The Tenth-Century Hogback Stones of Northern England in their Political and Social Context

Catherine Yates
## Contents

Introduction  
1  

i) What is a Hogback Stone?  
1  

ii) The Origins of Hogbacks  
6  

iii) Study of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture  
8  

1: Hogbacks and the Landscape of Northern England  
11  

i) Hogbacks and the topography of northern England  
11  

ii) Hogbacks and the evidence of place-names  
16  

2: Hogbacks within the Culture of Northern England  
23  

i) Typological groupings of hogbacks  
23  

ii) The form of the hogback  
26  

3: Hogbacks and the Political Landscape of Northern England  
32  

i) Hogbacks and Domesday Book  
32  

ii) The Political Context of the Hogbacks  
42  

Conclusion  
51  

Bibliography  
57
Introduction

i) What is a Hogback Stone?

Hogback stones are recumbent monuments which generally adhere to a building-shaped form with a humped ridgeline. They are widely believed to date to a very short period, being created mainly between c.920 and c.950. This dating rests on the assumption that the hogback was a form patronised by Hiberno-Norse invaders and so corresponds to the period when they are believed to have dominated southern Northumbria. A tenth-century date has been generally accepted due to the ornament on hogbacks, largely influenced by the Borre and Jellinge styles which appeared in Scandinavia in the late ninth and early tenth centuries.¹ Hogbacks are highly unusual monuments found only in the British Isles with the main concentration being in northern and eastern Yorkshire and the Cumbrian coastal plain; though one hogback has been identified in Ireland, two in Wales and four in the Midlands with another possible example in Cornwall. In Scotland there are a further twenty-one hogback sites, though these will not be examined in this dissertation as they are best seen in a different context to the hogbacks of southern Britain, being distinct in style and generally located far from the southern British examples (see Map 2).² In northern England and the Midlands hogbacks have been identified at fifty-one sites, though there is some dispute over whether or not certain monuments are better seen as recumbent monuments of a different type. In order to

avoid confusion this dissertation will focus on the hogbacks identified as such in the relevant volumes of the *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture*, with lost stones lacking photographic evidence omitted.³ The exception to this is the recumbent monument classified

---

³ Based on the map in in Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 86.
as a hogback by Everson and Stocker at Cranwell, Lincolnshire, which the author believes is best seen as a recumbent grave-cover. The lack of a Corpus volume for the West Midlands means that Lang’s 1984 catalogue is used to identify the four hogbacks of this region. The hogback sites discussed in this dissertation are shown in Map 1.

The ornament of hogbacks varies widely with some featuring large, three-dimensional end-beasts, often in the shape of bears, as at Brompton and Sockburn, and others entirely lacking such carvings, or else having only animal masks at their gable ends. Some hogbacks feature complex figural scenes, often identified as depictions of Scandinavian mythology, such as at Heysham (Image 2), Lowther and Gosforth, while others are relatively plan, having only

---


interlace decoration or tegulae (roof shingles) or else lacking any decorative embellishment. Only in three cases have hogbacks in northern England been found to have any overtly Christian motifs and two of these appear have been the result of later re-cutting. The lack of overt Christian iconography has led many to see hogbacks as perhaps being secular or pagan monuments, though the fact that many have been found alongside stone crosses of similar styles implies such an assumption is far from certain. Richard Bailey has suggested that in some instances hogbacks were created as part of larger monuments with small crosses acting as head and foot stones for a recumbent funerary monument. This ambiguity in their potential meaning makes hogbacks extremely unusual amongst Anglo-Saxon stone sculptures, most of which are overtly Christian.

Hogbacks are rarely found in their original context which again presents problems in their interpretation. The vast majority of hogbacks were discovered in the early nineteenth century during renovations to Norman churches, many being found in the foundations of these buildings, lending support to their tenth-century dating. In some cases stones can still be found built into the walls of Norman churches, suggesting that the purpose of

---


hogbacks had become redundant by the late eleventh century. While hogbacks are generally believed to have been intended as funerary monuments, their proportions suggesting that they were grave-covers, only one stone has been reportedly found associated with a grave. This is the Heysham hogback, which was uncovered near to the ruined church of St Patrick in the early nineteenth century, but the fact that the stone was found by builders and its excavation not properly reported means that its association with a grave cannot be confirmed. Nevertheless, the majority of commentators have assumed that hogbacks are funerary monuments, and recently Victoria Whitworth has pointed to the tapering plan and asymmetry of many hogbacks as an indicator of their purpose as grave-covers. However, in many instances this tapering and asymmetry is not particularly apparent and it would be best to avoid any claims to certainty until firmer evidence is uncovered.

The fact that hogbacks are often built into later stone churches raises the question of where they were originally located; whether they lay within the vicinity of the church or were brought in as building material from further afield. In the majority of cases the fact that only one hogback has been recovered would suggest that it is perhaps unlikely to have been brought in from any great distance in constructing the church. The difficulty of overland transport in the medieval period may likewise have meant that hogbacks were unlikely to have been moved over large distances. Furthermore, the fact that some hogbacks, such as that at Heysham, have been found near churches, rather than built into them, also suggests that they may have been originally located near what later became a stone church. Thus, it seems that hogbacks can be accepted as having come from the vicinity of the churches into which they were eventually built.

11 Kirkdale an example of this: Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 144.
12 Ewing, ‘Heysham Hogback’, p. 3.
14 Whitworth’s studies are largely based on the Scottish hogbacks, where this trait for a tapering form and asymmetry is generally more marked.
15 Ewing, ‘Heysham Hogback’, p. 3.
ii) The Origins of Hogbacks

Study of hogbacks in the past has tended to focus on their typology and debate has centred on their potential origins and influences. In the early twentieth century W.G. Collingwood first began the study of hogbacks in his pioneering work on Anglo-Saxon sculpture in northern England. He suggested that hogbacks were intended as ‘houses of the dead’ and that they were a direct and natural development of Anglian shrine tombs by Scandinavian settlers.16 For this reason Collingwood dated some of the hogbacks which bore the most similarity to Anglian shrine tombs to the late ninth century, a date which has since been disputed due to the current trend to link hogbacks with the Hiberno-Norse.17 This proposed relationship is due to the correlation between hogback sites and Hiberno-Norse place-names and the fact that hogbacks have not been found in parts of England where the Hiberno-Norse are not known to have settled.18 The link between hogbacks and the Scandinavian invasion of northern England is also a major feature of the literature, justified by their distribution, form (curved ridgelines, a feature of contemporary Scandinavian buildings) and use of Jellinge and Borre style decoration.19 This connection has faced little contention, despite being based on relatively shaky grounds. However, Whitworth has recently suggested that hogbacks were first created in eastern Scotland, in a Christian milieu, before spreading further south through western Scotland, Cumbria and Yorkshire due to trade, removing the importance of the Hiberno-Norse connection.20 Such an argument reveals the problems of this dominant view and hints at the possibility for the creation of new interpretations of hogbacks which a blind acceptance of the Hiberno-Norse link may have hindered in the past.

18 Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 87; Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, p. 92.
19 See n.1.
20 Whitworth, ‘Bears, Beasts and Relatives’.
Current scholarship accepts that hogbacks fit into the wider trend of house-shaped monuments seen across Europe, such as Hedda’s Tomb, Peterborough, stone sarcophagi, and perhaps also reliquary casks which also have a building-shaped form.\(^{21}\) The hogback should not, however, be seen as a direct copy of the Anglian shrine tomb as hogbacks have a distinctly curved ridgeline and often a bombé-shaped plan. Furthermore, no stone shrine tombs have been found in the area of hogback distribution, suggesting a lack of direct influence.\(^{22}\) Owing to their building-shaped form and association with Scandinavians, hogbacks have sometimes been used in attempts to reconstruct early medieval Scandinavian halls, though few now accept that they were literal representations of contemporary buildings.\(^{23}\) The significance of the house shape of hogbacks has not been widely studied, with commentators, such as Lang, downplaying the importance of the form of the hogback in understanding the monument’s significance.\(^{24}\) Lang ultimately concludes that hogbacks are ‘provincial’ monuments, suggesting that he views these traits which distinguish hogbacks from shrine tombs as being indicative of the separatism of hogback patrons and makers compared to those of more traditional sculpture.\(^{25}\) Ultimately, commentators have generally had little to say about the significance of the building shape of hogbacks beyond pointing out their resemblance to contemporary Christian devotional or funerary objects.

The few attempts to look at hogbacks in relation to their distribution have generally been to discover where they originated. The concentration of hogbacks in north Yorkshire, specifically at sites such as Brompton, Sockburn and Lythe, has led some to conclude that this is the place of origin of the hogback.\(^{26}\) However, as Whitworth’s new theory suggests, this claim is open to criticism. Attempts to create a chronology of hogback development have been made, first by Collingwood, whose suggestion of a late ninth-century origin of

\(^{21}\) Lang, ‘The Hogback’, pp. 90, 93 & 95; Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 94-5.
\(^{22}\) Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 95-6.
\(^{24}\) Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 93.
\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 111.
hogbacks which most obviously resemble shrine tombs has already been mentioned. Lang has suggested that the hogbacks with the largest and most naturalistic end-beasts are most likely to be the oldest.\textsuperscript{27} His argument is largely based on the assumption that Brompton and Sockburn were the first places to produce hogbacks as these sites exist in the area with the largest numbers of hogbacks. However, this claim is not particularly convincing and it does not seem that anything can be said as to the chronology of hogbacks beyond that they fit best into a tenth-century context given their Scandinavian influence in both form and ornament. The concentrations of monuments at Brompton, Sockburn and Lythe and the influence that they seem to have exerted on surrounding sculptural sites has led some commentators to claim that these were ‘workshops’ from which hogbacks were exported to the surrounding area.\textsuperscript{28} However, again it is by no means certain that sculpture was produced at central workshops, especially when we see that the stone used to create hogbacks was local to the hogback site in the majority of cases.\textsuperscript{29} Thus, many of the assumptions made by commentators as to the origins and development of hogbacks are far from indubitable.

