SEDILIA IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Cherry Hinton (Cambridgeshire), parish church, sedilia in chancel, 1220s or 30s

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ABSTRACT

This thesis forms the first monograph on sedilia, the seats for the clergy officiating at the high altar. The focus is on the medieval kingdom of England, as there are an unparalleled number of stone sets built into the walls of its parish churches, often featuring the most impressive sculpture in the building. After a survey of the liturgical and documentary evidence for ecclesiastical seating in Chapter One, Chapter Two gives an overview of the corpus of sedilia in English medieval churches, and establishes a standard 'classic' type of three niches, set into the thickness of the south wall by the altar, divided by shafts and surmounted by arches. The origins of this type are then investigated in Chapter Three and attributed to English architectural style and a preference for dado arcading. In Chapter Four, the continuing spread of this type is shown to be dependent on local building practice, and the occasional development into a site of conspicuous display as diagnostic of its recognition as an important fitting by high-ranking patrons. Chapter Five departs from the narrative approach for a close assessment of the more impressive sets, and uses these to investigate the mechanisms of patronage behind sedilia, the significance of their imagery, and signs of their extra-liturgical use in lay confession. Chapter Six examines the decline of sedilia in England in the fifteenth century within the Perpendicular Style, and also attitudes to them just before the Gothic Revival in the nineteenth century. Chapter Seven provides an investigation into parish church staff and whether sedilia can be considered as proof that a high mass with priest, deacon and subdeacon was taking place in the rural parish churches where they often appear, and how the material object relates to historical documentation.

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In lieu of visits, the most valuable resource has been the works of amateur photographers on the Internet, primarily Flickr.com, and I have taken care to preserve their authorship in both the sedilia database and the illustration credits for this thesis. I hope by sharing my own pictures online that I may be able to support future researchers of church architecture and fittings in a similar way. Particular thanks go to those who personally emailed me images of sedilia: Elizabeth Maggs, who has filled in many gaps in the database, most notably completing the Herefordshire corpus; Peter Moore, who made visits to photograph many important sedilia in Kent I could not visit; Ian Jessiman, who had some of his 1950s negatives of sedilia developed for me as fantastic prints; and Ann Adams, Malcolm Armstrong, Andrew Budge, Michael Carter, Donal Cooper, Judd Flogdell, Kayoko Ichikawa, Anthony McGrath and Evan McWilliams for sending me occasional examples of sedilia in England and abroad.

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Christmas Day, 2014

List of Illustrations

Many of these images are taken by fellow amateur photographers and shared on the websites Flickr.com or Geograph.org.uk. I am grateful to their efforts and have taken care to credit the name under which they were uploaded. Without online image sharing, the scope of this thesis would not have been possible. All sedilia are in the south wall of the part of the building specified unless otherwise noted. Where names are credited without a website (e.g. Flickr or geograph.org), the pictures have been given to me directly by the author. Other credits refer to the bibliography.

As through the whole of this thesis and the handlist, the counties given are the traditional counties of England and Wales, following those given in the most-recent volumes of the *Pevsner Architectural Guides.* Where appropriate, a small number are clarified where 1974 border changes are particularly confusing. The three Yorkshire Ridings are abbreviated to North, East and West Yorkshire.

Although many objects on this list have been renovated since their creation, 'restored' is appended in brackets if the majority of their current fabric is modern following the pattern of fragmentary evidence.

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INTRODUCTION

'Sedilia' is the modern word for the seats by an altar provided for the officiating clergy celebrating the Mass. They are familiar to students of English church architecture as the stone niches, usually three in number, often found in medieval parish churches across the country built into the thickness of the wall to the south of an altar (cover illustration). Their usually triple arrangement reflects the number of clerics who directly celebrate a High Mass, the celebrant priest and his assisting deacon and subdeacon.[1] Sedilia are liturgical furnishings that have received remarkably little attention, in their development as a permanent fixture of so many English chancels or precise function within the ritual and daily life of a medieval church. This is particularly surprising considering that sedilia often constitute the richest decorative vocabulary within parish church sculpture, showing much potential for formal investigation as well as displaying the high regard in which they must have been held in the Middle Ages to receive such treatment.[2] The literature on sedilia is scarce in both liturgical and art-historical fields, and this thesis will form the first monograph on the subject.

The break of England with its Catholic tradition at the Reformation meant that the function of its medieval liturgical furnishings became obscure, with sedilia often being identified by eighteenth-century antiquarians as confessionals due to a perceived similarity with the booths which had become well-established in Catholic countries after the Council of Trent.[3] The first critical examination of the liturgical function and development of sedilia, and indeed the coining of their very name, came in a debate, represented by a series of articles from *Archaeologia* in the last decade of the eighteenth century, between Rev. Samuel Denne and Charles Clarke.[4] Clarke's article in particular remains as an informative study of the celebrant's seat, but the value of Denne's papers are hampered by his stubborn counter-arguments for

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[1] This term distinguishes them from both the assisting acolytes and the presiding clergy seated in the choir further west. Another term, often used in an Anglo-Catholic context is 'sacred ministers'.
[2] Cotman, Turner, and Rickman 1838, Vol.1, pt.2, 1; Draper 2006a, 204.
[3] See Chapter Five for more on this debate, when it will be suggested that sedilia may have indeed been used by the parish priest to hear confessions from.
[4] Denne 1789a; Denne 1789b; Clarke 1794; Denne 1794; Denne 1796.

alternative functions.[5] The most-cited overview of sedilia is still the chapter in Francis Bond's *The Chancel of English Churches*, one of the many books he wrote on English churches and their furnishings.[6] Like much of Bond's admirable work, on close scrutiny the overall impression is that of a *tour d'horizon* rather than an intensive survey. It includes some errors regarding individual sedilia, including miscounted seats and a lack of discretion regarding over-restored sets such as the Romanesque-Style sedilia at Castle Hedingham (fig. 85), which will be shown in Chapter Three to be almost entirely of the 1870s. J. Charles Cox and Alfred Harvey provide a similar overview of sedilia in *English Church Furniture* of 1907-8, which is mainly illustrated with examples from Derbyshire, a county in which Cox had much experience, but inevitably also contains inaccurate statements.[7] Subsequent books on parish churches treat sedilia broadly, and add nothing in terms of their development, function or significance in the scant space accorded to them.[8]

A short section in David Parsons' article on Anglo-Saxon ablution drains is the most frequently-cited recent piece of literature about sedilia, and gives some informative background to the development of the liturgical topography of the English chancel, of which sedilia are a vital part.[9] Justin Kroesen's book on the European village church includes a chapter on sedilia from a continental perspective, but because of the predominance of English sedilia, the account owes much to Bond and Cox and Harvey.[10] Carol Davidson Cragoe's thesis, 'Written in Stone: Architecture, Liturgy and the Laity in English Parish Churches, *c*.1125-*c*.1250' is the first attempt that has been made to understand the development of sedilia and correctly identifies some of the earliest examples in England as being in twelfth-century Cistercian abbey churches.[11]

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[5] Originally he proposed that they were installed for the bishop and his assistants at the consecration of the church; Denne 1789a, 265. Ultimately he decided that they were designed for the use of the ecclesiastical patrons of appropriated parishes; Denne 1794, 389–396.

[6] Bond 1916, 176–203.

[7] Cox and Harvey 1908, 67–74. For instance, Cox states that Monyash (fig. 55) 'is the only example in [Derbyshire] where the seats are graded' when in fact the sedilia at Church Broughton, Hope, Mackworth, Whitwell and Bakewell (fig. 11) all have stepped seats. For Cox's focus on Derbyshire in historiographical context; Cragoe 1999a, 42–43.

[8] e.g.: Hamilton Thompson 1911a, 122–123; Cox and Ford 1954, 80; Cook 1954, 169–170; Nye 1965, 32, 46, 56, 68; Braun 1970, 170; Randall 1980, 142; Pounds 2000, 176, 442–443 (the latter stating that there are sedilia in 'every parish church').

[9] Parsons 1986, 107–108.

[10] Kroesen 2004, 148–153.

[11] Cragoe 1999a, 166–174.

The current literature establishes that sedilia first appeared in the south walls of churches in the twelfth century, but not why they became so uniquely popular in England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. As English sedilia appear to be largely represented by a single idea governing their general appearance – three niches built into the wall, surmounted by arches and divided by shafts – it can be broadly observed in retrospect that they formed a genre: a category of artwork with a common function, also characterised by common forms.[12] The primary purpose of this thesis will then be the broad understanding of how this apparent 'genre' was invented and developed in medieval England, also with a consideration to how much it was recognised by contemporaries. This will be achieved through a thorough understanding of the material corpus, set in the context of the liturgical and documentary evidence, the patronage of the finest sets, and the stylistic environment of English medieval architecture.

Chapter One will explain the basic function of sedilia in the liturgy. It will be questioned, however, using published examples of medieval liturgy, how much rubrics can tell us about the development of the furniture around the altar. As the word 'sedilia' is a convenient neologism of the late eighteenth century, the question of the original terminology used to refer to them in the Middle Ages will be investigated with reference to medieval documentation of art, with particular regard to the compilation by Otto Lehmann-Brockhaus.[13] Such a study of nomenclature will allow for an investigation into lost examples of sedilia, particularly the problem of wooden alternatives to the extant stone sets.

Chapter Two will undertake a taxonomical study of sedilia, based upon a database of the extant corpus in England and Wales which has been assembled throughout the course of the research for this thesis, to understand both their chronological and geographical distribution.[14] This database has been initially composed through a complete survey of the *Pevsner Architectural Guides*, and supplemented by digital images obtained through both site visits and the crowd-sourcing of photographs shared publically on the Internet. Attempting to comprehensively catalogue a feature within a given area to identify patterns in

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[12] The term 'genre' is a contentious one in literary criticism, but I feel that it is the best way to codify the idea of sedilia. Sedilia are said to be one of many genres of a 'very blurred kind' in Binski 2014, 90. Also see Baxandall 1980, 50 for notions of the winged altarpiece as a genre.

[13] Lehman-Brockhaus 1955-60.

[14] Appendix I.

distribution and form is not without precedent. Pamela Sheingorn's book on 'Easter sepulchres' gave a full handlist of examples across England, but its date from the pre-digital age means it was less able to drawn upon the potential of such a survey.[15] John Clark's recent thesis on the churches of Leicestershire, and Christopher Herbert's reconsideration of the 'Easter sepulchre' represent a renewed rigour in the art history of parish churches and their liturgical furnishings in which this thesis will work.[16] With the corpus catalogued by form, it will also be possible to comprehend the existence of a single normative type of stone sedilia which will occupy the vast majority of this thesis: which shall be dubbed the 'classic' type. Other forms of stone sedilia will also be categorised in order to understand their significance within the wider corpus. Certain common questions such as: the frequency of the 'stepping' of sedilia; the differing number of seats; their location within the church; and the liturgical topography of the sanctuary, shall also be re-evaluated. Finally, it will be considered how representative the surviving corpus is of the original medieval situation, with regard to embellishment through polychrome and fittings.

Chapter Three, with both the formal and liturgical context established, will begin the chronological narrative of sedilia, starting with their precursors in the first millennium. In the last thirty years, there has been a huge increase in the knowledge of the pre-Conquest church through excavations, which will be an aid in understanding the situation before the mid-twelfth century when south-wall sedilia first appeared.[17] Again, the liturgy will also form an important source alongside the archaeological evidence. However, the question of the development of the distinctive form taken by the majority of English sedilia – deep arched niches, set in the thickness of a wall, separated by shafts and surmounted by arches – will form a different line of inquiry. It has often been noted that stone sedilia are a peculiarly English phenomenon, rarely found overseas, but no explanation has ever been offered regarding the reasons for this.[18] Therefore the second half of this chapter will attempt to put sedilia into the context of the peculiarities of English medieval architecture, to demonstrate that they are part of this country's decorative preference rather than diagnostic of liturgical differences. This is also where the concept of the

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[15] Sheingorn 1987.
[16] Clark 2010a; Herbert 2007; published in part as Herbert 2006.
[17] e.g.: Rodwell 1985; Rodwell 2007.
[18] Cox and Harvey 1908, 67; Turner 1996; Coldstream 2001; Clarke and Clarke 2001; Kroesen 2004, 149–151.

rank of a church building will be introduced. It will be argued that the forms of sedilia were initially suited to the unaisled middle or lower-rank chancels of collegiate and parish churches, and that the genre was not initially suitable for incorporation into the highest-rank buildings such as great abbeys or cathedrals.

Chapter Four will move to the thirteenth century, when sedilia became much more common, to ascertain how they spread and developed in the lower-rank buildings of the regular parish church, the plan and topography of which has a similarity to the middle-rank buildings of the previous century. Therefore, there will be challenges in dealing with a type of building that is sometimes passed over by art historians as an active site of invention in both form and genre. The early twentieth-century work cited above of Bond, Cox and Hamilton Thompson represents a continuation of the antiquarian tradition, which, as noted by Richard Marks, although not to undervalue them, emit a rather 'gentlemanly tweedy flavour' that much architectural study of parish churches cannot avoid.[19] Paul Binski has made a provocative reconsideration of parish church art as a centre in its own right, and not a simplified trickle-down from the great church.[20] There is little doubt, however, that developments in the most advanced church-building in cathedrals and abbeys were important in informing the formal vocabulary of the parish church. Mary Dean has produced some articles that explore the dissemination of forms such as bar-tracery from Lincoln Cathedral and Peterborough Abbey to architecture in their vicinity.[21] Lawrence Hoey's articles on Gothic parochial architecture however posit a more nuanced methodology for how great church forms were transmitted to parochial architecture.[22] Parish churches, he argues, were not simply scaled-down versions of great-church three-storey elevations with stone vaults, but solutions appropriate to their different size and character: such as blind wall-arcades and varied pier designs. This idea of the great church creating new *forms* which only beyond its walls begat new *genres* will be used to articulate how sedilia were established throughout England without the need for a single influential prototype. The chapter will then continue to look at how the widespread phenomenon of sedilia began to be developed into a more sophisticated and deliberate feature by patrons of higher standing through the addition of micro-architectural elements. This will then lead to

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[19] Marks 2011, 65–66.
[20] Binski 1999.
[21] Dean 1984; Dean 1986.
[22] Hoey 1994; Hoey 1995; Hoey 1998.

an understanding of the magnificent sedilia in the great churches of the fourteenth century as an elaboration of what had formerly been only a utilitarian feature.

