This has been disputed by Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23, who thought the BT was produced in Normandy, though most of his examples rely on 'French' illustrations produced outside Normandy. For example, whilst he noted that 'in Anglo-Saxon illuminations ploughs are invariably drawn by oxen', he was unable to cite a Norman example to support his theory (*ibid.*, 28). Further, Grape's approach also understates the dependence of Norman illumination upon s. xi English manuscript art. This said he usefully highlights the fact that many of the motifs found in the Tapestry are not exclusive to English art, and it is a warning to the art historian not to focus upon English art in isolation.

<sup>76</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.26v and BT Figure 97 (Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 136, 139). Wormald, 'Style and Design', 32, noted that 'the gesture of the hands and the shape of the sling with a small tassel on the end are identical'. Likewise in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.14r, f.14v, f.15r, and BodL, Junius 11, p.68, we find parallels for the Tapestry's ornamental ship figureheads (Wormald, 'Style and Design', 31; Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 145-6). Similarly, Conan's escape from Dol (Scene 18) can also be paralleled with a scene in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.141v (Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 151, 154; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 41). Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 119, 129-30, 136, 138, 145, 147 also noted close comparisons between the two individuals (Figures 625-6) escaping from Hastings in the Tapestry, 'urging their horses on with scourges', and a similar scene in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.126r. Likewise, aspects of Edward's deathbed scene in the Tapestry (Scene 27-8) are paralleled in BL, Cotton Claudius, B. iv, f.11v, f.11r, f.12r, f.59r.

Likewise there are similarities between the feast in the Tapestry - where Odo is shown blessing the food - and scenes of the Last Supper in a late sixth-century Italian Gospel book, which was certainly owned by St Augustine's Abbey in the eleventh century (Ill.7 - below).<sup>77</sup> Another example is the parallel of the figure carrying a coil or rope and a labourer in the illustrated Prudentius Psychomachia, which Christ Church owned.<sup>78</sup>



**Illustration 7**

**The Last Supper scene in the St Augustine's Gospels (left)  
and a similar scene in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

Therefore the case for the English origin of the Tapestry rests in part upon specific parallels with illuminations produced or owned in Canterbury,<sup>79</sup> and (as we shall see

<sup>77</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 286, f.123 (Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 170; Wormald, *Gospels of St Augustine*, pls. I and V). Of particular note is the position of Odo and the shape of the table. This manuscript is also known to have had an important influence on Canterbury illuminations in the s. viii and s. xii (Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 15).

<sup>78</sup> BT Figure 364 and London, British Library, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f. 27. Significantly, Wormald, 'Style and Design', 32, noted that in other manuscripts of the Psychomachia this figure is holding a boulder on his back. This seems to have been misunderstood by the artist of BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii and then was fossilised in the Tapestry. Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 155, 157, thought this motif was actually 'a sieve used for winnowing'.

<sup>79</sup> Whilst we see echoes of the Tapestry in illuminations produced elsewhere, and these will be discussed in the chapters below, the epicentre for the influence was Canterbury and ultimately the Utrecht Psalter, which was housed there. One example, from many is the similarity between the Tapestry's architecture and the (sub) classical structures depicted in Utrecht, UB, 32, and its

in the course of this study) from both the monastery of St Augustine's and the cathedral church of Christ Church.<sup>80</sup>

It is known that Odo was patron of St Augustine's Abbey.<sup>81</sup> He is believed to have enjoyed a good reputation there, even after his imprisonment between 1082 and 1087, and subsequent to his banishment and the confiscation of his estates in 1088.<sup>82</sup> At this time both St Augustine's and Christ Church were producing illuminated manuscripts. In recent times scholars have questioned whether Odo would have turned to the community of Christ Church as he was in litigation with them over land.<sup>83</sup> However, it would seem unlikely that a man as powerful as Odo – Earl of Kent and Bishop of Bayeux – could not have assured access for his designer to the libraries of both St Augustine's and Christ Church.<sup>84</sup>

---

Canterbury copy BL, Harley 603 (Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 133, 134-5). Thus the circular pavilion in BT Scene 11 and the 'war-council' pediment building in Scene 44 (Bernstein, *Mystery*, 42-4) occur in both Utrecht, UB, 32 and BL, Harley 603.

<sup>80</sup> In contrast Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 172, believed the designer was primarily influenced by St Augustine's illuminations. He noted that 'St Augustine's was one of the very few centres in England to maintain the production of significant numbers of high-grade books, along with a flourishing tradition of decorating them, during the last third of the eleventh century'. Gameson, 'English Manuscript Art', 125, also observed that 'as a whole, the books produced at St Augustine's are of a higher quality than those from Christ Church, and their art work is indisputably finer'.

<sup>81</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 9-10.

<sup>82</sup> The community at St Augustine's sought Odo's advice on the translation of Abbot Hadrian's relics (Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 171). Even after his death Odo's benefactions to St Augustine's were remembered and recorded (*ibid.*; Bernstein, *Mystery*, 54).

<sup>83</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 17, suggested that in such an atmosphere it is unlikely that Odo would commission an embroidery celebrating his role in the Conquest from Christ Church, unless, the Tapestry was procured before 1072, which was certainly feasible. Since St Augustine's was not involved in the Penenden litigation and Odo is known to have endowed this community with grants, it may seem an obvious choice to produce the Tapestry. Yet St Augustine's was slow to warm to Norman influence: even after Canterbury had surrendered to Duke William, Abbot Æthelsig of St Augustine's is recorded as organising resistance to the invading army in the Kentish countryside (see also Eales and Sharpe, *Canterbury*, *passim*).

<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 117-8, correctly notes that 'there was much coming and going between the two communities'. See also Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, 266-78.

## Date

Since most commentators have attributed the Tapestry to either Queen Matilda or Odo, an eleventh-century date for its construction is imbedded in our understanding of its history. Whilst a later date for its production has been suggested by some, albeit not in a recent times,<sup>85</sup> the current - widely-held - belief is that the Tapestry was produced quite soon after the events it depicts.<sup>86</sup> There is also 'circumstantial evidence' to support this view.<sup>87</sup> For example, there are events shown in the Tapestry, such as the (to us) enigmatic Ælfgyva incident and the burning of domestic houses, which must have had a resonance in the years immediately after the Conquest, but whose significance will have faded thereafter.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, as we have seen, the Tapestry's style ties in well with that of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts produced in the eleventh century. Further, if, as it seems likely, Odo was the patron, then the date of production is intimately associated with his career. We can be reasonably certain that the Tapestry was commissioned before his death in 1097, and it is likely to have been completed prior to his imprisonment in 1082: if the Tapestry was produced in England, there would have been little time for Odo to commission such a work between 1082 and 1097, for his release from prison in Rouen - upon William's death in 1087 - was quickly followed by his exile to Normandy in the following year for partaking in the rebellion against William Rufus. Banishment from England would

---

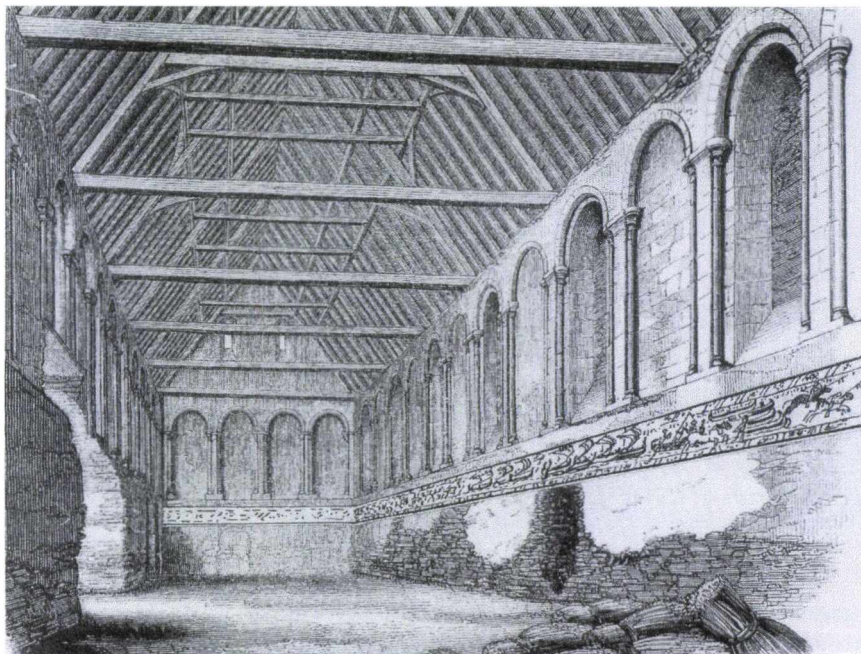
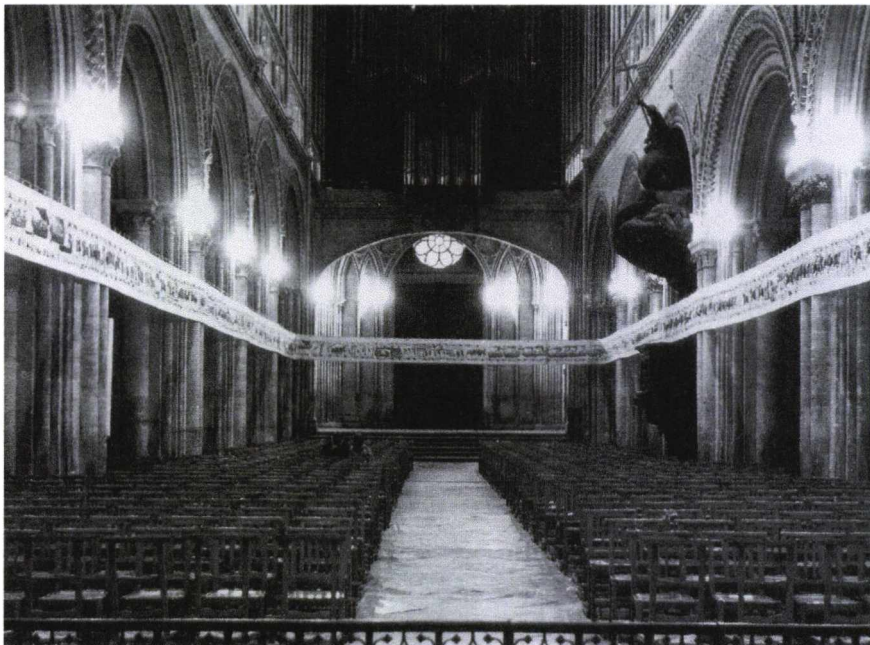
<sup>85</sup> E.g., Lord Lyttleton ascribed the Tapestry to Matilda, daughter of Henry I, believing it could not have survived the sacking of Bayeux in 1106 (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 26, 48). Consequently the Abbé de la Rue dated the manufacture of the Tapestry to between 1162 and 1167 (*ibid.*, 26-7). A s. xii date was also supported by de Noëttes based on his study of the arms and armour depicted in the Tapestry (cf. Maclagan, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 24). Similarly, in 1902, Marignan, 'Abbaye de Fleury', 291-305, applied methods he had already made use of in dealing with French sculpture, believing the Tapestry 'must have been made after the middle of the twelfth-century'. In particular he identified similarities between figures on the capitals at St Benoît-sur-Loire, Fleury and images in the Tapestry.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 212.

<sup>87</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 161.

<sup>88</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 34.

have left Odo without appropriate possessions, the use of local resources, and the impetus to manufacture the Tapestry.<sup>89</sup>



**Illustration 8**

**The Bayeux Tapestry as it might have been displayed in Bayeux Cathedral (top) and a secular residence, such as Dover Priory (bottom).**

---

<sup>89</sup> Maclagan, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 27-8; Wormald, 'Style and Design', 33-4; Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 10.

Since 1732 it has been intermittently proposed that that the Tapestry was produced for the consecration of Odo's cathedral at Bayeux in 1077.<sup>90</sup> In recent times this theory has lost favour, and instead it has become fashionable to imagine the Tapestry was produced for a secular residence, such as a great hall, though for not altogether convincing reasons (Ill.8 - above).<sup>91</sup> Certainly, it is possible to concede that the Tapestry need not have been produced specifically for the cathedral's consecration.

If we assume that an artist familiar with the resources of St Augustine's Abbey was involved with the Tapestry's production, then it might be possible to narrow the date range further. Scotland - consecrated abbot of St Augustine's Abbey in 1072 - came from Mont-Saint-Michel, and it is perhaps no coincidence that this famous abbey is also illustrated in the Tapestry.<sup>92</sup> If Scotland was the impetus for this element of the design, then this might date the Tapestry between 1072 and 1077. It would

---

<sup>90</sup> Fowke, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23. This theory was first proposed by Antoine Lancelot in his 'Suite de l'explication d'un monument de Guillaume le Conquérant' (cf. Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 46). In recent times both Bernstein, *Mystery*, 37-8 and Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23, have suggested that it was unlikely that the Tapestry was finished before 1077, since the figure identified in the Tapestry as Eustace of Boulogne (Figure 546) was out of royal favour until then: in 1067 Eustace and his knights had led a rebellion in Kent against William and Odo, and it would therefore seem inappropriate for him to appear in the Tapestry. Eustace was pardoned for his offence in about 1077. It is of course possible that the letters 'E...TIVS' given above Figure 546 may refer to another Eustace or indeed a man of another name beginning in 'E' and ending in 'tius', however, Brown, 'Eustace, Odo and William', 7-28, has argued against this view with some conviction (see also Stothard, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 185).

<sup>91</sup> Dodwell, 'French Secular Epic', 47-62, believed a secular work such as the Tapestry would not have been displayed in a cathedral. Bernstein, *Mystery*, 105, agreed and questioned whether the Tapestry would have been suitable for display in Bayeux cathedral, given its 'secular content', 'lewd imagery' and 'unusual shape'. Indeed, Henige, 'Place', 4, 12-9, proposed that the juxtaposition of certain scenes suggests that the Tapestry was displayed in a square installation, perhaps a timber keep. However, such theories ignore the fact that by 1476 there was a custom that the Tapestry was 'hung around the nave of the church on the Feast of relics and throughout the Octave (Bertrand, 'History', 76; Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 124-5) and this could also have been the case in the s.xi<sup>4/4</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> As discussed above Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 172, noted that Scotland worked at Mont-Saint-Michel as a scribe and it therefore 'seems likely that the presence of an abbot from the most decoratively active Norman scriptorium contributed to the continuing tradition of fine book production and decoration at St Augustine's during this period'.

certainly seem to be the case that St Augustine's Norman abbot would have been approachable, as well as geographically convenient for Bishop Odo.<sup>93</sup>

### Value of the Bayeux Tapestry as a Historical Source

The Bayeux Tapestry is one of the earliest surviving accounts of the events leading up to the Norman Conquest of England. The others are versions C, D and E of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,<sup>94</sup> the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* ascribed to Guy, bishop of Amiens (written in about 1070),<sup>95</sup> William of Jumièges' *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (also written in about 1070),<sup>96</sup> and William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi ducis Normannorum et Regis Anglorum* (probably written between 1071-77).<sup>97</sup> The Tapestry is therefore a very important primary source for the events of 1064-66.

---

<sup>93</sup> Scotland's time as abbot (appointed 1070, died 1087) seems also to have been a calm period for the abbey, unlike that under the abbacy of his successor, Guy (1087–c.1093), when 'tension between the Archbishop and Abbey erupted into open rebellion' (Gem, *St Augustine's*, 54-5).

<sup>94</sup> 'C' seems to have been compiled at Abingdon and is written throughout in scripts of s. xi<sup>med</sup> hands. It has a gap between 1056 and 1065, ending in 1066 during the account of the Battle of Stamford Bridge. 'D' was written by various hands in the s. xii, perhaps for presentation to the Scottish court. It is uncertain where it was written: Worcester, Evesham and York have all been suggested. This chronicle ends in 1079, but refers to later events in the text. 'E' was written in the s. xii in Peterborough. The copyist seems to have had before him a version of the chronicle compiled at St Augustine's, at least until 1061 and probably until 1121.

'C' is hostile to the house of Godwin even though the Earl of Wessex was friendly to the community at Abingdon, whereas 'D' is broadly neutral, with a 'somewhat impartial attitude to the political disputes of the time', and 'E' has 'a strong bias in favour of Godwin' (Douglas and Greenaway, *English Historical Documents*, 103).

<sup>95</sup> Barlow, *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, xl-xlii. See also Davis, 'Carmen', 241-61; Davis and Engels, 'Carmen', 1-20.

<sup>96</sup> Van Houts, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, xxxii, argues that the traditional date of this work – circa 1070-1 – is wrong: 'by the early 1050s William had already started his revisions. He finished the *Gesta* sometime before 1060 but then took up his pen again, probably at the request of King William in 1067, to add an account of the Norman Conquest. This he finished early in 1070.'

<sup>97</sup> Davis and Chibnall, *Gesta Guillelmi*, xx; Foreville, 'Guillaume le Conquérant', 3. The principal additional sources are: Gilbert Crispin's *Vita domini Herluini abbatis Beccensis*, ed. Robinson, 58-60, 87-110, written after 1093; John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis*, ed. Darlington and McGurk, ixviii-lxxi, written between c.1095-1106 and c.1140-1143; Orderic Vitalis' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, ed. Chibnall, 32, written between c.1123 and c.1137; William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ed. Thomson and Winterbottom, xxiv, of which the earliest version was written in about 1125; and the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. Searle, 1, written from the abbey's foundation (s. xi<sup>ex</sup> – Battle Abbey was dedicated in 1094) until about the 1180s.

For the most part, the version of events shown in Tapestry seems to be fairly reliable.<sup>98</sup> Whilst some elements broadly follow contemporary English accounts (briefly discussed above), it is nonetheless of interest that certain key episodes from the English perspective are omitted.<sup>99</sup> Likewise some aspects of its story are uncertain or obscure. Since Odo is believed to be the Tapestry patron, it is generally thought that he would commission a reliable account,<sup>100</sup> but this view would seem to be oversimplistic. Unlike other contemporary accounts, the Tapestry is neither an obvious apologist for either the Anglo-Saxon or Norman perspective.<sup>101</sup> Assuming the Tapestry was made for public display, and contemporaries familiar with the events depicted would have seen it, it seems likely that it is indeed a broadly reliable account of events depicted.

The Tapestry's exact purpose or function is unknown. The significance of the oath scene where Harold swears on sacred relics has been much discussed (Ill.9 -

---

<sup>98</sup> The major exception seems to be its account of the Breton campaign, which does not appear to reflect that given by William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, i. 43-6, ed. Davis and Chibnall, 70-7. In the BT William advanced to Dol to attack the town, but Conan (Figure 159) manages to escape (ET CONAN FVGA VERTIT). Then the Normans proceed to (or past) Rennes and 'do battle with the men of Dinan'. Here Conan (Figure 173) 'surrenders the keys' of the town (hIC MILITES VVILLELMI: DVCIS: PVGNANT: CONTRA DINANTES: ET: CVNAN: CLAVES: PORREXIT). Whereas William of Poitiers notes that Duke William advanced into Brittany to relieve Dol, and its lord – Ruallon - from siege by Conan. But as William approached Dol, Conan withdrew and joined forces of Geoffrey of Anjou. Conan subsequently avoided a pitched battle and/or capture. See also Amyot, 'Observations', 88-95; who believed the BT could not be used to establish historical fact.

<sup>99</sup> Notably Tostig's rebellion, the Norwegian Invasion and the battles of Fulford Gate and Stamford Bridge (for a general discussion see DeVries, *Norwegian Invasion, passim*; McLynn, *1066, passim*), and the deployment and withdrawal of Harold's southern fleet (although Hill, 'Phantom Fleet', 27-8, believed that this might be depicted in the lower border of Scene 33).

<sup>100</sup> Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 172; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 578. Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 53, hypothesised that William may possibly have viewed the Tapestry, though suggested it may not have been to his liking, especially after Odo's fall from favour in 1082.

<sup>101</sup> Some have concluded that the Tapestry is 'intentionally ambiguous', perhaps having one message for its Norman audience and another for the Anglo-Saxons (Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 11; Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 63-4).



below).<sup>102</sup> It is (now) unclear whether this, though clearly of some importance, was the main message of the Tapestry. The oath scene certainly highlights the role of Bayeux and its relics in William's victory at Hastings and the subsequent conquest of the English.



**Illustration 9**

**Harold swears an oath at Bayeux.**

The Tapestry is definitely incomplete, but how much more once existed and what it showed is uncertain. Some scholars believe that it ended with a depiction of William enthroned,<sup>103</sup> of which Jan Messent has produced a wonderful recreation (Ill. 10 –

---

<sup>102</sup> Brown, *Norman Conquest*, 172, for example, believed that 'its artistic theme, binding the whole together, is the fate which necessarily overtakes a man who breaks his oath taken on the relics of Bayeux'. Likewise Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 198, believed the 'oath scene' to be 'one of the cruces of the Tapestry'. Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 15, agreed that 'the purpose of his work caused the designer of the Tapestry to stress the oath...at the supreme moment of his story'. Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 53, saw the oath scene as 'critical'.

<sup>103</sup> Maclagen, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 15; Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 176; Cowdrey, 'Interpretation', 52.

below).<sup>104</sup> The extent to which the Tapestry has been repaired - even reconstructed – over time, notably during the nineteenth-century, is fundamental to any discussion of it; and this is particularly important for those who would use the Tapestry to understand the ‘real-world’ of eleventh century, as the appearance of artefact types might have been misconstrued by modern restorers.<sup>105</sup>



**Illustration 10**

**Jan Messent’s needlework reconstruction of the end of the Bayeux Tapestry.**

Whilst some of these repairs may be clearly distinguished as such, others are much closer to the ‘original’ and hence more difficult to identify. It is therefore imperative to refer to the ‘pre-reconstruction’ illustrations and etchings of Bernard de Mountfaucon and Charles Stothard, as well as modern photographic facsimiles and the surface of the Tapestry itself.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 72-7. Also reported in *The Times*, Thursday August 28<sup>th</sup> 1997, 7. Although this is quite feasible, and more of the Tapestry surely existed than now survives, we can never be certain how it terminated.

<sup>105</sup> Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 25, gave the example of the inscriptions in the later part of the Tapestry, which were not known to some of the earliest commentators.

<sup>106</sup> In 1729 the vol. I of the *Monuments de la Monarchie française* was published showing Montfaucon’s engravings of the first part of the Tapestry, reproduced from N. J. Foucault’s drawings of 1724. Montfaucon then sent Antoine Benoît to copy the remainder of the Tapestry, from which he again produced engravings. These were published in vol. II of the *Monuments*. In 1818 the Society of

## Previous Study

In view of the relative paucity of eleventh-century material culture, it is no surprise that historians and archaeologists have quarried the Tapestry as a source for the appearance of contemporary artefacts.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, for most students it remains the primary source for understanding certain eleventh-century artefact types.<sup>108</sup> However, scholars have rarely been sufficiently critically of its authority in this respect. For example, Maclagan considered the Tapestry ‘our best authority for the arms and armour of the period’, even though some eleventh-century weapons, do survive.<sup>109</sup> Mann, though clear on the limitations of embroidery for recreating artefacts, agreed; believing the Tapestry to be ‘self-authenticating’ he suggested that ‘confidence in the accuracy of the military scenes’ is enhanced by comparing it with the ‘obvious naturalness of other scenes’.<sup>110</sup> More recently Grape was so convinced by the Tapestry’s accuracy that he believed that the designer had a ‘catholic interest in the

---

Antiquaries sent Charles Stothard to Bayeux to make a complete colour copy of the Tapestry. He also studied Montfaucon’s drawings, retraced needle holes in the original, and observed surviving fragments of coloured thread in order to produce his reconstruction (Bertrand, ‘History’, 77, 82). Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 13, noted Stothard’s work is not without error. However, it seems it was on the basis of Stothard’s facsimile that the Tapestry was restored using wools of slightly different tones from the original. See Foys, *Bayeux Tapestry* for a complete digital facsimile of the BT and indispensable reproductions of both Montfaucon’s and Stothard’s drawings. The best modern photographic facsimile of the Tapestry is found in Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*.

<sup>107</sup> Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 41-2, noted that the Tapestry’s images ‘offer us an archaeological encyclopaedia’. Likewise, Cowdrey, ‘Interpretation’, 49, noted that the ‘Tapestry offers evidence upon which they (historians) can draw for the study of a wide range of political, military, social, and other topics’.

<sup>108</sup> Douglas and Greenaway, *English Historical Documents*, 2, 247; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 213; Morillo, *Hastings*, 33.

<sup>109</sup> Maclagan, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 24. Although, he did feel that the Tapestry’s ‘buildings were mostly represented in a rather conventional way; as in manuscripts for the period’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>110</sup> Mann, ‘Arms and Armour’, 65. Likewise Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 81, used the authority of the Tapestry to describe the military paraphernalia of the Norman Knight.

contemporary scene', even suggesting that it was 'a record of first-hand observation' (Ill.11 - below).<sup>111</sup>



**Illustration 11**

**David Smee's 1966 *Punch* cartoon showing the Tapestry designer at work!**

Whilst such incautious generalisations are regrettable, more worrying is the fact that many have cited the Tapestry depictions as if they were factual evidence for eleventh-century artefact types, without critically evaluating its authority, or demonstrating their awareness of its limitations. Such attitudes have a long history.<sup>112</sup> But whereas most nineteenth-century views of medieval sources have been steadily refined, this one has lingered on, gaining authority through repetition alone. Thus Demmin, Lemmon and Gibbs-Smith discuss arms and armour in the eleventh century by direct

---

<sup>111</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 28-9. Freeman, 'Authority', 7, 15, clearly agreed, boldly stating: 'I accept the witness of the Bayeux Tapestry as one of my highest authorities', adding... 'the contemporary artist represented things as he saw them'.

<sup>112</sup> Carver, 'Contemporary Artefacts', 118.

reference to the Tapestry without any critique of the nature of its imagery and likely sources.<sup>113</sup> Likewise Crumlin-Pedersen suggested the Tapestry provides literal evidence for eleventh-century shipbuilding,<sup>114</sup> whilst Holmes believed that its designer ‘had actual buildings in mind’.<sup>115</sup> As the Tapestry has consistently been used as a tool for understanding the contemporary world, it has served understandably as a bench-mark for interpreting new archaeological discoveries. For example Tweddle in his analysis of the Coppergate helmet referred to its evidence,<sup>116</sup> as did Cumlin-Pedersen (very favourably) in his recent study of the Skuldelev ships.<sup>117</sup> But, as one can see, there is an element of circular logic in this: incomplete items are interpreted in the light of the Tapestry; the resulting reconstructions are then seen to reinforce the authority of the Tapestry as an archaeological resource. Indeed, confidence in the accuracy of the Tapestry’s depictions of the ‘real-world’ has led to some extraordinary theories, some of which have radically transformed our understanding of artefacts and their use in the eleventh century. For example, Brooks and Walker - quite correctly - questioned the authenticity of the trousered hauberks, ‘because of the damage and discomfort to horse and rider’ such garments would cause. However, their belief in the accuracy of this artefact led them to conclude that the ‘English

---

<sup>113</sup> Demmin, *Arms and Armour*, 171-2; Lemmon, ‘Campaign of 1066’, 84-6; Gibbs-Smith, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 7. Likewise Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 85, suggested that since the Tapestry ‘has generally been regarded as the principal source of information about the way men armed during the late eleventh-century...we should therefore be disposed to trust it as a source for the English army at least’.

<sup>114</sup> Although, Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 189-91, were otherwise very scholarly, they overlooked discrepancies between the Tapestry and the archaeological evidence. Likewise Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 42, noted that ‘for the history of shipbuilding and navigation, Heinsius, Krischen, and Lienau have taken the Tapestry’s images as literal and reconstructed the boats exactly as shown, leaving no room for artistic licence’. See also Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 226; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 36.

<sup>115</sup> Holmes, ‘Houses’, 179.

<sup>116</sup> Tweddle, *Anglian Helmet*, 1169-70.

<sup>117</sup> Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 189-91.

designer of the Tapestry has drawn Anglo-Saxon mail on both English and Norman soldiers', not understanding that Normans wore different armour.<sup>118</sup> Clearly a rigorous evaluation of the nature and status of the Tapestry's evidence for the 'real world' of the eleventh century is long overdue.

This is not to say that some scholars have not been aware of the Tapestry's short-comings in this respect;<sup>119</sup> however, in the absence of a detailed exploration of the issue, their reservations have tended to be partial and not very forcefully expressed. Wilson, for example, believed that 'a great deal of what is seen in the hanging is...formulaic and cannot be said to do more than indicate the object illustrated'.<sup>120</sup> This said, on balance he came to the conclusion that 'a great deal more...is truly representative of the real thing'.<sup>121</sup> To be fair, Wilson was mostly fairly judicious in his views, and – where possible within the limitations of his study – attempted to compare the Tapestry against the available archaeological evidence. Likewise Edge and Paddock suggested that many of the Tapestry's representations are conventionalised, due to the restrictions of the medium, and, thus, comparanda are needed to make such illustrations fully comprehensive.<sup>122</sup> Pierce agreed, advocating the view that our understanding of artefacts derived from the Tapestry should be 'supplemented by information gleaned from the careful examination of manuscript illuminations, sculpture, wall paintings, bone and ivory carvings, and surviving

---

<sup>118</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'Authority and Interpretation', 19.

<sup>119</sup> As far back as 1894 Archer, 'Hastings', questioned the artifactual authority of the BT on the grounds of 'its curious and in some cases more than curious archaeology', as well as the fact that it was 'wrought by women who certainly were not on the field of battle'. Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 8-15, was also aware of inconsistencies between the BT and the archaeological evidence.

<sup>120</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 213.

<sup>121</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 213-4, suggested that 'the representations of fortresses in the Tapestry can be used by the historian of military engineering as evidence for the general structure and appearance of mottes in the late eleventh century'.

<sup>122</sup> Edge and Paddock, *Arms and Armour*, 17.

artefacts', but in fact made little use of relevant material in his subsequent discussion.<sup>123</sup> Nevinson was also cautious when using the Tapestry to understand contemporary costume, arguing that the fact the designer was a 'copyist must raise doubts about the accuracy of his pictorial representations of his contemporaries'.<sup>124</sup> Nonetheless, such views are the exception rather than the norm, and no one has undertaken the systematic evaluation of the Tapestry's objects in relation not only to surviving artefacts but also to the artistic traditions of the eleventh century that is so clearly needed.

### **Medieval Art Historical Tradition**

The task of understanding the 'contemporary scene' from medieval art is fraught with difficulties. First, there are few archaeological remains against which to test artistic representations, something which is particularly true for the eleventh century. Second, the medium used may limit the artist's scope for accurately recreating a particular artefact type - assuming this was the intention. Textiles are a clear case where simplification and stylisation is *de rigueur*, and here we should be especially cautious in our assessment of the visual imagery. Third, the fact it was customary for medieval artists to repeat pictorial formulae and reuse them in new contexts further complicates the matter.<sup>125</sup> It is well known that such 'naturalistic', 'classical' and semi-classical elements as appear in late Anglo-Saxon art were generally inspired by Carolingian art.<sup>126</sup> The example *par excellence* is, of course, the Utrecht Psalter,<sup>127</sup> which was to

---

<sup>123</sup> Pierce, 'Arms, Armour and Warfare', 237. This view was also expressed by Brown, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 42, who correctly noted that 'the only real guidelines we have' for deciding the accuracy of the Tapestry's depictions 'are the comparisons with actual objects of the same period and culture'.

<sup>124</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 75. Kiff, 'Images of War', 193, also noted the degree to which the Tapestry designer drew upon earlier iconographic models for inspiration.

<sup>125</sup> Carver, 'Contemporary Artefacts', 118; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 24.

have a profound influence on illuminations produced at Canterbury and beyond (Ill.12 - below). The notion that the task of the artist is to do something new, though deeply embedded in modern cultural awareness, is a comparatively recent development.



**Illustration 12**

**Psalm 2 as shown in the Utrecht Psalter (top), the Harley 603 Psalter (middle) and the Eadwine Psalter (bottom).**

<sup>126</sup> Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, 1.

<sup>127</sup> Utrecht, UB, 32.



Much the reverse held good in the period that concerns us here. Indeed, it could be difficult for an artist to ‘alter an accepted image or apply illustration to a text which had not before received it’.<sup>128</sup> In such a milieu, archaic representations of artefact types were common and probably deliberate. Moreover, the ‘transmission’ of pictorial model from exemplar to copy could lead to some corruption of the original image. Therefore, if the Tapestry designer behaved like most contemporary artists and used inherited formulae for artefacts, then his work might not be as a reliable source for life in the eleventh century as has generally been assumed. The general dependence of late Anglo-Saxon artists upon earlier models should not be overstated: their work is rightly celebrated for its diversity and originality – iconographic, stylistic and technical. Yet this did not really extend to the depiction of artefacts – though it should be noted, that this, too, has not been explored in any comprehensive way.<sup>129</sup> Such is necessarily part of our subject here.

### **Aims and Method**

In order to fill the major lacuna in the scholarship outlined above, the primary aim of this thesis is to examine systematically and comprehensively the extent to which artefacts in the Bayeux Tapestry reflect those of the contemporary world. In order to assess the accuracy of the depicted artefacts it is necessary to compare them carefully with, on the one hand, those which survive archaeologically, and, on the other, with those depicted in art – most notably in manuscript illuminations, whose own ‘pedigree’ will be sketched. We shall proceed via a series of ‘test cases’, including architecture, arms and armour, ships, dress and clothing, along with birds and beasts, and vegetation. Where depicted artefacts match the archaeological record (whether

---

<sup>128</sup> Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, 52, 77; Carver, ‘Contemporary Artefacts’, 177.

<sup>129</sup> A valuable start was made by Carver, ‘Contemporary Artefacts’.

they appear in manuscript illuminations or not) we can safely presume they are 'archaeologically accurate'. Where they differ from the archaeological record, but match those in manuscript art, the matter is more complicated and requires further scrutiny.

Following the meticulous investigation of detail, we offer an assessment of some of the wider implications of this research. First and foremost, we can offer the first truly authoritative and reasoned evaluation of the extent to which the Tapestry informs us of the material culture of the eleventh century. It will finally be possible to identify those elements of 'real life' which really did influence the designer, and attempt to understand their significance. In contrast we will also be able to see which elements of the Tapestry are clearly or very probably borrowed from art.

These findings will also offer new insights into the Tapestry designer and his world enabling us to offer a clearer 'profile' of him than hitherto been possible, and to understand something more of the complicated relationship between the artist, his visual models and the real world. We also seek to understand his method of work, the extent to which he looked to contemporary art for influence, and to clarify the range and nature of his pictorial sources. We hope also to be able to advance understanding of how the Tapestry was manufactured, in particular whether or not the separate sections of the Tapestry were worked by different groups of embroiderers. Henceforth, we will be in a better position to understand the Tapestry within the broader context of contemporary art and assess the extent to which its visual language is typical of the period, all of which will provide a firmer footing for interpreting it – and other artworks – as a historical source.

## BUILDINGS AND ARCHITECTURE

The Bayeux Tapestry is rich in architecture. Most of the buildings provide a physical or geographic context for a particular scene. Nonetheless, a few are principally scene dividers or embellishment - much like the Tapestry's trees, which will be discussed in due course.<sup>130</sup> The diverse appearance of the buildings might suggest that the Tapestry designer intended his architecture to evoke the essence of a variety of contemporary structures. However, a detailed study of these buildings reveals that in many cases their architectural elements are fictive - borrowed from art.<sup>131</sup>

Of the thirty-three buildings illustrated in the Tapestry, nine are named in the accompanying textual narrative.<sup>132</sup> While this might lead the modern viewer to expect the depictions in question to resemble the actual structures they represented, early

---

<sup>130</sup> Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 68.

<sup>131</sup> In contrast to the interpretation of other elements of the BT, there is general support for this view. E.g. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 27, believed that designer made 'no attempt...to depict anything that actually existed at the time'. Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 133, agreed, suggesting that 'few of the buildings shown in the Tapestry can represent contemporary structures with any degree of accuracy'. Though, not all buildings depicted in early medieval art are pure fantasy (Baylé, 'Architecture et enluminure', 55-7, observed that the artists of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 494 and Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 17. 1 were both 'inspired by real life considerations'); such examples are rare. Hence, Heitz, 'Iconography', 90, who mainly considered Carolingian art, exaggerated when she stated that the relationship of art 'with real buildings is clearly apparent' - 'one easily detects the pleasure...felt by the...artist at being able to reproduce the new forms created and realized by the architects of the period'. This view seems to have been supported by Lampl, 'Architectural Representation' 13, who remarked that 'the schemes of representation dealt with [in early medieval art]...should make it possible to understand and read a great number of medieval renderings...and help to reconstitute their physical prototypes'.

<sup>132</sup> Named buildings are underlined (in the order in which they appear): 1) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 2) Bosham Church, 3) High-status Domestic Building (?Bosham), 4) Guy's High-status domestic building at Beaurain, 5) Guy's High-status domestic building (?Beaurain), 6) William's Castle (?Rouen), 7) Tower (?Rouen), 8) William's High-status domestic building (?Rouen), 9) Ælfgva's Archway (?Rouen), 10) Tower (?Rouen), 11) Mont Saint Michel, 12) Dol, 13) Rennes, 14) Dinan, 15) Bayeux, 16) Quay/Lookout Tower (England), 17) Tower (England), 18) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 19) Westminster Abbey, 20) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 21) ?Westminster Abbey, 22) Harold's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 23) William's High-status domestic building (?Rouen), 24) Shipyard Building (?Dives-sur-Mer), 25) House (?Hastings), 26) House (?Hastings), 27) House (?Hastings), 28) Arched Building (?Hastings), 29) Building of William's war council (?Hastings), 30) Hastings Castle, 31) Building (?Hastings), 32) House (?Hastings) and 33) Building (?Hastings).

medieval assumptions were different.<sup>133</sup> In the few instances where remains of named buildings survive there is an opportunity to compare architectural fabric with the Tapestry illustrations. Where there is no corresponding fabric, or the buildings are not named, it must suffice to compare the designs with generic building types.

### **Building Types in the Bayeux Tapestry**

Irrespective of whether they are named, the Tapestry's buildings can be divided into six main groups on the basis of their appearance or function (these are illustrated in the Appendix): arches, churches, defensive structures or towns, domestic dwellings, high-status domestic buildings, towers, plus a supplementary category (other) for the miscellaneous structures that do not qualify to be considered a class on their own.<sup>134</sup>

Let us now sketch the principal characteristics of each group.

---

<sup>133</sup> See introduction. E.g. Krautheimer, 'Iconography', 3, suggested that 'the medieval conception of what made one edifice comparable to another was different from our own', noting that buildings described as similar to pre-existing structures in medieval times seemed quite diverse to the modern mind. His explanation (p.17) was that the medieval mindset intended to reproduce a building *typice* and *figuraliter*, i.e. in terms of the iconographic significance of individual architectural elements. Although Krautheimer was primarily examining the 'copying' of one structure in another, his perceptions are of fundamental significance for understanding ways in which architecture might be schematised and symbolised in a two-dimensional medium. Lampl, 'Architectural Representation', 7, took this further, claiming that one should not 'ascribe peculiarities...such as the apparent lack of proportions, incongruity of combined exterior and interior views of the same building and spatial ambiguity, to 'a mere inability of realistic rendering'. Rather these elements are 'intentional and meaningful', 'congenital to and adequate for the medieval mind'.

<sup>134</sup> Group A (Arches): 9) Ælfgyva's Archway (?Rouen), 28) Arched Building (?Hastings). Group B (Churches): 2) Bosham Church, 11) Mont Saint Michel, 19) Westminster Abbey, 21) ?Westminster Abbey. Group C (Defensive Structures/Towns): 6) William's Castle (?Rouen), 12) Dol, 13) Rennes, 14) Dinan, 15) Bayeux, 30) Hastings Castle. Group D (Domestic Dwellings): 25) House (?Hastings), 26) House (?Hastings), 27) House (?Hastings), 32) House (?Hastings). Group E (High-status domestic buildings): 1) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 3) High-status domestic building (?Bosham), 4) Guy's High-status domestic building at Beaurain, 5) Guy's High-status domestic building (?Beaurain), 8) William's High-status domestic building (?Rouen), 18) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 20) Edward's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 22) Harold's High-status domestic building (?Westminster), 23) William's High-status domestic building (?Rouen). Group F (Towers): 7) Tower (?Rouen), 10) Tower (?Rouen), 16) Quay/Lookout Tower (England), 17) Tower (England), 31) Building (?Hastings). Group G (Others):

### *Arches*

Two arches appear in the Tapestry. Both are square, comprising a horizontal lintel supported by two pillars. The pillars of the first (Building 9) are decorated with a spiral motif, terminating in outward-facing zoomorphic heads, whereas those of the second (Building 28) take the form of pointed-roofed towers, with a rounded striped roof above the lintel.

### *Churches*

Four churches appear in the Tapestry, of which three have cross-shaped roof terminals and arcading. Of these, Bosham and Mont-Saint-Michel are rectangular, with trapezoid pitched roof and two towers.<sup>135</sup> Otherwise they differ in most particulars. Westminster Abbey is shown with a long arcaded nave and offset tower, comprising a central dome, flanked by four narrow towers. An internal view of Westminster Abbey (Building 21), by contrast, is shown as an expanded structure of three rooms, formed of four towers bridged by tiled roofing of different forms.

### *Defensive Structures*

Five defensive structures are shown upon mounds, three of which are ‘approached’ from the left by a bridge.<sup>136</sup> Otherwise, apart from some basic architectural elements, all are different in form. Rouen is shown as a rectangular structure, with triangular battlements, two flat-roofed towers (at either end) and a large central domed tower. Dol has a three-dimensional rectangular tower of two parts, with rounded battlements.

---

24) Shipyard Building (?Dives-sur-Mer), 29) Building of William’s war council (?Hastings), 33) Building (?Hastings).

<sup>135</sup> Bosham’s towers might also be interpreted as buttresses (Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 273).

Rennes has a palisade with rectangular battlements. The palisade dips noticeably towards the centre, revealing a three-dimensional tower with domed roof. Dinan has a rectangular central tower, with ornate roofing in the form of a shrine,<sup>137</sup> and protrudes above a palisade composed of V-shape elements. Bayeux has a central tower with a domed roof (with tall pinnacle), flanked by rectangular towers with battlements, and a small gatehouse. Hastings Castle comprises a simple palisade of vertical stripes, which gently dip between tall plain posts.

### *Domestic Dwellings*

Four domestic dwellings appear in the Tapestry, of which three have the same rectangular shape, central doorway and trapezoid pitched roof; different forms are used to evoke the fabric of their roofs and walls. In contrast, the house which is ablaze, its occupants fleeing, is shown as a two-storey structure; the pillars at ground level support a rectangular building, with trapezoid pitched roof.

### *High-status domestic buildings*

The most numerous group of buildings represented in the Tapestry comprises high-status domestic buildings. All tend to be 'open plan', with thin roofs supported by pillars or simple towers. Edward's high-status domestic building (Building 1) is shown as an arch, with a magnificent gateway (made of ornate triangular roofed towers) on the left, and a single tall thin tower with a large square door (opening outwards) on the right. The building at Bosham (Building 3) is a rectangular shaped two-storey building, with arcading at ground level. It has a large triangular scaled roof

---

<sup>136</sup> Dol, Rennes, Dinan, Bayeux and Hastings Castle are shown on mounds; only Rouen is depicted at ground level. Hastings and Rouen are shown without bridges.

<sup>137</sup> This is has a similar form to the reliquary upon which Harold makes his oath to William (Scene 23).

supported by thin pillars. Steps to the right lead towards the foreshore. Guy's high-status domestic building at Beaurain (Building 4) is highly schematic, shown as a wide arch rising from thin pillars. This building (Building 5) is – seemingly - illustrated again in the following scene, but this time it comprises four simple columns, upon a platform, supporting a domed roof. William's high-status domestic building at Rouen (Building 8) is a long rectangular building, with a thin pitched-roof (the roof space embellished with arcading), supported by tall thin pillars at either end. When this building (Building 23) reappears, it is shown as a thin arched roof, with, at its summit, a small triangular roofed structure supported by a series of tall towers (two on the left, and one on the right). Edward's high-status domestic building at Westminster (Building 18) has a rounded roof (with small protruding towers) supported by two thin pillars, a crossbeam between, and ancillary towers, to the right. The same building (Building 20) reappears soon afterwards, this time shown as a two-story open roofed structure, with pitched towers supporting a central beam (the upper-level flooring). Harold's high-status domestic building at Westminster (Building 22) is shown as an ornate pitched roof structure, supported by a series of domed towers (on the left) and a spiral pillar (to the right).

### *Towers*

There are five independent towered structures in the Tapestry.<sup>138</sup> Normally shown with triangular roofs (Buildings 7, 10, 17 and 31), they often have small windows, arched doorways, pitched mid-level roofing, and are occasionally decorated with hatching (Buildings 7 and 10), floral-cross motifs (Building 10) or cross-patterning

---

<sup>138</sup> Renn, 'Burhgeat and Gonfanon', 178-86, attempted (rather unconvincingly) to compare these buildings in the Tapestry with contemporary structures.

(Building 31).<sup>139</sup> By contrast, the lookout tower (Building 16) is more robust, and has a gently rounded hatched-roof and small platform.

### *Other Buildings*

There are, in addition, a few miscellaneous structures, distinct in style and function from those already discussed. The shipyard building at Dives-sur-Mer (Building 24) consists of a trapezoid pitched roof, supported by four tall thin pillars. Similarly, William's war council in England is shown below a simple triangular-scaled roof structure, supported by two thin pillars (Building 29). In contrast, the elaborate building at Hastings (Building 33) comprises two adjoining triangular roofed towers, one wider than the other, and a large round-topped door (open outwards).

In general the Tapestry's buildings are composed of the same basic architectural elements - rectangular chambers, towers, pillars or arches, topped by triangular, pitched, flat, domed or rounded roofing - which have been assembled in different combinations to create a variety of distinct structures. Doorways and windows add character and decorative embellishment, while battlements or crosses reflect function.

### **Architecture in the Eleventh Century**

Although many Anglo-Saxon churches and some fortifications were built in stone,<sup>140</sup> it was an expensive commodity, and hence most domestic dwellings - including the

---

<sup>139</sup> Adjoined to Building 31 is a small ancillary structure with rounded roof, which serves as part of William's throne.

<sup>140</sup> Anglo-Saxon stone churches are numerous (see Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, for catalogue), although timber was also used - of which Greenstead, Essex, is a rare survival. Wood, *Norman Domestic Architecture*, 67, claimed that 'Saxons used stone only for sacred structures' and this view is supported by Richards, *Viking Age England*, 58, 68. However, Richards was careful to exclude the primitive forms of stone domestic dwellings found in the upland regions of England, the South-West and the Isle of Man. This said, the ground plans of mid-Anglo-Saxon monasteries are diverse and



royal palaces at Cheddar, Gloucester, London and Winchester - were constructed of wood.<sup>141</sup> Whilst most timber buildings would have been simple structures, some – including those at Cheddar and Cowdery’s Down - were more sophisticated.<sup>142</sup> There is evidence that some of the complex architectural forms shown in the Tapestry (such as the high-status domestic building at Bosham) could have been reproduced in timber, such as - a century later - at the Bishop’s Palace, Hereford.<sup>143</sup> However, such elaborate wooden buildings were probably the exception rather than the norm - their ornate features would probably have been decorative rather than functional:<sup>144</sup> the ‘rounded’ arch found on many of the Tapestry’s buildings could not have supported the weight of the building (without cross-beams) if they had been made from wood.<sup>145</sup>

The designer has undoubtedly excluded many every-day structures as peripheral to the thrust of the narrative, and this may explain the abundance of

---

this has made it difficult to distinguish between monastic and secular estates solely upon archaeological evidence (Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, 112). For the late Anglo-Saxon period, manors excavated at Porchester and Sulgrave provide evidence that some domestic structures were built of stone (*ibid.*, 124-9). Likewise, stone Anglo-Saxon fortifications are rare, although part of the manor complex at Porchester has been described as a ‘thegny tower’ (*ibid.*, 129). The ‘Anglian Tower’, York, ?s. vii-ix (often regarded as late Roman), may be an Anglo-Saxon secular fortification (Ottaway, *Defences*, 269-73).

<sup>141</sup> Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 131.

<sup>142</sup> E.g. Leahy, *Crafts*, 41, noted the ninth-century palace at Cheddar, which contained ‘large, fine buildings’ and the structures at Cowdery’s Down which ‘appear to have been remarkable’.

<sup>143</sup> E.g. Blair, ‘Bishop’s Palace’, 63, noted that the Great Hall of the Bishop’s Palace, Hereford ‘is in fact a careful, deliberate timber version of contemporary stone halls, and its architectural affinities are with these’. See also Alcock and Buckley, ‘Leicester Castle’, 78; Jones and Smith, ‘Great Hall’, 75, 79. Ralegh Radford, Jope and Tonkin, ‘Great Hall’, 82, compared the Great Hall at Hereford with buildings depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.

<sup>144</sup> Jones and Smith, ‘Great Hall’, 79, explained that this structure at Hereford was ‘primarily a decorative scheme of shafts and arches’. Likewise, ‘individual features’ of the tenth-century timbers from Vintner’s Place, London, ‘can be paralleled in early Romanesque stone architecture’, however the ‘arch shape’ of its famous arcade ‘was too weak to have a structural function’ and must have been decorative (Goodburn, *Vintner’s Place*, 86, 89).

<sup>145</sup> Kevin Leahy (personal conversation 18<sup>th</sup> March 2004) doubted that many of the Tapestry’s classical-style elements could (usefully) have been built in wood. In particular he noted that arches only have a structural function in stone buildings: in wooden structures the weight of the building was invariably supported by cross-beams.

complex classical-style architectural forms in the Tapestry. Visual tradition may account for this, since early medieval artists – like their late Antique predecessors – depicted similar forms. Yet some aspects of the Tapestry’s buildings are not antique, and might instead be interpreted as a response to the high-status stone building projects that were undertaken in England from the mid-eleventh century - notably the Confessor’s cathedral at Westminster and Wulfric’s Rotunda at Canterbury.<sup>146</sup> On general grounds alone it is likely that the designer will have known of one or both of these.

### **Buildings in Early Medieval Art**

Insular art is almost devoid of architectural elements until the end of the seventh century when we begin to see evangelists (and canon tables) beneath domed canopies supported by plain columns, as in the Northumbrian Lindisfarne Gospels and the Kentish Codex Aureus.<sup>147</sup> These architectural elements were borrowed from classical models, as the case of the Codex Aureus, whose portraits were almost certainly based on those of the sixth-century Italian St Augustine’s Gospels, underlines.<sup>148</sup> It is only subsequently that such features seem to have been adopted in Anglo-Saxon buildings, such as the crypt at Repton.<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>146</sup> Gem, ‘Westminster Abbey’, 44-55; Gem, *St Augustine’s*, 109-21.

<sup>147</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Nero D. iv, f.11b and Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, A.135, f.9v, f.150v. The same basic elements are common in contemporary sculpture, such as the ?viii<sup>ex</sup> sarcophagus/shrine, known as the ‘Hedda Stone’ in Peterborough Cathedral and the s. ix Virgin relief in Breedon church, Leicestershire.

<sup>148</sup> CCCC, 286, f.129v (Gameson, *Saint Augustine of Canterbury*, 22; Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 56). Likewise London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. i, f.30b shows a domed canopy supported by pillars, and was almost certainly copied from a s. vi Italian or Byzantine model.

<sup>149</sup> This resembles the *hypogeum* at Poitiers, and was remodelled in s. ix<sup>med</sup> to include the vault supported by spiral columns. Such vaulted chambers ultimately derive from extramural cemeteries of late Roman antiquity, seemingly introduced to England by Wilfred in c. 670-7.

Carolingian illumination by contrast, contains a multiplicity of architectural forms. Thus we find arches, arcades, columns, and towers, pitched and domed roofing, and also evidence of interest in a variety of building fabrics. If some of this may reflect an awareness of the grander building projects of the day, most of it was the product of renewed scrutiny and imitation of late antique models. The artists of the Court School of Charlemange clearly had access to (amongst other things) a set of portraits similar in type to those in the Gospels of St Augustine.<sup>150</sup>



**Illustration 13**

**A building in the Grandval Bible.**

A generation later at Tours, drawing on models like the celebrated late fifth-century Cotton Genesis,<sup>151</sup> the artists of the Grandval and Vivian Bibles, provided a more

<sup>150</sup> E.g. Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 22, f.15v, f.59v, f.85v, f.127v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8850, f.17v, f.81v, f.123v, f.180v; London, British Library, Harley 2788, f.13v, f.71v, f.108v, f.161v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, nouv. acq. lat. 1203, f.1r-f.3r (see Koehler, *Karolingischen Miniaturen II*, 22-8, 34-41, 56-87 and plates).

<sup>151</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Otho B. vi. See Weitzmann and Kessler, *Cotton Genesis*, 22, 31-4, 53, 55-6, for discussion of the date of this manuscript and parallels with London, British Library, Add. 10546 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1.

convincing architectural setting, including (in the Grandval Bible) frescos and interior roofing (Ill.13 - above).<sup>152</sup> The acme of achievement in relation to such illusionistic buildings, is the broadly contemporary Utrecht Psalter from Hautvillers near Reims:<sup>153</sup> whether a copy or a pastiche of a late antique book, there is no doubt that such a source informed its three-dimensional buildings, composed from an array of domed towers, fortified stone-walls, roofs, doors and windows.<sup>154</sup>

The Ottonians, who generally took Carolingian and not antique art as their model, retreated from the naturalism and spatialism of their predecessors in architecture as in other respects.<sup>155</sup> Their towns and buildings are often very obviously 'schemata' rather than 'representations'. That said, the actual architectural elements found in Ottonian art are not, on the whole, much different from those of the Carolingian period: stone buildings predominate, and most structures have columns or arcading, arched windows and doorways, and tiled-pitched roofing. It is rather that the structures they are used to create are less naturalistically conceived. As was the case in the ninth century, contemporary figures such as the emperors Otto II and III, and not just the company of heaven, can be housed in 'classical' structures.

Late Anglo-Saxon art, like Ottonian art, owed much to Carolingian influence; unlike their German counterparts, however, Anglo-Saxons remained more faithful to the naturalistic concerns of their models, albeit enhancing their decorative quality and surface pattern. The most obvious example of this is the Harley 603 Psalter,<sup>156</sup> many of whose illustrations were copied from those in the Utrecht Psalter. As this case

---

<sup>152</sup> London, British Library, Add. 10546, f.25v and BNF, lat. 1, f.3v (see Koehler, *Karolingischen Miniaturen I*, I, 386-7, 396-401, II, 13-48 and III. 51, 69; Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, Ill. 87, 130).

<sup>153</sup> Utrecht, BR, 32.

<sup>154</sup> van der Horst, Noel and Wüstefeld, *Utrecht Psalter*, *passim*.

<sup>155</sup> Mayr-Harting, *Ottonian Book Illumination*, *passim*.

underlines, and as will be further highlighted in the examples cited below, the architecture in late Anglo-Saxon manuscript art could depend on earlier works which were themselves dependent on late antique models, and could thus contain fossilised antique forms of architecture, divorced from contemporary reality. With this in mind let us now consider the physical evidence for the type of buildings depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.

### **Evidence for the Buildings in the Bayeux Tapestry**

#### *Churches*

Rectangular buildings with trapezoid pitched roofs, the form shared by Bosham church and Mont-Saint-Michel, are used elsewhere in the Tapestry for secular structures,<sup>157</sup> suggesting that the designer did not intend this form to be diagnostic of church architecture. It is only the small crosses on the roofs of these buildings that unequivocally indicate their true function.<sup>158</sup>

The early fabric that survives at both Bosham and Mont-Saint-Michel reveals that the Tapestry designer may not have taken the appearance of the contemporary structures as the basis of his design.<sup>159</sup> Even though the aisles, porch, and much of the chancel which dominate Bosham church today are later additions - disguising much of

---

<sup>156</sup> BL, Harley 603.

<sup>157</sup> E.g. Buildings 25, 26, 27 and 32.

<sup>158</sup> McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 51. Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 273, thought that Bosham church was actually an oratory – and this explains why Harold and his companion bow as they enter. Crosses also appear upon the reliquary box upon which Harold makes an oath in Scene 23, and at the ends of the catafalque bearing the Confessors body in Scene 26. The style of arcading found on the reliquary box is also typical of that of both churches, in particular Mont-Saint-Michel.

<sup>159</sup> Brown, 'Architecture', 216-7. This was disputed by Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 68-9, who thought the churches were very realistic, though some parts were stylised.

the Saxon fabric (Ill.14 - below) - it is apparent that the ground plan of the original Saxon church has little in common with the building illustrated in the Tapestry.<sup>160</sup>



**Illustration 14**

**Bosham church as it appears today.**

The suggestion that the central ‘doorway’ shown in the Tapestry might be Bosham’s magnificent chancel arch is possible, but ignores the fact that such rounded arches are not unique to this building.<sup>161</sup> Indeed, any relationship between the surviving Anglo-

---

<sup>160</sup> Pollock, *Bosham Ecclesia*, in contrast, attempted to demonstrate that the surviving fabric of Bosham is comparable to the depiction in the Tapestry. He argued that a watchtower had stood where the bell tower stands today, and this was the building depicted in the Tapestry. It was his understanding that this watchtower was partly destroyed after the Conquest, and the bell tower was built using some of the fabric of the earlier structure. Pollock’s evidence for this structure focused on the apparent remains of the church’s porticus, which he considered visible through the rendering to west face of the bell tower, and a small arched window on the same side of the church. He was convinced that these elements of the building are shown in the Tapestry. However, Pollock’s evidence is dubious, since the infilling of the west wall (if proven) might be better explained as a major repair, rather than extensive reconstruction of the building itself. Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Vol. I, 81-2, considered the west tower, nave, chancel-arch, and west part of the chancel walls to be Anglo-Saxon, but dated these elements period C3 (c.1050-1100).

<sup>161</sup> Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 68-9. It could also be suggested that the outer arch in the Tapestry depiction mimics the arch of the chancel itself. See Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Vol. III, 775-798, for discussion of arches in Anglo-Saxon churches.

Saxon parts of Bosham church and the representation in the Tapestry could well be coincidental.<sup>162</sup> The ground plan of Bosham church (as shown in the Tapestry) seems to compare favourably with the extant remains of several Anglo-Saxon churches,<sup>163</sup> and this may indicate that the designer took a standard Anglo-Saxon church form as the basis for his design. Moreover, one can move beyond the plan to compare individual aspects of the church in the Tapestry with (for example) the surviving fabric of St Laurence, Bradford-upon-Avon, which has similar features and decoration (Ill.15 - below).<sup>164</sup>



**Illustration 15**

**Parallels between the architectural fabric of St Laurence, Bradford-upon-Avon and the depiction of Bosham Church in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

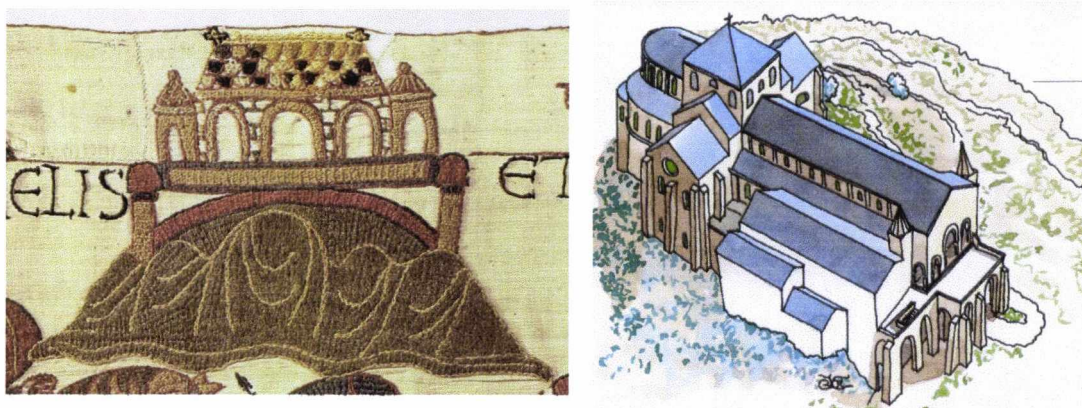
<sup>162</sup> Further, Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 217, noted ‘that two churches are recorded at Bosham in Domesday book and that it is more likely that the earl (Harold) would visit the church pertaining to his manor rather than the collegiate establishment which is now the church at Bosham’. This theory was also advocated by Brown, ‘Architecture’, 217, but – of course – cannot be proven.

<sup>163</sup> Ground plans most comparable to Bosham in the Tapestry are Heysham, Ledsham i, Thornage and Wharram Percy ii (Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Vol. III, 969-1005). Hall, *Viking Age York*, 53, also identified three Pre-Conquest churches with such ground plans in York. Needless to say, it is highly unlikely that the designer observed any of these buildings first hand.

<sup>164</sup> Taylor and Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Vol. I, 86-7, dated Bradford on Avon – chancel, and nave with flanking porches – period A2 (c.650-700), altered in periods C1 to C3 (c.950-1100). Many, including, Fernie, *Architecture*, 145-6, have questioned such an early date for this church.

This is not to say that the Tapestry designer knew of this particular building first-hand, rather that the upper arcading, arched windows and doorway are typical features of many late Anglo-Saxon churches from which he could have drawn inspiration.

The Tapestry shows Mont-Saint-Michel on a hill, but there resemblance to the eleventh-century building ends. The Carolingian church, built in the tenth century, comprised a rectangular nave and square chancel built on the summit of the rock, with a lower sanctuary – the chapel of Notre-Dame-sous-Terre – on a terrace below.<sup>165</sup> In about 1023 Abbot Hildebert II began work to replace (or incorporate) these buildings within an ambitious and complex Romanesque edifice. Although the structure in the Tapestry has some ancillary buildings, it is difficult to reconcile this depiction with the remains of the eleventh-century abbey complex (Ill.16 – below).<sup>166</sup>



**Illustration 16**

**Mont-Saint-Michel in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and an artistic reconstruction of the Romanesque church (right) based upon extant architectural fabric and archaeological remains.**

The nave, which consisted of seven bays, was not yet finished by 1085, and it is possible that the Carolingian church still survived when the Tapestry was produced:

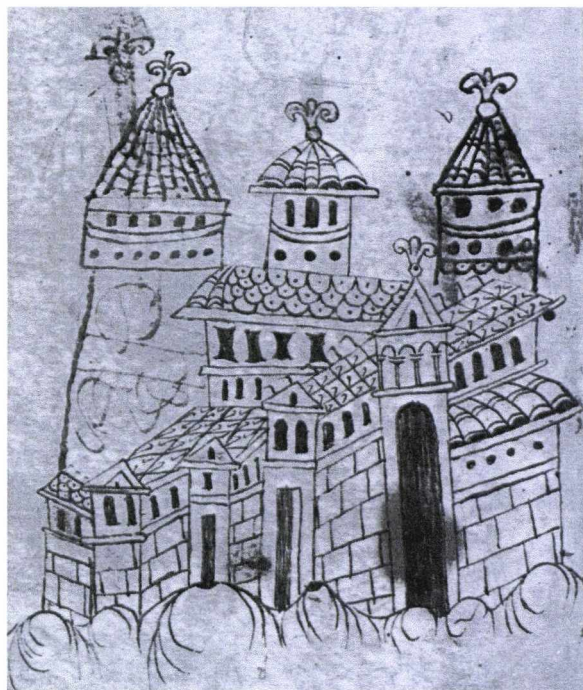
<sup>165</sup> Baylé and Bouet, *Architecture Normande*, II. 11-3. By this time there was already a small village on the south-east flank of the mount, the parish church of St Peter and some fortifications, none of which are recreated in the Tapestry (Déceneux, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 8-9, 12, 26-7).

<sup>166</sup> See further Baylé, Bovet *et al.*, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 112.



whatever the case, neither the new nave nor the earlier church is suggested in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>167</sup>

Instead, art - not the real world - informed much of the Tapestry's ecclesiastical architecture. Rectangular shaped buildings, with trapezoid pitched roofs are commonly illustrated in contemporary illumination (Ill.17 - below).<sup>168</sup>



**Illustration 17**

**A building depicted in British Library, Royal 15 A. xvi.**

---

<sup>167</sup> It is possible (though rather unlikely) that the Tapestry shows a north (or south) view of the Abbey church: the three arches representing the nave and two aisles, with the ancillary buildings to either side representing the chapels of St Martin and that of Trente-Cièrges (which formed the foundation arms of the transepts). Brown, 'Architecture', 217, for not altogether convincing reasons, suggested that the Tapestry designer sought to depict the Carolingian chapel of Mont-Saint-Michel and not the Abbey church. More popular is the theory of Alexander, *Norman Illumination*, 16-7, that the Tapestry illustrates a novel system of decorative arcading, built around 1060, which seems to 'have caught the (Tapestry) artist's attention'. Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 172, gave historical credibility to this hypothesis suggesting that Abbot Scotland – the first Norman appointee at St Augustine's and formerly of Mont-Saint-Michel - may have been involved in the Tapestry design. This said, there is nothing particularly striking about the arcading in the Tapestry's rendition, which is typical of the general form of arcading found elsewhere. Paradoxically, Alexander (pp.16-7), who initiated the debate, correctly surmised that 'little...can be gained from the earliest representation' of the abbey church in 'the Bayeux Tapestry'.

<sup>168</sup> Anglo-Saxon examples are extremely common and include BodL, Junius 11, p.87, BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.32, and London, British Library, Royal 15 A. xvi, f.84. Also of interest is the s. xii<sup>med</sup>

It was these, as well as contemporary reliquary shrines, which probably influenced the Tapestry's depiction of both Bosham church and Mont-Saint-Michel.<sup>169</sup> This is especially likely given that such artistic creations will have been more immediately available to the designer – whatever his identity and circumstances – than the actual buildings themselves.



**Illustration 18**

**Steps leading to a building in Junius 11 (left)  
and Bosham Church in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

Arched doorways and windows are widespread in contemporary illuminations,<sup>170</sup> as well as in surviving architectural fabric. Junius 11, for example, shows steps reminiscent of those leading up to the ‘chancel arch’ of Bosham church (Ill.18 -

---

TCC, R. 17. 1, f.284v, f.285r, which uses this form in its rendition of the buildings of Christ Church. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>169</sup> Hart, ‘Bayeux Tapestry’, 129, made an interesting comparison between Bosham Church in the Tapestry and the reliquaries in the apse of St Augustine’s shown in Thomas of Elmham’s *Speculum Augustinianum* (Cambridge, Trinity Hall, 1, f.63r). Whilst Hart believed that the designer of the Tapestry might have used the actual shrines for his model, these are unlikely to have been built much before 1091. The s. viii Anglo-Saxon reliquary shrine at Mortain (Manche) and a Romanesque example in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (17.190.520), demonstrate the use and subsequent survival of this form (Campbell, *Anglo-Saxons*, 114; Zarnecki, *English Romanesque Art*, 282).