\textbf{iii) Study of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture}

Most past work on Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture has tended to focus almost entirely on form and ornament, typology and identifying the meaning of carvings and sources influence. While this is interesting and useful in studies of religious doctrine and culture, in more recent decades sculpture has begun to be analysed in relation to its distribution and employed in discussions about the early Church, politics and in the identification of distinct communities.\textsuperscript{30} The general tide of early medieval sculptural history seems to be increasingly

\textsuperscript{27} Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 97.
\textsuperscript{29} Geology based on reports of the types of stone provided in the Corpus entries and then examined using the British Geological Survey’s Geological Map of Britain accessed at: http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html on 02/11/2014.
to attribute sculpture greater political significance, beyond merely using it as an indicator of
religious belief or élite culture. David Stocker has made strong arguments for viewing the
Viking-Age sculpture of Yorkshire as owing a great deal to the political power of the
archbishops of York and the continuation of Deiran national feeling.\textsuperscript{31} He has also suggested
that the majority of Viking-Age sculpture was patronised by Hiberno-Norse trading
communities in order to assert their cultural and political distinction from native populations.\textsuperscript{32}
Leslie Abrams has suggested that hogbacks probably had a political context, but declines to
propose one due to the problem of dating them.\textsuperscript{33} This recent turn towards more political and
socio-economic readings of stone sculpture, as opposed to the traditional focus on art and
religion, reveals possible avenues of investigation which could further understanding of the
wider significance of sculpture within early medieval history.

It is the intention of this dissertation to continue the trend in examining sculpture in
social and political context in a bid to further our understanding of hogback stones. Previous
studies have been too focused on arguments over typology and style, which are limited as to
what they can tell us about the wider context and implications of hogbacks. In order to
counteract these problems this dissertation will examine the hogbacks of northern England
first in their topographical and onomastic context in a bid to understand something of the
potential influence of the physical landscape and settlement geography on their distribution.
It will then move on to look at hogbacks in cultural context; first examining previous attempts
to create a typology of hogbacks and then looking more closely at the implications of the
building-shaped form of hogbacks. Finally, an examination of hogback distribution in relation
to landholding will be attempted before hogbacks are analysed in relation to the wider
context of early tenth-century political events in northern England. It is hoped that by these

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{33} L. Abrams, ‘The Problem of the Hogback’ (draft paper, 2006), p. 10-1, accessed at:
www.nottingham.ac.uk/shared/shared_viking/documents/Abrams.doc on 20/03/2014.
means a more accurate understanding of the hogbacks of northern England can be gained than previous studies have achieved.
1: Hogbacks and the Landscape of Northern England

i) Hogbacks and the topography of northern England

Previous comments on the setting of hogbacks have tended to be brief and mention only their tendency to be found near to rivers or the coast. James Lang has dismissed topographical approaches to analysing hogback distribution due to environmental limitations of settlement in hogback regions.\(^{34}\) However, by ignoring the topic the peculiarity of some sites has not been recognized and the importance of topography in the distribution of hogbacks not fully appreciated. The more accessible the site the greater the potential audience as many hogbacks found built inside later churches display evidence of weathering, suggesting they were originally located outside.\(^{35}\) Likewise, by looking at the physical location of hogback sites and their accessibility we may be afforded an insight into the types of people their patrons were.

The few hogback sites could be labelled isolated, the average elevation of a hogback site being 70m above sea-level with thirteen at 100m or more (highest Osmotherly, 185m).\(^{36}\) Teesdale has the largest concentration of hogback sites with nine within a mile of the River Tees. David Hill has suggested that the Tees was not navigable beyond Yarm, but nonetheless, the valley itself acts as a natural channel for overland traffic travelling to and from the Stainmore Pass, the main east-west route through the Pennines.\(^{37}\) Reynolds and Langlands have claimed that such natural channels for traffic ‘created locations in the landscape ripe for monumental expressions of power, belief and identity’ which the concentration of hogbacks in the Teesdale and Stainmore region supports.\(^{38}\) The importance of the funnelling of traffic by the physical landscape in determining sites of display is reflected in the relationship between roads and hogback sites. While our knowledge of travel

\(^{34}\) J. T. Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 89.
\(^{36}\) All altitudes found using ‘http://www.freemaptools.com/elevation-finder.htm’ on 30/10/2014.
in Anglo-Saxon England is limited it seems that roads were well used and travel not uncommon. In his *Ecclesiastical History* Bede writes that in the time of King Edwin there was such a peace ‘that a woman with a newborn child could walk throughout the island from sea to sea and take no harm’ and that the king set up ‘stakes… and bronze drinking cups’ on springs along the highway ‘for the refreshment of travellers’. This implies that travel was a common enough activity for kings to take an interest in even in the seventh century. The extent of roads within Anglo-Saxon England is an area which would benefit from greater

---

research, but chapter twelve of the *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* states that the king’s peace extended over the four main highways, ‘Watling Street, Fosse Way, Iknield Way, and Ermine Street’, and ‘the shipping which bring victuals to cities and boroughs from various places’, implying a relatively extensive road network.\(^{40}\) The Roman road network has enjoyed the most research and it is likely that these roads acted as the main highways in Anglo-Saxon England given that many of them have survived with little change into modern times. The supposed extent of these Roman roads, along with major rivers and hogback sites, is shown in Map 1.

In four instances hogbacks can be found at crossroads of major routeways: Derby, York, Penrith and Brigham. In the case of Brigham, its position on the crossroads may have been a factor in its having highest concentration of early medieval sculpture on the Cumbrian coastal-plain.\(^{41}\) Other hogbacks sited at, or near, river crossings include Gosforth, Hexham, Dinsdale, Sockburn and Gainford.\(^{42}\) Besides these Crosscanonby, Lowther, Appleby-in-Westmorland, Brompton, Stanwick, Wycliffe, Gilling West, Bedale, Sinnington, Repton and Hickling all lie on or near Roman roads.\(^{43}\) The Roman road network also goes some way in explaining the distribution of hogbacks at altitudes of over 100m in the north-west, most of which are clustered around the Stainmore Pass which goes from Teesdale to Penrith. There is therefore a clear link between the siting of hogbacks in this northern region of distribution and the location of the Stainmore Pass and Teesdale, revealing the possible importance of this route in the period.

In Yorkshire many of the hogbacks lie further from known roads, though there are notable exceptions, such as Sockburn and Brompton, two sites with unusually high numbers

\(^{40}\) Extract taken from B. O’Brien (trans.) accessed at: earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/laws/texts/ecf1/view/#edition,1/translatio\n

\(^{42}\) Some of these sites have been identified based on their names rather than location according to known roads, namely Gosforth (‘ford frequented by geese’) and Gainford (‘direct ford’).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Hogbacks</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Viking Age</th>
<th>Pre-Viking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>York Minster</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>20+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mary Bishophill Junior</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mary Bishophill Senior</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sinnington</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dinsdale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gainford</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hexham</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sockburn</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appleby</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brigham</td>
<td>8/9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crosscanonby</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gosforth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lowther</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Penrith</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bedale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Brompton</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gilling West</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stanwick</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wycliffe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>149+</td>
<td>40+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Hogbacks</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Viking Age</th>
<th>Pre-Viking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barmston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ellerburn</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Helmsley</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kirkdale</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lastingham</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oswaldkirk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bidston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>West Kirby</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bolton-le-Sands</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Heysham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Addingham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aspatria</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bromfield</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kirkby Stephen</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Plumbland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Burnsall</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kirkby Malzeard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Darlington</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Crathorne</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Easington</td>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>1?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ingleby Arncliffe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kirby Wiske</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lythe</td>
<td>15/16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ormesby</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Osmotherly</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pickhill</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stainton</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Upleatham</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82+</td>
<td>14+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tables 1 and 2:** Table 1 lists the hogbacks positioned on Roman roads or crossroads, Table 2 are those positioned away from these. The shaded boxes show sites with five or more sculptures or multiple hogbacks.*

Of hogbacks, both of which lie very near to a north-south road. It is also possible that Lythe lay near to the Roman road which went from York to Whitby via Sinnington and there was probably a road running along the top of the Vale of Pickering to Scarborough, following a similar course to the modern A170, which would have passed through most of the hogback sites of this region. However, many sites appear to lie away from probable regional

* Information sculpture taken from the relevant volumes of The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture (see bibliography).

routeways, Burnsall being a prime example and a highly unusual site when looked at in relation to topography, road networks and the distribution of other Viking-Age sculpture. The peculiarity of this site has not been recognised by commentators, surprising given the presence of nine other Viking-Age stone sculptures at this isolated location.  

Overall, there is some correlation between sites with multiple hogbacks and other forms of sculpture and proximity to supposed major roads or crossing-points, as illustrated by Tables 1 and 2. Sites near to regional roads are twice as likely to have multiple hogbacks or more than four piece of sculpture than those away from roads and those near to roads or crossings are 2.3 times more likely to have multiple hogbacks compared to more isolated sites. While the location of roads in early medieval Britain is uncertain the correlation between the amount of sculpture and proximity to likely roads and crossings is not insignificant. This relationship could support arguments such as Stocker’s as to the importance of merchants in patronising sculpture in the Viking Age as such people required good transport links to do business. Alternatively, sites with greater accessibility may have been favoured by élites who had an active role in the political life of the region as the politics of this age was based on personal relationships and service. The accessibility of a site may have also had a bearing on the wealth of its holder and community, with greater accessibility possibly allowing for more patronage of sculpture. Finally, proximity to major routeways would have had a bearing on the size of the potential audience of the sculptures with sites nearest to roads making obvious choices for sites of display. Thus, while the majority of hogback sites are not on regional routeways, the fact that those which are usually have more sculpture than less well connected sites is significant.