Chapter Five will take advantage of the understanding of sedilia as firmly established in English churches both great and small by the fourteenth century to undertake case studies of the imagery of certain outstanding sets. Despite the fact that sedilia, particularly in the fourteenth century, are some of the most richly-carved parts of chancels to survive they are the subject of surprisingly few individual studies. The set at Preston-next-Faversham (Kent) (fig. 141) is unique among English sedilia for having a whole article dedicated to them in an academic journal, however they are considered entirely stylistically, and are never directly called 'sedilia' by the author.[23] The wooden Westminster Abbey sedilia (fig. 159), thanks to their painting being some of the highest-quality work surviving by English painters working on a monumental scale *c.*1300, have received extensive coverage. Binski and Lucy Wrapson are the most recent writers to interpret their imagery in the context of the royal burial of the Saxon King Sebert apparently underneath them.[24] Tim Ayers has also written some insightful pieces on sedilia as functioning within the imagery of the chancel: particularly the chapter in his MA thesis regarding the sedilia of Dorchester Abbey (fig. 258), but also makes shorter remarks on their relationship to glazing schemes in his works on Merton College, Oxford (fig. 150) and Wells Cathedral Lady Chapel.[25] Veronica Sekules has examined the sedilia of Exeter Cathedral (fig. 168) along with its other high altar furnishings, and concluded that they were extraordinary objects intended to magnify the splendour of the liturgy in the absence of a relic cult.[26] However, it is the sedilia at Heckington (Lincolnshire) (fig. 206) and Hawton (Nottinghamshire) (fig. 207) that are the best-recognised examples in England and therefore will occupy a central position in this chapter. Sekules discusses their programmes of decoration in her thesis on Heckington church, but due to the constraints of the monograph format, only touches upon the wider context of sedilia.[27] With the understanding of the wider corpus, this chapter will draw parallels between the strategies such as heraldry, figures of saints and sinful or monstrous imagery used to decorate sedilia. This will be used to

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[23] They are instead, bizarrely, referred to as 'stalls', with 'sedilia' being only used once by the author in a quote of previous literature; Matthiesen 1962.
[24] Binski 1995, 123–126; Wrapson 2005; Wrapson 2006.
[25] Ayers 1991, 77–87; Ayers 2004, 24; Ayers 2013, 48–49.
[26] Sekules 1991a; Sekules 1991b.
[27] Sekules 1990, 113–128.

uncover the mechanisms of patronage behind sedilia, how the occupants of the seats may have been aggrandised, and give suggestions for their extra-liturgical function.

Chapter Six will conclude the chronological rise-and-fall narrative with a focus upon the evident decline of sedilia in England from the mid-fourteenth century to their total end at the Reformation, with an epilogue regarding the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. In the fifteenth century, the greater amount of available evidence for dating parish churches in the form of collegiate foundations, wills and glass inscriptions will be used to try to determine the rate of their decline. As some significant sets are still installed even in the Tudor period, it will be considered that stone sedilia became potentially deliberate *retardataire* architectural statements, rather than habitual as they were previously. As the only extant examples of wooden sedilia in parish churches date from this late period, this chapter will consider this perennial problem once more: through the interchange of forms manifest between stone sedilia and carpentered furniture in the fifteenth century.

Chapter Seven will close the thesis with an exploration of the relationship between sedilia and the human element of who actually sat in them, and whether the seats were frequently used or represented an often-unachieved level of divine service. To begin, an understanding of an 'ideal' for parochial liturgy will be established by the examination of diocesan synods regarding parish churches. Subsequently, this will be compared, as far as possible, to the reality; ascertained from published collections of bishops' registers, parochial visitations and clerical censuses, to determine whether three-seat sedilia could be filled by three clergy at each parish high Mass. Whether sedilia can represent the wealth or status of a parish will also be considered with the use of the 1291 *Taxatio*, a census that will recur much in this thesis, not least for defining its boundaries as that of the dioceses of the medieval kingdom of England under Edward I.

CHAPTER ONE: LITURGICAL AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Before examining the material evidence for sedilia manifest in hundreds of parish churches across England, their function will be explained and their nomenclature investigated. Firstly, we shall look at the liturgy contemporary to when stone sedilia were a familiar component in English churches: to ascertain what is said about the seats for the officiating clergy; when they were to be used; and why they always appear to be sited on the south side of the altar. Secondly, after looking at the coining of the term 'sedilia' in the late eighteenth century, the extra-liturgical medieval documentary evidence for sedilia will be considered to try to ascertain how they were referred to in the Middle Ages, and this documentation used to determine what form they may have commonly taken in lieu of a stone set built into the thickness of the wall.

LITURGICAL REFERENCES

If it were not for the copious evidence presented in English churches in the form of stone sedilia, it would not be clear from the textual sources that there was any special emphasis placed upon the seating for the officiating clergy or its location. Unlike the evidence for the axial position of the presidential seat that can be obtained from first-millennium liturgies (see Chapter Three), references to the seats of the officiating clergy in rubrics contemporary to the objects of this study are scarce.[1] In defining the function of sedilia, modern art-historical definitions assume that they are provided for the priest and his assistants to reside in while the choir sing the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, and perhaps also the *Credo*. In the post-Tridentine Roman Missal, it is indeed stipulated that the priest, deacon and subdeacon use the seats during these three standard prayers of the Ordinary.[2] Some Ordinaries immediately after the Council of Trent also advise the use of sedilia during the reading of the Epistle.[3] However, in

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[1] For instance when considering the Italian evidence, it is stated that neither art nor liturgy can provide us with sufficient evidence for the appearance or placement of the seat of the celebrant priest; Gatti 2001, 147.

[2] Catholic Church 1840, Rubricae generales missalis, XVII, 6; Bond 1916, 176.

[3] Clarke 1794, 338.

the liturgy of the Middle Ages, pre-dating its standardisation in the Baroque era, we do not find such specific instructions regarding the use of the seats for the officiating clergy. Instead, references to what we now know as sedilia occur incidentally within the rubrics of the Ordinary of the Mass. The *Liber Niger*, a collection of mid-thirteenth-century statutes from Lincoln Cathedral compiled in the early fourteenth century, states:

> '… *et sacerdos cum suis ministris dicet* epistolam *et* Gradale *et* Alleluia *et* sequenciam *et hiis dictis* **eat ad suum sedile** *et ibi dicet oraciones.*'[4]

> 'And the priest with his ministers will say the epistle and the Gradual, and the Alleluia, and the sequence, and with these words he may **go to his seat** and there he will say prayers.'

Similarly, the Cistercian customary, in use throughout Europe in the twelfth century, declares:[5]

> '*Postea preparent ministerium quod est iuxta altare in quo ministratur. ponentes calicem desuper cum corporali et offertorio:* **et sedes in, quibus sedent sacerdos et ipsi ministri.** *et piscinam.*'[6]

> 'Afterwards they shall prepare for the service next to the altar on which it is administered. Those who hold the chalice up with the Host at the offertory, **that is the priest and his ministers, sit in the seats** by the piscina.'

This liturgical reference to the seats for the officiating clergy reflects the simplified but lucid Cistercian liturgy, and also perhaps their early stone sedilia that will be examined in Chapter Three. The Sarum Rite was overwhelmingly the most popular Order of the Mass for England in the later Middle Ages and therefore has been much studied and reconstructed, although its origins and development are still a matter of considerable debate.[7] Considering the Sarum Rite's importance in England, it might

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[4] Bradshaw and Wordsworth 1892, 377.

[5] The *Carta Caritatis*, the 'constitution' of the Cistercians approved by Stephen Harding in 1119 represents the liturgical conformity throughout the whole Order, so we can assume a church like Kirkstall in West Yorkshire (see Chapter Three) was using the rubrics from Citeaux; Pfaff 2009, 249–250.

[6] Choisselet and Vernet 1989, 156.

[7] Pfaff 2009, 350–388. The earliest references to it as a liturgical standard are in 1223 at the Cathedral of St David, and more general references can be found by the 1270s; Pfaff 2009, 377–378. It was not until the second half of the fourteenth century that the Use began to dominate the province of Canterbury; Pfaff 2009, 412–444. Judging by calendars, the Use may have become consolidated in this region by the mid-fourteenth century; Morgan 2001.

be expected to reflect the emphasis placed on the officiating clergy's seating in English architecture. However, reference to such seats is, once again, rather in passing:

> '*Hiis itaque gestis in dextro cornu altaris cum diacono et sub-diacono officium misse usque ad oracionem prosequantur, uel usque ad* Gloria in excelsis *quando dicitur.* **Quo facto [sacerdos] et sui ministri in sedibus ad hoc paratis** *se recipiant et expectent usque ad* Gloria in excelsis, *quod in medio altaris semper incipiatur quandocunque dicitur.*'[8]

> 'After [censing] on the right of the altar, [the priest] with the deacon and subdeacon may continue with the Office of the Mass, or, when it is said, up to the *Gloria*. When the *Gloria* has begun, **the priest and his ministers may retire to the seats that have been prepared for this use** and await the end of the *Gloria* that should always begin at the centre of the altar whenever it is said.'

This rubric in Sarum Use allowing the ministers to sit down does not appear in the use of Bangor, York or Hereford as compiled by William Maskell.[9] The implication in the Sarum Rite is that the seats are used whenever the ministers are not occupied at the altar, or standing in reverence for the reading of the Gospel. Although there are not repeated instructions to return to the seats throughout the Sarum rubrics, the mention of the priest blessing the bread and wine brought to the table by the deacon '*interim sedeat in sua sede*' demonstrates their continued use throughout the service into the Eucharistic rite.[10]

The phrase 'seats that have been prepared', as will be shown, was noticed by antiquarians and liturgists as a candidate as the single authentic medieval term for sedilia. It also appears in the closely-related but distinct liturgy for Exeter Cathedral of 1337 where it is styled '*sedibus ad hoc peractis*'.[11] The phrase was certainly not invented by the Sarum Rite, as it appears in the tenth-century *Ordo Romanus* X, '*dextro cornu altaris ubi etiam sibi sedes parata est*', directing where the pontifical celebrant is to sit after he kisses the Gospels.[12] The phrase even remains in eighteenth-century liturgy, styled '*parato scammo oblongo*'.[13] However, the

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[8] Frere 1898, 66.
[9] Maskell 1846, 24–25.
[10] Frere 1898, 71.
[11] Some manuscripts render it verbatim to Sarum, as *paratis*; Dalton 1909-40, Vol. 1, 295.
[12] Andrieu 1971, 355; Palazzo 1998, 179.
[13] Gavanti 1749, 170; Clarke 1794, 338, citing Gavanti *commentaria in rubricas Missalis et Breviarii Rom.* Par. I Tit. ii. No. 7.

changing nouns show that it was not intended as a single name as such, but instead an instructive description. The meaning of 'prepared' initially seems somewhat mysterious. It is often thought to have indicated the placing of cushions on the seats, as four cushions specifically for the use of the ministers of the altar are recorded in a 1315 inventory of Canterbury Cathedral.[14] The use of 'prepared' in the Cistercian liturgy is closely associated with the piscina, which can be understood from the rest of the rubrics as having been prepared with three towels.[15] However, rather than having such an obscure meaning, 'prepared' regarding the sedilia was almost certainly have been meant to instruct that the seats must be set up before the Mass begins during a preliminary read-through of the rubrics. Just as it was essential that the towels were in the piscina before undertaking the Mass of the Cistercian rite, the Sarum Rite seems to be using 'prepared' as a retrospective instruction, and that the proper performance of the Mass is predicated upon provision taken beforehand.

     Dat Boexken vander Missen of *c.*1506 contains the only medieval image I have found of sedilia in use.[16] This printed guide to the performance of the Mass originated in the Netherlands and was subsequently printed in English in 1532 with the same images. A trio of cushioned wooden seats on the south side of the altar appear in the background throughout the *Boexken* (fig. 1), but are only seen occupied during the Epistle, with the priest wearing his crossed chasuble in the easternmost seat with the deacon to his left (fig. 2).[17] The sedilia are referred to in the accompanying Dutch text of the *Boexken* as '*gestoelte*'. *Gestoelte* is a rather uncommon Dutch word for seat now most frequently used to refer to choir stalls and pews, but it is first recorded from the fifteenth century onwards to mean 'seats of important people': there is no indication that it was specific to the seats of the officiating clergy.[18] Unfortunately in the English edition it is translated as 'the priest and the deacon do sytte them [sic] downe'.[19] Otherwise pictorial evidence for sedilia is disappointing. In many late medieval paintings depicting the Eucharist, such as the Mass of St Gregory, the focus is always placed on the elevation of the Host or the

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[14] '*Item quatuor pulvinaria magna .R. Archiepiscopi consuta de serico pro ministris altaris*'; Legg and Hope 1902, 74. They could also be used for comfort when kneeling rather than sitting, and are not proof of furniture.

[15] Anon 1848, 346. This is most obvious in the specific identification of a '*medium linteum*' in the ablutions at the end of the Mass; Choisselet and Vernet 1989, 166, line 127.

[16] Gherit Vander Goude.

[17] Gherit Vander Goude, 24–25.

[18] *Etymologisch woordenboek van het Nederlands*, URL: etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/gestoelte.

[19] Gherit Vander Goude, 142.

moment of consecration when all the officiating clergy are standing at the altar. In earlier manuscripts before the introduction of Renaissance perspective, the left-to-right logic means that any side view is usually from the south of the altar and there is no opportunity for an artist to include a picture of the empty sedilia in the background.[20] Despite the numerous images of church interiors and the celebration of the Mass in late medieval visual culture, the only image I have found that shows a chair in use as a sedile for the priest is in a set of tapestries of *c.*1519-39 in the church of Montpezat-de-Quercy showing the life of St Martin (fig. 3).[21] The chair in the background of his miraculous Mass is an X-shaped chair, or faldstool, which may be more typical of the sixteenth-century Renaissance, although medieval examples are known, such as the Dagobert throne from Saint-Denis, traditionally held to be Merovingian in date.[22] An unusual record of the appearance of clergy seating in early-fourteenth-century Italy is the life-size *trompe l'oeil* bench frescoed by Pietro Lorenzetti to the right of a fictive altar in the left transept of the lower church of San Francesco in Assisi (fig. 4).[23] It is no more than a long wooden armed seat draped with fabric, and may represent the usual seating for the officiating clergy at real altars across Italy at this time.

The seating order shown in the *Boexken*: the priest sitting in the easternmost seat, should be noted as different from much present-day custom.[24] The post-Trent reformed Catholic liturgy directs a central position for the priest between his assistants: '*Sedent celebrans medius inter diaconum a dextris a subdiaconum, a sinistris*'.[25] This is followed by much of the High Church within the Church of England, and can be seen in this thesis's illustrations of the sedilia in Merton College chapel (fig. 150) and Dorchester Abbey (fig. 258), both of which are being used by Roman Catholic clergy for a Solemn Mass in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. The influence of the Second Vatican Council and the succeeding Liturgical Movement has led to a distinct bias against the medieval in a great deal of both

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[20] In the fifty pictures in Dearmer 1910, only nine show the altar from the north, three of these being Biblical scenes such as the Presentation using a modern Christian altar, and four being Masses of St Gregory. None show sedilia. Late medieval wooden sedilia can be occasionally glimpsed beyond the choir stalls depicted in minatures of the Office of the Dead in Books of Hours, as noted in Chapter Six.

[21] Weigert 2004, 140–143. The work was brought to my attention by Gasquet 1906, 47.

[22] Wanscher 1980, 121–190; Eames 1977, 182–191. Also the example used by the angel organist in the Ghent Altarpiece, completed 1432.

[23] Maginnis 1981, 121–128.

[24] Both of these were observed by Torr 1931a, 158.