<sup>170</sup> E.g. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 869, f.83v; BL, Royal 15 A. xvi, f.84; London, British Library, Stowe 944, f.7. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

above).<sup>171</sup> Arcading is also often found on religious structures in manuscript art.<sup>172</sup>

Likewise, the association of the cross with church architecture is relatively common.<sup>173</sup>

In contrast, the Tapestry's depiction of Westminster Abbey parallels the surviving fabric,<sup>174</sup> and a description given in the *Vita Ædwardi*.<sup>175</sup> Notable details in the most recent reconstruction of the extant remains are 'the presbytery of two bays, the crossing tower with flanking turrets and with secondary turrets, and the arcaded nave of five bays'.<sup>176</sup> The appearance of Westminster Abbey in the Tapestry displays many aspects of the Romanesque style, comparing well with the abbey church at

---

<sup>171</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.84.

<sup>172</sup> Examples are numerous and include Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 389, f.1v; Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque municipale, 11, f.11; BL, Stowe 944, f.6. They are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (cited in the appendix). Arcading is also used to illustrate canon tables in gospel books, such as Hanover, Kestner Museum, WM XXI<sup>a</sup> 36, f.10; PML, M 869, f.13v.

<sup>173</sup> E.g. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 183, f.1v. Also King Cnut is shown presenting a cross to the altar of New Minster in BL, Stowe 944, f.6. Crosses are more commonly associated with church architecture in Romanesque illuminations (for examples see appendix).

<sup>174</sup> Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 37, believed that 'the depictions of the buildings in it (the BT) seem to have at least a general representational value'. Gibbs-Smith, 'Notes', 168 and Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 27, agreed.

<sup>175</sup> The *Vita Ædwardi*, i.6, ed. Barlow, 103-17, describes Westminster Abbey as follows: 'the house of the principal altar, raised up with most lofty vaulting, is surrounded by dressed stone evenly jointed. Moreover, the circumference of that temple is enclosed on both sides by a double arch of stones, with the structure of the work strongly consolidated from different directions. Next is the crossing of the church, which is to hold in its midst the choir of God's choristers, and, with its twin abutments from either side, support the high apex of the central tower. It rises simply at first with a low and sturdy vault, swells with many a stair spiralling up in artistic profusion, but then with a plain wall climbs to the wooden roof which is carefully covered with lead. And indeed, methodically arranged above and below, are chapels to be consecrated through their altars to the memory of apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins. Moreover, the whole complex of this enormous building is set at a sufficient distance from the east end of the old church to allow not only the brethren dwelling there to continue with their service to Christ but also some part of the nave, which is to lie in between, to advance a good way'. See further, Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 34-6. Brown, 'Architecture', 216, believed the lead roof of Westminster Abbey 'is emphasised in the needlework [of the Tapestry] by the marking of the vertical rolls characteristic of a lead-covered roof on the topmost stage of the tower'. Archaeological evidence for the eastern parts of the building is sparse. Whilst no part of either transept has been uncovered they seem to be indicated by the surviving east range of cloistral buildings (Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 39-40). Similarly, excavations in the 1930s provided evidence on the south side for the west tower bay and the next four bays to the east (Tanner and Clapham, 'Westminster Abbey', 232-3).

<sup>176</sup> Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 37, 48-9.

Jumièges.<sup>177</sup> Hence, it is difficult to establish whether the Tapestry depiction shows architectural features that were genuinely particular to Westminster, or is reflecting a generic Romanesque ecclesiastical architecture. On balance, the latter seem less likely, since few Romanesque buildings would have been completed in England by 1070 – about the time Tapestry itself was probably produced.

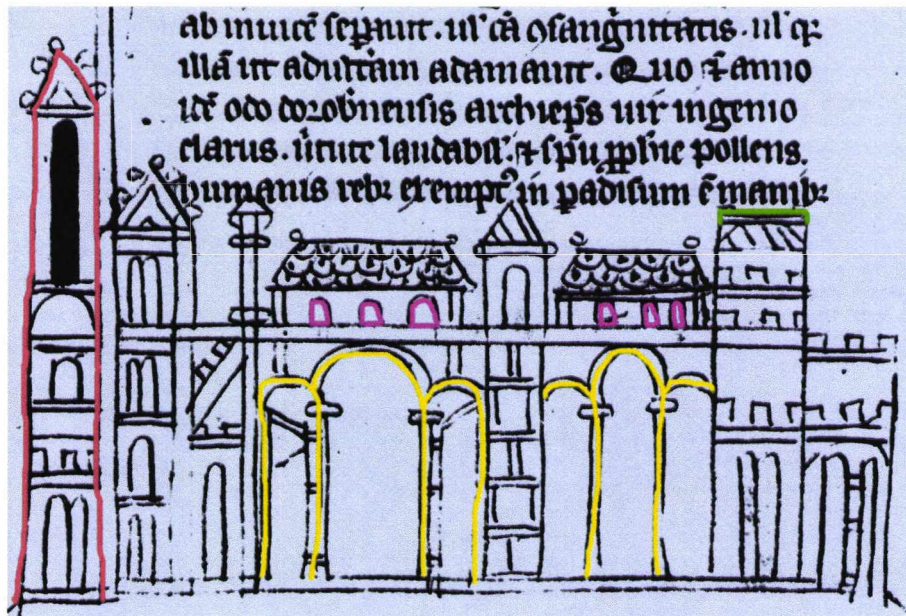


Illustration 19

Westminster Abbey in British Library, Cotton Nero D. ii.

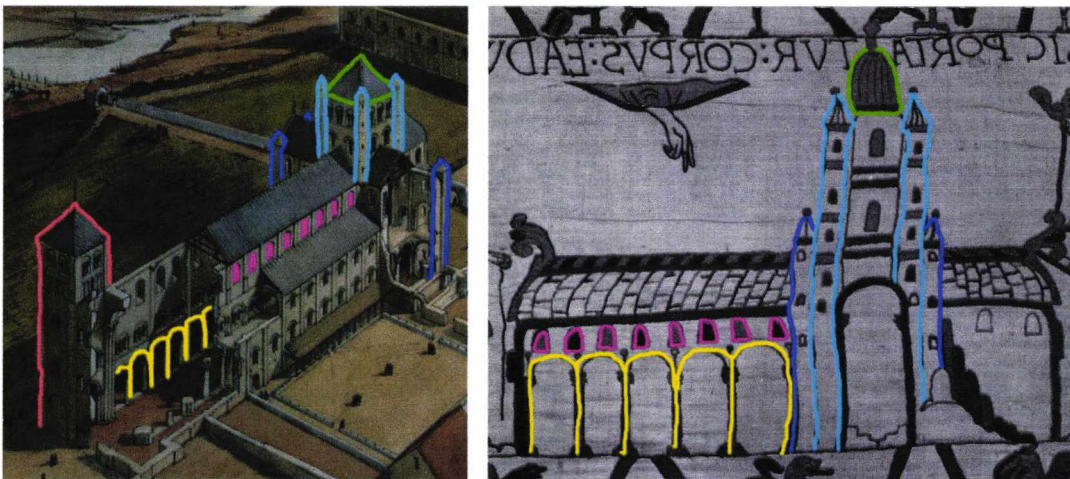
Nonetheless, there are two aspects of the Tapestry's depiction of the Confessor's cathedral that are worthy of further discussion. First is the absence of the western towers. Tanner and Clapham believed, that the towers existed at the time the Tapestry was produced, but the designer only recreated 'exactly what the bearers [of the Confessors body] would have seen on that winter's day'.<sup>178</sup> More likely – perhaps - is

<sup>177</sup> Tanner and Clapham, 'Westminster Abbey' 235-6. Baylé, 'Architecture et enluminure', 54 and Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 54, thought it possible that Jumièges and Westminster were designed by the same architect. For further discussion of Jumièges see Musset, *Normandie romane*, 61-126; Baylé and Bouet, *Architecture Normande*, II. 32-6.

<sup>178</sup> Tanner and Clapham, 'Westminster Abbey' 230-1.

that the western towers were not completed by the time of the Tapestry's execution.<sup>179</sup>

This theory has been supported by Tatton-Brown who suggests that the Romanesque masonry surviving within them is late eleventh century – that is to say they were a post-Conquest addition.<sup>180</sup> Some stylisation is to be expected, since the Tapestry designer is concerned to show internal aspects of the church. In this respect it is interesting to compare the Tapestry's depiction with a mid-thirteenth-century illumination in British Library, Cotton Nero D. ii (Ill.19 – above).<sup>181</sup>



**Illustration 20**

**An artistic reconstruction of Westminster Abbey in the eleventh century (left) and the depiction in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

Second, the Tapestry's depiction shows a domed roof to the central-east tower, which (most commentators agree) would have been pointed (Ill.20 - above).<sup>182</sup> Domed roofs, an intriguing feature of the Tapestry's architectural repertoire, are also commonly depicted in contemporary illuminations.<sup>183</sup> The evidence for such roofs in

<sup>179</sup> Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 37.

<sup>180</sup> Tim Tatton-Brown (personal correspondence 13<sup>th</sup> April 2004); Tatton-Brown 'Westminster', 174-5.

<sup>181</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Nero D.ii, f.87v.

<sup>182</sup> See archaeological reconstruction in Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 48-9.

<sup>183</sup> Domed roofs occur on BT Buildings 1, 5, 6, 7, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22 and 23. Contemporary examples are numerous and include BL, Harley 603, f.66v; BL, Royal 15 A. xvi, f.84; London British

early medieval western architecture is exiguous, and hence it seems likely that this aspect must have been borrowed from art. On balance, however, most aspects of the Tapestry's depiction of Westminster Abbey seem to have been influenced by the appearance of the contemporary building, as demonstrated by the surviving fabric.<sup>184</sup>

### *Defensive Structures/Towns*

Five of the six defensive structures depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry are named: Dol, Rennes, Dinan, Bayeux and Hastings Castle. They are shown as fortified structures,<sup>185</sup> upon defensive mounds,<sup>186</sup> perhaps intended to represent 'motte and bailey' castles.<sup>187</sup>

Although there are indications that such structures were being built in the Conqueror's homelands before 1066,<sup>188</sup> the archaeological evidence remains inconclusive.<sup>189</sup> Some

---

Library, Harley 76, f.10. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>184</sup> Some aspects of the Tapestry depiction must be considered schematic: e.g. the details of the weather vane being put in place, which is a *topos* for the completion of a building. This feature is also found in London, British Library, Add. 49598, f.118v.

<sup>185</sup> The defensive elements of these fortifications take various forms: Dol is shown as a square tower with rounded battlements; Rennes has square battlements on top of a wooden palisade. Bayeux seems to have a battlement palisade, perhaps constructed of wood. Likewise Dinan seems to have a wooden palisade, composed of V-shape elements. Hastings Castle does not have battlements, but is fortified by a rounded palisade of wood. Battlements associated with forts and city walls are common in contemporary illumination: BodL, Junius 11, p11; BL, Harley 603, f.66v; Cambridge, University Library, Ff. I. 23, f.4v. Romanesque and continental examples are cited in the appendix. In Romanesque illuminations battlements are sometimes associated with ecclesiastical structures: e.g. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud, Misc. 469, f.7v; TCC, R. 17. 1, f.285. See further the appendix.

<sup>186</sup> The forms of the defensive mounds in the Tapestry are diverse: Dinan's mound is rounded, with a ditch on either side. Dol also has a surrounding ditch, but the mound itself is steeper, with a flatter summit. A similar flat-topped hill also serves Rennes, but here the ditch has a square form, with a pronounced defensive structure - perhaps an outer wall or palisade. Bayeux and Hastings Castle do not have defensive ditches. Whilst Bayeux rises from a large and steep triple hill, Hastings Castle sits on a neatly rounded, quite shallow, mound. The only other buildings shown on a hill are the Abbey of Mont-Saint-Michel; representing a natural feature, and Building 6 (which Taylor, 'Belrem', 1-2, thought was Beaurain - discussed below), which may show a motte with outer bailey.

<sup>187</sup> 'Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 150, suggested that the absence of baileys alongside these mottes may well result from the lack of space [in the BT], or at least show that they were not considered important enough to warrant the use of that space'.

<sup>188</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215; Brown, 'Architecture', 214; Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 98-106. Documentary evidence is provided by William of Jumièges in his *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, vii. I (1-4), ed. van Houts, 92-3, who noted that 'from his [Duke William] tender years onwards many

recent commentators have even suggested that the origin of the motte is specific to the peculiar circumstances of the Norman Conquest:<sup>190</sup> Whilst we should be wary of putting too much weight upon negative evidence, it is significant that to date none of these locations (apart from Hastings - perhaps) has yet produced the slightest trace of a fortified mound.<sup>191</sup> This said, Building 6 and Hastings Castle are worthy of further discussion, since they have been compared to extant remains at the places that appear to be named in the Tapestry.

Taylor believed that Building 6 corresponds to the archaeology of Beaurain Castle: in particular he noted that ‘the castle was entered from within the borough (the gateway position in relation to the motte at the opposite end of the bailey) corresponding to that represented on the Tapestry’ and that ‘hummocks’ on the ground ‘look like the debris of fallen towers’ that ‘might approximate the towers that appear to flank the gatehouse on the Tapestry’.<sup>192</sup> However, as Taylor himself

---

Normans built earthworks in many places and erected fortified strongholds for their own purposes’ (*sub cuius ineunte etate Normannorum plurimi ab eius fidelitate aberrantes plura per foca erectis aggeribus tutissimas sibi construxere munitions*). Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 100, noted that whilst these structures have often been interpreted as mottes, they could also indicate a castle of any sort.

<sup>189</sup> Whilst there is evidence for mottes in parts of southern Italy and Sicily conquered by the Normans, for example at La-Motte-Montboyau (c.1026) and Ardres (c.1060), there is less support for these in the Norman homelands, where evidence for mottes at Manéhouville, Gaillefontaine and La Ferté-en-Bray remain uncertain (Brown, *English Castles*, 39). See also Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 101-3. Some motted structures seem to have existed in France: at Doué-la-Fontaine (Anjou) an unfortified stone ground-floor hall of c.900 was converted into a two-storey defensible building with first-floor entry added later in the same century. In the s.xi<sup>m</sup> this building was ‘enmotted’ with a mound piled around its base (Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 97).

<sup>190</sup> Brown, *English Castles*, 37; Fernie, ‘Buildings’, 7. Whilst there is an - albeit limited - amount of archaeological evidence for defended private residences in the late Anglo-Saxon period, such as Sulgrave (Northamptonshire) and Eynsford (Kent), there seems to be no evidence for pre-Conquest mottes (Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 39-56).

<sup>191</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215. Of course it entirely feasible that early earthworks at these sites could have been destroyed during later building programmes (Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 151). In the case of Dol, the Tapestry might instead represent the granite outcrop of Mont Dol, which – like Mont-Saint-Michel – was an island monastery. However, it seems unlikely that this would have been where Conan met Ruallon in siege (see introductory chapter). The fort at mount Léhon, just south of Dinan, is a post-Conquest structure.

<sup>192</sup> Taylor, ‘Belrem’, 4-10, 16-19.

concedes, ‘there is not to be seen one stone or brick standing’ at Beaurain today and that features of a contour survey of the castle do not identify archaeological features we might consider particular to the depiction in the Tapestry. It is also the case that most commentators believe that Building 6 is actually a representation of William’s castle at Rouen rather than Beaurain.<sup>193</sup>

Little remains of the early Norman castle of Hastings. Full excavation of this much altered feature was not possible – even to confirm that it was an early motte at all.<sup>194</sup> In recent times Combes and Lyne have suggested that *Hæstingaceaster* (as the structure is described in the Tapestry) might better be interpreted as Pevensey: the *ceaster* element being ‘almost without exception, associated with former Roman towns or forts’ and no major Roman site is known at Hastings.<sup>195</sup> If it can be proven that the Tapestry illustrates the castle built by Robert, Count of Mortain, as opposed to Hastings Castle,<sup>196</sup> it is apparent that it looks nothing like what we know of the early Norman castle or the pre-existing Roman remains.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>193</sup> See Gibbs-Smith, ‘Notes’, 165, Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 176, 216, Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 118-9, amongst others.

<sup>194</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 156 noted that ‘the Norman mound excavated at Hastings was dated by a single sherd of pottery and could have been built at any time after the Conquest. It is not even certain that it occupies the site chosen by William in 1066, since the seaward edge of the promontory on which it stands has suffered a long history of erosion. The castle depicted in the Tapestry may have disappeared centuries ago’.

<sup>195</sup> Combes and Lyne, ‘Hastings’, 213-6

<sup>196</sup> This said most commentators, including the present author, believe the Tapestry shows Hastings Castle. Wormald, ‘Inscriptions’, 179 translates the inscription as ‘this man has commanded that a castle should be thrown up at Hastings’. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 189, 229, notes that ‘the building of a fortification at Hastings is mentioned by William of Poitiers and the position of the element *ceastra* above the motte has led to speculation that this might be a label for the fortification itself. The occurrence of the name *Hestengaceastra* is, however, too common to accept this’. See also Taylor, ‘Belrem’, 19-20; Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 153-6.

<sup>197</sup> Peers, *Pevensey*, 6; Renn, *Norman Castles*, 276-9. The inscriptions relating to Pevensey and Hastings in the Tapestry are (following Wormald, ‘Inscriptions’, 179): ‘hIC: VVILLELM: DVX IN MAGNO: NAVIGIO: MARE TRANSVIT ET VENIT AD PEVENESÆ:’ (Here Duke William in a great ship crossed the sea and came to Pevensey); ‘ET hIC: MILITES: FESTINAVERVNT: hESTINGA: VT CIBVM. RAPERENTVR:’ (and here the soldiers have hastened to Hastings to seize food); ‘ISTE. IVSSIT: VT FODERETVR: CASTELLVM: AT. HESTENGA CEASTRA’ (this man



Commonsense also suggests that it is unlikely that the designer was trying to illustrate 'actual' castles in the places he depicts - unless we are to believe that he had seen these castles first-hand or had access to an accurate description of them.<sup>198</sup> Indeed, most agree that the designer represented these places by a type of castle which was visible in England in the 1070s on the assumption that, since this is how a 'Norman' castle looked in England, it was presumably the same in Brittany and Normandy.<sup>199</sup> Let us now examine the extent to which this view can be substantiated.

Most of the Tapestry's defensive structures seem to be made of wood,<sup>200</sup> including the upright members shown in the palisades at Dinan, Hastings and Rennes and the superstructure of Bayeux.<sup>201</sup> This corresponds to what we know about fortifications built in England in the third quarter of the eleventh century.<sup>202</sup> There is

---

has commanded that a castle should be thrown up at Hastings); 'hIC: MILITES: EXIERVNT: DE hESTENGA: ET; VENERVNT AD PRELIVM: CONTRA; hAROLDVM. REGE:' (here the soldiers went out of Hastings and came to the battle against King Harold'.

<sup>198</sup> In some cases the Tapestry seems to symbolise the whole settlement and not just the castle. Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 151, noted that Bayeux the mound lacks the ditches, shown elsewhere in the Tapestry, and perhaps here is shown as a defended town. The same could be true of Rennes.

<sup>199</sup> Brown, *English Castles*, 35; Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 87. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 214, believed that the representations of most of the mottes in the Tapestry are the artist's convention for a fortification of any form. Whilst these may not be indicative of the appearance of the actual sites or towns, he did consider them to be representative of the general appearance of contemporary structures. Schwartz, 'Buildings', 58, supported this view, but implied that the occurrence of mottes in the Tapestry was overtly political, advocating that the designer needed to 'rely on different sorts of images to invent an ideal replica of an important architectural feature', which in essence was a symbol of Norman domination. Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 68-70, thought that the motte was the most realistic feature of the Tapestry's architecture, but based on castles in England rather than in Normandy or Brittany. Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 151, agreed: 'intended for the gaze of an aristocratic audience' the Tapestry's depictions 'had to be convincing' within their physical limitations.

<sup>200</sup> This said, Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 150, believed that 'Dol is less obviously a timber site', and in this case and that of Bayeux 'the internal evidence could easily be interpreted as a mixture of timber and stone'.

<sup>201</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215; Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 150. Discussing the fact that the individual 'members' of the palisade of Hastings Castle 'are higher and more massive than others' Higham and Barker, *ibid*, 155, suggested that 'either it was built on top of the motte and the designer has depicted the end result as well as the building process, or its construction preceded that of the motte which is therefore shown being thrown up around its base'.

<sup>202</sup> Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 82, argued, 'whenever a motte was thrown up, the first castle upon it must have been a wooden one... a stone keep could not be placed on loose soil... in the wet climate of England it would take about ten years for the soil to settle sufficiently to bear a stone building'.

definite archaeological evidence for wooden structures upon mottes at a number of locations including Abinger, Durham, Hoverburg and South Mimms.<sup>203</sup>



**Illustration 21**

**Hastings Castle in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

The Tapestry also shows Hastings Castle upon a mound comprising of several coloured bands (Ill.21 – above), which suggest it was formed from layers of different material.<sup>204</sup> Whilst this may not have been the case at the site Barker and Barton believed to be Hastings, since the motte here was composed of different sorts of unstable and unstratified sand,<sup>205</sup> mottes of multi-composition construction are known at Bakewell in Derbyshire, Carisbrook on the Isle of Wight, Great Driffield in

---

Bertrand, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 270, thought that Norman castles in the Tapestry were shown built in stone, whilst the Breton ones were constructed of wood, which may have reflected 'real life'.

<sup>203</sup> For further examples see Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 244-325. At Abinger the evidence points to a tower, which stood on stilts. According to Brian Hope-Taylor (cf. Holmes, 'Houses', 179) this demonstrated 'that many seemingly obscure features of the Tapestry are fairly plain statements of fact'. Brown, *English Castles*, 34, agreed and noted the similarity between a 'timber' tower depicted on an s. xi capital from Westminster Hall (now in the Jewel Tower, Westminster) and the fortification of Dinan in the BT. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215, correctly, suggested that the Westminster capital compares better with the Tapestry's depiction of Dol than that of Dinan.

<sup>204</sup> Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 87-8; Brown, 'Castles of the Conquest', 67.

Yorkshire, Hallaton in Leicestershire and York.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, even if the Tapestry does not mimic the form of the early motte at Hastings (whether it be Pevensey or the site Barton and Barker excavated) it seems to embody a contemporary type.

Other aspects of Hastings Castle are also of interest. The Tapestry shows workmen digging a presumed ditch and throwing the spoil upwards to form a mound whose layering is revealed together with a surface capping. Higham and Barker thought that here the Tapestry shows ‘at least two constructional stages...telescoped together’, which they argued could not have been the case in real-life ‘since the surface [of the motte] could hardly have been consolidated while the layers were being deposited’.<sup>207</sup> This said the basic thrust of what is shown is probably correct.

Likewise, the building at Dinan is shown supported on timber pillars or stilts.<sup>208</sup> This may have been an actual feature of contemporary defensive structures, perhaps designed to increase the space available to the defenders.<sup>209</sup> Higham and Barker noted that the ‘interpretation of the excavated plan of the motte-top at Abinger

---

<sup>205</sup> Barker and Barton, ‘Hastings Castle’, 88.

<sup>206</sup> Carisbrook Castle was built using alternate layers of large and small chalk rubble. Similarly, Castle Hill at Hallaton was built of layers of peat and hazel branches, as well as of clay and stone boulders (Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 88). Kenyon, *Medieval Fortifications*, 11, noted several other good examples, including Baile Hill, York, which was composed ‘of several horizontal layers of clayey soil’, Castle Hill, Bakewell, Derbyshire and the castle at Great Driffield, Yorkshire ‘where alternate deposits of gravel, clay and chalk were laid down over the initial turf stack’. Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 154, also note examples of Okehampton, Devon, where the upper part of one end of the motte was laid in horizontal layers in preparation for the building to be erected. At Norwich excavation of an extension of the motte revealed a pattern of loam and chalk deposits on top of the old ground surface. Excavation has also revealed consolidating layers on motte surfaces at Oxford and Urr where there were cappings of clay, presumably to help prevent erosion of new or newly-enlarged mottes. See also Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215.

<sup>207</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 154.

<sup>208</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215, argued likewise for Dol.

<sup>209</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 152 also noted that ‘this argument has been of widespread influence and is commonly used in conjunction with the late eleventh-century capital from Westminster (discussed below) which depicts a raised tower.

rested heavily upon these considerations'.<sup>210</sup> Nonetheless they could not imagine that the building depicted in the Tapestry could have been stilted, instead suggesting that the designer (wishing to show as much as possible of the site) 'raised up in the air a building which in reality was on the ground'.<sup>211</sup> This case demonstrates the difficulties paralleling the Tapestry's architectural depictions with the archaeological evidence.

The Tapestry's rendition of Dol 'is somewhat enigmatic' – 'its motte, ditches, counterscarps and bridge with steps and gate are clear enough'.<sup>212</sup> Further, the building's surface is shown constructed of small squares, which has prompted some to suggest these are 'protective plates, of hide or metal' for which there is documentary evidence.<sup>213</sup> Even so, Higham and Barker considered the structure on top of the motte to be 'very curious' since it appears to be triangular in plan, 'which hardly seems possible'.<sup>214</sup> Likewise they thought that Bayeux was 'a very strange' looking building and contemplated what type of defensive structure would have had a domed roof.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, whilst individual aspects of the Tapestry's defensive structures can be paralleled with the current knowledge of eleventh century types,<sup>216</sup> it seems apparent that some elements are stylised (perhaps even invented) for artistic effect.

Forts on defensive mounds rarely occur in contemporary illumination: the depiction of a walled town on an eminence in the Harley 603 Psalter is the closest one

---

<sup>210</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 152.

<sup>211</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 152-3.

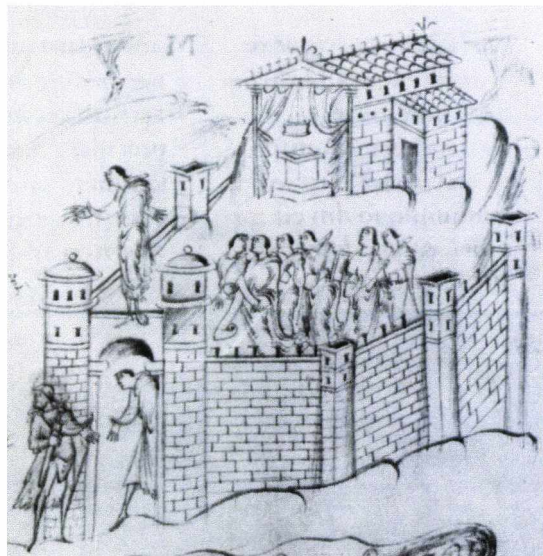
<sup>212</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 151.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 151-2.

<sup>215</sup> Higham and Barker, *Timber Castles*, 153. Gibbs-Smith, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 24, agreed noting that 'this elegant structure only symbolizes the building, and obviously bears no resemblance to the actual castle at Bayeux'. See also discussion (above) of the dome depicted on Westminster Abbey in the BT.

gets (Ill.22 - below).<sup>217</sup> Whilst, it is impossible to know if other (now lost) examples once existed, it would be surprising if they did, given that such fortifications seem to be a phenomenon of the post-Conquest period.



**Illustration 22**

**A walled town in the Harley 603 Psalter.**

An interesting feature that is unique to the Tapestry's fortified mounds of Normandy and Brittany is the presence of bridges leading to them from the left.<sup>218</sup> Bridges are not illustrated elsewhere in the Tapestry, even where buildings are depicted upon a mound, such as at Mont-Saint-Michel and Hastings. There is archaeological evidence to suggest that such bridges existed. For example Baile Hill, York, had steps cut into the mound, and these were probably faced with wood, much like the bridge serving

---

<sup>216</sup> Indeed Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 214, thought 'that the representations of fortresses in the Tapestry can be used by the historian of military engineering as evidence for the general structure and appearance of mottes in the late eleventh century'.

<sup>217</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.13v. This is just a town directly copied from the Utrecht Psalter.

<sup>218</sup> At Dol the steps are viewed sideways, and are shown running along the top of the bridge. The bridge itself is supported by posts at both ground level and further up the hill. At Rennes the bridge is three-dimensional. The steps look haphazard as they run between the sides of the bridge. Interestingly enough the bridge is not depicted with enough depth to accommodate the steps that run up it - this bridge has no supporting posts. The bridge leading up to Dinan is rather like a ladder with rungs between two lengths of wood - again no supports are shown. The bridge, which makes its way to Bayeux is similar to the bridge that serves Dol. Here the steps appear like tread on a tyre, and are

Rennes in the Tapestry.<sup>219</sup> Also, ‘Flying bridges’ – like those in the Tapestry – perhaps existed at Hen Domen, Montgomery.<sup>220</sup> Likewise, there is a twelfth-century description of the Merchan (Merckem) Castle, in Flanders, which indicates that the entrance to the fortress could only be made by bridge across a ditch.<sup>221</sup> Further, such bridges are also found in medieval art, where good parallels can be drawn between Dol in the Tapestry and the Westminster Hall capital (Ill.23 - below).<sup>222</sup> Hence there is good archaeological and art historical evidence for the types of bridges shown in the Tapestry.



**Illustration 23**

**Similarities in the depiction of Dol in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and a castle shown on a sculptured capital from Westminster Hall, London (right).**

viewed from the side. The main bulk of the bridge seems solid and straight, but again as it is shown without supporting posts.

<sup>219</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 215. Addyman and Priestley, ‘Baile Hill’, 124, on the other hand, suggested that ‘the most likely interpretation’ of the discoveries at Baile Hill was ‘that the arrangement represents a horizontal bridge over the ditch and steps up the mound itself’ which they believed was ‘very different from the flying bridges of the Bayeux Tapestry’, but consistent with the archaeology of other early medieval bridges.

<sup>220</sup> The earliest bridge at Hen Domen (bridge t) may have been accessed from the first floor of the castle, but it is impossible to certain on the available archaeological evidence (Higham and Barker, *Hen Domen* (1982), 56-7; Higham and Barker, *Hen Domen* (2000), 49, 69-70, 80).

<sup>221</sup> Brown, ‘Architecture’, 223, believed the ‘flying bridges’ in the BT ‘tally exactly’ with this literary description (Morlet, *l’architecture*, 314).

One aspect of several of the fortified mounds depicted in the Tapestry, which surely points to the importance of 'aesthetic considerations' in their design, is the presence of symmetrically-placed beasts or characters beneath them.<sup>223</sup> Whilst such symmetrical pairings of animals are common in the Tapestry's borders (something which we will examine in due course), instances in the main frieze are rare. Although these confronting characters beneath the towns might have a symbolic purpose, evocative of the struggle above, it seems probable that they are primarily decorative motifs, designed to fill the void of space in front of each mound.<sup>224</sup>

### *Domestic Dwellings*

The Tapestry's domestic dwellings all share the same basic rectangular form, central doorway and trapezoid pitched roof.<sup>225</sup> Building 32 is distinct, being a two-storey structure with pillars at ground level, which support the rectangular structure above. Whilst none of these buildings is identified in the inscriptions, it is still possible to compare them with the archaeological evidence in general terms.

The rectangular ground plan of the Tapestry's houses can be paralleled with tenth- and eleventh-century buildings at Goltho in Lincolnshire and elsewhere (Ill.24 - below).<sup>226</sup> The fashion whereby there is a doorway on the longest side of the building (normally one on either side) is predominately a rural phenomenon. Urban buildings,

---

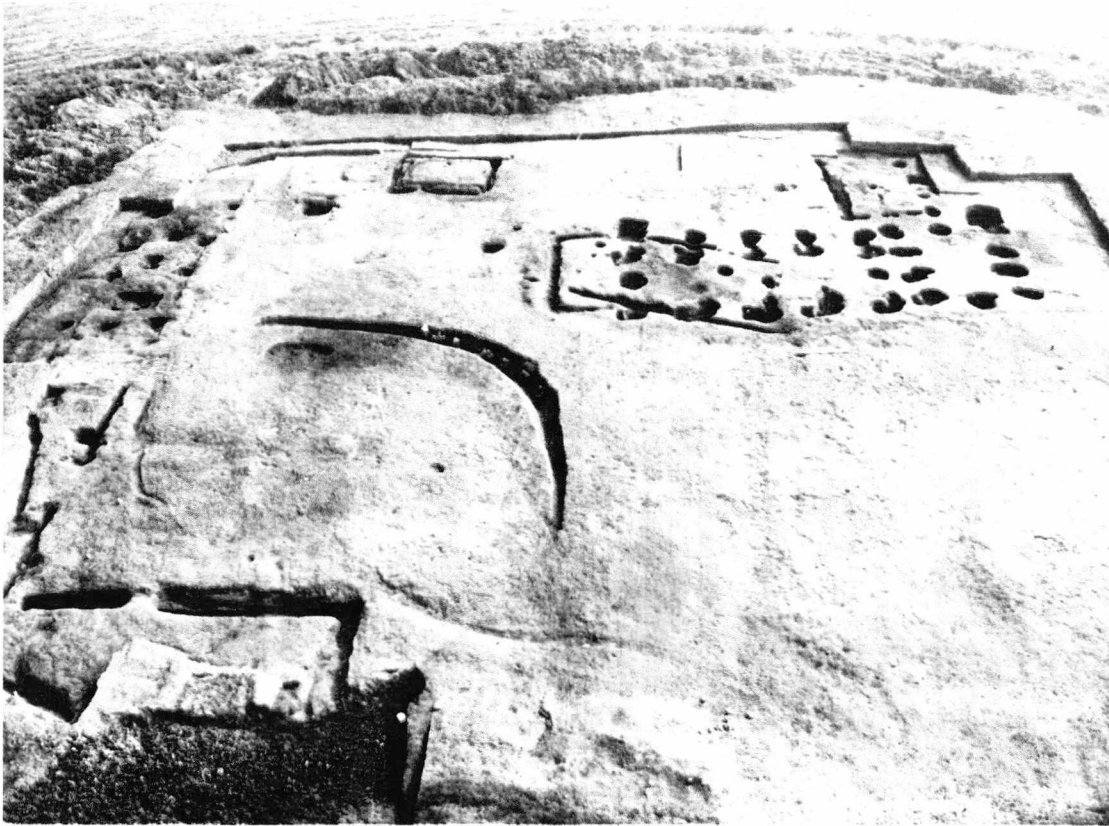
<sup>222</sup> The few examples in manuscript illumination include BodL, Junius 11, p.84, which is a relatively poor parallel, and BL, Stowe 944, f.7, which is a better one. Romanesque examples were not identified in the manuscripts studied.

<sup>223</sup> In the case of Dol, two cocks; Rennes, two pigs; Dinan, two men; and Bayeux, two birds.

<sup>224</sup> Suggestions that these beasts are heraldic are surely wrong (e.g. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 41), as heraldry, proper, is predominately a later phenomenon.

<sup>225</sup> Buildings 25, 26, 27 and 32. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 217, understood the Tapestry's domestic buildings to be large houses portrayed at a distance, rather than humble dwellings.

such as those excavated in London, are often found with their gable ends fronting on to the streets,<sup>227</sup> and this might be relevant to what we see in the Tapestry.



**Illustration 24**

**Post-holes of a rectangular building excavated at Goltho, Lincolnshire.**

Although the Tapestry does not clearly indicate the materials used to construct domestic buildings, the walls of Buildings 26 and 27 seem to be constructed from horizontal wooden planks. The evidence from excavation in York shows that by the first half of the tenth century post-and-wattle seems to have been the standard method of construction for domestic housing.<sup>228</sup> Wattlework was inappropriate for ‘Sunken Featured Buildings’, as it would have collapsed under the pressure of the surrounding

---

<sup>226</sup> Beresford, ‘Goltho manor’, 18-33. Other examples include earlier structures at Chalton, Cowdery Downs, West Stow (Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 14-21), Coppergate and Lincoln (Richards, *Viking Age England*, 58).

<sup>227</sup> E.g., Bow Lane, Botolph Lane and Milk Street (Richards, *Viking Age England*, 58). This may have also been the case at Coppergate (Hall, *Viking Age York*, 56).



earth and wall cladding. Post-and-plank construction was, therefore preferred.<sup>229</sup>

Buildings 26 and 27 in the Tapestry might have been intended to show this technique.<sup>230</sup>



**Illustration 25**

**The scaled roofing fabric of a building in Pierpont Morgan Library M 869.**

In contrast the walls of Building 25 are constructed of square-blocks, perhaps suggesting masonry.<sup>231</sup> The fact that this building also has a ‘scale’ tile roof may also imply a stone structure below - to support the weight of the roof. However, scaled roofing could also represent shingles, which may have been commonplace at the time

---

<sup>228</sup> Richards, *Viking Age England*, 63; Hall, *Viking Age York*, 55-7, 59-66.

<sup>229</sup> Richards, *Viking Age England*, 63. Welch, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17, noted similar construction at Chalton, where lines of small post-holes provided for timber uprights, sometimes offset in a zig-zag pattern, and these may have had adjoining horizontal planking. At Cowdery Down the evidence pointed to evenly-spaced vertical planks between which the gaps were ‘filled with panels of interwoven branches or wattles daubed with clay to make it weatherproof (*ibid.*, 19). Excavation at West Stow suggests that buildings had vertical planking. A similar method of construction can be identified for the nave of Greenstead church in Essex and at Goltho in Lincolnshire (Beresford, ‘Goltho manor’, 18).

<sup>230</sup> Brown, ‘Architecture’, 225.

the Tapestry was produced.<sup>232</sup> Scaled roofing is also a common feature in early medieval art, and there are numerous Anglo-Saxon examples (Ill.25 - above).<sup>233</sup> This is not to say the designer would, or could, not draw this element from life, but given that scale or square tiled roofs were an established artistic convention – however representational – we might expect an artist turning to the visual sources he knew best. Also it seems likely that most domestic dwellings, such as those at West Stow (Ill. 26 – below) and Coppergate, actually had thatched roofs: the diagonal pattered roof of Building 26 may be indicative of this.<sup>234</sup>



**Illustration 26**

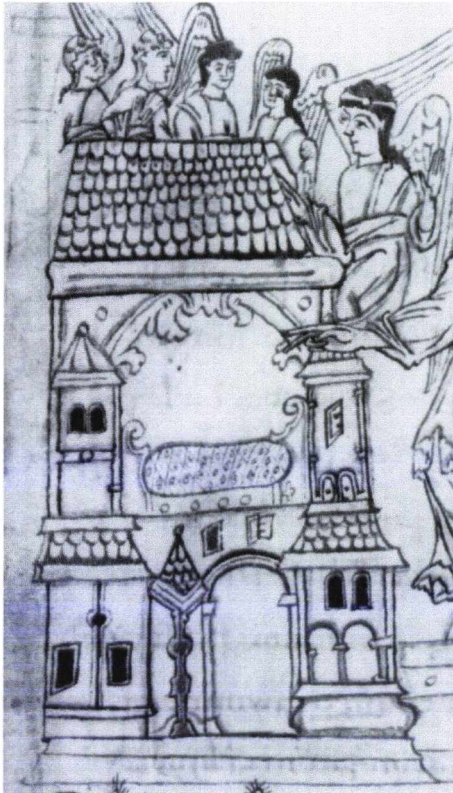
**A reconstruction of an Anglo-Saxon house at West Stow, Suffolk.**

---

<sup>231</sup> Bertrand, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 272.

<sup>232</sup> Carver, 'Contemporary Artefacts', 121-5, believed that some of the roofing types found in the BT, and late Anglo-Saxon illuminations, are oak shingles, which he argues were 'a notable feature of the English landscape'. He also believes (p.125) that the Tapestry designer has taken care 'to distinguish between shingle roofs (composed of rounded tiles) and the lead and stone, slate or tile used on the tower and nave of Westminster Abbey'. Shingle roofs have been found at excavations at Durham and Winchester (Beresford, 'Goltho manor', 25). A single – rectangular - oak roof shingle was recovered at Hen Domen (Higham and Barker, *Hen Domen* (2000), 112. Likewise there was evidence for the use of wooden singles on the s.xii roof of the Great Hall of the Bishop's Palace, Hereford (Raleigh Radford, Jope and Tonkin, 'Great Hall', 84).

<sup>233</sup> E.g. PML, M 869, f.83v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.32; BL, Royal 15 A. xvi, f.84. Romanesque and continental examples are also numerous (see appendix).



**Illustration 27**

**A two-storey building in Junius 11 (left)  
and similar structure in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

The materials used in Building 32 are difficult to identify.<sup>235</sup> It appears that the house has secondary flooring: the lower floor consists of long pillars, supporting a ceiling and the structure above. Early Medieval examples of two-storey domestic houses are known: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 978 records ‘the leading councillors of England fell down from an upper storey at Calne’.<sup>236</sup> However, the Tapestry’s two-storey houses are also paralleled in art. These include buildings illustrated in the Junius 11 manuscript, which show a multiple-tiered, rectangular building with a

<sup>234</sup> Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 272; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 217.

<sup>235</sup> Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 70, thought that since the building was burning it was probably constructed of wood.

<sup>236</sup> ‘The leading councillors of England fell down from an upper storey [*of anre up floran*] at Calne, all except the holy archbishop of Dunstan, who alone remained standing on a beam (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (E), ed. Garmonsway, 123).

trapezoid pitched roof, supported on pillars (Ill.27 - above).<sup>237</sup> Supposing the Tapestry designer worked from Canterbury illuminations, it is quite possible that this manuscript was available to him.

### *High-status domestic buildings*

Of the all the Tapestry architecture its high-status domestic buildings are the most overtly schematic and have been described as ‘fantasy architecture’.<sup>238</sup> Unfortunately, there is no extant physical evidence for the eleventh-century high-status domestic buildings in question to test the matter further.<sup>239</sup> Whilst the designer makes good use of an interesting repertoire of basic architectural forms, such as towers, arches, pillars, domed and pitched roofs, it is apparent that none of these details is particular to the Tapestry’s high-status domestic buildings. Instead the emphasis, in most instances, is upon the human characters who gesticulate below; the architectural elements are then designed to fit around them.<sup>240</sup>

Further, the Tapestry’s high-status domestic buildings are not depicted in a consistent manner, which demonstrates their schematic nature. For example, the royal high-status domestic building at Westminster seems to appear twice (Building 1 and 18), but the buildings themselves are quite distinct.<sup>241</sup> Likewise, the three buildings

---

<sup>237</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.3, p.51. Two-storey structures are found in some Romanesque illuminations including Cambridge, Pembroke College, 120, f.6v; Oxford, University College, 165, p.45; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 619r (Continental examples are cited in the appendix).

<sup>238</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 27. However, Lampl, ‘Architectural Representation’, 9, 11 and 13, considered that such representations were delineated renditions, opened out so that the edifice seems spit open along its longitudinal axis, with each side folded out sideways.

<sup>239</sup> Harold’s high-status domestic building at Bosham (Building 3) has been favourably compared with the ‘Maison de dîmes’ in Provins, ‘where the entrance stair to the first floor is in the same position’ (Schwartz, ‘Buildings’, 47).

<sup>240</sup> Lampl, ‘Architectural Representation’, 9, believed that ‘to the medieval artist the architectural shell of the actual edifice is little more than a frame and a setting for the illustration of the narrative’.

that we take to be William's high-status domestic building at Rouen (Buildings 6, 8 and 23) seem to have little in common with each other. It has been suggested that the very striking differences between the representations of the halls at Westminster (Buildings 1 and 18) and that of Rouen (Building 8) – of which the latter has a frieze of high-level arcading – may be seen as the designer's attempt to show a distinctively Norman type of building.<sup>242</sup> Indeed, this arcading can be paralleled with extant Anglo-Norman remains at Westminster and Chepstow.<sup>243</sup> However, similar arcading also occurs on (pre-Conquest) English buildings in the Tapestry, such as at Bosham (Building 3),<sup>244</sup> and on extant Anglo-Saxon structures, for example St Laurence, Bradford upon Avon. Only in the case of Guy's high-status domestic building at Beaurain (Buildings 4 and 5) do we see a similar basic form used twice for what we can assume to be the same structure. As far as the narrative is concerned such idiosyncrasies are irrelevant, as is the fact that many of these buildings seem to be made of stone and are commonly depicted with classical features. In brief, rather than replicate actual domestic buildings it seems that the designer has instead invented structures from a repertoire of architecture elements typical of contemporary manuscript art.

The point may be demonstrated by comparing the Tapestry's architecture with the Junius 11 manuscript of the late tenth century (which – as we have seen - was

---

<sup>241</sup> Mann, 'Architectural Conventions', 60, also considered Buildings 21 and 22 to be the high-status domestic building at Westminster, even though Harold's coronation took place in Westminster Abbey. (Walker, *Harold*, 136). Building 20 could well represent (part of) Edward's high-status domestic building at Westminster.

<sup>242</sup> John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004).

<sup>243</sup> Taylor, 'Belrem', 12-3.

<sup>244</sup> John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004) suggested that the Tapestry's depiction of the building at Bosham could show a timber forerunner of the kind of s.xii stone chamber-block which had a first-floor chamber approached by an external stair, such as a Boothby Pagnell. Whilst this is entirely

perhaps produced in Canterbury).<sup>245</sup> A significant number of architectural motifs are common to both works, including thin roofs supported by columns,<sup>246</sup> and towers.<sup>247</sup> The thin roofs themselves can also be paralleled satisfactorily: for example, the curved arch of Buildings 1 and 23 in the Tapestry have the same basic form and similar central embellishment as structures in Junius 11.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, the mid-level pitched roofs, domed and pointed roofs, scaled roofing, arched windows and doors, and arcading found in the Tapestry are abundant in Junius 11.<sup>249</sup> The same point could be made with reference to other extensively illustrated Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, such as the Harley 603 Psalter.<sup>250</sup> This book, whose illustrations were copied from a

---

possible, it seems more likely that a designer familiar with manuscript art would borrow from art – which we can be certain he knew – rather than attempt to draw from life.

<sup>245</sup> BodL, Junius 11. Comparisons could also be made with BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, which shares ‘a common formal vocabulary for the representation of buildings’ (Mann, ‘Architectural Conventions’, 60).

<sup>246</sup> E.g. compare Buildings 3, 4, 5, 8, 18, 20, 22 and 23 with BodL, Junius 11, p.9, p.10, p.13, p.41, p.45, p.47, p.54, p.56, p.57, p.58, p.59, p.62, p.63 and p.84. Columns also support open-planned buildings in CCCC, 183, f.1v; BL, Harley 603, f.66v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.32. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>247</sup> Compare Buildings 1, 18, 20, 22 and 23, with BodL, Junius 11, p.3 p.17, p.51, p.59. Towers also support open planned buildings in BL, Add. 49598, f.118v; PML, M 869, f.83v; Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 12, f.93v. Romanesque and continental examples are also known (cited in the appendix).

<sup>248</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p51, p54 and p56.

<sup>249</sup> Mid-level pitched scaled roofs: compare Buildings 1, 18, 20, 22 and 23 with BodL, Junius 11, p.3, p.51, p.59. Domed roofs: compare Buildings 1, 5, 18, 22 and 23 with Junius 11, p.11, p.16, p.17. Pointed roofs, compare Buildings 1, 18, 20, 22 and 23 with Junius 11, p.3, p.10, p.17, p.51, p.56, p.57, p.59, p.63. Scaled tiles: compare Buildings 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 18, 20, 22 and 23 with Junius 11, p.3, p.10, p.11, p.17, p.51, p.59, p.63. Arched windows and doors: compare Buildings 1, 18, 20, 22 and 23 with Junius 11, p.3, p.11, p.17, p.45, p.47, p.51, p.56, p.57, p.59, p.63. Arcading: compare Buildings 3, 5, and 8 with Junius 11, p.3, p.47, p.54, p.62, p.63. Mid-level pitched scaled roofs are also common in contemporary illuminations, including CCCC, 183, f.1v; BL, Harley 603, f.13v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.32. Examples are also found in Romanesque and continental illuminations (cited in the appendix). See footnote 174 for domed roofs. Likewise, pointed roofs are also common in contemporary illuminations, such as BL, Harley 76, f.10; CUL, Ff. I. 23, f.4v; CCCC, 389, f.1v. Romanesque and continental examples are also common (see appendix). See footnote 209 for scaled roof tiles, 163 for arched windows and doors, 165 for arcading.

<sup>250</sup> BL, Harley 603. This said it is perhaps significant that many architectural depictions closest to those in the Tapestry were probably produced in Canterbury (Mann, ‘Architectural Conventions’, 61, 63).

remarkably archaising Carolingian model, reminds us that the visual language in question derives ultimately from late antique and antique exemplars.

## Conclusion

The buildings in the Bayeux Tapestry, like those in tenth- and eleventh-century manuscript illumination, are in the most part fairly schematic, their architectural form and constructional elements greatly simplified.<sup>251</sup> This adds to the difficulty of differentiating between those attributes which may reflect 'real life' and those which are either imaginative or traditional iconographic motifs.<sup>252</sup> Nevertheless, when parts of a building named in the Tapestry still survive a more rigorous investigation is conceivable. With the possible exception of Westminster Abbey the Tapestry designer does not seem to have been concerned to represent actual contemporary buildings. Even in the case of Westminster, architectural elements - in particular domed roofs - are shown which were not part of the fabric. In general, the designer seems to have created many of his buildings from a varied repertoire of basic architectural forms found in the visual arts.<sup>253</sup> These forms, transmitted from classical times and preserved in art, cannot be thought to be typical of most contemporary buildings.

If his basic architectural vocabulary was thus an inherited pictorial language, he nevertheless responded to certain aspects of the world around him. Mottes -

---

<sup>251</sup> Baylé, 'Architecture et enluminure', 53.

<sup>252</sup> As Schwartz, 'Buildings', 36, noted 'some of the buildings include labels that may embody an identifiable link between illustration and reality' and these might remain unproven, whilst 'others may be viewed as ideograms, where realistic details are combined to form something unrealistic or idealistic'.

<sup>253</sup> Few specific exemplars have been successfully identified. However, Mann, 'Architectural Conventions', 61, believed Building 1 to be comprised of elements found in BodL, Junius 11; its two-storied façade, she compares with the structure on p.3, and the arched roof, with that on p.51 - though these are by no means faithful renditions. Other structures in the Tapestry may have comprised random architectural elements borrowed from art.

including some structural elements upon them - and the Romanesque architectural elements are notable cases in point. But even when responding to the 'real world' he could still make mistakes: thus in the case of motted fortifications he recreates Breton and Norman defensive structures on the assumption that they would match the new 'castles' being built in England.<sup>254</sup> If it is the contemporary elements that are the most interesting aspects of the architecture in the Tapestry, they must still, evidently, be approached with circumspection.

---

<sup>254</sup> That is to say, whilst elements of the Tapestry's Breton and Norman castles reflect the archaeology of xi<sup>2</sup> types, it seems that the designer did not attempt to recreate the form of specific castles.



## ARMS AND ARMOUR

Arms and armour are widespread in the Bayeux Tapestry, which is hardly surprising given that warfare is fundamental to the narrative and is indicative of a time when Norman military capabilities were integral to the success and stability of their regime in England.<sup>255</sup> It would therefore seem astonishing (to the twenty-first century mind at least) if the Tapestry designer did not attempt to recreate accurately the arms and armour worn and used by contemporary fighting men. Although previous commentators have generally agreed that this was the case,<sup>256</sup> the archaeological evidence is less conclusive.

### Archaeological Evidence

In England, like continental Europe, archaeological survival for early medieval arms and armour is poor: paradoxically, less military material culture remains from the tenth and eleventh centuries than from earlier periods. Such poor survival (in England) is primarily explained by changes in burial practice during the seventh and early eighth centuries.<sup>257</sup> Before this date artefacts were regularly interred with the dead or even deposited in rivers and streams as votive offerings to pagan gods - though, some items, particularly swords and helmets, which were highly prized heirlooms with a high monetary value, were less commonly deposited thus.

---

<sup>255</sup> Whilst Edgar Ætheling and much of the surviving elite soon submitted to the Norman invaders of England, resistance continued in parts of the country and at times was almost endemic. In the most part this was opportunist with little chance of success, but William must have been concerned that external aggressors could exploit internal strife (Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 75).

<sup>256</sup> Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 57, suggested that 'confidence in the accuracy of the military scenes' is enhanced by comparing it with the 'obvious naturalness of other scenes'. Similarly, Brooks, 'Arms, Status and Warfare', 85, suggested that since the Tapestry 'has generally been regarded as the principal source of information about the way men armed during the eleventh century...we should therefore be disposed to trust it as a source for the English army at least'. Both arguments are, of course, splendidly circular.

<sup>257</sup> Geake, 'Burial Practice', 85.



**Illustration 28**

**The Washingborough helmet.**

Few Anglo-Saxon helmets survive; most date from the seventh or eighth century, although the Washingborough helmet (Ill.28 - above) may be later.<sup>258</sup> Likewise, archaeological remains of mailed hauberks are rare, and what we have is normally fragmentary: the best example from England is the heavily corroded mail shirt found at Sutton Hoo. Numerous fragments of mail have been recovered from Scandinavia, including complete examples found at Visby in Sweden; however, these date from the fourteenth century.<sup>259</sup> Although evidence for round-shields is plentiful, especially during the migration period, furnished burials become less common from the eighth century onwards, and hence so do the number of shields recovered archaeologically.<sup>260</sup> In most cases only the shield boss and grip survive, as most other parts are organic. Kite-shields, by contrast, have never been found in England. Given that the sword was the weapon *par excellence*, and a quality weapon would have been expensive to produce, it is surprising that they should be better represented in the late

---

<sup>258</sup> 1) Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, before 625; 2) Benty Grange, Derbyshire, s. vii<sup>med</sup>; 3) Pioneer, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, s. vii<sup>med</sup>; 4) Coppergate, York, s. viii<sup>med-ex</sup>; 5) Washingborough, Lincolnshire, perhaps s. xi. Fragments of other possible helmets have been recovered at Rempstone, Caneby and Asthall (Tweddle, *Anglian Helmet*, 1086).

<sup>259</sup> O'Conner, 'Scandinavian Mail', 1183-7. The Visby mail includes 185 coifs, twelve or thirteen shirts and possibly two gauntlets (Tweddle, *Anglian Helmet*, 1078-9).

<sup>260</sup> Whilst Stephenson, *Shield*, 13, observed that shield fittings have been found in about 45% of Anglo-Saxon weapon burials, no complete shields survive.

Anglo-Saxon period than many other weapons.<sup>261</sup> Helpfully, the form of the hilt (particularly the pommel) normally gives a good indication of age and geographic location.<sup>262</sup> Spearheads are recovered throughout the early medieval period, though examples are more plentiful prior to the eighth century, thanks to inhumation practice.<sup>263</sup> Axes, on the other hand, seem to become popular in warfare from the ninth century; ninth-, tenth- and eleventh-century examples have been recovered.<sup>264</sup> The archaeological survival of the bow in the early medieval period is poor, with no known examples in England – although arrowheads are relatively commonly associated with Early to Middle Saxon inhumation burials.<sup>265</sup> Broadly similar survival patterns apply to most of Western Europe, apart from Scandinavia - where furnished inhumation continued beyond the tenth century.<sup>266</sup> *Faute de mieux*, this Scandinavian evidence proves most useful.

## **Arms and Armour in the Eleventh Century**

### *Mail*

Mail was expensive to produce, and affordable only by the elite. Early medieval warriors probably wore short-sleeved mail ‘long-shirts’, which would have protected

---

<sup>261</sup> If, as Pollington, *English Warrior*, 106, suggests, there was a return to ritual deposition in the s. ix, the dearth in evidence for other weapons, such as spears, is less easy to explain.

<sup>262</sup> Bone, ‘Anglo-Saxon Swords’, 63.

<sup>263</sup> Swanton, *Spearheads*, 14, noted that the richest cemeteries belong to the s. vii.

<sup>264</sup> Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 66; Gravett, *Hastings*, 36.

<sup>265</sup> Whilst no extant Anglo-Saxon bows have been recovered, decomposed traces of wood bow-staves were identified at Bifrons, Kent and Chessell Down, Isle of Wight (Stephenson, *Shield*, 64). Pollington, *English Warrior*, 152, identified no rigid typological distinction between the smaller types of spearheads, classified by Swanton, and normal arrowheads. However, it is possible that some arrows may have had organic tips hardened in fire.

<sup>266</sup> Graham-Campbell, *Viking World*, 174-7.

the chest, lower abdomen and upper legs.<sup>267</sup> It is unlikely that lower limbs could have been adequately protected, as added weight would have reduced mobility.<sup>268</sup>

### *Helmets*

Though varying in points of detail, all helmets were either constructed of individual metal plates riveted together or hammered out of a single piece of iron. Until about 1000 helmets in North-West Europe were crested and bowl-shaped, often fitted with cheek pieces and a visor.<sup>269</sup> During the tenth and eleventh centuries such types gave way to a conical-shaped variety, which was often fitted with a nasal guard.<sup>270</sup>

### *Swords*

Early medieval swords had a broad two-edged iron blade, which was typically between 65cm and 80cm long and 5cm and 6.5cm wide. Blades were either forge-

---

<sup>267</sup> A shirt from an undated Viking burial in Ringerike, Norway, was reconstructed with short-sleeves (O'Conner, 'Scandinavian Mail', 1185). During the s. xi<sup>1</sup> longer mail coats became increasingly popular. Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 8-9, believed the catalyst was probably the increasing role of the horse in early medieval warfare.

<sup>268</sup> The bulk of the weight of a mail shirt was borne on the shoulders and could be transferred to the hips by wearing a waist belt. Even so, armour could not mitigate the effects of well placed blows, and hence its advantages were dependent on the nature of a particular battle (Underwood, *Weapons and Warfare*, 93-4).

<sup>269</sup> All known Anglo-Saxon helmets are crested, a type otherwise only found in Scandinavia and the Ukraine. Other types of European helmets are either classified as *Spangenhelms* or *Lamellenhelms*. *Spangenhelms* are 'characterised by their high, pointed shape, and are usually constructed from either four or six copper-alloy T-shaped mounts; the cross bars of the mounts form a brow band and hold together a series of ovoid iron plates which form the cap'. *Spangenhelms* had their roots in Persia and Byzantium, and were, later, produced by Ostrogothic workshops for the Germanic world, and were used by the Goths, Gepids, Burgundians, Alemanni, Franks, Thuringians and Lombards. These contrast with the *Lamellenhelms*, which have 'a cap of conical shape composed of registers of overlapping scales and brow plate'. Both *Spangenhelms* and *Lamellenhelms* often have cheek pieces and a chain mail curtain, protecting the neck. These originate in south-eastern Europe and have also been found in Italy. Other typologically similar helmets have been found further north at Bremen, Trivières, Cologne and Mainz-Bretzebheim (Tweddle, *Anglian Helmet*, 1083-7).

<sup>270</sup> Such helmets are rare, and Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 45, thought that they may have only been owned by the elite. The best surviving examples are the Olmütz (Moravia) helmet in the Hofjagd und Rüstammer, Vienna, the Washington helmet, an unpublished example found in the River Witham, Lincolnshire - now in the City and County Museum, Lincoln and the segmented helmet from Northern France (or the River Thames) in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

welded or pattern-welded, had a fuller and often tapered towards the point.<sup>271</sup> Swords normally had a short guard, between 7cm and 9cm in length,<sup>272</sup> a grip made of wood, horn or bone, and a pommel, which acted to counterbalance the weight of the blade. Pommel designs varied considerably, with 'tea-cosy' and 'brazil nut' varieties being favoured during the eleventh century.<sup>273</sup> Anglo-Saxon warriors, like other Germanic peoples, also carried a single edged knife, known as a *seax*, although it is unlikely that this weapon was in much use during the eleventh-century.<sup>274</sup>

### *Spears*

The most popular early medieval weapon was the spear.<sup>275</sup> Spear shafts were made of wood, and may have been up to 280cm long. Forged from iron, spearheads were between 10cm and 116cm in length, and show great variety – the most popular forms seem to be angular or leaf shapes.<sup>276</sup> Hunting spears seem to have differed, since they were occasionally fitted with small flanges or wings.<sup>277</sup>

---

<sup>271</sup> By about 900 improvements in the forging of steel, combining hard steel and malleable iron, helped produce hard but flexible blades (Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 20-1). Henceforth pattern-welding, which was expensive, became less desirable (Pollington, *English Warrior*, 148).

<sup>272</sup> During the s. ix some crossguards curve away from the hand.

<sup>273</sup> Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 14 (See also Musset, *Tapissérie de Bayeux*, 49, who notes that this type was popular throughout Western Europe).

<sup>274</sup> The *seax* – a bladed weapon between 8cm and 76cm - had a distinctive shape, whereby the back of the blade is angled outwards from the tang and then sharply in towards the point. The weapon also had a simple hilt, which lacked a guard and pommel (Pollington, *English Warrior*, 147).

<sup>275</sup> It was certainly the most common of Anglo-Saxon grave goods.

<sup>276</sup> Swanton, *Spearheads*, types B2 to L (excluding E4). Other forms were barbed (type A) or primarily long narrow points (types B1 and E4).

<sup>277</sup> Winged spearheads could help restrain a kill until despatched (Pollington, *English Warrior*, 118). See also Fuglesang, *Ringerike Style*, 136-40. Brooks, 'Weapons and Armour', 211, suggested that winged-spears might also be used in combat.

## Axes

The hand-axe was a readily available tool, and was probably used by fighting-men throughout the early medieval period as both a projectile and a hacking weapon. Although the hand-axe had a relatively small cutting edge of only about 10cm, it was mounted on a light wooden haft, and could be swung with ease. Two-handed axes with a large asymmetrical single broad blade were commonly used in warfare in Scandinavia and England from about the late ninth century. Broadaxes had a cutting edge of about 26cm and were mounted on a long wooden haft.

## Bows

It is currently believed that the bow was not much used as a weapon of war by the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>278</sup> However, its ready availability for hunting is likely to have ensured use in battle, and there are a few references to this in pre-Conquest sources.<sup>279</sup> Early medieval bows were long, perhaps between 152cm and 210cm in length, and would have been constructed from yew, ash or elm. Arrows had wooden shafts, flights made of feathers, and iron heads that were often barbed or leaf-shaped. It is possible that the Normans may have also had the crossbow, though there is little evidence for its use before 1066.<sup>280</sup>

---

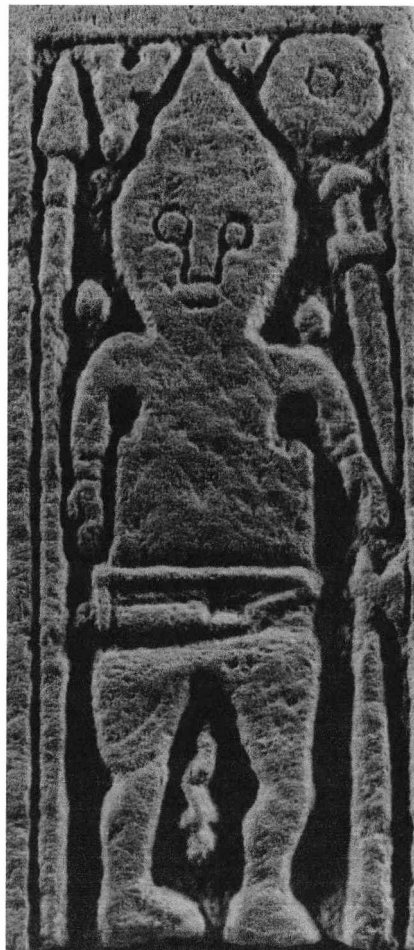
<sup>278</sup> Bradbury, *Medieval Archer*, 17. However, longbows have been found in Scandinavia dating from the late Roman Iron Age and from the Viking Age. A Viking Age long-bow was found at Hedeby (*ibid.*, 75; Graham-Campbell, *Viking Artefacts*, 74, Cat. No. 266).

<sup>279</sup> E.g. *The Battle of Maldon*, 110, trans. Bradley, 522 - bows were busy (bogan wæron bysige); *Judith*, XI. 220b-223a, trans. Bradley, 501 - 'they vigorously let fly from the curved bow showers of darts, arrows, the serpents of battle' (leton forþ fleogan flana scuras, hildenaedran, of hornbogan); the *Exeter Book*, Riddle 23, 1, ed. Mitchell and Robinson, 235 - 'bow' (Agof). Of these *The Battle of Maldon* and *Judith* specify use of the bow in battle. An addition, in a s. xii hand, to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (C), ed. Douglas and Greenaway, 149, for 1066 suggests that bows were used at Stamford Bridge.

<sup>280</sup> William of Poitiers' account of the Battle of Hastings in his *Gesta Guillelmi*, ii.16, ed. Davies and Chibnall, 126-7, seems to refer to the use of crossbowmen - 'he [Harold] placed foot-soldiers in front, armed with arrows and cross-bows' (*pedites in fronte locauit, sagittis armatos et balistis*). Davis and Chibnall, *ibid.*, xxxii, believed that 'the mention of bolts show that they (the Normans) included crossbowmen'. See also Morton and Muntz, *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*, 112-5.

## *Shields*

The primary defensive tool of the early medieval warrior was the shield. Between the fifth and eleventh centuries shields were normally round, comprising a flat board made from wooden panels, a grip (riveted across a central hole) and a round or conical iron boss, designed to protect the warrior's otherwise exposed hand. It is likely that the edge of most shields would have been protected with hide or a metal rim. During the eleventh century, kite-shaped shields were introduced, and these may have had a convex board. Consequently the shield would have been strapped to the forearm and the boss became redundant. Shields were probably brightly painted, perhaps with zoomorphic or geometric motifs.



**Illustration 29**

**The Middleton (2A) warrior.**

## Arms and Armour in Early Medieval Art

Depictions of arms and armour are rare in Insular manuscript art until about the eighth century. The earliest artistic depictions occur on bonework, such as the Franks Casket,<sup>281</sup> and on sculpture, such as those at Middleton and Nunburnholme.<sup>282</sup> The nature of these limit the amount of detail that could be included, and the images are clearly stylised. This said, Middleton 2A (cross shaft), for example, shows a rich array of weaponry, including, axe, conical helmet, seax, spear, sword - with a 'tea-cosy' pommel - and round-shield (Ill.29 - above), which broadly parallels contemporary archaeological finds.<sup>283</sup>

In contrast, the images we see in Carolingian art, though more numerous and superficially more precise, demonstrate a general dependence upon classical, rather than contemporary, models. This is particularly evident in the 'Vivian' Bible of Charles the Bald, where the attendants of King David are shown wearing the armour of late Roman soldiers (Ill.30 - below) - which, of course, also reflects the subject matter.<sup>284</sup> Likewise, the figures of Lothar, in the Gospel book that he sponsored, and Charles the Bald in the Codex Aureus, are based on representations of late antique rulers.<sup>285</sup> Here soldiers wear classical-style helmets and bear swords of a Roman type. This said, some aspects of arms and armour in Carolingian illumination might reflect contemporary reality. In the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura, for example, men carry round-shields which seem to have flat shield-boards, as the shield boss and hand-grip

---

<sup>281</sup> In the British Museum, dated to viii<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>282</sup> Middleton 1A, Middleton 2A, Middleton 5A, s. x (Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture III*, 181-6, Ill. 670-1, 676-7 and 688) and Nunburnholme 1, s. ix/x (*ibid.*, 189-93, Ill. 709).