46 The chance of a hogback site having multiple hogbacks and/or five or more sculptures given that it’s near a road is 89% compared to 43% for sites away from roads; based on the numbers in Tables 1 and 2.
ii) Hogbacks and the evidence of place-names

The distribution of hogbacks in relation to place-names is another area which has received little attention. Commentators have frequently pointed out a correlation with the distribution of Hiberno-Norse influenced names, but rarely have more to say.\(^47\) Richard Bailey has suggested that the distribution of Viking-Age sculpture tends to focus ‘on those areas where Anglian settlement names are prominent’. He suggests these regions were primary areas of settlement and so the most profitable, where landholders were most likely to patronize sculpture.\(^48\) Place-names are a challenging source and their implications have been a topic of debate amongst historians of the Viking Age for many decades.\(^49\) The question over whether place-names are indicative of the language spoken by the resident population, their lords or those recording them poses obvious difficulties; though it should be accepted that the more names of a particular language the more likely the area was to have been influenced by speakers of this language. Despite these difficulties, onomastic evidence has remained important in the study of Viking-Age England and should not be overlooked, especially when other sources are so limited. The place-name evidence examined in this section is derived from Domesday Book as this is the earliest extensive record of place-names for much of the region.\(^50\) While this evidence is not without problems, not least its being made a century after the supposed creation of most hogbacks, meaningful patterns can be observed. The hogbacks of Cumbria and Northumberland are omitted from this discussion as they are not recorded in Domesday, any records of place-names there generally coming from the twelfth century or later.

\(^47\) Lang, ‘The Hogback’, pp. 89-90.
\(^48\) Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 213-4.
Overall hogbacks tend to be located in regions with a mix of Old Norse (ON) and Old English (OE) place-names, though the hogback sites themselves are usually OE. The two most north-westerly hogbacks recorded in Domesday Book are Heysham and Bolton-le-Sands (there just Bolton) in Lancashire, shown in Map 2. In both instances the settlements have OE names, Heysham lying in an area of almost exclusively OE names with two hybrid
names to its north-east. Bolton-le-Sands then sits in a line of OE named settlements with a small cluster of ON names to its north-east. In both instances the small number of nearby settlements with ON names may suggest some limited Scandinavian influence in the region. This contrasts with the Wirral where the hogbacks lie in the only region with ON influence. Neither site is recorded as a distinct vill in Domesday but their location is plotted on Map 3 along with the recorded vills. Here the tendency for OE named settlement is not as pronounced as in Lancashire, with West Kirby being an ON name and appearing alongside two other ON settlements. Likewise, the presence of the nearby vill ‘Thingwall’, ON for ‘field where an assembly meets’, is indicative of the influence of Scandinavian administrative vocabulary in this region of the Wirral.\(^51\) This may suggest that there was a group of élites within the area at some point in the later Anglo-Saxon period who were at least exposed to ON if not speakers of ON themselves. This suggestion is strengthened by documentary evidence for the settlement of a Viking war-band on the Wirral in the early tenth century, explored in chapter three. The fact that the hogbacks are found in the ON influenced north end of the Wirral suggests that this influence was important in their creation.

Maps 4 and 5 depict the hogbacks from the north Midlands and largely echo this preference for OE named settlements near to ON settlements. This is most clear in the two Nottinghamshire hogbacks where Shelton lies at the edge of a group of OE settlements besides a line of ON influenced names. Hickling is similarly placed and is also north of a large cluster of -by names (ON) south of the area depicted on the map. This large group of ON names could be indicative of an ON speaking population in the area and it is interesting that the hogback has been found at a settlement away from this, possibly lending credibility to Bailey’s theory and warning against too closely connecting all hogbacks with Viking populations.\(^52\) Derby is then unusual, being an ON name amongst a large cluster of OE


names. The settlement was influenced by ON speakers in the tenth century; Æthelweard’s Chronicle, of tenth century date, refers to ‘the place called Northworthig, but in the Danish tongue, Derby’, possibly challenging the Hiberno-Norse association of hogbacks.\(^{53}\) Thus, the hogbacks of the Midlands can be seen to conform to the general pattern of hogbacks being sited in settlements subject to both ON and OE influence according to the onomastic evidence.

This pattern of mixed influence is echoed at the majority of hogback sites in Yorkshire. Barmston (Map 6) is a lone hogback site on the east coast of Yorkshire which sits on the edge of a group of OE and ON settlements, itself being OE. Elsewhere in Yorkshire Maps 7 and 8 reveal the general preference for hogbacks to be sited at settlements in areas where place-names were influenced by both OE and ON. Pickhill, in Map 7, is a notable exception, lying within an area clearly dominated by ON place-names. Pickhill sits within a river valley, possibly providing a topographic justification for this “enclave” of ON speakers. However, the hogback site itself is an OE name and it may be significant that this vill is the location of the hogback, perhaps suggesting this was the residence of the local lord.\(^{54}\) The hogback sites of far north-east Yorkshire, seen in Map 8, are located in an unusually dense area of ON place-names with Easington being the only OE named hogback site. This large concentration of ON names would suggest that the region was dominated by ON speakers by at least the mid-eleventh century. The name Lythe means ‘the slope’, likely a reference to the site’s position above Eskdale, an area


Map 7: place-names for the west of the north Riding and east of the West Riding. Based on maps 59 & 62, Domesday Gazetteer.

Map 8: place-names in the north of the East Riding and east of the North Riding. Based on maps 62 & 63, Domesday Gazetteer.
without OE names.\textsuperscript{55} It is tempting to suggest that the inhabitants of this valley acted as the patrons of Lythe as the high number of hogbacks at the site (17) suggests that there were an unusually high number of patrons operating at the site. The place-name evidence may therefore provide a hitherto unsuggested context for Lythe and links hogbacks with a likely ON speaking population.

Another peculiar site is Burnsall, shown in Map 7. This site is again OE in name and appears in a group of similarly named settlements with a Thorpe settlement to its side. According to Fellows-Jensen such names are indicative of secondary settlements, suggesting that this was unlikely to be held by an influential landholder. However, thorpe was also a naming element used in OE and so cannot be seen as unambiguous evidence of ON influence within the Wharfe valley.\textsuperscript{56} This further adds to the peculiarity of Burnsall and is something which previous commentators have failed to pick-up on. Bailey’s suggestion that OE named settlements were more likely to be wealthy and attract more patronage of sculpture may provide some context for the finds of sculpture here. However, this does not explain the presence of hogbacks at the site rather than exclusively more common monuments such as stone crosses. The onomastic context of Burnsall highlights its idiosyncrasy and difference from a site such as Lythe, thus revealing that hogbacks were created in a variety of possible contexts. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases the onomastic context of hogbacks suggests that the monuments were created in Anglo-Scandinavian communities. This significance of this Anglo-Scandinavian context will


become clear in the course of the next chapter. In instances where this pattern is notably different, particularly at Lythe and Burnsall, peculiarity could be indicative of a unique context for the hogbacks, something which is easier to explain in the case of Lythe than Burnsall.
2: Hogbacks within the Culture of Northern England

i) Typological groupings of hogbacks

Rosemary Cramp and James Lang have created typological groupings for hogbacks in order to facilitate their analysis. Cramp categorized the hogbacks into eleven groups using the letters a to k; Lang likewise uses eleven groupings (I-XI), though in a different order to reflect his proposed chronology of their development.\(^57\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lang</th>
<th>Cramp</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>Niche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>Extended Niche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>Pannel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Pilester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>Dragonesque</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Vestigial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>Illustrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>Wheel Rim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>Enriched Shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>Scroll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: hogback types according to James Lang and Rosemary Cramp

Lang suggests that the ‘niche’ hogbacks seen at Brompton (with large, naturalistic end-beasts and a semi-circular niche carve into their long sides) were the earliest in the series. Subsequent hogbacks had smaller, stylized end-beasts before end-best were either entirely omitted or appear just as masks.\(^58\) Running counter to this development was the increasing resemblance of hogbacks to buildings, which becomes apparent from types III to XI, excluding VIII (‘wheel rim’) which is a rare design, found only at Lythe, Shelton and Cranwell, Lincolnshire.\(^59\) While Lang’s classification is a useful tool for comparison the chronological element of his system is problematic and if hogbacks did develop under the influence of Anglian shrine tombs, as is often proposed, then it makes more sense to reverse Lang’s chronology as the scroll type bears the greatest similarity to shrine tombs and types I and II the least.\(^60\) Furthermore, it could be argued that some monuments Lang characterizes as hogbacks are best seen as coped-grave covers, most obviously the wheel-rim types which resemble hogbacks only in having curved ridgelines. Despite the problems inherent in the categorization of any object these typological groupings


\(^{58}\) Ibid., pp. 106 & 108.


\(^{60}\) See for instance Bailey, The sculpture of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire, pp. 280-1.
can help us to gain an understanding of the cultural networks which influenced the patronage of hogbacks. The spatial distribution of these groups have been commented on briefly before; however, this section seeks to analyse these groupings in somewhat closer detail in an attempt to better highlight these cultural links.\textsuperscript{61}

Clusters of various types of hogback are visible though a few types, such as scroll, have a very wide distribution. Niche types are found concentrated in Allertonshire, specifically at Brompton, Sockburn, Ingleby Arncliffe and Dinsdale, with Kirby Malzeard being a possible outlier (though Coatsworth classifies this as a panel type).\textsuperscript{62} Another clear group are the dragonesque hogbacks, characterized by serpentine end-beasts and roof panels decorated with interlace rather than the usual tegulae (ornament compared to roof-shingles, see Image 1). This type is found only in the east of Yorkshire, at Lythe, Upleatham, Easington, Stanwick, Ellerburn, Sinnington and Lastingham. In Ryedale there is a division between the three sites in the east, which have only dragonesque hogbacks, and the three western sites, amongst which scroll type is favoured. These two hogback types are clearly distinct, the scroll type being more obviously building-shaped and lacking large end-beasts, possibly suggesting an east-west cultural divide in northern Ryedale. Another larger scale, east-west split is evidenced by the lack of scroll hogbacks in the far north-east of Yorkshire. Scroll hogbacks appear in all other parts of the hogback distribution zone; the lack of scroll types in this region may be

\textsuperscript{62} Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 98; Coatsworth, Corpus, vol. VIII, p. 185.
explained by the onomastic evidence, which suggests this area around Lythe existed in a different cultural milieu to the other hogback sites.