[25] Gavanti 1749, 170; Catholic church 1840, Rubricae generales missalis, XVII, 6; Clarke 1794, 338.

scholarship and ceremony.[26] This evidence, however, demonstrates that in the primary period covered by this thesis it was the prevailing custom that the priest took the easternmost seat closest to the altar and next to the piscina. A French Dominican missal of *c.*1260-70 carefully describes the graded order as the priest with the deacon to his left, and the deacon with the subdeacon to his left.[27] Otherwise, liturgical evidence is scant, with no instruction relating to seating order in the Sarum Rite. However, at least in England, the material evidence of sedilia overwhelmingly proves that the priest took the eastern seat in the Middle Ages, as will be shown in Chapter Two.

It has been noted that the Sarum Rite was 'remarkably visual and performative'.[28] Yet the rubrics of the Ordinary do not seem to account for the popularity of stone sedilia in England, as the references to the seats for the priest and his assistants do not seem extraordinary in a continental context. The passing references seem to imply that sedilia were widely understood as to be used when the officiating clergy were not otherwise occupied with the duties of reading the scriptures or administrating at the altar table for reasons of decorum.

THE LITURGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE ALTAR

Stone sedilia, with only a tiny number of exceptions that are so unusual as to prove the rule, are invariably located on the south side of the chancel: that is, the right as one approaches the altar from the west. The position of the priest's seat is rarely specified in liturgical rubrics, but whenever it is, it is always *dextra cornu altaris.* The Sarum Rite does not specifically mention the location of the 'seats that have been prepared', but the French Dominican missal (BL add. ms. 23,935) states, with the familiar usage of 'prepared': '*in **dextra parte presbyterii** in qua parte semper sedes huiusmodi sunt parande sedente'.*[29] In Tridentine ordinaries, the instruction remains that the officiating clergy sit '*cornu Epist.*' (the Epistle side being the south, see below).[30] Durandus, in his highly-influential late-thirteenth-century tract the

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[26] Pfaff 2009, 10–111. Modern rubrics are generally quiet on the issue of seating order; Fortescue 1918 or, post Vatican II; Fortescue, O'Connell, and Reid 2009, although it is implied at 165.

[27] British Library add. ms. 23,935. Transcribed in Legg 1904, 75.

[28] Reeve 2008, 22.

[29] Legg 1904, 75. It has been noted that the Dominican Rite at this time had many points in common with Sarum; King 1959, 307.

[30] Catholic Church 1840, 48.

Rationale Divinorum Officiorum, mentions that during the Epistle and Gradual psalm and up until the reading of the Gospel, the priest should have been sitting on the right hand of the altar.[31] Sitting on the south side of the altar has its origins in the *Ordines Romani* of the first millennium. In the *Ordo Romanus* IV (Frankish, 750-800) it is said that after kissing the Gospel on the altar, the celebrant bishop goes to the right side of the altar before sitting down, strongly implying his seat is in this position.[32] The ivory panels of the back cover of the Sacramentary made for Bishop Drogo of Metz (d. 855), all of which depict the celebration of an episcopal Mass, have been interpreted as showing the bishop seated to the right hand of the altar and its ciborium.[33]

Piscinas – the drains for the decorous disposal of sacred waste, most importantly the ritual ablutions of the priest and the Eucharistic vessels – are also placed in the south wall wherever possible.[34] Ian Jessiman in his survey of the English piscina notes that they are occasionally found in the north wall in north chapels where there is no south wall.[35] More often piscinas are found in the east wall, but still to the south side of the altar.[36] The reason for the more varied position of piscinas is perhaps because that, unlike sedilia, they were considered an essential part of the chancel fabric by episcopal statutes (see below). Durandus states unequivocally that the ablutions must be done on the south side of the altar: '*Lavat autem semper ad dextrum cornu altaris*'.[37] Evidence for the location of the drain itself can be found as early as the twelfth century from Gerald of Wales in his *Gemma Ecclesiastica:* '*Piscina quoque decenter secus **dextrum altaris cornu** ad recentationes vel reincerationes demittendas inseratur*'.[38]

The interpretation of the relevance of north/south and left/right to the topography of the chancel is fraught with difficulty, due to the contradictions

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[31] '*Hactenus, dum Epistola lecta fuerit, et choro Graduale psallente, sacerdos tactitus ad dextram partem sedebit altaris*'; Durandus, Vol. 1, 338 (*Rationale* I, xxiii, 1)
[32] Andrieu 1971, 159; Vogel 1986, 160–161.
[33] Reynolds 1983, 71–72.
[34] A good account of the development of the ritual washing of the fingers and the chalice are given in Simmons 1879, 301–307. There is also the very dense account of Anon 1848. Lockton 1920, 118–170 concentrates more on the disposal of the ablutions than the rituals of washing. For the formal development of the piscina drain and niche; Jessiman 1957; Cragoe 1999a, 155–165.
[35] Jessiman 1957, 67.
[36] Bond 1916, 158. An example is Ellesmere (Shropshire).
[37] Durandus, Vol. 1, 377 (*Rationale* IV, xxviii, 2). The context for this reference is the gloss of Psalm 91:7.
[38] Gerald of Wales, Vol. 2, 36.

inherent in relative direction. Durandus attempts to explain the tradition of the location of the celebrant's seat through a Biblical gloss:

> '… *repraesentandum quod ait propheta: Dixit Dominus Domino meo, sede a dextris meis. Donec ponam inimicos tuos, scabellum pedum tuorum.* **Sacerdos quidem Christem repraesentans sedet a dextris altaris** …'[39]

> '… representing what the prophet says, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand. Until I make your enemies a footstool. **The priest, indeed representing Christ sitteth on the right of the altar** …'

The problem with any exegetical interpretation of this kind is that either side can be interpreted as the 'right hand of God' depending on the way one assumes He is facing. The reason for seating is instead, entirely due to the liturgical tradition of the Epistle and Gospel sides, where the deacon's reading of the Gospel takes place on the north of the altar (the left). The first sure evidence of this dual terminology comes from Ivo of Chartres (d.1117), who saw the relationship of the '*sinistra par ecclesie*' and the most honoured of Holy Texts as akin to the Apostles turning to the gentiles.[40] North as Gospel side was first mentioned in the commentary of Remigius of Auxerre (d.908) who also saw the apparent contradiction between the Word of the Lord on the darkened 'sinister' side of the church as symbolising preaching amidst paganism.[41] These associations between compass points and relative direction would have been different when the Gospel was read to the right hand of the throne behind the altar in the occidented basilicas of Rome, which, as will be shown in Chapter Three, were where the liturgy was first codified.[42] It may be that when this liturgy was performed in orientated churches that the relationship reversed.

It came to be the usual medieval custom that the earliest parts of the Introductory Rites were said at the Epistle side of the altar, before moving to the north side for the reading of the Gospel.[43] The Sarum Rite also has the *Gloria* intoned just after the right side of the altar has been prepared implying it was said

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[39]Durandus, Vol. 1, 294 (*Rationale* IV, xi, 7). The gloss is from Psalm 110:1, also, Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43.
[40] Jungmann 1951, 108–110.
[41] Jungmann 1951, 413.
[42] As demonstrated with diagrams in Jungmann 1951, 415–419.
[43] Although we tend to speak of liturgical topography as north and south, it should be noted that liturgy is always *sinister* and *dexter*, never *borealis* and *australis*.

there, and also by extension that the '*sedibus ad hoc peratis*' are also on this side.[44] The Cistercian liturgy shows particular observance of the Epistle and Gospel sides: the order of the Mass from twelfth-century Citeaux having the *Gloria* intoned from the Epistle side of the altar, then the *Credo* and *Dominus Vobiscum* from the Gospel side, only the preface onward being conducted in front of the table.[45] It is also reflected in the Orthodox architectural and topographical tradition of the *diaconicon,* the room in which the Gospels, vestments, and vessels were kept and the *prothesis,* where the species of the Eucharist were kept and prepared also being on the south and north sides respectively.[46] The Eucharistic rite has an inherent symbolism in that it begins on the south, ventures to the north, and then finishes back where it started. Durandus speaks of this journey as symbolic of Christ preaching to the Jews, then the Gentiles, and back to the Jews.[47]

It was and still is vital that the reading of the Gospel in a Mass is honoured by standing.[48] Therefore it is clear that all the opportunities for the clergy to sit were when they were instructed to be on the Epistle side, and when the attention turned to the north for the first time, the sedilia would not be required. Thus it would be utterly illogical for the sedilia to be anywhere else other than the right hand side of the altar, which due to the orientation of churches, was always the south in medieval England.[49] Clearly there was not a set of influential architectural examples that began the idea of south-side seats, but instead it was always decided by the ubiquitous tradition of the liturgy and the geography of the sanctuary it implied.

THE MODERN ORIGIN OF THE TERM 'SEDILIA'

Before we delve into an investigation of possible medieval documentation for sedilia, it should first be emphasised that the specific use of the word 'sedilia' for the seats of the officiating clergy is entirely modern, and its use rare before the Victorian age. This contrasts with 'piscina', which is an authentic medieval term for the drain

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[44] Frere 1898, Vol. 1, 66.
[45] Jungmann 1951, 108–110; Lackner 1971, 29.
[46] Krautheimer 1979, 298.
[47] Durandus, Vol. 1, 556 (*Rationale* IV, lvii, 3).
[48] e.g.: Durandus, Vol. 1, 351 (*Rationale* IV, xxiv, 23).
[49] This was the conclusion drawn by Clarke 1794, 331–332.

of the Eucharistic ablutions, often inside niches part of a single design with sedilia.[50] We can see above that sedilia had no such peculiar noun in medieval liturgy. While the priest had a '*sedile*' in the Lincoln text, most commonly, as in Sarum, the noun used was '*sede*'. The Latin word *sedes* is described in the British Academy *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* as a seat that usually carries an implication of status.[51] By contrast, *sedile* generally lacks this prestige, commonly used for more simple seats, often in the form of benches.[52] Therefore it would appear to be one of the least likely words to be used in the Middle Ages for the demarcated stone seats with which this study is chiefly concerned.

Description of sedilia is rare until the beginnings of the Gothic revival. In the seventeenth century, because of his interest in its unusual inclusion of heraldry, Gervase Holles refers to the grand mid-fourteenth-century sedilia at Claypole (Lincolnshire) (fig. 217) as '*tumulus lapideus excelsus*', presumably mistaking them for a tomb.[53] Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century antiquarians referred to sedilia as 'stone seats' or 'stone stalls', and occasionally 'confessionaries' or 'confessionals' due to their confusion with post-Tridentine booths for a priest and a penitent.[54] The use of the word 'sedilia' as the precise name for these seats was first coined by the antiquarian Charles Clarke partway through an article in the journal *Archaeologia* in the closing decade of the eighteenth century.[55] At the end of his article he reveals that he has derived his neologism from the expression 'seats that have been prepared' that he has found in liturgical rubrics referring to the officiating clergy's seats, and simply chosen one of a number of Latin words that are used for 'seats' in this phrase.

> 'And, lastly, the seats of the celebrants in latter times, of whatever kind they were, seem to have been known by no particular term. Thus they are simply named *sedes, sella, sedilia parata* by Tobias Lockner, in his "Practical instruction on the Missal and Breviary". As also in a Sarum Missal of 1515, and in one for the use of the Roman court in 1528.'[56]

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[50] *Sacrarium* and *lavacrum* (and the vernacular 'lavatory') appear to have been more common in inventories, but Durandus used both *piscina* and *lavacrum*; Durandus, Vol. 1, 23–24 (*Rationale* I, i, 39).

[51] Howlett and Ashdowne 2012, 3003; Latham 1965, 429; Kurath 1952, Vol. S–SL, 295.

[52] Howlett and Ashdowne 2012, 3004; Kurath 1952, Vol. S–SL, 293; Latham 1965, 429.

[53] Cole 1911, 226.

[54] See Chapter Five.

[55] Clarke 1794, 335. This origin is recognised by the *OED*: 'sedile, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Second edition 1989, Online version 2000) URL: oed.com/view/Entry/174697.

[56] Clarke 1794, 347.

In the early nineteenth century, sedilia are still usually referred to with the straight forward appellations of 'stone stalls' or 'stone seats'. For instance, the wooden Westminster Abbey sedilia (fig. 159), previously thought to be merely a canopy to the tomb of King Sebert, were recognised in an article of 1825 as 'answering in every respect to the exact situation to the *Sedilia Parata* of the Officiating Priests', recognising the work of Clarke, although they are subsequently referred to as 'stalls'.[57] A reference to 'sedelia, [sic] or stone stalls' in All Saints, Hastings is supported by a reference to Clark's *Archaeologia* article, which suggests that the name was beginning to gain acceptance in the 1820s.[58] Other terms persist in the literature, such as 'altar-seats' or 'subsellia' (the latter more often associated with choir stalls and misericords).[59] The definition of 'seat' in an 1838 dictionary of medieval architecture includes the modern definition of sedilia, and attributes this term to Clarke.[60]

The word then had already become common by the time the Oxford Movement promoted the revival of ritual fittings in new churches akin to medieval prototypes. A.W.N. Pugin, complained in 1840 to the ecclesiologist Dr. Daniel Rock that he was 'compleatly *alone*' in putting sedilia into his churches.[61] But from this decade onwards, sedilia became commonplace in new churches, and their name subsequently taken for granted. Little enquiry into their origins and development was entered into by antiquarians and architects, which might seem surprising with the great interest expressed by ecclesiologists for the seating arrangements of medieval churches, although this focused largely on recovering the ideal of free pews in the nave.[62]

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[57] Moule 1825, 1–7.

[58] Moss 1824, 101.

[59] At Marshfield church: 'on the left hand [i.e., right] of the altar are three *subsellia,* or stone stalls, with light canopies and finials, where officiating priests used to be seated'; Atkyns 1803, 333–334. Britton, quoting an earlier description from Storer, refers to Gloucester Cathedral's sedilia as 'four subsellia, or stalls for the officiating priests'; Britton 1836, Vol. 5, Gloucester, 62. At Rochester Cathedral 'the remains of three rich pointed arches, called the confessional but more properly altar-seats'; Storer 1819, Vol. 3, Rochester, (p). Despite the varying terms used in Storer's Cathedrals, Kendall's glossary included as an appendix to the volumes in 1819 but also published separately, defines sedilia with reference to the *Archaeologia* correspondence in the 1790s; Kendall 1818, 48–49.

[60] Britton 1838, 416–417, 418.

[61] 'To Daniel Rock: Ramsgate, Sunday 13 December 1840', in Belcher 2001, Vol. 1, 173–174.

[62] e.g. Radford 1849.