<sup>283</sup> Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture III*, 182-4.

<sup>284</sup> BNF, lat. 1, f.215v and Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 14000, f.5v (Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, Ill. 140; Mütterich and Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, 106).



shown are typical of this form of shield.<sup>286</sup> This is of particular interest given that that the events depicted are actually Biblical.



**Illustration 30**

**King David and his attendants wearing Roman armour  
in the Vivian Bible of Charles the Bald.**

<sup>285</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 226, f.1v (Mütherich and Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, 85).

<sup>286</sup> Rome, Abbazia di San Paolo fuori le mura, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.30v.

The Ottonians, who looked to Carolingian art for inspiration also (unsurprisingly) depict arms and armour of a classical type. For example, in the Gospel Book of Otto III soldiers are shown wearing Phrygian helmets, and fighting with short – classical style - bows and winged-spears (Ill.31 - below); the latter are also depicted in the Bamberg Apocalypse.<sup>287</sup>



**Illustration 31**

**Soldiers in the Gospel Book of Otto III depicted wearing Phrygian helmets and fighting with classical style bows and spears.**

Yet there are signs that the Ottonians were attempting to introduce some accurate contemporary weapon types into their work. Hence, in the Gospel Book of Otto III, one of the Emperor's men carries a sword with a 'walnut' pommel – a contemporary type – whilst another in the same folio is armed with a winged-spear - typically an antique form.<sup>288</sup> It therefore seems that it was acceptable for Ottonian artists to mix

---

<sup>287</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4453, f.188v and Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, 140, f.60.

<sup>288</sup> Munich, BSB, Clm. 4453, f.24.

and match antique and contemporary forms in their depictions of arms and armour – like some Carolingian artists before them.<sup>289</sup>

This phenomenon is also apparent in late Anglo-Saxon art, where we see both contemporary and ancient types of arms and armour. However, whereas in Carolingian and Ottonian illumination some artefact types are clearly classical, this tends not to be the case in Anglo-Saxon illumination; rather they are broadly of a contemporary type, but preserve antique attributes. For example in the Tiberius Psalter we see both ‘three-lobed’ and ‘tea-cosy’ pommels; whilst the manuscript dates to the third quarter of the eleventh century, the pommel types are typically ninth- and tenth-century forms, respectively.<sup>290</sup> Similarly, in the Old English Hexateuch both ‘three-lobed’ and ‘disc-shaped’ pommels are depicted in the same scene.<sup>291</sup> Here then, even though the subject matter is Biblical, the Anglo-Saxon artist had introduced broadly contemporary weapon types; although certain characteristics, such as pommel types, wings on spears and convex shields - derived from classical models - have been ‘fossilised’ alongside them.

### **Arms and Armour in the Bayeux Tapestry**

The largest concentrations of arms and armour in the Bayeux Tapestry appear during William’s campaign in Brittany and during the Battle of Hastings. However, high-status individuals and the members of their entourages often carry or wear arms and armour in other scenes.<sup>292</sup>

---

<sup>289</sup> E.g. in the Stuttgart Psalter (Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, bibl. 2° 23, f.158v) Goliath wears a mail tunic and segmented helmet of broadly contemporary type, whilst in the same folio the round-shields depicted have a convex form, which is typically classical.

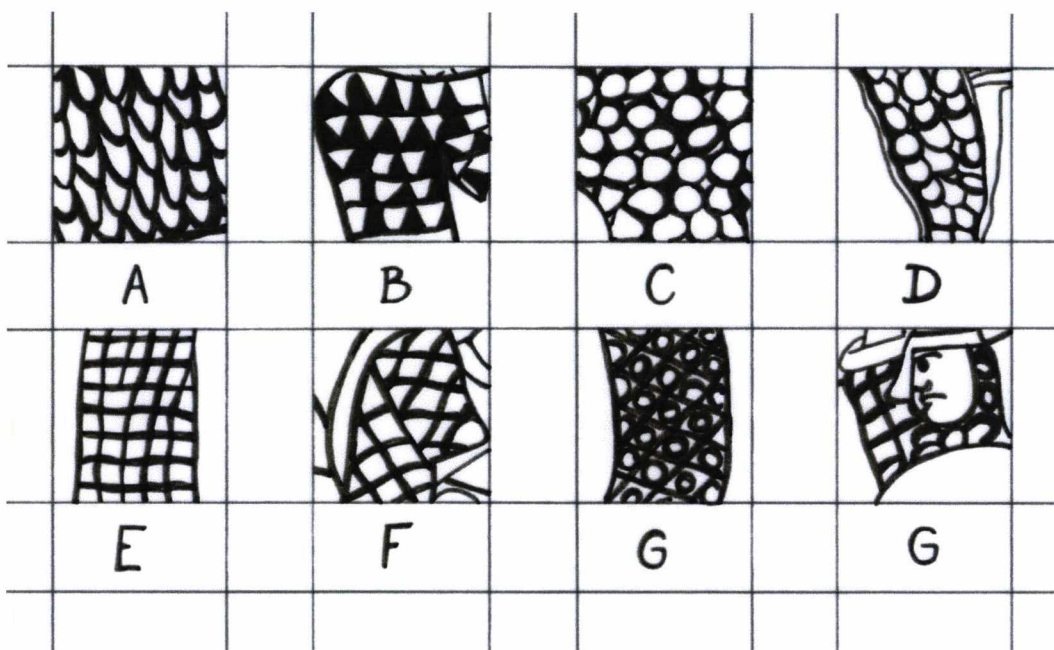
<sup>290</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.10v.

<sup>291</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.24v.

## *Helmets*

All the helmets shown in the Tapestry are conical in shape. Most appear to be segmented - each part usually being a different colour - with a brow-band normally holding them together. All are fitted with nasal guards, which are occasionally ornately decorated. Other embellishments include circles on the crown and supporting bars around the chin.

## *Armour*



**Illustration 32**

**The different designs used to evoke armour in the Bayeux Tapestry:  
a) scaled, b) triangular/patterned, c) circles, d) half circles, e) crossed horizontal hatch,  
f) crossed diagonal hatch, and g) variants on a mixture of types c to g.**

Armour is shown as trousered mail hauberks, normally covering the arm up to the elbow and the leg to just above the knee, but at times also the lower limbs. Often hauberks are shown with straps, arranged as horizontal lines at the neck or a square panel on the chest. Different designs were used to evoke armour, including scales,

<sup>292</sup> Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 45, observed that all soldiers in the BT (though there are a few exceptions) wear the same type of helmet and armour.

triangles, circles and hatching (Ill.32 – above).<sup>293</sup> Several fighting-men also appear to wear mail coifs beneath their helms.

### *Swords*

Swords are depicted with double-sided blades which taper towards the point.<sup>294</sup> Cross-guards are normally shown straight, but occasionally bend either towards or away from the hand. ‘Tea-cosy’ and ‘disc’ pommels are the most commonly illustrated types, but a single ‘three-lobed’ variety is also depicted.<sup>295</sup>

### *Spears*

Whilst foot soldiers carry spears, and knights are armed with lances, the form of their weapons is impossible to tell apart.<sup>296</sup> Spearheads are generally leaf-shaped, pointed, angular or barbed; spears frequently have one or two wings; the shafts are always very long, often irregular in form.

### *Axes*

Only a few axes are depicted in the Tapestry. Some, quite small with a short cutting edge, are indistinguishable from the hand axes depicted in the boat-building scenes – which will be considered in due course. Whilst this may imply that carpentry axes were taken to war, most axes in the battle scenes are shown with a large broad

---

<sup>293</sup> There are seven main types of armour: a) scaled, b) triangular/patterned, c) circles, d) half circles, e) crossed horizontal hatch, f) crossed diagonal hatch, g) a mixture of types c to g. Type a is only worn by Figure 91 (Guy). Type b is only worn by Figures 143 (William) and 534 (Odo).

<sup>294</sup> The seax does not seem to be represented in the BT.

<sup>295</sup> Wielded by Figure 582.

<sup>296</sup> Even so Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 306, believed the BT was the first evidence for the regular use of the lance in combat.

asymmetrical cutting edge. Often these have a long haft, occasionally gripped using both hands.

### *Bows*

Bows are infrequently shown in the Tapestry and are often small, measuring no more than the distance from the bowman's head to his knee. Such bows are 'drawn' low, often at waist height, and short, only about halfway across the chest. Arrows are indistinctly illustrated, but appear to have an angular or barbed head, and feathered flights.

### *Clubs and Maces*

Other weapons, such as the club and mace, are even less common.<sup>297</sup> Two types of mace are illustrated in the Tapestry, a flange-headed, and a three-knobbed example. The clubs have a plain, sub-oval form.

### *Round-shields*

Much more common are shields, of which two types are depicted: round- and kite-shaped. The round-shield is less frequently illustrated, with only nine examples in the entire Tapestry.<sup>298</sup> Normally shown sideways-on, round-shields appear to have a convex board, with a conical, pointed or round boss. The boards of all round-shields are shown to have a rim, most with rivets which seem to secure it. Often the field of the board appears to be divided into triangular segments, and these are often coloured differently. One shield is shown facing forward and appears to be oval.<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>297</sup> Figures 423, 619, 620 and 622 have maces. Figures 143, 424, 431, 534 and 542 have clubs.

<sup>298</sup> Held by Figures 488, 497, 498, near 504, 572, 587, 599, 600 and 603

### *Kite-shields*

Kite-shields are never shown sideways on. Rear-facing shields occasionally reveal horizontal or square strapping used to secure them to the forearm. Most kite-shields have a rim - though rivets are never shown - and a circular boss. The shield board itself is often patterned with a zoomorphic or geometric design.

## **Evidence for the Arms and Armour in the Bayeux Tapestry**

### *Helmets*

Contemporary helmets provide good evidence that the Tapestry designer attempted to reflect elements of contemporary fashion within his design. Although few conical helmets survive,<sup>300</sup> an example in the Royal Armouries and another in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Ill.33 - below) compare well with the segmented helmets depicted in the Tapestry.<sup>301</sup> Whereas all the helmets are shown with nasal guards, only the Wenceslas helm has this as an original feature.<sup>302</sup> This helmet also has a brow-band, a characteristic not found on any other surviving conical helmet, but which is commonplace in the Tapestry.<sup>303</sup> Nonetheless, whilst the archaeological

---

<sup>299</sup> Held by Figure 573.

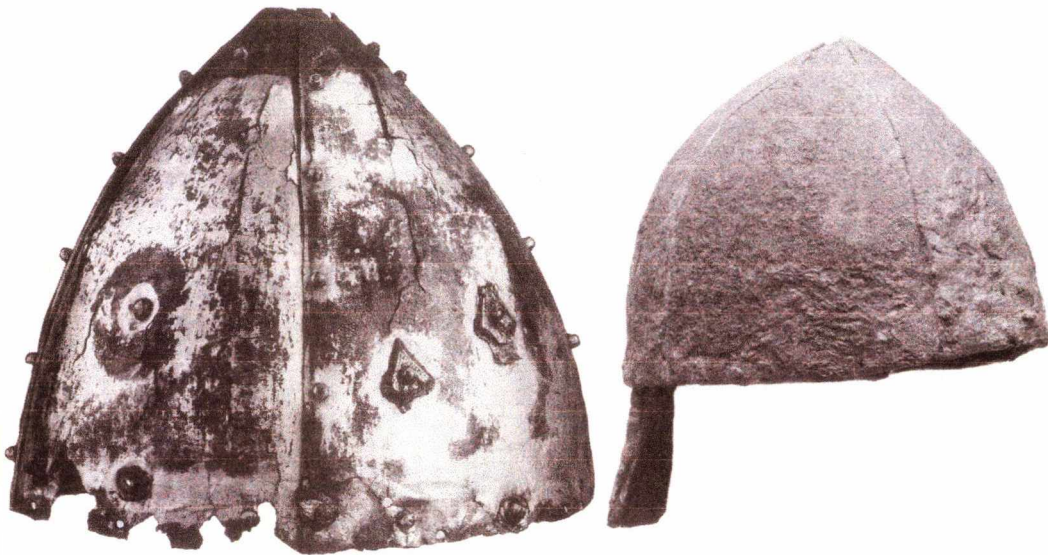
<sup>300</sup> 1) St Wenceslas' helmet, Prague Cathedral, s. ix or x. 2) Polish helmet, Royal Armouries, Leeds, s. x. 3) A helmet from Northern France, or possibly the River Thames, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, s. x or xi. 4) Exhibit A 41, Kunsthistorisches Museum Hofjagd und Rüstkammer, Vienna, from Olmütz, Moravia, s. xi or xii. 5) Washingborough helmet, City and County Museum, Lincoln, perhaps s. xi.

<sup>301</sup> Typologically similar to the Spangenhelme, there is no evidence in the Tapestry of the diagnostic T-shaped mounts, which hold the cap plates together, or cheek pieces. The term *Spangenhelme* has caused much confusion amongst commentators: Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 60, incorrectly described some crested helmets, as well as the helmets in the BT, as 'Spangenhelme'.

<sup>302</sup> This is an integral part of a highly decorated brow-band, but Hejdová thought it may be a later addition (cf. Merhautová, 'St. Wenzelshelm', 172). The nasal guard on the New York helmet is a restoration.

<sup>303</sup> The Olmütz and Washingborough helmets have holes around the lower edge, which may have held a brow band.

evidence for individual aspects of the Tapestry helmets may be slight, their basic conical form is consistent with the contemporary record.



**Illustration 33**

**Segmented conical helmets in the Royal Armouries, Leeds (left)  
and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (right).**

Turning to pictorial representations we find that, from about the tenth century, classical and crested helmets give way to those of a conical type, suggesting that artists were responding to changing fashions in arms and armour.<sup>304</sup> Conical helmets are found on Viking Age stone sculpture in Yorkshire,<sup>305</sup> and it is not impossible - albeit hardly likely - that the Tapestry designer may have seen some such works. A more plausible source of influence would have been contemporary manuscript illumination, where segmented conical helmets, such as that worn by Goliath in the

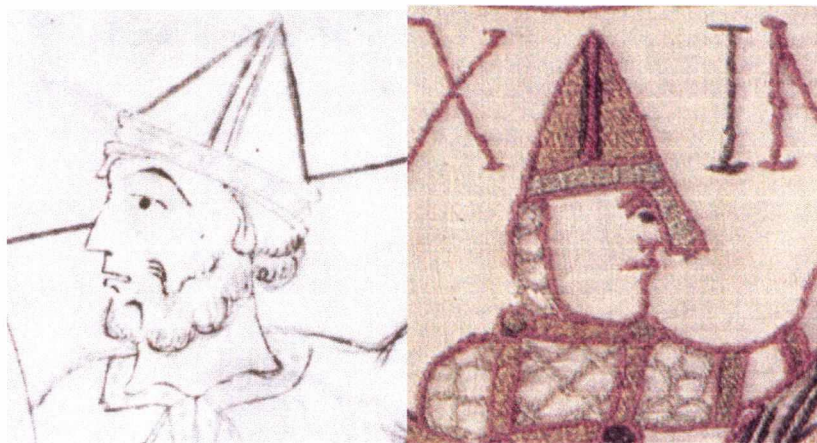
---

<sup>304</sup> Some conical helmets seem to curve slightly towards the top. This feature is not found in the archaeological record but probably originated from the Phrygian cap. Phrygian caps seem to be worn by two archers in the BT (Figures 443 and 444) and are also common in contemporary illuminations including, Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, Y. 6 (274), f.36v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 296; London, British Library, Arundel 60, f.13. Romanesque examples are also common (cited in the appendix).

<sup>305</sup> Middleton 2, Middleton 4a and Middleton 5a, all s. x. Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture III*, 38, suggested that the Middleton warrior was an iconographic type made popular by workshops of the 'Yorkshire school' during the Viking Age. Similar helmets also appear on the runestone from



Tiberius Psalter (Ill.34 - below) are common.<sup>306</sup> Nonetheless it is a phenomenon of early medieval illumination that helmets are never shown with nasal guards. Indeed, since nasal guards are not found in manuscript art until the twelfth century,<sup>307</sup> their abundance in the Tapestry is particularly fascinating.



**Illustration 34**

**The segmented conical helmet worn by Goliath in the Tiberius Psalter (left) and a figure in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

Another potentially significant visual source for the type of helmets depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry is eleventh-century coinage (Ill.35 - below).<sup>308</sup> However, doubts to

---

Ledberg, Östergötland and a carved antler fragment from Sigtuna, Sweden (Tweddle, *Anglian Helmet*, 1129-31). The s. xii *Temple Pyx* (Burrell Collection) shows conical helmets with nasal guards.

<sup>306</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.8v, f.9: Heslop, 'Illuminated Psalter', 171 convincingly argued that this manuscript was post-Conquest. Segmented conical helmets also appear in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.85, whilst non-segmented examples are found in London, British Library, Add. 24199, f.17; BL, Harley 603, f.73v. Romanesque and continental examples are also common (see appendix).

<sup>307</sup> Conical helmets with nasal guards appear in Romanesque manuscripts including, London, British Library, Royal 6 C. vi, f.79v; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 724r and London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 661v. Continental examples are also known (see appendix).

<sup>308</sup> Cnut's 'helmet type' coinage (North, *English Hammered Coinage*, Cat. No. 787-9, dated to about 1024-30) depicts a segmented helmet with nasal guard, as do the 'helmet type' coins of Edward the Confessor (North 825-6<sup>2</sup>, of about 1053-6). Gareth Williams (British Museum) agreed that these depictions are intended to represent conical helms with nasal guards (though not apparent on all coins), but he regarded it as highly unlikely that the Tapestry was influenced by coinage design as neither type of coin was in circulation at the time the Tapestry was produced (personal correspondence, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2001). Conical helmets next appear on English coins a hundred years later: irregular coinage of Stephen and his wife Matilda (North 922), perhaps minted in York, shows Stephen wearing a conical helmet with a nasal guard, as do the baronial issues often attributed to Eustace Fitzjohn (North 929) and Robert de Stuteville (North 932).

whether these coin motifs would have still been in circulation by about 1070, and therefore not available for an artist to copy, may suggest that the designer was receptive to changes in contemporary fashion, taking ‘real-life’ for this aspect of his design.



**Illustration 35**

**A conical helmet with nasal guard worn by Edward the Confessor  
on a silver penny of about 1053-6.**

In this case the close correspondence between the design in the Tapestry and the known form of the contemporary artefact, allied to the circumstances that the visual tradition in manuscript illuminations was not as faithful to that form, strongly suggests that the designer was here responding to ‘real life’.

### *Armour*

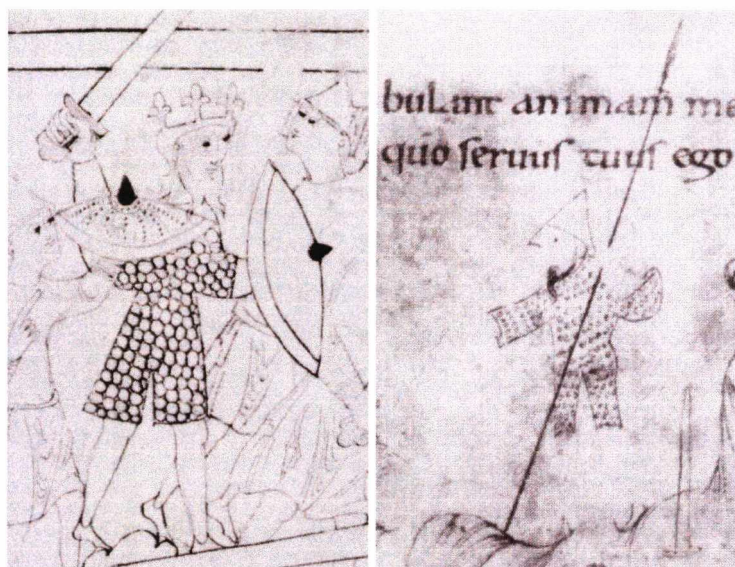
It is generally accepted that the armour shown in the Tapestry is a stylised representation of mail.<sup>309</sup> These simplified geometric designs offer a clear indication

---

<sup>309</sup> Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 303-4. Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 60, proposed that ‘mail, by nature a highly intricate and complicated structure, is difficult to represent accurately on a small scale’ thus ‘the artist must have recourse to some convention’. It is interesting therefore that Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 3, sought to demonstrate that armour ‘type d’ was an attempt to depict accurately chain mail, which was withdrawn in favour of other conventions adopted in the later phases of the Tapestry. It is probable that armour ‘type a’ and ‘b’ has been used in the Tapestry to highlight high status characters: ‘type a’ is only worn by Guy (Figure 91); ‘type b’ is worn by William (Figure 143) and Odo (Figure 534) – discussed further in the general conclusion.

that the designer was prepared to use artistic motifs for some elements of his design, rather than try to emulate 'reality'.

Besides the conventional circular and hatched types of mail (types c-g) commonly found in medieval art, the Tapestry designer also chose to illustrate, if somewhat infrequently, a scaled armour (type a) and a strange triangular form of armour (type b) - which may be a padded coat.<sup>310</sup> Neither type (a or b) has been recovered archaeologically, and this is not surprising, especially for the latter, which if indeed a padded coat can be presumed to have been organic.



**Illustration 36**

**The trousered hauberks worn by a king in the Old English Hexateuch (left) and a figure the Harley 603 Psalter (right).**

Most intriguing is the fact that all the mail hauberks in the Tapestry (types c to g) are shown as trousered garments.<sup>311</sup> This is particularly apparent in the scene where hauberks are carried on poles towards William's ships. Although it is plausible that

<sup>310</sup> Gravett, *Hastings*, 19. Similar types of triangular armour seem to be illustrated in Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, 14, f.13, f.13v. Likewise, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 17767, f.40v shows the personification of May wearing a similar triangular patterned coat. It is interesting that these depictions occur in French Romanesque illuminations, and are not found in English manuscript art.

<sup>311</sup> The Tapestry shows some mailed hauberks covering the lower limbs. Whilst this is entirely feasible, there is a lack of corresponding archaeological evidence.

foot soldiers may have fought in trousered armour, it is generally accepted that horsemen could not. Brooks and Walker debated the issue at length, concluding that this ‘blunder’ was understandable since the Tapestry designer must have been an Anglo-Saxon – a race unaccustomed to fighting upon horseback.<sup>312</sup> It is therefore enlightening that comparative examples are found in Anglo-Saxon art, not archaeology; these include a king with trousered mail in the Old English Hexateuch and the mailed figure in the Harley 603 Psalter (Ill.36 - above).<sup>313</sup> It is interesting that both illuminations were probably produced in Canterbury, and could thus have been available to the Tapestry designer.



**Illustration 37**

**The trousered hauberk depicted on the stone sculpture fragment from Winchester.**

---

<sup>312</sup> Brooks and Walker, ‘Authority and Interpretation’, 19-20; Brown, ‘Hastings’, 11. However, the use of the horse in Anglo-Saxon warfare is not unknown: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (C), for the year 1055, trans. Garmonsway, 184-6, reports that Earl Ralph, the Norman nephew of Edward the Confessor, used English horsemen against the Welsh, though with little avail - ‘because they had been made to fight on horseback’. See also Davis, ‘Warhorses’, 141-4; Hooper, ‘Anglo-Saxon Warfare’, 90-2.

<sup>313</sup> Ben Withers (personal correspondence dated 5 August 2002) has suggested that the hauberk worn by the king in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv. f.24v may be a later addition of about 1076, but there is little evidence to substantiate this. The hauberk in BL, Harley 603, f. 73v is certainly a later addition, perhaps of s. xii date. Trousered armour is also found in some Romanesque and continental illuminations (cited in the appendix), but these examples are less impressive than the Canterbury illustrations.

The best example outside manuscript illumination is the carved stone fragment from Winchester (Ill.37 - above), hitherto the most commonly cited example of trousered mail in English art.<sup>314</sup> Whilst the origins of trousered hauberks are unclear it is more likely that this motif developed from an artist's misinterpretation or stylisation of a mailed skirt – perhaps strapped to the leg – than that it reflects first-hand observation.<sup>315</sup>

Almost as peculiar are the horizontal and vertical lines, sometimes formed into a square, that are frequently depicted upon the chest of the Tapestry's hauberks. There is no conclusive explanation of their purpose, although it has been argued that they might be reinforced mail patches to protect the chest, or a lowered ventail or flap to guard the throat.<sup>316</sup> Although they are mentioned in the *Song of Roland*, nothing is known of ventails from the archaeological record until about the thirteenth century.<sup>317</sup> Moreover it seems unlikely that the designer took the motif from contemporary art since representations of ventails are infrequent, and those that occur are - given their provenance and date - an improbable source of inspiration.<sup>318</sup> Here then it is impossible to be sure whether or not the designer attempted to recreate accurately an attribute of contemporary armour. However, the fact that trousered armour is probably an error suggests one should be wary of accepting other aspects of the Tapestry hauberks for which no other independent confirmation can be found.

---

<sup>314</sup> Biddle, 'Winchester', 332, who excavated the Winchester stone fragment, dated it to between 1016 and 1035 (see also Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture IV*, Cat. No. 88, 314-22). This date has been disputed by Zarnecki, *English Romanesque Art*, 150-1 and Kahn, 'Frieze Sculpture', 70-1, who suggest the style of the sculpture is Romanesque.

<sup>315</sup> Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 304.

<sup>316</sup> Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 63; Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 52. Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 46-7, agreed that this feature had a protective purpose, but also hypothesised that it may have been a flap to allow armour to be put on or taken off with ease.

<sup>317</sup> *Song of Roland*, 100, line 1293 and 255, line 3449, trans. Burgess, 70 and 139.

## *Sword*

Swords in the Bayeux Tapestry compare well with the general typology of contemporary weapons. The form of the hilt, in particular, can be usefully compared with the archaeological evidence.

Three types of pommel are depicted in the Tapestry, which cover a wide chronology from the ninth century until the twelfth.<sup>319</sup> First is shown a single, rather weak example of a ‘three-lobed’ pommel.<sup>320</sup> In view of the archaeological evidence, commentators agree that by 1066 this type of pommel was going out of fashion, although it is commonly illustrated in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts.<sup>321</sup> Whilst this may therefore be another aspect of the Tapestry design that was borrowed from art, it is important not to overemphasise the significance of this ‘rogue’ detail.

Second are illustrated ‘tea-cosy’ pommels. The archaeological record attests to their popularity during the eleventh century, and ‘tea-cosy’ pommels seem to be commonly illustrated in contemporary manuscripts, particularly those associated with Canterbury.<sup>322</sup> Although it could be argued that the latter account for its popularity in the Bayeux Tapestry, it is just as likely that both the Tapestry and these manuscripts share the same source – that is to say ‘real life’.

---

<sup>318</sup> E.g. BNF, lat. 6. *Bible of Roda*, f.145r and a xii<sup>med</sup> sculptured capital showing a scene from the *Psychomachia*, Notre-Dame-du-Port, Clermont-Ferrand.

<sup>319</sup> 1) ‘Three-lobed’ type: popular from about the s. ix, but going out of fashion during the s. xi. 2) ‘Tea-cosy’ type: which was popular during the s. x, and still in nominal use after 1100. 3) ‘Disc’ type: a Southern European variety, introduced to England during the s. xi, becoming increasingly popular during the s. xii.

<sup>320</sup> Held by Figure 582.

<sup>321</sup> Mann, *Arms and Armour*, 65. It is conceivable that this depiction was appropriated from a manuscript exemplar. Examples include BL, Stowe 944, f.6; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.38; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.85v.

<sup>322</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.11; BL, Harley 603, f.72v; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.32r, f.87v. ‘Tea-cosy’ pommels in Romanesque illuminations are rare, but one possible example appears in Cambridge, St John’s College, A. 8, f.39v.

Third are depicted 'disc' pommels. Their occurrence in the Tapestry is more intriguing, since it is believed that this type was introduced from Southern Europe during the first two crusades (1096-9 and 1147-9).<sup>323</sup> Given that this pommel type also appears in Late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts,<sup>324</sup> there are grounds to question such a late date for its introduction into England. On the other hand, it is feasible that disc-pommels in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are irregularly drawn 'tea-cosy' or 'brazil-nut' pommels, and this is probably the case in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>325</sup>

Short straight cross-guards were favoured throughout the early medieval period, while curved forms were adopted in England from about the ninth century onwards. Correspondingly, several cross-guards in the Tapestry seem to be curved. It is interesting that these sometimes curve away from the blade, towards the forearm, and this must be an error.<sup>326</sup> A similar phenomenon can be observed in contemporary manuscript art, and this may well explain its occurrence in the Tapestry.<sup>327</sup> Such idiosyncrasies, common to both the Tapestry and manuscript art, would seem to imply that the designer used manuscript exemplars for at least some aspects of his design here.

---

<sup>323</sup> Edge and Paddock, *Arms and Armour*, 28.

<sup>324</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.10r; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.24v.

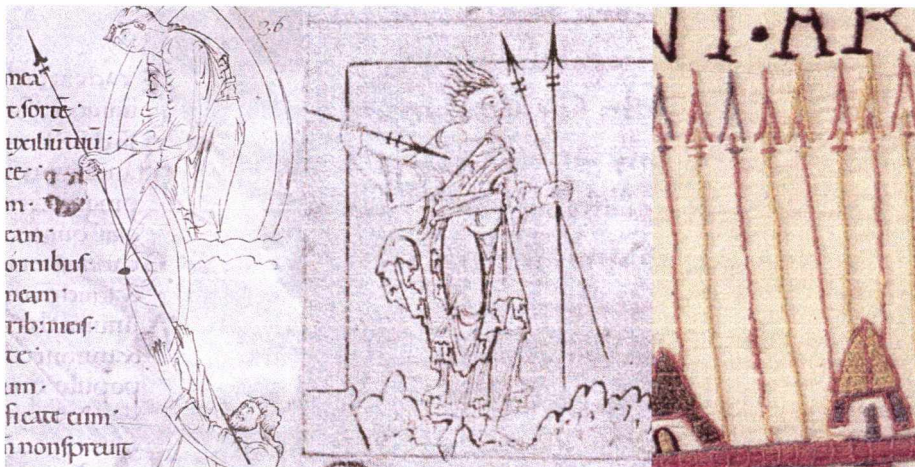
<sup>325</sup> However, it certainly seems to be the intention that some of the Tapestry's sword pommels are shown round. Since 'disc' pommels are commonplace in Romanesque manuscripts (see appendix), their occurrence in the Tapestry should not be considered unusual.

<sup>326</sup> Cross-guards with a guard curving away from the blade are unknown. This is of little surprise since such a guard would channel a hostile weapon towards the defending swordsman's forearm. Nonetheless the limitations of the Tapestry medium should be considered, as the curved form of some cross-guards may be unintentional (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 48-9).

<sup>327</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.85v and BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.8v, f.9, which have a highly prominent curve towards the blade. However, neither manuscript was produced in Canterbury. It

## *Spear*

Although the spears in the Tapestry are undoubtedly stylised, the spearheads themselves are broadly consistent with the archaeological record. However, it is interesting that several spears in the Tapestry have one or two sets of wings, a feature which, it has been argued, was designed for hunting.<sup>328</sup> It is noteworthy, therefore, that contrary to their intended function such spears are repeatedly used in combat scenes.<sup>329</sup> However, more importantly, some of these spears are also barbed, which makes little sense, as the wing would restrict the depth to which the spearhead could be thrust, whilst the barb would make it impossible to withdraw once used.



**Illustration 38**

**The winged spears of the Bury Psalter (left), the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (middle) and the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

Both single- and double-winged spears are commonplace in early medieval illuminations. The former predominate in Carolingian manuscripts,<sup>330</sup> but also appear

---

should also be noted that curved guards in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts were notably longer and more prominent than those in the BT.

<sup>328</sup> Fuglesang, *Ringerike Style*, 136-40.

<sup>329</sup> As in the Breton campaign. They are not depicted during the battle of Hastings, although they were loaded onto William's ships for the Channel crossing (Scene 37).

<sup>330</sup> Carver, 'Contemporary Artefacts', 129. An example is BNF, lat. 1, f.215v.



in the Canterbury-produced Bury Psalter,<sup>331</sup> whilst the latter are shown in the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (Ill.38 - above).<sup>332</sup> Hence, it is wholly plausible that the designer appropriated winged spears from contemporary art.

### *Axe*

Axes in the Tapestry are broadly similar to types that were commonly used in England and Scandinavia from about the tenth century. In the battle scenes, axes are nearly always associated with the English, and this is consistent with our understanding of Anglo-Saxon warfare.<sup>333</sup> However, the Tapestry's axes have an additional iconographic significance. Excluding domestic scenes, it can be seen that the designer has used axes to denote persons of rank (up to Scene 19),<sup>334</sup> and thereafter to identify Anglo-Saxons in the *mêlée* of battle (this will be further discussed in the main conclusion).

Though axes are not common in Anglo-Saxon illumination, the depiction of a wood-worker felling a tree in Cotton Julius A. vi, from Canterbury, provides a good parallel for the men cutting trees in the boat-building scenes of the Tapestry (Ill.39 - below).<sup>335</sup> Axes in other Canterbury manuscripts also show that the Tapestry designer could have taken inspiration from manuscript art, but this is by no means certain, and the question of their origin remains open.

---

<sup>331</sup> BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.36r.

<sup>332</sup> BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.10v-11r. Winged spears are common in Anglo-Saxon illuminations, but less so in Romanesque ones (see appendix).

<sup>333</sup> Archer, 'Hastings', 12-3, 16; Bernstein, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 41.

<sup>334</sup> E.g. Figure 90 (Guy), Figure 205 who accompanies Figure 206 (Harold), Figure 208 who stands behind Figure 207 (Edward), Figure 238 who holds an axe towards Figure 239 (Harold), Figure 239 (Harold). In contrast, Musset, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 50, did not think that axes were symbolic of rank in the Tapestry, although he did note this was the case in Scandinavia.



**Illustration 39**

**Woodworking felling scenes in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi (top) and the Bayeux Tapestry (bottom).**

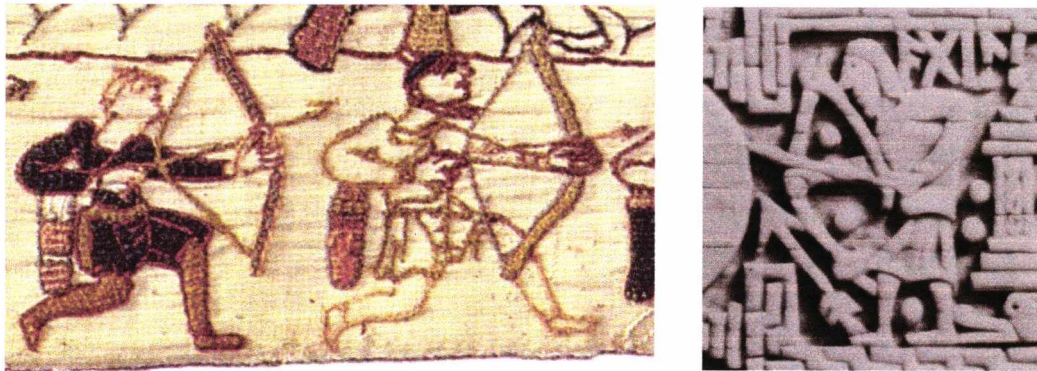
*Bow*

Bows are not prominent in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>336</sup> Although their scale and linear form make comparison with contemporary weapons difficult, their small size does not

<sup>335</sup> London, British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v. Other contemporary examples include BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.27v, which is used by a warrior, and BL, Harley 603, f.4r, which is an unusual double-sided type. Axes are more frequent in Romanesque manuscripts (see appendix).

<sup>336</sup> Archers only occur in Scene 51 (Figures 441-4 and the lone English archer, Figure 462), Scene 55 (Figures 544-54, 560-7, 575-6, 578-9) and Scene 58 (the mounted archer, Figure 612).

compare favourably with the archaeological record for Western European bowstaves.<sup>337</sup> Illustrations of archers are rare in early medieval manuscripts, but when shown they are consistently depicted using a short, rather than long, bow.<sup>338</sup> Similarly, the Ruthwell Cross and the Franks Casket (Ill.40 - below) both depict short bows. Hence, it seems that the Tapestry's bows are of a form fossilied in art, quite different from the long bows probably used by contemporary bowmen.



**Illustration 40**

**Archers in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and an archer using a short bow in the Franks Casket (right).**

The fact that arrows are incorrectly loaded onto bowstaves is also of interest,<sup>339</sup> but may well be nothing more than an unintentional 'error', which has more to do with the designer's (or embroiderers') method than with actual design (or knowledge). A plausible explanation for this error seems to be that the embroiderers first 'sewed in' the bow and then placed the arrow across it, whether the archer was facing right or

<sup>337</sup> Bradbury, *Medieval Archer*, 25 noted that 'all the bow staves found in western Europe before 1066 are either of longbow length, or are fragments of ordinary wooden staves...none are short bows'.

<sup>338</sup> Anglo-Saxon illuminations include BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.23; BL, Harley 603, f.4r, f.14v, f.15r; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.24v, f.109v (continental examples are cited in the appendix). Archers are more common in Romanesque manuscripts, particularly those produced in England (see appendix).

<sup>339</sup> The right, rather than left, side: a right-handed archer would fire an arrow from the left hand-side of the bow stave (Bradbury, *Medieval Archer*, 36).

left.<sup>340</sup> In point of fact this phenomenon is found elsewhere in medieval art, where bowmen firing to the left are shown with arrows on the left side of the bow - as on the Franks Casket - whilst arrows fired right are shown across the right side of the bowstave, as in the Reimsian Ebbo (Ill.41 - below) and a sculpture fragment from Hexham.<sup>341</sup>



**Illustration 41**

**An archer in the Ebbo Gospels (left) and one of those in the Bayeux Tapestry (right) firing arrows over the right side of the bow stave.**

### *Round-shield*

Round-shields provide some of the most conclusive evidence that the Tapestry designer borrowed aspects of his design from art. The majority of the round-shields in the Tapestry are shown in profile, revealing the form of the boss and showing that the board is convex.<sup>342</sup> This contrasts with the archaeological evidence, notably the three

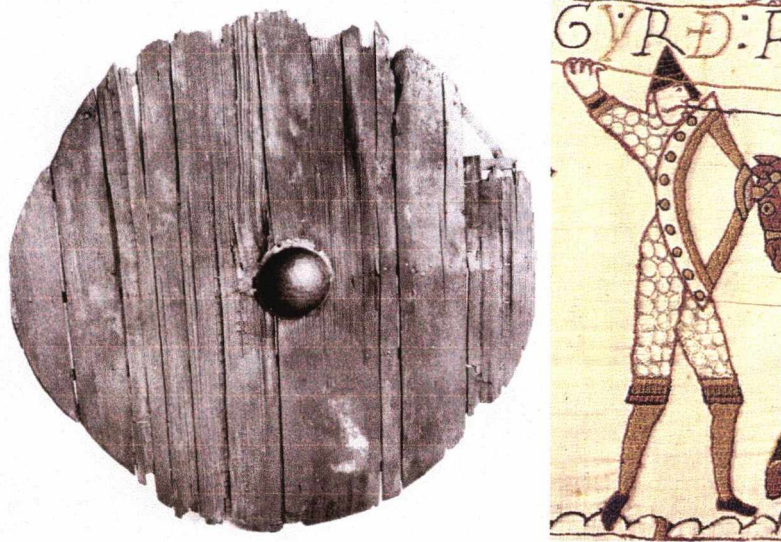


<sup>340</sup> Indeed, the only archer in the Tapestry facing left (Figure 462) correctly fires his arrow over the left hand-side of the bow stave.

<sup>341</sup> Épernay, Bibliothèque municipale, 1, f.15v and the s. vii<sup>4/4</sup> sculpture fragment from Hexham (Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 1*, 185-6, Pl. 179, No. 961).

<sup>342</sup> The position of the shield boss proves that the designer wished to show that round-shields had a convex form, and this is confirmed by the curved lines, shown on many of the Tapestry's shields.

two round-shields recovered from the Gokstad ship burial, which indicate that shield boards were flat (Ill.42 - below).<sup>343</sup>



**Illustration 42**

**One of the Gokstad round-shields (left)  
and an example in the Bayeux Tapestry (right).**

There are many artistic parallels for convex round-shield boards, including the early eighth-century Franks Casket as well as numerous contemporary illuminations.<sup>344</sup> Hence there is clear evidence to suggest that in the case of round-shields the Tapestry designer appropriated readily available artistic motifs (even though it did not correspond to reality), rather than sketched from 'real life'. Depictions of convex

<sup>343</sup> This was disputed by Stephenson, *Shield*, 26-8. Indeed, the case for Anglo-Saxon convex boards is by no means clear cut, but Dickinson and Härke, 'Anglo-Saxon Shields', 43-4 discounted angled boss flanges and sharply curved bronze clips as evidence for convex shield boards; Härke suggested that curved long grips may have been bent by earth pressure, and it is certainly intriguing that only long grips were bent in his sample case. Archaeological reconstructions subsequently show Anglo-Saxon round-shields with flat boards, although finds from Vendel period Sweden and Alamannic cemeteries seem to indicate that both convex and flat shields were once used by some European peoples. Ironically Stephenson, *Shield*, 28 - who favoured the existence of convex shield boards - noted that 'concavity in the (shield's) vertical plane' would 'glance blows which struck the top of the shield into the head, and those which struck the bottom into the legs'.

<sup>344</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.4v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi. f.16; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.36r. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

shield boards seem to have derived from classical art,<sup>345</sup> though the precise origins of such representations are obscure: to date Roman Iron Age bog deposits on the Continent have only produced flat shield boards.<sup>346</sup>



**Illustration 43**

**Kite-shields depicted in the Harley 603 Psalter.**

### *Kite Shield*

By the middle of the eleventh century the kite-shield superseded the round-shield as the favoured defensive tool of the medieval warrior. Kite-shields are more numerous than round-shields in the Tapestry and this may provide evidence of the transition. It

---

<sup>345</sup> E.g, Greek pottery, such as the 'Macmillan' aryballos (British Museum) and the 'Chigi' vase (Villa Giulia Museum, Rome), both c.650 BC, show large rounded shields. The convex form of these shields is apparent in sculpture, such as the Temple of Aphaia pediments (Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich), c.500-480 BC. In the Roman period round-shields are commonplace in art, examples including, the s. i 'Healing of the wounded Aeneas by Iapyx' from Pompeii (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples) and the s. iv<sup>m</sup> mosaic 'the Great Hunt' in the villa at Piazza Armerina, Sicily. Again sculpture, such as the s. i<sup>cx</sup> 'Cancellaria reliefs' (Musei Vaticani, Rome), 'Column of Trajan', dedicated 113 AD (Rome) and a marble sarcophagus from Rome, c.190 AD (Museum of Art, Rhode Island), reveal the convex form of classical shield boards.

<sup>346</sup> Dickinson and Härke, 'Anglo-Saxon Shields', 44.

is interesting, therefore, that kite-shields only appear once in Anglo-Saxon art, the work of hand F of the Harley 603 Psalter (Ill.43 - above), and are unknown in Norman illumination before the twelfth century.<sup>347</sup> Intriguingly, artist F made his contribution to Harley 603 in the early eleventh century at Canterbury, so the Tapestry designer may have known his work. Whether influenced by F's hand or not, this undoubtedly reflects a contemporary trend in the Tapestry's repertoire.

That said, details of the design imply that art still exerted an influence. A majority of the Tapestry's kite-shields are illustrated with shield bosses, but unlike round-shields, where the boss is functional (designed to protect the handgrip), bosses on kite-shields are unnecessary.<sup>348</sup> Kite-shields were held by an arrangement of straps, and hence metal bosses became redundant.<sup>349</sup> Intriguingly, kite-shields with bosses continue to feature in art until about the thirteenth century, when flat-topped kite-shields become common: throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries they are shown with and without shield bosses.<sup>350</sup> Of course it may have been the case that bosses remained in use as a decorative ornament, and that this is reflected in contemporary art. Nonetheless, it seems more likely that bosses were depicted on some kite-shields as a matter of artistic convention, since the boss was iconographically associated with the form of the shield.

---

<sup>347</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.60r, f.65v, f.69r. Kiff, 'Images of War', 186, correctly noted that 'this would make this series of drawings one of the earliest representations of this shield type in an English manuscript'. It is intriguing that the design on the kite-shield in f.29v (Gameson's, 'Romanesque Artist of the Harley 603 Psalter', hand R), dated s. xii<sup>2/4</sup> closely resembles those in the BT. Kite-shields, however, are occasionally depicted in early continental illuminations, such as Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, 156.142/KG1138, f.18v and Arras, Médiathèque, MS 435, f.1 (also see Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 47).

<sup>348</sup> It is noteworthy that the Tapestry designer frequently depicts kite-shields with shield bosses, whereas kite-shields with bosses are rare in the Harley Psalter.

<sup>349</sup> The earliest kite-shield known is of the von Brienze family, which was made in the xii<sup>cx</sup>, upon which evidence for rear straps remains. Between c.1230-50 the top arch of the shield was cut off (Gravett, *Norman Knight*, 61).

## Conclusion

Discreet idiosyncrasies in the Tapestry's depiction of arms and armour demonstrate that contemporary art did exert an influence upon our designer. First, there are 'errors', such as the trousered hauberks and convex shield boards: it is doubtful that these objects existed, and it is far more likely that such motifs were borrowed from contemporary art. Secondly, the designer consistently makes use of forms, such as particular pommel types and small bows, which – archaeologically - belong to an earlier period, but have been fossilised in art. Thirdly, the Tapestry depicts weapons, such as the winged spear, which have been borrowed for a context contrary to their intended function. Such motifs are clearly copied from contemporary art, and should not be considered first-hand observations.

Nonetheless, the designer has chosen to illustrate some relatively recent innovations in arms and armour, such as conical helmets and kite shields, which would seem to imply that not all of his military impedimenta were fallacious and out-of-date. Even so, this evidence must be viewed with caution. In many instances the archaeological record is weak, and near-contemporary art still offers good comparisons. Consequently it seems probable that the Tapestry designer relied on motifs found in art for much of the arms and armour he depicted.

---

<sup>350</sup> Examples showing bosses include London, British Library, Arundel 91, f.188, *The Temple Pyx* of s.xii<sup>2/4</sup> and TCC, R. 17. 1, f.9. Those without bosses are also common (cited in the appendix).



## SHIPS

Seafaring vessels were an integral part of warfare and defence in the eleventh century. The sea offered natural protection from invasion or attack, and was vital to trade and economic prosperity. Sea travel was also important politically, helping to maintain dynastic and religious ties between peoples across Europe and beyond. During the eleventh century ports, harbours and beaches on both sides of the channel must have been subject to considerable maritime activity.<sup>351</sup> It is therefore of no surprise that ships appear in the Bayeux Tapestry.

As we have seen, there is a presumption among modern scholars that the Tapestry designer would have wished to recreate accurately the contemporary scene - including the ships which operated within it. Accordingly most commentators have considered its ships to be faithful renditions of contemporary vessels.<sup>352</sup> However, a systematic exploration of the relationship between the ships in the Tapestry, those depicted in contemporary manuscript illuminations, and the archaeological evidence raises questions about the origins and 'authenticity' of the Tapestry's depictions.<sup>353</sup>

---

<sup>351</sup> Lebecq, 'England and the Continent', 56; Gardiner, 'Shipping and Trade', 71-93.

<sup>352</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 226; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 36. Indeed Crumlin-Perdersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 191, actually reinterpreted an element of Skuldelev 2 – where the archaeology suggested it had a gap in its gunwale amidships – on the basis of evidence provided by the BT. Musset, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 56-7, 65, also thought that the Tapestry was the best source for ships in the s. xi, but realised its drawings were schematised and stylised.

<sup>353</sup> Farrell, 'Iconographic Material', 238, discussed the limitations of artistic evidence for understanding contemporary ships and shipping.

## Archaeological Evidence

Despite the large number of ships that must have been constructed in the eleventh century, archaeological survival is poor, especially so in England and Normandy.<sup>354</sup>



**Illustration 44**

**Excavation of the Skuldelev ships, Roskilde fjord, Denmark.**

The boat from mound one at Sutton Hoo and that from Graveney offer the best and most complete Anglo-Saxon examples.<sup>355</sup> In comparison, the archaeological evidence from Scandinavia is more considerable, with over 500 known ‘Viking’ type vessels;

---

<sup>354</sup> Fewer tangible remains have been ‘found in the British Isles than in almost any other North European country’ (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 193-5). In Normandy there is nothing of comparable antiquity.

<sup>355</sup> Sutton Hoo 1, Suffolk, pre c.625 (Evans, *Sutton Hoo*, 109-10); Graveney, Kent, s. x<sup>1</sup> (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 105-24: radiocarbon AD 944 ± 30 (109), dendrochronology AD 927 ± 2 (123)).

though for the vast majority of these cases little survives apart from clenched nails and the basic hull outline. The most famous Scandinavian boat finds are the Oseberg, Gokstad (and its three associated færing) and Ladby ships.<sup>356</sup> As all three were used in elite inhumation burials they are not typical of sea-going vessels. More useful for our purposes are the five boats that were excavated near Skuldelev; they had been scuttled in the eleventh century to block the Roskilde fjord, presumably protecting the royal town of Roskilde from attack (Ill.44 - above). The substantial wrecks of the Skuldelev ships are especially important because of their date and since they encompass a range of vessel types from small traders to warships.<sup>357</sup> One of these had been constructed in Dublin using local timber, showing that where Scandinavians settled they also brought their shipbuilding skills.

### **Ships in the Eleventh Century**

The surviving physical evidence suggests that eleventh-century ships generally followed the 'Viking' model. Clinker built, the hull was symmetrical, with the keel rounding gently into curved stem posts. Strakes would have been fastened with iron clenched nails or wooden pegs, and caulked with tarred animal hair. The gunwale had a distinctive curve, significantly lower amidships. Internally the hull was supported with frames and beam knees. Although some vessels had decking fore and aft, most would have been open to the elements. Many ships were propelled by a single square

---

<sup>356</sup> Oseberg, Norway, s. ix<sup>in</sup> (Sjøvold, *Oseberg*, 32-3); Gokstad and its færing, Norway, s. x<sup>in</sup> (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 70); Ladby, Denmark, s. x<sup>1</sup> (Sørensen, *Ladby*, 57).

<sup>357</sup> Preliminary excavation identified Skuldelev 1 and 4 as separate ships, and hence the wrecks were numbered 1 to 6. Skuldelev 1: 16m ocean-going trader, c.1025, preserved to 60%. Skuldelev 2: c.29.2m longship, c.1042, preserved to 25%. Skuldelev 3: 14m coastal trader, after c.1035-44, preserved to 75%. Skuldelev 5: 17.3m longship, c.1025-34, preserved to 50%. Skuldelev 6: 11.2m ferry/fishing boat, c.1027-46, preserved to 50% (Olsen and Crumlin Pedersen, 'Skuldelev Ships', 95-153; Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 64-8, 97-304). A further nine ships were recovered in 1996-7 during construction work. Four of these less complete wrecks are of particular interest: Roskilde 3, dated after 1060, Roskilde 4, c.1100, Roskilde 5, c.1130 and Roskilde 6, c.1025 (Myrhøj and Gøthche, *Roskilde Ships*, *passim*).

sail, whilst others would have been rowed, or used a combination of both methods. Oars were worked from rowlocks or oar ports. Ships would have been steered by a rudder from the starboard quarter, which often would have been fixed and operated using a tiller.

Around the time of the Conquest there were four main types of clinker-built vessels.<sup>358</sup> First, there were small fishing boats, or workboats, such as the Gokstad færings or Skuldelev 6. These would have had rowlocks, and could have negotiated coastal waters and navigable rivers. Secondly, there were ocean-going traders, such as Skuldelev 1, Askekärr and Hedeby 3, which would have a deeper draft and a wide beam.<sup>359</sup> Often traders would have had space amidships (for cargo) with decking forward and aft. These vessels would have been equipped with a square-rigged sail, often supplemented by oars above the decking. Thirdly, there were warships or longships, such as Hedeby 1 and Skuldelev 2 and 5, which would have been long, with a narrow beam and low draft.<sup>360</sup> The mast of these vessels could have been unstepped with ease, and oar ports would have run along the length of the upper strakes. There was limited room for cargo, and such ships would have been open to the elements. Lastly, there were ceremonial vessels, such as the Oseberg and Gokstad ships, which had limited capabilities on open water and therefore would probably have been restricted to inshore waters.<sup>361</sup> These vessels were propelled by both oar

---

<sup>358</sup> These are also discussed by Musset, *Tapissérie de Bayeux*, 56-7.

<sup>359</sup> Skuldelev 1 (see above); Askekärr, Sweden, x<sup>ex</sup>; Hedeby 3, near Schleswig, s. xi (Askekärr and Hedeby 3 are discussed by Crumlin-Perdersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 137). See also Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Cargo Ships', 83-7.

<sup>360</sup> Hedeby 1, near Schleswig, c.985 (Crumlin-Perdersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 277-8); Skuldelev 2 and 5 (see above).

<sup>361</sup> Gokstad and Oseberg (see above) were 'royal ships' designed for sailing on closed waters in good weather (Sjøvold, *Oseberg*, 20).

and sail, but would have had a fuller beam and a pronounced curve at the stem. Some stems were ornately carved, and may even have been embellished with a figurehead.

Although ports and landing places existed before the eleventh century,<sup>362</sup> most vessels would have been beached: experimental archaeology has demonstrated that their design was suited to this.<sup>363</sup> Other vessels, notably traders with their deep hulls and hefty draft, would have been moored to foreshore posts.<sup>364</sup>

### **Ships in Early Medieval Art**

Early Anglo-Saxon illustrations of ships are unknown, which is not surprising given the paucity of narrative images in general. However the outline of a vessel, including oar, is depicted in the Würzburg Epistles of St Paul; though continental, its illuminations are of Insular style.<sup>365</sup> This ship seems to be of a broadly contemporary type, although it is greatly simplified. Carolingian depictions of ships are relatively uncommon. Some, such as that in the Vivian Bible, are clearly inspired by classical models.<sup>366</sup> The vessel here appears as a splendid Roman galley – which may be considered fitting, given it is used to narrate the life of St Jerome (Ill.45 - below).<sup>367</sup>

---

<sup>362</sup> E.g. Bentumersiel, Flögeln, Graveney, Hastings and North Ferriby.

<sup>363</sup> Trials of the Sutton Hoo half-size model demonstrated that beaching was eased due to the vessel's design (Gifford and Gifford, 'Anglo-Saxon Ships', 135 and 151). Keel cross sections of Skuldelev 1 to 6 show wear due to countless beachings (Olsen and Cumlin-Pedersen, *Five Viking Ships*, 132). The Graveney boat had been protected by a false keel from the effects of beaching.

<sup>364</sup> Mooring posts have been found at Graveney and on the Vintry site in London (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 181; Milne and Goodburn, 'Port of London', 630). At Kaupang, Norway, mooring ropes were still found tied to the mooring posts (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 181).

<sup>365</sup> Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. p. th. f.69, f.7v.

<sup>366</sup> BNF, lat. 1, f.3v (Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, 84, Ill. 130).

<sup>367</sup> The illuminator of this manuscript, in common with artists of the school of Tours, 'transmute their antique and Carolingian heritage into new and lucidly displayed forms [no late antique narrative scenes of St Jerome's life are known] more expressive of the aims of classical art than the works of any other Carolingian school' (Mütherich and Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, 14, 77).



**Illustration 45**

**The Roman galley depicted in the Vivian Bible.**

In contrast, the ships in the Utrecht Psalter and on an ivory plaque in the Louvre are broadly of a contemporary type; albeit with stylised elements.<sup>368</sup> Those in the Utrecht Psalter, for example, have an exaggerated sheer curve, rounded hull and simple zoomorphic stem decoration.<sup>369</sup> The presence of a contemporary type of ship in this manuscript is worthy of note given the general assumption that most of its pictorial language come from a late antique exemplar.

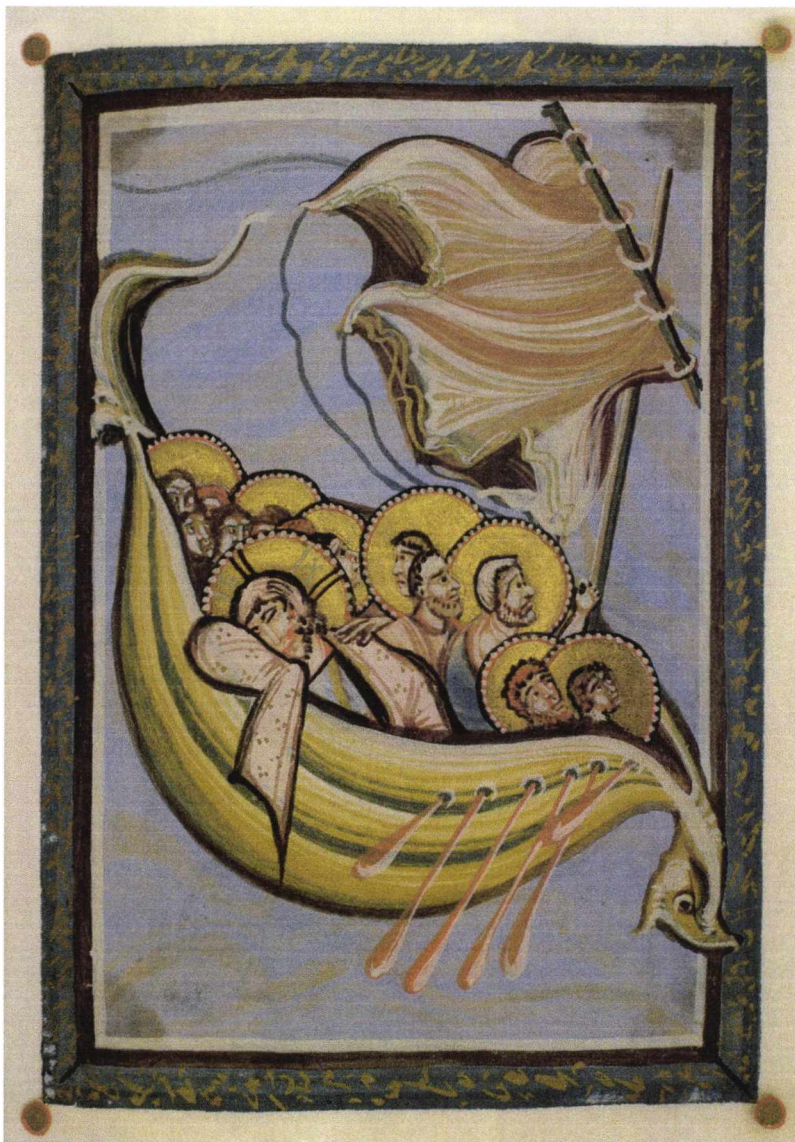
In general, ships in Ottonian manuscripts are highly stylised and clearly derive from Carolingian prototypes. A ship in the eleventh-century Codex Aureus of Echternach is similar in form to those of the Utrecht Psalter, having a rounded form, curved sheer and zoomorphic stem decoration. Other examples which reflect contemporary vessels include the ship shown with a square sail that is depicted on the nave of the church of St Sylvester in Goldbach.<sup>370</sup> Likewise in the Gospel Book of Otto III, the vessel is of exaggerated form, but basic contemporary elements – such as

<sup>368</sup> Utrecht, UB, 32, f.59v and Paris, Musée du Louvre, MR 374, ix<sup>3/4</sup>, Court of Charles the Bald (Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires*, Ill.79).

<sup>369</sup> van der Horst, Noel and Wüstefeld, *Utrecht Psalter*, 73-6. Ships in Utrecht, UB, f.40v, f.62v also have steering oars in the form of arrow flights, which are clearly stylised. This feature reoccurs in BL, Harley 603.

<sup>370</sup> St Sylvester, Goldbach, wall painting showing the 'stilling of the storm', s. x/xi (Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts*, Ill.166).

square sail, hull planking, even rivets - are also represented.<sup>371</sup> However, as these examples advertise and consonant with their general progression away from 'naturalism' towards greater stylisation, Ottonian artists also experimented with the form of their designs for stylistic effect. A good example appears in the Hitda Codex (Ill.46 - below). Here the fore and aft stem 'come alive' in the form of a sea monster, with oar ports clustered together at the prow.<sup>372</sup>



**Illustration 46**

**The ship of the Hitda Codex.**

<sup>371</sup> Munich, BSB, Clm. 4453, f.103v.

<sup>372</sup> Darmstadt, Hessische Landesbibliothek, 1640, f.117.

Late Anglo-Saxon illustrations of ships are found in several manuscripts, including the Harley 603 Psalter, Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch.<sup>373</sup> Those in Harley 603 closely follow the form of those of the Utrecht Psalter – from which it was copied – and cannot therefore usefully be considered as ‘independent witnesses’. The depictions of Noah’s Ark in both Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch, on the other hand, are less certainly copied from specific manuscript prototypes and are arguably more revealing of late Anglo-Saxon attitudes. What we see is a parallel development to the Carolingians and Ottonian practices noted above. Whilst some ships in both Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch are highly stylised, appearing as if they are composed of ‘building blocks’,<sup>374</sup> others broadly reflect contemporary clinker-built vessels - though their stem ornament is clearly artistic fancy.<sup>375</sup>

### **Ships in the Bayeux Tapestry**

Towards the beginning of the Tapestry five vessels are boarded and sailed out to sea by Earl Harold and a small company of men. Although the eventual destination, by design or chance, was *in terra vvidonis comitis* (the land of Count Guy - of Ponthieu), the reason for Harold’s voyage is not made clear. The next ship appears alone at sea, transporting Harold and a few companions from Normandy back to England. Then, when Harold is crowned king, a comet is seen in the sky, and a fleet of five ‘spectral’ ships appears in the lower border. This ‘phantom fleet’ is normally seen as a premonition of Duke William’s invasion plans.<sup>376</sup> In the following scene a single

---

<sup>373</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.27v, f.51v, f.54v; BodL, Junius 11; BL, p.65, p.66, p.68, p.73; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v, f.14r, f.15r.

<sup>374</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.65, p.73; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v, f.15r.

<sup>375</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p. 66, p.68; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.14r.

<sup>376</sup> Gibbs-Smith, ‘Notes’, 169. For an alternative interpretation see Hill, ‘Phantom Fleet’, 27-8.



English ship arrives in William's duchy bringing him news of Edward's death and Harold's coronation.<sup>377</sup> Upon Bishop Odo's advice, William orders an invasion fleet to be built: its construction is shown in some detail. With men and provisions aboard, William's fleet sets sail. This is the most substantial boat scene in the Tapestry. The fleet is tremendous, with ships of all sizes - some have shields along the gunwale, whilst others carry horses. Upon arrival near Pevensey, the ships are beached and men and horses disembark. The empty vessels are shown deserted on the beach, as William's troops harry nearby villages.



**Illustration 47**

**The ships in the Bayeux Tapestry showing their sheer curve.**

Whilst stylised, the ships in the Tapestry broadly reflect a contemporary form (discussed below). It is true that the distinctive curve of the gunwale - typical of the 'Viking' form of hull - is not readily apparent; however it is not impossible that this was done for good reason. Since the curve of the sheer would be less apparent on larger vessels, this might suggest the designer was (reasonably and pointedly) trying to show that the ships in William's fleet were large (Ill.47 - above). Needless to say

<sup>377</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 124; Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 180-1.

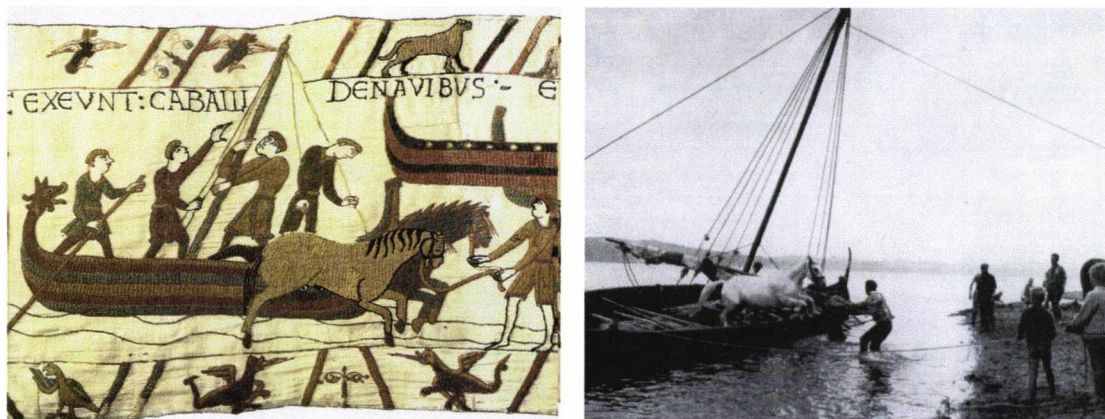
this must remain conjectural. Some vessels are shown with a gap amidships, which might be instructive of their cargo hold. Occasionally the fore-stem is higher than that at the aft, and on some vessels it is embellished with a figurehead or another form of decoration. Hulls are generally divided into long, broad, multi-coloured bands, which may represent strakes. Some ships are depicted with kite-shields along the gunwale. At times, oar ports line the length of an upper strake, although these are never shown in use. Occasional vessels are shown with a starboard rudder or steering oar. Many of the ships in the Tapestry have a single mast with a triangular-shaped sail, which is probably representative of the square sail in full wind. Rigging is shown, but only as simple lines running from the mast-top towards fixings at the stem and/or gunwale. A good number of ships are shown fully laden with horses and men.

#### **Evidence for the Ships in the Bayeux Tapestry**

The basic form of the Tapestry's ships compare well with most early medieval ship finds. Particularly striking are the symmetrical hull forms, which have a curved keel and stem posts. These are characteristically 'Norse', typical of Scandinavian ships from the ninth to eleventh centuries and beyond. Vessels such as Sutton Hoo 1 and Graveney indicate that the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with a similar form of ship. As such, those in the Tapestry seem to conform to the broad scheme of contemporary North-West European boat building.