Pilaster hogbacks, whose long sides are split into panels by raised pilasters, have been found at Aspatria (Image 2), Lowther and Wycliffe. This group appears to have been linked by the Stainmore pass, with Wycliffe and Lowther lying at either end and Aspatria to the west. The Aspatria hogback is an elaborately carved monument differing greatly to other hogbacks in having decorated tegulae and unusually complex interlace on one side.63 The fangs of the end-beasts on all three hogbacks are of the same type, and are an unusual feature on hogbacks, being reserved only for the more elaborate stones.64 This would suggest that this grouping of hogbacks was especially prestigious and that their creators or patrons had some form of contact.

In Teesdale the house type hogback was another influential form found at Ormesby, Gainford, Sockburn Ingleby Arncliffe, Lythe and Kirby Stephen in the Stainmore pass. The Teesdale hogbacks reveal a range of influences, with sites with multiple hogbacks rarely having multiple examples of the same type. This pattern is particularly pronounced at sites with eight or more hogbacks, all of which have examples of at least three types. The lack of uniformity suggests that patrons wished for their monuments to have some originality, perhaps important if hogbacks had a memorial function. However, underlying uniformity in form and some degree of regional difference, for instance in dragonesque hogbacks in

north-east Yorkshire or the tall, thin proportions of north-west hogbacks, do suggest more localised tastes were not entirely absent.

Hogbacks, particularly in the north-west, can be seen to follow a distinct cultural network compared to other forms of sculpture in the region which fit into a culture based around the Irish Sea. For example, the circle-headed crosses are found in western Britain from Anglesey to the Solway are, with only one exception, located no more than ten miles from the coast, implying links to the Irish Sea were important in their distribution.\(^{65}\) In contrast, hogbacks are not distributed elsewhere in the Irish Sea region, with the exception the unusual outliers at Castledermot, Ireland, and one in north Wales.\(^{66}\) This suggests that hogbacks existed within a cultural context distinct from other forms of contemporary sculpture and owing less to Hiberno-Norse activity centred on the Irish Sea than is often suggested. The typological distribution of hogbacks suggests a large degree of contact between patrons across the distribution zone and could be indicative of shared cultural, political, social or economic loyalties amongst hogback patrons, challenging Lang’s description of hogbacks as ‘provincial’.\(^{67}\) Such a view is strengthened when we examine the possible significance of the hogback form.

**ii) The form of the hogback**

The form of hogbacks has elicited varying degrees of interest. Some, such as James Walton and Holger Schmidt, have emphasised the importance of the hogbacks’ resemblance to contemporary Scandinavian buildings while others, such as Lang, have downplayed this.\(^{68}\) The importance of the building-form varies depending on how closely one believes hogbacks are related to Anglian Shrine tombs. Victoria Whitworth has suggested that the house shape of the hogback was intended to represent a sacred space rather than be literal copies of

\(^{65}\) Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 177-80.


\(^{67}\) Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 111.

contemporary buildings, similar to the function of reliquary shrines. Likewise, Lang has suggested that hogbacks, particularly the enriched shrine types, were skeuomorphs of reliquary shrines and not intended to be literal houses. Others have emphasised the importance of the house form to the hogback and in a number instances they have been employed as possible models of contemporary Scandinavian houses. While viewing hogbacks as accurate representations of contemporary buildings goes too far, the similarities between hogbacks and buildings should not be so easily dismissed. The bombé shape and curved ridgeline of hogbacks find parallels in contemporary Scandinavian buildings uncovered in excavations across northern Europe and represented on a coin from Björk, the Bayeux Tapestry and two Scandinavian picture stones. The fact that hogbacks feature contemporary Scandinavian architectural elements suggests that their creators made a conscious decision to alter the pre-existing form of the shrine tomb better to reflect such buildings. This implies that hogbacks should not be seen as necessarily having the same meaning as these pre-existing building-shaped monuments even if they were at least partially inspired by them. This is perhaps especially true of a house-shaped monument when we take into account the significance of the hall, which hogbacks most obviously resemble, within Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian society.

A number of commentators have emphasised the cultural significance of houses in contributing to personal and communal identity. The existence of OE words such as seledream (‘hall-joy’) and seledreorig (‘sad at the loss of a hall’) reflect the emotional significance of halls in Anglo-Saxon society. Likewise, many OE poems contain references to halls which reveal their social and political significance. The Fight of Finnsburgh is set in a

---

69 Whitworth, ‘Bears, Beast and Relatives’.  
70 Lang, Corpus, vol. VI, p. 23.  
hall where feuding families are battling, while in the *Battle of Maldon* Ælfwine asks his warriors to:

> Remember the speeches spoken over mead,
> battle-vows on the bench, the boasts we vaunted,
> heroes in hall against the harsh war-trial.\(^76\)

Revealing how halls acted as places where warriors swore oaths to lords and built social bonds. The importance of the hall is further echoed by Stephen Pollington who points out that halls acted as meeting places and thus were central to the functioning of a society governed by personal lordship.\(^77\) Halls were also important status symbols; this is reflected in *Beowulf* where Hrothgar’s hall, Heorot, is described as ‘a large and noble feasting-hall of whose splendours men would always speak’.\(^78\) This implies that the function of the hall was not merely to provide a physical space for meetings, but also to confirm the status of its owner. Halls then were highly significant buildings in Anglo-Saxon society, making them an understandable form for sculptural display, especially in a period when invaders were challenging for supremacy.

Halls also had significance in contemporary Scandinavian society, most obviously shown by Valhöll, Óðinn’s hall where warriors went to feast. Depictions of halls with roofs of a similar curved appearance to hogbacks can be found on two Scandinavian picture stones: the largest Ardre stone and the Tjängvide stone which have been dated to the ninth or tenth centuries.\(^79\) These mound-like objects appear on both stones alongside an eight-legged horse, associated in Norse mythology with Óðinn, so have been identified as Valhöll.\(^80\) In

---


both cases the mounds appear to have semi-circular openings on their side, comparable to
the niches seen on some hogbacks, and the suggestion of roof shingles, though both lack
any sign of end-beasts. While the buildings on these stones do not mirror exactly hogbacks,
their roofs having a more extreme curve, they offer a feasible non-Christian parallel,
especially as they are roughly contemporary with hogbacks. This warns against an
exclusively Christian interpretation of the origin and significance of hogbacks, further
supported by the possibly pagan decoration seen on some stones, such as the occurrence
of the 'world serpent' on a number of hogbacks from the north-west such as Heysham.81

However, an entirely pagan explanation for the hogback would go too far. The
resemblance of hogbacks to Christian shrine tombs has already been noted and these are
believed to have marked the tombs of saints. Bede makes reference to the shrine of St Chad
which was a 'wooden coffin in the shape of a little house'.82 This coffin had a hole in which
pilgrims could put their hand and gather some of the saint's ashes which Lang has
suggested offers a parallel to the niche found in some hogbacks, though the Scandinavian
picture stones suggest this need not be correct.83 Nonetheless, the hall shape could have
had Christian significance. The use of halls in a Christian literary context is evidenced in the
first lines of the first Advent Lyrics which states of Christ:

You are the corner-stone the builders
once discarded. It becomes you well
to stand as the head of the great hall,
to lock together the lengthy walls,
the unbreakable flint, in your firm embrace.84

This image of Christ holding together the walls of a hall could be said to parallel the end-
beasts seen on some hogbacks. Likewise, in The Dream of the Rood reference is made to

82 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, p. 178.
83 Lang, Corpus, vol. VI, p. 23.
84 K. Crossley-Holland (trans.), The Anglo-Saxon World: An anthology (Oxford: Oxford University
‘the heavens, where the Lord’s people is [sic] seated at the feast’, which could imply an equation between heaven and a hall, similar to Valhöll. The hall could therefore be used in a Christian context, just as in Bede’s description of the conversion of Edwin’s followers where a hall was used to symbolise the space in which men have respite from the chaos of the unknown, like a sparrow from a storm. These examples illustrate the ways in which halls could be used as a vehicle for Christian belief, in the same way that in contemporary Scandinavian society they were used in a pagan context. In these instances the halls themselves were not Christian or pagan, instead their deep significance in society meant they were appropriated for religious teaching, revealing the malleability of the form’s significance and arguably making it ideal for a society of mixed religious belief.

Such an interpretation of hogbacks is vulnerable to the charge that not all hogbacks clearly resemble buildings, Helmsley and Hickling being pertinent examples. However, these are peculiar monuments, Hickling resembling a coped grave-cover more than a hogback and Helmsley only mirroring a hogback in being a large stone block with a curved top. At Brompton, Sockburn and Lythe there are an interesting range of hogbacks, some of which more obviously resemble buildings than others. At Brompton the six niche and extended niche hogbacks do not closely resemble buildings, lacking obvious roofs or tegulae; nonetheless, in all instances where the top of the stone is still extant a distinct ridge-post emerges from the mouth of the end-beasts, clearly suggestive of a timber building. The vast majority of hogbacks do resemble buildings in some way and the common trend of the curved ridge-line and bombé shape would suggest that their creators consistently drew on these architectural features. It could be argued that those monuments which do not conform to this shape should not labelled true hogbacks; in the same way that a post has a different significance to a cross, a coped grave-cover which bears little resemblance to a building should be seen as having a different significance to one which does resemble a building. It

85 Alexander, The First Poems in English, p. 41.
86 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, p. 95.
therefore seems that the building shape of hogbacks should be viewed as more significant than most commentators have allowed. While hogbacks should not be used as literal guides to the construction of contemporary houses their resemblance to buildings should play a more central role in their classification and interpretation than has generally been afforded.
3: Hogbacks and the Political Landscape of Northern England

i) Hogbacks and Domesday Book

The relationship between sculpture and landholding is an area which has been largely overlooked in the study of hogbacks. The fullest account of landholding in this region is Domesday Book. While this survey was conducted over a century after the proposed date of creation of most hogbacks the tenurial situation it records in the north has often been seen as being of much earlier origins.\(^88\) In recent years Dawn Hadley has urged caution in attributing all large estates to the pre-Viking era, but a number of estate do seem to have been of longstanding.\(^89\) An examination of hogback sites in relation to the record of landholding in Domesday may afford an insight into the tenurial context of hogbacks, providing an idea of their potential patrons. Likewise, such an examination may offer an insight into how much the tenurial geography of northern England changed from the Viking Age to the Norman Conquest.