MEDIEVAL DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The reason for this relative lack of antiquarian inquiry into sedilia's true nomenclature is not due to oversight, but rather that documentary evidence for their existence and a clear indication of how they were referred to by contemporaries is extremely difficult to find. Unlike piscinas, sedilia do not seem to have been required by episcopal legislation.[63] Two early English diocesan synods mention piscina drains as a necessity in parish churches: Worcester II 1229 requires a '*sacrarium immobile*' and Exeter II 1286 a '*sacrarium lapideum et immobile*'.[64] A contract dated 1412, written in the vernacular for the rebuilding of the church at Catterick (North Yorkshire) between the Lady of the Manor Katerine de Burgh and the mason Richard of Cracall contains a unique extra-liturgical reference to stone sedilia which have survived to the present day (fig. 311). When describing the altar area, next to the vestry door it is requested that 'thre Prismatories couenably made be mason crafte with in the same quere'.[65] Since the word 'Prismatories' has never been found outside the Catterick document, it is widely held that it was an error on the part of the scribe for the Latin *presbyteries*.[66] Like the term *sedes ministrorum,* this word would identify the sedilia through its occupants: the *presbyter*, priest (or literally, 'elder'). The Catterick contract in itself is an extraordinary survival, and it is difficult to find any other documents that provide parallels with this use of '*presbyteries*' to describe what we now call sedilia. St Stephen, Coleman Street, London, inventoried in 1466 'i cloth of grene bokrame lyned for the **presbetory**', which has been interpreted as referring to a hanging for the back of the priest's seat.[67] However the word presbytery is used frequently in the Middle Ages as another word for the east end of a church building (i.e.: 'priest place').[68] It is unlikely that both a priest's seat and the liturgical area in which it stood were habitually referred to with the same word, and this item therefore is most likely to be a cloth hung in the chancel area. As Salzman wrote: 'the clerks who wrote these documents were not only, like all men,

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[63] It is noted there is no law or canon in the Church of England requiring sedilia or altar-chairs in Pinnock 1855, 741.

[64] Powicke and Cheney 1964, 171, 1006; Cragoe 1999a, 163–164.

[65] Raine and Salvin 1834, 9; Salzman 1952, 488.

[66] First suggested in Raine and Salvin 1834, 9. Kurath also regards it unique to the Catterick contract and that the error may have occurred via conflation with 'crismatorie'; Kurath 1952, Vol. O–P, 1230.

[67] Freshfield 1887, 42. Cited in Kurath 1952, Vol. O–P, 1230.

[68] Howlett 2009, 2451; Kurath 1952, Vol. O–P, 1230. For instance, the chronicle of the building of Evesham Abbey *c.*1202-18 uses it extensively. '*Chronicon abbatiae de Evesham usque ad a.1418, p.265 sqq.*' in Lehman-Brockhaus 1955-60, Vol. I, Nr.1638, 444.

liable to make slips of the pen, but often they were putting on parchment purely local technical terms of which they could at best give a phonetic rendering, when they did not complicate matters by attempting to latinize them', which appears to suit the unique term used at Catterick well.[69] Yet it could be that, rather than referring to the seats, the contract is specifying the work on the gables above them, in the sense of their prismatic, prism-like quality.[70] Further suggestion that the form or appearance of the sedilia was referred to in contracts, rather than their liturgical role as seats, comes in a 1505 contract regarding the furnishings of the choir of St James, Bristol (of which now only the nave survives). In this, three 'howsyngs' are specified opposite the [Easter] sepulchre.[71] This suggests that the term was used in the contract to indicate the extra labour on an architectural feature of three niches, using a term that could be just as easily used for tabernacles for saints or cupboards for books.

Regarding incidental references to sedilia outside of contracts and liturgical rubrics, the most common name in documentation seems to be, simply, the 'seats for the ministers'. The location of a burial in the Cisterican abbey of Newenham (Devon) in the mid-thirteenth century is described as '*iacet in dextra presbyterii prope sedes ministrorum*', that is, 'on the right of the presbytery near the seats of the ministers'.[72] Later medieval vernacular also seems to refer to the officiating clergy's seats in this straight-forward descriptive fashion. A list of items bequeathed in 1440 to the church of Somerby (Lincolnshire) includes 'three peces of [stened Clothe with byrdes of golde] for the sitting of the priest deken & subdecon' for the high altar.[73] The *Greyfriars' Chronicle* refers to the destruction of 'the place for the prest, dekyne, and subdekyne' in St Paul's Cathedral in 1552.[74] Another post-Reformation reference is from 1569/70, when St John Bow in Exeter removes 'the seage that the priest sitteth in'.[75]

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[69] Salzman 1952, v. This oft-quoted passage is adapted from Willis 1844, 1.
[70] I thank Nicola Coldstream for this suggestion.
[71] Harvey 1984, 265; citing Hicks 1932.
[72] Dugdale 1825, Vol. V, 693.
[73] 'Inventories of goods given by Sir Thomas Cumberworth, Knt., to the chapel of the Holy Trinity in Somerby church A.D. 1440 [Dodsworth MSS. 125, p.164]', in Peacock 1866, 184. There are two Somerbys in Lincolnshire, Dodsworth's transcription identifies the church as Old Somerby (St Mary Magdalene), near Gainsborough, but Peacock corrects him to say that the Cumberworths were from Somerby-juxta-Bigby (St Margaret). Both the dedication of the chapel and the high altar are given in the transcription as the Holy Trinity, so tying this document to a specific church should be approached with caution.
[74] Nichols 1852, 75. See Chapter Four.
[75] Whiting 1989, 103; Whiting 2010, 193. From churchwardens' accounts in Devon Record Office.

It is important to note that the word *sedilia* was applied to a variety of seats in the Middle Ages, and that it was not used specifically for the seats for the officiating clergy.[76] A set of visitations made to churches belonging to St Paul's Cathedral in 1297 offers a fascinating record of the condition and inventories of twenty-two parish churches in which the furnishings, liturgical books and other paraphernalia are described in some detail.[77] It is unusual for detailed records of parochial visitations to survive from such an early date, and they give an insight into the modest seating present in parish churches at the time. Fourteen churches were noted to possess *sedilia* in their chancels, always *distincta* (separate) and often '*cum formis et lectrinis*' (with a bench and a desk).[78] *Forma* was used in the customaries of Salisbury Cathedral to describe parts of the choir seating in a similar way: the minor clerics sat on the '*secunda forma*'.[79] The precise wording seems to imply that the seating was a continuous bench divided by armrests, rather than fully separate chairs or ornate choir stalls.[80] That these were not the seats for the officiating clergy is shown by references to other sets of seats in some of the chancels. Four of the churches were recorded as having '*Cathedre Ministrorum altaris*': 'chairs for the ministers of the altar'.[81] All of these churches had these *cathedrae* in addition to *sedilia* (benches), showing that they were not synonymous or an alternative. The use of *minister* is compatible with the nomenclature used for the sacred ministers in the Sarum Rite ('*sacerdos et sui **ministri** in sedibus ad hoc paratis*'). Unlike the choir benches, their descriptions are not as suggestive of their appearance or material, Navestock's *cathedre* described as '*deficiunt*' and Aldbury's as '*distincta*'. However, these *cathedre* are unlikely to have been references to sedilia built into the wall of the chancel. Comparing these informative church accounts to the corresponding material evidence is not straightforward. Many of the churches on the itinerary had

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[76] For more on the use of *sedilia* in the Middle Ages; Cameron 2015.

[77] Simpson 1895a. No seats are mentioned in the 1458 visitations, which are largely concerned with parish matters, or in the 1249-52 visitations to the same parishes in Simpson 1895b.

[78] Simpson 1895a: <u>Essex</u>: Barling, 9; Tillingham, 13; Heybridge, 17; Walton on the Naze, 20-21; Kirkby, 25; Thorpe-le-Soken, 27; Wickham St Paul, 34; Belchamp St Paul, 37; <u>Hertfordshire</u>: Furneux Pelham 40; Brent Pelham 43; Aldbury 46; <u>Middlesex/London</u>: West Drayton, 55; Willesden, 59; St Pancras, 61. Navestock (Essex) is unique in having '*sedile sufficiens*', 2.

[79] Latham 1965, 197. E.g.: Frere 1898, 13.

[80] See Chapter Two for the possibility of stone benches and armrests used as choir seating in parish churches.

[81] Simpson 1895a: Navestock, 5; Brent Pelham, 44-45; Aldbury, 47; West Drayton, 56. Wickham St Paul is recorded as having '*i cathedra*', 35; much as Belchamp St Paul has '*i sella parva*' (a small seat) listed, 37.

rebuildings in the later Middle Ages.[82] Some were almost wholly rebuilt in the nineteenth century making them useless as evidence.[83] Others were destroyed after the Reformation and have left no trace.[84] However three churches on the itinerary – Tillingham (Essex), Caddington (Bedfordshire) and Furneaux Pelham (Hertfordshire) – preserve stone sedilia in their chancels that are datable stylistically to the thirteenth century and therefore could have been present at the time of the visitations.[85] While these stone seats were not mentioned in the visitations, none of these three churches were recorded as to having *cathedrae*. Piscinas too were not recorded, except indirectly: a veil over the *sacrarium* was mentioned in several churches.[86] Stone sedilia, when encountered, may have been regarded as part of the chancel structure for the purposes of the assessment and thus not listed amongst the moveable furniture. Instead the word *cathedra* seems to have been used to record another type of celebrant's seat that has not hitherto been recognised.[87]

CATHEDRAE MINISTRORUM ALTARIS: *DOCUMENTED WOODEN ALTERNATIVES TO SEDILIA*

As well as the nouns '*sedes*' and occasionally '*sedile*' being used to refer to the seat for the celebrant priest, we can find the documentation of a number of *cathedrae* as described as being for his use. Stone sedilia are not ubiquitous in the chancels of English churches. The totals of the corpus survey (Chapter Two), when compared against the number of surviving medieval chancels, suggests that only approximately 20% of churches had stone sedilia. It has often been suspected that many churches had alternative arrangements for seating the officiating clergy involving wooden furniture more susceptible to decay and destruction. However, as shown above, this assumption has never been conclusively proven through documentary sources, with even Dissolution and Reformation inventories of furniture removed from churches

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[82] Navestock: *BoE Essex* 2007, 608; Barling: ibid., 109; Wickham St Paul: ibid., 834; Belchamp St Paul: ibid., 128-129; Sandon: *BoE Hertfordshire* 1977, 331 (for the contract of this rebuilding, see Chapter Six); Brent Pelham: ibid., 109-110.

[83] Kirkby-le-Soken: *BoE Essex* 2007, 515; Thorpe-Le-Soken: ibid., 779; Chiswick: *BoE London 3: North-West* 1991, 393; Twyford: ibid., 197; St Pancras: *BoE London 4: North* 1998, 348.

[84] Westlee: Simpson 1895a, xiv; Walton-on-the-Naze: *BoE Essex* 2007, 816.

[85] Tillingham: *BoE Essex* 2007, 786; Caddington: *BoE Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* 2014, 124; Furneaux Pelham: *BoE Hertfordshire* 1977, 144.

[86] Kirkby: Simpson 1895a, 26; Belchamp: ibid., 37; Furneaux Pelham: ibid., 41; Aldbury: ibid., 46; Drayton: ibid., 55.

[87] Bond gives the best survey of surviving chairs in churches, but does not consider them as alternative seating for the celebrant. Bond 1910, 111–130. Also; Cox and Harvey 1908, 253–255

rarely referring to ritual seats. Surviving furniture does not suggest that wooden benches serving as sedilia were widespread. As will be shown in Chapter Four, wooden sedilia did exist in great churches from the fourteenth century onward: the earliest being of *c*.1307 in Westminster Abbey (fig. 159). Yet these great-church sedilia were solutions to the problem of featuring sedilia in aisled choirs which have no wall next to the altar. In English parish churches, there are only four surviving examples of wooden furniture that plausibly served as sedilia, all from the fifteenth century, and which will therefore be considered in Chapter Six.

In the Middle Ages, as today, the primary definition of *cathedra* was the chair of a bishop, cathedral being a metonym derived from it.[88] For instance, in the twelfth century Reginald of Durham refers to the '*cathedram itaque episcopalem*' at the high altar.[89] The word was rarely used to refer to a secular royal throne, instead *sedes regis* being preferred, but it was often used for ecclesiastical chairs not related to the bishop.[90] For instance, the assessment of the property of an early fourteenth-century vicar of St Peter's church in Leicester after his imprisonment for murder records he owned a '*cathedram*'.[91] Of course every cathedral is expected to have a literal *cathedra*, such as the marble throne at Canterbury (in the fabric rolls of 1201-4, documented as *sede archiepiscopi*).[92] This, however, may have been solely an enthronement chair, and not the chair an archbishop would regularly preside in at the high altar. In the Exeter Cathedral fabric rolls, a *cathedra episcopi* is documented between 1328 and 1329.[93] This was distinct to the Bishop's throne at Exeter, with its famous wooden canopy at the south-east end of the choir stalls, which was referred to as *sedes episcopi*.[94] The Exeter *cathedra episcopi* may have been the 'ancient throne' seen in 1669 on the left-hand side of the altar, and thus where the Bishop would have presided from during Mass if he was not celebrating.[95] An inventory of St Paul's Cathedral in 1245 describes nine *cathedrae*, five of wood, three of iron, and one of silver-plated iron which was gilded and adorned with carving of human

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[88] Latham 1965, 76.
[89] Raine 1835, 166. For an identification of the separate seats allocated to the bishop in Canterbury Cathedral; Phillips 1949.
[90] Kurath 1952, Vol. C–D, 97 has a bishop's chair as its only definition.
[91] Bateson 1901, 370.
[92] Reeve 2003, 133
[93] Erskine 1981, 218, 221, 226, 227, 288. I thank Charles Tracy for these references.
[94] Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 54; Morris 1943, 132.
[95] Chope 1918, 108–109. I also thank Dr. Tracy for this reference.

heads.[96] Although two were related to bishops (one had belonged to the venerated Roger Niger (1228-41), the silver-plated chair claimed by the incumbent bishop), two were given by deans. One was described as being in the Chapel of St Radegund, which implies that these chairs were spread around the Cathedral, and thus may have been used by the celebrants at various altars. The most distinguished chantry in York Minster, beneath the east window and dedicated to the Virgin, was recorded as having a '*cathedra lignae*' in 1364.[97] An inventory of St Paul's from 1295 recorded textiles made for the '*cathedras ministrantium in choro*'; further demonstrating that there were chairs intended to be used in the Cathedral liturgy.[98]

In identifying any extant examples of such furniture, the problem of establishing both provenance and authenticity arises. A chair at Little Dunmow (Essex) has been often described as thirteenth-century and from the nearby abbey, but it is now regarded as a post-Reformation palimpsest of medieval woodwork.[99] The famous chair at Hereford Cathedral, a remarkable survival of the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, is now in a place of importance near the altar (fig. 5). However, its oldest known location was in the adjacent bishop's palace, meaning that it is only generally representative of furniture in the Middle Ages, rather than of that with a liturgical function.[100] The only surviving example of a piece of furniture, albeit an extraordinary one, with a documented function as the seat of a celebrant priest, may be the famous chair at Westminster commissioned by Edward I to hold the Stone of Scone: commonly known as the Coronation Chair (fig. 6).[101] There has long been some doubt whether it was originally intended for the crowning of the monarchs of England, as the first documented use of it at a coronation was not until Henry IV's in 1399.[102] The Chair was recorded in an inventory of *c.*1307 ('*cathedra lignea deaurata quam Rex fieri*') as next to the shrine of St Edward the Confessor,

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[96] Simpson 1887, 474–485, 447–448.

[97] Browne 1862, 294–295.