### *Horse Transportation*

The Tapestry's ships are shown fulfilling various functions. Those with horses aboard seem - by implication - to be cargo vessels.<sup>378</sup> The designer does not otherwise or obviously make the distinction between cargo vessels and warships, as both appear broadly similar in form.<sup>379</sup> Although archaeologists have paralleled the Tapestry's ships with Skuldelev 5, such medium-sized warships would have had little room for storage or cargo.<sup>380</sup>



**Illustration 48**

**Disembarkation of horses as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and from the working replica of the Ladby ship (right).**

Whilst a reconstruction of the Ladby boat was put to sea with four horses, such a vessel could not have accommodated the large number of animals shown aboard ships in the Tapestry (Ill.48 - above). Moreover, the Ladby exercise tested whether horses

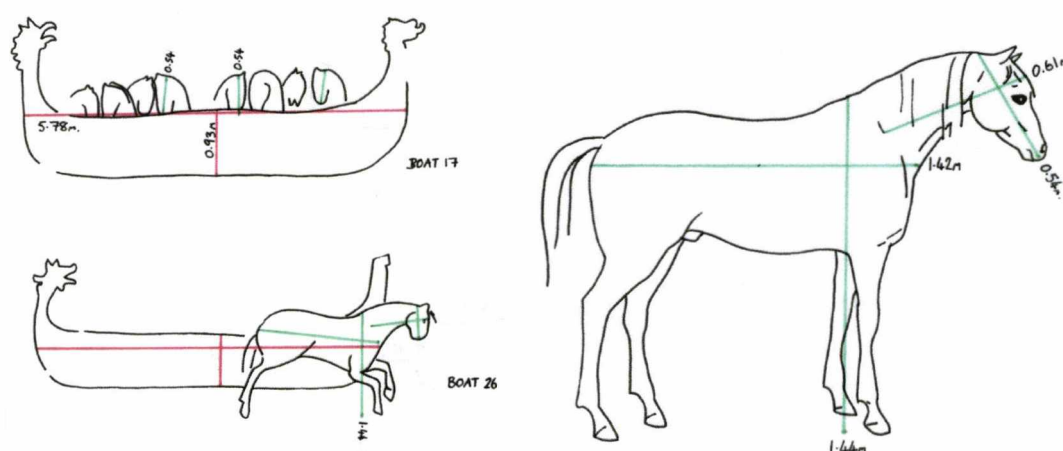
---

<sup>378</sup> Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 60, believed that the transportation of horses by ship was a relatively new technique adopted by the Normans shortly before 1066. However, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (A and E), trans. Garmonsway, 84-5, notes that in 892 the East Franks crossed from Boulogne to Lyminge with 'horse and all' (also see Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 301).

<sup>379</sup> Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 299. Between Scene 36 and 40 William's men are shown embarking with masses of weapons, food and supplies, and once away the ships are shown transporting both horses and men. Both 'warships' and 'cargo vessels' have a similar keel shape, curved stem posts, long hull form and relatively narrow draft.

<sup>380</sup> Skuldelev 5 is of special interest because 'here for the first time ever we can form a true idea of the nature of a ship built for flat Danish beaches' (Olsen and Crumlin-Pedersen, *Five Viking Ships*, 108, 132-45 and 170). The general form of this vessel, its numerous oars holes in the gunwale strake and evidence for a mast, allow for a close comparison with Ships 10-15, 19-20 and 27-32.

could be embarked to and disembarked from a shallow drafted vessel, rather than the sailing capabilities of a ship laden with up to ten horses and undertaking a Channel crossing.<sup>381</sup> Incidentally, given that the average European warhorse was a medium-sized animal between 14.2 and 15 hands, the distance between the base of the hull and gunwale should be at least 1.5 meters deep (Ill.49 - below).<sup>382</sup> It is quite clear then – if there were much doubt - that the horses and ships in the Tapestry are not drawn to the same scale.<sup>383</sup>



**Illustration 49**

**Diagram to illustrate the size of the ships in the Bayeux Tapestry, using the size of an eleventh century horse for scale.**

<sup>381</sup> Ten horses are shown on Ship 15. For further discussion of the Ladby experiment see Thorvildsen, *Ladby*, 26. Gillmor, 'Naval Logistics', 110, convincingly argued that the Ladby ship was 'too narrow and too shallow drafted' to transport horses across the channel as 'the roll and pitch of the sea undoubtedly would have thrown the horses overboard because of the low freeboard'. See also Neumann, 'Ship-Hydrodynamic Aspects of the Norman Invasion', 233-4.

<sup>382</sup> Hyland, *Medieval Warhorse*, 85-6, gives a dimension between 144.27cm and 152.40cm high from hoofs to withers. If the horses in the BT had been drawn to scale and in proportion, a horse measuring 14.2 hh would suggest that Ship 17 was 0.93m deep: well below the 1.5m required to ensure that only the horses' heads are showing above the gunwale. Based on similar calculations the overall length of the Tapestry ships would be between 5.64m and 5.78m, much smaller than Gokstad Færing 1 (6.6m).

<sup>383</sup> Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 189-90.



**Illustration 50**

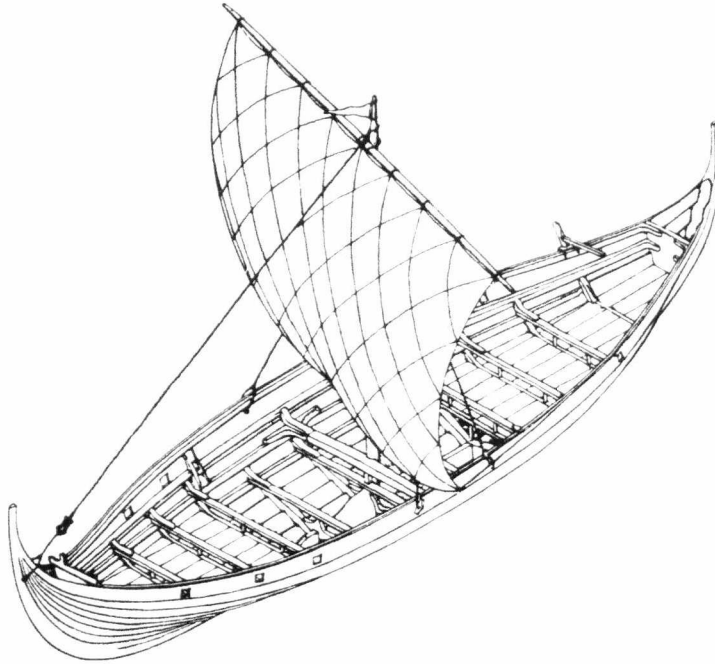
**A ship in the Bayeux Tapestry with a gap in the gunwale amidships.**

Some ships are shown with a gap in the gunwale amidships, a feature which the designer possibly considered to be diagnostic of contemporary cargo vessels (Ill.50 - above).<sup>384</sup> Certainly, some vessels in the Tapestry do seem to compare well with the basic features of the Skuldelev traders (Ill.51 - below), having the same hull form, central sail, gap amidships and - in three cases - oar ports both forward and aft.<sup>385</sup> However, it is perplexing that in the Tapestry horses are never shown on ships with a gap amidships, while those with the gap (which we would naturally assume to be traders) are never shown with cargo. It is apparent that horses have a limited role in the earlier part of the Tapestry, and this might explain why they are not illustrated

<sup>384</sup> Ships 1 to 6 (Scenes 4-6 and 23-4). This seems to be a common feature of traders from the s. ix onwards. Skuldelev 1 had a small number of oars, fore and aft, which would have been used when the wind dropped (Olsen and Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Skuldelev Ships', 106-7). Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 226 compared the Tapestry ships with Skuldelev 3, which has two oar ports forward starboard, three forward port, and a single oar-hole (which shows little sign of wear) on each side aft. The evidence from Roskilde (1996) supports the view that oars no longer played much part in the propulsion of trading vessels from the s. xi onwards (Croome, 'Roskilde', 384).

<sup>385</sup> Ships 3, 5 and 6. Gillmor, 'Naval Logistics', compared the Tapestry ships with Gokstad and Skuldelev 1 and 3.

aboard vessels with a gap amidships. Nonetheless, this begs the question: why, if cargo vessels are shown with a gap amidships in the earlier part of the Tapestry, did they not have them in the Norman invasion fleet?



**Illustration 51**

**Artistic reconstruction of Skuldelev 3:  
one of the traders excavated from Roskilde fjord.**

The point at which the gap amidships appears within the Tapestry seems to be important in understanding its significance. Since in all but one instance the gap-amidships is associated with English vessels, it may be the case that the designer deliberately used this feature to differentiate between English and Norman ships.<sup>386</sup>

Interestingly, both the vessel from mound 1 at Sutton Hoo and the Graveney boat may

---

<sup>386</sup> Ship 7 is the exception. However this vessel is described as '*navis Anglica*' and therefore this visual attribute – if diagnostically English – might not have been necessary. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 181 and 226, suggested that the gap amidships may have been used on the basis of a verbal description or personal observation. See also Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 190-1. Musset, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 61, disagreed, suggesting that it was evident that the Tapestry artist only had one type of ship in his mind.

have had a gap amidships.<sup>387</sup> Yet this feature is not particular to Anglo-Saxon boatbuilding; as we have seen, it appears in the Skuldelev traders.<sup>388</sup>

It is also important to note that the English ship without a gap amidships appears after one of the 'joins' in the Tapestry (between Sections 2 and 3). It is possible then that, rather than representing a purposeful attempt to express characteristics of national identity, the distinction between the boats in the earlier part of the Tapestry and those depicted after Scene 24 is due to the tastes of different workshops or a simplification in the Tapestry design during construction.<sup>389</sup> This will be discussed further in the main conclusion.

Gaps amidships are rare in medieval art, but do seem to be depicted in both Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch: here the Ark is shown with a doorway cut through the upper strakes (Ill.52 - below).<sup>390</sup> Hence, whilst it is possible that the Tapestry designer has used this feature in an attempt to convey the cargo hulls of contemporary traders, it is perhaps more likely that this motif was borrowed from art.

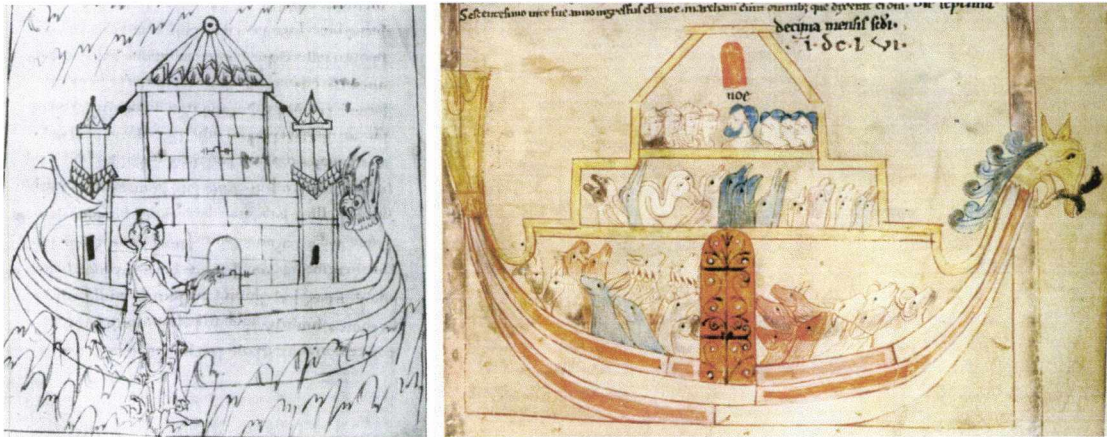
---

<sup>387</sup> Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 251, suggested that the Graveney boat 'may have had a break amidships in the hold area'. Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo*, 352, noted that there was an 'absence of gunwale spikes or tholes in the midship area' of the Sutton Hoo 1 and surmised that 'either...the thole-bases were removed throughout the burial chamber area to accommodate the chamber roof; or that' the vessel 'had been adapted as a royal barge or vessel for non-military occasions, by either the elimination of the rowing positions in the midships area – or conceivably, removal of the rowing positions might have been connected with adaptation of the vessel for sail'. He also suggested that there might have been a central gap in the rowing positions from the outset. Gifford and Gifford, 'Anglo-Saxon Ships', 133, agreed, noting that the wrought-iron fastenings from the oak of the hull of the Sutton Hoo ship could not have been extracted without leaving some traces behind.

<sup>388</sup> Both Skuldelev 1 and 5 had cargo space amidships, and oar ports only forward and aft.

<sup>389</sup> At the same point in the Tapestry the moustaches of 'Englishmen' disappear. In previous scenes these had been used to distinguish between Anglo-Saxons and Normans.

<sup>390</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p. 68; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.14r. For discussion of the gap amidships see Evans, *Sutton Hoo*, 29 and Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 251. For a discussion of horses aboard a ship see Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 187 and Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 38.



**Illustration 52**

**Vessels in Junius 11 (left) and the Old English Hexateuch (right)  
with gaps in the gunwale amidships.**

### *Figureheads and Stem Ornament*

The ornate figureheads of the Tapestry's ships are the most notable nautical (!) feature indicating the influence of artistic tradition as opposed to the contemporary world (Illustrated in the Appendix).<sup>391</sup> Imposing zoomorphic, anthropomorphic and decorative figureheads, commonly referred to in Scandinavian sagas, are traditionally associated with Viking longships;<sup>392</sup> however, most such literary sources date from long after the period in question.<sup>393</sup> Archaeologically, decorative figureheads are

<sup>391</sup> Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 144. The bow and stem decoration of the Tapestry ships is variable, with six main types of bow and stem decoration: A) Figureheads, B) Vegetal/Decorative, C) Fluted, D) Scrolled, E) Boxed, and F) Squared.

<sup>392</sup> *Karlhöfði*, the ship of Saint Olaf the King (1016-30), carried a king's head (*Saint Olaf's Saga*, Chap. 47, trans. Hollander, 279-80). King Harald Haardraade (1060-1), Chief Raud the Strong of Salten (c.997) and King Eystein (1103-22) all had ships with a dragon's head for a prow and crook-like tail aft (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 27-9). The Sagas imply that the serpent or dragon was a leading motif for the stem decoration of Scandinavian ships throughout the medieval period (Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 167).

<sup>393</sup> An exception is the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, I. 4, II. 4, ed. Campbell, 13, 19-21, written c.1037-40, which describes the ornate figureheads of the ships of King Svein and Knut, carved in the form of many kinds of animals and beasts.



known for the migration period, as the early examples from the River Scheldt at Zele, Appels, and Moerzeke demonstrate (Ill.53 - below).<sup>394</sup>



**Illustration 53**

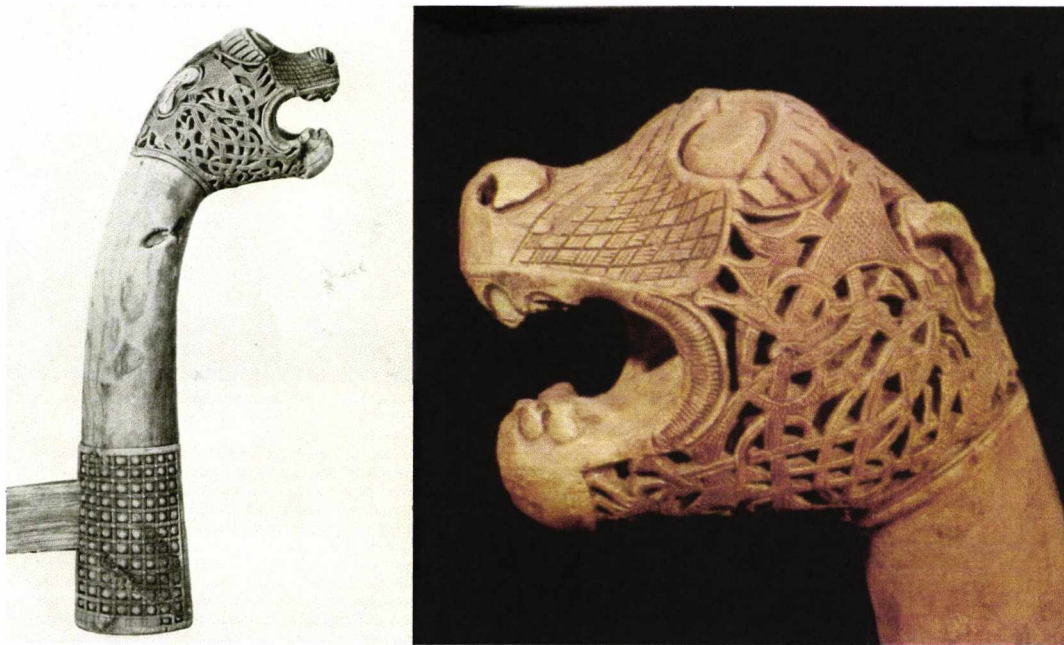
**The decorative figureheads from the River Scheldt  
at a) Zele, b) Appels and c) Moerzeke.**

Nonetheless, the suitability of these for display on the narrow, raking stems of Anglo-Saxon ships has been doubted.<sup>395</sup> Although later examples are unknown, it is tempting to parallel the five zoomorphic carvings recovered from the Oseberg ship with those

<sup>394</sup> Zele has been radiocarbon dated to AD 69 ±180, Appels to AD 400 ±150 and Moerzeke to AD 350 ±70 (Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, 132-3). Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo*, 384, made the important point that since such figureheads are considered essentially Viking in conception, it is sobering to see such early examples found on the River Scheldt, rather than in Scandinavia.

<sup>395</sup> Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, 133, claimed that the Zele figurehead was from a piece of furniture or cart, and doubted the purpose and function of the Moerzeke carving. The massive tenon of the Appels piece could not have been fitted to the narrow raking stem of an Anglo-Saxon ship.

described in the Scandinavian sagas (Ill.54 - below). Even so, these were never tied or fixed to a Viking Age ship.<sup>396</sup>



**Illustration 54**

**One of the zoomorphic carvings recovered from the Oseberg ship.**

With no extant early medieval zoomorphic or anthropomorphic figureheads, it is necessary to examine surviving stem posts to see whether or not they might once have carried them. Such an investigation is difficult where the remains are fragmentary. The stem posts of Sutton Hoo 1, for example, had rotted away prior to excavation, and although Bruce-Mitford hypothesised that a royal ship might be expected to have carried stem decoration, this was simply conjecture.<sup>397</sup> Similarly, the height of the

---

<sup>396</sup> The Oseberg head posts all had metre-long wooden handles that were morticed into holes at the base of the pole. The figureheads were probably carried by means of these poles, perhaps as part of a religious procession (Sjøvold, *Oseberg*, 40; Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 62). Nonetheless, royal ships may have had much more ornate stem decoration than that found on working boats. Both the top parts of the bow and stern of the Oseberg ship were reconstructed on the basis of fragments recovered elsewhere in the burial (Sjøvold, *Oseberg*, 22).

<sup>397</sup> Although Sutton Hoo 1 could not have carried a figurehead on its stem, 'as neither the sweep nor the narrow plank-on-edge cross-section of the stem post would have been suitable', Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo*, 382-3, entertained the hypothesis that 'such a figurehead could have been fixed at the point where the gunwale strakes join the stem-post'. This would 'suggest that the stem-post would have ended at the gunwale level and the figurehead placed behind the out-thrusting curve of the stem'. Iron spirals

stem of the Gokstad ship could not be determined since the bow, stern and first two upper strakes had rotted away.<sup>398</sup> Surviving stem posts imply that early medieval ships had either square or, more commonly, pointed stem termination.<sup>399</sup>



**Illustration 55**

**Examples of the ships with box stems (apparently shown with slots) depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

It has been suggested that figureheads may have been removable, and that boxed, square or flushed stems - commonly illustrated in the Tapestry - may have been slots designed to take a figurehead (Ill.55 - above).<sup>400</sup> There is later documentary evidence

---

found in the prow of Ladby were believed to be part of a 'dragonhead' stem ornament (Sørensen, *Ladby*, 237), but the archaeological evidence for this was by no means certain.

<sup>398</sup> On the basis of the fine carved heads of the tents and beds recovered from Gokstad burial, Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 103, were inclined to accept that the ship did have figureheads. Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 57, argued against this view due to the small size of the vessel, noting that the standing portion of the stem maintained its breadth to the top and then appears to have been cross cut.

<sup>399</sup> Interestingly, the type of pointed stem post recovered intact from Skuldelev 3 is not depicted in the Tapestry (Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 200-2). Nonetheless, the square flush stem seems to have been the common way of terminating the stern in the Viking era. The stern of a vessel found near Sunnanå, Ryfylke, had 'a characteristic break in the transition from a uniform projecting curve to a vertical line' and the top of the stem was intact and 'cut into a high point which rises flush with the edge of the sheer strake' (Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 82). Similarly, Gifford and Gifford, 'Anglo-Saxon Ships', built their half scale working model of Sutton Hoo 1 and the Graveney boat with flush stem decoration.

<sup>400</sup> Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 57; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 187; Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 61.

to support such a procedure: in 1221 Bishop Nicolas of Aaslo is said to have lent figureheads of his ship, *Skeggen*, to Duke Skule.<sup>401</sup> The theory that this is what is shown in the Tapestry would be more convincing if all the beached ships had such slots (which they do not), and if they did not also appear on some of the vessels sailing in William's invasion fleet. Further, on common sense grounds it seems unlikely that many of the newly-constructed vessels of William's fleet would carry ornate stem decoration.<sup>402</sup> Would Duke William have tied up valuable time and resources insisting that figureheads be carved? Taking all the evidence into account it seems probable that many contemporary vessels, including (most of) those in William's fleet, would have had simple stem decoration or, more likely, none at all.<sup>403</sup>

The diversity in the types of stem ornamentation is thus an intriguing aspect of the Tapestry. It might imply that the designer wished to evoke the diversity of William's grand fleet - requisitioned cargo ships, small boats, warships and specially constructed troop ships. Yet most working vessels in the eleventh century would have had pointed or square flush stems; so why does the Tapestry omit pointed stems, while ornate figureheads are proliferate? The conundrum may be explained by iconographic tradition. Zoomorphic prow decoration can be traced back to prehistoric art, becoming common in the medieval period.<sup>404</sup> Contemporary manuscript

---

<sup>401</sup> cf. Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 29.

<sup>402</sup> Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 145; Musset, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 61.

<sup>403</sup> Perhaps only high-status vessels in the Norman fleet would have had stem ornament: the *Ship List* which van Houts, 'Ship List', 174, believed was a contemporary text, states that William's flagship, the *Mora*, had a prow figurehead of a golden infant holding an ivory horn. Van Houts (p.166) likened this to the figurehead which is depicted in the BT (Figure 334 on Ship 22).

<sup>404</sup> Prehistoric rock carvings with zoomorphic stem decoration have been found in Norway at Skjomen, Rødøy and Evenhus. Bronze Age carvings are known at Hornes in Skjeberg and Brandskog, Uppland (Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 12).

illuminations provide numerous parallels for the figureheads in the Tapestry, some of the closest being those in Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch (Ill.56 - below).<sup>405</sup>



**Illustration 56**

**Zoomorphic figureheads of the Bayeux Tapestry (left), Junius 11 (middle) and the Old English Hexateuch (right).**

### *Planking*

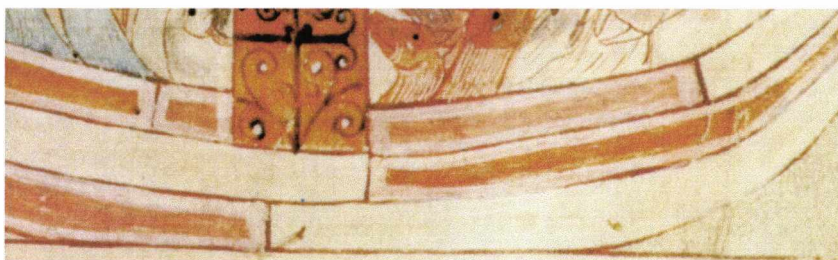
There are other vital clues to the extent to which the designer was concerned to recreate the contemporary scene. The strakes which form the hull of the Tapestry ships are depicted as a delightful array of multi-coloured bands. These could be purely decorative – like the stripes on the mound of Hastings castle (discussed above) – but they might represent clinker planking.<sup>406</sup> If the latter is true then the number of strakes

---

<sup>405</sup> Zoomorphic stem decoration is depicted in BodL, Junius 11, p.66, p.68, BL, Cotton Claudius, B. iv, f. 14r, 15r. BT Ship 1 has fluted stem decoration, which can be paralleled in BodL, Junius 11, p.66, p.68. This stem decoration also occurs in Romanesque illuminations such as Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 22, f.166; Oxford, Corpus Christi College, 157, p.383; BL, Arundel 91, f.188. Vegetal stem decoration is found on the bow of Ship 6 and the stern of Ship 19. Such decoration is rarely found in manuscript illuminations, although p.65 of Junius 11 provides one such example.

<sup>406</sup> Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 64. Carvel construction should not be dismissed (and was proposed by Fowke, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 93), although the archaeological evidence reveals that clinker build was the preferred method of boat building practice in North-West Europe (Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, 33). Evidence that contemporary vessels would have been painted is found in the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, l. 4, ed. Campbell, 13 and on the Ladby ship, which – based upon the archaeological evidence – was painted in blue and yellow (Sørensen, *Ladby*, 239-241).

shown compares well with those found on early medieval wrecks.<sup>407</sup> Nonetheless, the strakes of the Tapestry's ships are shown as single planks. Strakes of one-plank construction are known in the migration period, particularly in North-West Europe, but from the seventh century onwards ships were constructed of several planks scarfed together.<sup>408</sup> Significantly perhaps, scarf joins frequently appear in manuscripts from the early twelfth century,<sup>409</sup> but are less common before then. This said Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch provide good and early examples of hull planking with scarf joins (Ill.57 - below), but even here this feature is atypical of ships in both manuscripts.<sup>410</sup>



**Illustration 57**

**Detail of one of the ships depicted in the Old English Hexateuch showing the scarf joins on the hull planking.**

### *Shields along the Gunwale*

It has long been assumed that it was Scandinavian custom to hang shields along a vessel's gunwale when leaving or arriving at port; and five ships in the Tapestry have

---

<sup>407</sup> Not accounting for the strakes below the waterline, the boats in the BT have between three and seven strakes each.

<sup>408</sup> Sutton Hoo 1, Gokstad, Oseberg, Graveney and Skuldelev 1 to 6 were all built of planks scarfed together. The earlier Nydam ship was constructed of single oak planks up to 23m long. John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004) suggested that the joints in the hull planking shown in art might be butt-joints rather than scarf-joints. Whilst the small wooden pegs used to join the scarf are never illustrated, and therefore it is possible butt-joints might have been intended, butt-joints are never found on late Anglo-Saxon or Viking Age ships (Graham-Campbell, *Viking World*, 45).

<sup>409</sup> E.g. Oxford, CCC, 157, p.383; Oxford, UC, 165, p.143; London, British Library, Harley 4751, f.69.

<sup>410</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.65; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.14r.

shields arranged in this manner.<sup>411</sup> Recently it has been argued that shields could not have lined the gunwale whilst a ship was underway, since oar ports would have been covered;<sup>412</sup> although an archaeological reconstruction of Skuldelev 5 was put to sea by oar with shields in the shield rack (Ill.58 - below).<sup>413</sup> However, most discussions have overlooked the fact that the shields on the ships in the Tapestry are not shown outboard, but are displayed from within the gunwale, contrary to the archaeological evidence.



**Illustration 58**

**A working replica of Skuldelev 5  
showing shields in a shield rack along the outboard gunwale.**

---

<sup>411</sup> This compares well with the testament of Scandinavian sagas and was documented archaeologically at Gokstad, where thirty-two shields were fixed along the gunwale of each side of the ship (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 34; Brøgger and Shetelig, *Viking Ships*, 88).

<sup>412</sup> With the limited navigational ability of the single square sail in port or low wind, the crew would need to alter course by oar (Gibbs-Smith, 'Notes', 170; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 33). Since shields would only have been secured with bast cord, it is unlikely that they could have been hung outboard in high seas (Christensen, *Viking Ships*, 92).

<sup>413</sup> Sørensen, *Ladby*, 221-2. Indeed, Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 175 & 265 suggested that the shields lining the sides of the boats in the BT would have protected the crew from the elements, whilst underway. However, it is difficult to explain why the majority of the ships in the Tapestry, including those with cargo, did not require such protection. Shields are also shown at the stem of some ships. Whilst Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 61, did not know their exact purpose, he did not think they would offer protection from the elements.

Shields are depicted on ships in near-contemporary art, such as the Stone of Ledberg, Kyrka and the late twelfth-century Ebulo Codex, both of which show shields hanging along the outside of the gunwale.<sup>414</sup> Of particular relevance to the Tapestry's illustrations (though they cannot have been known to the designer) are some early tenth-century coins from Spangerid, Vest-Auger, one of which seems to depict both round- and kite-shields from within the gunwale (Ill.59 - below).<sup>415</sup> Illuminated manuscripts are less helpful, although the manner in which the halos of Christ and his companions line up against the side of the portside gunwale of the ship in the Hitda Codex (depicted on page 112) offers an interesting analogy.<sup>416</sup> The origins of this motif in the Tapestry, therefore, remain uncertain.



**Illustration 59**

**A coin from Spangerid, Vest-Auger,  
which appears to show both round- and kite-shields along the inboard gunwale.**

### *Sail*

There is extensive documentary evidence for the use of sails by Anglo-Saxon ships, but this is not paralleled in archaeology. Similarly, there is no direct evidence for the type of sails used on Anglo-Saxon, or for that matter, Norman ships. The bundle of

<sup>414</sup> Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 120. II, f.120r (see Kölzer and Stähli, *Liber ad Honorem Augusti*, for a facsimile of this manuscript).

<sup>415</sup> Shields were displayed in a similar manner on s. ix coins from Hedeby (illustrated in Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, 179), picture stones at Lärbro and Tullstorp, and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 736, p.12.

<sup>416</sup> Darmstadt, HL, 1640, f.117.



yellowish woollen cloth (on to which red stripes were sewn) that was found in the Gokstad burial may be the vestiges of a sail, but this has been disputed.<sup>417</sup>



**Illustration 60**

**Diagram of Ship 3 in the Bayeux Tapestry  
showing that its sail has been rendered in error.**

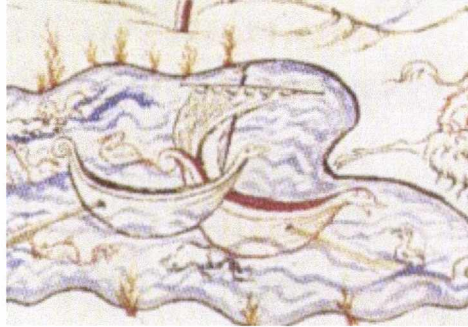
In the Tapestry sails are shown with a curved triangular form which, most commentators agree, are stylised representations of the square sail: perhaps the designer ‘did not know how to foreshorten in such a way as to give a recognisable rendering of a rectangle seen obliquely’.<sup>418</sup> Grape believed that at first (in the case of Ship 3) the designer had ‘been at pains to indicate that the lower edge of the wind-filled sail is straight’, but that he did away with this in the following scenes in favour of a ‘simplified and stereotyped’ sail.<sup>419</sup> However, Grape’s reading of the sail of Ship

<sup>417</sup> Recently, there has been much support for Nicolaysen’s hypothesis (*Gokstad*, 37) that this material was part of a tent. Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 63, believed early sails would have been made of wool, but were probably constructed of linen or hemp by the time the Tapestry was produced. The Scandinavian saga of St Olaf, Chap. 147, trans. Hollander, 437 - written down in s. xiii – notes that the sails of the ships of Knut the Powerful and Earl Hakon had stripes of blue, red and green. Likewise Patterned sails are found on Gotland picture stones (Tweddle and Hall, *Viking Ships*, 14). These tend to be much more ornate than the BT, with a tendency towards diagonal patterning; examples include the s. viii picture stones at Karlby, Lärbro and Tjangride.

<sup>418</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 35. Sails may have been furled with brailing lines as a way of shortening the standard square sail and controlling it when setting out and arriving (personal correspondence with Gillian Hutchinson, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2001).

<sup>419</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 35. Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 190, agreed, even though he believed that ‘in practice, ships of this size would always have the sheet of the sail belayed aft at cleat or on one of the beams’ – so in this respect the depictions are unrealistic. Similarly Musset, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 63, observed that some of the Tapestry’s ships sails are held by a corner, even though it would have been impossible for a man to hold a sail in this manner against the force of the wind. Sails must have been managed by a system of ropes and pulleys, but this level of detail is not shown in the BT.

3 is mistaken. Closer inspection reveals it to be an error: the bottom is shown with an outline stitch, but it has not been filled with laid and couched work (Ill.60 - above). Again, this is something to which we shall return in the main conclusion.



**Illustration 61**

**Ships with ‘triangular’ sails in the Harley 603 Psalter.**

Since the form of medieval sails is (currently) uncertain, it is difficult to be sure whether or not the renditions offered by our designer depict those used by contemporary ships. However, most early medieval representations of ships show a forward-facing square or rectangular sail.<sup>420</sup> Representations of triangular-form sails, like those in the Tapestry become more common in twelfth-century illuminations;<sup>421</sup> however, they do occur in the Canterbury-produced Harley 603 Psalter (Ill.61 - above).<sup>422</sup> Thus whilst the Tapestry designer might have sketched the sails of ships as they visited a local harbour, on balance it seems more likely that he borrowed this triangular form from contemporary art.

---

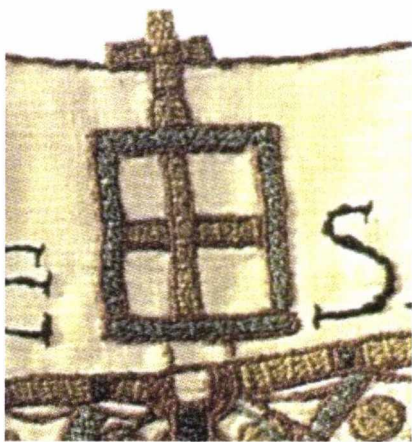
<sup>420</sup> Gotland picture stones at Hunninge and Stenkyrka, Lillbjärs are good examples. An undated graffito on an early Norman column in Upper Deal church, Kent shows a square sail, manipulated to give the impression of the vessel riding along in the wind.

<sup>421</sup> E.g. BL, Arundel, 91, f.188; BL, Harley 4751, f.69; Oxford, CCC, 157, p.383.

<sup>422</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.51v.

### *Cross at the Masthead*

The cross fixed high in the mast of the vessel that is believed to be William's flagship, the *Mora*, has been interpreted as a lantern or crossed pendant, perhaps a Papal banner.<sup>423</sup> It is not known whether crosses were carried on the masts of contemporary ships, though they appear in artistic depictions. However, similar crosses are shown on early ninth-century coins from Dorestad, as well as on the twelfth-century Tournai font in Winchester Cathedral (Ill.62 - below).<sup>424</sup>



**Illustration 62**

**The crossed masthead of the *Mora* in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and that on a ship depicted on the Tournai font in Winchester Cathedral (right).**

### *Shipbuilding Scenes*

It has long been held that the shipbuilding scenes in the Tapestry are of the utmost importance for understanding the use of woodworking tools in the early medieval

---

<sup>423</sup> William of Poitiers, *Gesta Willelmi*, ii. 7, ed. Davis and Chibnall, 111, noted that 'for fear that they [the Normans] might reach the shore to which they were bound before dawn and run into danger in a hostile and unknown landing place, he [William] has (sic) an order proclaimed by a herald that when they reach the open sea they should all rest at anchor for a short watch of the night not far from his ship, until they see a lamp lit at his masthead, and hear the sound of a trumpet as a signal to sail on'. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 187, believed that this referred to the lantern depicted in the Tapestry (also see Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 299). On the other hand, Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 39, suggested that the masthead should be interpreted as a composite object: 'essentially a double cross, with a possible function as an ensign'. Although it is not known whether William's flagship displayed a special pendant, it is documented that William was given the Papal banner.

<sup>424</sup> For illustrations: Dorestad coins, see Haywood, *Dark Age Naval Power*, 179; Winchester Cathedral font, see Eden, *Black Tournai Fonts*, 12-6, Ill. (facing p.12) i; Drake, *Romanesque Fonts*, 21.

period.<sup>425</sup> Such a view presupposes that the tools and methods accurately reflect contemporary boat-building practice. Although the Tapestry seems to give an accurate rendition of eleventh-century woodworking tools, it is worth noting that diagnostic phases of contemporary boat construction are not depicted.



**Illustration 63**

**Parallels between the method used to smooth rough planks in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and Damian Goodburn in an archaeological experiment (right).**

Men are shown felling trees with long hafted symmetrical, straight-bladed axes. A haft of up to one metre in length is believed to have been ideal for such a purpose and the axes depicted in the Tapestry seem to correspond to this view.<sup>426</sup> The Tapestry also suggests that rough planks were smoothed with a T-axe, and this is also consistent with the archaeological evidence: one may compare the method employed by Damian Goodburn in an archaeological experiment (Ill.63 - above) with the figure in the Tapestry, who wedges a rough plank in a split tree trunk for ease of work. Both the construction of the Graveney boat and the Skuldelev wrecks demonstrate that the

<sup>425</sup> Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185, suggested that 'the Bayeux Tapestry depicts the clinker boat-building technique current in southern England'. See also Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships*, 8, 21-2

<sup>426</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 184.

axe was the principal tool of the medieval shipwright and was used in preference to the saw.<sup>427</sup> Concordant with this, the Tapestry does not show carpenters working with saws. The other tools that are shown, such as breast-augers, hammers and side-axes, are similarly consistent with the archaeological evidence.<sup>428</sup>

The trees in the boat-building scenes have tall straight trunks and are free of notches, providing excellent carpentry timber.<sup>429</sup> They are also notably thinner and straighter than those depicted elsewhere in the Tapestry (which will be discussed in due course).<sup>430</sup> In addition, the designer gives the impression that this timber was green, and as such would have been ideal for boat-building.<sup>431</sup> Although it is known that English shipbuilders used common/green oak for boat-building, while Scandinavians preferred pine,<sup>432</sup> the designer has made no obvious attempt to signal the type of trees being used. This is hardly surprising given that the Tapestry is an artistic impression of boat-building, not a carpentry manual! Nonetheless, some have ignored the Tapestry's limitations and presumed it to be an accurate guide to

---

<sup>427</sup> Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185, noted that axes of different kinds were used during the construction of the Graveney boat. Axe traces 'in the form of a series of short chop marks terminating with straight cuts at an angle of 30° to 90° in the direction of the grain were found almost everywhere in the oak planks and internal timbers' of the Skuldelev wrecks (Olsen and Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Skuldelev Ships', 160). Though saws were used during the construction of the Gokstad ship (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 13), the archaeological evidence demonstrates that Anglo-Saxons did not use them (Damien Goodburn, Lecture given at the 'Kent Archaeological Field School', 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2000). Wedge-shaped planks produced by cleaving are stronger than those tangentially cut by saw and more economical in time to produce (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185).

<sup>428</sup> Marks left in the blind holes of the Graveney boat were left by an auger with a spoon-bit, similar to a type found in Anglo-Saxon England and Scandinavia (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185). Two spoon-shaped augers were also found in the Gokstad burial mound (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 51).

<sup>429</sup> Strakes were usually made from long pieces of timber of equal width and height of about 10-18cm, up to 12.1m in length, and cut from slender logs (Olsen and Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Skuldelev Ships', 156; Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185; Graham-Campbell, *Viking World*, 50).

<sup>430</sup> Since the Tapestry's trees are stylised, it is difficult to prove whether or not their form in the boat-building scenes is intentional.

<sup>431</sup> The Tapestry shows timber being newly cut. Green timber had practical advantages and could be easily cleft, without the log splitting, and conveniently worked (Fenwick, *Graveney Boat*, 185).

<sup>432</sup> Edwin Gifford, Lecture at 'Kent Archaeological Field School', 1<sup>st</sup> July 2000.

contemporary woodworking. Indeed, Wilson used the Tapestry to claim that trees were trimmed before they were felled.<sup>433</sup> Common sense suggests that this would have been a laborious and impractical process, since someone would need to climb the tree and lop off its branches from what would be a dangerous and precarious position.<sup>434</sup> It is altogether more likely, therefore, that this image is simply the product of artistic licence.



**Illustration 64**

**The author using wedges to cleave wooden planks.**

As with all clinker-built vessels, the keel and stem posts were laid first. Next the shell was fashioned, and then the frames were carved to fit.<sup>435</sup> Whilst under construction

---

<sup>433</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 184.

<sup>434</sup> Other trees in the Tapestry have lower branches missing, which could be suggested that this is evidence that lower branches were cut for firewood, though is more likely to be an artistic convention.

<sup>435</sup> Rivets fastening the hull planking together are often discovered under the frames of early medieval boat finds, and this proves that the order of construction was keel, hull then frames.

the vessel would be secured by a series of stakes.<sup>436</sup> Using wedges, the medieval carpenter would have cleft tree trunks into usable planks, and these would have formed the strakes for the hull (Ill.64 – above).<sup>437</sup> Internal supporting timbers were cut, following the grain, from appropriately crooked trunks and branches. Given the generous amount of space that was allotted to the boat-building scenes, it is notable – though hardly surprising – that these important stages of clinker-build construction are not shown in the Tapestry. The designer clearly wished to evoke the enormity of the task of constructing the invasion fleet, rather than give a stage-by-stage account of contemporary carpentry methods which were incidental to the thrust of the narrative. Fundamental to understanding the boat-building scenes is the fact that the boats undergoing construction are not significantly different from the completed vessels shown elsewhere. Indeed, as the designer only depicts phases of boat-building which are common to timber construction in general; there is little to suggest that he had an in-depth knowledge of contemporary boat-building practice.<sup>438</sup>

As noted earlier, boat-building illustrations are extremely rare in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and those that appear are associated with Noah's Ark. The parallels between the figure using an axe to smooth a timber plank in the Tapestry and those engaged in constructing the Ark in both Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch (Ill.65 - below) are therefore particularly interesting, since both books may have been

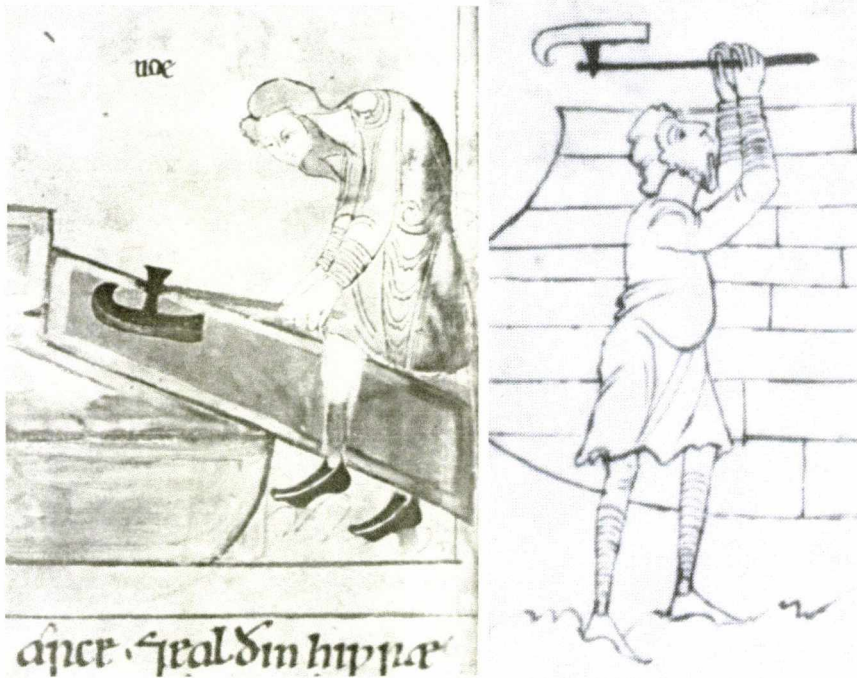
---

<sup>436</sup> This was identified archaeologically at Graveney. The Graveney boat seems to have been undergoing repair at the time it was abandoned, since it was excavated from a platform of brushwood, with evidence of woodworking in oak, ash and willow.

<sup>437</sup> Olsen and Crumlin-Pedersen, 'Skudelev Ships', 160, suggested that the piles of wooden planks around the woodman in the Tapestry (Figure 269) indicate that large logs were split in the forest and then transported to the shipyard where they were squared and finished. The more parts a trunk is cleft into the less it will shrink or expand, and thus it is more suitable for boat building (Damien Goodburn, Lecture at 'Kent Archaeological Field School', 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2000).

<sup>438</sup> During the early medieval period boat-building seems to have been a specialized profession. In Scandinavia there seem to be a distinction between two groups of workmen engaged in the construction work of vessels of war (Nicolaysen, *Gokstad*, 13). See also Crumlin-Pedersen and Olsen, *Skuldelev Ships*, 235-8).

available to a designer with access to Canterbury illuminations.<sup>439</sup> The availability of such motifs clearly lessened the need for the designer to sketch from personal observation.



**Illustration 65**

**Noah using an axe in the Old English Hexateuch (left) and Junius 11 (right).**

## **Conclusion**

The ship scenes in the Bayeux Tapestry are some of the most difficult to interpret with regard to the question of their sources. The present investigation has concentrated upon detail, particularly individual aspects of the design which can be paralleled in the archaeological evidence and/or contemporary manuscript art. Our systematic analysis of individual elements has raised serious doubts concerning the authority of various details of the Tapestry's depiction of contemporary shipping; and it is apparent that the designer has effectively made use of motifs from contemporary manuscript art: examples include ships figureheads and the gap amidships. Further

---

<sup>439</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.65 and BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v. On p.87 of Junius 11, Abraham is shown holding a T-axe as he stands before a building. It is interesting that such tools are often found outside boat-building scenes in such illuminations.



archaeological discoveries in this poorly understood area may yet refine our understanding; nevertheless it is clear that the confidence hitherto placed in the designer's desire to recreate the contemporary scene as regards ships and boat-building, has been overstated.

## DRESS AND CLOTHING

It is inconceivable that the Tapestry designer did not know what contemporary clothes looked like. Yet rather ironically, some scholars have been less ready to accept the evidence of the Bayeux Tapestry at face value here than in other areas. Since dress and clothing in the Tapestry 'is fairly standardized' and 'clearly related to' that in contemporary art, most commentators have remained unconvinced that it reflects contemporary fashion.<sup>440</sup> This, it will be noted, is another essentially circular argument, albeit a negative one.

### Archaeological Evidence

As the only clothing to survive from the Anglo-Saxon and early Anglo-Norman period is highly fragmentary (shoes excepted), it is of limited use for reconstructing the nature of whole garments. Excavations in York yielded the greatest selection of textile remains recovered from a Viking Age site in England, but only one garment (a sock) was substantially complete.<sup>441</sup> Similarly, remarks about dress in contemporary literature are few, and of little help with regard to details of their form.<sup>442</sup> Thus in contrast to previous sections, here there is no firm basis of evidence against which to compare the Tapestry images; consequently the discussion is necessarily more conjectural. This said, one can still compare the clothing depicted in the Tapestry with

---

<sup>440</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 219. Nevinson, 'Costumes', 75, warned that we should not place too great a reliance on the Tapestry for giving conclusive evidence on the history of dress. Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 285, was less sceptical, believing that the Tapestry offered an insight into the form of contemporary royal costume.

<sup>441</sup> Hall, *Viking Dig*, 99. For a discussion and catalogue of the 211 fragments discovered see Walton, *Textiles, Cordage and Raw Fibre*. The poor survival rate of pre-Conquest textiles is matched elsewhere in York (MacGregor, *Anglo-Scandinavian Finds*, 102-38) and in London (Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing*, 1). Whilst textile fragments provide useful indications of manufacturing techniques and the materials employed, they are of limited help for understanding the form of garments. Pre-Conquest shoes are discussed by MacGregor, *Anglo-Scandinavian Finds*, 138-42 and Reid, 'Shoes of Lundenburg', 267-74. See Grew and de Neergaard, *Shoes*, 9-13 for a discussion of s. xii<sup>in-med</sup> footwear.

that shown in illuminations, and try to evaluate such differences as can be observed. This may provide some clues as to whether art or real life exerted the greater influence on the designer.

### **Dress and Clothing in Early Medieval Art**

Relatively little can be learnt about contemporary clothing from the earliest English manuscripts, where bright colours, geometric interlace and zoomorphic motifs dominate at the expense of figural subject matter.<sup>443</sup> Some figures, such as the symbol of St Matthew in the Book of Durrow, have highly stylised clothing, which clearly owes more to the geometric forms of Insular art than to actual forms of dress (Ill.66 - below).<sup>444</sup> Conversely, the altogether more naturalistic garments of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus – who is shown bare-footed and wearing an ankle-length toga over a loose-fitting long-sleeved gown – are obviously a faithful reproduction of those of a late antique model.<sup>445</sup> Between these two extremes, other images, such as St Mark in the St Gallen Gospels, St Luke in the Lichfield Gospels and Christ in the Book of Kells, offer more or less stylised interpretations of late antique models.<sup>446</sup>

---

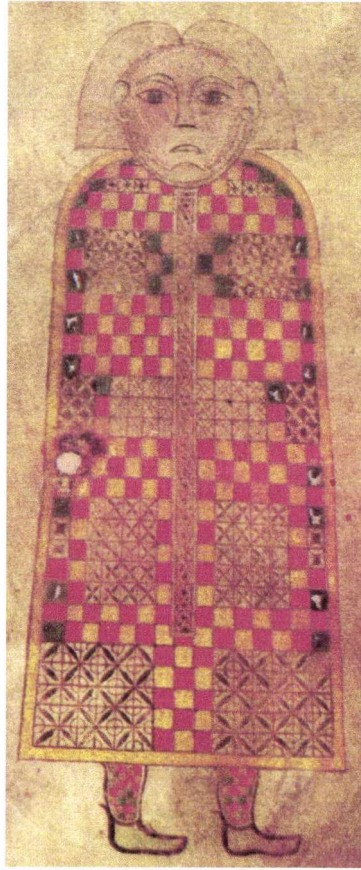
<sup>442</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 70; Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 131-2.

<sup>443</sup> Only holy figures are depicted and women are never shown. Our earliest depictions of female costume are found on the s. viii Franks Casket (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 86).

<sup>444</sup> Dublin, Trinity College, A. 4. 5 (57), f.21v. Whilst St Matthew's cloak is spectacularly embellished with colour and a geometric pattern, his tight-fitting patterned trousers and clog like shoes, with slightly upturned toes, might be indicative of contemporary dress. However, the form and decoration of St Matthew's body in this illumination is clearly likened to contemporary metalwork (Henderson, *Durrow to Kells*, 48-9).

<sup>445</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Amiatino 1, f.5a. The same basic form of garb is also found in Stockholm, KB, A. 135, f.9v, viii<sup>med</sup>, which was very probably copied from CCCC, 286 (discussed by Gameson, *Codex Aureus*, 68-71).

<sup>446</sup> St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 51, p.78; Lichfield, Cathedral Library, 1, p.218; Dublin, Trinity College, A. 1. 6 (58), f.114.



**Illustration 66**

**The stylised clothing of St Matthew in the Book of Durrow.**

The Carolingian renaissance saw a renewed interest in classical art, implying some ‘perception of the three-dimensional figure in space’.<sup>447</sup> With a wider range of figural subject matter and a more naturalistic aesthetic, Carolingian artists seem to show some awareness of the clothes worn by the laity. ‘Contemporary’ garments, such as tunics, trousers (some gartered) and short cloaks appear in volumes like the Utrecht Psalter, the Grandval Bible and the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura.<sup>448</sup> Yet whilst such illuminations show clothing which seems more realistic, antique models undoubtedly played a crucial role in forming the vocabulary of those artists and one must be very cautious about accepting it as a reflection of contemporary reality. The

---

<sup>447</sup> Mütherich and Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, 9.

<sup>448</sup> Utrecht, UB, 32, f.41v; BL, Add. 10546, f.25v; Rome, SPfM, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.50v.

ongoing debate about the precise status of imagery in the Utrecht Psalter – a faithful copy of late antique work or a ninth-century pastiche – is a sobering, albeit extreme, advertisement of the problem. Indeed, other garments in these same manuscripts are sub-classical, while on certain pages characters wear an intriguing combination of classical and contemporary attire (Ill.67 - below).<sup>449</sup>



**Illustration 67**

**The mix of classical and contemporary attire worn by the characters  
in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura.**

<sup>449</sup> E.g. BL, Add. 10546, f.25v; Rome, SPfM, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.50v.

The garb preferred for most 'historical' religious figures was a classical robe – worn barefooted - often with a loose-fitting cloak about the shoulders, as exemplified by the evangelists in the Gospels of St Médard of Soissons and the Ebbo Gospels.<sup>450</sup> It is interesting, therefore, that many 'living' figures, such as Charles the Bald in the Codex Aureus, are shown in contemporary costume, and this might suggest that Carolingian painters were consciously showing living figures in everyday attire.<sup>451</sup> The significance of this should not be overstated since other contemporary figures, such as the emperor Lothar in his eponymous gospels, wear antique or sub-antique outfits:<sup>452</sup> in this case such clothing added resonance to the imperial figure. Conversely, some mythical and biblical characters, such as Cepheus in the Leiden Aratea and Solomon in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura, wear what would appear to be medieval clothing.<sup>453</sup> This is certainly true of Solomon's attendants. It therefore seems that the form of clothing shown in Carolingian illuminations could vary according to the personalities depicted, the circumstances of the commission, and the nature of available exemplars. This said, real life experience may account for several anonymous figures shown in contemporary attire, of which the hunter in the Ebbo

---

<sup>450</sup> BNF, lat. 8850, f.81v, f.180v; Épernay, BM, 1, f.18v, f.90v. Examples of evangelist portraits, such as those in Vienna, Weltliche Schatzkammer der Hofburg, *Coronation Gospels*, f.76v, f.178v, betray Hellenistic tradition and are much more faithful to ancient exemplars (Mütherich and Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting*, 51).

<sup>451</sup> Munich, BSB, Clm. 14000, f.5v.

<sup>452</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 266, f.1v.

<sup>453</sup> Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. lat. Q 79, f.26v and Rome, SPfM, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.1.m, f.188v. Saint Jerome and his clerics in BNF, lat. 1, f.3 and St Gregory in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1141, f.3r also wear, what would seem to be, contemporary attire. However, the conservative nature of religious dress, and the fact that it was designed to follow the form of late antique garb, makes it difficult to be certain whether contemporary dress is being represented or not.

Gospels is one of many examples.<sup>454</sup> This complicated material richly deserved more detailed investigation, but such is beyond the scope of the present enquiry.

The Ottonians recreated contemporary dress with at least as much enthusiasm as the Carolingians. Loose-fitting tunics, tight-fitting trousers, long cloaks fastened with round-brooches, shoes and boots are found in manuscripts such as the Codex Egberti and Codex Aureus of Echternach.<sup>455</sup> Interestingly, some tunics in the Codex Egberti have v-shaped necklines and closely gathered sleeves – a feature which, as we shall see, is also typical of some garments in the Bayeux Tapestry. Clothing is often shown heavily embellished, with braided borders, jewellery and embroidered motifs, as exemplified by the *Registrum Gregorii* and the Munich Gospel Book of Otto III, and this may indicate interest in the details of ‘real life’ high-status costume.<sup>456</sup>

Given their indebtedness to Carolingian precedent, it is no surprise that Ottonian illuminators show both antique and contemporary attire. For example, St Peter in the Pericopes Book of Henry II is shown bare-footed, wearing long, loose-fitting gowns and draped in a classical ‘shawl’,<sup>457</sup> whereas ‘living’ figures, including Henry II in his sacramentary, wear contemporary garb.<sup>458</sup> Similarly, ‘living’ ecclesiastics such as Bernward of Hildesheim in his ‘Precious Gospels’ and Otto III’s attendants in his Munich Gospel Book, wear contemporary vestments, comprising chasuble, alb and orphrey.<sup>459</sup> Here it would seem that Ottonian artists differentiated

---

<sup>454</sup> Épernay, BM, 1, f.13r (van de Horst, Noel and Wüstefeld, *Utrecht Psalter*, 184).

<sup>455</sup> Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 24, f.15v, f.22 and Nuremberg, GNM, 156.142/KG1138, f.78.

<sup>456</sup> Chantilly, Musée Condé, 14 b, *Emperor and Provinces* and Munich, BSB, Clm. 4453, f.24.

<sup>457</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4452, f.152v.

<sup>458</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4456, f.11.

<sup>459</sup> Hildesheim, Cathedral Treasury, 18, f.16v and Munich, BSB, Clm. 4453, f.24v. It is unusual for saints to be depicted in contemporary vestments in Ottonian illuminations: an exception is St Luke in Madrid, Escorial Library, Vitr. 17, f.61v.

between the 'modern' dress of their contemporaries, and the archaic garments worn in antiquity. However, whilst one might expect biblical figures to wear antique attire, many, like Pilate on an early eleventh-century bronze frieze and the Magi in the Pericopes Book of Henry II, are shown in medieval garments.<sup>460</sup> Similarly, there are many instances of a bizarre fusion of antique and 'modern' in the same scene: for example, when Christ - dressed in classical robes - enters Jerusalem, the Epistolary of Trier shows him met by a crowd, in what could be tenth-century costume (Ill.68 – below).<sup>461</sup>



**Illustration 68**

**The mix of classical and contemporary attire worn by the characters in the Epistolary of Trier.**

Likewise, in the Fulda Sacramentary at Göttingen, the soldiers at the crucifixion wear medieval tunics, yet on the same folio Christ and the crowd - before Pilate - are

<sup>460</sup> Bronze doors of c.1015 commissioned by Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim for St Michael's monastery, Hildesheim and now in the cathedral there; Munich, BSB, Clm. 4452, f.152v.

<sup>461</sup> Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, theol. Lat. fol. 34, f.15v.



dressed in classical gowns.<sup>462</sup> Again, this is a complicated field that deserves further study than can be offered here.

In late Anglo-Saxon art, notwithstanding its great debt to Carolingian models, dependence upon antique exemplars for clothing seems to be waning. Although – as in Carolingian and Ottonian art – loose-fitting classical style garments are favoured for the depiction of most holy personages, such as the Evangelists in the Gospel lectionary of St Margaret and Christ in the Trinity Gospels,<sup>463</sup> it became increasingly common to show lay folk – including biblical characters – in contemporary garments, such as long-sleeved tunics and tight-fitting trousers. The example *par excellence* of this phenomenon is the Old English Hexateuch.<sup>464</sup> Hence we see Abraham in the Old English Hexateuch as also Goliath in the Tiberius Psalter wearing what we assume to be contemporary costume; like King Cnut and Queen Emma in the New Minster *Liber Vitae*.<sup>465</sup> Similarly, high numbers of ecclesiastics are, as in some Carolingian and Ottonian works, shown wearing contemporary vestments; the bishop in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold and the priests in the borders of the incipit to John in the Grimbald Gospels are cases in point.<sup>466</sup> In Anglo-Saxon illumination, therefore, many figures – ‘historic’ and contemporary alike – are shown in what seem to be medieval garments. Only God, Christ and the saints regularly retain sub-classical attire.

---

<sup>462</sup> Göttingen, Universitätsbibliothek, MS theol. 231, f.60.

<sup>463</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lat. lit. F. 5, f.3v, f.13v, f.21v, f.30v and Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 10. 4, f.16v.

<sup>464</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.19.

<sup>465</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.38; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.8v, f.9; BL, Stowe 944, f.6.

<sup>466</sup> BL, Add. 49598, f.118v and London, British Library, Add. 34890, f.114v.

## Dress and Clothing in the Bayeux Tapestry

The majority of the 627 characters depicted in the Tapestry wear civilian clothing.<sup>467</sup> Interestingly most - including many of the elite and the clergy - wear the same basic outfit, comprising a long-sleeved tunic with belt, fitted trousers (sometimes gartered) and simple round-toed shoes.<sup>468</sup> High status characters often wear cloaks, and a few are even robed. Occasionally both cloaks and robes are embellished with embroidery or - as in the case of William - decorative tassels. Whilst most ecclesiastics wear civilian dress and are distinguished only by their tonsure, some high-ranking clergy are shown in vestments. The three clothed (!) women all wear long-sleeved dresses with a kerchief covering the head. The Tapestry embroidery also gives hints of material, pattern, folds, as well as border ornament and fastenings, but does not indicate seams or tailoring.<sup>469</sup> Jewellery and dress accessories appear infrequently, with only functional round or square brooches and the occasional buckle depicted.

Elements of the clothing depicted in the Tapestry must be stylised, although how far this was due to the restraints of the medium remains uncertain. On the other hand, it is clearly the case that the colours of the clothing in the Tapestry are more life-like than those of, for example, horses – which will be discussed in a later chapter. It is logical to think that the dyes available to the embroiderers would have also been accessible to contemporary tailors: excavations in York demonstrated that early medieval people wore brightly coloured garments, whose tones were produced

---

<sup>467</sup> From Scenes 1 - 40 (excluding some during the Breton campaign – Scenes 18 - 22) the figures nearly always wear civilian clothes.

<sup>468</sup> This contrasts to some manuscript illuminations where dress differs from one occupation to another, particularly in the case of male clothing (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 149-50).

<sup>469</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 70.

using a range of natural dyes, along with imported silks and other textiles from the Mediterranean and the Near and Far East.<sup>470</sup>

### **Evidence for the Dress and Clothing in the Bayeux Tapestry**

#### *Gown*

The loose-fitting gowns - derived from classical robes – that are commonly depicted in early medieval manuscripts are less frequent in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations.



**Illustration 69**

**Gowns with a diagonal fold in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and British Library, Cotton Titus D. xxvi (right).**

Here they are generally worn by royalty, the Divine and some religious figures.<sup>471</sup>

Correspondingly, examples in the Tapestry are few: only eleven characters – all of

---

<sup>470</sup> Hall, *Viking Dig*, 88, 99, 101; Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 175-95; Crowfoot, Pritchard and Staniland, *Textiles and Clothing*, 86.

<sup>471</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 155, observed that ‘in art the long gown is used to indicate rank’ but ‘in the Bayeux Tapestry it distinguishes rulers from those of lesser rank’. She also notes (pp. 153-4) that the gown was introduced as a costume of kings during the reign of Edgar. Its origins were probably Byzantine.

high status – are clearly shown wearing long-sleeved, ankle-length gowns.<sup>472</sup> In late Anglo-Saxon art, gowns begin to lose their one-shoulder, loose-fitting classical appearance and become long-sleeved and tighter fitting. This transformation adds to the difficulty of distinguishing between long tunics and classical-style gowns in art. At times, gowned seated figures in the Tapestry also appear to wear an undergarment, sometimes of a different colour, which is suggested by a single diagonal line.<sup>473</sup> This is also a common feature of gowns depicted in contemporary illuminations (Ill.69 - above).<sup>474</sup>

Gowns in the Tapestry are occasionally embellished with plain or embroidered bands.<sup>475</sup> The latter are normally found just below the knee of seated, high status individuals,<sup>476</sup> and similar bands are also found in contemporary illuminations.<sup>477</sup>

---

<sup>472</sup> Edward (Figure 3), Guy (Figure 85), William (Figure 186), Edward (Figure 207), clergyman (Figure 234), Harold (Figure 242), Stigand (Figure 243), William (Figure 263), Odo (Figure 264), Odo (Figure 384) and William (Figure 385).

<sup>473</sup> Figures 243, 384 and 385. William's (Figure 263) gown, which is monochrome, has a diagonal fold over the right knee, which might also suggest an undergarment. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 156, thought that the Tapestry designer may have been using this feature to indicate rank, disregarding realism.

<sup>474</sup> Anglo-Saxon examples include London, British Library, Cotton Titus D. xxvi, f.75v; Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 15. 34, f.1; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 709, f.1v. They are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations.

<sup>475</sup> E.g. Edward's gown (Figure 3) has decorated bands around the neck, up the front of the torso and around the legs (just below the knee); the latter comprises a geometric design with a quatrefoil motif over the banding on the left knee. Guy's gown (Figure 85) has a plain band at the hem and decorated bands around the legs (just below the knee). William's gown (Figure 186) has a plain band at the hem and double plain bands around the legs (just below the knee). Edward's gown (Figure 207) has decorated bands around the legs (above the knee). The clergyman (Figure 234) wears ecclesiastical vestments. Harold (Figure 242) wears a plain gown. Stigand (Figure 243) wears ecclesiastical vestments. William (Figure 263) wears a plain gown. Odo (Figure 264) wears a plain gown with a plain band at the hem. Odo (Figure 384) wears a plain gown. William (Figure 385) wears a plain gown. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 155, likened decorated bands on the gown worn by Edward to some found in Carolingian art, but noted they were not typical of Anglo-Saxon art.

<sup>476</sup> E.g. Figure 85. It is uncertain whether such decorated bands are intended to be functional, like leg garters (which would not have been visible through the cloak!) or were purely decorative (see Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 156, for brief discussion).

<sup>477</sup> Anglo-Saxon examples are found in Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Plut. XVII. 20, f.1; Warsaw, Biblioteka Narodowa, I. 3311, f.15; BL, Arundel 60, f.12v. They are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (examples are cited in the appendix).

Gowns are occasionally embellished with other decorative elements. Thus the geometric embroidered bands with associated quatrefoil motifs found on the gowns of King Edward in the Tapestry can be paralleled with that of St John in a Winchester Psalter which also dates from the second half of the eleventh century (Ill.70 - below).<sup>478</sup> It is unlikely that our designer knew of this illumination and it therefore seems reasonable to suppose that these are two broadly contemporary reflections of the same fashion.



**Illustration 70**

**Embroidered band and quatrefoil motifs on the gowns of Edward the Confessor in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and St John in British Library, Arundel 60 (right).**

<sup>478</sup> Edward (Figure 3) and BL, Arundel 60, f.12v (the case for a post-Conquest date for this manuscript as has recently been published by Kidd, 'Re-examination of the Date', 42-54). Nevinson, 'Costumes', 71, believed that this quatrefoil motif was a fleur-de-lys, which it is clearly not. Similar motifs are also found on gowns in Boulogne, BM, 11, f.56; London, British Library, Arundel 155, f.133; Warsaw, BN, I. 3311, f.15. Romanesque examples are also known (examples are cited in the appendix). In general this motif is less popular in continental Romanesque illuminations.

## *Tunics*

Tunics are less common in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations than might be expected.<sup>479</sup>

When depicted, they are shown to be about knee length, which is broadly consistent with those in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>480</sup> Most tunics in the Tapestry and manuscript art alike are fastened with a belt.