The most notable pattern between hogbacks and landholding is the fact that many hogback sites were held by the earls of Northumbria and Mercia at the time of king Edward (TRE). Many of these holdings have been suggested as having been comital estates, non-alienable estates tied to the office of earl and acting as an incentive for remaining loyalty to the king while providing large power bases for their holders.\(^90\) Hogbacks are associated with the possible comital estates of Gilling (at Gilling itself, Wycliffe and Stanwick) and Allerton (at Brompton, Dinsdale and Kirby Wiske) both held by Earl Edwin of Mercia TRE; Halton

---


Maps 1-4: Hogback distribution map with estates (clockwise from top right) of Earl Edwin, Earl Morcar and Earl Siward showing hogbacks of Yorkshire tend to be found in areas with large holdings of the earls of Northumbria, with the exception of south-east Yorkshire.*

(Heysham and Bolton-le-Sands) held by Earl Tostig; Acklam (Ormesby) and South Loftus (Easington and Upleatham) held by Earl Siward; and Pickering (Ellerburn) held by Earl Morcar. Maps 1 to 4 show that hogback areas in Yorkshire correlate well with the holdings of the earls TRE, though there is a notable lack of hogbacks in south-east Yorkshire where

Earl Morcar's estates are concentrated. Although Edwin was earl of Mercia, Stephen Baxter has pointed out that it was not unusual for late Anglo-Saxon earls to have holdings within territories held by family members and Edwin was the brother of Earl Morcar of Northumbria.  

Gilling (Map 5) is a good candidate for an ancient estate as it was the site of a royal monastery set up by Oswiu of Bernicia to atone for the murder of Oswine of Deira in the mid-seventh century. Wycliffe was then possibly obtained in the ninth century by King Ælla of Northumbria who, the History of St Cuthbert records, seized this vill along with a number of others. G.W.S Barrow suggests that in Yorkshire the use of the phrase ‘x [being the manor’s name] with all of its appendages’ in grants from the ninth to twelfth centuries was ‘the normal manifestation of royal and princely lordship’. Such estates include Gilling which Barrow suggests was a regio in the seventh century given how Bede refers to it as in Gellingum, ‘among the people of Gētla’. The association of three hogback sites within this manor could indicate one of several things. It is possible that the estate was divided in the tenth century, the multiple hogback sites possibly indicative of the existence of multiple patrons operating from different centres. Alternatively, it could be argue that the land was held by a single overlord with multiple petty lords using different sites of display. The lack of similarity between the hogbacks and other pieces of tenth-century sculpture at each site could suggest a level of disassociation between them, though this need not be indicative of complete disassociation, especially given the existence of hogbacks at each site. Gilling itself has fewer pieces of tenth-century sculpture than Stanwick, with one hogback and eight

---

93 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, p.132.
96 Ibid., p.25.
other monuments to Stanwick’s two hogbacks and eleven stone crosses.\textsuperscript{97} This could indicate that the élite around Gilling were less wealthy than those at Stanwick, or else that Gilling was served by fewer patrons, possibly making it a more likely candidate for the tenth-century estate centre.

The manor of Allerton, held by Edwin \textit{TRE}, is another example of a probable comital estate with hogbacks at multiple sites. As with Gilling, Allerton gave its name to a wapentake and its estate centre may have been the site of church since at least the eighth century.\textsuperscript{98} It may then be significant that Brompton is located so close to Allerton and has considerably more tenth-century sculpture than the estate centre (twenty-six to Allerton’s six) which could suggest that this was used as the main site of display on the estate at some point in the tenth century.\textsuperscript{99} The two other hogback sites attached to the manor of Allerton are two of the furthest vills from the estate centre and again reveal a lack of stylistic uniformity, Dinsdale drawing more influence from Sockburn and Kirkby Wiske from Bedale.\textsuperscript{100} However, this lack of uniformity may have been due to distance rather than the estate being split. Despite uncertainty over the extent of the early tenth-century estate the fact that Brompton lies so close to this important later estate centre provides an interesting possible context for the site with the second highest number of hogbacks.

Elsewhere in Yorkshire the estates of South Loftus, and Acklam (Map 7) were held by Earl Siward \textit{TRE}.\textsuperscript{101} Siward had died in 1055 but is listed as holding three manors in Yorkshire in Domesday. These estates are unlikely to have been Siward’s private holdings as if this were the case they would have either passed on to his son, Waltheof, who appears


\textsuperscript{98} Lang, \textit{Corpus}, vol. VI, pp.180-1, 183.


\textsuperscript{101} See n. 91
as a landholder elsewhere, or else whoever they were bequeathed to would have been quick
to claim them given their apparent value: Acklam £48, Loftus £48 and Whitby £112.\textsuperscript{102}

Stephen Baxter and others have pointed out that manors valued at multiples of £8 were
frequently in the hands of earls, especially in the Danelaw, suggesting this was a trait
of comital lands.\textsuperscript{103} The hogbacks and other Viking-Age sculptures within this
estate again lack uniformity. The sculptures at Upleatham draw on influence from
Cumbria and further west whereas

Easington fits better into Yorkshire tastes.\textsuperscript{104} The geology of the hogbacks of Easington and
Upleatham also differ, the Upleatham hogback being made of stone from the Easton Hills
while that at Easington was made from stone quarried near the settlement, suggesting that
their production was distinct.\textsuperscript{105} Again the Domesday estate-centres have less sculpture than
the hogback sites with Loftus and Acklam lacking contemporary stone monuments.\textsuperscript{106}

The two Lancashire hogbacks are both located in the estate of Halton (Map 3), held
by Earl Tostig \textit{TRE}.\textsuperscript{107} Tostig had lost his title of earl of Northumbria in 1065 so his
appearance in Domesday Book may suggest that the holding was not comital. However, the
history of this estate suggests otherwise. The region of Amounderness had been granted to
Archbishop Wulfstan by Æthelstan in 934 and in Domesday Tostig appears as the only lord
in this region. The 934 charter states that Æthelstan had ‘bought [the land] at no little money

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{map7.png}
\caption{Map 7: Manors of Acklam (black), South Loftus (green) and Whitby (blue), all held by Earl Siward according to Domesday Book.
}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{102} Loftus: Phillimore ref. 4N2, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/NZ7217/south-loftus/ on
23/11/2014; Whitby: Phillimore ref. 4N1, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/NZ9011/whitby/

\textsuperscript{103} Baxter, \textit{The Earls of Mercia}, p.142; also S. Baxter and J. Blair, ‘Land Tenure and Royal Patronage
in the Early English Kingdom: a model and a case study’, p. 24, in \textit{Anglo-Norman Studies}, 28 (2005),
pp. 19-46.


\textsuperscript{107} See n. 91
of my [his] own\textsuperscript{108} while the \textit{Chronicle of the Archbishops of York} adds the land was bought ‘from the pagans’.\textsuperscript{109} This implies the land was purchased from Scandinavian settlers, although it is far from clear whether it was bought as the estates which appear in Domesday or if these divisions were created later. The Domesday estates are not uniform (see Map 8) which could suggest that they were laid out according to a pre-existing tenurial arrangement. The fact that this land has direct connections with the Archbishop of York, who was a major political force in early tenth-century northern England, suggests that by at least 934 this region bore a strong connection to the polity operating from York.\textsuperscript{110} However, the hogbacks of Heysham and Bolton-le-Sands show great influence from Cumbria than Yorkshire, suggesting that links to York were not important in their creation. It may well be that important estates were of longer standing, or better able to weather the late ninth and tenth centuries, in Yorkshire than further west due to the possible continuation of structures from the old kingdom of Deira, discussed in the next section.

The links between these hogback sites and possible comital estates could be indicative of their being patronised by people who had important political roles or were at least associated with such people. Such a claim is supported by evidence for the existence of a politically important group of people in early tenth-century Northumbria. The 934 Amounderness charter contains the names of six men referred to as ‘dux’ (ealdormen/earls) with Scandinavian names alongside seven ‘dux’ with Anglo-Saxon names. It is probable that these men came from Northumbria and the Five Borough regions given that the document was witnessed by bishops from these regions, but none from East Anglia, implying a lack of

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 549, n. 2.
East Anglian involvement in the creation of the charter.\footnote{D. Whitelock, \textit{EHD}, vol.1 , pp. 548-51.} Similarly, frequent mention is made of ‘the Northumbrians’ in the \textit{Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (ASC)} in entries from the tenth century, often involving them choosing new leaders, implying the existence of a cohesive group of politically powerful people within the region.\footnote{See for example the entries for 941: “In this year the Northumbrians were false to their pledges, and chose Olaf from Ireland as their king”; and 954: ‘the Northumbrians drove out Eric [Bloodaxe]’, in Whitelock, \textit{EHD}, p. 220 & p. 224.} It is probable that the power of such people came from landed resources, providing both wealth and men. It is highly possible that such resources were based on pre-existing estates given that these would have had the necessary machinery for exploitation in place. The correlation of hogback sites with such estates may therefore suggest a link between some hogbacks and politically active and important patrons.