[98] '*Visitatio facta in thesauria s. Pauli Londoniarum, anno 1295, p.316*' in Lehman-Brockhaus 1955-60, Vol. II, Nr. 2910, 193.

[99] *BoE Essex* 2007, 548; Roe 1929, 63–64.

[100] Eames 1977, 210–211.

[101] Rodwell 2013 was published during the research for this publication and I thank Warwick Rodwell for citing my findings on seating nomenclature, forthcoming Cameron 2015.

[102] Binski 2003, 217; Legg 1901, xxii. Its depiction in a English Coronation Order (Cambridge, Corpus Christi MS 20) is argued by Rodwell to prove that it was used by Edward II in 1308; Rodwell 2013, 18. Binski argues that this image is generic, and also that the illustration was produced later than 1327, after Edward III's coronation. Binski's theory that the throne was redecorated for Edward III's coronation; Binski 2003, 216–217, 222, is no longer tenable in the light of the finding by Sauerberg and Tavares da Silva 2005 that the two layers of painted decoration interpreted by Percival-Prescott 1957 is mistaken. See also Sauerberg in Rodwell 2013, 101–102.

but the following clause regarding its use in the coronation has been struck out at unknown date, as if it were an error.[103] Whatever Edward I's plan for the Chair and the Stone at coronations, it is well-documented that both were used as a celebrant's seat.[104] A series of chronicles: from contemporary with the stone's removal to Westminster, through the early fourteenth century and into the fifteenth century relates the use of both the stone and the Chair as a seat for the priest, and its location by St Edward's shrine.[105] As well as the 1307 inventory, the Chair was termed *cathedra* in its documented manufacture during 1297-1300.[106] Previously in the King's Works, royal thrones were not termed as such.[107] The *Liber Regalis,* preserved in a manuscript of the late fourteenth century, calls the King's seat in Westminster Hall and the chair set on a raised platform in the Abbey crossing variably *sedes* or *thronus*.[108] However, those on which the clergy sit, and the king's chair on the south side before he ascends to the main throne, are called *cathedrae*.[109] Furthermore, recent investigations have shown that the spot where the Coronation Chair was chained down in the 1320s (when there was a threat of removing the stone back to Scotland) is still visible south of the shrine, proving its ritual position at the altar.[110] Although the Westminster Chair is a unique object, the records of its multiple uses by both celebrant priests and the coronation of monarchs may not be atypical, and many of these *cathedra* could have been used variously in daily liturgy, for enthroning bishops and for seating visiting secular delegates.

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[103] Hunter 1856, 252; Binski 2003, 216.

[104] Cameron 2015; Rodwell 2013, 21. I believe Edward I did not intend his commission to be any more than a trophy case at St Edward's Shrine, but that subsequently it was used at his son's coronation against his intent, leading to this confusion over its function.

[105] The 'Chronicle of the Picts and Scots (MS. Corpus Christi. Coll. Scalacronica)' in Skene 1867, 197; William Rishanger, 162–163; Thomas of Walsingham, 60; John Harding, 296.

[106] Exchequer Roll (E/101/357/1), as translated in Binski 2003, 207–208. The chair is also referred to as '*regali cathedra*' in an early fourteenth-century chronicle when it is recorded as '*iuxta magnum altare*'; Geoffrey le Baker, 40, and in 1395 when it is noted as '*cathedra Regis apud feretrum Sancti Edwardi*'; Rodwell 2013, 17.

[107] E.g.: *Cal. Close Rolls, Henry III* (*A.D.* 1237-1242), 26; *Cal. Close Rolls, Henry III* (*A.D.* 1242-1247), 293.

[108] Legg 1901, 82, 83, 84, 85.

[109] Legg 1901, 87, 91. The seat in which the queen on the left side however is termed *sedes*; Legg 1901, 101.

[110] Rodwell 2013, 39–41.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER ONE

This chapter has demonstrated that the dearth of scholarly literature on sedilia is partly due to their lack of presence in both liturgical and documentary sources. Clearly the position of sedilia south of the altar was formed and maintained by the ancient tradition of the Epistle and Gospel sides, but the medieval liturgy placed no further demands on their form nor emphasised their importance. This characterises sedilia as *adiaphora*, things inessential but not forbidden, and that, like the altarpiece, sedilia were a genre that came to prominence through stylistic trends and ornamental attitudes rather than as a matter of ecclesiastical doctrine.[111] The best evidence that we have for their use in the liturgy and their proliferation as an artistic idea is the material evidence spread around the parish churches of England, which will now be analysed in a taxonomical survey of the corpus.

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[111] Binski 2009, 31. See also Gardner 1993.

CHAPTER TWO: INTRODUCTION TO THE CORPUS OF SEDILIA IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Now that the nomenclature of sedilia and their liturgical function has been established, their conspicuous, manifest presence in the walls of churches throughout the medieval dioceses of England can be investigated. This has been catalogued into a digital database, included in handlist form in the appendix. This database has proved a vital tool for ascertaining the distribution of sedilia, both geographical and chronological, as well as understanding their common forms. This systematic approach has ensured that the most sculpturally-significant sedilia have not escaped my attention, but also that these are put into context by a majority of less impressive examples. Before we proceed with a narrative of their origin and development, this chapter will familiarise the reader with sedilia across England and Wales, and highlight how rare it is to see significant variations in their form.

AMASSING THE CORPUS: THE SEDILIA SURVEY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Primarily, the database is based on a survey through the entirety of the most up-to-date *Pevsner Architectural Guides*, that is, the *Buildings of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.* As the bishoprics of the principality of Wales were incorporated into the Province of Canterbury after their conquest under Edward I, Welsh churches are fully incorporated into the database. Scotland and Ireland also feature a number of sedilia, some rather significant, which will be mentioned in the thesis. However, due to the lower rate of survival for medieval churches and the current lack of a comprehensive coverage from the *Pevsner Architectural Guides* for the latter, while data has been amassed, no attempt will be made to analyse it under as much scrutiny like for England and Wales.[1]

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[1] A separate database has been kept for Scotland and Ireland which I believe to be reasonably complete. Although I have not attempted a survey of the same rigour for the Continent, a database has also been kept of continental medieval sedilia whenever they have been encountered, either in the literature or site visits by colleagues or myself. This does seem to indicate that sedilia are much rarer abroad as initially assumed: I have for instance, found no 'classic' sedilia in France.

The database records every item noted by Pevsner and his revisers as possible seats for the ministers of the altar in a medieval church. Any sedilia found in medieval chancels that are not recorded in the *Buildings of England* have also been added to the database.[2] Because Pevsner's descriptions of sedilia were occasionally extremely succinct (e.g.: 'C14 sedilia in chancel') and cannot be relied upon to give an indication of key characteristics – such as the number of seats and their comparative levels – I have searched for images of every church in the database to obtain a picture of the sedilia. The sources have included my own photographs, the Conway Library at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and the Internet. On the latter, most useful has been the photo-sharing website Flickr, which features many photographs of church interiors by enthusiasts. Often excellent photographs where sedilia are the primary subject have been obtained, but even low-resolution pictures of a general view into the chancel have yielded important information. The total number of entries in the database is over 1,300, and a picture has been obtained of just over two-thirds of all these features. When images were not obtainable, descriptions outside the *Buildings of England* have been used, including the now all-but-aborted *Royal Commission on Historical Monuments* and the not-yet-completed *Victoria County History*. English Heritage descriptions and church homepages have also been used to ascertain the type of sedilia and their general appearance. This has allowed me to confirm a total number of around 800 of the normative 'classic' type of sedilia, the main concern of this study which shall be defined below.

Sedilia in medieval churches not recorded in the *Buildings of England* nearly always, in my experience, turn out to be entirely nineteenth-century in their stonework. While this is usually ideal for my survey, sometimes an entirely remade set can represent an original feature. For instance, the sedilia at Charing (Kent) were ignored in the first two editions of *Kent: North East and East*, as their sculpture is entirely nineteenth-century.[3] However, it was recorded before the church was restored that there were 'three sedilia in the chancel, two partially filled up'.[4] It is now not possible to ascertain how much these sedilia reflect what was there before. If there is any indication that entirely nineteenth-century sedilia were based on now

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[2] Many of these are simple 'drop-sill' sedilia. The problems of dismissing these as unimportant will be discussed below.
[3] *BoE Kent: East* 1983, 263-264. Now called 'wholly renewed'; *BoE Kent: East* 2013, 272.
[4] Hussey 1852, 46.

lost evidence then they have been included in the database, otherwise they have not.[5]
Due to the frequently not well-recorded actions of nineteenth-century restorers, even
if minute scrutiny could be personally applied to every church in England, absolute
accuracy and comprehensiveness could never be achieved. However, the database is
a valuable resource in making an assessment of the popularity and distribution for
sedilia across England.

ASSESSMENT OF THE CORPUS: THE TYPES OF SEDILIA CLASSIFIED

This comprehensive survey has allowed for the different forms sedilia take to be
classified into a small number of different types. This taxonomical approach will
involve establishing a new nomenclature, most notably for the normative type of
stone sedilia, which I will dub the 'classic' sedilia.

'CLASSIC' SEDILIA

As has been implied in the introduction, the vast majority of stone seats on the south
side of English chancels consist of such common forms that they are easily
identifiable as sedilia, even out of their context with the altar. Due to the small
variations and overlap with other types that will be categorised below, the definition
has to be kept loose, but can be summarised thusly. The key characteristics of the
'classic' type are that the seats are set into the thickness of the wall, underneath a
series of arches, with supporting shafts to demarcate the individual places. The
overall effect is comparable to a short length of decorative arcading: but also
resembling individual niches, like separate tabernacles for the sitters. This general
character seems to have been highly valued in late-thirteenth- and fourteenth-century
England for sedilia, as there are very few sets that significantly depart from it, and
innovation is kept within its confines. There is no term in the literature to distinguish
this familiar form from other types of sedilia.[6] As there is no period nomenclature to
promote from the medieval sources, I have chosen to call it the 'classic' type, based
on Pevsner's definition of the adjective as signalling 'the highest achievement of a

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[5] For further discussion of Victorian sedilia in medieval chancels, see Chapter Six.
[6] A distinction between plain recesses and 'the normal type' is made in Randall 1980, 142.

style'.[7] Once the 'classic' type was 'discovered' by the late twelfth century, it appears to have endured in England as the ideal manner of seating the officiating clergy in the vicinity of an unaisled altar for some two hundred years, from *c.*1200 to *c.*1400, with lessened but still continued use from then until the Reformation. The corpus survey has identified some 800 medieval examples of 'classic' sedilia, a 62% majority of the 1,300 features gathered in the database (chart 1).

The dividing elements between the seats of 'classic' sedilia may be proper columns with capitals: either fully freestanding such as at Cherry Hinton (Cambridgeshire) (*c.*1220-30s) (cover illustration), or attached to a projecting part of the wall at Leominster (Herefordshire) (first half of the fourteenth century) (fig. 59). Sometimes detached and engaged columns are used in pairs, either decoratively, as at Bakewell (last quarter of the thirteenth century) (fig. 11) or to spring a vault, such as at Lewknor (Oxfordshire) (second quarter of the fourteenth century) (fig. 7). Columns are also frequently clustered for decorative effect, such as at Southwell Minster's south-east chapel (fig. 109). The shafts can also be entirely without capitals: simply a continuation of the arch moulding such as at Kempsey (Worcestershire) (1260s) (fig. 8), or even completely plain such as Broadhempston (Devon) (thirteenth century) (fig. 57).[8] That the shafts are proper columns is a common element in thirteenth-century sedilia, with over three quarters of sets featuring shafts with capitals, but in the fourteenth century, dividing shafts not featuring capitals creep into the majority. Shafts fully detached from the wall are in the majority in the thirteenth century, and while they fall into the minority in the Decorated period, they remain not unusual. Occasionally, a compromise is formed by the mural divisions between the seats being pierced by a small opening, such as the cusped lights between the uprights at Kersey north aisle (Suffolk) (mid-fourteenth century) (fig. 60). It appears that visibility from one seat to another within the sedilia was desirable, perhaps for communication between the ministers to allow for coordination in liturgical performance, but it was clearly not essential. However,

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[7] This Wolfflinian definition is included in glossaries of the *Pevsner Architectural Guides* up to the mid-1980s (e.g.: *BoE Leicestershire* 1984, 531) but subsequently has been omitted. It also has connotations of Classical architecture (also a term omitted from current *Pevsners,* although it does appear in the stand-alone glossary; Pevsner 2010, 44), and the similarly loaded term of 'classic' Gothic; Coldstream 2002, 27–28. Inventing a term that avoids such anachronistic period connotations, such as Frankl's 'akryism' (coined Frankl 1953, 105, see also Crossley in Frankl 2000, 16–17) seems unnecessary. The word 'classic' will be kept in quotes in this thesis to show that it is indeed an appellation of my own.
[8] For dating of Kempsey see Chapter Four.

the dividing shaft is a very important element of the 'classic' type, as it is extremely rare to find sedilia without full shafts between the arches. Exceptions that prove the rule are arches set on corbels at Staindrop (County Durham) (mid-thirteenth century) (fig. 127) and apparently dying into the wall at Alford (Lincolnshire) (fourteenth century).[9] It would be overly pedantic not to consider these particular sets that lack shafts to be 'classic' sedilia, as the arches still articulate the other important characteristic of the type. They are included in the overall statistics as such, but it should be acknowledged that they are extremely unusual.

In the standard unaisled chancel of the English parish church, it is very rare for the sedilia not to be fully recessed into the wall. At the thick-walled, rustic Early English chancel at Whalley (Lancashire) the simple sedilia are placed in a box-like construction in front of the wall (fig. 9). Therefore either the builders were concerned with the structural implications of recessing the seats, or these sedilia were added as an afterthought. The only other sedilia that have such a construction are Bishopstone (Wiltshire) (fig. 204), probably of the 1310s, and Sandiacre (Derbyshire) (fig. 203) of the 1340s, that will be examined together in Chapter Four. At Chelmorton (Derbyshire) (mid-fourteenth century) the seat projects from the wall and is backed by a shallowly carved panel behind.[10] At Wells Cathedral Lady Chapel (begun *c.*1323/4), a stone bench serves as the sedilia under projecting nodding ogee canopies which partly preserve the 'niche' character of this set.[11] However, this apparently simple idea of a projecting ledge is otherwise extremely rare in extant sedilia.[12]

This integral and distinctly mural quality, with the seats fully embedded into the building itself, is a very important aspect of the 'classic' type. Until the fourteenth century, sedilia were dependent on the presence of a wall next to the altar,

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[9] The only other sedilia I have found without shafts, and their tapering corbels showing they have not been destroyed, are at Castor (near Peterborough), Fairstead (Essex), Tillingham (Essex), Farthingstone (Northamptonshire), Mobberley (Cheshire), Burnham Thorpe (Norfolk) and Aldingbourne (Sussex). The impressive set at Fressingfield (Suffolk) is not recorded by Pevsner as it appears to be entirely nineteenth-century; *BoE Suffolk* 1974, 222-223, but it is pictured in Kroesen 2004, 152.