Some tunics in the Tapestry are shown as culottes. These were once identified as a feature of working-men,<sup>481</sup> but are in fact clearly worn by individuals of varying status and occupation. It has also been suggested that the designer reserved trousered tunics for the Normans, but this association should be regarded with caution since Englishmen are also shown occasionally to wear them.<sup>482</sup>

Trousered tunics are very rare in contemporary art.<sup>483</sup> It is therefore intriguing that the culottes illustrated in the Tiberius Psalter - like that worn by Figure 76 in the

---

<sup>479</sup> Whilst Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 157, was correct to suggest that tunics were the commonest male garments to appear in Anglo-Saxon art, most medieval illuminators preferred to show biblical characters and saints in classical-style robes. Tunics in the Tapestry are occasionally shown tucked up, as in Scenes 6, 34 and 35/6. This convention is rare in manuscript illumination, appearing only in BL, Harley 603 and BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v. The origins of this convention probably derive from the classical loin-cloth, which, it seems, the Tapestry designer adopted especially for the purposes of his design. This also demonstrates awareness of the practicalities of wading through water fully clothed. Nonetheless, it is intriguing that parts of these tunics still dangle at knee level, suggesting that the convention best served to illustrate that lower garments were removed, rather than indicate that the tunic was tucked up for its own protection.

<sup>480</sup> In rare instances the Tapestry's tunics are shown longer than this (for example Figure 64), whilst a few are shorter (as with Figure 239). Likewise in manuscript art some tunics can be short or long, and there does not seem to be any chronological pattern to explain this (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 158).

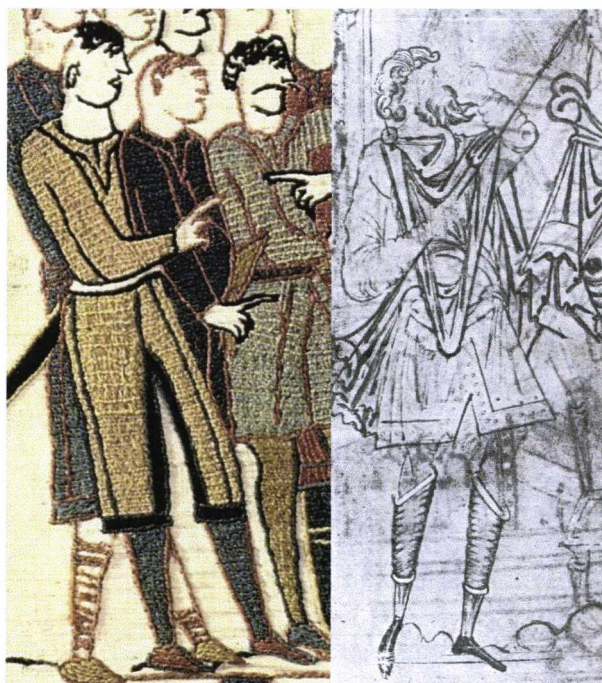
Other peculiarities of the Tapestry tunics can be noted: Nevinson, 'Costumes', 73, suggested that the tunics of the older shipwrights have fuller skirts, although this may be due to their scale. In one instance the lower part of the tunic worn by Harold (Figure 59) is decorated with vertical multi-coloured bands, rather like a pleated dress. A tunic worn by Figure 87 appears ragged and has zig-zag hem. This may be paralleled to the skirts of the rebel angels in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.2.

<sup>481</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 73; Bertrand, *Tapissérie de Bayeux*, 292.

Figure 527, who is moustached, wears a trousered tunic. Owen-Crocker, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 2-4 observes that this has a more pronounced racial affiliation in some portions of the Tapestry than in others, possibly reflecting different circumstances of production.

<sup>483</sup> Owen-Crocker, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 2, noted that 'culottes were not part of the English iconographical tradition and their presence in the Tapestry suggests the artist was familiar

Tapestry (Ill.71 - below) - have banding on the inside leg.<sup>484</sup> Unless the designer knew of this illumination (which is unlikely since it is a Winchester manuscript), it is possible that we have here two independent reflections of contemporary reality; the fact that the Psalter is broadly contemporary with the probable date of the Tapestry adds to the interest of the case.



**Illustration 71**

**Culottes with banding on the inside leg depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and the Tiberius Psalter (right).**

Baggy-trousered tunics and those of one-piece construction are not found in manuscript art. This might be taken to suggest that such garments in the Tapestry reflect a recent innovation in fashion, not known to earlier artists.<sup>485</sup> Of course trousered tunics of one-piece construction could not have been worn without some

---

with...contemporary Norman dress', which may have Scandinavian origins. She cites examples in early Scandinavian tapestries from Oseberg, Skog and Baldishol: the latter two were made after the BT.

<sup>484</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.13. Excluding armour, discussed in an earlier chapter, this feature does not seem to occur in Romanesque illuminations.

<sup>485</sup> Baggy trousered tunics are worn by Figures 442 and 443. One-piece tunics are worn by Guy (Figure 117).

kind of opening, either at the front or rear.<sup>486</sup> The same is true of the trousered armour – discussed above - which is also seemingly of one-piece construction. Whilst we might not expect to see such an opening or fastenings in the Tapestry - given its scale and the restrictions of the medium - it might alternatively be the case that the imagery represents a garment of two parts, but since both parts are shown of the same colour, the distinction between them is obscured.



**Illustration 72**

**Necklines of tunics in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. v (right).**

Most tunics in the Tapestry have a rounded neck-line, with slit front and v-shaped braided border.<sup>487</sup> This form rarely occurs in contemporary illuminations, where simple round<sup>488</sup> or wavy necklines<sup>489</sup> are common – even though tunics must have had

---

<sup>486</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 73. It is interesting that Owen-Crocker, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 4, suggested that 'culottes were obviously practical for riding'. The Tapestry designer may have thought likewise, and hence presumed that armoured leg protection would also be trousered.

<sup>487</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 219. In the Tapestry these give the impression of a v-neck tunic, with a round-necked undershirt; a view supported by Nevinson, 'Costumes', 74. Although there is ample linguistic evidence for undershirts in the late Anglo-Saxon period (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 163) comparisons with manuscript illuminations suggest that this was not the intention in the Tapestry.

<sup>488</sup> Plain rounded necks are rare in the BT: the only example seems to be Edward (Figure 231) on his death-bed.

<sup>489</sup> Depictions of wavy neck-lines are extremely common in Anglo-Saxon art but seem to occur with less frequency in Romanesque illuminations (Romanesque and continental examples are cited in the appendix).



some kind of opening at the neck.<sup>490</sup> There are striking parallels between the Tapestry depictions and the necklines of tunics in Cotton Tiberius B. v and the Tiberius Psalter (Ill.72 - above).<sup>491</sup> Given that it is fairly unlikely that the designer referred to these illuminations and, moreover, that this feature is uncommon in art before the eleventh century, it seems reasonable to deduce that this motif reflected a contemporary form.<sup>492</sup>

In the Tapestry, and some contemporary illuminations, sleeves are typically long, reaching to the wrist: often these are shown with plain-banded cuffs and/or hems.<sup>493</sup> Whereas in many late Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque manuscripts sleeves maybe closely gathered on the forearm,<sup>494</sup> this feature is uncommon in the Tapestry; but then embroidery work probably did not lend itself to the rendition of such detail.

Evidence that one aspect, at least, of the Tapestry's tunics was borrowed from art seems to be provided by the occasional suggestion of a frill at the side of the knee (Ill.73 - below).<sup>495</sup> It seems unlikely that this was an actual feature of contemporary garments, and is more probably an artistic convention to indicate movement.<sup>496</sup>

---

<sup>490</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 158.

<sup>491</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.6v and BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.9, f.11.

<sup>492</sup> This said, this type of tunic neck form also seems to appear in BL, Arundel 155, f.93 and BodL, Junius 11, p.53, p.59, but is shown with a more rounded v-shape. Similar necklines appear in Romanesque illuminations (examples cited in the appendix), although here they are, more often than not, rounded.

<sup>493</sup> In illuminations some banded cuffs and hems are decorated with geometric designs. These become notable from s. xi<sup>med</sup>. Decorated braided necklines, not found in the Tapestry, are surprisingly widespread in illuminations.

<sup>494</sup> Examples in Anglo-Saxon illuminations include BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.6v; London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. viii, f.2v; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 23, f.37v. This feature is also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (Romanesque examples are cited in the appendix).

<sup>495</sup> E.g. Figures 266-7 and 269.

<sup>496</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 72.



**Illustration 73**

**Tunics with a frill at the knee as shown in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

### *Cloaks and Brooches*

Several individuals in the Tapestry wear a cloak, and this seems to be indicative of rank.<sup>497</sup> Cloaks worn by horsemen are quite short, hanging not much further than the waist, whilst those worn by other figures are significantly longer, often falling below the knees - sometimes almost to the ankles.<sup>498</sup> This contrasts with the cloaks shown in late Anglo-Saxon illumination which tend to be a little shorter.<sup>499</sup> The notable exception is Cnut's cloak in the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, which hangs well below the

---

<sup>497</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 71. E.g. Figures 1-2, 4-9, 11, 29, 44, 56, 74, 84-5, 91, 106, 116-8, 124, 128-9, 136, 186-7, 203, 206, 207, 226, 229, 237-42, 256, 262-4, 296, 378, 380, 384-5, 387, 392, 398-9. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 150, noted that the cloak was not used to indicated status in illuminations.

<sup>498</sup> Examples of cloaked horsemen in Anglo-Saxon illuminations are rare but include CCCC, 23, f.2 and Rouen, BM, Y. 6 (274), f.36v. In Romanesque illuminations, the bottom of the cloak is often obscured, so the length of the cloak is difficult to judge. In Continental Romanesque illuminations cloaked horsemen tend to wear long cloaks (see appendix).

<sup>499</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Vespasian A. viii, f.2v; BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.4v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.13.

knees.<sup>500</sup> Cloaks in Romanesque illuminations are approximately the same length as those in the Tapestry, which may reflect the post-Conquest fashion.<sup>501</sup>

The cloaks in the Tapestry are mostly plain. The exception is one worn by William, which – we have seen - has tassels towards the back of the neck and a decorated band at the hem (Ill.74 - below).<sup>502</sup> It is of course possible that William's cloak did actually have such tassels, but given this is an established artistic convention the designer may have instead coined this motif to denote William's status (this will be discussed further in the main conclusion).<sup>503</sup>



**Illustration 74**

**A decorative cloak worn by William in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

---

<sup>500</sup> BL, Stowe 944, f.6, which is shown slipping off the king's shoulders (for facsimile see Keynes, *Liber Vitae*).

<sup>501</sup> Though some short cloaks appear in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>502</sup> Figure 118. It is rare to find tassels associated with non-religious clothing in Anglo-Saxon drawings – although this is a prominent feature of Carolingian, Ottonian and Romanesque illumination. However, Cnut in BL, Stowe 944, f.6, is shown with a tassel from his cloak. In the same image Emma is shown with tassels hanging from her shoulders, which Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 143, considered to be part of her fillet. William (Figure 106) is also shown with tassels on his garters.

<sup>503</sup> Bertrand, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 286.

Both in the Tapestry and in illuminations cloaks, though occasionally worn at the throat, are more frequently clipped with a simple brooch, normally on the right-shoulder (leaving the sword arm free).<sup>504</sup> Such brooches are generally circular, sometimes shown with a closed circle as a central motif.<sup>505</sup> We can safely assume that these are representations of disc brooches, a type typical of the late Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>506</sup> On one occasion the Tapestry illustrates a disc brooch with four (or five) inner segments, which may suggest decoration or its settings.<sup>507</sup> Given that such detailed treatment is rare in art, some have suggested that this might reflect a brooch admired at first hand.<sup>508</sup>

Much less common are square or rectangular brooches. When they occur in manuscript art they are normally plain,<sup>509</sup> but in the Tapestry they tend to have a

---

<sup>504</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 150, noted that some cloaks in illuminations were clasped at the left shoulder, but this is not found in the BT. It is also evident that cloaks are generally fastened at the throat when worn with a long gown (*ibid.*, 151).

<sup>505</sup> In the Tapestry these include Figures 1-2, 4-9, ?11, 29, 44, 56, 74, 84, 91, 116, 118, 124, 128-9, 186-7, 189 (no cloak), 203, 226, 229, 237-42, 243 (cape), 262-4, 296, 378, 380, 384-5, 387, 392, 398-9. Examples in Anglo-Saxon illuminations include BL, Add. 24199, f.17; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.38; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.34. Romanesque and continental examples are just as numerous (see appendix).

<sup>506</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 220. Disc brooches continued to be worn throughout the medieval period, and many examples have been recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)), including an s. x lead circular disc brooch with central boss and cruciform motif from East Lindsey, Lincolnshire (NLM193) and a s. x copper-alloy disc brooch with Borre-style decoration from Hemingstone, Suffolk (SF-8EE7E2). Other examples include a cast pewter example from Parliament Street, York, which has a rosette pattern radiating from a central boss (Waterman, 'Finds from York', 79), a copper-alloy disc brooch from Icklingham, Suffolk (Hinton, *Anglo-Saxon*, No. 2) and a s. xi silver disc brooch engraved with zoomorphic decoration found at Sutton, Isle of Ely (Wilson, *Ornamental Metalwork*, Cat. 83).

<sup>507</sup> Figure 56. A similar example recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme is a s. xi cast copper-alloy disc brooch, with traces of yellow, blue and colourless glass settings from Winchester, Hampshire (HAMP1472). See Coatsworth and Pinder, *Anglo-Saxon Goldsmith*, 64-175, for discussion of the manufacture, decoration and design of such brooches.

<sup>508</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 149.

<sup>509</sup> Anglo-Saxon examples include Boulogne, BM, 11, f.11 and London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.117v. Romanesque and continental examples are also known (see appendix).

central circle, dot,<sup>510</sup> or (sometimes off-centre) square.<sup>511</sup> These types contrast with the ornate, rectangular brooch worn by Edward in the Tapestry, which comprises a cruciform motif with central circle.<sup>512</sup> An example with similar elements, though stylistically different, is worn by St Benedict in the Arundel 155 Psalter (Ill.75).<sup>513</sup>



**Illustration 75**

**Rectangular brooches worn by Edward the Confessor in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and St Benedict in the Arundel 155 Psalter (right).**

This is significant for our enquiry since early English rectangular brooches are extremely rare archaeological discoveries,<sup>514</sup> and continental examples are

<sup>510</sup> E.g. Figure 117 and 136.

<sup>511</sup> E.g. Figure 85, 106 and 256.

<sup>512</sup> Figure 207.

<sup>513</sup> BL, Arundel 155, f.133. In Romanesque illuminations a cross-shaped brooch with a central circle is illustrated in Cambridge, University Library, li. 3. 12, f.61v. A similar cross shaped brooch, but with foliate arms is depicted in Cambridge, St John's College, H. 6, f.iiiv. A variety of quatrefoil brooches are found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 2, f.94; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 4, f.84v; Copenhagen, Royal Library, Thott 143 2°, f.69v; Dijon, BM, 14, f.13v; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 76 F 13, f.5v.

<sup>514</sup> Examples of sub-square or rectangular brooches recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme include a s. ix<sup>2</sup>-x<sup>ex</sup> openwork copper-alloy Borre style square brooch (possibly an import) from Humberside, North Lincolnshire (NLM194), a similar s. xi example from Wenham Parva, Suffolk (SF-D9EEA2) and a peculiar s. vii-ix sub-rectangular copper-alloy brooch, with serrated sub-triangular protrusions at each corner from Coddendam, Suffolk (SF178). An Anglo-Danish sub-square copper-alloy plate brooch 'with a plain border and interlaced animal design in cast relief' of s. x/xi, found on West Stow heath, Suffolk is catalogued in Hinton, *Anglo-Saxon*, 62-4.

infrequently found in England.<sup>515</sup> A possible explanation is that square brooches, being the prerogative of the richest, and normally of gold or silver, are unlikely chance or archaeological finds.<sup>516</sup> Even so their rare survival suggests that few Anglo-Saxon artists would have observed such objects first-hand. Alternatively it is possible that the motifs in question are stylised representations of the square patches adorning ecclesiastical vestments - occasionally recreated in art (Ill.76 - below).<sup>517</sup>



**Illustration 76**

**The square patch adorning ecclesiastical vestments depicted on the gilt cover of the Judith Gospels.**

<sup>515</sup> Wamers, 'Karolingerzeit', 587, and *Frühmittelalterlichen Lesefunde*, 128-34, noted a series of rectangular and square Carolingian brooches (some with a cruciform motif as a decorative element) dating from c.650 until c.1000. Most of these were found in the Rhineland and southern Denmark. Some, such as those noted by Haseloff, *Email im Frühen Mittelalter*, 99-101, are enamelled. A copper-alloy cross-brooch from Germany (found in s. x deposits) was also discovered in York (Hall, *Viking Dig*, 102).

<sup>516</sup> This highlights the fact that the extant corpus of small-finds might be unrepresentative of that what the highest social ranks would have had or worn. Indeed, Leslie Webster (personal conversation 25<sup>th</sup> October 2001) suggested that it was fitting that high-status characters in the BT wear such continental square brooches. Since they are extremely rare archaeological finds in England, we can assume they would have been prized by their owner. However, Helen Geake (personal conversation 26<sup>th</sup> February 2004) noted, that whilst high-status Anglo-Saxon brooches have been handed down (i.e. they are not archaeological or chance finds) none are square; hence the corpus matches the archaeological record.

<sup>517</sup> E.g. the s. xi<sup>ex</sup> Flemish, gilt cover of the Judith Gospels (PML, M 709). These also seem to be relatively common in continental Romanesque manuscripts; but here they are probably the only visible part of a wide neck-band to the alb which is not covered by the chasuble. However, an angel in Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque de l'agglomération, 12, f.5v, Christ in Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque de l'agglomération, 30, f.5v, and Baudemundus in Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, 501, f.58v have square patches as an independent decorative element, seemingly sewn directly onto their alb. Comparable survivals, rectangular rather than square, include those on an English s. xiii<sup>4/4</sup> chasuble now in Skara Cathedral and another s. xiii<sup>ex</sup> now in Anagni Cathedral (Christie, *Embroidery*, 86 and 101).

All such representations in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts appear on robes worn by religious figures and it is therefore surely no coincidence that all the rectangular brooches represented in the Tapestry (bar that on Figure 117) are shown joining a cloak either at the neck or at chest height, mimicking their position on ecclesiastical gowns. However, it seems likely that our designer (and/or his embroiderers) turned these patches into brooches, as they are worn by high status secular figures, and – as we have observed – one is worn on the shoulder.

Other small-scale dress fittings, such as strap-ends, pins, hook-tags and fasteners, which are well known from the archaeological record, are unsurprisingly omitted from the Tapestry, as from most contemporary illustrations.<sup>518</sup> Whilst the absence of these items does not impugn the accuracy of the Tapestry, they do provide further evidence, if it were needed, that some elements of these drawings were simplified.

### *Ecclesiastical Dress*

Ecclesiastical dress is less common in late Anglo-Saxon art than one might expect, with illuminators still showing religious figures in classical-style robes. This contrasts with the Tapestry where loose-fitting classical garments have been entirely supplanted by contemporary dress.<sup>519</sup>

Three churchmen in the Tapestry wear formal religious dress, which consists of a narrow straight alb with long sleeves and a wide fronted chasuble that falls in a

---

<sup>518</sup> Anglo-Scandinavian brooches, strap-ends, pins, hook-tags, finger-rings, beads etc - many mass-produced - were found in high quantity during excavations in York (Hall, *Viking Dig*, 102-5) and have been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Whilst less metalwork is known from the s. xi and s. xii than before or afterwards, Anglo-Norman jewellery does survive, and therefore must have been worn.

<sup>519</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 149, noted 'since the costume of secular men is so clearly distinguished from that of holy figures, one can make deductions about medieval dress more confidently that one can in the cases of female figures'. However, this is not always the case in the BT.

‘v-shape’ covering much of the shoulders.<sup>520</sup> The churchmen at Edward’s deathbed wear chasubles with embroidered neckline and long ophreys,<sup>521</sup> whilst Archbishop Stigand is shown wearing a chasuble with plain banding,<sup>522</sup> a plain stole, and a long orphrey decorated with a dot and cruciform motif.<sup>523</sup>



**Illustration 77**

**Ecclesiastical vestments worn by Stigand in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and ecclesiastics in Durham Cathedral Library, B. III. 32 (right).**

<sup>520</sup> Figures 230, 235 and 243 (Stigand), which all appear in close proximity to one another. Stigand’s alb has a plain band visible at the hem. This is also found in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts such as Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, A. 27 (368), f.1v and BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.18v.

<sup>521</sup> Edward’s cloak (Figure 3) has comparable banding – and may represent his personal spirituality. Nevinson, ‘Costumes’, 71, compared this banding with those in Cotton Tiberius C. vi as evidence that this was continuous along the hem of an upper tunic: indistinguishable from the green tunic below.

<sup>522</sup> Plain neck bands are also depicted in CCCC, 183, f.1v and Durham, Cathedral Library, B. III. 32, f.56v. Stoles are shown in London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.11v; Rouen, BM, A. 27 (368), f.1v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.18v; BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v; DCL, B. III. 32, f.56v.

<sup>523</sup> Vestments are mostly plain in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, although the s. xi<sup>med</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v shows some faint decoration. In contrast, those in Romanesque illuminations are nearly always decorated, and this may be of interest in regard to the Tapestry’s date of production (see appendix). Surviving vestments are normally ornate. Parallels for the decoration of Stigand’s orphrey include the s. xii<sup>2</sup> stole and apparel of amice decorated with cruciform motif, attributed to St Thomas of Canterbury and now in Sens Cathedral, the surviving s. xii<sup>ex</sup> lappet of a mitre (possibly English) now in Anagni Cathedral, which is decorated with cruciform and crescent motif, and the s. xii/xiii stole of Archbishop Hubert Walter, embellished with fylfot and other cruciform devices (Christie, *Embroidery*, 55 and 58-9).



In some illuminations the 'v-shape' form of the chasuble is less pronounced, but those worn by Saint Æthelwold (or Dunstan) in Cotton Tiberius A. iii and by an anonymous ecclesiastic in the closely related image in DCL, B. III. 32 - both manuscripts dating from the mid-eleventh century - are very similar to those in the Tapestry (Ill.77 - above).<sup>524</sup>

The survival rate of Anglo-Saxon (even Anglo-Norman) ecclesiastical vestments is poor, and there is not really adequate material to compare with the depictions we have been considering. However, there is a marked increase in examples from about 1200,<sup>525</sup> and these later vestments are broadly similar to the corresponding religious garments in the Tapestry, and also to those shown in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations.<sup>526</sup> Since ecclesiastical dress was a fairly conservative field we might consider such comparisons useful.

Elsewhere in the Tapestry clerics wear civilian clothing, their profession only being indicated by their tonsure. This is not found in contemporary illuminations, where clerics will often be shown wearing classical robes or formal ecclesiastical dress. It is perhaps significant that clergy are always shown in lay dress except where they appear in formal sacramental contexts, and therefore vested. This is something to which we will return in the general conclusion.

---

<sup>524</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v and DCL, B. III. 32, f.56v. More angular examples include BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.11v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 3, f.1v; Rouen, BM, A. 27 (368), f.1v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.18v. In Romanesque illuminations the form of the chasuble is notably longer, draping gently over the arms.

<sup>525</sup> The s. xii<sup>2</sup> chasuble ascribed to St Thomas of Canterbury (noted above) is broadly similar in style and form to that worn by Stigand in the Tapestry, although his chasuble hangs much further at the back (Christie, *Embroidery*, 55).

<sup>526</sup> BodL, Tanner 3, f.1v; Rouen, BM, A. 27 (368), f.1v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi; f.18v, BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v; DCL, B. III. 32, f.56v. The decorated stole hangs around the shoulders in Hereford, Cathedral Library, O. 5. XI, f.147; Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Vit 23-8, f.144v; London,

## *Trousers*

Most characters in the Tapestry wear tight-fitting trousers, which are also widespread in contemporary illustrations.<sup>527</sup> Only Tuold in the Tapestry wears trousers with a loose cut.<sup>528</sup> Trousers in both the Tapestry and illuminations are often shown with horizontal banding (garters), normally only from the knee down.<sup>529</sup> At times, a diagonal band is shown just below the knee, suggesting this might be intended to represent leather strapping. This is clearly visible in both the Tapestry and the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter (Ill.78 - below).<sup>530</sup> It has been noted that Normans in the Tapestry wear a wider selection of leg bands than Anglo-Saxons and that at times this may have been used to distinguish between them.<sup>531</sup> However it is the opinion of the present writer that such differences are coincidental.

---

British Library, Royal 10, A. xiii, f.2. Only Cambridge, S-JC, H. 6, f.iiv, shows a decorated band at the neck, with the stole hanging at the front.

<sup>527</sup> In art trousers are rarely shown with folds and in some instances, such as CCCC, 23, f.2, f.37v, it is almost impossible to tell whether characters wear trousers or not. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 165, noted that trousers, stockings and tights are not clearly distinguished in art, although in the Tapestry such garments do seem to cover the ankles and possibly even the feet.

<sup>528</sup> Figure 95. Bertrand, *Tapiserie*, 292, thought these might be labourer's clothes. Nevinson, 'Costumes', 73, likened these to trousers on s. xii<sup>med</sup> sculptured figures at Kilpeck church, Herefordshire. For a discussion of the sculpture of Kilpeck church see Thurlby, *Herefordshire School*, 37-70.

<sup>529</sup> Examples in Anglo-Saxon illuminations include BL, Add. 24199, f.17, x<sup>ex</sup> (uncertain); BodL, Junius 11, p.74; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.8v. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 167, favourably compared the garters worn by William (Figure 186) in the Tapestry with those worn by King Edgar in BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v. Examples have also been noted on stone sculpture at Barking, Essex and Repton, Derbyshire (Owen-Crocker, *Dress* 166). This feature is also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>530</sup> BL, Cotton Vespasian A. viii, f.2v. In BodL, Junius 11, p.58, Malalehel's garters seems to unfurl, revealing the pattern of the banding quite clearly. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 166, suggested a figure in BL, Harley 603, f.72v wears garters where the top two stands cross, though this is not obviously intentional. The garters of the s. xi<sup>2</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 391, p.24 are diagonal, whilst those in Romanesque works, such as PML, M 736, p.24 and Winchester, Cathedral Library, 17, f.350v are crossed.

<sup>531</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 167. Owen-Crocker, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 5, noted that cross-garters are prominent early in the second section of the Tapestry, but not thereafter. This suggests that embroidering cross-garters took too long, or the craftsman - who favoured cross-garters - only worked on a small section of the Tapestry. See Conclusion for further discussion.



**Illustration 78**

**Garters worn by a figure in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and King Edgar in the New Minster Charter (right).**

### *Footwear*

Footwear in the Tapestry is normally illustrated in profile, showing a narrow, often pointed, shoe with a rounded heel and toe.<sup>532</sup> On a few occasions, the shoe upper is clearly depicted. In these instances the shoe widens gradually from the heel to a mid point then narrows sharply to a pointed toe.<sup>533</sup> This contrasts with the majority of tenth- and eleventh-century shoes recovered in London. In the tenth century most shoes had a ‘rounded toe with the sides broadest across the tread tapering to a point (v-back) at the heel’.<sup>534</sup> Whilst in the eleventh century the ankle boot becomes fashionable.<sup>535</sup> By the end of the eleventh century most boots are fastened with a drawstring and the toe begins to increase in length.<sup>536</sup> Whilst the Tapestry does seem

<sup>532</sup> Apart from Edward’s shoes (Figure 207), which are slippared, with an angular cut at the ankle.

<sup>533</sup> Figures 129, 136 and 187.

<sup>534</sup> Pritchard, ‘Footwear’, 213.

<sup>535</sup> Pritchard, ‘Footwear’, 219-29.

<sup>536</sup> Pritchard, ‘Footwear’, 220-22. The majority of shoes from Guildhall Yard, London, (mostly post-1040) cover at least the foot, and many cling to the ankle, although the low cut makes a return later in the century (Reid, ‘Shoes of Lundenburg’, 270). Indeed, both ankle boots and shoes were excavated from a s. xi pit in the City of London (Werner, *London Bodies*, 54-5). Boots have also found in York, although MacGregor, *Anglo-Scandinavian Finds*, 140-1, thought these were best paralleled in Northern Europe.

to show a slight point to the toe the ankle boot – typical of eleventh-century footwear – is clearly not depicted (Ill.79 – below). These differences may suggest that our designer was recreating a form of shoes he found in art, rather than those worn at the time.<sup>537</sup>



**Illustration 79**

**Two late eleventh-century ankle-boots from London.**

Shoes are not particularly common in Anglo-Saxon illuminations, with many characters shown bare footed. Nonetheless, when they do appear they generally compare better with those in the Tapestry than the contemporary artefact or ones in Romanesque illuminations.<sup>538</sup> The latter demonstrates a greater variety in form and

---

<sup>537</sup> Reid, 'Shoes of Lundenburg', 269, warned against assuming that shoes in art are realistic portrayals of what people wore at the time, although she hypothesised that 'the clothing of individuals is more realistic than in the portrayal of saints or personages from antiquity'.

<sup>538</sup> Anglo-Saxon examples include BodL, Junius 11, p.57, p.74, p.84, p.87; BL, Cotton, Vitellius C. iii, f.11v, f.19; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v, f.32, f.38, f.139v. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 168, noted deviation from this basic form of footwear in sculpture (Slaidburn, Lancashire). Shoes with pronounced toes seem to be illustrated in BodL, Junius 11, p.58. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 168, argued that their form probably reflects the artist's style, as long narrow feet are a characteristic of this manuscript, as also of the s. x<sup>1</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tanner 10 - see for example f.115v (However, there cannot be more than a coincidental connection between the two).

style, with pronounced toes becoming a dominant feature. It is therefore interesting that the archaeological evidence shows a clear progression from blunt toes in the early tenth century to narrow pointed toes by the end of the eleventh: around this time, excessively long, broad based toes make an abrupt appearance, as do the first instep-waisted asymmetric soles,<sup>539</sup> and these elements may be indicated in Romanesque drawings.

Shoes in the Tapestry are not shown stitched or laced, which is possibly due to their small scale and the limitations of embroidery.<sup>540</sup> The only hint of embellishment is a red stripe that appears along the 'vamp' of one of Edward's shoes.<sup>541</sup> 'Vamp stripes' are first recorded in (London) archaeological deposits of the late eleventh century, and barely out-lived the twelfth.<sup>542</sup> This detail therefore broadly reflects contemporary fashion. Decorated shoes occasionally appear in contemporary illuminations, but most are plain.<sup>543</sup>

---

<sup>539</sup> Two early examples (of s. xii<sup>in-med</sup> date) were found during London excavations at the Seal House, and this style is increasingly common thereafter (Grew and de Neergaard, *Shoes*, 11). Reid, 'Shoes of Lundenburg', 270, noted that the 'familiar' instep-waisted, asymmetric sole quickly becomes associated with this elongated toed shoe.

<sup>540</sup> This said, the embroiderers have managed to outline individual toes (E.g. Figures 20-1, 57-9, 261, 275-9 and 357) suggesting that they had the skill to depict laces if they had so desired. Evidence from London shows that late Anglo-Saxon shoes were often decorated with embroidery and impressed decoration (Reid, 'Shoes of Lundenburg', 271). Saxo-Norman shoes often contained a pair of interwoven thongs, just below the ankle, which were probably a decorative feature, or helped to hold the upper shape of the shoe (Grew and de Neergaard, *Shoes*, 10). These were also evident on a late Anglo-Saxon shoe from the parish of Irthlingborough (Northampton Shoe Museum, Ref. 1973-5).

<sup>541</sup> Figure 3. In manuscripts vamp stripes are normally white (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 167). Anglo-Saxon examples include BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.9; BL, Cotton Caligula A. xv, f.122v. Examples are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>542</sup> Grew and de Neergaard, *Shoes*, 10; Reid, 'Shoes from Lundenburg', 271; Pritchard, 'Shoes', 230-2.

<sup>543</sup> In BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v the central stripe of King Edgar's shoes are decorated with striped bands. The upper edge of King Cnut's shoes in BL, Stowe 944, f.6 are decorated with bands of dots. St Benedict in BL, Arundel 155 and King David in CUL, Ff. I. 23, f.4v both have fleur-de-lys on their shoe uppers. Aldhelm, in London, Lambeth Palace Library, 200, f.68v seems to wear slippers which have a plain banded edge at the top. In CCCC, 391, f.24v King David has shoes decorated at the side and toe. Many shoes in Romanesque illuminations are decorated with dots, including BL, Arundel 60, f.13; London, British Library, Cotton Claudius E. v, f.28; BodL, Laud, Misc. 469, f.7v; London, British Library, Cotton Nero, C. iv, f.21; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Gough liturg. 2, f.17; Durham, Cathedral

In the Tapestry, spurs are a distinguishing feature of footgear worn by horsemen. They are, however, uncommon in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, only being observed in the Old English Hexateuch and a few Romanesque drawings.<sup>544</sup> It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that the designer had the Hexateuch – or a manuscript like it – as his exemplar. However, the form of the Tapestry’s spurs better parallels the actual artefact than those in this manuscript,<sup>545</sup> hence it seems eminently possible that the designer drew, instead, upon his own first-hand knowledge of contemporary ‘horse furniture’.

### *Headgear*

Only a few of the characters in the Tapestry wear hats, and the same is true of those in contemporary illumination.<sup>546</sup> In the Tapestry, Conan wears a pointed hat with large brow band, which could be a poor rendition of a non-segmented helm.<sup>547</sup> Similar hats

---

Library, A. II. 9, f.130v. Shoes in PML, M 736, p.13, p.24, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, 22, f.67v and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud, Misc. 752, f.146 have dots on the vamp and (sometimes) on the upper. Shoes in PML, M 736, p.15 have a striped vamp. Shoes in Hildesheim, St Godehard’s Church, 1, p.19, p.304 and Madrid, BN, Vit 23-8, f.144v have diagonal lines protruding from the vamp. Shoes in Durham, Cathedral Library, Hunter 100, f.119 are two-tone. Shoes in BodL, Bodley 269, f.iii have a fleur-de-lys vamp. Shoes in CCCC, 391, p.24 have cross-hatching on the upper. Such examples might be compared to a pair of ornate s. xii/xiii silk sandals found in the tomb of Archbishop Hubert Walter, embroidered with gems, gold fleur-de-lys, scrolls and zoomorphic motifs (Christie, *Embroidery*, 57). Similar motifs and decoration are found in Continental Romanesque illuminations.

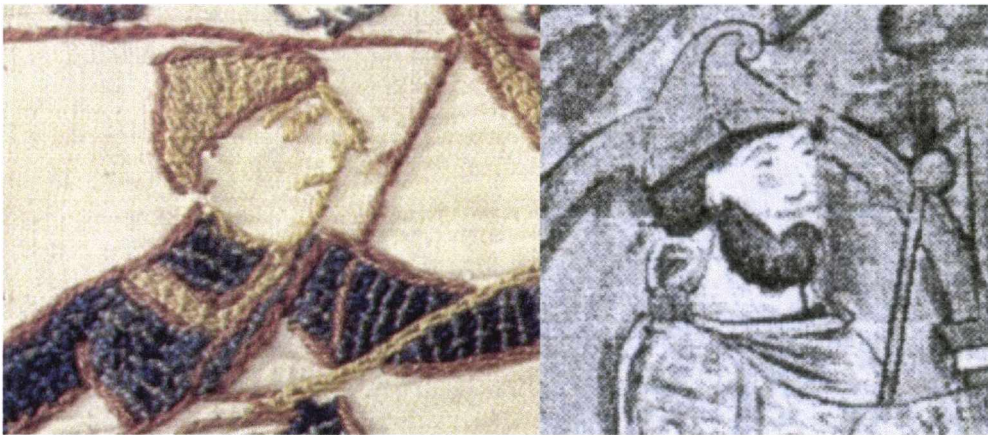
<sup>544</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius, B. iv, f.25v. Romanesque examples include BL, Harley, 603, f.29v; Copenhagen, RL, Thott 143 2°, f.10v; Santiago de Compostela, Archivo de la Catedral, *Libre Sancti Jacobi*, f.162v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16730, f.262v; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 1 Gud. lat, f.88; Heilgenkreuz, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 226, f.129v; The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 76 F 5, f.1.

<sup>545</sup> A s. xi spur from Canning Town (Newham) is on display in the Museum of London. See also Graham-Campbell, ‘Equestrian Equipment’, 86-7.

<sup>546</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 169 noted ‘men mostly appear bare-headed in art, even...in winter’.

<sup>547</sup> Figure 159. Although this is almost certainly the case that Conan’s hat is a segmented helm, it is intriguing that there are a large number of similar caps worn by civilians in contemporary illuminations: the hats worn by the monks in BL, Arundel 155, f.133 and the rounded cap with brow band depicted in BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.62. They are even more common in Romanesque illuminations (see appendix). Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 169, made the important point that helmets and pointed headgear are sometimes undistinguishable, particularly in sculpture, and noted the s. x sculptures of

are worn by two archers in the Tapestry, but are shown with a slight curve to the point.<sup>548</sup> Though a little crudely rendered, these may be Phrygian caps, which are commonly found in contemporary manuscripts, such as the Sacramentary of Robert of Jumièges (Ill.80 - below).<sup>549</sup> The eastern origins of this type of hat are not disputed, and hence - if these are indeed Phrygian caps – then it seems likely that the designer borrowed this motif from art.



**Illustration 80**

**The Phrygian caps worn by an archer in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and a figure in the Sacramentary of Jumièges (right).**

### *Women's Dress*

Women appear less commonly than men in manuscript illuminations, and they are extremely rare in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>550</sup> All the Tapestry's women wear long ankle-length gowns,<sup>551</sup> which sometimes trail on the ground.<sup>552</sup> This is broadly typical of the

---

<sup>548</sup> 'Viking' warriors at Middleton, Yorkshire (Middleton 2A, 4A and 5A – see Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture III*, 182-4, 185-6, Ill. 676-7, 686, 688).

<sup>548</sup> Figures 442 and 443.

<sup>549</sup> Rouen, BM, Y. 6 (274), f.36v. Other Anglo-Saxon examples include Oxford, BodL, Douce 296, f.40v; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.85v. They are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>550</sup> Most women in illuminations are biblical characters, saints or high-status individuals.

<sup>551</sup> Of whom three (Figures 135, 228 and 402) are clothed. Examples in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts include Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 3. 7, f.1; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v; PML, M 709, f.1v.

form of dress found in contemporary art, where the subjects in question are generally biblical or saintly women. The main difference between the women's clothes shown in the Tapestry and those in many illuminations is that the Tapestry's garments are long-sleeved and appear to flare at the cuff,<sup>553</sup> whereas most women in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts wear loose-fitting overgarments or gowns with either straight sleeves or sleeves with a slight flare at the cuff.<sup>554</sup> During the Romanesque period, sleeves protruded even further at the cuff (Ill.81 - below),<sup>555</sup> hence it seems likely that the Tapestry designer - like contemporary illuminators - responded to this change in fashion. Twice in the Tapestry the form of such gowns is ambiguous: the 'sleeves'

---

They are also common in Romanesque and continental illuminations (see appendix). In some illuminations robes seemed to be tied at the waist with a girdle of sash, but this is not evident in the BT (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 140).

<sup>552</sup> Some robes have an area of fullness at the feet, which suggests the garment may have trailed on the ground (Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 139). Leggings are never shown in the Tapestry, and are also rarely depicted in illuminations (*ibid.*, 145). Ælfgýva is the only woman in the Tapestry to wear narrow shoes, with a rounded toe. These parallel examples found in manuscripts, including CCCC, 23, f.37v; PML, M 869, f.9v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v; BL, Stowe 944, f.6. English Romanesque examples include London, BL, Royal 1, C. vii, f.58; Cambridge, PC, 120, f.5v. Similar examples are found in continental manuscripts. Although there is variation in the form and decoration of shoes in illuminations, most are pointed (*ibid.*). Reid, 'Shoes of Lundenburg', 273 noted that by the s. xi<sup>ex</sup> women's feet in illuminations are mostly covered up due to longer hemlines, and therefore the possibilities for comparison with archaeological survivals are rare.

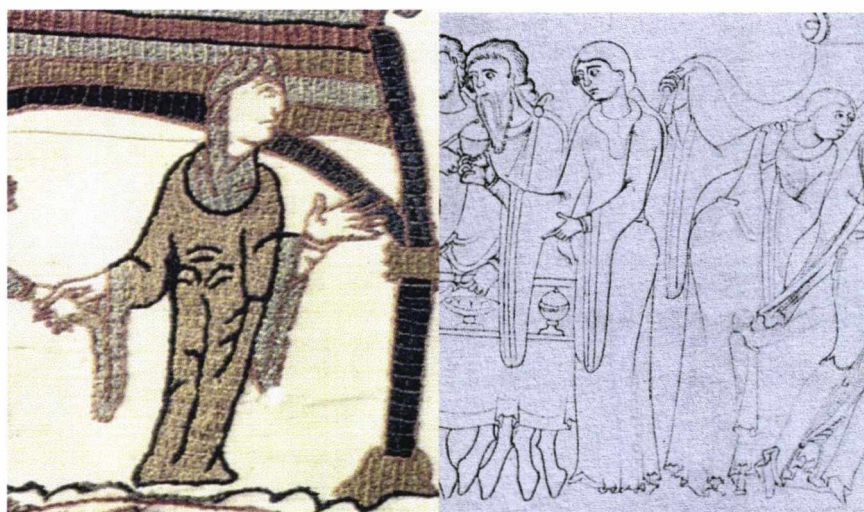
<sup>553</sup> These are particularly prominent on the gown of Figure 402.

<sup>554</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 136-40. All three figures in the Tapestry seem to wear long sleeved undershirts. Similar examples found in manuscript illuminations include Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 577, f.1v; BL, Stowe 944, f.6; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 421, p.1. Romanesque and continental examples are equally numerous (see appendix). Occasionally sleeves are closely gathered, as with men's tunics, and/or have banded cuffs. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 140-1 suggested that 'close gathering' at the sleeves was either due to their length or was evidence that they were deliberately pleated for decorative effect - a Viking Age burial in Birka provided evidence that some garments may have been pleated at the sleeves.

<sup>555</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 74 noted that the trailing sleeves of this type are unusual before the s. xii. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 139, agreed, commenting that later in the s. xi some sleeves were to flare into exaggerated points. Few s. xi examples are known, but they include, London, British Library, Add. 33241, f.1v; PML, M 709, f.1v. Romanesque examples are common and include Winchester, Cathedral Library, 17, f.331v (other examples are cited in the appendix). Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 288, pointed out that the distinction between long sleeves and shorter ones distinguished the rich from the less well off.



trail by the sides of the robe in the form of a sleeveless overgarment, rather similar to a 'pallium-like cloak',<sup>556</sup> but it is questionable whether this was intentional.



**Illustration 81**

**Women in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and the Winchester Bible (right) wearing long-sleeved overgarments with flared cuffs.**

Women in both the Tapestry and contemporary manuscripts wear kerchiefs which cover the head, neck and shoulders (so that no hair is showing).<sup>557</sup> In the Tapestry these are rounded about the head, whereas some headdresses in Anglo-Saxon illuminations have angular hoods.<sup>558</sup> The rounded form of the Tapestry's headdresses can be paralleled with a cap recovered at York, whilst the angular variety is similar to a cap discovered in Lincoln.<sup>559</sup> A noticeable difference is that the caps recovered archaeologically are much shorter than those depicted in art.

---

<sup>556</sup> Also found in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.76. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 138 suggests that this may have been restricted to the s. xi elite, since both Ælfgyva and Edith in the Tapestry wear such a garment. Such cloaks are also common in Romanesque illuminations (see appendix).

<sup>557</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 141-5, was probably correct in postulating that this type of headgear had its origins in the east and was subsequently fossilised in art. Examples of bare-headed women and other types of headdress are found in contemporary illuminations. In general, women in Christian society covered their heads, particularly in worship, following Paul's dictum implicit in 1 Cor 11.2-16.

<sup>558</sup> Rounded kerchiefs in Anglo-Saxon illuminations include Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale, Y. 7 (369), f.21v, f.54v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v, f.32, f.36; PML, M 709, f.1v. Romanesque examples are notably more common (see appendix).

<sup>559</sup> Both silk (Owen Crocker, *Dress*, 147-8; MacGregor, *Anglo-Scandinavian Finds*, 132-6).

In the Tapestry, women's clothing is never decorated: the only embellishment of any sort is the plain-banded hem of Ælfgyva's dress.<sup>560</sup> Much the same is true of female attire in contemporary illuminations: few clothes are decorated and such embellishment as appears is generally restricted to a plain hemline band.<sup>561</sup> Interestingly, women in the Tapestry are never shown wearing jewellery, and the same is true of most contemporary art.<sup>562</sup> This is in contrast to the archaeological evidence, which attests to fairly widespread use of jewellery. The reason simply seems to be that the small scale of such drawings explains the reduction or loss of detail superfluous to the main design.

## Conclusion

Contemporary costume is one area that any artist surely knows first hand, and hence one might expect to find some reflections of changing fashions in dress and clothing. This has particular relevance in regard the Bayeux Tapestry, given the number of

---

<sup>560</sup> Figure 135.

<sup>561</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 146, noted that 'Anglo-Saxon artists rarely suggest opulent fabrics, particularly for garments', which contrasts with Carolingian and Ottonian drawings, where elaborate decoration is much more common: indeed Echternach manuscripts of s. xi<sup>2/3</sup> include fictive textile pages. Exceptions in English illuminations include PML, M 709, f.1v, which has double linear hem decoration and BL, Arundel 60, f.12v. Similarly, a wide frill at the hem often gives the impression of banding, such as in TCC, O. 3. 7, f.1; Rouen, BM, Y. 7 (369), f.21v; CCCC, 23, f.17v; PML, M 869, f.9v; BodL, Bodley 577, f.1v. The Virgin in London, British Library, Harley 2904, f.3v, has decorative linear and geometric flecks on her dress. Similarly, BL, Arundel 60, f.12v, shows some linear and quatrefoil decoration on the main drape of the dress. Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 139 and 147, suggested that such ornamentation is 'rather unsystematic' highlighting the form of the figure rather than 'giving a clear picture of overall decoration'. The kerchief of Emma in BL, Stowe 944, f.6, has tassels at the rear. Similarly, the headdresses of some of the nuns of Barking in London, LP, 200, f.68v, are decorated with geometric motifs, comprising linear bands and dots. Similar patterned head-dresses are found in BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.62. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

<sup>562</sup> Examples in contemporary art are rare but include Superbia in BL, Add. 24199, f.12. Romanesque examples seem to be more frequent, but are by no means common. They include round brooches in Cambridge, PC, 120, f.5v; TCC, R. 17. 1, f.9; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. F. 2. 13, f.54v, f.85v; PML, M 619r, and a square brooch in London, Lambeth Palace, 3, f.198. However, it is interesting that brooches are rarely worn by women in continental illuminations; examples include Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, 130, f.104; Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, 108, f.58v; The Hague, KB, 76 F 13, f.38v.

people who may have been involved in its creation. We could imagine, for example, that an embroideress might bring to the designer's attention any errors in his representation of female dress.

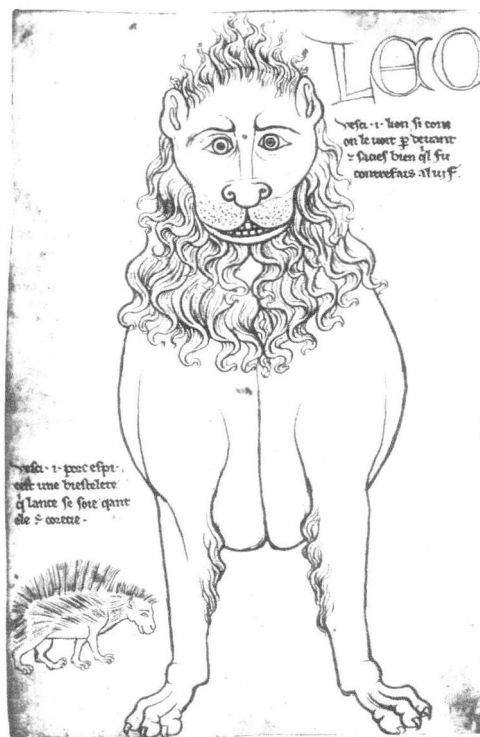
It is interesting that 'ancient' modes of dress – still found in some contemporary art – are mostly omitted from the Tapestry. Phrygian caps are the only – though ambiguous - remnant of classical attire. Nonetheless, in the Tapestry we still see a fusion of influences. On the one hand, there are elements of dress typical of late Anglo-Saxon art, such as ecclesiastical vestments, cloaks and shoes, which could either have been borrowed from art or observed first-hand. On the other, there are aspects of costume which apparently reflect up-to-date fashions, including tunics with a rounded neck-line, slit front and v-shaped braided border, culottes and some elements typical of the post-Conquest period, such as women's long-sleeved dresses, with long cuffs. At the same time, there are also some aspects of the Tapestry's dress and clothing which are essentially new, unparalleled in either the archaeological evidence or artistic tradition and are subsequently difficult to understand; these include square brooches and trousered tunics.

It is apparent that the Tapestry designer did not concern himself with certain smaller details, particularly in the case of dress accessories; such decorative embellishment as appears would seem to derive from artistic/visual tradition. Conversely, some details superficial to the narrative have been included, which might indicate the designer's knowledge of certain types of artefacts or activities. For example, spurs, which do not appear in (much) late Anglo-Saxon art, are shown in the Tapestry, and might suggest that the designer (or patron) had some equestrian knowledge. Furthermore, some elements of the Tapestry's dress and clothing also have an iconographic significance, indicating status or national affiliation, as in the

case of gowns, cloaks and tassels – and this will be considered further in the general conclusion. In general, therefore, the Tapestry seems to reflect accurately the dress and clothing worn by people in the late eleventh century, and, provided the evidence is interpreted with due care, can offer useful material for archaeologists and historians.

## ANIMALS, BIRDS AND BEASTS

With 738 animals, birds and beasts, zoomorphic images are the most prevalent type of motif in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>563</sup> Although some creatures appear in the main panel, most are found in the borders. It is an issue of debate whether the latter are purely decorative, or symbolic and purposeful.<sup>564</sup> The distinction between the role of creatures in the main frieze and that of those in the borders may also be relevant to the accuracy with which they are depicted.<sup>565</sup>



**Illustration 82**

The lion illustrated by Villard de Honnecourt.

<sup>563</sup> Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 32, incorrectly counted 505.

<sup>564</sup> Those asserting that the figurative ornament of the upper and lower borders is closely bound up with the content of the pictorial narrative include McNulty, *Narrative Art of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 24-44, and Bernstein, *Mystery*, 124-35. However, it is the general view of most commentators that there is limited association between the main panel and the borders. Wormald, 'Style and Design', 27, for example, understood both the fables and beasts in the borders as 'purely ornamental motifs', which 'cannot be related to the main scenes'. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 42, Yapp, 'Animals', 33 and Hicks, 'Borders', 265, broadly supported this view.

<sup>565</sup> If animals are superfluous to the narrative, then surely the artist has licence to draw from his imagination. In contrast, we might expect more realist portrayals of animals if their purpose were to add a naturalistic dimension to the design.

We should also bear in mind that the medieval artist is likely to have had a different understanding of what comprised a ‘realistic portrayal’ of an animal than we do today. A point in case is the lion illustrated by Villard de Honnecourt (Ill.82 - above): the artist tells us it was supposedly drawn from ‘real life’, but, given the strong elements of stylisation and decoration, other factors than what he saw clearly come into play.<sup>566</sup> Once again, therefore, it is necessary to assess each of the Tapestry’s creatures on their own merits, examine how it compares with similar animals in art, and decide whether or not it seems to be a reasonable rendition of the creatures we know today or those that existed in the eleventh century.

### **Animals, Birds and Beasts in the Eleventh Century**

As types and sizes of animals in the Early Medieval period could differ from the related species we know today, it is worth sketching a few basic facts about the creatures the designer of the Tapestry would or could have known. Our knowledge is based on animal bones, which are mostly fragmentary, decayed or damaged.<sup>567</sup> Archaeological survival of tissue or fur is rare, unless it had been used in manufacture – hence altering its nature to a greater or lesser extent.

Horses were important in the eleventh century and there is documentary evidence to support this.<sup>568</sup> Based on archaeological remains, it seems that

---

<sup>566</sup> Erlande-Brandenburg, Pernoud, Gimpel and Bechmann, *Villard*, pl.48; Gravestock, ‘Imaginary Animals’, 120.

<sup>567</sup> Rackham, *Animal Bones*, 19-20.

<sup>568</sup> Before 1066 far more is known of horses in England than in Normandy, reflecting the fact that Anglo-Saxon sources are much richer than Norman ones: English wills and marriage-agreements refer to 95 horses, 6 stallions and 3 studs in comparison with the 20 horses and 2 studs named in Norman charters. Davis, ‘Warhorses of the Normans’, 80-1, nevertheless cautions that most English documentation relates to the period 946-1045, whilst those in Normandy were created in 1045-66.

contemporary European warhorses were of medium size, about 14.2 to 15 hands.<sup>569</sup>

Workhorses and mules - vital for transport and trade - were probably smaller; those butchered in Anglo-Scandinavian Coppergate were just under 14 hands.<sup>570</sup>

Dogs were probably domesticated and some were doubtless kept for hunting.<sup>571</sup> At Coppergate the range of dog sizes represented was considerable: their shoulder heights varied between 52cm and 70cm, but most were about the size of a 'collie'.<sup>572</sup> Only the elite could have kept significant numbers or superior animals. Whilst a single animal could be fed on scraps and bones, the keeping of several dogs would consume valuable food supplies. Similarly, hunting hawks – presumably the peregrine falcon - were maintained by those who had the means to sustain them, and such prized birds also reflected status.<sup>573</sup>

In the eleventh century England's economy was primarily agrarian; the topography of the kingdom suiting many different types of animal husbandry. However, whilst this was the case, and food was transported, the types of livestock kept were widespread, being maintained in both urban and rural areas.<sup>574</sup> Hence contemporaries would have been familiar with many species of farm animals. Cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry were certainly kept, and wild animals, birds and fish were also consumed. The Anglo-Saxons seem to have reared several breeds of cattle, which – based upon archaeological evidence – had a shoulder height between 1.10

---

<sup>569</sup> Hyland, *Medieval Warhorse*, 85-6.

<sup>570</sup> Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 383. Even though some were butchered, the scarcity of horse bones seems to reflect the status of the species (O'Conner, *Bones*, 183-4).

<sup>571</sup> O'Conner, *Bones*, 187; Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 385.

<sup>572</sup> O'Conner, *Bones*, 186. In contrast Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 387, noted that dog remains recovered from Thetford suggest a 'hound type with relatively long muscles' – similar in size to a modern retriever. This attests to a variety of dog species that were kept in the Anglo-Saxon period.

<sup>573</sup> Owen-Crocker, 'Hawks and Horse Trappings', 220-9; Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 388.

and 1.20 metres, a little larger than a modern Shetland (one of Britain's smallest breeds).<sup>575</sup> Sheep were probably quite small, lightly built and long-legged – probably similar in size to modern day Welsh Mountain or Soay sheep.<sup>576</sup> At Coppergate both sexes were horned.<sup>577</sup> Although archaeological evidence shows that fleece types varied, hairy, white fleeced sheep seem to be particularly common.<sup>578</sup> During the late Anglo-Saxon and Medieval periods urban centres show an increasing dominance of sheep bones, which may be explained by the expansion of wool production.<sup>579</sup> Goats were less popular than sheep, and were generally small in stature and slightly built.<sup>580</sup> Pigs greatly outnumbered all other domestic animals kept in the eleventh century and 'were the basic component of the agricultural economy'.<sup>581</sup> They were dark skinned and bristly, with relatively long legs.<sup>582</sup> Anglo-Saxon pigs were smaller than modern varieties – ranging between about 50cm to 70cm to the withers.<sup>583</sup> A diverse number of bird species was eaten in the Early Medieval period, which seems to increase in the

---

<sup>574</sup> As the archaeology of s. xi London, Southampton and York shows (Rackham, *Animal Bones*, 54).

<sup>575</sup> O'Conner, *Bones*, 166-7. Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 59 thought the average Anglo-Saxon cow was 60cm high. Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 378, also compared the medieval cow to modern breeds such as 'Lincoln', 'North Devon' and 'Hereford' breeds.

<sup>576</sup> Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 84-5; Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 380. At Coppergate sheep had an average shoulder height of about 59cm (O'Conner, *Bones*, 176).

<sup>577</sup> O'Conner, *Bones*, 178

<sup>578</sup> As at Coppergate (O'Conner, *Bones*, 178)

<sup>579</sup> Rackham, *Animal Bones*, 50, noted that 'there is a change in the bone assemblages from a predominance of cattle (80-90 per cent of fragments) to medieval samples where sheep make up 60 per cent or more of bones' (see also O'Conner, *Bones*, 171).

<sup>580</sup> Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 97; O'Conner, *Bones*, 184-5.

<sup>581</sup> Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 378.

<sup>582</sup> Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 378.

<sup>583</sup> Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 102-3. In Anglo-Scandinavian Coppergate the average shoulder height of pigs was 69cm (O'Conner, *Bones*, 183).



late tenth century.<sup>584</sup> Hens were most popular, but geese and fowl were also commonly eaten.<sup>585</sup>

Wild animals were hunted. Remains of badgers, bears, beavers, boars, deer and hares have all been recovered archaeologically.<sup>586</sup> Likewise a variety of wild birds, including doves, crows, gulls, partridges, pigeons, ravens and woodcock, were consumed but in lesser numbers than 'domestic' species.<sup>587</sup> Fish were also an important part of an eleventh-century diet. Types eaten before the Conquest differ from those consumed thereafter, and perhaps reflect the development of commercial fisheries and the increased demands of urban areas after 1066.<sup>588</sup>

### **Animals, Birds and Beasts in Early Medieval Art**

Zoomorphic motifs are prevalent in Insular art, although most are highly stylised - the species indecipherable.<sup>589</sup> Examples include a complex design of 'Type I' animal interlace decorating a gilt copper-alloy disc found at Sutton Hoo and beasts of the

---

<sup>584</sup> O'Conner, *Bones*, 193.

<sup>585</sup> Hall, *Viking Age York*, 122; O'Conner, *Bones*, 193-4.

<sup>586</sup> Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 132-3. The bone assemblage for s. xi levels at Westminster Abbey show a wide diversity of food species (Rackham, *Animal Bones*, 54). Some animal remains – such as deer – are more common on castle and other high-status domestic sites after the Conquest, when deer hunting was prohibited to many (*ibid.*, 55). In Anglo-Scandinavian Coppergate deer seems to have been more important as a source of antler than meat (O'Conner, *Bones*, 185-6).

<sup>587</sup> Excavations at Exeter and King's Lynn reveal that domestic birds represent between 87% and 92% of the bird bone assemblage (Hagen, *Anglo-Saxon Food and Drink*, 141-3).

<sup>588</sup> Rackham, *Animal Bones*, 52, noted that the abundance of freshwater fish and eels diminish sharply at Fishergate, York, after the Anglo-Saxon period, with herring and cod being the favoured fish species from the s. xi onwards. At Coppergate herrings and eels were exploited in the Anglo-Scandinavian period, with a shift to cod and other gadid species from the s. xi<sup>m</sup> (O'Conner, *Bones*, 197).

<sup>589</sup> Hicks, *Animals*, 5-8, argues against this suggesting that 'one of the most constant features of Insular art is the continuing use of the recognisable animal' – but concedes that the degree of reality which they are depicted varies.

carpet pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels.<sup>590</sup> Creatures produced within the context of ecclesiastical art, by contrast, may be more recognisable, reflecting late antique prototypes on the one hand, and the need to function as recognisable symbols on the other. Highly stylised – though recognisable – examples appear in the Evangelist portraits for Mark (the Lion), Luke (Ox) and John (Eagle) in the Book of Durrow and the Lichfield Gospels (Ill.83 - below).<sup>591</sup> In the case of the lion the debt to pictorial sources alone is unquestionable! Mediterranean sources doubtless explain the relatively naturalistic appearance of the wolves which illustrate the story of Romulus and Remus on the Franks Casket.<sup>592</sup>



**Illustration 83**

**The lion, the Evangelist symbol for St Mark, in the Book of Durrow.**

Reflecting the stronger debt to (sub) classical sources and the more natural general aesthetic, animals, birds and beasts in Carolingian art appear more realistic than most of those in early Anglo-Saxon art. Some of these creatures, such as the glorious lion

---

<sup>590</sup> This copper-alloy disc is perhaps a s. vii<sup>1/4</sup> shield fitting (Evans, *Sutton Hoo*, 17) and BL, Cotton Nero D. iv, f.26v, f.138v.

<sup>591</sup> TCD, A. 4. 5 (57), f.84v, f.124v, f.191v and Lichfield, CL, 1, p.219.

<sup>592</sup> Frank's Casket, viii<sup>1</sup>.

in the Codex Aureus (Ill.84 - below),<sup>593</sup> clearly cannot have been observed first hand, and this should warn us against believing that other animals that could have been seen by the artists were copied 'from life'.



**Illustration 84**

**The lion in the Codex Aureus.**

Cases in point are the mule of Solomon in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori Le Mura,<sup>594</sup> and the sheep on the ivory cover embellishing the Psalter of Charles the Bald.<sup>595</sup> Likewise, a particularly famous Carolingian horse or pony - sometimes said to be later antique (that *is* itself revealing) - now in the Louvre, is a rare realistic sculpture.<sup>596</sup> More clearly indebted to art – perhaps unsurprisingly so - are Evangelist symbols in Carolingian illumination. Like those in Insular art they appear somewhat stylised and

---

<sup>593</sup> Munich, BSB, Clm. 14000, f.16v.

<sup>594</sup> Rome, SPfM, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.188.

<sup>595</sup> van der Horst, Noel and Wüstefeld, *Utrecht Psalter*, 203, Cat. No. 14.

<sup>596</sup> Lasco, *Ars Sacra*, 18-9, pl.19. However, the date of this sculpture is the subject of some controversy; its history cannot be traced beyond the s. xvi. If genuine it could also be based on a late antique model – in 801 Charlemagne bought a life size s. v<sup>ex</sup> equestrian statue of Emperor Theodoric.

contrived – but are clearly recognisable as known species. Examples include those in the Gospels of Saint Médard of Soissons and in a Sacramentary fragment from Metz.<sup>597</sup>



**Illustration 85**

**The donkey and goat depicted in the Pericopes Book of Henry II.**

The repertoire of creatures found in Ottonian illumination is seemingly not as extensive as that found in Carolingian and Early Anglo-Saxon art, being confined mostly to creatures traditionally associated with biblical depictions and Evangelist symbols. As one would expect the animals, birds and beasts in Ottonian art show a greater degree of stylisation than those in Carolingian art, consonant with the Ottonian artists' general move from 'realism' towards 'abstraction'. Telling examples are found in the Pericopes Book of Henry II, where Christ's donkey and a goat are shown as thinly fleshed creatures, with accentuated features (Ill.85 - above).<sup>598</sup> Similarly contrived are the birds and beasts which accompany St Luke in the Gospel Book of

<sup>597</sup> BNF, lat. 8850, f.1v and BNF, lat. 1141.

<sup>598</sup> Munich, SB, Clm. 4452, f.78. See also the sheep in folio 8v and bovine and donkey in folio 9.

Otto III.<sup>599</sup> Although a few more naturalistic renditions can be noted, including the sheep and cockerel in the Codex Egberti and the peacocks in St Gregory's *Moralia in Job* these are very much the exception not the rule.<sup>600</sup> As in Carolingian illuminations, from which they ultimately derive, Ottonian Evangelist symbols are stylised, though to a varying degree. For example, the lion of St Mark in the Codex Wittekindeus is broadly naturalistic (though its facial features and expression - dozy eyes and smile - are almost anthropomorphic).<sup>601</sup> However, Ottonian depictions are - 'globally speaking' - more stylised than their Carolingian equivalents. A more typical example is the lion in the Gero Codex, which is clearly stylised and almost unrecognisable as the beast it is intended to represent.<sup>602</sup>

The abundance and variety of zoomorphic motifs in Early Anglo-Saxon art continues into the later Anglo-Saxon period. Here we find numerous examples of both highly stylised and naturalistic motifs. Mythical, inevitably stylised, creatures appear in illuminations and are typical of initials, such as Bodleian Library, Tanner 10 and Royal 12, C. xxiii. In contexts where their function is primarily decorative, animal motifs tend to be more stylised. Examples include lead and copper-alloy brooches with 'backward-looking Jellinge-style' beasts from Norfolk, a stirrup-strap mount with 'griffin' from Somerset (Ill.86 - below), and a grave-marker depicting a 'Ringerike-style animal' from London.<sup>603</sup> Where zoomorphic images fulfil a more overt illustrative function and where naturalistic models can be assumed or suspected,

---

<sup>599</sup> Munich, SB, Clm. 4453, f.139v.

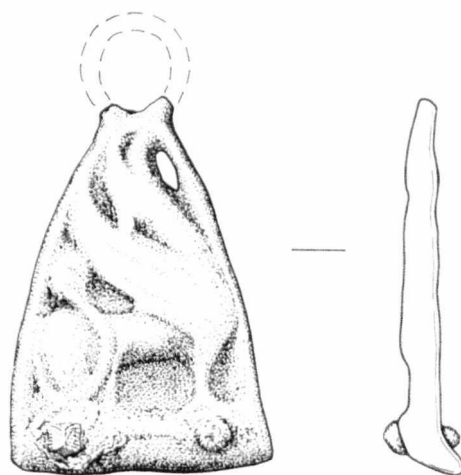
<sup>600</sup> Trier, SB, 24, f.13, f.80v and Trier, Stadtbibliothek, 2209/2328, f.1.

<sup>601</sup> Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, theol. Lat. fol. 1, f.45v.

<sup>602</sup> Darmstadt, Hessische Landesbibliothek, 1948, f.2v.

<sup>603</sup> Colney, s. ix/x, Fig. 3c, and Gooderstone, x, Fig. 3d (Geake, 'Medieval Britain and Ireland 2001', 135-6); Wiveliscombe, s. xi, Fig. 3c (Geake, 'Medieval Britain and Ireland 2000', 245-6); Grave-

such as the sheep and oxen in the calendar illustrations of Cotton Julius A. vi and the horses and boar in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 23, they appear more realistic.<sup>604</sup> The extent to which even these latter cases involved first hand observation of nature is, however, debatable. These, and other examples, will be explored further below.



**Illustration 86**

**The stirrup-strap mount from Somerset which depicts a griffin.**

### **Animals, Birds and Beasts in the Bayeux Tapestry**

Most animals in the main frieze directly relate to the events in the narrative, and help to provide an ambiance of ‘everyday’ life on the eve of the Conquest. Common are horses, dogs and hawks, but also shown are farm-animals, including a cow, ram and boar. In only four instances are animals in the main-frieze overtly stylised: these are

---

marker from St Paul’s cathedral, London (now in the Museum of London, Acc. No. 4075), s. xi (Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture IV*, 226-8, no. 351).