This link between hogback sites and politically influential people is also possible at a number of other hogback sites recorded in Domesday, but not held by the earls. For example, in the Vale of Pickering, alongside the estate of Pickering held by Earl Morcar, there are a number of hogback sites in the hands of major landholders.\footnote{Ellerburn: Phillimore ref.: 1Y4, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/SE8484/ellerburn/ on 23/11/2014.} These include Kirkdale, which is not listed in Domesday, but was likely attached to the manor of Kirkbymoorside held by Orm son of Gamal given the evidence of an inscribed sundial in the church.\footnote{Ellerburn: ibid.; Crathorne: Phillimore ref.: 5N29 & 1N40, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/NZ4407/crathorne/ on 23/11/2014; Stainton: Phillimore ref.: 4N3 & 11N10, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/NZ4814/stainton/ on 23/11/2014; Kirkdale: P. Rahtz & L. Watts, ‘Three Stages of Conversion’, p. 307.} Orm’s father, Gamal, was probably one of the men to be murdered in Earl Tostig’s hall at York in 1063, a contributory factor in the Yorkshire thegns’ revolt against Tostig in 1065, suggesting he was an important figure within northern England.\footnote{A. Williams, ‘Thegnly Piety and Ecclesiastical Patronage in the Late Old English Kingdom’, p. 11, in \textit{Anglo-Norman Studies}, 24 (2001) pp. 1-24.} Helmsley and Oswaldkirk were held by Uhtred \textit{TRE}.\footnote{Helmsley: Phillimore ref.: 5N50, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/SE6183/helmsley/ on 23/11/2014; Oswaldkirk: Phillimore ref.: 5N38, accessed at: http://opendomesday.org/place/SE6278/oswaldkirk/ on 23/11/2014.} Uhtred is a common name within Domesday Book meaning that it is hard to tell whether the lands attributed to him belonged to a single man.

\footnote{111 D. Whitelock, \textit{EHD}, vol.1 , pp. 548-51.} \footnote{112 See for example the entries for 941: “In this year the Northumbrians were false to their pledges, and chose Olaf from Ireland as their king”; and 954: ‘the Northumbrians drove out Eric [Bloodaxe]’, in Whitelock, \textit{EHD}, p. 220 & p. 224.}
However, the concentrated distribution of holdings attributed to Uhtred in the north and west of the Vale suggest that they were one person’s holdings and could point to the existence of another powerful landholder associated with two hogback sites. Lastingham was then held by Gamal son of Karli and Sinnington by Thordbrand son of Karli, who may have been brothers with significant holdings in the region, Gamal having eighty-six holdings and Thorbrand twenty-five. One of Gamal’s holdings, Lastingham, was a Deiran monastic house set up in the mid-seventh century for the burial of King Æthelwold and so may have had some lands attached to it. However, the monastery disappears into obscurity from the mid-eighth century, so we cannot be certain of the status of the site by the early tenth. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note another link between a hogback site and a settlement with links to an early royal monastery and also to men of not insignificant landed resources.

A final hogback site associated with a major Domesday landholder is that of Crathorne which belonged to Gospatric son of Arneketil TRE and was part of the manor of Hutton Rudby. Gospatric is listed as having 115 holdings spread across Yorkshire in Domesday Book, implying that he was a significant presence in the region. Again, uncertainty over how Gospatrick came to hold Crathorne make confident conclusions impossible. Nonetheless, the fact that around one third of hogback sites recorded in Domesday are associated with individuals of significant landed resources is noteworthy and further weakens Lang’s labelling of the hogback as a ‘provincial’ monument.

Hogback sites with less clear links to major landholders include Burnsall, a frustrating example again given the noted peculiarity of the site. In Domesday Book Burnsall is held by

118 Bede, Ecclesiastical History, p.148.
121 Lang, ‘The Hogback’, p. 111.
two petty landholders of only six holdings between them.\textsuperscript{122} The lack of any substantial landholders associated with the site in the mid-eleventh century does not necessarily mean that the early tenth-century landholders were of similar standing. However, the fact that the vill is held by two people could provide a context for the multiple hogbacks at the site, perhaps offering evidence for the existence of multiple patrons. Lythe similarly lacks association with a major landholder in Domesday Book. It is listed as being held by one Swein, a name attached to ten holdings clustered between Siward’s manors of South Loftus and Whitby (Map 3) and include what is now known as Mulgrave Castle.\textsuperscript{123} In the post-Conquest period this site became the \textit{caput} of the Barony of Mulgrave, held by Nigel Fossard’s family, the successor to Swein’s lands around Lythe, and many others besides.\textsuperscript{124} The origins of Mulgrave Castle may well have been pre-Conquest given local myths which claim that the giant Wada constructed a fortification in the ninth century at what later became Fossard’s castle.\textsuperscript{125} Clearly a myth is a poor substitute for real evidence, and unfortunately the area around Lythe has not been subject to archaeological excavations. Nonetheless, such myths may hint at the earlier political significance of the area around Lythe and may offer a context, beyond the previously discussed onomastic evidence, for the presence of seventeen hogbacks and numerous other Viking-Age sculptures at the site.

The three hogbacks of the Wirral, one at Bidston and two at West Kirby, also lack links to major landholders or estates in Domesday Book. Neither site is listed in Domesday and the tenurial situation of the Wirral area is highly anomalous with a mixture of large and petty landholders and a lack of recorded manorial units. The land to the south of the Wirral was held mainly by Earl Edwin while that to the north was dominated by King Edward.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{125} H.P. Kendall, \textit{A History of the old Castle of Mulgrave in Yorkshire} (Hull: A. Brown & Sons for Kendall Memorial Fund Committee) pp. 1-3.
Bailey has claimed that two lords had two strings of holdings on the peninsula correlating to the two hogback sites.\textsuperscript{127} However, upon closer inspection such a claim does not seem wholly accurate. Certainly one man, Leofnoth of Caldy, can be seen to have a number of holdings on the south of the peninsular \textit{TRE}, and one of these, Caldy, is the closest settlement to West Kirby.\textsuperscript{128} Leofnoth seems to have been an important landholder on the Wirral and may well have been preceded by a tenth-century lord, possibly offering an explanation for the existence of a hogback made of non-local stone at the site.\textsuperscript{129} However, the hogback at Bidston, the smallest known example, with stylistic links to the north Yorkshire hogbacks, does not fit easily into the holdings of any important landholder \textit{TRE}.

A further eleven hogback sites (not including York) are held by people with few holdings. This does not necessarily mean that their position within élite society was insignificant or that they are representative of the early tenth-century hogback patrons. The limitations of Domesday Book’s record of northern England have been widely recognised and lamented; most notably the inconsistency with which information about from whom land was held.\textsuperscript{130} Nonetheless, the evidence of Domesday Book does show that a not insubstantial proportion of hogback sites were associated with significant landholders by the mid-eleventh century and a number of these were probable comital estates. Domesday also offers another possible context for Lythe, but unfortunately cannot help to cast light on the peculiar site of Burnsall. While extrapolating back from Domesday Book to the situation in the first half of the tenth century is not without problems, the links with comital estates and major political figures of the period could be indicative of the hogback’s connection to the tenth-century political élite of southern Northumbria.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{127} Bailey, \textit{Corpus, vol. IX}, pp. 135-6. \\
\textsuperscript{129} Bailey, \textit{Corpus, vol. IX}, p. 135. \\
\end{flushleft}
ii) The Political Context of the Hogbacks

The political landscape of early tenth-century northern England is largely obscure. The region is generally believed to have been dominated by Norse invaders who ruled from York, though Rollason has pointed out that the existence of a formal “kingdom of York” is by no means certain.131 Nonetheless, the numismatic evidence and various fragments of documentary evidence point to the political dominance of Scandinavians within the region south of the Tees, sometimes extending as far south as the north Midlands, in the late ninth and early tenth centuries.132 In the north-west the situation is less clear due to the almost complete lack of written evidence; most proposed political narratives are based on the evidence of later medieval governmental and territorial structures and contemporary coins and sculpture. From this Phythian-Adams has speculated that Allerdale and the region between the river Esk and Beckermet, both areas with hogbacks, were dominated by the Hiberno-Norse, supporting the long-held association between hogbacks and the Hiberno-Norse.133 However, more recent investigations of hogbacks have focused less on the proposed Hiberno-Norse link. For example, David Stocker has argued that hogbacks, and other Viking-Age stone monuments, should be seen in the context of a rising sense of ‘Deiran nationalism’ encouraged by the archbishops of York.134 Likewise, Lesley Abrams has suggested that hogbacks were likely to have had some form of political motivation, suggesting that they may have acted as ‘badges of affinity to the kings of York’.135 In complete contrast Victoria Whitworth has recently suggested that hogbacks are best seen as originating from the east coast of Scotland, developing amongst native communities from pre-existing stone shrine tombs, and spreading south to Cumbria due to trade.136 It is the

136 Whitworth, ‘Bears, Beasts and Relatives’; also see Edmonds’s recent article on the expansion of Strathclyde into east Cumbria in the early tenth century for a possible political context for this: F.
aim of this section to attempt a deeper investigation of the political context of hogbacks to test these assertions and offer an explanation as to why hogbacks appear where they do.

The role of the archbishops of York in the politics of early tenth-century southern Northumbria has been noted by a number of commentators.137 The D version of the ASC in particular reveals the political importance of Archbishop Wulfstan of York in 943 when he appears alongside Olaf Guthfrithson, king of York, during an attack on Leicester.138 The support of the archbishops of York for Scandinavian rulers is suggested by the minting of coins with Christian motifs at York from at least c. 895 when coins bearing the name Siefrid appear.139 The role of the church in patronising stone sculpture and the fact that many sculptures within York are made of re-used Roman stone, which the archbishop may have had rights over, has led Stocker to claim that the archbishops of York effectively controlled sculptural patronage in tenth-century southern Northumbria.140 However, it is far from certain that the Church had such control of sculptural patronage in the Viking Age, ON mythological motifs on some hogbacks suggesting a lack of Church involvement in their creation. The archbishops’ links with the rulers of York in the period could equally be used to argue that connections to the secular powers of York were of greater importance in the distribution of hogbacks than links with the archbishop. Likewise, very few hogbacks, or other pieces of sculpture from hogback sites, show any typographic links with York, further undermining this theory.141 It will therefore be argued that hogbacks owe more to secular than ecclesiastical structures of power, as the evidence of landholding, discussed above, appears to suggest.