[10] A design so similar it must be from the same workshop is at Kirk Hallam (Derbyshire), now half-buried under the chancel floor. Another half-buried set of similar form can be found at Arnold (Nottinghamshire).

[11] See Chapter Four for the rarity of the nodding ogee.

[12] Other unrecessed sedilia are Whittlesford (Cambridgeshire), which is entirely contained within a window and therefore more like a 'drop-sill' and Winchcombe (Gloucestershire) which is suspected as a reset reredos; *BoE Gloucestershire 1* 1999, 728. The sedilia in the Cistercian Abbey at Dundrennan (Scotland) consist only of blind arches, that must have been designed to back a bench. They seem to be connected to the work of the 1180s first identified in Fergusson 1973.

and chancels having arcades on their south side must be a common reason for the absence of sedilia in a church. Freestanding sedilia in an arcade between the sanctuary and a chancel aisle are very unusual: those in cathedral-scale churches with fully aisled presbyteries will be considered in detail in Chapter Four. In smaller-scale parish churches, two unusual examples are Chewton Mendip (Somerset) and Eastbourne (Sussex) (fig. 10), both fourteenth-century additions to the Early Gothic arcades.

While sedilia could often be very plain, they also became sites for elaboration, but whilst maintaining the key elements of the 'classic' type. This began in the late thirteenth century when the space between the string-course and the arches became part of the sculptural field of the sedilia: an early example being from the 1260s with Kempsey (Worcestershire) (fig. 8) and another in the Bishop's Chapel at Wells from the 1280s.[13] This becomes much more widespread in the fourteenth century, making sedilia a unit separate from the rest of the wall and therefore, while still structurally integral with the building, a more distinct fitting. Sedilia decoration, rather than general form, will be considered in detail in Chapter Four, including the comparatively rare motif of gables over the arches which truly take these seats beyond mere function into the realms of conspicuous display and extravagant sculpture.

'Stepping' of sedilia seats and the order of seated clergy

It is a commonly remarked characteristic of 'classic' sedilia that the level of the seats often rises towards the east, resulting in a stepped appearance. However, just over half of all 'classic' sedilia have their seats on a single level. In 'stepped' sets, as the characteristic will be called, the height of the seats increases towards the east, while the level of the arches themselves usually remains consistent: such as at Cherry Hinton (Cambridgeshire) (cover illustration).[14] There are only occasional sets where the arches also rise, such as Bakewell (Derbyshire) (fig. 11). Sometimes only the eastern seat is raised, as at Eastling (Kent) (late thirteenth century) (fig. 12), and occasionally the western seat is the only one on a different level, such as Blakeney

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[13] Morris 1974a, 32–34.

[14] This is assuming that a dispute with the town which ended with the church being set on fire resulted in an immediate rebuilding; Gibson 2002, 972–977.

(Norfolk) (fig. 13).[15] However, there is not a single set of sedilia in England I have found where the seats are stepped out of this west-to-east hierarchy.[16] It has often been said that 'stepped' sedilia are common from the thirteenth century, but rare in later sets. It is certainly true that stepping dropped in popularity during the three centuries of sedilia, although not quite as dramatically as has been implied. The corpus survey shows that the number of sedilia with some form of stepping fell from half in the thirteenth century, to a third in the fourteenth and to a quarter in the fifteenth. However, all the apparently earliest 'classic' sedilia we will see in Chapter Two are fully stepped: most importantly the only fully authentic Romanesque 'classic' sedilia at St Mary de Castro in Leicester (fig. 80).

The stepping of sedilia is something that is rather ambiguous as to whether it was intended as symbolic, aesthetic or was simply a practical feature. The symbolic potential of the priest in the highest position is obvious. As Eric Fernie has stated, there is 'plentiful evidence' in most societies for the implication of higher status from a raised physical position.[17] The specific symbolic importance of steps up to a Christian altar and raised seats around it goes right back to the *Testamentum Domini* in the fourth century, where it was stated that the place of the episcopal throne 'be raised three steps up' along with the altar.[18] Although Durandus said in the late thirteenth century that the chancel is usually lower than the nave, he also implied that the altar itself was approached by steps.[19] The idea of clergy arranged by rank was maintained in choir stalls, by level of Holy Orders and also the hierarchy of chapter, and has been characterised as part of a 'masculine obsession' with grading and ranking.[20] A similar expression of the *cursus honorum* from subdeacon to priest may inform the stepping of sedilia to some degree.

A hypothesis that is used to explain why stepped sedilia fell out of fashion is that the seats reflected the actual Holy Orders of the officiating clergy within, and that by the fourteenth century, there were a greater number of men ordained as

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[15] Blakeney is an Early English vaulted chancel, and whilst the sedilia may represent an original feature, the mouldings of the arches have been refashioned in the fourteenth century.

[16] The stone sedilia in the Latin cathedral at Famagusta, Cyprus begun around 1300, are stepped east to west. Olympios 2010, 175–196 relates the building to the Cologne Cathedral workshop and to St Urbain, Troyes. See also Franke 2012.
Some late medieval continental wooden sedilia contradict the liturgical evidence for seating order gathered in Chapter One by having raised centre seats, e.g.: Ennetach (fig. 294).

[17] Fernie 2000, 253.

[18] Mango 1986, 25.

[19] Durandus, Vol. 1, 22, 33 (*Rationale* I, i, 28; I, ii, 13).

[20] Greenaway 1989, 63.

priests acting as assistants at Mass.[21] The flourishing recruitment rates of clergy by the early fourteenth century could corroborate this.[22] However, one cannot say unstepped sedilia 'clearly indicate' that the church had three priests.[23] By the late thirteenth century, surviving records show us that it was not uncommon for a man to progress from subdeacon to priest within a year.[24] As detailed in Chapter Seven, parish staff would frequently change, and permanent stone furnishings could not represent such transitory situations. Possibly referring to such speculation, Parsons states that 'much nonsense' has been written about sedilia stepping, and sees them as purely reflecting the chancel floor levels.[25] It also has been suggested that symbolic changes in floor levels are due to excessive Victorian ecclesiological pedantry, and that sedilia stepping was intended as a purely aesthetic effect toward the high altar.[26] What is clear however is that the floor level within the chancel itself, like sedilia, would *never* step down towards the altar. There are numerous objections as to the consideration that the motif could be entirely 'aesthetic', with no relationship to hierarchical symbolism or the changing floor level up to the altar. These include why 'stepping' was partly abandoned by the Decorated Style, why the effect was rarely enhanced by stepping the arches as at Bakewell (fig. 11), and why other features such as decorative arcading and windows did not utilise the same effect.

It has been shown in Chapter One how there are liturgical sources that prove that the priest took the eastern seat in the Middle Ages: as was noticed by Bond, in contradiction to post-Trent evidence.[27] Although it has been shown that there was no mention in the Sarum Rite as to seating order, there is another important rubric that further argues against a central position for the priest. A now rarely-enacted arrangement is that at a number of key points in the Mass, the priest stands before

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[21] This explanation is cautiously prefixed with '[it is] said' in Cox and Harvey 1908, 68.
[22] For example in Lincoln diocese between 1290s and 1340s the number of ordinands increased fourfold; Robinson 2008, 52–77, 64–65.
[23] This popular assumption is expressed for example in Brown 1998, 231. It is refuted by Torr 1931a, 158.
[24] In one survey of bishops' registers, it was found a quarter of clergy achieved this. Half took a further year to progress from deacon to priest; Robinson 1985, 7.
[25] Parsons 1986, 171.
[26] Cragoe 1999a, 171–172. Cragoe argues that there were no chancel steps in medieval chancels, but provides insufficient evidence for this; Cragoe 1999a, 176–178. She cites Rivenhall (Essex), which had an unbroken floor level c.1325; Rodwell 1985, 141, but considering Cragoe is concerned with the thirteenth century (when, in contrast to the fourteenth century, stepped sedilia were very common) this evidence may actually support the link of stepped sedilia to floor levels. For a Victorian ecclesiological position on floor levels; Anon 1844, 161.
[27] Bond 1916, 181. Cragoe 1999a, 170 however uses this later evidence to argue for a central position for the priest.

the altar, with the deacon on the first step (*proximu gradu*) and the subdeacon on the second step (*secundo gradu*).[28] With this rubric of the Sarum Rite in mind, it becomes even more difficult to argue that when the officiating clergy rose from their sedilia, they changed places on the steps, and then changed back again to sit down. Even more persuasive than the liturgical evidence that the priest occupied the eastern seat is the material evidence of English stone sedilia. In the small number of sedilia that emphasise one of their seats through means other than stepping, it can be seen in the vast majority to be the easternmost one. Extra levels of decoration, endowing a higher tier of status, were usually reserved for the piscina. However it is occasionally found over the celebrant's seat: such as the fourteenth-century set at Waltham (Kent) (fig. 14), where the easternmost seat is distinguished from other two not just by raising it, but cresting it with a cinquefoil while the assistants are given mere trefoils. A similar conceit is used in the late-thirteenth-century sedilia at Iver (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 15), where the eastern seat is trefoiled when the other two are pointed. The very similar fourteenth-century sets at Westbere and Willesborough (both Kent) raise the crenellation above the eastern seat and embellish its arch with large pointed trefoil motifs. In the destroyed set at Chatham (Kent) (fig. 142), the diaper ornament of the western seats was in contrast to the lavish carving of the east set, which had swirling vegetation with animal motifs, which may reflect how sedilia were set up with hanging fabrics to emphasise the priest's place.[29] Other sets show more subtle attention to the priest's seat. Ayers has shown that on the lavish sedilia of the 1340s at Dorchester-on-Thames (Oxfordshire) (fig. 258), the decorative motifs around the eastern pair of arches are human, as opposed to animals.[30] At Claypole (Lincolnshire) (fig. 217), the *c.*1360s sedilia in the chancel have their soffits studded with tiny little decorative motifs which are only figurative in the eastern seat, including a squirrel eating a nut.[31]

A well-known exception that appears to contradict the eastern seat being for the priest is to be found in the apparently mid-to-late-thirteenth-century sedilia in the largely Perpendicular church at Stepney in East London (fig. 16).[32] The easternmost seat is stepped up from the others, but the centre arch is enriched with fine foliage

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[28] Frere 1898, 67.
[29] See Chapter Four.
[30] Ayers 1991, 79–80. See Chapter Five.
[31] After 1340, probably into 1350s, see Chapter Five.
[32] In addition to post-Trent liturgical evidence, Cragoe uses these sedilia to argue that the priest sat in the middle seat in medieval England; Cragoe 1999a, 170.

carving that suggests a date of the third quarter of the thirteenth century, a semi-naturalistic style akin to Westminster Abbey and Stone-by-Dartford (fig. 102).[33] However, a drawing by John Wykeham Archer made in 1845 reveals that the sedilia in the church now must be almost entirely nineteenth-century work (fig. 17).[34] Wykeham Archer shows the wall shortly after the niches were re-exposed, and it can be seen that they were originally a piscina and stepped double sedilia, with sharper arches and a different hood-mould, and the foliage in an extremely decayed condition.

Another most troublesome set for seating order, coincidentally also in Greater London, are the sedilia in Hayes (fig. 18), formerly in Middlesex. They are part of the fairly well-preserved interior of a lanceted thirteenth-century chancel, the most major alterations being the usual inserted Perpendicular window in the east wall, and a Decorated south-east window.[35] The thirteenth-century windows have rere-arches with rather accomplished foliate and grotesque label-stops, the sedilia clearly part of the original build as they are integral with the surviving string-course.[36] The middle seat of the sedilia is some 20cm wider than its flanking seats, suggesting its priority, but a pre-restoration drawing shows that it has been restored from two seats, with a seemingly fifteenth-century aumbry between it and the piscina (fig. 19).[37] While the Hayes sedilia may have been cut down from three when the aumbry was inserted, they are not sufficient to argue against the eastern position of the priest.[38]

With the celebrant's seat confirmed unanimously as the easternmost in medieval England, the aesthetic, practical and symbolic can all be legitimately interpreted in the 'stepping' of sedilia. A stepped floor would give the altar an exalted, elevated platform making it more visible from the nave, and it is most likely that the sedilia were deliberately placed over these steps to reflect the relation of the three *gradi* to priest, deacon and subdeacon.[39] Like the number of seats being set at three, this feature would act as a permanent reminder of the correct performance of

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[33] *BoE London 5: East* 2005, 447.
[34] British Museum, prints and drawings, 1874, 0314.213.
[35] Dated 'about 1220' in Mills 1874, 17.
[36] Mills 1874, 18–19.
[37] Also recorded are signs of painting and gilding; Mills 1874, 20–21, pl. 6.
[38] In the south transept of Medbourne (Leicestershire) the central arch of the sedilia breaks through the window sill slightly when the others do not, however this could be due to poor setting of the arches more than symbolic intent.
[39] This connection of liturgical performance to object was observed in Rock 1905, 224.

the liturgy. This tying of sedilia to floor levels would imply that level pavements throughout chancels (except for a dais around the altar) became more common in the fourteenth century. Investigating the truth of this assumption and the possible reasons for it are beyond the scope of this thesis.[40] However, it is possible that the idea of the stepped sedilia had become such an ingrained idea as representing rank that the motif remained to be used in chancels with level floors. The levels of the chancel under the splendid fourteenth-century Decorated sedilia at Cliffe (Kent) have clearly been altered, as the seats are now set uncomfortably high. The floor is now stepped partly in relation to the sedilia, but the moulded shafts that continue down to the floor can be seen to become unworked foundations at the same height. Therefore it would seem to be a motif born out of habitual practicality, but that later became engrained: one of many such formal traditions regarding sedilia in the English church.

Although it will be shown throughout this thesis that sedilia are embellished with up-to-date architectural motifs that are in fashion on other monuments, the 'classic' type largely endures from the thirteenth century onwards as the most popular appearance of sedilia. The sedilia that depart from this 'classic' type will now be explored and defined.

THE SEDILE

Since one of the defining aspects of the 'classic' type is the series of arches and their demarcation, niches designed for a single person cannot be included within the definition. Although the Latin singular *sedile* is used by some for the wide, undemarcated 'single-niche' sedilia I will define below, it is more logical to use the term to refer to a single seat that is clearly designed for only one man. In this sense it has a very close formal relationship to the 'classic' sedilia of two or three seats, but having only jambs, it cannot have features such as detached columns. Some can be quite elaborate, such as the late thirteenth-century insertion at Chalk (Kent) (fig. 20), which has rich mouldings and a head carved under the piscina; or the nodding ogee arch of the fourteenth-century example at the south aisle of Princes Risborough (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 28).

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[40] A hypothesis is that the increasing size of chancels made it impractical to raise the whole floor level.