<sup>604</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5, f.5v and CCCC, 23, f.2.

the bovine in Scene 41, and the symmetrically paired adversaries below the mottes of Dol, Rennes and Bayeux.<sup>605</sup>

By contrast, the Tapestry's borders display a more varied range of species, including exotic beasts (such as lions and camels) which were unlikely to have been known first-hand to most eleventh-century Europeans, mythical creatures (such as dragons, griffins and centaurs), as well as domestic and indigenous species (such as dogs, donkeys, cattle, goats, horses, sheep, eels, deer, fish, foxes and rabbits).<sup>606</sup>

The animals in the borders can be divided into two groups. First there are creatures that seem to act within their own narrative; there are twenty-six such stories.<sup>607</sup> Wormald considered these to be purely decorative, a view supported by the fact that some are repeated in later sequences, where they accompany episodes whose tone is quite different.<sup>608</sup> Further, they do not occur in relationship to key scenes in the main panel, such as the oath scene, Harold's coronation and death.<sup>609</sup> Yet whether or not they were purposefully deployed so that their own stories could comment on the

---

<sup>605</sup> Below Dol a pair of birds (A598-9) fight. Below Rennes a pair of beasts (A604-5) face one another. Below Bayeux two birds (A616-7) fight over a piece of vegetal ornament. In the case of Dinan two soldiers (Figures 174 and 175) are shown in symmetry attempting to burn down the fortification.

<sup>606</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209, made the important observation that 'the upper border is, generally speaking, less historiated, decorated with single or paired animals and birds', whereas 'the lower one has the more varied subjects', including fables and various farming activities.

<sup>607</sup> Upper Border: **Fable 1** (Scene 24u) A100-1. **Fable 2** (Scene 24u) A102-3. **Fable 3** (Scene 39/40u) A132-8. **Fable 4** (Scene 49u) A170-1. **Fable 5** (Scene 51u) A198-9. Lower Border: **Fable 6** (Scene 4.lw) A272-3. **Fable 7** (Scene 4.lw) A274-5. **Fable 8** (Scene 5.lw) A276-80. **Fable 9** (Scene 5.lw) A281-2. **Fable 10** (Scene 5.lw) A283-91. **Fable 11** (Scene 5.lw) A292-3. **Fable 12** (Scene 6.lw) A294-6. **Fable 13** (Scene 7.lw) A297-306. **Fable 14** (Scene 8.lw) A307-8. **Fable 15** (Scene 10.lw) A315. **Fable 16** (Scene 10.lw) A316. **Fable 17** (Scene 10.lw) A317-8. **Fable 18** (Scene 11.lw) A321. **Fable 19** (Scene 12/13.lw) A322-31. **Fable 20** (Scene 16.lw) A343-4. **Fable 21** (Scene 17/19.lw) A349-61. **Fable 22** (Scene 38.lw) A440-1. **Fable 23** (Scene 48.lw) A492-3. **Fable 24** (Scene 49.lw) A500-1. **Fable 25** (Scene 50.lw) A510-4. **Fable 26** (Scene 51.lw) A531-4. There are other small narrative sequences in the BT, but these exclude animals.

<sup>608</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design' 27. Hicks, 'Borders', 255-6, agreed, suggesting they might also be space fillers, 'when the confronted pairs [of animals] have got out of rhythm'. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 42.

main narrative,<sup>610</sup> it is highly likely that these motifs were taken from visual sources.<sup>611</sup> Others are scenes of everyday life, such as farming and hunting, which might be purely decorative. Most of the domesticated and indigenous creatures are shown here.<sup>612</sup>

Second, there are animals that appear independently of any such stories. At face value, their primary purpose is to provide decoration - the vast majority appear as symmetrical pairings, alternating between land-based animals, and those with wings.<sup>613</sup> Exceptions to the continuity of this pattern (bird – beast – bird), besides the short stories discussed above, are griffins, which (given that they have four feet and wings) are depicted in the place of either land-based or winged creatures.

### **Parallels for the Animals, Birds and Beasts in the Bayeux Tapestry**

Whereas manes are indicative of lions, and pointed-ears are generic to the donkey, many beasts (especially those in the borders) are not shown with diagnostic attributes.

---

<sup>609</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 255; Hicks, *Animals*, 259-60, believed that it would 'have detracted seriously from the reading of the main text had the borders either contained subversive messages or been filled with distracting symbolic images in their own right'.

<sup>610</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 135, believed the purpose of these stories was to express dissent in a manner in which the fables could be understood from two perspectives, so the author was beyond punishment.

<sup>611</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 27-8. Hicks, 'Borders', 253, believed that 'the animals in these scenes belong to a manuscript tradition which comes via proto-bestiariums, books of fables and monster lore, and calendar and natural history illustrations from late antique art'.

<sup>612</sup> Most stories occur in the lower border (where there are 21 as opposed to 5 in the upper border), and only occur in Sections 1, 2, 4 and 6.

<sup>613</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 252. Wormald, 'Style and Design', 27, noted similar arrangements of birds and beasts, also between diagonal lines, can be found in woven borders of a girdle found in the tomb of Pope Clement II, a chasuble belonging to Bamberg cathedral, and of the Reitermantel of the Emperor Henry II, all in Bamberg. These motifs probably came into Western Europe from Byzantium and the East, and 'had formed part of the ornamental vocabulary of the West for some time. Symmetrical pairings of beasts are also common in Anglo-Saxon metalwork, sculpture and illumination. For numerous examples see Wilson, *Early Medieval Designs*. This arrangement of alternation between land-based and flying beasts is also found in some manuscripts, such as TCC, B. 10. 4, f.60, f.133 and Monte Cassino, Archivio della Badia, BB. 437, 439, p.126 (for a discussion of the latter see McGurk and Rosenthal, 'Gospelbooks of Judith', 254-5).



Since most of these animals are shown outside structured narrative sequences we have no clues to their identity, and hence it is more difficult to identify the norms with which to compare them. The following analysis is, therefore, necessarily selective, focusing upon creatures which can be fruitfully discussed.

## The Main Frieze

### *Horses*



**Illustration 87**

**Odo's horse (A714) in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

Of the 184 horses depicted in the Tapestry, all but seven are shown in the main frieze.<sup>614</sup> They are clearly stylised, with their movements exaggerated. Thus in Scene 54, Odo's horse (A714) runs with limbs outstretched far beyond the physical capability of such an animal (Ill.87 - above).<sup>615</sup> Likewise their colouring is often imaginative and many carry anthropomorphic expressions.<sup>616</sup> This said, the designer

---

<sup>614</sup> The remainder (A290, A316, A331, A345-6, A531-2) only appear in the lower border. Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 32, made the number 202, including mules. Keefer, 'Horses', 22, counted 185.

<sup>615</sup> Keefer, 'Horses', 1, observed that this 'galop volant' was not an attempt at realism.

<sup>616</sup> Davis, 'Warhorses of the Normans', 68-9.

has taken time to illustrate the physique of horses,<sup>617</sup> their manner, furniture and fittings,<sup>618</sup> and has chosen to differentiate between mares and stallions.

Horses appear in various late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, including some that were produced at Canterbury. Those in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 23 (Ill.88 - below) are broadly similar in form and also have a comparable arrangement of harness fittings.<sup>619</sup> Particularly close parallels can be made with the horses on folio 2, which are shown with a rounded neck and the head held tightly to the chest.<sup>620</sup>



**Illustration 88**

**Horses and horse furniture depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 23 (right).**

Likewise, the form of one of William's horses in the Tapestry (A664) mimics a beast in the Old English Hexateuch.<sup>621</sup> Of course, it is not certain whether the designer took

---

<sup>617</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 208, believed that, 'in many respects' the Tapestry's horses 'are the most competently designed and realistic figures on the hanging'. Yapp, 'Animals', 27, agreed, suggesting that 'there is no need to suppose that they [the horses in the BT] are anything but representations of what the designer saw every day of his life'.

<sup>618</sup> Hyland, *Medieval Warhorse*, 97. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 28, noted that the horses which Turol holds (A562-3) 'have their harnesses precisely detailed, including a saddle with adjustable stirrup'.

<sup>619</sup> CCCC, 23, f.2.

<sup>620</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 27, suggested that in the case of the Tapestry's images this implied the existence of a bearing rein.

these drawings as his model, copied from another - now lost - exemplar, or even sketched from 'real life'. However, such motifs would have been accessible to a designer working from Canterbury illuminations.

### *Dogs*

Dogs, of which there are twenty-four in the Tapestry,<sup>622</sup> are characterised by a narrow body and long, thin tail; all wear collars. It is perhaps significant that all but one (A440) appear in Sections 1 and 2. Although clearly canine - because of their features - it has been suggested that the designer did not attempt to differentiate between the two types of hunting dogs used in the medieval period.<sup>623</sup> This might indicate that the designer satisfied the scope of his commission with one generic type of dog, rather than any specific breed.

Dogs are not common in contemporary art, but when shown are often characterised by their thin 'athletic' body and collar - as they are in the Tapestry. Good parallels include the dogs in Cotton Tiberius B. v.<sup>624</sup> Since this manuscript was probably produced in Winchester it seems unlikely that our designer knew it; nevertheless, it remains probable that he based his dogs on art rather than 'life'.

---

<sup>621</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.69r (Keefer, 'Horses', 13-4). See also f.4r, f.6r, f.25r, f.25v, f.37r, f.51r, f.72r, f.84v, f.122v, f.126r, f.141v and f.154r of the same manuscript. Other Anglo-Saxon examples include BL, Add. 24199, f.17; Rouen, BM, Y. 6 (274), f.36v. Romanesque examples are also numerous (see appendix). Keefer, 'Horses', 8, also parallels the 'falling horse' image in the Tapestry (Scene 53) with a similar motif in BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.16r.

<sup>622</sup> Bertrand, *Tapisserie de Bayeux*, 32, somehow made the number 55.

<sup>623</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 27.

## Hawks

Of the ornithological varieties depicted in the Tapestry, birds of prey - which we presume to be hunting hawks - are most recognisable, characterised by their large eyes and rounded beak. These appear from Scenes 2 to 14 and are shown on the arms of Guy, Harold and William.<sup>625</sup>



**Illustration 89**

**Harold with a hawk in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and a mounted huntsman in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi (right).**

Although these hawks might reflect the form of 'real life' creatures, their colours – like so much in the Tapestry – are clearly imaginative,<sup>626</sup> and we might do well to look for comparisons in art. However, in art hawks are uncommon – not least because of the dearth of early medieval hunting and other 'secular' books.<sup>627</sup> Nonetheless, a good parallel for the Tapestry's hawks – of which one is even handled by a mounted

<sup>624</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.7. Romanesque examples include London, British Library, Add. 11283, f.10v (which are not collared); Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 2. 34, f.137v.

<sup>625</sup> A539 (Harold), A547 (?Harold), A559 (Guy), A561 (Harold), A571 (Harold), A573 (Guy) and A581 (William).

<sup>626</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 30-1, fruitlessly endeavoured to identify the actual breed of hawk shown in the BT.

<sup>627</sup> Later famous examples include the s. xiii<sup>med</sup> falcon book of Frederick II (Willemsen, *Falkenbuch*) and the s. xv<sup>m</sup> hunting book of Gaston Phebus (Thomas, Avril and Schlag, *Hunting Book*).

hunter - appears in Cotton Julius A. vi (Ill.89 - above).<sup>628</sup> Given that this illumination was possibly produced in Canterbury, it may well have been available to our designer. However, it is just as likely that the Tapestry designer took the basic characteristics of a bird of prey from his knowledge of the Evangelist symbol for St John, of which plentiful examples survive.<sup>629</sup>

### The Fables in the Borders

Many of the creatures illustrated in the Tapestry's borders are not species that appear in the main frieze. While a few are instantly recognisable, most are difficult to identify with certainty. In the case of the latter it is impossible to know whether they are 'accurately' recreated, or not, and hence they cannot be fruitfully discussed here.

Some of these short stories represent well-known fables, such as the raven and the fox, and the crane and the wolf.<sup>630</sup> Therefore, it should be possible to tell what

---

<sup>628</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.7v. Hawks also appear in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15r and London, British Library, Add. 47967, Fly-leaf (iii).

<sup>629</sup> E.g. PML, M 869; TCC, B. 10. 4.

<sup>630</sup> **Upper Border:** **Fable 1** the crane (A101) and the wolf (A100). **Fable 2** the fox (A102) and the raven (A103). **Fable 3** two small birds (A132-3), two beasts (A134-5), a deer (A136) and a lion (A137) confront a large bird (A138). **Fable 4** a beast (A171) watches a donkey (A170) eating. **Fable 5** the wolf (A198) and the goat (A199). **Lower Border:** **Fable 6** the raven (A272) and the fox (A273). **Fable 7** two beasts (A274-5) face one another. **Fable 8** a bear (A280) faces her cubs (A276-9). **Fable 9** (Scene 5.lw) the crane (A281) and the wolf (A282). **Fable 10** (Scene 5.lw) a man (Figure 38) takes four beasts (A284, A287-9), two donkeys (A285 & A291), a deer (A286) and a horse (A290) to a beast (A283) in its cave. **Fable 11** (Scene 5.lw) a bird of prey (A293) catches a ?mouse (A292). **Fable 12** (Scene 6.lw) a beast (A294) faces a goat (A295), whilst another goat (A296) runs the other way. **Fable 13** (Scene 7.lw) two men (Figures 61-2) beat a hunt of five dogs (A297-301), a goat (A302), a beast (A303), a bull (A304), a lion (A 305), which chase a deer (A306). **Fable 14** (Scene 8.lw) a deer (A307) and a lion (A308) fight. **Fable 15** (Scene 10.lw) two men (Figures 88-89) plough with a donkey (A315). **Fable 16** (Scene 10.lw) a man (Figure 96) ploughs with a horse (A316). **Fable 17** (Scene 10.lw) a man (Figures 97) scares ?crows (A317-8). **Fable 18** (Scene 11.lw) a man (Figure 100) baits a bear (A321). **Fable 19** (Scene 12/13.lw) a man (Figure 102) with dogs (A322-6 & A328-30) and a man (Figure 113) on a horse (A331) hunt a deer (A327). **Fable 20** the fox (A343) and the raven (A344). **Fable 21** (Scene 17/19.lw) two fish (A349 & A351) catch an eel (A350), other eels (A352-7) flee from a man (Figure 154), who flees from a beast (A358), who flees from a bird (A359), who flees a beast (A360), who flees a centaur (A361). **Fable 22** (Scene 38.lw) a dog (A440) chases a rabbit/hare (A441). **Fable 23** (Scene 48.lw) a bird (A492) and a rabbit (A493). **Fable 24** (Scene 49.lw) a beast (A501) watches a donkey (A500) eat. **Fable 25** (Scene 50.lw) a bear (A514) faces her clubs (A510-3). **Fable 26** (Scene 51.lw) a beast (A531) catches a bird (A532), whilst another beast (A523) catches a mouse

creatures the designer intended to recreate, and whether these are ‘accurately’ illustrated.<sup>631</sup>

The fable of the raven and the fox is shown on three occasions,<sup>632</sup> but there is little consistency in the manner in which either animal is depicted. On one occasion the raven is shown – unrealistically - multi-coloured (A272): on another its form is more like that of a blackbird (A344). Similarly, some foxes look little like the animal we know. One (A273) has an uncharacteristically long thin tail (more like that of a wolf),<sup>633</sup> whereas another (A343) is shown with floppy ears. Indeed, the ‘foxes’ in the Tapestry are not greatly distinct from what we take to be a bear (A280) or wolf (A282) in other scenes.<sup>634</sup> Here then, the accuracy of detail seems of little import to the designer. Even so, the ‘raven’ is shown clearly as a bird, and hence the tale is identifiable.

Likewise, in other fables, such as that of the crane and the wolf, only certain (often singular) characteristics seem to be of any significance. For example, of two cranes depicted (A101 and A281) neither reflects accurately the form of the species. What actually seemed to matter to the designer is the ‘essential feature’ of the bird’s long neck, which was fundamental to the narrative and understanding of the tale.

---

(A524). Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 28, gives examples of other fables, such as the mouse and the fox, which I could not identify. Also see McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 26-34.

<sup>631</sup> Some of these fables are also depicted in near contemporary illuminations. The fables of the wolf and the crane and that of the fox and crow are both found in the Romanesque Dover Bible, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 4, f.239, made at Canterbury, s. xii<sup>med</sup>.

<sup>632</sup> Fable 2 (A102-3), Fable 6 (A272-3) and Fable 20 (A343-4).

<sup>633</sup> Yapp, ‘Animals’, 36.

<sup>634</sup> Again Fable 7 is supposed to show that of the wolf and the lamb (Yapp, ‘Animals’, 36). Although, to me, neither beast looks like a wolf, fox or lamb! Similarly, Yapp (p.38) considered Fable 11 (A292-3) to represent the fable of the mouse and frog: A292 to be the mouse and A293 to be a bird, which sweeps down to eat him. The feature alongside them (which looks like vegetal ornament) is supposed to be the frog!

### *Scenes of Agriculture and Everyday Life*

Agricultural scenes are found in the lower borders. Of particular interest is the donkey and horse shown pulling a plough and harrow (Fable 15 and 16).<sup>635</sup> These could be taken from 'real-life', as both depicted creatures are broadly representative of the actual beasts.<sup>636</sup> However, both have been paralleled with contemporary calendar illustrations, representing occupations of the month (Ill.90 - below).<sup>637</sup> Whilst these drawings show beasts of the same generic type, the correspondence with what we see in the Tapestry is not particularly close. It is evident that these calendar images were not the specific source; however this does not exclude the influence of art, as there are strong parallels between these depictions and Canterbury-produced illuminations.<sup>638</sup>



**Illustration 90**

**Oxen pulling a plough in British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi.**

<sup>635</sup> Given their appearance in the Tapestry it is interesting, therefore, that Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 383, believed there was no evidence that horses were used for ploughing in Anglo-Saxon times'.

<sup>636</sup> It is interesting that the horse which pulls a plough in the lower border (A316) is bulkier than those of war. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 28, agreed, believing the designer to be a Norman, he certainly thought that he would have been used to the sight of working horses and farming techniques not used in England before the Conquest.

<sup>637</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.3 and BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.3 (both discussed by Wormald, 'Style and Design', 28, 32 and 35).

<sup>638</sup> There are general parallels between the plough in the Tapestry and those in BodL, Junius 11, p.54 and BL, Harley 603, f.21r. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 117, believed the Tapestry's harrow to be the earliest representation of the implement in Medieval art.

Similarly, Fable 17 shows a man (Figure 97) scaring birds (A317-8) which are multi-coloured and clearly schematic. Moreover, here (as we saw earlier) the influence of art is clear: the Tapestry's depiction replicates a scene in the Old English Hexateuch. The basic form of the birds is similar; the Tapestry designer has even emphasised the outstretched claws of the original.<sup>639</sup>

The Tapestry also depicts a scene of bear-baiting. Clearly stylised, this bear (A321) is by no means a convincing rendition. Again, art offers a close comparison in the form of a near-contemporary initial in a manuscript from Saint Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury.<sup>640</sup>

### *Farm Animals*

Apart from in Scene 40, farm animals are confined to the borders. Some are depicted in symmetrical pairings, whilst others are participants in the Tapestry's fables. The farm animals in the main frieze (A659-61) relate to those seized as provisions described in the inscription,<sup>641</sup> providing a 'naturalistic' setting for the narrative.

The sheep in the Tapestry are shown with a solid body and have round horns and a stubby - slightly curved - tail. These characteristics can be likened to the actual creatures, but also compare well those in contemporary illustrations, such as Cotton Julius A. vi (Ill.91 - above),<sup>642</sup> which could well have been available to the designer.

---

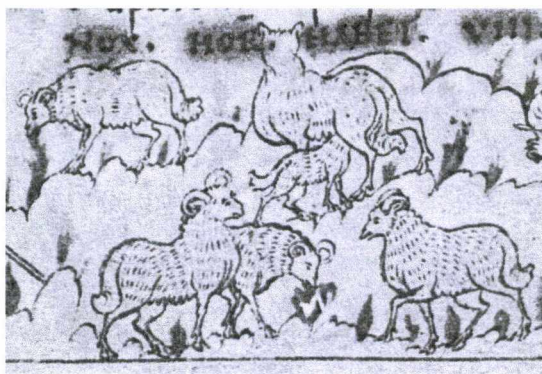
<sup>639</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius, B. iv, f.26v. These drawings allow for more detail than the Tapestry rendition. Wormald, 'Style and Design', 32, noted, in particular, 'the gesture of the hands and the shape of the sling, with small tassels on the end'.

<sup>640</sup> BL, Arundel, 91, f.47b. Although there are similarities between this illustration and the Tapestry's rendition, Yapp, 'Animals', 42, was unconvinced, and believed the Tapestry's image must have been influenced by first-hand observation. This motif is also found in TCC, O. 4. 7, f.75.

<sup>641</sup> *ET hIC: MILITES: FESTINAVERVNT: hESTINGA: VT CIBVM. RAPARENTVR.*

<sup>642</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5. Likewise sheep in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.14r, f.67v, are shown with thin legs, rounded horns and stubby tails; though sometimes tails are shown with a slight curl.





**Illustration 91**

**Sheep in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and British Library, Cotton Julius A. vi (right).**

A pair of hogs (A75-6) occur in the upper border. They are shown with a sub-oval body, hairy crest along the back and curled tail. Again, these animals parallel the appearance of actual beasts, but also, in general terms, those in contemporary art. Examples include the illustration of the Miracle of the Gadarene Swine and on a tympanum from Ipswich.<sup>643</sup> Either ‘real life’ or art could therefore have provided the designer with his model here. The same is true of the goats which are characterised by their pointed narrow horns and tufty beard; they are, also, often shown with rounded backs and small stubby tails. As with other farm animals in the Tapestry, they have characteristics of ‘real-life’ goats, and also compare well with depictions in contemporary illuminations.<sup>644</sup>

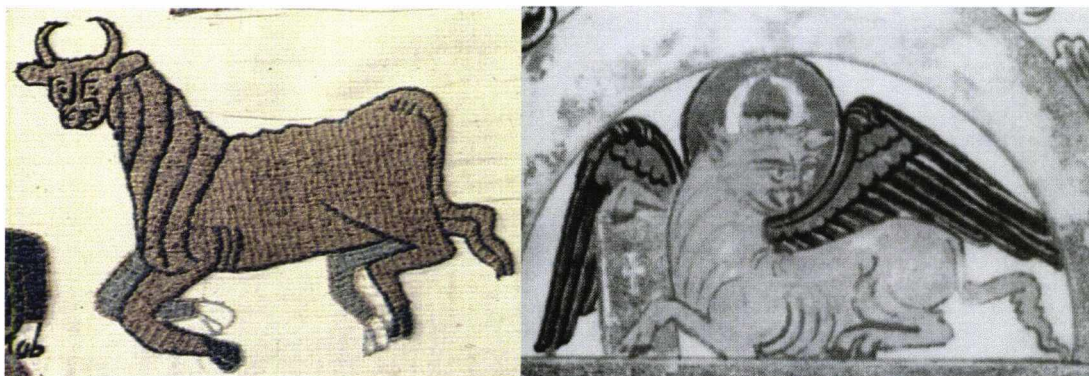
Two bovines occur in the Tapestry; one (A304) is depicted in Fable 13, the other appears in the main frieze (A660). These creatures are characterised by their inward turning horns, sub-rectangular shaped body, bumpy back and long tail of two

---

Other examples include PML, M 869, f.11v, f.12v; BodL, Junius 11, p.49; BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.19; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.5. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

<sup>643</sup> Los Angeles, Getty Museum, MS 9 (Teviotdale and Cohen, ‘Anglo-Saxon Leaves’, 63, 73, pl.16) and s. xii<sup>1/4</sup> limestone fragment, St. Nicholas’s Church, Ipswich. Other examples include CCCC, 23, f.2; BodL, Junius 11, p.11, p.49, p.66, p.74; BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.19; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.7. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

strands. Both animals adopt the same ‘canter-style’ pose, with head shown in ‘portrait’, and look ‘more like a drunken Evangelist symbol than a serious milk producing creature’.<sup>645</sup> Wilson was surely correct that this motif was reproduced from art and not from ‘real life’.<sup>646</sup> A similar example is found in the Trinity Gospels (Ill.92 - below).<sup>647</sup> Even when compared with illustrations of bovines in other manuscripts, such as the Old English Hexateuch, the Tapestry’s animals are notably stylised.<sup>648</sup>



**Illustration 92**

**A bovine in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and the Evangelist symbol for St Luke in the Trinity Gospels (right).**

<sup>644</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.19 and BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15v, f.26v, f.48v, f.49r, f.84v. See appendix for Romanesque examples.

<sup>645</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.* This was disputed by Yapp, ‘Animals’, 28, who thought the drawing ‘very life-like’, adding that, when annoyed, cows do jump like this! However, Yapp also made the more weighty observation that the horns of the Tapestry cows ‘curve upward and inward, as in the white Chillingham cattle of the present day’. He considered this the least changed of any breed from the medieval period.

<sup>647</sup> TCC, B. 10. 4, f.16r. Another Anglo-Saxon example is Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, 9, f.88. Romanesque examples include Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 614, f.17v; Florence, Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Plut. XII. 17, f.1v (which are shown in a landscape setting); CCCC, 2, f.281v. However, not all calves in Evangelist portraits have this form: e.g. Warsaw, BN, I. 3311, f.55; PML, M 869, f.83v. Romanesque examples include BL, Arundel, 60, f.52; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 777, f.37v.

<sup>648</sup> E.g. the cattle in BL, Cotton Claudius, B. iv, f.66r, f.67r, f.67v, have the same inward facing horns, bumpy back and two-part tail, but are notably less stylised than those in the BT. Similar depictions are found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B. 484, f.85; BL, Add. 47967, fly-leaf iii; CCCC, 23, f.2; Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 290316, f.1v and BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

## Elsewhere in the Borders

### *Birds*

There are 222 birds (including hawks) in the Tapestry, most of which are in the borders.<sup>649</sup> The majority of these appear in symmetrical pairings, placed between beasts. At face value, their purpose seems purely decorative.

The birds in the Tapestry are clearly stylised, and therefore drawing parallels with 'real' world ornithology is problematic.<sup>650</sup> For example, most birds are shown with only two toes, surely a convention for front toes and back toe. Although the characteristics of some birds are accentuated, they do not seem to reflect a particular type. Their sizes vary, though the majority are quite large. Most are shown rounded - plump - and have long necks and small heads (such as A50). Others are thinner, with large wings, and a small neck (such as A73). This said, some are clearly poultry, shown with a crest and rounded tail feathers (such as A41-2). In one instance a pair of peacocks is also illustrated (A61-2), shown with distinctive crests and colourful tails.

Parallels for the Tapestry birds and their posture are found in art, where they are relatively common, especially in manuscript initials.<sup>651</sup> Many different varieties of birds are shown in the Old English Hexateuch, depicted in flight as well as walking.<sup>652</sup>

---

<sup>649</sup> In the Tapestry birds may drop their heads, face towards (or away from) each other, peck or bite plants, themselves or other beasts or objects, plume their feathers, raise their heads, or, flap or gesticulate with their wings. Some seem to fly, but most walk. Others are shown collapsing, as if they are dying.

<sup>650</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 257-8. However, Yapp, 'Animals', 26, noted that 'for mechanical reasons, it is very difficult to produce the small curves, whether in weaving or embroidery, and there is often distortion through differential stretching or shrinking, so that the representation of jizz (particularly in birds) is more difficult'.

<sup>651</sup> Hicks, *Animals*, 253. E.g. Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 14. 3, f.5; BodL, Tanner 10, f.54, f.79, f.115v; London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. i, f.7v; BL, Add. 49598, f.19v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 17814, f.46; BL, Harley 603, f.1; BodL, Junius 11, p.7, p.11, p.13, p.62, p.66; London, British Library, Cotton Titus D. xxvii, f.75v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.3v; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 6401, f.159. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

<sup>652</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.3v, f.4r, f.6r, f.14r, f.15r, f.15v, f.115v.

In some instances birds are even shown in symmetrical pairings, for example in the Kederminster Gospels.<sup>653</sup> This is a common feature above arcades, and dates back to the ninth century and beyond.<sup>654</sup> As with the Tapestry's birds, they often bite their borders and/or gesticulate. Similarly, birds with a single raised wing are common in both the Tapestry and other art works, including, for example, the sculptures on the mid twelfth-century south doorway of Kilpeck Church, Herefordshire.<sup>655</sup> Some birds in the Tapestry can be favourably compared with particular examples in art. For example, the birds beneath Dol (A598-9) can be paralleled with illustrations in Cotton Tiberius B. v, whilst the Tapestry's peacocks (A61-2) compare well with birds in the Trinity Gospels.<sup>656</sup>

### *Rabbits*

The Tapestry seems to illustrate rabbits (A441 and A493), which can be distinguished from hares by their relatively short ears.<sup>657</sup> Their appearance in the Tapestry is particularly fascinating, as it is thought that rabbits were first introduced to England after the Norman Conquest.<sup>658</sup> If this were the case then their occurrence in the Tapestry might provide evidence of first-hand observation. However, similar shorter eared creatures appear to be shown in the Old English Hexateuch and Cotton Vitellius

---

<sup>653</sup> London, British Library, Loan 11, *s.n.* Numerous other examples, including sculpture, metalwork and illumination are illustrated in Wilson, *Early Medieval Designs*.

<sup>654</sup> E.g. Épernay, BM, 1, f.10r-15v.

<sup>655</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 52; Thurlby, *Hereford School*, 43-51. Other examples include BNF, lat. 6401, f.159.

<sup>656</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.82v and TCC, B. 10. 4, f.9v.

<sup>657</sup> Hares do not seem to be depicted in the BT.

<sup>658</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 49.

C. iii,<sup>659</sup> indicating the availability of visual models for the Tapestry's 'rabbits'. Indeed the Tapestry's rabbits compare particularly well with those in the Old English Hexateuch; sharing their form of motion and extended hind feet, as well as their characteristic ears.

### *Lions*

Among the (identifiable) land-based animals in the Tapestry lions are particularly prevalent, being shown on at least sixty-six occasions.<sup>660</sup> Lions occur only in the upper and lower borders, but are more common at the beginning of the Tapestry. All but two are shown as symmetrical pairings.<sup>661</sup>

The Tapestry's lions differ in details, but are all characterised by their wavy or ruffled mane.<sup>662</sup> Most are shown in profile,<sup>663</sup> sometimes with mouths open and/or tongues hanging out; their rounded backs, slender waists and toned bodies are emphasised. These characteristics might be compared with those of living beasts, though it is highly improbable that the designer had ever seen a lion. Closer inspection reveals that the lions in the Tapestry are stylised, and were probably borrowed from art.<sup>664</sup> Whilst most are shown with a widening tip at the tail, some have a decorative trefoil ending.<sup>665</sup> Similarly, their tails are normally shown between

---

<sup>659</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.4r and BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.19. Rabbits and hares also appear in Romanesque manuscripts including Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 83, f.65.

<sup>660</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 258, made the number 140, but was surely rather indiscriminating in her interpretation of quadrupeds.

<sup>661</sup> Two lions appear in the Tapestry's fables (A305 in Fable 13 and A308 in Fable 14).

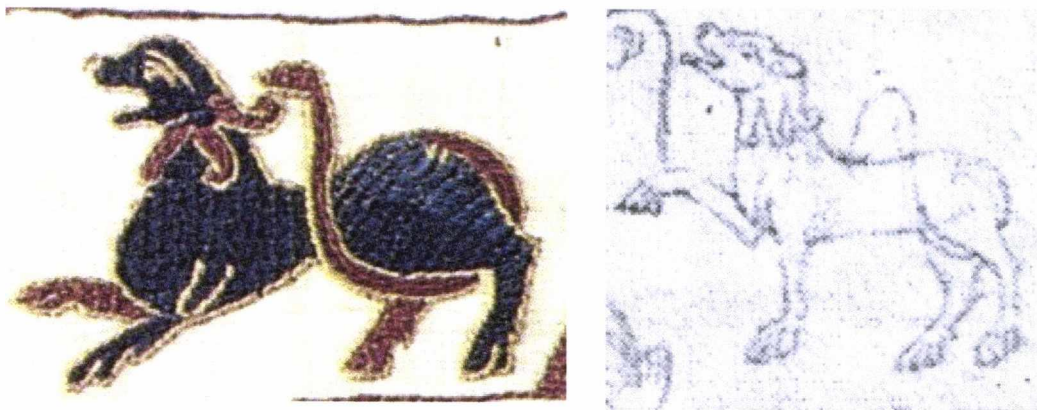
<sup>662</sup> The mane of A258-9 appears striped

<sup>663</sup> Only the heads of A97-8, A250-1 and A486-7 face forward.

<sup>664</sup> Hicks, *Animals*, 253-4, noted that the lion was the most popular motif of the Canterbury school of illumination.

<sup>665</sup> E.g. A21-22, A87-8, A154-5, A190-1, A313-4, A367-8.

the legs, which then wrap around the body.<sup>666</sup> Some are even shown biting their own tails, and commonly a foreleg is raised. This form of lion rampant, with tail curling between its legs and around its body, is uncommon in Anglo-Saxon illumination, but is found in Junius 11 (Ill.93 - below) and contemporary metalwork.<sup>667</sup> Further, the association of the lion with a winged beast (normally a dragon), prevalent in the Tapestry, is also common in Canterbury illuminations, such as the Arenberg Gospels.<sup>668</sup>



**Illustration 93**

**Lions rampant in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and Junius 11 (right).**

### *Camels*

Camels are only shown once in the Tapestry, as a symmetrical pairing (A51-2) in the upper border. Their presence is intriguing since it is improbable that the designer

<sup>666</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 46, believed this to be typical of most lions in the BT, and termed this attribute as the 'Bayeux tail'.

<sup>667</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.11 and class 11a stirrup-strap mounts (Williams, *Stirrup Strap Mounts*, 58-69). Other examples include BodL, Douce 296, f.40; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.107v. Hicks, 'Borders', 259, considered this 'distinctive treatment of the tail' was 'characteristic of Romanesque lions', although its appearance in Junius 11 suggests not. Similar beasts are found on s. xi<sup>ex</sup> sculpture from Canterbury (Kahn, 'Frieze Sculpture', 71, Ill. 37; Gameson, 'Romanesque Crypt Capitals', 17-48).

<sup>668</sup> PML, M 869, f.13v. Also lions in Monte Cassino, AB, BB. 437, 439, p.126 are shown associated with winged beasts. Other broad comparisons include BL, Harley 603, f.51v; BodL, Junius 11, p.11; BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.11v; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.36. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix) and include a c.1096x1100 lion on a capital from the crypt of Canterbury cathedral. Evangelist winged lions include Boulogne, BM, 11, f.55v; London, British Library, Royal 1 E. vi, f.30v and Copenhagen, Royal Library, G.K.S. 10, 2°, f.82v.

knew of such animals first hand. These camels share attributes with actual beasts, and are characterised by their two humps, long thin – crooked - neck and small head, with pointed ears.<sup>669</sup> However, good parallels for the Tapestry's camels do occur in contemporary manuscripts, notably the Old English Hextauch, where they are extremely common.<sup>670</sup> As this work was probably executed in Canterbury, it is possible that the Tapestry designer actually knew these drawings, or their source, and may have used them in his work.<sup>671</sup>

### *Mythical Beasts*

Some of the beasts depicted in the Tapestry are mythical, and clearly could never have been observed by the designer.<sup>672</sup> Griffins, of which there are forty-one, are the most common.<sup>673</sup> Dragons (nine), centaurs (five) and winged-horses (two) are also

---

<sup>669</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209, felt that the camels in the BT were 'unconvincing'. Yapp, 'Animals', 50, agreed, stating the fact that they are camels is unmistakable, though they were obviously not drawn from life 'since the humps are mere pimples'.

<sup>670</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.4r, f.22v, f.23r, f.39r, f.39v, f.46r, f.48r, f.48v, f.49r, f.84v and London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv, f.101.

<sup>671</sup> Yapp, 'Animals', 50, agreed that those in the Tapestry were ultimately derived from a representation, probably drawn from a living animal (which seems logical) - but believed the original to be ancient.

<sup>672</sup> Presumably some in the Middle Ages believed such beasts actually existed. Indeed, 'the imaginary animals (in bestiaries) are not treated in a more fantastic manner or given any special attributes or qualities that would serve to separate them from living animals' (Gravestock, 'Imaginary Animals', 120). Another school of thought – 'the rationalist approach' – considered that such beasts were 'real life' reflections of extant (exotic) animals, which as a result of error, had been corrupted as the animals shown in art. (*ibid.*, 123). Gravestock herself (p.130-1) took the more level-headed view that 'medievalists knew quite well that these animals did not exist' but utilised them as they had a 'didactic (symbolic) purpose' not served by extant creatures. See also Baxter, *Bestiaries, passim*, for an introduction to bestiaries and their users in the Middle Ages.

Hicks, *Animals*, 256, noted of the Tapestry's 'exotic and fantastic beasts' that 'it is as if the designer were deliberately drawing upon a wide repertoire [of motifs] as possible while continuing to foreground those most familiar from existing manuscript art'.

<sup>673</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 259, identified 43 griffins, but noted 'some overlapping types', which might explain why I counted 41.

illustrated. All are found in the Tapestry borders, most in symmetrical pairings. Such arrangements are also found in manuscript initials.<sup>674</sup>

Griffins are a cross between a beast and a bird.<sup>675</sup> In the Tapestry they are characterised by their large outstretched wings, and often have a rounded beak and ‘bird-shaped’ feet.<sup>676</sup> Hind legs normally end in paws, and may also have claws. All griffins are shown with tails, which often curl between the hind legs and around the body – as with the Tapestry’s lions. Yapp considered some of the griffins in the Tapestry to be copies of winged lions representing the evangelist St Mark,<sup>677</sup> which is plausible: art must have formed the basis of this motif. Griffins are rare in late Anglo-Saxon illuminations, although examples can be found in Junius 11 and the Trinity Gospels, both possibly produced in Canterbury.<sup>678</sup>

Dragons, like griffins, are shown winged, but are bipedal and have a long thick tail.<sup>679</sup> Their tails may either arc over the back or trail behind - some are even shown knotted.<sup>680</sup> Dragons are illustrated with a small head and pointed ears. Often they are

---

<sup>674</sup> The best examples appear in Romanesque drawings. E.g. London, British Library, Royal 6 B. vi, f.23; London, British Library, Harley 624, f.93v; Cambridge, University Library, Dd. 1. 4, f.64v; Cambridge, S-JC, A. 8, f.91. Dodwell, *Canterbury School*, 77, noted that ‘the griffin is an animal that appears in both illumination and sculpture of Canterbury’ and ‘was transferred to Western art by means of [Byzantine] silks (see also Hicks, ‘Borders’, 259).

<sup>675</sup> In the medieval bestiary (e.g. CUL, li. 4. 26) it is said of the griffin that ‘all its bodily members are like a lion’s, but its wings and mask are like an eagle’s’ (White, *Book of Beasts*, 22-4).

<sup>676</sup> In this study griffins have been categorised as quadrupeds with wings: the exception are two winged horses (A186-7). Instead of beaks and bird-like feet, some have snouts (often upturned) and pointed or drooping ears. Some are even shown with a mane (e.g. A151), which Bernstein, *Mystery*, 127, categorised as winged lions.

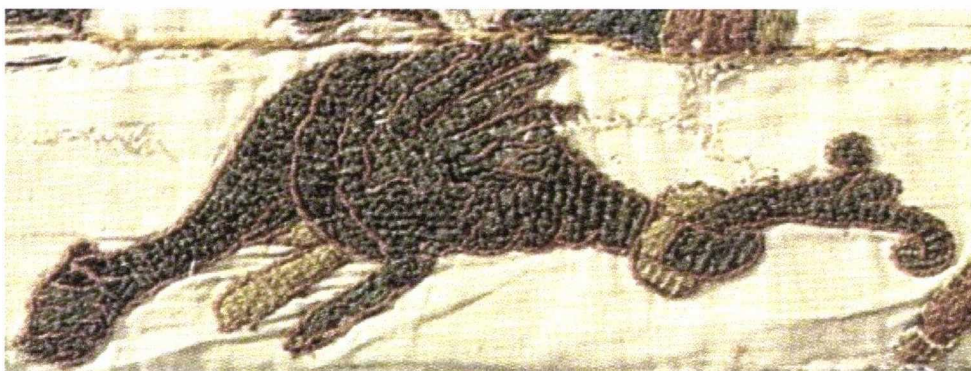
<sup>677</sup> Yapp, ‘Animals’, 45, also implied that the ‘winged beasts’ with solid feet, not clawed’ may have been derived from the ox or calf of St Luke. Likewise, he (p.46) understood some of the birds, with notably ‘hooked beaks and prominent talons’ to be eagles, representing St John.

<sup>678</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.13 and TCC, B. 10. 4, f.10v. Griffins become more common in art after the Norman Conquest. E.g. Madrid, BN, Vit 23-8, f.72 and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 81, f.36v.

<sup>679</sup> Dragon motifs are also found on some of the kite-shields in the BT.



shown with a forked tongue and may have fire protruding from their mouths. Dragons are an extremely common motif in late Anglo-Saxon art, and good parallels can be drawn between the dragons in the Tapestry and, for instance, those in the contemporary Tiberius Psalter (Ill.94 - below).<sup>681</sup> These not only share the same basic form, but also have small wings and knotted tails.



**Illustration 94**

**Dragons in the Bayeux Tapestry (top) and the Tiberius Psalter (bottom).**

---

<sup>680</sup> It is perhaps significant, therefore, that the medieval bestiary focuses on the dragon's tail: the source of the animal's strength, by which 'it inflicts injury by blows', lassoing its prey 'in a knot with its tail', and destroying them by suffocation (White, *Book of Beasts*, 166-7).

<sup>681</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.60, f.72. Other examples include London, British Library, Royal 5 F. iii, f.2v; PML, M 869, f.13v; BodL, Junius 11, p.1, p.10, p.13, p.58, p.63; Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 41, p.246, p.410; Monte Cassino, AB, BB. 437, 439, p.127; CUL, Ff. I. 23, f.131v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 296, f.10, f.40v. Romanesque examples are also common (see appendix).

## The Symbolism of the Animals, Birds and Beasts in the Bayeux Tapestry

Whilst some of the birds and beasts in Tapestry seem to be purely decorative, others appear to have a symbolic function. Let us examine a few examples, to assess their purpose within the context of the narrative.

### *The Main Frieze*

Horses are mostly associated with the Normans (154 of 177 animals are ridden by them) and seem to mark their national identity. This complements the accounts in written sources on the different ways horses were used (in warfare) by the Anglo-Saxons and Normans.<sup>682</sup> They play a prominent role during William's campaign against the Bretons, in the Norman invasion fleet, and as part of the Norman contingent at Hastings. Indeed, at Hastings only one Englishman – Harold (Figure 430) - is mounted. In contrast, when ridden by the English, horses seem to be symbolic of rank: only Harold and his entourage are shown on horseback, whilst the lower echelons travel by foot. The designer seems to have made a point of showing that some of the elite ride particularly virile stallions.<sup>683</sup> Similarly, the depiction of Guy's horse (A572), shown with the ears of a donkey, might be intended as a symbol

---

<sup>682</sup> Both Norman and English sources demonstrate a conviction that the Normans were accustomed to fighting on horseback, whilst the English were not. We have already noted that in 1055, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (C), trans. Garmonsway, 186, Earl Ralph unsuccessfully led English cavalry against the Welsh, 'because they had been made to fight on horseback'. While the English probably rode to war, it is generally accepted that they would dismount before battle (Douglas and Greenaway, *English Historical Documents*, 134). This tradition seems to be reflected in *The Battle of Maldon*, trans. Crossley-Holland, 11, where Byrhtnoth 'ordered every warrior to dismount, drive off his horse and go forward into battle'. Similarly, William of Poitiers in his *Gesta Guillelmi*, ii. 16, trans. Davis and Chibnall, 127, mentions that the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings dismounted before battle. Hyland, *Medieval Warhorse*, 72-6, however remained unconvinced by this notion, noting numerous references in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to the use of the horse in a military context.

<sup>683</sup> Particularly evident in the earlier parts of the Tapestry, e.g. Harold (Figure 9) on A538 (Scene 2) and William (Figure 124) on A582 (Scene 14). Keefer, 'Horses', 4, noted that whilst 'Norman and English figures of importance' start out riding one gender of horse 'a gender shift [then] occurs underneath them', which she took as indicating hierarchy between the Tapestry's characters. Medieval bestiaries note that 'the virility of horses is extinguished when their manes are cut'. The long manes in the Tapestry depictions might thus have been additionally resonant (White, *Book of Beasts*, 86).

to demean its rider.<sup>684</sup> Then again the donkey has a strong association with Christ. The symbolism of this horse is thus open to interpretation.

By association, hawks seem to be indicative of the rank of their handlers.<sup>685</sup> It is also possible, though clearly conjectural, that hawks might be symbolic of character.<sup>686</sup> Moreover, it is worth noting that once Guy hands Harold over to William, only the Duke is shown with a hawk – Harold loses his hawk at the very moment that his grasp on power begins to slip away.<sup>687</sup>

In both the main frieze and the borders, dogs are shown hunting - in most instances at the direction of men.<sup>688</sup> This association with 'man' complements both the medieval and modern view of the dog.<sup>689</sup> Of more interest, perhaps, is the fact that dogs in the main frieze seem to be associated with the English (Harold in particular) and therefore seem to symbolise both national identity and status.

---

<sup>684</sup> Owen-Crocker, 'Telling a Tale', 54-5. Bestiaries such as CUL, Ii. 4. 26 describe the donkey as 'a tardy beast and having no sense at all' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 82). Its relative, the wild ass, is symbolic of the devil (*ibid.*, 83). Donkeys are found elsewhere in the BT, but only in the upper (A170, A194, A195) and lower (A285, A291, A315, A500) borders. All but A194 and A195, which are symmetrically placed, are associated with the Tapestry fables. A194 and A195 might not be donkeys.

<sup>685</sup> Harold had, it seems, personal associations with a hunting text - now lost (Haskins, 'Harold's Books', 399; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 197). See also Owen-Crocker, 'Hawks and Horse Trappings', 220-9; Keefer, 'Horse', 5; Barlow, *Godwins*, 54. Archaeological remains of sparrow-hawks were probably remains from birds that had been used for hunting, which Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 388, notes was a common sport and method of catching small birds in Anglo-Saxon times.

<sup>686</sup> In the medieval bestiary the hawk is described as 'an avid bird at seizing upon others' and compared with 'the ravisher the thief' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 138-9), but - in contrast - is also noted for its courage out of proportion to its size (Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 76). Hence the character of the bird, in terms of the Tapestry narrative, is open to interpretation.

<sup>687</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 124 also considered the hunting animals (both hawks and dogs) in the opening scenes of the Tapestry to be symbolic of Harold's own capture in France.

<sup>688</sup> A297-301 (Fable 13) chase a deer under direction of Figures 61-2. A322-6 and A328-330 (Fable 19) chase a deer under direction of Figures 102 and 113. A540-4 run ahead of Harold's entourage. The exceptions are A440 - which chases a rabbit, A545-6 - which are taken aboard Harold's ships, and A553-4 - which accompany the captured Harold.

<sup>689</sup> Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 385. 'None is more sagacious than (the) dog, for he has more perception than other animals and he alone recognises his own name. He esteems his master' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 61-2). This said often when dogs died - or were killed - their remains were disposed of in general rubbish pits (Cutton-Brock, 'Animal Resources', 385).

The dog might also be symbolic of character. According to the medieval bestiary, 'the fact that a dog returns to its vomit signifies that human beings, after a complete confession, often return incautiously to the crimes which they have perpetrated'.<sup>690</sup> Is it possible, therefore, that the designer associates the dog with Harold, and his breaking of the oath he made to William? However, it is wise to be cautious, as the dog in the bestiaries is given more than one characterisation, and its significances are contradictory.<sup>691</sup>

### *The Borders*

A marked feature of the Tapestry's borders is the representation of paired species divided by diagonal lines. It has been suggested that these might symbolise the preservation of bloodline condoned in Genesis 49, 9-10,<sup>692</sup> which in terms of the Tapestry might allude to the succession crisis of 1066. However, there is no evidence to support either hypothesis. Similarly, the diagonal border decoration has been interpreted as an occasional tool of narrative: in the fable of the raven and the fox the diagonal line - which in this case divides the animals from one another - has been thought to represent the English Channel.<sup>693</sup> This, we are asked to believe, symbolises Harold's relative safety once across, and henceforth his assurance of obtaining the crown. Although one might compare Harold with the bird - which allows his prize to slip away by opening his mouth (a reference to the oath) - and William with the

---

<sup>690</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 67.

<sup>691</sup> As Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 50-1, notes, the dog is compared to both the Devil and priests, but 'for the most part...the bestiary was happy to expound' its 'usefulness, fidelity and cleverness'.

<sup>692</sup> Haist, 'Lion', 4.

<sup>693</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 134.

cunning fox, the interpretation lacks conviction, as in the final rendition of this tale (Fable 2) the prize is again in the bird's mouth!

Analogous theories have been proposed for other fables, such as that of the crane and wolf. Here it has been suggested that the 'repetition and position' was meaningful, and chosen by the designer because of its 'thematic emphasis upon ingratitude and oath breaking'.<sup>694</sup> However, since the fable could be understood to be either pro-Harold or pro-William, we cannot be sure of its intended message – if indeed it had one.

The interpretation of other motifs is equally hypothetical. A pair of rams or sheep (A43-44) appears above Scene 12, where William receives news of Harold's detention. In the medieval bestiary sheep are described as 'defenceless in body and placid in mind',<sup>695</sup> and hence, here, they could be associated with Harold's predicament. The ram, in contrast, was considered to be a 'strong, pugnacious creature'.<sup>696</sup> Any hypothetical meaning associated with either creature is clearly subjective: though this, itself, might be considered intentional.

Similarly, the goat (A334), which occurs in the borders below the scene where William's cortège meets the captured Harold, might have thematic relevance. In the medieval bestiary the goat is compared to Christ's betrayal.<sup>697</sup> Could, then, the designer have placed this animal in order to compare Christ's betrayal to that of William by Harold? It is impossible to be sure, as the domestic goat, in contrast to its

---

<sup>694</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 131.

<sup>695</sup> Further, according to the bestiary *ovis* – the sheep – gets its name from *ab oblatione* – the burnt sacrifice (White, *Book of Beasts*, 73).

<sup>696</sup> Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 52.

<sup>697</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 41-2. Other goats in the Tapestry include A199, A295-6 and A302.

wild counterpart, was a symbol for 'lechery and licence'.<sup>698</sup> Again, the interpretation of any intended symbolism is open to debate.

Likewise, dragons - likened to the devil in medieval bestiaries - might perhaps be construed as a reflection of the character of Earl Harold.<sup>699</sup> However, although dragons are more common in the earlier parts of the Tapestry, appearing in the upper border of Section 2 and in the lower borders of Sections 1, 2, 4 and 6, their placing seems random, with no obvious correlation to the events in the main frieze.<sup>700</sup>

Of more interest, is the single pair of camels, which appear in the Tapestry at the place where Harold and William first meet (Scene 13). This placing could well be symbolic, as the word 'camel', according to the medieval bestiary, comes from the Greek '*cam*', for low or humble; and this might reflect Harold.<sup>701</sup> The symbolism attributed to this creature is less contradictory than that of the other animals discussed; however, whether it was meant to be evoked by the examples in the Tapestry remains conjectural.

Whilst most birds in the Tapestry are purely decorative, some may have a symbolic function. For example, in the medieval bestiary the cock was a symbol of hope and optimism,<sup>702</sup> and it is perhaps significant that these birds only seem to appear above the scene where two of William's messengers (Figures 98 and 99) ride to free Harold from Count Guy. Similarly, peacocks (A61-2) make their only

---

<sup>698</sup> Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 41.

<sup>699</sup> According to the bestiary the dragon 'beguiles those whom he draws to him by deceit' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 167) and is also symbol for sin, heresy and the Devil (Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 82).

<sup>700</sup> A332-3 appear when Guy takes Harold to William (Scene 13). A69-70 and A341-2 appear where Harold joins William on campaign against the Bretons (Scene 16). A448-9 appear where horses are unloaded from William's invasion fleet (Scene 39). A502-3 appear where Harold's scouts spot the Norman army near Battle (Scene 50). A508 appears at the beginning of the Norman attack (Scene 51). Of course all are related to Harold's demise, but so are most events in the BT.

<sup>701</sup> 'Adam gave their name to camels (*camelis*) with good reason, for when they are being loaded up they kneel down and make themselves lower or humbler' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 79).

appearance above the scene where William and Harold converse at 'Rouen' (Scene 14). This might be significant, although the medieval bestiary gives little clue as to the nature of the peacock, concentrating mainly on the bird's good looks and terrible cry.<sup>703</sup>

In some instances beasts may have a more general symbolic contribution to the narrative. For example, the designer may have illustrated the boar to draw a parallel between the nature of this beast and the savagery of war (shown in the main frieze).<sup>704</sup> But even this is merely conjecture, as hogs do not occur in all the Tapestry's scenes of war.

Lions, similarly, are randomly distributed throughout the entire upper and lower borders, suggesting that they are purely decorative, and not symbolic of specific scenes or events depicted in the main frieze.<sup>705</sup> This said, the lions in the Tapestry, sometimes have tails decorated with trefoil endings, and these might be symbolic.<sup>706</sup> Similarly, the lion is often described as a beast that rages 'about with tooth and claw',

---

<sup>702</sup> Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 80.

<sup>703</sup> Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 80. Similarly, Bernstein, *Mystery*, 126, believed that some of the birds in the Tapestry were symbolic of events in the main frieze. For example, he suggested that the bird (A401), which seems to struggle, in vain, from its compartment (below Scene 29 - where Harold is offered the crown) is perhaps symbolic of Harold's own predicament. Similarly, McNulty, *Narrative Art of the Bayeux Tapestry*, 1-2, thought the birds associated with a small star (for example A488), which he took to be a representation for the ostrich, as symbolic of William and his military prowess. Yapp, 'Animals', 53, also gave credit to this hypothesis, but noted that this symbol (for the ostrich) did not occur elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon art. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 41, successfully dispelled this theory as nonsense, on the basis that this motif was not always associated with William, and occurred elsewhere in the Tapestry.

<sup>704</sup> 'We get the name *aper* 'the wild boar' from its savagery (*a feritate*)' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 76). Also noted is the boars 'boorish, rustic qualities' (Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 53).

<sup>705</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 127, seems to support this view. In medieval bestiaries the form of the mane was considered indicative of the animal's disposition: 'the short ones with curly manes are peaceful: the tall ones with plain hair are fierce' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 7). This said it is not clear from the BT, which - if either - is actually depicted.

<sup>706</sup> In medieval texts 'the nature of their...tail-tufts is (said to be) an index to their disposition' (White, *Book of Beasts*, 7), but this is not clarified.

characteristic of the lions in the Tapestry, who gesticulate fiercely.<sup>707</sup> Indeed, the emphasis upon the lion as a 'wild' beast 'accustomed to freedom by nature' and 'governed by' its 'own wishes' proves the Tapestry a fitting context for such depictions.<sup>708</sup> Moreover, there are specific attributes of the lion, such as its biblical strength and courage, which could reflect the character of both Harold and William.<sup>709</sup> In contrast, bestiaries also indicate that 'lions...do not get angry unless they are wounded',<sup>710</sup> and here the parallels with Duke William are obvious,<sup>711</sup> yet as the symbolism of the lion could be varied and multivalent, great caution is needed when ascribing meaning to a particular example.

The griffin's vehement hostility to horses is noted in the medieval bestiary,<sup>712</sup> and this characterisation could be significant in the Tapestry. If the horse is identified with the Normans, then the griffin - with its antagonism towards horses - might symbolise the English. Bernstein thought quite differently, and understood the griffin (and winged lion) as a symbol of Norman triumph, the winged lion - in particular - being associated with William.<sup>713</sup> However, winged beasts are found in all eight

---

<sup>707</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 7. It is interesting that the nature of the lion is also compared to that of Christ (*ibid.*, 7-9).

<sup>708</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 7. Similarly, Haist, 'Lion', 3-5, discussed the lion in art as a symbol of bloodline and kingship. This is examined in relation to Gen. 19: 9-10, which 'affirms the importance of bloodline and implies that keeping it uncontaminated will maintain the strength required to fulfil the ultimate prophecy'. In this context, and in terms of the Tapestry narrative, the lion is less easy to understand, as neither Harold nor William had direct lineage to Edward the Confessor. Indeed, if lions in the Tapestry are symbolic of bloodline then they might be understood, as a general reference to the succession crisis of 1066 (Garnet, 'Coronation and Propaganda', *passim*).

<sup>709</sup> Haist, 'Lion', 7. In the Old Testament the lion is also used to symbolise the power of the kings of Israel - Ezek. 19: 2-9.

<sup>710</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 9.

<sup>711</sup> The lion is credited with 'a slowness to anger and a noble compassion...and allowing any prisoners it encounters to go home unscathed' (Payne, *Medieval Beasts*, 19).

<sup>712</sup> White, *Book of Beasts*, 24. McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 91, also notes their association with the use of arms, which might be significant.

<sup>713</sup> Bernstein, *Mystery*, 127.



sections of the Tapestry, and do not seem to be particular to scenes with horses, Norman victory, William, or the English.<sup>714</sup> Of course, in very general terms, the griffin might be symbolic of the tension between the Normans and English, but again, any such ascribed meaning is pure conjecture.

## **Conclusion**

Although many of the animals depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry could have been drawn from real life, it seems more likely that most were borrowed from art. Animals in the main frieze seem to illustrate actual beasts, though the repertoire of types is relatively small, including just horses, dogs, hawks and a few farm animals. Although the designer is likely to have had first-hand experience of such animals, artistic models would have been equally – if not more - conveniently available. The best evidence for their use is the Tapestry's stylised cow (A660), which must have been inspired by an Evangelist portrait.

In the cases of animals, which are not also represented in the main frieze, the degree of accuracy varies. The designer seems to exaggerate features of beasts that were useful to the narrative, at the expense of those that were not. This is particularly evident in the fable of the wolf and crane, where only the length of the bird's neck is fundamental, rather than an accurate portrayal of the actual beast.

Elsewhere in the borders (outside narrative sequences) most creatures seem to be highly stylised, offering decorative embellishment only. Indeed, some of these – such as the mythical creatures - must have been taken from art, since they never existed. Is it then, that animals such as horses, dogs and farm animals, seem realistic, just because we expect them to be, whilst others, such as mythical creatures, do not,

---

<sup>714</sup> Griffins are not found in the upper border of Section 3, or the lower borders of Section 5 and 7.

because we know they never existed? Certain other creatures have attributes that we recognise today - such as the lion's mane and camel's humps – but it seems unlikely that the designer observed these first hand. Further, there are many creatures in the Tapestry which we cannot identify with any degree of certainty, and whose forms would surely have perplexed even the eleventh-century viewer.

Some animals in the Tapestry had a symbolic function. This is most evident in the cases of creatures which indicate rank, status or nationality, such as horses and hawks. Whether other animals might have symbolised attributes of particular characters, or glossed events in the narrative is altogether more difficult to establish, not least because such animals were credited in literary sources with a dual, often contradictory, personality. In these cases their role and symbolism is conjectural.

Considered together the birds and beasts in the Bayeux Tapestry provide little clue to the designer's understanding of the world around him. Although many of his creatures could have been sketched from 'real life', most – in all probability - were borrowed from art. Nonetheless, there is a general distinction between the depiction of animals, which had a narrative function and those that did not. This, as we have seen, is crucial to understanding the Tapestry's creatures.

## VEGETATION

The vegetation depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry has attracted little scholarly comment. Drawing on a limited range of parallels, such discussions - when they happen - tend to examine the vegetal ornament as further proof that the Tapestry was produced in England, shortly after the Norman Conquest.<sup>715</sup> However, in the present context, the vegetation should be considered with regard to the extent to which the designer drew from 'real life' or borrowed from contemporary art. Although no one has seriously suggested that the Tapestry's vegetation is a product of first-hand observation,<sup>716</sup> it is essential to evaluate its nature and status in some detail as another - very prominent - indication of the designer's visual language and his attitudes to representing the world around him.

### Vegetation in Early Medieval Art

Vegetation is not particularly widespread in early Anglo-Saxon art, where interlace patterns are the most common form of ornament. Especially striking examples are found on the great gold buckle from Sutton Hoo, which has a looped variety, and in the Lindisfarne Gospels, where hatched interlace and spiralled motifs frequently occur.<sup>717</sup> Where vegetation is shown, it is often stylised. For example, in the Book of Kells 'daisy' florets appear in the diagonals which divide the Evangelists' symbols,<sup>718</sup> and on another folio of the same manuscript we see a highly stylised tree, with

---

<sup>715</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 30; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209.

<sup>716</sup> Even the 'naturalistic' English herbals of the s. xi, of which three surviving examples are illustrated, are copies, though if on occasion greatly stylised examples of ancient models (Collins, *Medieval Herbals*, 26, 192-199).

<sup>717</sup> Sutton Hoo, mound 1, s. vii, British Museum and BL, Cotton Nero D. iv, f.27, f.29, f.211.

<sup>718</sup> TCD, A. 1. 6 (58), f.290v.

invented leaf and bud ornament.<sup>719</sup> Some vegetal elements appear to be classically inspired, such as the 'vine-scroll' found on the stone crosses at Bewcastle and Ruthwell; these also have stylised leaves and fruit.<sup>720</sup> Furthermore, whilst recognisable plant types never occur, relatively naturalistic looking trees – with thin trunks and stylised globular and angular leaves - are shown on the Franks Casket.<sup>721</sup>



**Illustration 95**

**The Evangelist carpet page of the Codex Aureus.**

---

<sup>719</sup> TCD, A. 1. 6 (58), f.114.

<sup>720</sup> Bewcastle Cross, Cumbria, s. viii<sup>1</sup> (Bailey and Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture II*, 61-72, Ill. 90-117) and Ruthwell Cross, s. viii<sup>2/4</sup>, Ruthwell Church, Dumfriesshire (*ibid.*, 19-22, Ill. 682-7; MacLean, 'Ruthwell Cross', 49-70).

<sup>721</sup> Franks casket, viii<sup>1</sup>, British Museum.

In Carolingian art, by contrast, there is an explosion of vegetal decoration. Plant motifs are predominately decorative and often stylised. In the Coronation Gospels, for example, sub-acanthus ornament adds gentle decoration to the borders.<sup>722</sup> Similarly, in the Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura, a bold sub-acanthus scroll, with ornate leaf types, serves as border embellishment.<sup>723</sup> In some illuminations this vegetal ornament is not just confined to border decoration: an excellent example is the Codex Aureus which has an impressive Evangelist ‘carpet page’ full of sub-acanthus ornament, including florets (Ill.95 - above).<sup>724</sup> Carolingian artists also show vegetation as a feature of buildings, echoing classical architecture. Acanthus ornament decorates the capitals of columns in illuminations such as the Saint Médard of Soissons and Ebo Gospels, and the Codex Aureus.<sup>725</sup> However, vegetation can also have a narrative function. The Grandval Bible from Tours provides an example where naturalistic-looking trees form scene-dividers or even ‘props’ within pictorial narrative.<sup>726</sup> Likewise trees in the evangelist portraits of the Saint Médard, Soissons, and Ebo Gospels provide a semi-naturalistic setting for its characters.<sup>727</sup> It is interesting, therefore, that in such instances vegetal elements appear more ‘life like’ than those shown elsewhere.

The use of vegetation in Ottonian art is akin to that in Carolingian works. Acanthus-derived motifs decorate borders,<sup>728</sup> and appear as architectural

---

<sup>722</sup> Vienna, WS-H, *Coronation Gospels*, f.178v.

<sup>723</sup> Rome, SPfM, *Bible of San Paolo Fuori le Mura*, f.331v.

<sup>724</sup> Munich, BSB, Clm. 14000, f.16v.

<sup>725</sup> BNF, lat. 8850, f.7v; Épernay, BM, 1, f.13r; Munich, BSB, Clm. 14000, f.5v.

<sup>726</sup> BL, Add. 10546, f.5v. Also found in BNF, lat. 1, f.10v (Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, Ill.1, 3).

<sup>727</sup> BNF, lat. 8850, f.81v and Épernay, BM, 1, f.18v.

<sup>728</sup> Berlin, SPK, theol. Lat. fol. 1, f.45v and Hildesheim, Cathedral Treasury, 688, f.77v.

adornment,<sup>729</sup> while plants or trees may feature in narrative scenes and iconic images. However the vegetal ornament or plants in question are more formalised, and this is as true of those that perform a ‘narrative’ function as those that are purely decorative. A good example of the former is the tree in the Gospel Book of Otto III, representing that in the parable of the barren fig tree, which is shown with large trefoil leaves and grape-like fruit (Ill.96 - below).<sup>730</sup> Similarly in the Codex Egberti the trees have stylised trunks and drooping globular leaves.<sup>731</sup>



**Illustration 96**

**A fig tree in the Gospel Book of Otto III.**

---

<sup>729</sup> Acanthus ornament decorates the capitals of columns in Munich, BSB, Clm. 4453, f.139v, f.192 and Hildesheim, CT, 18, f.17.

<sup>730</sup> Munich, SB, Clm. 4453, f.175v.

<sup>731</sup> Trier, SB, 24, f.85v.

Vegetation in late Anglo-Saxon art has much in common with that of the Carolingians and Ottonians, though some aspects differ. Stylised vegetal motifs are, of course, very common as border decoration. Numerous splendid examples appear in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, and the general style is sometimes (inaccurately) termed ‘The Winchester School’.<sup>732</sup> Similarly, acanthus motifs and spiralling plant types, sometimes with ornate leaves and fruit, decorate many initials, such as those in the Harley 2904 Psalter and Stowe 2.<sup>733</sup> Also – as in Carolingian and Ottonian art – vegetal ornament occasionally decorates architecture.<sup>734</sup> However, in contrast to what we find in Ottonian and, in particular, in Carolingian art, vegetation rarely appears outside the borders in late Anglo-Saxon illumination. If it does it is either functional within the narrative, as with ‘the tree of knowledge’ in a biblical cycle or the trees being felled in a calendar illustration,<sup>735</sup> or adds to the context of the events depicted, as in the Harley 603 Psalter.<sup>736</sup> Even, in such narrative settings, the vegetation is stylised. Indeed, this is also the case in late Anglo-Saxon Herbals; although theoretically these images represent particular species, it is often impossible to recognise them visually.<sup>737</sup>

---

<sup>732</sup> BL, Add. 49598, f.46, f.100.

<sup>733</sup> BL, Harley 2904, f.4 and London, British Library, Stowe 2, f.1. See, in general, Wormald, ‘Decorated Initials’, *passim*; Van Moé, *Illuminated Initials*, *passim*.