Cumbria has been largely neglected so far in this chapter; however, the presence of hogbacks implies some level of contact between the élites of the north-west and north-east of England, as was shown in the previous chapter. This contact is particularly significant as

137 Whitelock, ‘The Dealings of the Kings’, pp. 73-6; Rollason, Northumbria, pp. 228-9.
138 Whitelock, EHD, vol. 1, p. 221.
139 Hadley, The Vikings in England, p. 47.
140 Stocker, ‘Monuments and Merchants’, p. 196.
the tenth century witnessed the emergence of the ‘kings of Cumbria’ beginning with Owain in the late 930s, suggesting this was a period when the two regions were becoming more politically distinct.\(^{142}\) In the seventh and eighth centuries there were close links between the north-west and the rest of Northumbria. The rulers of the kingdom of Rheged (the British kingdom in the north-west of England) married into the family of the kings of Northumbria through Prince Oswiu’s marriage to Riemmelth of Rheged, in the seventh century.\(^{143}\) Political links across the Pennines in the Viking Age are hinted at by the fact that Eric Bloodaxe was killed at Stainmore in 954, possibly suggesting that he was attempting to flee to allies in the north-west.\(^{144}\) Furthermore, the ASC tells us that in 945 ‘King Edmund ravaged all Cumberland’ before granting it ‘to Malcolm, king of Scots, on condition that he should be his ally both on sea and land’.\(^{145}\) This suggests that the people of the north-west were not absent in the politics of southern Britain and shared a similar defiance to West Saxon expansionism as those to the east of the Pennines.\(^{146}\)

The importance of Scandinavians in the politics of the north-west is suggested by the fact that Allerdale, the name for the north-west portion of Cumbria, is derived from *dalr* (ON, ‘dale’) of the river Ellen.\(^{147}\) Phythian Adams suggests that within this region the territorial core was the parish of Brigham, one of the largest parishes in Allerdale when they become visible in the High Middle Ages.\(^{148}\) Besides Brigham he argues that the smaller parishes of Aspatria, Bromfield and Crosscanonby may have been smaller manors in the Viking Age, given the sculpture evidence at these sites.\(^{149}\) Plumland appears as a parish in the earliest record of parishes, the 1291 *Taxatio Ecclesiastica*, as do the other Cumbrian hogback sites,

---

\(^{142}\) Phythian Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, p. 113; Edmonds ‘Expansion of Strathclyde’, pp. 43-66 offers a more Strathclyde heavy account than Phythian Adams, but focuses mainly on the Eden Valley region.

\(^{143}\) Phythian Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, p. 65.

\(^{144}\) Ibid., p. 119; Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, p. 67.

\(^{145}\) Whitelock, *EHD*, vol. 1, p. 222.

\(^{146}\) For example: 948: ‘King Eadred ravaged Northumbria because they had accepted Eric as their king’ in Whitworth, *EHD*, vol. 1, p. 223.

\(^{147}\) Phythian Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians*, p. 127.


possibly indicating that they were centres of territorial units given the distinctive parochial structure of Cumbria. Lowther is known to have been the site of castle from at least the late twelfth century and the home of the most powerful family in later medieval Westmorland. The name Lowther may derive from the ON lauthr + á (‘foamy river’) which adds to the evidence of the depiction of two groups of warriors, one group on a ship, the other on land on a hogback at Lowther, which mirrors an image on one of the Gotland picture stones. This suggests that the site was home to an élite of Scandinavian, warrior tastes. The weight of evidence implies that the hogbacks of Cumbria fit into a similar context to the hogbacks from those areas recorded in Domesday Book, displaying links to possibly important territorial units. The hogback patrons at these sites may have operated in a similar political context to the élites across the Pennines; acting in defiance of West Saxon expansionism under the influence of élites of Scandinavian origin. Therefore, it could be suggested that hogbacks should be seen as the monuments of an élite in support of the kings of York and asserting independence in the face of West Saxon expansionism.

Such a context can also be observed at Gainford, the only hogback site for which we have explicit evidence of the early tenth-century landholders. This evidence comes from the History of St Cuthbert and reveals possible links between the community of St Cuthbert, Anglo-Saxon lords and King Rægnald in the period c.913-c.920. The passage states:

Eadred son of Ricsige rode westwards across the mountains and slew Prince Eardwulf … violating the peace and the will of the people, and fled to the protection of St Cuthbert and remained there for three years, peacefully cultivating the land presented to him by Bishop Cutheard … from Chester-le-

---


153 Ewing proposes a similar context for the Heysham hogback in ‘Heysham Hogback’, p. 20.
Street as far as the river Derwent, and from there as far as the Wear towards the south, and from there as far as the road which is called Dere Street…. and the vill upon the Tees which is called Gainford … The same Eadred faithfully held this land… until the above mentioned King Rægnald … fought at Corbridge and slew this same Eadred and a very great multitude of English, and being victorious seized all that land which Eadred held from St Cuthbert and gave it to Esbrid, the son of Eadred, and to his brother Count [comiti] Ælstan, who were staunch warriors in this battle. Finally the same accursed king perished with his sons and friends, and of the things he had stolen from St Cuthbert he took away with him nothing 154

Gainford appears earlier in the History as a grant from bishop Ecgred (d.845) where he ‘built a church’ and presented it to the community ‘with whatever pertains to it’, being the same area granted to Eadred by Bishop Cutheard. 155 This estate was extremely large and seems to have been originally centred at Gainford, suggesting another possible link between a hogback site and a major estate. The passage reveals that the early tenth-century lords of Gainford held their land from the community of St Cuthbert until the Battle of Corbridge (c. 918) when Rægnald installed two men there. Following Rægnlad’s death (c. 920) the land was returned to the St Cuthbert’s community and reappears again when bishop Aldhun [990-1018] presented it to three earls. 156

The passage is extremely important as it may provide us with a context for three, or possibly four, hogbacks found in the lands of the community of St Cuthbert. Indeed, Lang has explained the absence of hogbacks in this region as being due to the cultural dominance of the community of St Cuthbert between the Tyne and the Tees. 157 The fact that here we find a brief period in which Gainford was not held by the community could provide a possible explanation for these hogbacks on their land. While the community had early links to the

154 Johnson South, Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, chapter 24, p.63.
155 Johnson South, Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, chapter 9, p.51.
156 Johnson South, Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, chapter 31, pp.67 & 9.
Vikings south of the Tees, for instance in helping to select one of their leaders, Rægnald’s seizing of the communities’ lands suggests that such connections had weakened by the second decade of the tenth century. The Battle of Corbridge may provide the context for the hogbacks of Gainford, and possibly also Hexham, an otherwise obscure site which sits only four miles from Corbridge. It is notable that the men Rægnald installed on the land he seized had OE names. This may hint at the continuation of divisions between the old kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira as the battle of Corbridge was fought between Rægnald and the king of the Scots who may have had the support of Bamburgh. It is tempting to suggest that it was Esbrid and Earl Ælstan who patronised the hogbacks given their links to Rægnald who probably ruled over much of the hogback distribution zone east of the Pennines. While their tenure of Gainford may have lasted only two years the possibility of hogbacks being created within this short period is not inconceivable. This especially true if hogbacks were intended to act as grave-markers as the occurrence of a battle may provide a reason for their creation. The fact that Gainford was the site of a pre-existing church and the most southerly point on the seized lands may have recommended it as a site for burial of Rægnald’s followers. While these suggestions rely on a good deal of conjecture the evidence of Gainford’s history does provide an interesting and at least feasible context for the hogbacks found there. That the evidence allows for such a context to be proposed strengthens the claim that hogbacks were patronised by a secular Anglo-Scandinavian political élite in southern Northumbria. Furthermore, the possibility that some patrons of hogbacks and supporters of the Viking kings of York could have been natives may suggest that the pre-existing political tensions between Deira and Bernicia could have continued to play a role in early tenth-century politics of the region. This could provide a more secular

158 Johnson South, Historia de Sancto Cuthberto, p. 53.
161 Thor Ewing gives the Heysham hogback a similar context based only on analysis of the hogback itself, Ewing, ‘Heysham Hogback’, pp. 19-20.
explanation for the lack of hogbacks north of the Tees than Lang’s proposal and supports Abram’s suggestion that hogbacks were symbols of Deiran nationalism.

A similar situation could be suggested for the hogbacks of the north Midlands, though perhaps based more on political affinity with York rather than ancient links to Deira. Repton was settled by a large Viking group in the late ninth-century who may have created a mass grave and barrow burial at the earlier site of burial for the Mercian royal family. At the other hogback site in Derbyshire, St Alkmund’s, Derby, we find pre-Viking links to Northumbria in the dedication of the church itself; Alkmund being a Northumbrian prince reportedly murdered by King Eardwulf of Northumbria c. 800 and later buried in Derby. There is evidence that coins were being minted for Olaf Guthfrithson in Derby which he had successfully taken in c. 939 following the death of Æthelstan. Dawn Hadley has suggested that these coins, which feature the Old Norse title of ‘CUNUNC’ (‘king’) rather than the customary ‘REX’ used by other Anglo-Scandinavian rulers, reveal a clear attempt to assert freedom from West Saxon authority. Olaf’s rule lasted only two years and so it may be too bold to suggest that this was the period in which the hogbacks of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire were created; however, again we are provided with an interesting possible context in which assertion of connections to York in opposition to West Saxon expansionism are central. It is significant that it was only in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire that hogbacks have been found in Southumbria despite the Viking presence in East Anglia, implying that links to York were important in hogback patronage.