However, these solitary seats represent a paradox. Sedilia, as have been shown, were used for seating the officiating clergy during a High Mass (*missa solemnis*) while the choir are singing the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, and for two of their complement while one is giving his scriptural reading. A single seat indicates one priest, without a deacon and subdeacon but instead only a lone server, celebrating a *missa privata* ('privated': deprived of the elaborate or special).[41] Thus all the parts of the Mass otherwise sung by the choir, and all the Bible readings usually said by the other two ministers, would be said by this one priest alone. The only function that the sedile could have then was to seat him while the server prepared the altar before the consecration. It is possible then that many of the single niches next to piscinas were not intended as a single seat, but as a credence shelf for preparing the bread and wine before it was taken to the altar.[42] What initially appears to be a sedile at Egginton (Derbyshire), dated stylistically *c.*1300, may have dimensions of a comfortable size in which to sit, but it is difficult to reconcile with the piscina, which is at the same level as the seat.[43] The piscina drain is now awkwardly low to use, and if the floor level was lowered to make it hand-height, the seat would become unusable.

The earliest extant example of a sedile is also the earliest English evidence for any south-wall seating for the use of the celebrant, at Avington (Berkshire), *c.*1130s (fig. 72), to be considered in Chapter Three.[44] The remodelled Saxon chancel at St Mary de Castro, Dover has a single pointed niche with dogtooth which has been allied with the work of William the Englishman at Canterbury in the 1180s.[45] Subsequently, I have identified around twenty examples of single seats in thirteenth-century parish church chancels. Of these Shipdham (Norfolk), dated *c.*1190 by Pevsner on account of its crude capitals and half-pillar piscina, is a suitably authentic early example (fig. 21), evidently untruncated and with the seat at suitable height next to the piscina. Warlingham (Surrey) is an unusual partial survival which may represent the use of the sedile in the sort of smaller parish

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[41] For the development of the 'private Mass' see Vogel 1986, 156–159.
[42] Bond 1916, 164–175; Anon 1847.
[43] Cox 1875, Vol. 4, 189–191.
[44] At St Mary in Shrewsbury there is a niche made of two columns and chevron ornament at floor level, which is often thought to be a sedile as it is next to a piscina-like niche (but with no drain); *BoE Shropshire* 2006, 530. I believe its context in the building to be too unsure to prove it as an extremely early example of a sedile.
[45] Scott 1863a, 4–5.

church that rarely survived to the present day unscathed.[46] The south wall of the (current) chancel (fig. 22), incorporating part of the medieval unaisled nave, has features such as engaged shafts and dying mouldings that suggest a later thirteenth-century date despite its simplicity.[47] It displays an impressive array of integral furniture: a sedile and piscina for the high altar, a priest's door, a low-side window, a rebate for the rood beam, and then another sedile and piscina for the altar in the former nave.[48] This illustrates the provision of services for both sides of the screen with apparently the same level of service by a single priest.

There are even fewer examples of a single sedile in fourteenth-century Decorated chancels: only around fifteen. Ebbesbourne Wake (Wiltshire) resembles one bay of 'classic' sedilia (fig. 23), with a low crocketed gable, much as the sedile and piscina inserted into the fabric at Raunds (Northamptonshire), which previously evidently only had a single piscina further east (fig. 24).[49] Frodsham (Cheshire) is particularly notable for it has a prominent nodding ogee, a rare motif on sedilia.[50] North Barningham (Norfolk) (fig. 25), with an extravagant multi-cusped ogee arch, is wider than a single seat of typical 'classic' sedilia, but it would still seem to be designed for only one man: showing how a sedile was not necessarily a humble feature.[51] Often a problem is ascertaining if a sedile was actually part of partially destroyed or still-covered sedilia, such as at Clixby (Lincolnshire), where one simple narrow ogee niche has been uncovered, but with adequate room for two more on either side.

Examples of single sedile are proportionally rather common in private chapels of all dates, such as at Goodrich Castle (Herefordshire), the Prior's Chapel in Castle Acre Priory (Norfolk) (fig. 26) and Warkworth Castle (Northumberland) (fig. 27) of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. The single sedile inserted into the chancel in the late thirteenth century at Brook (Kent) (fig. 63), a church with a grand and unusual *westwerk* commissioned by a twelfth-century prior

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[46] For the problem of the loss of the simplest parish churches in contextualising the surviving evidence for sedilia, see Chapter Seven.

[47] *BoE Surrey* 1971, 501-502.

[48] A similar arrangement can be found in Upper Winchendon (Buckinghamshire), which has an apparently early, thirteenth-century sedile in the chancel, and a drop-sill sedile (see below) before the chancel arch for the nave altar. For low-side windows; Barnwell 2006.

[49] For ensembles like this with a seemingly surplus furnishing, we should remember after Victorian restoration we have what is like an x-ray: we are seeing everything at once, and that this older piscina was probably plastered over when the new one was installed.

[50] Crossley 1937, 13.

[51] Similarly sized is the ogee niche with a finial at Denton (Sussex).

of Canterbury, may also reflect the building's continuing association with the priors of Canterbury and a quasi-private status.[52] Although not proportionally more common in south chapels compared to main altars, the chapel context would be appropriate for the elaborate fourteenth-century sedile that are directly between a piscina and a tomb niche in the south aisles of Wolston (Warwickshire) and Princes Risborough (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 28).[53] There are two examples of a sedile at subsidiary altars in Chester Cathedral: a much-restored late-thirteenth century example with a bar-traceried piscina in the south choir aisle, and also a late-fourteenth-century example with a tip-up vault over both the sedile and piscina in the southernmost chapel of the vast south transept (fig. 29).[54]

It should be concluded that a single sedile is not a typical feature. In the early thirteenth century it may have been included in simple chancels with low expectations for service at the high altar, not necessarily proving the permanent absence of a deacon and subdeacon throughout the church's existence. But when the 'classic' three-seat sedilia had become established as the norm, a single sedile appears to have been most common where a *missa privata* was celebrated for practical rather than financial constraints, such as private chapels and chantries endowed with a single priest.

'SINGLE-NICHE' SEDILIA

While the sedile can be considered as a single-seat variant of the classic type, what I call the 'single-niche' sedilia is distinct from both in that it is clearly wide enough for a number of sitters, and thus lacks the individual tabernacle-like quality. As will be explored in Chapter Three, this type appears to have been the precursor to the 'classic', appearing in the twelfth century. For instance, they are found in a number of twelfth-century Cistercian churches in England, Ireland and Europe, the best

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[52] *BoE Kent: East* 2013, 151-152; Rigold 1969, 270.

[53] Also found in south chapels are a thirteenth-century sedile and piscina with heavy moulded frame in the south aisle of Bottisham (Cambridgeshire), and a fourteenth-century sedile in the south chapels of Burstwick (East Yorkshire), Lillingstone Lovell (Buckinghamshire) and Nuneaton (Warwickshire), the latter again with the otherwise rare motif of the nodding ogee.

[54] The south choir aisle chapel's termination has been 'restored' with a polygonal apse. It should be noted that because of these two examples of a sedile, alongside the Lady Chapel sedilia (fig. 155) (possibly a sedile, see Chapter Four) and four-seat high altar sedilia (fig. 175), Chester Cathedral has the most of sets of sedilia of any medieval building.

survivor being that at Kirkstall Abbey (North Yorkshire) dating to the late 1150s
(fig. 75).

Despite more surviving chancels from the Gothic period, this type of sedilia
continues to be only very occasionally found in England in both Early Gothic and
mid-thirteenth-century churches, such as Sutterton (Lincolnshire) (fig. 30) and I have
found none that clearly date from the end of that century.[55] In the fourteenth century
it is even rarer to find sedilia of single-niche type. At New Romney (Kent), the three
identical single-niche sedilia at the aisled east end are only demarcated by the
characteristic stepping of the seats.[56] The chancel at St Mary the Great in Cambridge
has an unusually elaborate example.[57] An example such as Northbourne (Kent) (fig.
31) originally entirely undemarcated and undecorated except for a single chamfer is
representative of the extremely plain appearance of most of these features.[58] Many
other such single-niche sedilia with suspiciously cleanly-cut arches may have been
inserted in nineteenth-century restorations, and their lack of stylistic features makes
it impossible to be sure of their date.[59] With the demarcation of sedilia into
individual narrow niches such an essential characteristic of the 'classic' type, the
single wide arch, often used elaborately in tomb niches to shelter a single recumbent
body, was evidently not widely considered appropriate for upright, seated ones.
Almost all the later examples remain as simple and unornamented as their twelfth-
century predecessors, suggesting that the type was only used for its cheapness. In the
fifteenth century however, a number of sedilia, such as Southwold (Suffolk) (fig.
305), display a lack of visual demarcation of seats. This may be due to a formal
exchange with wooden furniture, which will be looked at in Chapter Six.

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[55] Some possibly very early parish-church examples are Whatlington (Lincolnshire) and Stockbridge
(Hampshire), both rather unsophisticated buildings stylistically.
[56] Very similar designs, which can be all broadly considered as early-fourteenth-century, are at Great
Henny (Essex), Stanground (Huntingdonshire) and Whitchurch (Buckinghamshire).
[57] The single use of the ogee in the cusping gives an early-fourteenth-century date.
[58] The lower part of the niche is entirely restored and the triangular-arched piscina is difficult to date.
The most likely scenario is that the whole ensemble is a late Perpendicular addition to the thirteenth-
century thick-walled lanceted chancel. Similar late Perpendicular simplicity is also in the single niche
at Birling (Kent), where the chancel was rebuilt in the sixteenth century; *BoE Kent: West* 2013, 128.
[59] For instance Emneth (Norfolk), which has its chancel sedile and piscina ignored in *BoE Norfolk 2*
1999, 332-333.

'DROP-SILL' SEDILIA

The second most common architectural seating solution in English parish churches after 'classic' sedilia are 'drop-sill' sedilia. These are frequently no more than an embrasure made below a south window next to an altar, with the low sill serving as a seat. They frequently have absolutely no elaboration or decoration, such as in the chancel at Kersey (Suffolk) (fig. 32). Such window-seats are an architectural feature not peculiar to churches, also found in domestic buildings, reflected in their use in church naves such as at Wiveton (Norfolk). However, very often in English churches, it is only the south-east window of the chancel next to the piscina that is treated in this way, proving that these drop-sills were intended as sedilia. Because no accounts of parish churches comprehensively record them, the survey of the corpus of drop-sills is far from complete, and, barring a photograph of every south-east chancel window of every parish church in England, never could be. However, they are mentioned frequently enough in the *Buildings of England* to get a good idea of their distribution across the country.[60] Despite the simplicity of the idea, in a majority of England's counties, I have not recorded any drop-sills.[61] It has not been unnoticed that they are most common in East Anglia, and my survey confirms this observation (map 6).[62]

Often the lights of the window appear to be equal with the space for the number of sitters, but there are occasionally examples where the embrasure created by a drop-sill cuts deeply into the jambs of the window, such as under the two-light south window of the late-thirteenth-century chancel at Cley-Next-Sea (Norfolk),

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[60] Pevsner's note-taking means that some drop-sills are accorded more prominence than others in his descriptions. For instance, the drop-sill in Eaton Socon (formerly Bedfordshire, now Cambridgeshire) is described with great care as if it is an unusual feature in *BoE Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* 1968, 236. This is probably because the description was written during Pevsner's work on one of the earliest volumes, Cambridgeshire, in the 1950s, before the plethora of drop-sills in Norfolk and Suffolk that he would encounter in the '60s. I thank Pevsner reviser Simon Bradley for this observation.

[61] Since many drop-sills are entirely plain features, they are often not mentioned in the *Buildings of England,* therefore it is difficult to give definitive figures, but I currently have recorded 34 in Norfolk, 22 in Suffolk, 12 in Essex, 11 in Oxfordshire, 11 in Gloucestershire, 5 in Somerset, 5 in Kent, 3 in Buckinghamshire, 2 in Shropshire, and 1 in Leicestershire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire, Northumberland, Huntingdon/Peterborough, Greater London, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Sussex and Devon.

[62] Brown 1998, 252.

suggesting that it was designed to allow for three sitters.[63] Some drop-sill sedilia, such as Cockfield (Suffolk) are stepped in the manner of many 'classic' sedilia (fig. 33), but this is unusual, appearing in only 20% of my 178 gathered examples, and it should be considered that the visual interest created increases the likelihood of stepped drop-sills being included in architectural descriptions. Frequently there is no decoration to a drop-sill whatsoever, the association with the window above its only claim to grandeur. This often makes it difficult to ascertain whether drop-sills are coeval with the fabric or inserted later. The latter seems to have happened at Cockfield (fig. 33), where the springing of an arch from a *c.*1300 piscina appears to be all that is left of the original 'classic' sedilia, now replaced by the dropped sill of an inserted Perpendicular-Style window.[64] In chancels heavily restored or rebuilt in the Victorian period, a drop-sill may have been added even by an otherwise careful and archaeologically-minded restorer as an ecclesiological concession. Therefore drop-sills in such churches, particularly those outside their usual regions of popularity, may not represent an original feature from the medieval building.

Although they can be found occasionally on 'classic' sedilia, drop-sill sedilia often incorporate a so-called 'angle piscina' in their eastern jamb, where the drain is accessible from both the front and the side.[65] Some angle piscinas are clearly of a piece with the drop-sill, such as one with a freestanding column at Barney (Norfolk) (fig. 34), which helps to date the sedilia, but sometimes this may have been a conversion of an earlier, regular piscina when a drop-sill was added, such as at Themelthorpe (Norfolk).[66] However, I have not found any angle piscinas that could date from before *c.*1250, suggesting that drop-sill sedilia were a later phenomenon than 'classic' sedilia: which will be shown in Chapter Three as to first develop in the late twelfth century.

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[63] This can be seen in lancets at Hailes (Gloucestershire) and Shelley (Suffolk), and with another two-light traceried window at Stanton south aisle (Suffolk). All except Shelley have trefoiled heads at the sides of the embrasures.

[64] The original sedilia were probably coeval with the tomb niche surmounted by an extraordinary triple-gable canopy opposite of pre-ogee style, likely from the first couple of decades of the fourteenth century.

[65] Jessiman 1957, 61–62; Cox and Harvey 1908, 62.

[66] The Barney piscina is dated 'late C13' in *BoE Norfolk 1* 1997, 377. Similar angles with simple columns and moulded capitals can be found in Norfolk at Great Cressingham, Little Dunham and All Saints in Warham. The pointed trefoil heads of the drop-sill embrasures at Bedingham and Cley-Next-The-Sea demonstrate the style of the later thirteenth century.

Called 'cheapest of all' sedilia by Bond, it is nevertheless difficult to entirely reject drop-sill sedilia as uninteresting.[67] As well as being an architectural solution to the liturgical needs of the parish church, in the fourteenth century they can have features that make them equal to or even surpass some 'classic' sets in their levels of decoration. For instance, at Hockham (Norfolk) and Standlake (Oxfordshire) (fig. 35), low armrests of a single flat piece of stone carved with two knops are placed between the seats.[68] Armrests are treated with sophisticated Decorated Style invention in the fourteenth century at St Martin in Colchester (fig. 36), where the armrest is formed directly from the mullion of the window behind, something that is done even more elaborately at Mildenhall (Suffolk). At Earl Stonham (fig. 37) and Gazeley (both Suffolk) some sort of quadruped, probably a lion, is carved on the armrest (beheaded in both cases), a motif otherwise only known on episcopal and royal thrones.[69] Occasionally the window embrasure as a whole was given extra elaboration to accentuate the seat within, as at Beeston Regis (Norfolk), where the embrasure head is filled with a second set of tracery, the two mullions of which descend to separate the seats.[70] The style of all the more sophisticated drop-sills noted above are consistent with the chancels they are in. This, along with the fact the majority are found in Decorated period chancels, shows that the peak of drop-sill sedilia's popularity was parallel to that of the 'classic' type. However, due to the prominence given to windows in Perpendicular architecture, they are more popular in proportion to the amount of sedilia on the whole after 1400, particularly in the church-building boom in East Anglia.