<sup>734</sup> E.g. Copenhagen, RL, G.K.S. 10, 2°, f.2v and BL, Stowe 944, f.7.

<sup>735</sup> E.g. BodL, Junius 11, p.11 and BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v.

<sup>736</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.51v, f.66v.

## Vegetation in the Bayeux Tapestry

The vegetal ornament in the Bayeux Tapestry can be divided into two main types: first, trees, which are common in the main frieze; second, ‘cruciform’ and ‘scrolled’ leaf-work, which are typical of the borders. Relatively few trees occur in the borders and leaf-work is only seldom found in the main frieze.

### *Trees*



**Illustration 97**

**Decorative leaves or fruit depicted on trees in the Bayeux Tapestry:**

- a) oval leaf with lobed terminal, b) trifoliolate pointed leaf, c) trifoliolate acanthus leaf, d) single-sided acanthus leaf, e) trifoliolate rounded leaf, f) heart shaped leaf, g) aroid leaf with lobed terminal, h) chilli shaped leaf, i) serrated leaf, j) multi-lobed leaf, and k) oval lobed leaf.

Trees in the Tapestry normally comprise a single trunk and a number of branches.<sup>738</sup>

Often branches will entwine with one another, in many instances forming a hatched effect or simple interlace pattern. In other instances branches fan outwards, or lean to one side - as if they were blowing in the wind. Some branches, often the lower ones, are short and stubby. In one instance all the branches are cut.<sup>739</sup> Most trees have

---

<sup>737</sup> E.g. BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii (see Collins, *Medieval Herbals*, 192-6).

<sup>738</sup> There are twenty-four trees in the Tapestry's main frieze.

<sup>739</sup> Tree 13.



decorative leaf or fruit terminals, of which eleven distinct types can be identified (Ill.97 - above).<sup>740</sup>

Trunks usually consist of vertical multi-coloured stripes, each leading to different coloured branches (see appendix). When added to the hatched or interlaced branches, the effect is strikingly decorative.<sup>741</sup> In some instances trunks have trapezoid horizontal bands (here termed 'stumps'), which often appear staggered. Sometimes these also appear at the top of tree trunks (termed 'trapezoid nodes'). In three instances these nodes are rounded,<sup>742</sup> but one appears as a wavy band.<sup>743</sup>

Trees in the borders, of which there are at least twenty, have the same basic characteristics of those in the main frieze. However, since they are smaller they are also greatly simplified with fewer branches, leaves or fruit.

### *Vegetal Border Ornament*

There are broadly two groups of vegetal leaf-work found in the Tapestry's borders:<sup>744</sup> first (type 1), 'cruciform' or 'quasi-cruciform';<sup>745</sup> second (type 2), 'scroll' form.<sup>746</sup>

---

<sup>740</sup> a) oval leaf with lobed terminal, b) trifoliolate pointed leaf, c) trifoliolate acanthus leaf, d) single-sided acanthus leaf, e) trifoliolate rounded leaf, f) heart shaped leaf, g) aroid leaf with lobed terminal, h) chilli shaped leaf, i) serrated leaf, j) multi-lobed leaf, and k) oval lobed leaf.

<sup>741</sup> Strictly speaking this ornament is a form of vegetal plait, rather than 'true' interlace. Wormald, 'Style and Design', 30, considered this a 'characteristic' of the Tapestry trees.

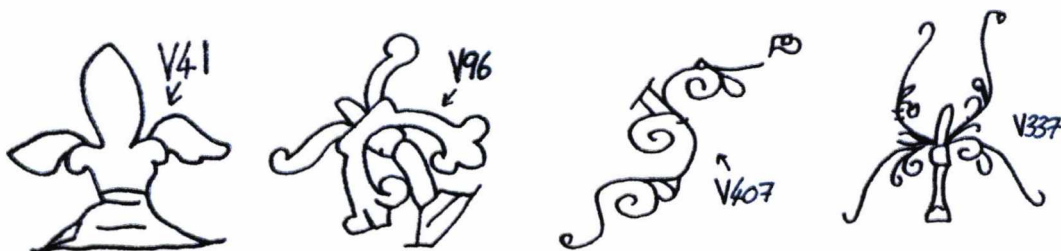
<sup>742</sup> Trees 16, 21 and 23.

<sup>743</sup> Tree 19.

<sup>744</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 30, considered that the vegetal ornament in the Tapestry to be 'emaciated acanthus scroll'. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209 seemed to agree. However, this definition is not wholly satisfactory for most of the vegetal ornament in the Tapestry, including types '2' and '3'.

<sup>745</sup> Type 1: a) in its most basic form cruciform vegetal ornamentation simply comprises of a cross, with three oval arms protruding from its main shaft (e.g. V83 and V245); b) occasionally the oval arms to the right and left of the shaft are curved downwards and the central arm rises to a point (e.g. V38 and V41), giving a form similar to a fleur de lys; c) on rare occasions side arms protrude upwards (e.g. V19); d) in other instances arms are pointed (e.g. V77 and V274); e) some have a varying number of arms, with a varying degree of fluidity about them (e.g. V7, V96 and V101) and appear sub-acanthus in form; f) occasionally the crosses on shafts are diagonal, or a diagonal cross is juxtaposed over a standard example (e.g. V81 and V299); in some instances they appear without shafts, and have few

The former is mostly rigid and upright, whereas the latter is suspended and normally curls in sporadic spirals. Occasionally these types merge into a cruciform variant with scrolled protrusions (type 3, Ill.98 - below).<sup>747</sup>



**Illustration 98**

**Types of vegetal ornament found in the borders of the Bayeux Tapestry (left to right): Type 1 (cruciform), Type 2 derivative (quasi-cruciform), Type 2 (scrolled) and Type 3 (cruciform variant).**

Cruciform vegetal ornament is predominately found in the earlier part of the Tapestry (until about Scene 35), thereafter scrolled ornament is common. This division is interesting since it may reflect a change in procedure - or workshop. We will examine this issue further in the main conclusion.

### **Parallels for the Trees in the Bayeux Tapestry**

General similarities between the trees in the Tapestry and those in the Old English *Hextateuch* have long been recognised. Of particular note are the parallels between Trees 18 to 20 and those on folio 36v of the *Hextateuch*, which have similar ‘strand-

---

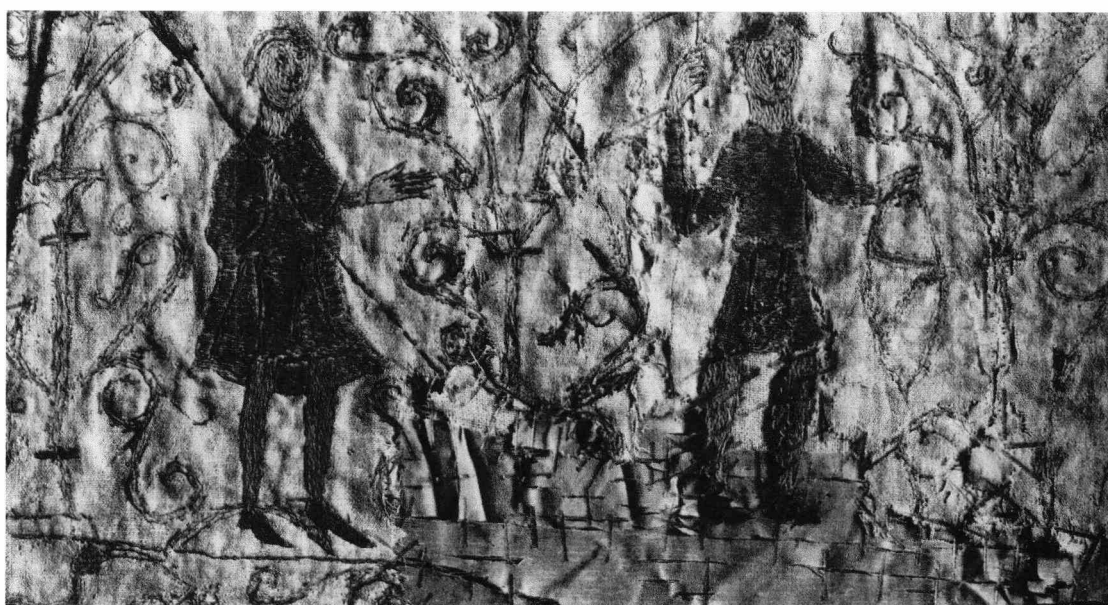
vegetal characteristics (e.g. V837 and V838). Often cruciform vegetal ornamentation has a rounded base comprising of a half circle, and/or the shaft is segmented with a sub-circular embellishment or break (e.g. V86, V291 and V254).

<sup>746</sup> Type 2: a) most scroll ornament appears as a simple regulated scroll (e.g. V401 and V411); b) occasionally the scroll adopts a more developed and sporadic curl (e.g. V380 and V407).

Both types are typical of ‘lotus and bud scroll’ (Valentine, *Ornament*, 27), which Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209, compared with late Anglo-Saxon filigree.

<sup>747</sup> Type 3: there are many variations of this cross between ‘spiral scroll’ and the ‘cruciform’ type (e.g. V108, V337 and V38).

like trunks', 'tangle of branches' and leaves 'ending in bunches of trefoil acanthus and teat-like buds'.<sup>748</sup> Similar comparisons have also been made with trees in the Tiberius Psalter, which perhaps better reflect the rigid form of those in the Tapestry.<sup>749</sup> Other good – but rather general – parallels are found in Cotton Julius A. vi and Junius 11.<sup>750</sup> This is a rare case where the Tapestry can be compared with another Anglo-Saxon textile (the fragment now in the Museo di S. Ambrogio, Milan) and it is here that particularly good parallels are found (Ill.99 - below).



**Illustration 99**

**Trees in the Museo de S. Ambrogio textile fragment.**

Although the individual strands of the trees in the Bayeux Tapestry are thicker and fuller, their general form is similar. The trees in the Milan fragment are symmetrical, like those in the Bayeux Tapestry, and have scrolled branches similar to the ornament found in the Tapestry borders. Further, the long tall trunks of the Milan fragment,

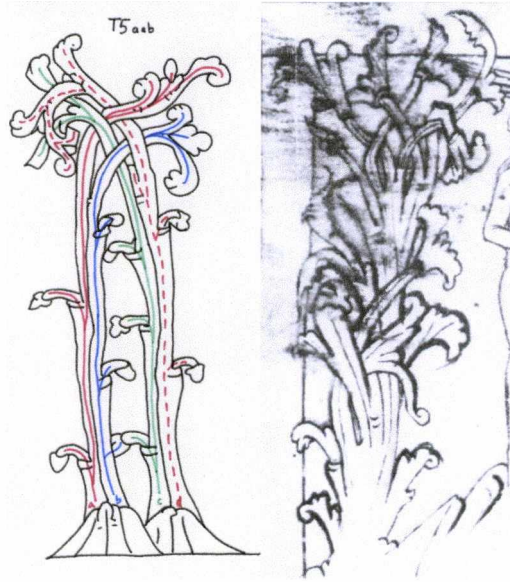
---

<sup>748</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.36v (Wormald, 'Style and Design', 30-1).

<sup>749</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.7 (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209).

<sup>750</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v and BodL, Junius 11, p.11, p.41.

with a few strands at a low level, and a trapezoid node at the top of the trunk (discussed below) is also matched in the Bayeux Tapestry.



**Illustration 100**

**Loose plait of trees in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and Junius 11 (right).**

### *Interlace*

Hatched or interlace ornament, characteristic of some of the Tapestry's trees, is also found in some late Anglo-Saxon illuminations. Thus the loose plait of Tree 5 can be paralleled in Junius 11 (Ill.100 - above).<sup>751</sup> Similarly, the intertwining branches of Trees 6 and 7 can be favourably compared to folio 39 in the same manuscript.<sup>752</sup> Here there are striking similarities in the curvature of the plaits and associated leaf ornament. Further, the trunk of Tree 3 - which 'curls round in an oval loop' framing an 'elaborate interlace pattern' - can be paralleled in the Old English Hextateuch.<sup>753</sup>

---

<sup>751</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.24.

<sup>752</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.39. Other examples include BL, Harley 603, f.7r; TCC, B. 10. 4, f.11v; BL, Harley 76, f.11v; PML, M 709, f.26v. A s. xii<sup>ex</sup> example is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 8846, f.50.

<sup>753</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.7 (Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 64). Although Grape, *ibid.*, had made this comparison he still felt that that the 'ornamental impulse' of the 'cloud-like crown' of this tree had been 'visibly reigned back' in an 'effort to hold on to something of the natural appearance of the tree'.

Occasionally the interlace of the Tapestry's trees is fairly tight - quite unlike that of trees in contemporary illumination. A particularly good example is Tree 1.<sup>754</sup> However, such interlace decoration is found in initials and upon architectural elements depicted in contemporary illuminations – examples include the capitals of a building in Junius 11 and the initials in Arundel 155.<sup>755</sup> Such examples could have provided the basis of this motif in the Tapestry.

The Tapestry's interlace has been considered Ringerike in style.<sup>756</sup> Convincing comparisons have been made between the Tapestry's ornament and commemorative stone sculpture at Jelling in Denmark and Vang in Norway.<sup>757</sup> Such Ringerike type elements are found elsewhere in the Tapestry, such as on the figureheads of ships – which we have discussed previously. Grape argued that the Ringerike style was a relatively short lived phenomenon in English illumination, suggesting that its high point of popularity in the 1020s was soon in decline following the return of Edward the Confessor from exile.<sup>758</sup> He used this hypothesis to forward his belief that the Tapestry had Norman origins noting that 'the Normans long continued to hold Viking Art forms in high esteem'.<sup>759</sup> However, Grape's examples from Normandy are few

---

<sup>754</sup> Other examples include Trees 2, 3, 15 and 18. Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 209, believed that Tree 1 had 'an interlacing character entirely unknown in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and...different from trees which appear after the Conquest'. Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 69, took this further, suggesting that the designer was not 'constrained to use any authoritative corpus of source images; evidently, he sought and found new pictorial formulas that were intended to differ radically from those of the past'. See also Fuglesang, *Ringerike Style*, 74.

<sup>755</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.57 and BL, Arundel 155, f.12, f.53, f.93. Other Anglo-Saxon examples include York Minster, Cathedral Library, Add. 1, f.23; BL, Loan 11, *s.n.*; BL, Harley 76, f.45. Romanesque examples are cited in the appendix.

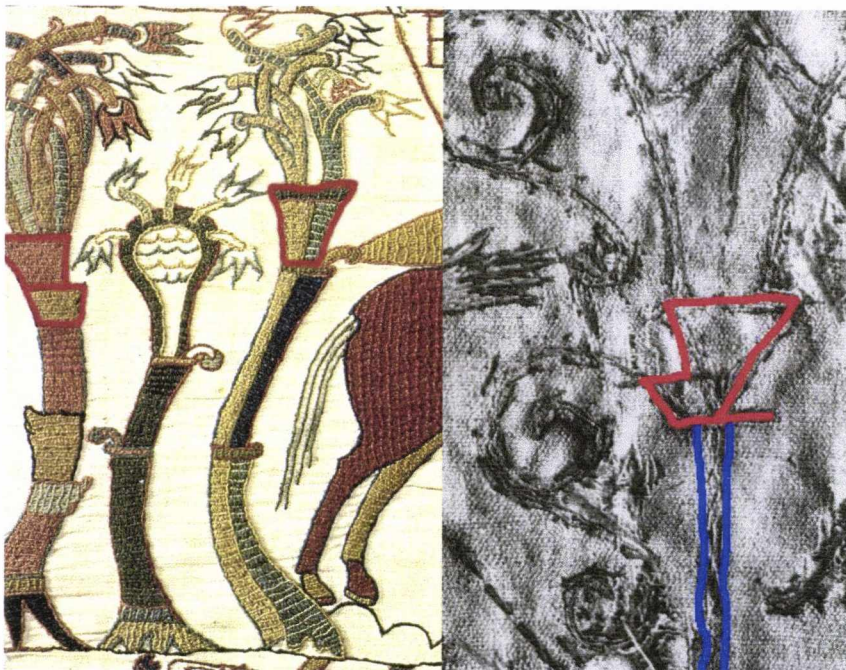
<sup>756</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 64, 66-7, noted that in the early medieval period Scandinavian artists 'show a marked predilection for kaleidoscopic patterns'. The 'isolating colour pattern' and 'ornamentalization of objects' represents 'indirect connections between the Tapestry and Scandinavian art'.

<sup>757</sup> of s. x<sup>4/4</sup> and s. xi<sup>1</sup> respectively (Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 64).

<sup>758</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 67.

<sup>759</sup> *ibid.*

(indeed, most of them are Anglo-Norman - which he argued (with circular aplomb) demonstrates that the Normans re-introduced 'Viking art' into England following the Conquest).<sup>760</sup> While it is apparent that the Ringerike style was reasonably popular in England throughout the eleventh century,<sup>761</sup> there are no reasons to suppose it met a decline during the Confessor's kingship. It is by no means surprising that echoes of Scandinavian art are to be found in the Tapestry, although it is true to say that regular-curling elongated tendrils - the hallmark of the Ringerike style - are uncommon. The plait ornament on the Tapestry's trees is far too fragmentary to be confidently declared Ringerike.



**Illustration 101**

**Trapezoid node depicted on trees in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and the Museo de S. Ambrogio textile fragment (right).**

<sup>760</sup> In fact Baylé, 'Interlace Patterns', 4, notes that 'interlace ornament in sculpture remains very uncommon until late in the eleventh century'. See also Baylé, 'romane de Normandie', 35-48 and Zarnecki, 'Romanesque Sculpture', 174, for a discussion of Anglo-Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon influence upon Norman sculpture.

<sup>761</sup> Graham-Campbell, *Viking World*, 152.

### *Trapezoid Node at the Top of the Trunk*

The trapezoid node at the tops of some tree trunks is an intriguing feature of both the Tapestry and the Milan textile fragment (Ill.101 - above).<sup>762</sup> It also appears on trees in Junius 11.<sup>763</sup> Although not found in other narrative contexts, it is a common feature of capitals depicted in architecture and canon tables, both of which would have been known to our designer. It is thus of little help in localising the work.

### *Staggered Stumps*

Trees with stumps or cut lower branches - shown in the Tapestry - are also found in some contemporary illuminations, including the front piece to one of the Gospels of Judith of Flanders where of course it represents the tree-trunk cross.<sup>764</sup> Whilst the motif might echo some 'real life' phenomenon once observed by contemporary artists, such as the felling of lower branches for tinder, by the late eleventh century it was an established convention in art. Occasionally these tree stumps have sub-circular protrusions, which may be intended to be fungi. In the Tapestry such depictions are rare, but can be found on Trees 2 and 6. These also appear in art.<sup>765</sup>

### *Leaf Varieties*

The foliage in the Tapestry better reflects that found in art than first hand observation. Particularly common in the Tapestry are 'trifoliate acanthus' (type c) and 'single-

---

<sup>762</sup> E.g. Trees 15, 17 and 19.

<sup>763</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.78.

<sup>764</sup> PML, M 709, f.1v. Other Anglo-Saxon examples include BodL, Junius 11, p.13; BL, Harley 603, f.3v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.7; BL, Arundel 60, f.52v. Romanesque examples are cited in the appendix. Examples in the BT include Trees 2, 5, 6, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22 and 23. For a discussion of the tree-trunk cross see Schiller, *Iconography*, 133-36.

<sup>765</sup> E.g. London, LP, 3, f.6.

sided acanthus' (type d) which are typical of leaf ornament found in contemporary illumination.<sup>766</sup> Also popular in the Tapestry are 'trifoliate pointed' (type b), 'trifoliate rounded' (type e), 'heart shaped' (type f), 'serrated' (type i), 'multi-lobed' (type j) and 'oval lobed' (type k) leaf varieties which are likewise common in both Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque illuminations.<sup>767</sup> However, 'chilli' (type h) leaves are only found in pre-Conquest illuminations,<sup>768</sup> while other types, such as 'oval leaves with lobed terminals' (type a), are only found in the Romanesque illuminations studied – placing the design at the watershed of pre- and post-Conquest traditions.<sup>769</sup> 'Aroid leaves, with lobed terminals' (type g) seem to be particular to the Tapestry, suggesting the designer developed his own motifs.

### *Trees in the Borders*

Trees in the borders, like those in the main frieze can be paralleled in illumination. However, unlike the trees in the main frieze these have a more fluid form, akin to the acanthus scroll that is found elsewhere in the borders. One tree stands out from the

---

<sup>766</sup> Type C (*trifoliate acanthus*) is found Anglo-Saxon illuminations such as London, British Library, Royal I, D. ix, f.11; BL, Royal 15, A. xvi, f.84; Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 2. 51, f.46. Type D (*single-sided acanthus*) is found in Anglo-Saxon illuminations including BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v; CUL, Ff. I. 23, f.4v; TCC, B. 10. 4, f.15r. Romanesque examples for both types are cited in appendix.

<sup>767</sup> Type B (*trifoliate pointed*) is found Anglo-Saxon illuminations, such as BL, Harley 603, f.2, f.25r; BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.23v; Cambridge, Pembroke College, 302, f.3v. Type E (*trifoliate rounded*) appears in Hanover, KM, WM XXI<sup>a</sup>, 36, f.10; Cambridge, Pembroke College, 301, f.10v; Cambridge, Trinity College, O. 4. 7, f.48v. Type F (*heart shaped*) is found in London, British Library, Royal 12, C. xxiii, f.6v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579, f.154v; BL, Cotton Julius, A. vi, f.5v. Type I (*serrated*) is found in London, British Library, Harley 5431, f.54v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 718, f.1; BodL, Douce 296, f.40. Type J (*multi-lobed*) appears in London, British Library, Cotton Galba A. xviii, f. 120v; BodL, Junius 11, p.13, p.41; BL, Stowe 2, f.1. Type K (*oval lobed*) is found in BNF, lat. 6401, f.57v. More examples of all types, in both Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque illuminations, are cited in the appendix.

<sup>768</sup> Type H (*chilli-type*) is found in BL, Cotton Galba A. xviii, f. 10v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson C. 570, f.44v; BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.56v.

<sup>769</sup> Type A (*oval leaf, with lobed terminal*) is found in BL, Cotton Nero C. iv, f.9.



rest, as it has symmetrical branches that spout outwards along the length of its trunk,<sup>770</sup> a motif that is not found in manuscript art until the twelfth century.<sup>771</sup>

### **Parallels for the Vegetal Ornament in the Bayeux Tapestry**

Both forms of vegetal ornament depicted in the borders of the Tapestry can be favourably compared with the ‘conventional leaf-work’ found on eleventh-century textiles,<sup>772</sup> and in contemporary manuscript illumination.

#### *Cruciform Vegetal Ornament (type 1)*

The Tapestry’s cruciform vegetal ornament is highly stylised, but some sub-classes (typically types 1b, 1c and 1e) betray roots in acanthus leaf ornament, which is common in art.<sup>773</sup> In general the remaining sub-classes of type 1 ornament are less widespread, but are found as decorative embellishment to architectural structures, canon tables and as general border decoration. Examples include the simple cross upon Cuthberth’s shrine in Bede’s *Vitae Cuthberti*, and embellishments in the border

---

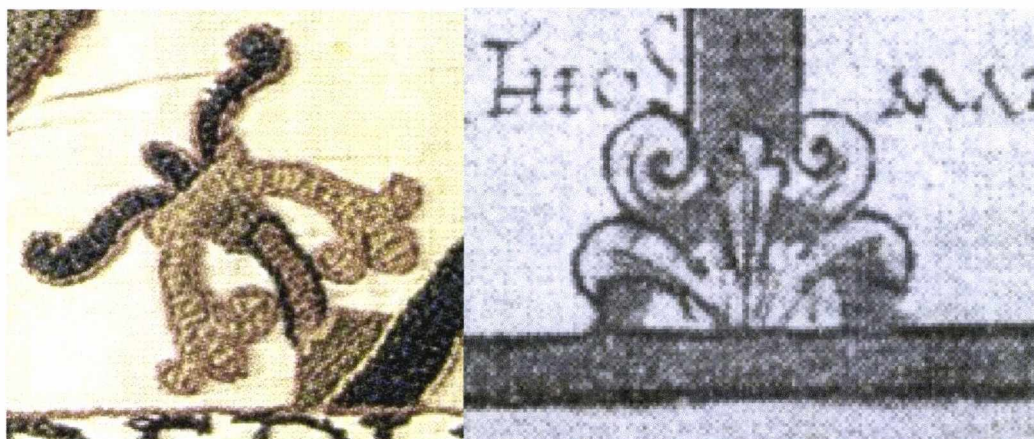
<sup>770</sup> V234.

<sup>771</sup> E.g. London, British Library, Add. 37472 (I) v; London, British Library, Cotton Nero C. vii, f.46; Dijon, Bibliothèque municipale, 2, f.148. However, it is possible to compare this motif - in general terms - with ‘tree scroll’ ornament found in older Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, such as the s. viii Jedburgh (Roxburghshire) slab (Lang, *Anglo-Saxon Sculpture*, 28-30; Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture I*, pl. 265, n.1429).

<sup>772</sup> Such as the s. xi<sup>med</sup> Bamberg textiles. These display zoomorphic motifs and diagonal line dividers, which are also common in the BT. Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 27, believed that these were derived from textiles imported into Western Europe from Byzantium and the East.

<sup>773</sup> Type 1b is found in Anglo-Saxon illuminations such as BL, Cotton Galba A. xviii, f.21r; BL, Harley 603, f.64r; BAV, Reg. Lat. 12, f.62. Type 1c appears in Hanover, KM, WM XXI<sup>a</sup> 36, f.247v; BL, Arundel 155, f.93. Perhaps, more indebted to acanthus leaf motifs is Type 1e, which is found in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 987, f.41; BodL, Junius 11, p.7; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.60. Romanesque examples for Type 1b and 1c are cited in the appendix.

corners of the Pembroke 301 Gospels (Ill.102 - below).<sup>774</sup> It may be that the rigidity of some cruciform ornament in the Tapestry is due to the limits of the medium.



**Illustration 102**

**Cruciform vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and the Cambridge, Pembroke College 301 (right).**

### *Acanthus Scroll*

Occasionally the vegetal ornament in the borders has thick strands which spiral haphazardly with sporadic twists and turns. This decoration compares better with the more robust trees of the Tapestry than with the delicate plant ornament found elsewhere in the borders.<sup>775</sup>

Favourable comparisons have been made between V390 – which has leaves that ‘stretch out and curl up tightly at the end’ – and the ‘stringy acanthus ornament’ of the Winchcombe Psalter.<sup>776</sup> Similar are the acanthus elements of Junius 11 and

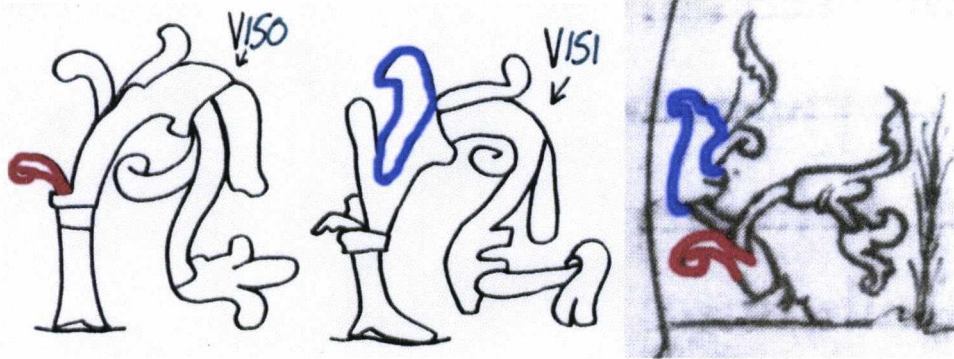
---

<sup>774</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.14v; Cambridge, PC, 301, f.5v. Type 1a is found in CCCC, 183, f.1v. Type 1d is found in BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.72. Type 1f is found in BodL, Bodley 579, f.154v. Diagonal or juxtaposed crosses, typical of Type 1g ornament, are not normally shown on shafts in the manuscripts studied. However, this form is recognised as general decorative motif, rarely associated with vegetal ornament. Examples frequent canon tables (e.g. Cambridge, PC, 301, f.70v, f.71), are found as decorative elements of buildings (e.g. Parma, Biblioteca Palatine, Pal. 1650, f.102) and on clothing (e.g. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Dahlem, Kupferstichkabinett, 78 A 4, f.18). Type 1h is found in Rouen, BM, Y. 6 (274), f.72; BodL, Tanner 3, f.1v.

<sup>775</sup> E.g.s V1, V286, V301 and V303.

<sup>776</sup> CUL, Ff. I. 23, f.5 (Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 31).

V150 and V151 in the Tapestry (Ill.103 - below).<sup>777</sup> Of particular note is the flange tube-like neck of the stem and the tendril stumped lower strands. Even the strands themselves have the same characteristic gentle twist. However, such ornament is also found in many other contemporary illuminations.<sup>778</sup>



**Illustration 103**

**Acanthus elements of vegetal ornament  
depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and Junius 11 (right).**

Near the end of the Tapestry a figure appears in 'foliage scroll', a motif which is quintessentially Romanesque.<sup>779</sup> Nonetheless, whilst not common in late Anglo-Saxon art, this motif may have had its roots in the 'gripping beast' motif, which is typical of pre-Conquest metalwork.

### *Scrolled Vegetal Ornament (type 2)*

The Tapestry's scrolled vegetal ornament (type 2) is much more fluid and sporadic than the cruciform varieties (type 1). It also has numerous associated decorative elements, such as leaves, buds and fruit, which parallel those of 'vine scroll' in both

<sup>777</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.7, p.9.

<sup>778</sup> E.g. BodL, Bodley 577, f.1v; Warsaw, BN, I. 3311, f.15; Monte Cassino, AB, BB. 437, 439, p.126, p.127. Romanesque examples are cited in the appendix.

<sup>779</sup> Comparable examples include Madrid, BN, Vit 23-8, f.15; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. E. inf. 1, f.304. This foliage scroll is also found on contemporary metalwork, including Benward's candlestick, s. xi<sup>in</sup>, and the s. xii<sup>in</sup> Gloucester candlestick.

stone sculpture and illumination.<sup>780</sup> More often than not, these are highly stylised derivatives of standard ornament types. Particularly good parallels with the Tapestry's 'type 2' scrolled ornament can be found in an early eleventh-century herbal (Ill.104 - below).<sup>781</sup> Such ornament also appears on textiles, including those from Bamberg and the fragment in the Museo di S. Ambrogio, Milan. This allows comparison of medium. The Tapestry's scrolled vegetal ornament can also be paralleled with the filigree ornament of the jewelled binding of the (probably Flemish) Judith of Flanders 709 Gospels.<sup>782</sup>



**Illustration 104**

**Scrolled vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left)  
and British Library, Cotton Vitellius C. iii (right).**

*Cruciform-Scrolled Derivative Vegetal Ornament (type 3)*

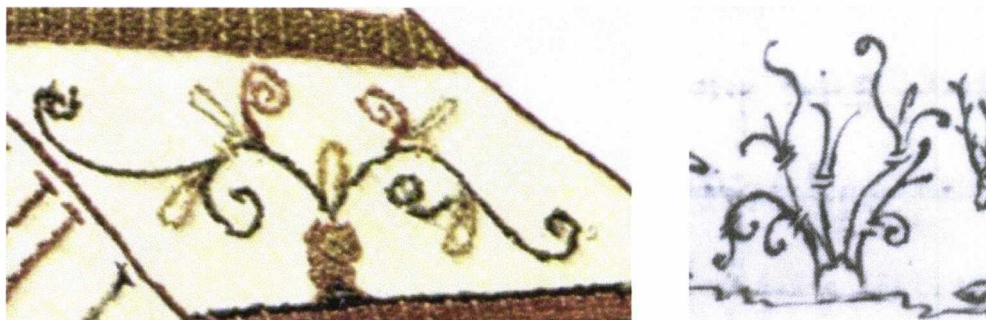
Type 3 vegetal ornament also features in contemporary illumination, as in Cotton Cleopatra C. viii and Junius 11 (Ill.105 - below).<sup>783</sup> Both were probably produced in

<sup>780</sup> E.g. Lastingham 8A, s. viii and Kirkdale 7A, s. viii/ix (Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture III*, 161-2, 171, Ill. 558, 608); BL, Add. 47967, Fly-leaf (iii); New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 708, f.43r. Romanesque examples are common (see appendix).

<sup>781</sup> BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, 11v.

<sup>782</sup> PML, M 709, s. xi<sup>cx</sup> (Ohlgren, *Textual Illustration*, 7).

Canterbury, and may well have been available to the designer of the Tapestry. This type of ornament is not found in Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, which may be explained by its delicate form and by the general paucity of southern late Anglo-Saxon sculpture.



**Illustration 105**

**Cruciform-scrolled derivative vegetal ornament  
depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and Junius 11 (right).**

#### *Leaf and Bud Types*

Vegetal ornament in the borders is embellished with fewer leaves, buds and fruit than that in the main frieze. In part this may be due to their size and the limited space available. This is particularly true for ‘cruciform’ ornament, where foliage is confined to vegetal tendrils and acanthus type ornament. Similarly, the ‘acanthus scroll’ in the Tapestry borders does not have leaves, buds or fruit.

This contrasts with ‘scrolled’ vegetal ornament, which is occasionally embellished with leaves and fruit. Leaf types are commonly oval,<sup>784</sup> whilst a tri-lobed variety becomes popular in Scene 51 (Ill.106 - below).<sup>785</sup> Both leaf varieties are found

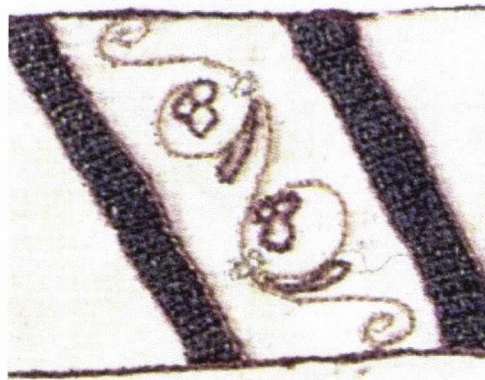
---

<sup>783</sup> BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.24r and BodL, Junius 11, p.7. Other Anglo-Saxon examples include Cambridge, Trinity College, B. 11. 2, f.4; BNF, lat. 987, f.41; Cambridge, PC, 302, f.1v, f.38r. Romanesque examples are cited in the appendix.

<sup>784</sup> E.g. V105 and V407.

<sup>785</sup> E.g. V180 and V189.

in contemporary manuscripts, such as the Hereford Gospels.<sup>786</sup> Similarly, some leaves appear pointed but may be just elongated oval varieties.<sup>787</sup> At times buds are indistinguishable from leaves, normally sprouting from a node or stem. Mostly, these are oval, but elongated almost pointed varieties are also depicted.<sup>788</sup> The nodes themselves maybe square, oval or sub-circular in shape.<sup>789</sup> Similar nodes are found in contemporary illuminations.<sup>790</sup>



**Illustration 106**

**A tri-lobed variety of leaf ornament / fruit variety found on some vegetal ornament depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

## **Function and Landscape**

### *Trees in the Main Frieze*

Trees in the main frieze have been likened to punctuation marks, which divide one scene from another.<sup>791</sup> ‘By this means the actors are able to turn in the opposite

<sup>786</sup> Cambridge, PC, 302, f.9r.

<sup>787</sup> E.g. V200.

<sup>788</sup> E.g. V192, V369 and V393.

<sup>789</sup> E.g. V187 and V381.

<sup>790</sup> E.g. BodL, Junius 11, p.13; TCC, B. 11. 2, f.4; BL, Cotton Vitellius C. iii, f.11v; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.36.

<sup>791</sup> Wormald, ‘Style and Design’, 26; Musset, *Tapiserie de Bayeux*, 71. In the BT trees occur in the main frieze dividing Scene 2 from Scene 3 (Tree 1), Scene 7 from Scene 8 (Tree 2), Scene 9 from Scene 10 (Tree 3), Scene 11 from Scene 12 (Tree 4), Scene 13 from Scene 14 (Tree 5), Scene 33 from Scene 34 (Tree 6), Scene 34 from Scene 35 (Tree 7), Scene 35 from Scene 36 (Trees 8-14), Scene 47

direction without too abrupt an interruption of the action'.<sup>792</sup> Though eleventh-century parallels are not numerous such a usage had a venerable ancestry - trees appear as scene dividers in classical paintings, and the practice was adopted by some Carolingian artists (Ill.107 - below).<sup>793</sup>



**Illustration 107**

**Trees used as scene dividers in the Grandval Bible.**

---

from Scene 48 (Trees 15-17), Scene 49 from Scene 50 (Trees 18-20), Scene 50 from Scene 51 (Tree 21), Scene 53 from Scene 54 (Trees 22) and Scene 58 from the end (Tree 23).

<sup>792</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 26.

<sup>793</sup> Wormald, 'Style and Design', 26 (though classical examples were not cited in Pollit, *Hellenistic Age* or Ling, *Roman Painting*). The usage is particularly prominent in illuminated Turonian Bibles such as BL, Add. 10546, f.5v and BNF, lat. 1, f.10v (Koehler, *Karolingischen Miniaturen I*, Ill.50, 170; Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, Ill. 1, 3). Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 68-9, disagreed believing that these antecedents cannot be traced with such certainty. Instead he argued that 'in late antique art, and in the early medieval works that followed, trees are meant to be seen primarily as part of the landscape – they accentuate the layers of spatial recession, and have nothing like the dramatic function that they possess in the Tapestry'. Adding that 'the trees [in the BT] are markedly art-traditional – that is to say, anti-classical' and that they 'have nothing in common with the legacy of late antique art, because they have a different way of intervening in the story'.

But this is not the function of all the Tapestry's trees. For example, Trees 8 to 13 - shown being felled by Norman woodsmen - illustrate some of the practicalities involved in realising Duke William's invasion plans. In this scene, therefore, they actively participate in the narrative.<sup>794</sup> Perhaps significantly, these trees are thin and narrow, with little foliage and few low branches, and hence ideal for shipbuilding.

Further, some trees appear in the middle of narrative sequences, and therefore cannot be understood as scene dividers. Examples include Tree 14 which, although it appears towards the end of the boat-building scene, is not used to divide it from the next: a building performs this function.<sup>795</sup> Instead, Tree 14 covers the aft of several ships.<sup>796</sup> Its positioning is important since it simplifies this scene, allowing the narrative to flow forward.<sup>797</sup> Similarly, Tree 23 almost impedes the charge of four Norman horsemen, who chase the fleeing English from the battlefield. In this instance the tree conveniently allows the main frieze to be divided into two: Englishmen cautiously make their way home in the upper section,<sup>798</sup> whilst Norman horsemen torture a captive, below.<sup>799</sup>

The fact that a few trees seem to bow has attracted comment.<sup>800</sup> Grape suggests that Tree 14, which occurs at the end of the shipbuilding scene, is a 'salute to the completed ships', stressing the speed in which they have been completed.

---

<sup>794</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 63-4, suggested that Trees 7 to 14 were 'plant like and relatively natural', which may be significant if the trees in this scene are interpreted as functional.

<sup>795</sup> Such use of buildings, found in classical art, is not particular to the BT (Wormald, 'Style and Design', 26).

<sup>796</sup> Ships 11 to 14.

<sup>797</sup> With only the forward parts of the boats showing the viewer is guided towards the next scene.

<sup>798</sup> Figures 619-23.

<sup>799</sup> Figures 625-7.

<sup>800</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 69.



Similarly, he believed that Tree 3 ‘draws attention to the arrival of William’s emissaries’, that Tree 4 ‘bows in obeisance’ before William, and that Trees 6 and 7 - which flank an English ship - were designed to emphasise the importance of this scene.<sup>801</sup> These controversial views are difficult to substantiate. As some trees bow to the right, they might simply suggest the direction of the narrative. This is particularly evident in the case of Tree 4, where the tree divides two scenes within which characters move in different directions. This tree follows the action moving from right to left, and as such alerts the ‘viewer’ that the narrative will now continue in the opposite direction.

Other trees seem purely decorative - the narrative flows irrespective of their presence.<sup>802</sup> These are surely just space fillers. On some occasions the designer has even shown two or more trees standing together, when one would do if it was purely functional.<sup>803</sup>

### *Trees in the Borders*

Trees in the borders are mostly associated with the Tapestry’s fables which are particularly prominent in the first few sections of the lower border (between Scenes 1 and 18).<sup>804</sup> It is possible that these function as scene dividers within the smaller narrative sequences.<sup>805</sup> Of more significance are the trees in Scene 58 (V415 and V416) which seem to be associated with the torture of the English who flee the battle, and thus help to convey the events in the main narrative.

---

<sup>801</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 68-9.

<sup>802</sup> E.g. Trees 1, 6, 7 and 12.

<sup>803</sup> E.g. Trees 15 to 17 (between Scene 47 and 48) and Trees 18 to 20 (between Scene 49 and 50).

<sup>804</sup> E.g. V150-1, V231, V233-4, V235-7, V238, V239-40, V241, V242-3, V246, V249 and V415-6.

<sup>805</sup> E.g. V237 and V238.

### *Vegetal Ornament in the Main Frieze*

Only in two instances is vegetal ornament, other than trees, found in the main frieze. V229 appears alone (and thus is easily missed) as a wilting plant, in the thick of battle, beneath the caption ‘...here, at the same time, both English and French fell in battle’. Next to this plant are a few wavy lines possibly representing a short expanse of water or a marsh, also serving as a watery grave for a knight who falls from his horse.<sup>806</sup> V229 may be a marshland plant, which emphasises the boggy nature of the battlefield. Alternatively, since it is shown with a drooping stem, it could be a metaphor for the death and destruction which takes place above.

Similarly, V230 is clearly functional rather than purely decorative. This plant appears as vine leaf scroll, and restrains a man undergoing torture.<sup>807</sup> It seems likely that this figure is an Englishman, as two men on horseback (and we have seen that it is normally Normans who ride horses) attack him. This motif therefore clearly relates to the events in the narrative, rather than just being decorative. It is also conceivable - though impossible to substantiate - that this figure, might be associated with Christ ‘the true vine’.<sup>808</sup>

### *Vegetal Ornament in the Tapestry's Borders*

The cruciform and scroll vegetal ornament in the Tapestry's borders seems purely decorative. However, the positioning of the different types of ornament is of some interest. Most cruciform (type 1) vegetal ornament is depicted in the earlier parts of the Tapestry: from Scene 2 to 35 in the upper border, and Scene 13 to 35 in the lower border. In contrast scroll (type 2) ornament is found in the mid to later parts of the

---

<sup>806</sup> Figure 515 (Musset, *Tapissérie de Bayeux*, 71).

<sup>807</sup> Figure 627.

Tapestry: from Scene 35 to 58 in the upper border, and Scene 35 to 51 in the lower border. Whilst it is tempting to hypothesise that this change in ornament reflects events in the main frieze - marking the point (Scene 35) at which Duke William learns that Harold has taken the English crown - it seems more likely that these changes reflect different embroiderers or workshops, or even the circumstances in which the commission was produced. This will be discussed further in the main conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

In the most part vegetation in the Bayeux Tapestry has not been drawn from 'real life', rather these elements are traditional motifs borrowed from art. The plants and foliage in the Tapestry parallel those found in contemporary illumination, including work which was produced in Canterbury and hence would have been available to an artist working there. However, the significance of these motifs must not be overemphasised, as a majority of the Tapestry's vegetal elements are common in earlier and later illuminations, produced elsewhere in England and abroad. Whilst some aspects of the vegetal ornament in the Tapestry are typically Anglo-Saxon, others are more popular after the Norman Conquest. It is difficult to identify particular sources which have been used by the designer. Whether this is due to differences in medium, the character of the work, the artist's style, or even the non-survival of the relevant works is debatable. However, it seems probable that the designer was indebted to a number of influences, mainly artistic. He seems happy to improvise, but may have responded to some 'real world' observations. This is perhaps most evident in some of the trees in the boat building scenes, where their tall, narrow appearance helps convey realism to the narrative.

---

<sup>808</sup> Jn 15:1-17.

It is inconceivable that the designer did not have first hand knowledge of contemporary plant types. Nonetheless, it is clear that he was more interested in the decorative qualities of traditional vegetal motifs, than in producing an accurate rendition of familiar trees and plants,<sup>809</sup> and that his work in this respect was influenced by a range of artistic conventions. This provides a sobering counterbalance to the view of him as a proto-realist, and is a useful reminder of the many other factors – apart from visual reality – that affected the way he chose to depict the eleventh-century world. Most commentators have passed over this aspect of his work, with the result that their assessments have been partial at best. But it is only after a comprehensive exploration of his visual language that we can truly be in a position to analyse his artistic personality and the general authority of his work. To this we can now turn.

---

<sup>809</sup> Even in the case of s. xi herbals, which we assume to be naturalistic, the artists have borrowed from art, rather than 'real life' (Collins, *Medieval Herbals*, 198-90).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to examine systematically and comprehensively the extent to which artefacts in the Bayeux Tapestry reflect those of the contemporary world. Through a series of six test cases we have been able to assess the accuracy of the depicted artefacts against, on the one hand, types which survive archaeologically, and, on the other, those which appear in art – most notably manuscript illuminations. We have seen that the results have been quite varied, with the designer drawing upon both manuscript art and, to a lesser extent, ‘real life’.

Following this meticulous investigation of detail, we will now present an assessment of some of the wider implications of this research. First and foremost, we can offer the first truly authoritative and reasoned evaluation of the extent to which the Tapestry informs us of the ‘real world’ of the eleventh century. These findings will also offer new insights into the Tapestry designer and his world, enabling us to offer a clearer ‘profile’ of him than has hitherto been possible, and to understand something more of the complicated relationship between the artist, his visual models and the world in which he lived. We also seek to understand his method of work, clarifying the range and nature of his pictorial sources. In addition we hope to be able to advance understanding of how the Tapestry was manufactured - in particular whether or not its separate sections were worked by different groups of embroiderers, as has sometimes been suggested.<sup>810</sup> Henceforth, we will be in a better position to understand the Tapestry within the broader context of contemporary art and assess the extent to which its visual language is typical of the period, all of which will provide a firmer footing for interpreting it – and other artworks – as a historical source.

---

<sup>810</sup> Most recently by Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 7.

## **A Source for the Real World of the Eleventh Century**

How valuable, then, is the Bayeux Tapestry as a source for the 'real world' of the eleventh century? Our discussion has shown that many of the Tapestry's buildings are composed of elements borrowed from art. Even the named ones, such as Bosham and Mont-Saint-Michel, do not reflect what we know about those structures in that period.<sup>811</sup> Likewise we have seen that it offers little insight into eleventh-century flora and fauna. Plant types are highly stylised and clearly relate to sub-acanthus and scrolled vegetal ornament of contemporary illumination, from which they were borrowed.

Depictions of arms and armour in the Tapestry are more varied. We have seen, for example, that bows, spearheads and trousered hauberks, are inaccurate, demonstrating the designer's dependence upon artistic models - though it is conceivable that he knew what the actual objects looked like. In contrast, some of his military paraphernalia, such as sword pommel types, axes and kite-shields appear reasonably realistic, although it is possible that these were also borrowed from art, where similar forms are common. An exception, perhaps, is the Tapestry's depiction of conical helmets with nasal guards which reflects the contemporary artefact and is not found in pre-Conquest illuminations.<sup>812</sup> Similarly, the Tapestry's domestic creatures, such as hawks, horses and dogs, as well as some farm animals, broadly parallel contemporary species. However, here again, parallels exist in contemporary art; as they do - incidentally - for its exotic and mythical creatures, which the designer could not have known first-hand. Likewise, our discussion has shown that we learn

---

<sup>811</sup> The exception - perhaps - is Westminster Abbey. It is notable that the Tapestry does not show structures which were peripheral to the narrative, such as wooden domestic buildings.

<sup>812</sup> Conical helmets are only otherwise found on coins of Cnut and Edward the Confessor, which - we are to believe - would not have been in normal circulation in 1070.

little of eleventh-century ships from the Tapestry; although the designer shows some understanding of contemporary clinker-built vessels, detail is overlooked.

On the other hand, some elements, such as the Tapestry's rendition of dress and clothing, suggest a high response to the contemporary scene.<sup>813</sup> Of particular interest are the tunics, which have a rounded neck, slit front and v-shaped braided border: this form is relatively rare in illumination, but becomes increasingly common by the mid-eleventh century,<sup>814</sup> suggesting it was an innovation in fashion. We have also discussed the relative accuracy of female dress and ecclesiastical garments. Further, we have seen that the Tapestry's shipbuilding scenes seem to indicate some knowledge of contemporary carpentry, even though diagnostic phases of contemporary boat construction are ignored. Although it is possible that the designer looked to art, rather than 'real life', for his inspiration, representations of boat construction in late Anglo-Saxon illumination are limited in the extreme.<sup>815</sup>

#### *The Significance of the Balance between Real Life and Borrowed Elements*

The fact that some artefacts are drawn with a higher degree of accuracy than others gives them a particular significance. Whereas much of the Tapestry's architecture seems to have been influenced by contemporary art, our study has shown that its depiction of Westminster Abbey seems to reflect the contemporary building.<sup>816</sup> The accuracy here is presumably intentional. The Confessor's foundation - his final resting

---

<sup>813</sup> This said, we have seen that the Tapestry gives little impression of contemporary dress fittings or jewellery, which – because of their small size - may have been ignored or simplified.

<sup>814</sup> E.g. BL, Arundel 155, f.93; BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.6v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.9, f.11. A similar – early – form of this tunic appears in BodL, Junius 11, p.53, p.59.

<sup>815</sup> The only examples are BodL, Junius 11, p.65 and BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v. Whilst such illustrations may have been convenient to the designer, carpentry must have been ubiquitous in s. xi England.

<sup>816</sup> Gem, 'Westminster Abbey', 37; Gibbs-Smith, 'Notes', 168.

place - was a symbol of his legacy; moreover, it symbolised continuity from Edward to William: Edward's reign saw the beginning of the Normanization of England, including the introduction of the new – Norman – architecture, which Westminster epitomised.<sup>817</sup>



**Illustration 108**

**The early Norman castle at Pleshey, Essex.**

We can also be confident that ‘real life’ influenced the Tapestry’s mottes,<sup>818</sup> and some elements of the fortifications upon them. Perhaps most realistic is the illustration of the ‘early’ wooden fort at Hastings - though by the time the Tapestry was produced this structure had probably been rebuilt in stone.<sup>819</sup> Castles had an immediate visual impact on the landscape, and also had political and economic implications; by 1070 – at the latest – they were vital to the stability of the Norman regime in England,

---

<sup>817</sup> Barlow, *Edward*, 230-2; Godfrey, *Church*, 407.

<sup>818</sup> Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 87.

<sup>819</sup> Dyer, *Hastings Castle*, 3; Armitage, *Norman Castles*, 56; Barker and Barton, ‘Hastings Castle’, 80-100. This presumes the Tapestry does show Hastings Castle.



especially in the parts of the kingdom prone to rebellion.<sup>820</sup> During William's campaign against the north - in 1069/70 - the castle was fundamental for security, to protect men and supplies (Ill.108 - above).<sup>821</sup>

Other 'real-life' elements of the Tapestry, such as its dress, aspects of its arms and armour and the woodworking scenes, are also intentional. However, since these seem to be specifically related to the world of the designer – rather than the general political climate of the eleventh century - we will discuss these in due course when we examine the designer himself.

The predominant influence in the remainder of the Tapestry is unquestionably art. The example *par excellence* is its vegetation. Whilst trees, for example, make useful scene dividers, they are – in the most part - peripheral to the narrative, but contribute to the general decorative effect of the work; hence the designer pays less attention to their botanical accuracy than to their ornamental form.

Art-based motifs, however, are in themselves informative. 'Traditional motifs' are used to express 'real life' so that the narrative can be easily understood. Many aspects of the Tapestry's arms and armour, such as round-shields (with convex boards) and spears (barbed, with wings), are shown in archaic but traditional forms, as this would conform to the expectations of most contemporary viewers.<sup>822</sup> The designer was concerned to recreate accurately the appearance of many contemporary garments for much the same reason, for these were things whose current form would have been well known to any contemporary viewer.

---

<sup>820</sup> Brown, *Normans*, 82-85.

<sup>821</sup> Brown, *Normans*, 44. Coulson, *Castles, passim*, recently discussed the fact that the vast majority of castles have virtually no history of military conflict and instead had a social function. This, of course, is less likely to have been the case of the first generation Norman castles.

<sup>822</sup> cf. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 130.

The fact that the balance between ‘real life’ and ‘borrowed’ elements could vary according to context and artistic needs is exemplified by the Tapestry’s depiction of beasts. We have seen that, here, there is a marked contrast between the relative realism of the animals in the main frieze and the more fabulous nature of those in the borders. The former had to be compatible with the narrative, the latter could be decoration. There also seems to be greater accuracy in the representation of those animals in the borders which are elements of fables - something which was necessary if they were to make any sense.<sup>823</sup> Hence, in the tale of ‘the fox and the crane’, the crane is shown with a long neck which evokes the appearance of the actual bird.<sup>824</sup>

Our study has shown that the designer also depicts certain elements with greater accuracy when emphasising the role of the patron, or other high-status characters. The boatbuilding scenes are a good example. Whilst in theory they may owe a debt to visual models, the sequences found in the Tapestry are much longer and more informative than most manuscript illuminations.<sup>825</sup> Had the designer just wanted to make a general reference to the construction of the Norman fleet he could have done this more economically. Instead he makes a feature of these activities, thereby stressing the time and resources involved.<sup>826</sup> Likewise this scene seems to emphasise the role of Odo (Ill.109 – below),<sup>827</sup> who is shown advising William on the construction of the fleet (the ways in which the designer highlights important characters is discussed in more detail below).

---

<sup>823</sup> Hicks, ‘Borders’, 253-7.

<sup>824</sup> We should be aware that their apparent accuracy might only reflect their form in the original exemplar, rather than any intention on the part of the designer.

<sup>825</sup> In BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v and BodL, Junius 11, p.65, the boatbuilding scenes are much shorter, but here the illustration is only of the construction of one vessel: Noah’s Ark.

<sup>826</sup> Bachrach, ‘Observations’, 1-21, discusses the likely resources needed to sustain William’s army in the days and months preceding the conquest of England.



**Illustration 109**

**Odo shown advising William on the construction of the Norman invasion fleet.**

### **The Bayeux Tapestry Designer**

Apart from helping us to understand the real world of the eleventh century, the Tapestry's artefacts also enable us to build a profile of the designer, and explore his relationship to his pictorial models and to the 'real world'. What, then, does our material show, or let us deduce, about the designer?

#### *A Designer Familiar with South-East England*

Notwithstanding some anomalies and a reliance on certain artistic motifs, the relative accuracy of the depiction of the Romanesque Westminster Abbey suggests that the designer knew the building, had access to reasonably accurate depictions of it; though it is also possible that he may have based his illustration upon a verbal or written account. Assuming the designer was based in Canterbury it is quite possible that he made the trip to London to see the abbey itself.

---

<sup>827</sup> Figure 264 (Scene 35).

*A Designer Familiar with Lay Society*

We have seen that the Tapestry offers a reliable and convincing portrayal of contemporary dress. It is certain that our designer – whether lay or cleric - would have known the form of contemporary garments. However, we have seen that the realism of his response to many articles of contemporary lay clothing – such as the form of tunics and culottes – is greater than is generally the case in art of the period. This may suggest he himself was a member of the laity or at the very least that he was interested in lay fashion. On the other hand it is possible that the designer was a cleric who wore lay dress, like the clerics whom he depicts.<sup>828</sup> Late Anglo-Saxon texts urge priests not to wear lay clothing and therefore we may assume some did.<sup>829</sup> However, the implication must be that most did not as it was considered wrong to do so.

It is also of note that - in contrast to many of his contemporaries – the designer demonstrates a good understanding of post-Conquest female fashion.<sup>830</sup> As the actual embroiderers were likely to have been women,<sup>831</sup> we can imagine that they might have instructed the designer, or corrected his work, had he erred in his depiction of female costume. However there is no reason to assume that he did so - it is simpler to presume that he was familiar with the garments in question. This would indicate that

---

<sup>828</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 171, believed ‘that ecclesiastics did not wear a distinctive costume at all times’ – citing the Tapestry as evidence. John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004) agreed, suggesting that ‘there is nothing implausible about most English secular clergy in the 1060s normally walking around in lay dress’.

<sup>829</sup> E.g. in *Ælfric’s first Old English letter for Wulfstan*, 206, eds. Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, 300, of about 1006, it is stated that ‘he [a mass-priest] may never be clothed with lay clothing (*na he ne mot beon mid læwedum scrude gescryd*)’. In his *pastoral letter for Wulfsige II*, 144, eds. Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, 219, Ælfric says ‘and he [the priest] is not to wear a monk’s garb or that of a layman’.

<sup>830</sup> Typical are the Tapestry’s long-sleeved dresses with flared cuffs.

<sup>831</sup> E.g. see Staniland, *Embroiderers*, 7-8. William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, ii. 220. 1, eds. and trans. Mynors, Thomson and Winterbottom, 404-5, recorded that Edward the Confessor’s wife - Harold’s sister - Edith, embroidered the robes he wore at festivals (*in precipuis festiuitatibus, quanuis amiciretur uestibus auro intexis quas regina sumptuosissime elaborauerat*). Likewise, Domesday Book, f.74, f.149, ed. Williams and Martin, 195, 410, contains at least two references to secular embroideresses: Leofgyth of Knook, Wiltshire ‘made and makes the gold fringe of the king and queen’

the designer was accustomed to the company of women – including those of the higher echelons.<sup>832</sup>

### *A Designer Familiar with the Clergy*

Whether he was a cleric or a layman, the Tapestry designer certainly knew how ecclesiastics dressed; the accuracy and detail of his response are as high as those found in contemporary illuminations.<sup>833</sup> This is of little surprise, given that the church had a prominent role both in society as a whole and in the illustrations of manuscripts, which we know to have been among the designer's sources.<sup>834</sup> More intriguing is the fact that the designer – in contrast to his contemporaries – also shows clerics wearing lay clothing (comprising tunics and tight fitting trousers), such as at the funeral of Edward the Confessor (Ill.110 – below). This must be of some significance, though its meaning is lost on us today.

---

and Ælfgyth of Oakley, Buckinghamshire, who held land 'on condition of her teaching his [Godric the sheriff] daughter gold embroidery work'.

<sup>832</sup> Of course clerics may also have been familiar with female clothing and there is documentary evidence to support this: in the *Northumbrian Priest's Law*, 35, eds. Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, 459, dated to between 1008 and 1023, it is stated that 'if a priest leaves a women and takes another, anathema sit! (*gif preost cwenan forlæte oðre nime, anathema sit!*)'; *Ælfric's first Old English letter for Wulfstan*, 82, eds. Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, 278, says that 'no bishop and no mass-priest, deacon or minster-priest, is to have living in his dwelling nor in his house any women, unless it is his mother or his sister, father's sister or mother's sister' (*þæt nan bisceop ne nan mæssepreost, diacon oþþe mynsterpreost, næbbe on his wununge ne on his huse wunigende ænigne wifman, butan hit syg his modor oþþe his swustor, faþu oþþe moddrige*); in the same document, 153 (page 290) Ælfric states 'that he who takes a widow or a deserted wife is never afterwards to be deacon or mass-priest (*þæt se þe wuduwn genimð oþþe forlæten wif, þæt he næfre syþþan ne beo deacon oþþe mæssepreost þæt*)'.

<sup>833</sup> Parallels for elements of ecclesiastical dress in the Tapestry are found in Rouen, BM, A. 27 (368), f.1v; BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.18v; BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v, amongst others. See 'ecclesiastical dress', in the chapter on dress and clothing.

<sup>834</sup> Clegg, *Medieval Church*, 9, 51-9.



**Illustration 110**

**Clerics wearing secular dress at the funeral of Edward the Confessor.**

*A Designer Familiar with the Highest Social Echelons*

The designer uses clothing to distinguish men of rank from the lower echelons of society. He uses decorative or intricate motifs to emphasise the quality of garments and jewellery worn by high-status characters.<sup>835</sup> This indicates that he was aware of contemporary social distinctions, as one would expect.

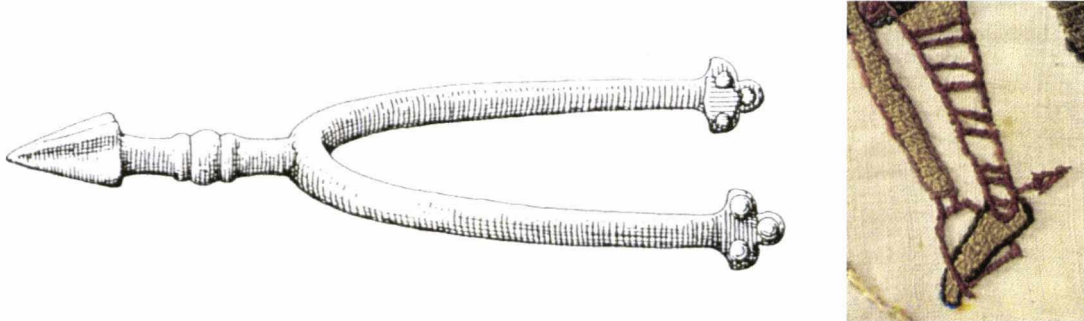
Likewise, the creatures drawn with the greatest degree of accuracy are horses, dogs and hawks. Of particular interest is the fact that the designer shows horsemen wearing spurs (he even seems to illustrate stirrup-strap mounts).<sup>836</sup> Since these

---

<sup>835</sup> E.g. William's cloak (Figure 118) has an embroidered hem, and Edward's brooch (Figure 207) is shown with 'jewelled' cells.

<sup>836</sup> Spurs are uncommon in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Stirrup-strap mounts are essentially triangular or sub-triangular: Robinson, 'Late Saxon Mounts', 63-4, notes that in the BT a sub-triangular (or sub-rectangular) 'area in a different coloured fabric appears above the stirrups and at the end of the strap' – and these could be stirrup-strap mounts!

artefacts are rarely depicted in contemporary art, they may suggest the designer had some first-hand equestrian knowledge (Ill.111 - below).<sup>837</sup> Horses and hawks were almost certainly kept by men of rank.<sup>838</sup> Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that the designer owned such animals himself, he clearly knew them. This is perhaps indicative of his interaction with high status individuals, including - we may presume - the Bishop of Bayeux.



**Illustration 111**

**Spurs worn by a horseman in the Bayeux Tapestry (right) and an eleventh century example from Winchester (left).**

#### *A Designer Familiar with Art and Other Crafts*

Given that the Tapestry designer borrowed from contemporary illuminations, we can presume that he was *au fait* with a range of manuscript art. Indeed, he may himself have been first and foremost an illuminator - a possibility which will be examined in due course.

We have also noted that the designer used decorative motifs to emphasise the quality of garments and jewellery. Whilst similar motifs appear in manuscript art,<sup>839</sup>

<sup>837</sup> Though it is possible that the designer borrowed this motif from BL, Cotton Claudius B.iv the form of the spurs in the Tapestry better reflect the actual artefact. In *Ælfric's first Old English letter for Wulfstan*, 203-5, eds. Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, 300, it is written that 'we [priests] may never hunt or be hawkers...for no hunter was ever holy' (*na we ne motan huntian ne hafecaras beon...forþan þe nan hunta næs næfre halig*). John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004) thought that this shows that sometimes the clergy did go hunting and therefore could have had first-hand equestrian knowledge.

<sup>838</sup> For horses see Keefer, 'Horse', 5. Hawks see Haskins, 'Harold's Books', 399; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 197; Owen-Crocker, 'Hawks and Horse Trappings', 220-9. Dogs in the Tapestry are mostly associated with Harold.

<sup>839</sup> See chapter on dress and clothing.

our designer clearly delights in utilising such forms. This perhaps reflects his knowledge of embroidery and jewellery-making (the former being implicit in the nature of the work under consideration).<sup>840</sup>

Likewise the Tapestry's woodworking scenes reveal that that the designer was familiar with contemporary carpentry methods, though seemingly not specifically with the work of the shipwright.<sup>841</sup> Woodworking would have been a not uncommon sight in most towns and villages; wood was certainly readily available and affordable, and was worked to produce a great range of different structures and artefacts.<sup>842</sup>

#### *The Artist, his Model and the Real World*

The relationship between the artist, his model and the real world is complex. We have seen that for most aspects of the work the designer utilised art-based motifs. Like contemporary artists, he borrowed 'traditional' - sometimes archaic - motifs for aspects of the real-world which he surely knew first-hand. A good example is the Tapestry's vegetation, which is pure fantasy. Here, there was little need to reflect 'real-life', as vegetation (with the possible exception of the trees in the shipbuilding scenes) is incidental to the main thrust of the narrative. Likewise, much of the architecture in both the Tapestry and contemporary illuminations appears to be of a sub-classical style.<sup>843</sup> When our designer responds to 'real life' - such as for

---

<sup>840</sup> It is inevitable our designer witnessed other craftsmen at work. Numerous 'lead-alloy points', some of a type used for 'writing and ruling on manuscripts', were excavated from medieval contexts in York on sites also associated with metalwork and textile production (Ottaway and Rogers, *Finds*, 2934-6).

<sup>841</sup> See chapter on ships.

<sup>842</sup> See in particular Morris, *Wood and Woodworking*, *passim*.

<sup>843</sup> Possible exceptions include the plan of Christ Church waterworks in TCC, R. 17. 1, f.284v-5, f.286r and sections of a building in BodL, Bodley 494, f.115v, f.156, f.158, f.162v (Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, 97, 113; Woodman 'Waterworks Drawings', 168-77).



Westminster Abbey and the mottes – it is because the buildings/structures in question are particularly important within the narrative.

For certain other aspects the designer selected the artistic schema that most accurately reflected contemporary reality, even though the narrative did not dictate it. For example, in the Tapestry we seem to see a higher response to contemporary garments than in most eleventh-century illuminations. But then dress and clothing was, of course, one aspect that every beholder could evaluate. Hence as well as ‘accurately’ depicting artefacts that had a narrative role, our designer might also reflect the contemporary scene in areas that interested him or where the likely knowledge of his prospective audience required that he did so.

#### *The Direction of the Tapestry’s Patron*

The case for Odo’s patronage – discussed in the Introduction - is substantial. It seems unthinkable that a man as powerful and resourceful as Odo would not have imposed his mark on the work, and the Tapestry’s artefacts might reflect this.