The hogbacks of the Wirral do not fit as neatly into this context of allegiance to the Viking kings of York given a lack of evidence for association between the Vikings settled here and those of York. The hogback sites have a possible Hiberno-Norse connection given the evidence for the settlement of the Viking leader Ingimund in the first decade of the tenth century. The records of his invasion come from a collection of Irish annals, the earliest

known copy of which is from the seventeenth century, known as the *Three Fragments*. While the very late date of this source means that it has been viewed with scepticism F. T. Wainwright made a convincing case for accepting the basic facts of Ingimund’s invasion.\(^\text{165}\)

The annal states that ‘The Lochlanns [Norwegians] went away from Erin … under the conduct of Higamund [Ingimund], their chieftain, and … went to … the island of Britain.’ They then unsuccessfully made a raid in Wales before landing in England where they were given ‘lands near Chester’ by Æthelflæd. They reportedly lived in peace for some time, but coveted the wealth of Chester so Ingimund ‘came to meet the chieftains of the Lochlanns and Danes’ and they agreed to launch an attack on Chester which ultimately failed.\(^\text{166}\) The annal dates these events to 902-7, tying in well with what is known of the political situation in Mercia shortly before the death of Æthelstan of Mercia and an unexplained reference in the *Mercian Register* to the restoration of Chester in 907.\(^\text{167}\) The account is supported by the evidence of place-names, discussed in chapter one, and suggests that there were Scandinavian settlers in the north Wirral. The evidence of the Thingwall settlement in the north Wirral suggests that these settlers played a role in the governance of the region. The hogbacks of the Wirral have been explained in terms of trade links between people of Hiberno-Norse heritage and other parts of Scandinavian occupied England given the evidence of a large market at Meols in this period.\(^\text{168}\) However, Meols was a market associated with Irish Sea trade and the Bidston hogback is in the style of Yorkshire hogbacks, albeit it very small.\(^\text{169}\) This would rather


\(^{167}\) Wainwright talks of the illness of Æthelred which wasn’t mentioned in English sources, but clearly impacted on his ability to fulfil his duties as ruler in Mercia in Wainwright, ‘Ingimund’s Invasion’, pp. 141-2; *Mercian Register*: ‘In this year Chester was restored’, Whitelock, *EHD*, vol. 1, p. 209.


\(^{169}\) Bailey, *Corpus*, vol. IX, p. 51.
suggest that if it was a Hiberno-Norse merchant who commissioned the Bidston hogback they were making a statement of cultural affiliation to York and not the Irish Sea zone.

While there are problems in attempting to determine a context for hogbacks which can encompass all of the different regions of their distribution it seems that links to the so-called kingdom of York offer the most plausible explanation for their distribution. The evidence of landholding connects a number of hogback sites with important later landholders. In the case of hogbacks associated with comital estates we may have greater grounds for asserting a link between hogbacks and the political élite of the region. West Saxon expansion may have acted as a unifying force amongst hogback patrons who may have used the monuments as an expression of separatism from the élites of Southumbria. The lack of hogbacks north of Teesdale may have been caused by the continuation of divisions between the old kingdoms and Deira and Bernicia and implies that these divisions continued to shape identity and political allegiance in the Viking Age. This may be indicative of the continued importance of native élites in southern Northumbria in this period. The Hiberno-Norse connection with hogbacks is certainly not insignificant, as the evidence from the Wirral and Cumbria shows. Nonetheless, this Hiberno-Norse connection is not a sufficient explanation for the distribution of hogbacks. Instead, secular politics played a major role in the creation and proliferation of hogbacks, providing a context for the patronage of these unique monuments that asserted difference from pre-existing Anglian sculptural tradition. Stocker’s claims as to the importance of the archbishops of York in the proliferation of sculpture appear ungrounded in the case of hogbacks, demonstrated by both landholding and the evidence discussed in this section.
Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has highlighted the importance of looking at hogbacks in relation to their wider social and political context. While the examination of the Viking-Age sculpture of northern England in its wider context is not straightforward due to the lack of documentary evidence for the period, it is hoped that this dissertation has highlighted some of the ways this can be achieved and what it can reveal. The ultimate finding is that the hogback stones of tenth-century northern England are best seen within the context of secular politics centring on allegiance to the Viking kings of York in the face of West Saxon and Brittonic expansionism. The Hiberno-Norse connection of hogbacks, so often highlighted by commentators, does hold up to deeper scrutiny, particularly in the case of the hogbacks of western England, but this connection is not a sufficient explanation for their distribution. The evidence of Gainford suggests that not all hogback patrons had to be Hiberno-Norse and their building-shaped form could have carried deep significance for both Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian patrons. Instead, hogbacks may be better understood as a monument patronised by secular figures with some involvement in the politics of southern Northumbria. This political milieu could have owed a great deal to the memory of an independent kingdom of Deira, as the lack of hogbacks north of the Tees may suggest.

A more politically focused reading of hogbacks is supported by the investigation of the monuments in relation to topography and probable contemporary regional routeways. The fact that sites on such routeways are twice as likely to have multiple hogbacks or four or more pieces of sculpture supports seeing hogbacks as politically charged monuments as such sites were more accessible, thus meaning that the people living at them could have had better access to other élites and thus have played a more active role in the politics of the region. That hogback patrons made use of such overland connections is suggested by the stylistic links between hogbacks noted in chapter two which highlights the importance of overland connections, and particularly the Stainmore Pass, in the distribution of hogbacks. The apparent importance of overland connections and accessibility in hogback distribution
damages Lang’s claim that hogbacks were ‘provincial’ monuments and support arguments such as Langlands and Reynolds’s as to the importance of the physical landscape in dictating sites of sculptural display.170

Onomastic evidence then suggests that the majority of hogbacks were created in areas with a mixture of ON and OE influence. It is significant that this mix of OE and ON is rarely absent in areas around hogback sites. This evidence, especially as regards Lythe, the site with the most hogbacks in an area of almost entirely ON settlement names, further supports the association between hogbacks and Scandinavian immigrants. This suggests that Whitworth’s recent attempt to move the origins of hogbacks into eastern Scotland, seeing them as direct descendants of Christian shrine tombs created by native populations, is incorrect.171 The likelihood that hogbacks were created in Anglo-Scandinavian communities is further supported by the evidence for the shared importance of the hall in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian society. The evidence examined in chapter two suggests that hogbacks can and should be understood as having a different significance to Anglian shrine tombs as they represent buildings of a different style and are decorated in a new and original way. The form need not have been Christian or pagan, its adaptability to religious or non-religious readings possibly being the key to its success in a society which may have been made up of people of mixed religious belief. Furthermore, the form of hogback could support a more politicised reading of the monuments as halls had political significance, acting as the places in which oaths were sworn and meetings held as well as being status symbols and homes for the élite and their followers. Accounts of the significance of hogbacks should therefore take their resemblance to contemporary buildings more seriously as this is central to our understanding of the monuments.

The evidence for landholding reveals possible links between hogback sites and the political élite of later Anglo-Saxon northern England. The fact that a number of hogback sites

171 Whitworth, ‘Bears, Beasts and Relatives’.
existed on probable comital estates could suggest that hogbacks were connected to the highest echelons of political society, especially given the evidence for the existence of such a group in Northumbria in the first half of the tenth century. These links have not been recognised by earlier commentators and offer firmer grounds for thinking that hogbacks are monuments with a political significance. This significance could have been as a badge used by élites to signify their allegiance to an independent Anglo-Scandinavian polity in southern Northumbria. The possible links between hogbacks and native patrons found at Gainford may suggest that this southern Northumbrian identity could have been based, at least in part, on the continuation of Deiran feeling amongst native élites, though the form and style of hogbacks, and their existence in Cumbria and other areas outside of Deira, suggests that the élite society of southern Northumbria had absorbed a number of Scandinavians. The possible connections between hogbacks and comital estates, especially apparent in Yorkshire, further supports the idea of political continuity from the pre-Viking to Viking period, suggesting that élites continued to operate from these places and exist within a shared culture. Thus, hogbacks could support political narratives such as that proposed by Rollason relating to continuity in southern Northumbria from the ninth to tenth centuries and the importance of the secular aristocracy within this.\textsuperscript{172}

Investigation of hogbacks in relation to landholding and the possible political events of the first half of the tenth century has also highlighted the lack of importance of the archbishops of York in the distribution of hogbacks. As hogbacks appear to fit well into the milieu of the secular élite of tenth-century northern England this could suggest that previous accounts of this period which have emphasised the role of the archbishops of York in the politics of this age may go too far.\textsuperscript{173} Indeed, the use of sculpture as a form of expression amongst the élites of southern Northumbria could be indicative of the Church’s loss of power

\textsuperscript{172} Rollason, \textit{Northumbria}, p. 230, Rollason argues that the Viking kings of York exercised relatively little power outside of York and that instead government was mainly enacted by the archbishops of York and the secular aristocracy.

in the Viking Age, because previously they had had a monopoly on sculptural display. The fact that the hogback need not be seen as a Christian monument implies that the Church need not have had much input in their creation or dispersal. Indeed, despite the possible links between Amounderness and Archbishop Wulfstan after 934 the hogbacks of Lancashire appear not to owe a great deal to influence from the east, suggesting that such links had little to do with their creation. However, we are then left to wonder why secular lords decided to patronise stone sculpture when their predecessors had not. Such a change may have been due to a transformation in élite culture, something historians such as Robin Fleming have observed in late Anglo-Saxon England, where overt display was becoming more important in the expression and maintenance of status. In the case of early tenth-century northern England it has often been argued that there was an influx of élites suggesting that there was greater competition for land and claims to power and status. This may have prompted élites, both native and non-native, to begin to express their power and wealth in more overt and lasting ways, much in the same way that patronage of stone churches later came to act. The native aristocracy may then have adopted Scandinavian tastes as an expression of their separatism from the élites of southern and northern Britain.

The hogback may therefore be a monument testifying to the existence of a powerful secular political class in southern Northumbria in the first half of the tenth century. The patrons of hogbacks may have had aspirations to existing within a polity free from interference from other powers within Britain and one of the ways of expressing this, as well as expressing status and possibly securing ones position within this increasingly competitive society, was to act as patron to a new and distinctive form of sculpture. The hogback then was far from a provincial monument; instead it should be seen as the monument of the

176 Hadley, "Hamlet and the Princes", p. 127.
secular élites of early tenth-century southern Northumbria, acting as an expression of their political, cultural and social independence from the other polities of Britain and of their subscription to a common Anglo-Scandinavian culture.
Bibliography

Primary Printed Sources


Secondary Sources


Denton, Jeff et al. *Taxatio*. Published by HRI Online (Sheffield, 2014) accessed at: http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio on 06/12/2014.

Domesday Maps accessed at: http://www.domesdaymap.co.uk last on 17/04/2015


Key to English Place-Names (Nottingham University) accessed at: http://www.kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/ last on 02/11/2014.


Kopár, L., Gods and Settlers: The Iconography of Norse Mythology in Anglo-Scandinavian Sculpture (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012)