#### *Odo the Warrior*

At a crucial moment in the battle Odo is shown rallying the ‘boys’.<sup>844</sup> Considering the Bishop of Bayeux’s military standing, it is interesting that some of the Tapestry’s arms and armour are less than accurate, and many seem to reflect ancient types.<sup>845</sup>

This may suggest that the patron accepted the limitations of art for depicting ‘real-life’, or that he was not much involved with the design process. On the other hand, it

---

<sup>844</sup> Figure 534. The Tapestry’s caption reads ‘HIC ODO EP[i]S[copus]: BACVLV[m] TENENS CONFOR:TAT PVEROS’ (Here Bishop Odo, holding his baton, cheers on the boys).

<sup>845</sup> This said, whilst Odo was increasingly involved in military affairs from 1080, it is significant that he ‘played no discernable part in the warfare of 1067 to 1071 which completed the Conquest’ (Bates,

is notable that the Tapestry's mottes – especially Hastings Castle - seem to reflect the actual structures that were being built when the Tapestry was commissioned. In this connection it is perhaps significant that they had a direct association with Odo: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notes that 'Bishop Odo and Earl William...built castles far and wide throughout the land, oppressing the unhappy people, and things went ever from bad to worse'.<sup>846</sup> This is not to say that Odo commented on the accuracy of the Tapestry's mottes, but rather the designer was probably very conscious of their importance in the context of his work, and made a special effort to depict them.

### *Odo the Lord*

Pre-eminent amongst the nobility, Odo was clearly a man of great wealth.<sup>847</sup> It is therefore notable that whilst the Tapestry uses hawks and dogs (besides other attributes) to indicate status, such animals accompany Guy, Harold and William; none is associated with Odo.<sup>848</sup> The omission is perhaps coincidental: these animals are only found in the earlier parts of the Tapestry whereas Odo first appears at a much later point.<sup>849</sup>

---

'Odo' 6). The Tapestry is the only contemporary source which ascribes an important military role to Odo at Hastings, and it is quite possible that this could be exaggerated.

<sup>846</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (D), 1066, ed. Garmonsway, 200.

<sup>847</sup> 'the extent of his English lands...far exceeded that of any other Norman's holdings (besides the king). Domesday lists estates in twenty-two counties...which produced a 1086 value of about £3050' (Bates, 'Odo', 10).

<sup>848</sup> Elsewhere the designer highlights Odo's status with other 'symbols': He (Figures 264, 380 and 384) is identified by a tonsure in Scene 35, 43 and 44. In Scene 43 he (Figure 380) is also shown at the head of the table – the position of Christ at the Last Supper. In Scene 54 he (Figure 543) is shown wearing a triangular patterned hauberk and holds a *baculum*, which Bates, 'Odo', identifies 'as a symbol of authority and direction'.

<sup>849</sup> Scene 35.

### *Odo the Ecclesiastic*

It is certain that Odo knew Westminster Abbey: he attended William's coronation there on Christmas day 1066 and that of Matilda on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1068.<sup>850</sup> Odo also had an interest in church architecture; he was currently re-building his own cathedral at Bayeux - for which some believe the Tapestry itself may have been commissioned.<sup>851</sup> Might this also explain the apparent accuracy of the depiction of Westminster Abbey in the Tapestry? On balance, it seems unlikely that Odo would have instructed the designer about Westminster's appearance or indeed have been overly concerned with such detail, especially since no such interest is apparent in relation to structures in Normandy which were of more relevance to the ducal family – most notably his own cathedral church. Bates notes that 'in spite of his English interests, Normandy, and Bayeux cathedral in particular, remained the focal point of Odo's life'.<sup>852</sup> Yet in the Tapestry these structures in Normandy are highly stylised.

We explored above the possibility that the accuracy of the Tapestry's ecclesiastical garments suggests the designer was familiar with clerical dress. But might their accuracy be better explained by the direction of the patron? Against this possibility is the fact that Odo himself is never shown in religious vestments. Is it likely that he would vicariously insist on accuracy for others, yet never take advantage of it to flaunt his own ecclesiastical status?

---

<sup>850</sup> Odo's presence at Matilda's coronation is confirmed by the witness lists of two charters (Bates, *William*, 101). See also Charter 290 (Bates, *Acta of William I*, 870-81).

<sup>851</sup> E.g. Stenton, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 11. For alternative views see Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 203; Henige, 'Bayeux Tapestry'. Odo was a benefactor to other institutions and later in life also became further involved with affairs of the church: for the first time he is surrounded by his clergy in witness lists, of 1092 and 1093; he attended the council of Clermont and in 1096 travelled around Normandy with the papal legate, Abbot Gerento of St Bénigne of Dijon 'presumably to preach the Crusade', which he himself went on in 1096 (Bates, 'Odo', 3, 5, 9, 12, 18).

<sup>852</sup> Bates, 'Odo', 12.

In brief, artefacts which we might reasonably identify with Odo - such as certain types of arms and armour - are not depicted accurately, whereas those that appear realistic – such as ecclesiastic garb - are (strangely) never associated with the Bishop of Bayeux. We may conclude therefore that the artefacts give little indication that the patron was involved in the details of the design.

### **The Production of the Bayeux Tapestry**

Although the Tapestry presents a new and - as far as we know - original picture cycle, we have seen that there is good evidence that much of its design is based on pre-existing artistic motifs. These provide vital clues to the range and nature of the sources that influenced the designer.

#### *Elements typical of art in general*

Whilst it is inevitable, given the nature of the surviving evidence, that manuscript art appears to have been the primary influence upon the designer (and this may well have been the case), he was clearly familiar with a wider spectrum of visual culture. Some of the Tapestry's motifs are of an established type with a long tradition in Anglo-Saxon art commonly found not only in illumination but also on stone sculpture, antler, bone, leather and metalwork.<sup>853</sup> It also seems likely that such motifs would have commonly occurred in textiles and wall paintings. The vegetal ornament, predominately found in the Tapestry's borders, is a case in point, as are the Tapestry's beasts. Although some may have been sketched from life (albeit quite unlikely), most are indebted to artistic motifs which were widely available in the eleventh century.<sup>854</sup>

---

<sup>853</sup> For examples see Backhouse, Turner and Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art*; Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*.

<sup>854</sup> It has been suggested that the embroiderers may have been left much more to their own devices, or at least to select from a number of designs, for the borders (personal correspondence with John Cherry,

### *Elements typical of manuscript art*

The Tapestry's classical-style architecture, typical of late Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest illuminations is perhaps the clearest evidence that the designer was influenced by manuscript art.<sup>855</sup> As we have seen, in the most part the Tapestry's buildings are composed of generic architectural elements, assembled in different combinations to create a variety of distinct structures, and this is commonplace in manuscript art – as, too, is the manner in which architecture is used to provide a physical environment, either as the settings for scenes, or to divide them.<sup>856</sup> Whilst it is difficult to identify specific exemplars that may have been drawn upon for the Tapestry, the best parallels for the variety of forms and quantity of architecture are found in Canterbury illuminations - discussed below.

Also typical of manuscript art are many aspects of the Tapestry's arms and armour. Barbed spears with wings, short bows and convex shield-boards - types absent from the archaeological record - are common in both English and continental illuminations from at least the ninth century.<sup>857</sup> Likewise, the frill found beside the knee on some of the Tapestry's tunics is a common convention used to indicate movement in illuminated manuscripts.<sup>858</sup>

---

August 2002). Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 7, 60, agreed claiming that 'a close examination of the borders shows convincingly that they were drawn by the embroiderers themselves and that the designer had, apart from stating his initial requirements, no hand in their development'. However, this latter point seems unlikely in a culture which highly valued decoration. For examples see Zarnecki, *English Romanesque Art, passim*.

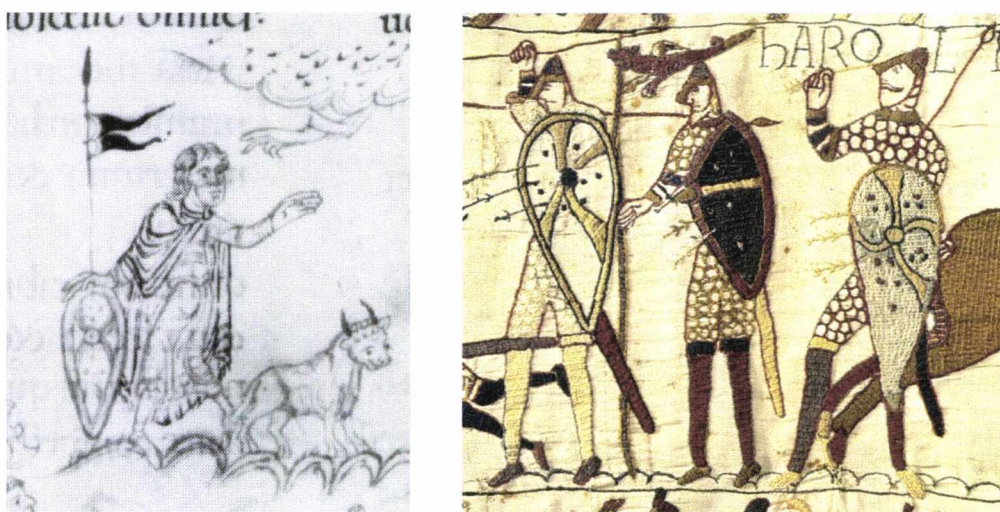
<sup>855</sup> E.g. Raleigh Radford, Jope and Tonkin, 'Great Hall', 82-3, noted that buildings in the Harley 603 Psalter 'are shown as a stone-built, with tiled roofs' since 'they belong to the Mediterranean tradition, on which the illustrations of the Canterbury Psalter and its continental model are based'.

<sup>856</sup> This is not particular to Canterbury illuminations: it also occurs, for example, in some Carolingian illuminations, such as BL, Add. 10546, f.5v.

<sup>857</sup> Barbed spears, for example, are inherently a Carolingian invention fossilised in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon art (Carver, 'Contemporary Artefacts', 129).

*Elements typical of Canterbury illuminations*

The strongest parallels with the Tapestry illustrations occur in manuscripts that were certainly or probably produced in Canterbury, of which three (the Harley 603 Psalter, the Old English Hexateuch and Junius 11) are of particular interest.<sup>859</sup> The high number of parallels between motifs in these manuscripts and the Tapestry provides good evidence that the designer knew and used them, or manuscripts like them.



**Illustration 112**

**Parallels between the geometric designs of some of the kite-shields depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry (right) and the Harley 603 Psalter (left).**

The Harley 603 Psalter, a copy of the Utrecht Psalter produced at Christ Church by at least seven artists, mostly during the first half of the eleventh century, provides good general parallels for the Tapestry's architecture, arms and armour, clothing and vegetation. Significantly this manuscript (hand F) offers the first and only parallel for a depiction of a kite-shield in Anglo-Saxon art; there are also striking similarities between the geometric designs on some of the Tapestry's shields and those in Harley

<sup>858</sup> E.g. BodL, Junius 11, p.74; BL, Cotton Caligula A. xv, f.123; BL, Stowe 944, f.7.

<sup>859</sup> BL, Harley 603; BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv; BodL, Junius 11.

603 (Ill.112 - above).<sup>860</sup> Further, this manuscript parallels the way in which the Tapestry designer foreshortens the sail of his ships, giving them their triangular form.<sup>861</sup>

The Old English Hexateuch, which was probably produced at St Augustine's Abbey in the first half of the eleventh-century, provides parallels for several complete motifs found in the Tapestry: one thinks of the illustrations of an Israelite spy escaping from Jericho down a rope (Ill.113 - below), Abraham slinging at birds, a servant waiting at a table, and a woodworker (Noah) using a T-axe.<sup>862</sup>



**Illustration 113**

**Parallels between the scene where Conan escapes from Dol in the Bayeux Tapestry (left) and an Israelite spy escaping from Jericho in the Old English Hexateuch (right).**

Besides these complete motifs, similar forms of artefacts - or elements thereof - occur in both the Tapestry and the Hexateuch. Of particular interest is a figure wearing a trousered hauberk which, it seems, is the earliest representation of this type of armour

<sup>860</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.29v, f.30v – but these were drawn in the twelfth century.

<sup>861</sup> F.27v, f.51v.

in Anglo-Saxon illumination.<sup>863</sup> Similarly, the ships in this manuscript, particularly their figureheads, are similar to those in the Bayeux Tapestry.<sup>864</sup> There are also general parallels with the Tapestry's boatbuilding scenes, architecture, dress and clothing, vegetation and beasts.<sup>865</sup>

Junius 11 may have been produced at Christ Church in the late tenth century. Its ships parallel those in the Tapestry – of particular note are their figureheads and the gap-amidships,<sup>866</sup> and, like the Tapestry and the Old English Hexateuch, it shows boat-building.<sup>867</sup> Junius 11 also offers good general parallels for the Tapestry's architecture: specific elements include the steps leading up to a building, which is similar to those leading up to Bosham church and the two-storey house in the Tapestry.<sup>868</sup> It includes vegetal interlace and acanthus elements akin to those in the Tapestry: the trapezoid nodes found on some of the Tapestry's trees, for example, only otherwise occur in Junius 11 and an Anglo-Saxon textile fragment from Milan.<sup>869</sup> There are also general parallels in arms and armour, clothing, and beasts.<sup>870</sup>

---

<sup>862</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v, f.19r, f. 26v, f.57v (Scenes 10, 18, 36 and 43 in the BT).

<sup>863</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.24v. Other parallels include BL, Harley 603, f.73v (which seems to be a s. xii addition) and the (probable Romanesque) stone fragment, Winchester Old Minster 88A (Biddle, 'Winchester', 329-332; Tweddle, Biddle and Kjølbye-Biddle, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture IV*, 314-22, ill. 644, 646).

<sup>864</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.15r, f.24v.

<sup>865</sup> See discussion in previous chapters.

<sup>866</sup> These are shown as a doorway cut through the gunwale strake: BodL, Junius 11, p.65, p.66, p.68.

<sup>867</sup> P.65.

<sup>868</sup> P.84.

<sup>869</sup> P.78 and textile fragment in the Museo di S.Ambrogio, Milan (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 204).

<sup>870</sup> As discussed in previous chapters.



Of special note are Junius 11's lions rampant (shown with their tails between their legs) and griffins,<sup>871</sup> which are uncommon in pre-Conquest art.

Notable parallels found in other Canterbury illuminations include the type of trees, and the men cutting them, in Cotton Julius A. vi,<sup>872</sup> in which we also find generic parallels for the 'occupations of the month' and some of the Tapestry's creatures.<sup>873</sup> In Cotton Cleopatra C. viii we find a match for the 'man with a coil' and for the 'cruciform scroll (type 3) ornament'.<sup>874</sup> In Arundel 155 the brooch worn by St Benedict parallels the centrally-fastened neck brooches in the Tapestry,<sup>875</sup> while ecclesiastical vestments similar to those in the Tapestry are depicted in Cotton Tiberius A. iii and Durham B. III. 32.<sup>876</sup> The Tapestry's horses and the arrangement of their harness fittings are paralleled by those in a late tenth-century copy of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*.<sup>877</sup> Further, the sixth-century Italian Gospels of St Augustine, which were certainly at St Augustine's Abbey by the eleventh century, seem to have been the model for the Tapestry's feast scene (Scene 43).<sup>878</sup>

Whilst the strongest parallels are found in manuscripts from St Augustine's Abbey, our study has shown that the Tapestry also shares a large number of motifs with Christ Church illuminations. It therefore seems probable that both scriptoria had an impact on the designer. Although Odo was in litigation with Christ Church over

---

<sup>871</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.11, p.13.

<sup>872</sup> BL, Cotton Julius A. vi, f.5v.

<sup>873</sup> F.4v, f.5, f.5v.

<sup>874</sup> BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.24r (vegetal ornament) and f.27 (man with coil). The latter is discussed by Wormald, 'Style and Design', 31-2.

<sup>875</sup> BL, Arundel 155, f.133.

<sup>876</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.117v and DCL, B. III. 32, f.56v.

<sup>877</sup> CCCC, 23, f.2.

<sup>878</sup> CCCC, 286, f.125r.

land, this seems unlikely to have restricted the designer having access to whatever he needed. Indeed, it is plausible that he compiled a sketch book of relevant motifs from illuminations housed by both communities.

#### *Elements typical of Romanesque illuminations*

Whilst many of the closest parallels are found in late Anglo-Saxon art, the Tapestry is (of course) a post-Conquest work, and it is therefore of little surprise that it shows various affinities to Romanesque art. To date it has not been possible to identify specific Romanesque exemplars which the designer knew – it is perhaps doubtful we ever will. The clearest parallels with Romanesque art – such as some of the leaf types – are too general and widespread to permit the identification of a particular model, while in the case of clothing it is unclear whether the parity reflects a debt to Romanesque art or to real life. Likewise, we noted that the Tapestry shows horsemen using spurs, which are more common in post-Conquest illuminations, but this may similarly reflect his personal equestrian knowledge.

#### *The Designer's Working Practices*

We have seen that illumination had a profound influence upon the designer, and we can be confident that he sketched from manuscript exemplars. It is also possible – perhaps likely – that the textile tradition was as prolific as the manuscript one: manuscripts (for certain scriptorium) tend to survive, whereas textiles hardly ever do. It is therefore possible that the traditions of illumination and embroidery – amongst other arts forms – had long existed side-by-side influencing each other.<sup>879</sup> It nonetheless seems certain that he was a trained illustrator, and, unless we presume

---

<sup>879</sup> John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004).

that he specialised exclusively in textile design - which seems unlikely - it is probable that he contributed to the decoration of some eleventh-century manuscripts.<sup>880</sup> We might assume – therefore – that the designer was a cleric. However, ‘evidence for the involvement of professional scribes in the production of manuscript books at ecclesiastical centres in England during the late Anglo-Saxon and Romanesque periods is scarce’, but does exist.<sup>881</sup> Their participation was potentially important since ‘professionals’ may have been able to work longer hours than cloistered members of the communities - which ‘would directly reflect on the speed with which libraries were built up’ - and ‘as they might have worked at more than one centre, professionals could have been a means by which new ideas...and decoration were transmitted from one centre to another’.<sup>882</sup> It is therefore quite possible that our designer could have been familiar with and used manuscripts held by local religious communities, whether he was a cleric or not.

### *Inception*

Although we do not know the terms of his commission, we can imagine that the designer would have had a basic, possibly detailed, design concept, which may have been based upon a written or oral narrative account.<sup>883</sup> It is likely that the designer was given some instruction concerning events and elements which should be included

---

<sup>880</sup> Though - to date – specific examples are unknown or at least unidentified. Interestingly, Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23 - based on her knowledge of embroidery work - believed that the designer had no previous experience or wool-embroidery or translating line drawings to fabric.

<sup>881</sup> Gullick, ‘Professional Scribes’, 1, 15, noted that St Albans employed a number of professionals in the s. xi<sup>ex</sup> and Abingdon employed six in the s. xii<sup>in</sup>. We also know that in the s. xi monastic scriptoria produced books for each other and non-monastic clients (Emms, ‘Scribe’, 182).

<sup>882</sup> Gullick, ‘Professional Scribes’, 1.

<sup>883</sup> Some scholars, such as Bachrach, ‘Bayeux Tapestry’, 1-28, have hypothesised that the Tapestry follows a lost *Gesta* or *Chanson de geste*. However, Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 193-4, found this an ‘altogether too simplistic a model’ and instead suggested that since ‘the narrative flows so well...we

or omitted.<sup>884</sup> It is also possible that the Tapestry's account may have been composed especially for the purpose of this commission. The apparent fact that Odo did not contribute his knowledge of the contemporary scene to the visual depictions (as discussed above) does not automatically mean he did not have a role in forming the narrative. On the contrary, since Odo has such a prominent role in the Tapestry, it is eminently plausible that he (or his agent) did.

It is likely that the designer had the 'freedom to select and mould the material according to his own style and art'.<sup>885</sup> Our discussion of the relationship between the designer and patron supports this: whilst the designer was clearly influenced by contemporary art, he showed both ingenuity and originality in accomplishing his pictorial narrative. At the same time, the fact that the artistry becomes simpler after Scene 24 – discussed further below – also suggests a degree of flexibility during the process of creation, especially at the embroidery stage.

The Tapestry's inscriptions appear to be squeezed between the pictorial imagery, and hence some commentators have suggested that they were an afterthought, added at a late stage of the design process or even upon the completion of the work (Ill.114 – below).<sup>886</sup> However, Gameson correctly viewed this as 'an erroneous twentieth [twenty-first] – century perception, presupposing the modern neat delineation between picture and caption...its inappropriateness is underlined by many

---

should credit him with a pro-active and not merely a passive role in the formation of this particular version of the story'. Also see Brilliant, *Stripped Narrative*, 119-34.

<sup>884</sup> See Alexander, *Medieval illuminators*, 52-71, which assesses the extent of interaction between designer and patron in the production of manuscript illuminations.

<sup>885</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 194.

<sup>886</sup> As implied by Winfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 42; Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 59.

early medieval book illuminations which include inscriptions within the picture space'.<sup>887</sup>



**Illustration 114**

**Part of the Bayeux Tapestry's inscription  
(ET HIC EPISCOPVS CIBV[M] ET POTV[M] BENEDICT).**

### *Design*

We have noted that the Tapestry designer borrows complete motifs from known exemplars,<sup>888</sup> and it seems highly probable that he knew the libraries where these were kept. Although the artefacts depicted in the Tapestry suggest that the designer primarily consulted material in Canterbury, it is also possible that he had his own collection of drawings - a model book - which he used for his design.<sup>889</sup> This could have been compiled from a number of sources over a period of time. It is interesting, therefore, that some elements of the design most commonly appear in Winchester books - an example is the distinctive form of the Tapestry's tunics.<sup>890</sup> This may provide evidence that the designer consulted other libraries, though perhaps in this instance we have instead independent reflections of contemporary reality. It is also important to emphasise that whilst the designer almost certainly used Canterbury

<sup>887</sup> Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 185, cited examples of these within Temple, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*. Also see Gameson, *Role of Art*, 70-104.

<sup>888</sup> See Wormald, 'Style and Design', 31-2; Hart, 'Bayeux Tapestry', 129-163.

<sup>889</sup> The use of model books and theories on how art was transmitted in the Early Medieval period is still a matter of discussion and debate (see Scheller, *Model-Book Drawings*, 1-53, 62-88).

<sup>890</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius B. v, f.6v and BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.9, f.11. Similarly the culottes worn by Figure 76 in the BT - which have banding on the inside leg - otherwise only appear in BL, Cotton

illuminations, this in itself does not prove the Tapestry was actually produced there; sketches (and memories) were portable, and wherever the design was done, the embroidery could have been done elsewhere.

### *Production*

The designer would have sketched out his design onto linen, probably using one of two methods: pricking or squaring up.<sup>891</sup> Given the sheer size of the work, the latter seems most practical. It seems likely that the design would have been sketched as an outline drawing, with perhaps only the most important scenes being drawn in detail.<sup>892</sup> We do not know where the Tapestry was embroidered, but we must assume it was produced in a workshop accustomed to embroidery work.<sup>893</sup> The fact that particular artefacts/attributes found in the earlier parts of the Tapestry do not continue throughout the work may suggest that the design was not sketched in full before embroidery began,<sup>894</sup> but rather was developed as work progressed. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, the designer may have sketched a full version of his design, but allowed the embroiderers an element of independence in the treatment of minor

---

Tiberius C. vi, f.13. Of course it is possible such motifs did also appear in Canterbury manuscripts, which are now lost.

<sup>891</sup> For a general discussion to the production of embroidery see Staniland, *Embroiderers*, 27-9, although the craft of working large hangings – like the BT – is unknown to us. The transfer of designs from one illumination to another is discussed by Alexander, *Medieval Illuminators*, 50-1.

<sup>892</sup> This was inferred by Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 193.

<sup>893</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 36, believed that ‘individual professional embroiderers’ would more usually have worked ‘in workshops under royal patronage to ensure that accommodation, wages and the purchase of...materials was met’. For example in 802 Eanswitha, an embroiderer of Hereford, was granted by the Bishop of Worcester a lease of land on condition that she carried out textile work for the priests of the cathedral church (*ibid.*).

<sup>894</sup> E.g. moustaches, gaps amidships and certain types of flowers and fauna.

motifs. The embroiderers would presumably have been experienced in transferring a design on to linen, and could have copied border motifs from a 'model-book'.<sup>895</sup>

Although it has been suggested that the eight lengths of the Tapestry were embroidered in different workshops, there is no evidence to support this.<sup>896</sup> Certain regularly appearing motifs which it would be difficult to standardise across a variety of centres, such as the geometric designs used to evoke chain-mail, provide evidence that it was in fact worked by a single team. A variety of motifs were used, but most types appear throughout the Tapestry. Therefore we might imagine one team of embroiderers working systematically through the whole Tapestry, from left to right - though invariably some embroiderers would have worked on the design from above (upside down).<sup>897</sup> The use of one team would have had time implications: the fact that the design becomes greatly simplified, particularly after Scene 24, may reflect this.

Errors in the Tapestry – which we shall examine below - suggest that the designer did not monitor the progress of his work throughout the embroidery stage. The fact that these remained uncorrected imply that he may never have seen the finished product (if indeed the work ever was fully completed).

### *The Embroiderers' Work and the Design*

Mistakes in the Tapestry are few, but they have nonetheless altered the appearance – and hence our understanding - of some artefacts. They were referred to individually in the discussion above; however, it is now worth examining them collectively since they shed light on the work of the embroiderers.

---

<sup>895</sup> There is certainly evidence of this later in the medieval period (Staniland, *Embroiderers*, 31).

<sup>896</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 7, suggested that 'the variation between the borders of each length meant...that different groups were at work'. She also hypothesised that the Tapestry was made at a nunnery in Wessex. See also Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 42.

The sail of one ship was rendered in outline, but not in-filled using laid-and-couched work,<sup>898</sup> as is the convention elsewhere in the Tapestry. Consequently it looks square rather than triangular. Grape was convinced that the form was intentional,<sup>899</sup> but – as we have seen - the effect is almost certainly the result of oversight on the part of the embroiderers.

Likewise, the Tapestry shows some men wearing culottes and a tunic of matching colour, giving the appearance of a one-piece garment (Ill.115 – below). Whilst this may have been intentional, it seems unlikely that contemporaries wore such clothing. It is worth recalling in this context that mail hauberks are also shown trousered (which is incorrect). Perhaps, then, the embroiderers misunderstood the designer's intent, believing that, like the mailed hauberks, these garments were of one-piece construction.



**Illustration 115**

**Culottes and tunic of matching colour – giving the appearance of a one-piece garment.**

---

<sup>897</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 48.

<sup>898</sup> Boat 3 (Scene 5).

<sup>899</sup> Grape, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 35.



The Tapestry shows right-handed archers firing arrows from the right hand side of the bow stave, when they would have been fired from the left side.<sup>900</sup> This follows an artistic convention that when archers are illustrated facing right, the arrow is shown crossing the bow stave on its right hand side, whereas when an archer is depicted facing left the arrows cross the left hand side of his bow stave.<sup>901</sup> The significance of this in the present context is that it suggests – unsurprisingly – that the embroiderers had little understanding of archery.

It is also the case that the embroiderers show a majority of the Tapestry's sword hilts with disc-shaped pommels, a type unlikely to have been commonplace before the end of the eleventh century.<sup>902</sup> Although this form of pommel also occurs in contemporary illuminations, it seems likely that here the embroiderers intended to depict the 'walnut type' (more common at the time the Tapestry was produced) but – perhaps due to the limitations of the medium – it was misrepresented. Similarly, women in the Tapestry never wear jewellery, though it is evident on the basis of surviving material culture that they did.<sup>903</sup> The explanation would seem to be limitations of the tapestry medium for such small-scale detail.

It was noted above that some of the embroiderers were probably working upside down, and a few errors reflect this.<sup>904</sup> An example is the mailed hood which is shown super-imposed over a conical helmet (Ill.116 – below).<sup>905</sup> Strangely, the nasal

---

<sup>900</sup> Bradbury, *Medieval Archer*, 25.

<sup>901</sup> Examples of depictions of archers firing arrows from the wrong side of the bow stave include Épernay, BM, I and BL, Harley 2826, f.4v, f.5r, f.6v.

<sup>902</sup> This type of pommel is of a late type. See discussion above and Edge and Paddock, *Arms and Armour*, 28.

<sup>903</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 133-4. Good examples of female dress accessories are recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme finds database ([www.find.org.uk](http://www.find.org.uk)).

<sup>904</sup> As noted above.

<sup>905</sup> Figure 432 (Scene 51).

guard is shown, even though the lower part of the helmet is omitted. Such cases illustrate lapses in the embroiderers' concentration.<sup>906</sup> More significantly, the designer did not spot them, which provides further evidence that he was not available (or able) to make corrections at the embroidery stage.



**Illustration 116**

**A mailed hood in the Bayeux Tapestry shown superimposed over a conical helmet.**

#### *Variations in the Motifs Depicted in the Individual Lengths of the Tapestry*

The Tapestry was constructed of (at least) eight pieces of linen of varying lengths.<sup>907</sup> Some features are particular to specific sections and this has suggested to certain commentators that the lengths may have been worked by different teams of embroiderers, perhaps in different workshops.<sup>908</sup> However, this study supports the hypothesis that the variations are best explained by the fact that the design was simplified in its later parts, perhaps to save time, money or both.

---

<sup>906</sup> Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 28, believed that some of these errors and lesser quality embroidery was the work of 'less-skilled hand' or 'assistants'.

<sup>907</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 10; Bertrand, *Tapissierie de Bayeux*, 24.

<sup>908</sup> Levé, *Tapissierie de la reine Mathilde*, 148-9 (cf. Wingfield Digby, 'Technique and Production', 42); Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 43, 61.

The point is illustrated by the moustaches and hairstyles which were initially used to distinguish between the English and Normans. Moustaches are most frequent in Section 1, becoming less so from Section 2. In Scene 25 even Harold is clean shaven! From this point onwards only the occasional figure is moustached.<sup>909</sup> When Normans first occur (in Scene 8) many are shown with the backs of their heads shaven; however by Scene 17, during the Breton campaign, this feature has been discontinued. Although this may be partially explained by the fact that much of Section 3 is in England whilst from Section 6 most Normans wear helmets, so their hair is covered, nevertheless a discrepancy remains.

Likewise, hawks only appear in the early part of the Tapestry, disappearing early in Section 2;<sup>910</sup> ships with a gap in their gunwale amidships only occur in the first two lengths;<sup>911</sup> and cross-garters are prominent in the second section of the Tapestry, but thereafter are mostly shown as horizontal bands. There is also a distinctive change in the Tapestry's form of vegetation from about Scene 35: here the 'cruciform vegetal ornament' typical of the earlier sections of the Tapestry gives way to a 'scrolled' variety. Further evidence is provided by the fact that square or rectangular brooches are confined to the first three sections of the Tapestry:<sup>912</sup> all

---

<sup>909</sup> In Section 3 the only examples are the enthroned Harold and Edward; in Section 4 there are none, which is explained by the fact there are no Englishmen; in Section 5 the only example is an old man at the Norman feast; and in Sections 6 and 7 this feature is associated with just a few of the English at Hastings. The only member of the Norman contingent wearing a moustache is the 'Eustace' figure (Figure 543) which may be significant in determining whether this character is actually Eustace of Boulogne, as usually is considered to be the case.

<sup>910</sup> Between Scenes 2 and 14.

<sup>911</sup> Between Scenes 4 and 24.

<sup>912</sup> From Scene 9 until 33. Brooches are only worn by cloaked figures, which are themselves less prominent in the latter part of the Tapestry.

brooches in the latter part of the Tapestry are round, the explanation being that a circle would have been easier to stitch than a square.<sup>913</sup>

We have already noted that the same range of motifs for depicting armour was used throughout the Tapestry, providing evidence that the same team of embroiderers worked on all its extant lengths. However, whilst at the outset the different armour types are clearly distinguishable, they become intertwined as the narrative continues, suggesting that the work was accelerated as it progressed.



**Illustration 117**

**The scene numbering system depicted on the Tapestry's backing cloth.**

We therefore see two distinct phases in the manufacture of the Tapestry. In phase one (the first two sections) there is a high degree of detail and ornament; this is reduced in phase two. The second phase of the Tapestry begins at Section 3, where square

---

<sup>913</sup> Depicted from Scene 33.

brooches disappear and the ornament in the borders simplified. The division is also reflected in a change of pace in the narrative. The scene numbering system that was added to the backing cloth (in the modern era) functions as an index to this (Ill.117 - above).<sup>914</sup> Most of the individual scenes (phases of actions) occur in the first three sections, accounting for about 60% of its scenes in about 40% of its length.<sup>915</sup> The weight of evidence therefore suggests that the rate of production increased as work progressed, and that all the sections were produced by the same team of embroiderers.

#### *The Artefacts and the Date of the Tapestry*

What light do the depicted artefacts shed on the date of the Tapestry?<sup>916</sup> Although the designer seems to have recreated contemporary garments – most notably ecclesiastical vestments and female costume - these cannot be precisely dated. Most important are its ecclesiastical vestments and female costume. We have seen that episcopal garments best parallel depictions in some late Anglo-Saxon illuminations, but twelfth-century examples of such vestments also survive. Likewise, parallels for the Tapestry's female dress are found in Romanesque illuminations, and therefore these elements were certainly current after the Conquest, but they cannot be dated more specifically: although their long sleeves and flared cuffs become prominent in the twelfth century, some examples are known from the second quarter of the eleventh.

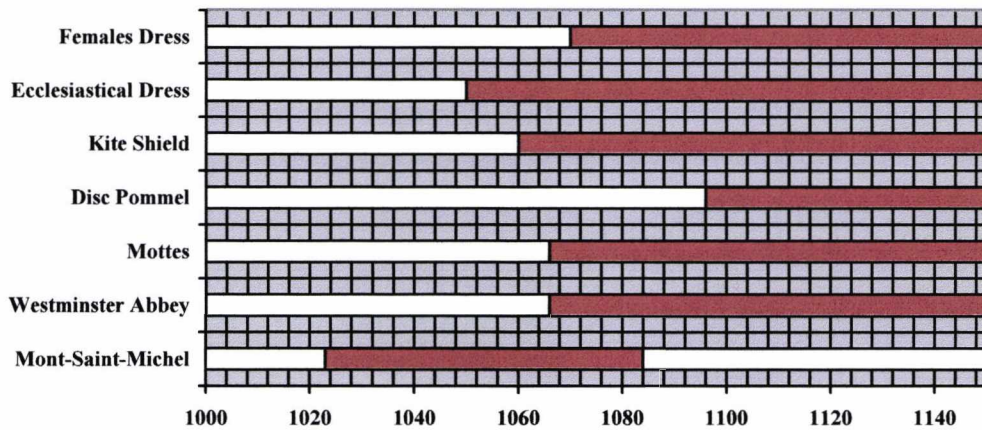
Conical helmets with nasal guards point to a date no earlier than the second half of the eleventh century (on the basis of when they first occur in manuscript illumination). Similarly, the Tapestry's kite-shields are unlikely to have been current

---

<sup>914</sup> The BT was relined in about 1842, and is probably the backing fabric that survives today. The numbers identify the individual scenes (Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 13).

<sup>915</sup> Scenes 1-37.

much before the Norman Conquest,<sup>917</sup> but were still in use until at least the twelfth century.



**Table 1**

**Date of Artefacts in the Bayeux Tapestry**

(coloured block indicates the known life of the artefact as depicted).

More problematic are the ‘disc shaped’ pommels shown on many of the Tapestry’s swords. These, it seems, were introduced into England from Southern Europe during the first two crusades and superficially this would date the Tapestry - on the basis of this artefact - to the late eleventh century at the earliest.<sup>918</sup> However, as we have seen, the disc shaped pommel is unreliable dating evidence for two reasons: first, this type of sword pommel also occurs in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, which undermines the ‘received’ late date for its introduction into England; secondly, it is possible that ‘disc’ shaped pommels are merely irregularly drawn ‘tea-cosy’ or ‘walnut’ pommels - both types that were current in the eleventh century. The Tapestry’s depiction of

<sup>916</sup> Given that we have a firm *terminus post quem* - since the Tapestry depicts the Battle of Hastings - 14<sup>th</sup> October 1066 - hence we are attempting to establish a *terminus ante quem* for the Tapestry.

<sup>917</sup> However, kite-shields appear in some Ottonian illuminations, such as Nürnberg, GNM, 156.142/KG1138, f.78.

<sup>918</sup> Edge and Paddock, *Arms and Armour*, 28.

Mont-Saint-Michel further demonstrates the limited value of its ‘artefacts’ for precisely dating its production. The seven bays of the late eleventh-century nave, which we know were not finished by 1085, are not shown in the Tapestry.<sup>919</sup> However, neither is there any indication of the earlier Carolingian church, which was removed to construct the new nave. The depiction of a Romanesque Westminster Abbey is more specific – the abbey was one of a few buildings constructed in the style in England before about 1070 – but of course this only confirms the *terminus post quem* that we know from the historical events depicted.<sup>920</sup> Likewise the Tapestry’s mottled fortifications suggest a post-Conquest date, but not one that has a rigid chronology. In brief, whilst the exact dates of many of the Tapestry’s ‘real-life’ elements are difficult to establish in detail, their general chronological ties in (if somewhat broadly) with the traditional dating of the work outlined in the introduction.<sup>921</sup>

### **Symbolism and Iconography of Attribute**

The designer makes good use of symbolism and iconography to highlight particular individuals and important phases in the narrative. Besides using conventional motifs he innovates, employing new artefact types, to ensure the narrative flows and is understood.

#### *National Affiliation*

The designer uses specific attributes to distinguish between the Normans and English. Moustaches are used to denote Englishmen, though these are less in evidence after the

---

<sup>919</sup> Baylé and Bovet *et al.*, *Mont-Saint-Michel*, 112.

<sup>920</sup> Gem, ‘Westminster Abbey’.

Breton campaign.<sup>922</sup> Axes, excluding woodworking tools, are typically used by the English and this confirms our understanding of Anglo-Saxon warfare; only Guy is otherwise shown holding an axe (Ill.118 – below).<sup>923</sup> Similarly, round-shields are used to identify the English, especially in confused battle scenes.<sup>924</sup>



**Illustration 118**

**Guy shown holding an axe.**

Normans are sometimes identified by their shaven hair-style. It is not known whether this was a contemporary fashion, though this feature seems to be unique to the Tapestry.<sup>925</sup> The designer also identified archery with Norman warfare, perhaps on the

---

<sup>921</sup> See the introduction; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 203-12; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 157-81.

<sup>922</sup> Scene 16-21. See discussion above.

<sup>923</sup> Figure 91.

<sup>924</sup> Figures 488, 497-8, 504, 510, 572-3, 599-600 and 603. It is interesting that they only occur during the Hastings campaign, where they are used to distinguish between the opposing armies.

<sup>925</sup> Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 208, noted that 'it is not without interest that there is a remarkable consonance between the bare-necked Normans of the Tapestry and a condemnatory description of Danish shaven necks in a late Old English letter' (Oxford, BodL, Hatton 115).



basis of his understanding of the role of archery at Hastings.<sup>926</sup> The Tapestry also closely associates the horse with the Normans: apart from Harold, Englishmen only ride horses in England. As with archery, it is likely that the designer understood that horses played a fundamental part in William's success at Hastings.

Although other artefacts in the Tapestry have been interpreted as symbols of national identity, their association with either the English or Normans is coincidental. For example, Owen-Crocker noted that the Normans display variation in their leg bands, which might distinguish them from the Anglo-Saxons.<sup>927</sup> We have seen that cross-garters are prominent in the second section of the Tapestry, but thereafter are mostly shown as horizontal bands. A likely explanation of this is that embroidering cross-garters took too long and hence was abandoned after the first phase, which of course recounts events in Normandy: it is thus coincidental that more Normans than English wear this type of leg band.<sup>928</sup> Culottes have also been identified with the Normans, and it is certainly the case that it is predominately they who wear them. Nonetheless, some figures who have moustaches (such as Figure 527) – and therefore are English – also wear culottes.<sup>929</sup> Hence it seems unlikely that this attribute was intentionally used to differentiate between 'nationalities'. Indeed, it is a general feature of the Tapestry that there is no obvious national distinction in the clothes worn, though such may have existed in real-life.<sup>930</sup> Further, it is coincidental that all

---

<sup>926</sup> Archers only appear at Hastings; all but one of them (Figure 462) are Norman.

<sup>927</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 167; Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 219.

<sup>928</sup> E.g., Harold (Figure 187) and William (Figure 183) wear the same type of leg bands.

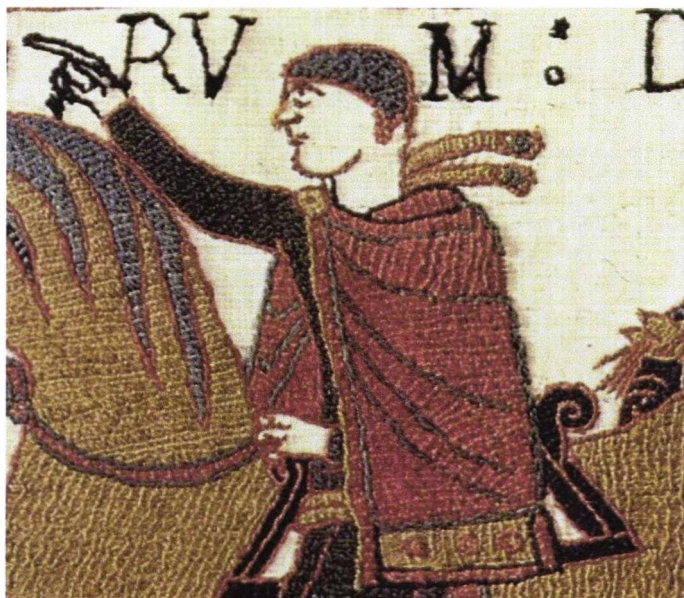
<sup>929</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 164, incorrectly thought these were only worn by the Normans in the BT.

<sup>930</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV, ii, 215, ed. Chibnall, 256-7, observed that after the initial disruption of the Conquest 'you could see many villages or town markets filled with displays of French wares and merchandise, and observe the English, who had previously seemed contemptible to the French in their native dress (*et ubique Anglos qui pridem amictu patrio compti Francis uidebantur turpes*) completely transformed by foreign fashions'. See also Bates, *William*, 157.

but one English ship is shown with a gap-amidships. This feature occurs in the earlier parts of the Tapestry, and is discarded in the simpler later parts (as discussed above).

### *Status*

Some artefacts indicate status, highlighting important figures.<sup>931</sup> Clothing is a prime example: only the elite wear gowns or cloaks, which – to some extent - may have reflected real-life. These garments are sometimes worn by those surrounding the focal figure, magnifying the importance of the latter. Likewise, jewellery is rare in the Tapestry. Brooches, for example, are only worn by cloaked figures and further indicate their status.<sup>932</sup>



**Illustration 119**

**William shown with tassels hanging from his cloak.**

---

<sup>931</sup> McNulty, *Narrative Art*, 52, also believed that the designer indicates status by showing important characters overlapping those of lesser status. For example in Scene 8, William's horse (A558) overlaps that of his retinue including Earl Harold.

<sup>932</sup> Brooches, may be round, square or rectangular, of which the quadrangle types seem to be reserved for the highest echelons; e.g. Guy (Figure 85), William (Figure 106), Edward (Figure 207) and Harold (Figure 239).

On many occasions William is shown with tassels hanging from his clothes (Ill.119 – above).<sup>933</sup> These help identify the primacy of his status, especially in scenes where he is depicted alongside other high-status characters or where he would otherwise be difficult to recognise. The clothing of other members of the highest echelons is also embellished with embroidery. For example, Edward is once shown with vamp stripes on his shoes, and has quatrefoil motifs on his gown.<sup>934</sup> Likewise William once wears a gown with embroidered bands just below the knees.<sup>935</sup> Distinctive armour is used for the same end: a scaled type of mail (type a) is only worn by Guy, and a triangular patchwork mailed coat (type b) only by William and Odo.<sup>936</sup>

The designer also uses animals, notably hawks and dogs, to highlight status. Hawks are mostly held by - or on behalf of – Harold, but are also associated with Guy and William.<sup>937</sup> It is revealing that once Guy hands over Harold to William only the duke is shown with a hawk - at the very moment when Harold's grasp on power begins to slip away he loses this emblem of status.<sup>938</sup> Hunting-dogs are also primarily associated with Harold, highlighting his status.<sup>939</sup> Likewise, when horses are ridden by Englishman they indicate the status of their rider: Harold is the main character distinguished in this manner.<sup>940</sup>

---

<sup>933</sup> This feature is first shown tied to the feet of hawks (e.g. A559 and A561). Thereafter William has tassels hanging from his knees (Figure 106), braided cloak (Figure 118) and helmet (Figure 179 and Figure 404).

<sup>934</sup> Edward (Figure 3).

<sup>935</sup> William (Figure 85).

<sup>936</sup> Guy (Figure 91), William (Figure 143) and Odo (Figure 534).

<sup>937</sup> Haskins, 'Harold's Books', 399; Gameson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 197.

<sup>938</sup> Hicks, 'Borders', 263, thought that Harold was taking this bird of prey as a gift for William.

<sup>939</sup> See Scene 2 and 14.

<sup>940</sup> E.g. in Scenes 2, 24 and 50.

Some artefacts, whilst symbols of national affiliation also have additional iconographic significance. The designer uses axes, for example, to denote persons of rank up to Scene 19, and thereafter to identify Anglo-Saxons in the *mêlée* of battle; interestingly, the axe does not necessarily need to be held by the high-status character but can be wielded by a companion nearby (Ill.120 – below).<sup>941</sup> Similarly, round-shields are often held by companions of the English elite who are dead or dying.<sup>942</sup>



**Illustration 120**

**Axes held by Harold and one of his companions.**

<sup>941</sup> E.g. Figure 90 (Guy), Figure 205 who accompanies Figure 206 (Harold), Figure 208 who stands behind Figure 207 (Edward), Figure 238 who holds an axe towards Figure 239 (Harold). Axes are also held by Figure 287 and associated with English positions during battle.

<sup>942</sup> 1-2) Figures 497-8 who stand before the mortally wounded Leofwine. 3) In the lower border of Scene 52 below '*regis*' in 'hIC CECIDERVNT LEVVINE ET GYRÐ FRATRES HAROLDI REGIS'. 4-5) Figure 573 and in the lower border of Scene 56, below '*cecidervnt*' in 'ET CECIDERVNT QVI ERANT CVM HAROLDO'. 6-8) Figures 599-600 who stand before the mortally wounded Harold, and in the lower border of Scene 57 between 'hIC HAROLD REX INTERFECTVS' and 'EST ET FVGA VETERVNT ANGLI'.

## *Symbolism and Narrative*

The evidence suggests that it was not necessary for the artefacts that were used by the designer to highlight national affiliation or status actually to reflect real-life. Their primary purpose was to ensure that the narrative flowed and could be clearly understood. Verisimilitude could be incidental to this function, indeed in certain circumstances it could impede it, while exaggeration might facilitate it.

For example, although it is impossible to be sure whether Englishmen generally wore moustaches or that most Normans shaved the back of their heads,<sup>943</sup> we might have some confidence that this feature reflected real-life – otherwise it would have been nonsensical to the contemporary viewer. At the same time, however, we should expect such characterisations to be exaggerations and generalisations in the service of visual clarity. Likewise, whilst we have seen that the designer associates weapons with either the English or Normans on the basis of his understanding of how the opposing armies fought at Hastings, these attributes may have been overstated for visual lucidity. Indeed, we might imagine that round-shields – which in the Tapestry are only associated with the English – were also used by some Normans.

The most realistic of the Tapestry's devices for indicating status is clothing. The gowns that distinguish men of high status perhaps reflect garments worn at the time.<sup>944</sup> It is less likely, however, that cloaks and brooches would have been worn only by the elite.<sup>945</sup> We know that high-status figures would have worn expensive jewellery made of gold and silver, perhaps also embellished with semi-precious and precious stones. The less well-off would have worn base-metal replicas: made of

---

<sup>943</sup> Nevinson, 'Costumes', 74, was convinced these were 'a realistic feature of the Tapestry', but did not support this with evidence.

<sup>944</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 153-4, 155.

<sup>945</sup> Owen-Crocker, *Dress*, 150.

copper-alloy or pewter, these would have recreated the appearance of gold or silver (Ill.121 - below).<sup>946</sup> Such distinctions would have been difficult to show in embroidery,<sup>947</sup> and hence the designer seems to have chosen to indicate status by showing the elite wearing cloaks with brooches, and the lower echelons without them.



**Illustration 121**

**A copper-alloy brooch with Borre-style decoration from Hemingstone, Suffolk.**

Embellishment of clothing, with vamp stripes and embroidery, reflects real-life attributes affordable to the elite, though the less well-off may have copied high-status fashion in lesser quality materials.<sup>948</sup> As with jewellery, distinguishing fabric quality would have been difficult in two-dimensional art. Perhaps more significant is the fact that embellished clothes would have signalled their quality to the contemporary, and this was used by the designer to highlight particular characters. The designer has used scaled and triangular types of armour in a similar manner.

---

<sup>946</sup> There is particularly good evidence of this in s. x York (Hall, *Viking Age York*, 96).

<sup>947</sup> However, embroidery could be enriched with pearls, other precious or semi-precious stones, gold or silver ornaments, enamelled plaques or glass beads or discs (Staniland, *Embroiderers*, 46-8). But this is not the case in the BT.

<sup>948</sup> It is not known whether the clothes of the elite would have tassels or not – and hence whether this convention to highlight status was precisely that.

*Symbolism in the Tapestry and Contemporary Art*

Can the way in which artefacts are used in the Tapestry to highlight nationality and status be paralleled in contemporary art? Unlike the Tapestry, most surviving works of art recreate well-defined biblical or spiritual events, whose characters often act within established iconographies and outside human time. Therefore, whilst the Tapestry designer has used contemporary - or at least non-archaic attributes - to indicate the nationality or status of his contemporary figures, such would hardly be expected in much eleventh-century art.



**Illustration 122**

**Psalm 16 in the Harley 603 Psalter,  
where opposing armies are both armed with round-shields.**

It is rare elsewhere to find artefacts used to denote national affiliation. The depiction of Normans with shaven hair seems to be unique to the Tapestry: significantly, this feature does not seem to occur in illuminations - even those from Normandy. Similarly, in Anglo-Saxon illumination only bearded figures have moustaches,<sup>949</sup> and there is no evidence to suggest they have been used to distinguish nationality. This confirms the fact that the designer exaggerates the currency of moustaches for the

<sup>949</sup> BL, Cotton Cleopatra C. viii, f.9v, f.12v; BodL, Junius 11, p.44, p.54, p.58.

purposes of his narrative. Likewise, although the Tapestry designer associates particular types of weapons with national identity, this does not seem to occur elsewhere in contemporary art. Whilst in the Tapestry axes and round-shields are largely reserved for Anglo-Saxons, in pre-Conquest illuminations they are used by people on both sides of a conflict. Thus, in Harley 603 the opposing armies of Psalm 16 both carry the same type of round-shield (Ill.122 - above);<sup>950</sup> while, in Psalm 53 the psalmist carries a kite-shield, as do his enemies in Psalm 54.<sup>951</sup> Similarly, in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 23, two figures with round-shields fight one another.<sup>952</sup>



**Illustration 123**

**Christ in classical robes greets the people of Jerusalem who wear eleventh-century style tunics in the Tiberius Psalter.**

---

<sup>950</sup> BL, Harley 603, f.8v.

<sup>951</sup> F.29v, f.30r.

<sup>952</sup> CCCC, 23, f.18r.



Although contemporary artists – in contrast to the Tapestry designer - do not seem to use artefacts to indicate nationality, the reverse is true in regard to status. Thus a robed Moses stands before Israelites in tunics in the Old English Hexateuch,<sup>953</sup> and a robed Christ greets the people of Jerusalem who wear tunics in the Tiberius Psalter (Ill.123 – above).<sup>954</sup> Similarly, the cloak, together with its brooch fastener, is used to identify the elite. The ancestors of Christ in the Boulogne Gospels, for example, are shown wearing cloaks and brooches.<sup>955</sup> Likewise in Junius 11 Abraham is shown cloaked, while Tubal-Cain is not.<sup>956</sup> Tassels of the sort seen on William’s clothes in the Bayeux Tapestry, which highlight his status, also occur in Carolingian and Ottonian art. They are, for example, associated with the Emperor Lothar in his Gospels (Ill.124 – below).<sup>957</sup>



**Illustration 124**

**Tassels embellish the cloak of the Emperor Lothar in the Lothar Gospels.**

---

<sup>953</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.139v.

<sup>954</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.11.

<sup>955</sup> Boulogne, BM, 11, f.11r – v.

<sup>956</sup> BodL, Junius 11, p.54.

<sup>957</sup> BNF, lat. 266, f.1v.

This said, in some Ottonian illustrations they are worn by lesser mortals, such as the Romans in the Codex Egberti,<sup>958</sup> and an inhabitant of Jericho in a Pericopes Book of Reichenau.<sup>959</sup> Tassels are less common in Anglo-Saxon illuminations, but are clearly used as a symbol of status: an example is the tasselled cloak of King Cnut in the New Minster Liber Vitae.<sup>960</sup> Further, it is common elsewhere in contemporary art, as in the Tapestry, that the elite wear ornate garments, embellished with embroidery and jewellery.<sup>961</sup>

In other respects, the designer shows greater innovation in using artefacts to highlight status than contemporary artists. Patterned armour like that of William, Odo and Guy, for example, is seemingly not used for this purpose in Anglo-Saxon illuminations,<sup>962</sup> nor do, hawks and dogs tend to be symbols of status. These differences are explained by the dominance of biblical and hagiographical subject matter in early medieval art, where such creatures have different – or little – iconographic meaning.

### *Uniqueness and Naturalism*

The uniqueness of the Tapestry and the fact that it is a new picture cycle narrating a recent historical event impresses its ‘naturalism’ upon the modern viewer – to a greater extent than any other example of eleventh-century art. Yet, the break with

---

<sup>958</sup> Trier, SB, 24, f.22.

<sup>959</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm. 4454, f.119.

<sup>960</sup> BL, Stowe 944, f.6.

<sup>961</sup> E.g., the ornate clothes of King Edgar in BL, Cotton Tiberius A. iii, f.2v, the embroidered robes of Aldhelm in London, LP, 200, f.68v and St Benedict in BL, Arundel 155, f.133.

<sup>962</sup> An example of patterned armour in Anglo-Saxon art appears in BodL, Douce 296, f.40v, though here the armour is not used to highlight status. A Romanesque parallel might be Boethius in CUL, li. 3. 12, f.61v who wears a gown, patterned in scales, similar to the decorated armour of Guy in the Tapestry.

established conventions is actually much less than is generally assumed. Significantly, however, the designer does expand traditional methods of pictorial narrative.

The designer takes time to illustrate the progression from one scene to the next, whereas in most eleventh-century art this is merely implied. In Junius 11 and the Old English Hexateuch, for example, the act of shipbuilding is largely implicit, in the Tapestry the process is shown in more detail.<sup>963</sup> Hence, the Tapestry gives the impression that its designer was *au fait* with every detail depicted. This encourages exaggerated confidence in the accuracy of these illustrations.

Also the fact that the Tapestry's visual narrative continues at one level – rather like a modern day cartoon - and is, in the most part, chronological makes it seem naturalistic (especially to the twenty-first century mindset). In contemporary art – even in contemporary narrative art - this is less common.

Of further interest are the Tapestry's incidental details of everyday life, which give the impression that the designer observed such elements first hand – which is unlikely actually to have been the case. For example, in Scene 45 two men are shown fighting or play-fighting with spades.<sup>964</sup> Likewise, in Scene 53 a soldier unseats a knight by unfastening the girth of his saddle.<sup>965</sup> Further, in Scene 25/6 one of the Tapestry's characters places the weather vane on top of Westminster Abbey.<sup>966</sup> Although such 'banter' is typical of Anglo-Saxon art, especially manuscript initials,<sup>967</sup>

---

<sup>963</sup> Scenes 35-6 in the BT. In BodL, Junius 11 Noah, is shown building the Ark on p.65, but by p.66 it is complete with animals aboard. BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, f.13v shows the Ark being built, but it is complete thereafter (see Pächt, *Pictorial Narrative*, 5-11). Dodwell and Clemoes, *Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 65, disagreed that progression from one scene to the next is merely implied in BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv, believing that its scenes 'follow each other in a natural and continuous time sequence, as in the Bayeux Tapestry'.

<sup>964</sup> Figures 390-1.

<sup>965</sup> Figure 518.

<sup>966</sup> Figure 209.

<sup>967</sup> E.g. an armed figure menacingly grabs another by his leg in BodL, Tanner 10, f.115v.

the Tapestry seems to have a naturalistic edge since these details are used to embellish a contemporary event.



**Illustration 125**

**Parallels between Cain enthroned in Junius 11 (left) and Edward the Confessor (middle) and William (right) in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

### *Identity and Emphasis*

The designer is expert at using attributes to highlight significant characters, some of whom are identified by the use of established iconography. For example, Edward, Guy, Harold, Odo, Robert and William are all shown enthroned, indicating their importance.<sup>968</sup> This convention is commonplace in contemporary art: examples include David in the Tiberius Psalter and Cain enthroned in Junius 11 (Ill.125 – above).<sup>969</sup> Likewise, as we have seen, Odo in the feast scene (Scene 43) is shown at the centre of a semi-circular table, paralleling the representation of Christ at the Last Supper in the sixth-century Italian St Augustine's Gospels.<sup>970</sup> Similarly many of the

<sup>968</sup> Edward - Scene 1, Guy - Scene 9, Harold - Scene 30 and William, Odo and Robert - Scene 44.

<sup>969</sup> BL, Cotton Tiberius C. vi, f.30r; BodL, Junius 11, p.57.

<sup>970</sup> CCCC, 286, f.125r; demonstrably at St Augustine's, Canterbury by s. x (Budny, *Manuscript Art*, 3-13, pl. 1).

Tapestry's important characters are shown larger than their companions.<sup>971</sup> Comparisons in contemporary art are common, and include King Edgar in the New Minster Charter and Enoch in Junius 11.<sup>972</sup> Likewise the small size of the character traditionally believed to be Turolde (Figure 95) serves to highlight him;<sup>973</sup> parallels for identifying a character in this particular way (perhaps ironically) have not been found in contemporary art.

It is also apparent that while some of the Tapestry's artefacts are not indicative of status in their own right, the designer has innovatively used them to draw attention to important characters. For example, although - as we have already seen - round-shields are used to identify the English, particularly during the *mêlée* of battle at Hastings, they also help to highlight the death of significant characters.<sup>974</sup> Specifically, it is the isolation of particular artefacts in the Tapestry that makes them significant. For example, a cloak worn by a high-status character amongst other cloaked figures, such as Harold and his entourage in Scene 2, is not a distinguishing attribute.<sup>975</sup> In contrast a cloaked character shown in isolation - such as Harold in Scene 8 - stands out. Where an artefact alone does not necessarily indicate status, the designer employs other attributes to highlight his most important characters. For example, in Scene 2 where the cloak does not distinguish Harold from his

---

<sup>971</sup> E.g. Edward in Scene 1 and 25, and William in Scene 44.

<sup>972</sup> BL, Cotton Vespasian A. viii, f.2v; BodL, Junius 11, p.58.

<sup>973</sup> Figure 95. John Blair (*viva*, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004) suggested 'that Turolde is not the dwarf-man, but the full-size figure standing immediately to his left' (Figure 94). Others, such as Gibbs-Smith, 'Notes', 165, have agreed with this. However, some, such as Wilson, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 176 thought that Figure 95 is Turolde, arguing that the identifying label seems too far away from the chief messenger (Figure 94) to be a convincing designation. I support Wilson's view.

<sup>974</sup> E.g. Gyrrh (Figures 497-8) - and the dead in the borders either side of him (Figure 488 and 504/510), Figure 573 and Figure 572 dead in the border below, Anglo-Saxons in a shield wall (Figures 599 and 600) and dead in the border below (Figure 603) in the scene (Scene 57) where Harold is killed.

<sup>975</sup> Here we may assume that the cloak implies Harold was accompanied by the elite, but the cloak itself does not indicate the importance of any one particular character.

companions, the Earl is also shown holding a hawk, accompanied by dogs and wears spurs.

We also see that the designer contrives scenes to emphasise important people. For example in the aforementioned Scene 2, where Harold is shown on horseback leading a hunting party, the designer has used specific features to distinguish the Earl from his companions (Ill.126 – below). Now in terms of the main narrative, this scene is of little significance. Hence, it seems that the designer has conceived this scene specifically for the purpose of introducing Harold to the viewer and highlighting the fact that he is a character of status and importance. It is hardly coincidence that his name appears for the first time in the accompanying inscription.<sup>976</sup>



**Illustration 126**

**Harold shown leading a hunting past in the Bayeux Tapestry.**

Similarly the feast scene (Scene 43) showing Bishop Odo blessing the food and drink is designed to emphasise his importance within the narrative. By using established iconography to liken Odo to Christ, it emphasises his spiritual role in the Norman Conquest of England.

---

<sup>976</sup> hAROLD DVX: ANGLORVM

## History, Art and the Bayeux Tapestry

The primary aim of this investigation has been to provide the first truly authoritative and reasoned evaluation of the extent to which the Bayeux Tapestry informs us of the real world of the eleventh century. Whilst the Tapestry is a depiction of a ‘real’ sequence of events, we have seen that its artefacts were influenced more by artistic convention than by the contemporary scene. This said, some artefacts are illustrated with a greater degree of accuracy than others, and this mix - between borrowed and ‘real life’ elements - offers an important opportunity to learn more about the world of the designer and how the Tapestry was produced.

We know that the designer was a highly skilled artist – probably an illuminator - familiar with Canterbury manuscripts, though perhaps (previously) inexperienced in embroidery work.<sup>977</sup> We do not know if he was an ecclesiastic or a layman, though he was certainly knowledgeable of the clergy and the highest social echelons. Although the designer must have discussed the commission with the patron, who may have helped formulate the narrative and in all probability approved a basic design, it seems unlikely Odo commented on detail, which was presumably therefore left in the hands of the designer. How far the designer supervised the embroiderers is a moot point: mistakes in the Tapestry actually suggest that he may not have been present at this stage. Such errors are also revealing of the work of the embroiderers, bearing witness to the fact that they were left much to their own devices (or at least select from a number of designs) for parts of the Tapestry – such as its border motifs. We have seen that the Tapestry’s artefacts indicate that the work was embroidered in

---

<sup>977</sup> This was suggested by Messent, *Bayeux Tapestry*, 23 - an expert in embroidery – who (upon studying the Tapestry surface) believed that ‘the designer had had no experience of wool-embroidery or the translation of line-drawings to fabric’. Further research on this would seem worthwhile.

a single workshop - its design being simplified as work progressed, perhaps to save time.

Our investigation has also demonstrated that the primary role of the artefacts in the Tapestry was to ensure that the narrative flowed and could be clearly understood. Some artefacts had an important political impact, and it is generally the case that these are illustrated with the highest degree of accuracy. Further, the designer uses artefacts to highlight the nationality and status of particular characters important to his story. As we have seen, this is less common in contemporary art and indicates that the designer could break from artistic traditions in order to fulfil the requirements of his commission.

From the standpoint of our improved understanding of the art and artefacts of the Bayeux Tapestry we can re-evaluate the work and conclusions of commentators who have used it as a witness for eleventh-century material culture. In brief, our work suggests scholars should be more cautious when approaching the Tapestry in this way, since its relationship to contemporary reality was complicated and generally indirect. More may yet be done than has been possible in the present work – given the limitations of time and space to which it was subject - to understand the artistic lineage of the artefacts depicted in the Tapestry. It would be a useful exercise to examine artefact types depicted in art and systematically document how they alter through time; based on the work already done for this study, it seems unlikely that such a chronology would parallel that of the ‘real life’ artefacts.

The methodology used here might usefully be applied to other art works. The Old English Hexateuch, which has been used for comparative purposes in the course of this study, is a case in point.<sup>978</sup> The style and origins of its many illustrations have

---

<sup>978</sup> BL, Cotton Claudius B. iv.



been widely discussed,<sup>979</sup> however little account has been taken of the evidence of its rich fund of artefacts and implements. Yet for the vexed question of the extent of the artist's debt to earlier, in particular late antique, sources they offer a vital witness and would clearly repay careful investigation.<sup>980</sup>

Likewise, even one of the most famous of Carolingian illuminated manuscripts – the Utrecht Psalter – would benefit from examination in this way.<sup>981</sup> The artwork is generally believed to reflect a late antique exemplar,<sup>982</sup> however the reality must be more complicated. This study has pointed to the interesting case of a ship which seems to be of a broadly contemporary type (that is to say dating from the first half of the ninth century), rather than of antique form.<sup>983</sup> Further study of the artefacts depicted in the Utrecht Psalter thus have the potential to tell us more about the lineage and creative processes behind this much debated work.

Our investigation also has implications for the study of archaeological finds. Whilst scholars should be very cautious when interpreting artefacts depicted in art, representations can nevertheless be an indispensable tool for artefact typology and dating – if used with care. Stirrup strap mounts (which were placed at the junction of stirrup and stirrup leathers) are a case in point. Few are known from securely dated archaeological contexts, and hence they have been ascribed to the eleventh century mostly on general stylistic grounds, allied to assumptions about the use of the horse in

---

<sup>979</sup> E.g. Dodwell and Clemons, *Old English Illustrated Hexateuch*, 58-73.

<sup>980</sup> The present author is preparing such a study for the proposed digital facsimile of the manuscript, ed. Ben Withers.

<sup>981</sup> Utrecht, BR, 32.

<sup>982</sup> See van der Horst, 'Psalms', 73-81.

<sup>983</sup> Utrecht, BR, 32, f.59v, is broadly of a contemporary type, whereas that in BNF, lat. 1, f.3v – a manuscript of similar date – appears as a Roman galley (Kessler, *Bibles from Tours*, 84, Ill. 130).

the Anglo-Saxon period.<sup>984</sup> However, the range of styles found on these objects and the fact that stirrups are depicted in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts before the eleventh century provides reason to question – and expand - their traditional dating.<sup>985</sup>

Using visual evidence to interpret contemporary artefact types is a complicated task, requiring painstaking work which ranges across the territory of archaeologists, historians and art historians. Our investigation demonstrates that it is imperative to analyse the evidence on an artefact by artefact basis, against a broad background of visual tradition and archaeological witnesses since artists responded to and used ‘real life’ and art based motifs to different extents and in varied combinations according to circumstances; and what might apply to one scene or artefact need not to the next. Nevertheless, the rewards for such work are considerable. As the present study has shown, it offers the possibility for real advances in factual knowledge, which in turn can shed new light on long-debated questions, with important implications for archaeologists, historians and art historians alike.



---

<sup>984</sup> Williams, *Stirrup Strap Mounts*, 8.

<sup>985</sup> E.g. CCCC, 23, f.2.