The forms of some drop-sills are so closely connected to 'classic' sedilia that it becomes difficult to categorise them. It is not unusual to find a recessed, sedile-like seat placed directly next to a drop-sill, continuing it as single set of sedilia. Strangely, it is usually the westernmost seat that is recessed, as at Anstey (Hertfordshire), where the priest's seat is raised by a step within the two seats of the

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[67] Bond 1916, 182.

[68] Other drop-sill with armrests are Little Dunham, Narford, Buckenham (all Norfolk), Asthall, (Oxfordshire), Thurning (Northamptonshire), Wigmore (Herefordshire), Drayton Parslow (Buckinghamshire) and Stanton (Suffolk).

[69] For instance at Lincoln, Tracy 2002. See Chapter Five for more discussion of the rarity of lions on sedilia in relation to the unprecedented number on the set at Exeter Cathedral.

[70] This sort of 'interior' tracery can be paralleled in the north window of the Nine Altars transept at Durham and the west window of the fourteenth-century Guild Chapel at Waltham Abbey (Essex).

window embrasure.[71] At Dennington (Suffolk), the westernmost seat is given what appears to be undue prominence by a large canopy, which suggests perhaps equal emphasis was placed on the priest's seat by some other means which have been lost.[72] However, having the priest's seat in a drop-sill means that the south-east window would better serve as a light source for the altar it was adjacent to, something that was clearly an important reason in the choice of drop-sill over 'classic' sedilia. Sometimes it is apparent that, ambitiously, the carved decoration of the recessed seat was intended to continue across the width of the drop-sill seats. Due to the delicate nature of these canopies, none from the Middle Ages seem to have remained intact, and they may have been originally more common. Great Horwood (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 38) is the best example of this trope, but all between the initial springing halves of the jamb arches is nineteenth-century restoration, supported by iron bars. Clear evidence of broken springers without intervening restoration can be seen at Cotton (Suffolk) (fig. 39) and a number of other East Anglian churches.[73] At Ascott-Under-Wychwood (Oxfordshire) (fig. 40) the canopies in front of the embrasure are a simpler openwork tracery screen.[74] More rarely, an arcade articulating the form of the 'classic' type was shallowly carved in stone at the back of a drop-sill embrasure, such as at Sandon (Hertfordshire) (fig. 41).[75]

If the top of 'classic' sedilia under a window have been vandalised and destroyed, the resulting embrasure can resemble drop-sill sedilia, such as at Wood Dalling (Norfolk), which has capitals at each jamb that could have supported the stonework of the arches over the seats. It is possible that some drop-sills may represent more ornate features that have been removed. However the evidence is overwhelming that drop-sills were mostly an inexpensive alternative to 'classic' sedilia used particularly in East Anglia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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[71] Similar at St John's Hospital in Duxford (Cambridgeshire), Bressingham (Norfolk), Alpheton (Suffolk). The eastern seat is recessed at Lackford (Suffolk) and Snave (Kent).

[72] See also Preston (Rutland), and possibly Queen Camel (Somerset). See Chapter Five for the evidence of stained glass forming an iconographical ensemble with the sitters in the sedilia below.

[73] Similar remains at Alpheton (Suffolk), Buxhall (Suffolk) and Southrepps (Norfolk).

[74] This treatment of the sedilia is also said to occur at Idbury, yet the chancel there does not even have a drop-sill sedilia; *BoE Oxfordshire* 1974, 423. The very similar sedilia at Shipton-under-Wychwood are said to be added by Street in 1859; *BoE Oxfordshire* 1974, 759.

[75] Also at Luton (Bedfordshire) (fig. 216), Acle (Norfolk) and the chancel of St Martin in Leicester (now the Cathedral).

STONE ARMCHAIRS

A comparatively rare but important category of stone seating in churches is of two upright armrests with a built-up seat in between. This gives the appearance of a stone chair or throne most unlike the 'classic' type of sedilia. Such stone thrones would appear in the centre of a bench for the clergy around the perimeter of an apse called a *synthronon*, popular in the first millennium of Christianity: a precursor of sorts to sedilia that will be investigated in Chapter Three. Of authentically ancient stone chairs we have very few genuine survivals. At Norwich Cathedral the pair of badly-eroded armrests that form a throne in the Norman apse were plausibly brought from the previous site of the see at Elmham, where they originally may have formed a north armrest of a central throne and the south armrest of a flanking bench.[76] Similarly, two stones carved with lions found at Monkwearmouth (County Durham) in 1866, dated late-seventh-century, have been interpreted as the left-hand armrests of a central seat and its flanking bench (fig. 42).[77] A number of other comparable Anglo-Saxon stone furnishings have been found at Lastingham (North Yorkshire) and Escomb (County Durham), showing that such arrangements were not just confined to the greatest monasteries and cathedrals.[78]

Two well-known examples of stone chairs, in this case cut from a single block, are found at Hexham Abbey (fig. 43) and Beverley Minster, only the former sophisticated enough to be convincingly dateable stylistically to the late seventh century.[79] Both can be supported by documentary evidence as associated with Sanctuary from Crown prosecution.[80] However, although Sanctuary was granted

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[76] Radford 1959; Fernie 1993, 29; Heywood 1996, 91 all date the armrests as late Saxon, but Whittingham 1979, 69–75 attempts to date them as far back as the original East Anglian cathedral of c.630-647 at Dunnoc which is over-ambitious considering their condition and lack of parallels. The north armrest of the bench was apparently found during excavations under the tower in 1974, and allegedly fragments of the south throne armrest can be found in the walling of the deanery garden; Whittingham 1979, 65. For the relocation from Elmham and the original East Anglian cathedral; Campbell 1996, 9*; Heywood 1982.

[77] Cramp 1984, 129–130; Clapham 1950; Cramp 2006, 164.

[78] Lastingham: Lang 1991, 172–173. For the Norman rebuilding; Harrison and Norton 2012. Escomb: Cramp 1984, 9. A single armrest found in Bamburgh Castle and dated c.800 may also have come from a nearby church, but could also be a secular throne; Cramp 1984, 162–163. Cramp has also interpreted a bird's head finial found at the ruined eighth-century cliff-top chapel at Heysham (Lancashire) as an armrest; Cramp 1991.

[79] Hexham: Clapham 1950, 3–4; Bailey 1976, 56; Cramp 1984, 192–193. The seat and armrests have been broken and rest upon three separate blocks that plausibly appear to have interfaced with a bench and rear wall. Beverley: Lang 1991, 224.

[80] At Beverley, Camden recorded the inscription '*haec sedes lapidea Freedstool dictur; i.e. Pacis Cathedra, ad quem fugiendo perveniens omnimodan habet securitatem*' on, or associated closely with

only to large churches it is often spuriously claimed for a stone chair of ancient appearance in any church.[81] An armrest and its returned seat are incorporated into the western end of the unusual fourteenth-century sedilia at Halsham (North Yorkshire) (fig. 193), and are claimed as old as the eleventh century.[82] This may indeed be an older fragment. However, a stone chair which currently resides on the north side of the chancel at Sprotborough (West Yorkshire), clearly at least heavily recarved in the fourteenth century, is more difficult to see as representing something as ancient as Hexham.[83] Although this remarkable object's function is obscure (and as it accompanies a set of 'classic' sedilia, it cannot be a sedile for the high altar), it is much more preferable to date it as entirely fourteenth-century.

Many other stone chairs in parish churches clearly date much later, to the late thirteenth or fourteenth century. They are often made of armrests which are so heavily decayed that the chair they form does not seem to be in-situ but instead reconstructed from discovered fragments, frequently matched with restored sections. One notable aspect of them is that they occur in small regional groups, the most notable in Huntingdonshire. Farcet and Stanground are both just outside of Peterborough, and Houghton is 15 miles south of this near Huntingdon. The stone chair at Farcet (fig. 44) is in the position of the sedilia in the south wall of the chancel but one of the armrests and the seat is modern.[84] At Houghton the armrests are apparently refitted against the west wall of the north aisle.[85] At Stanground the armrests are on the north side of the chancel, and certainly could not be the medieval priest's seat as the church has stepped single-niche sedilia in the opposite wall.[86] Battered armrests are found with modern seats in the south aisle at Evenlode (Gloucestershire) (fig. 45) and at Welsh Newton (Herefordshire).[87] As at Farcet,

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the chair; Oliver 1829, 57–58. The Hexham chair is also called a frithstool by Prior Richard in the mid-twelfth century; Raine 1864, cxliii–cxliv, 201.

[81] Cox and Harvey 1908, 252; Cox 1911, 126–149, 153–162. For a similar dismissal of every highly ornamented church door handle as a 'sanctuary knocker'; Cox 1911, 120–125.

[82] *BoE Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* 1995, 448.

[83] *BoE Yorkshire West Riding* 1967, 496-497.

[84] *VCH Huntingdon Vol. 3* 1936, 167; *RCHM Huntingdonshire* 1926, 90; *BoE Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* 2014, 482.

[85] *VCH Huntingdon Vol. 2* 1932, 180; *RCHM Huntingdonshire* 1926, 143-144; *BoE Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* 2014, 518.

[86] *VCH Huntingdon Vol. 3* 1936, 215, dated c.1300-10; *RCHM Huntingdonshire* 1926, 248, dated c.1300; *BoE Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* 2014, 654. I have not been able to obtain an image of this feature.

[87] Other stone armrests with a seat in between and dated to the thirteenth century by Pevsner are at Sookholme (Nottinghamshire), Compton Beauchamp (Berkshire), Rodbourne (Wiltshire) and Linslade (near Leighton Buzzard). Linslade is recessed into the east face of the chancel arch.

many 'stone chair' sedilia only have one genuine medieval armrest, its companion and the seat being modern, including Thornton Steward (North Yorkshire), Woodeaton (Oxfordshire) and Corhampton (Hampshire).

We can find dateable parallels for such armrests in stone, such as the Prior's throne in Canterbury Cathedral chapter house, *c*.1304 (fig. 46).[88] However, formal similarities are found more widely in wooden furniture, for instance the stalls at St Mary's Hospital, Chichester (fig. 47).[89] Through this comparison with wooden furniture we can offer a new interpretation of their original function. At Campsall (West Yorkshire) two stone armrests have been used as terminal ends for benches on the north and south walls of the chancel (fig. 48).[90] This context can also be seen at St Peter in Aldwincle (Northamptonshire) (fig. 49), where an armrest is set in a stone ledge behind the Victorian choir stalls. However, it is plausible that these stone uprights could have enclosed stone or wooden benches between themselves and the chancel arch, representing the furniture called *sedilia* in the churches inspected by the visitation committee from St Paul's Cathedral in the 1290s that we have seen in Chapter One. When the seats of this simple furniture were removed, the stone uprights would have become redundant and discarded, and therefore perhaps why they are interpreted in this variety of contexts by Victorian restorers.[91]

However, despite the issues with many of these armrests, there are a number of authentic medieval examples of sedilia that unusually chose to eschew the language of deep niches in favour of these upright armrests to form stone chairs that project from the wall. Sedgeberrow (Worcestershire), although heavily restored by William Butterfield in 1867-8 in his usual exuberant polychrome fashion, was recorded in 1862 as 'of the appearance of stone arm chairs' suggesting that the extant set does accurately incorporate fourteenth-century fabric as proposed by Pevsner.[92] At Owston (West Yorkshire) (fig. 50), there are stepped two-chair sedilia in the

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[88] Attributed to the post-court career of Michael of Canterbury in Wilson 1979, 93–94. Woodman dates the chapter house and the throne earlier on account of their pre-ogee character, to at least before Pecham's tomb in the north transept (*c*.1292); Woodman 1981, 145.
[89] Tracy 1993, 9–12.
[90] The 'classic' sedilia further east are so new in appearance that they must be entirely modern.
[91] The armrest at Campsall is seen in context with stone bench ends in Needham 1944, 48.
[92] Walker 1862, 289; *BoE Worcestershire* 2007, 590. Walker also includes Bricklehampton, which is a simple drop-sill lancet with one large armrest and two smaller ones at the jambs, which the VCH records as 'three stone arms of the old sedilia'; *VCH Worcester Vol. 4* 1924, 174.

chancel.[93] Much of their stonework is modern, but the original work under the central armrest incorporates the return of the actual seats, which demonstrates the authenticity of their reconstruction. At Upchurch (Kent), there are a set of three stepped chairs, now mutilated for the provision of a south aisle arcade (fig. 51).[94] Upchurch may have originally resembled Brailes (Warwickshire) (fig. 52), part of an ensemble with a fourteenth-century chancel where the arches behind are partly recessed into the wall, with armed chairs projecting in front.[95] Similar is the single chair at Lenham (Kent), with capitals supporting a cinquefoil arch that cuts through the string-course of the evidentially earlier lanceted chancel.[96]

In the grand chancel of Newark (Nottinghamshire) (complete by 1498), in the arch of the Markham chantry (*c.*1508) beside the sanctuary are a set of four elegant freestanding stone armchairs with quatrefoils below the seats.[97] Since the carved roundels of the terminals are obscured by the chantry, they may have been kept from a previous chancel. Similar stone-chair type sedilia associated with a tomb monument are at Wingfield (Suffolk), where they uniquely back onto the south side of the tomb chest with the effigies of Michael and Katherine de la Pole which dates *c.*1415 (fig. 53).[98] They seem not to be original to the chest, but added when the tomb was moved and the arcades were carried forward to embrace the sanctuary in the 1460s, which would have destroyed any mural sedilia in the originally unaisled sanctuary.[99] This modification discourages assumptions regarding the patrons envisioning a deliberate combination of their tomb with the sedilia. Instead, it seems more of a spirit of compromise in the competition for space around the high altar that will be noted in the account of great-church sedilia in Chapter Four.

There are very few sedilia of the 'classic' type that incorporate armrests: they are awkwardly placed in the notable set at Preston-next-Faversham (Kent) (fig. 141), but due to the extent of restoration of these sedilia and the seeming redundancy of the armrests hidden behind the columns, it is possible that they were not originally

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[93] Arksey, Campsall and Owston are noted as a group in *BoE Yorkshire West Riding* 1967, 27. I was not able to make contact with Arksey to gain access, nor have obtained a picture from another source.
[94] These sedilia are fancifully reconstructed with freestanding canopies in Denne 1796, who did not take into account that the arcade is later and therefore the sedilia were originally mural.
[95] *BoE Warwickshire*, 1966, 217.
[96] See Chapter Four for mention of dating of the cinquefoil in English architecture.
[97] *BoE Nottinghamshire* 1979, 184.
[98] Goodall 2001, 55, 57.
[99] Goodall 2001, 57–62.

intended for this position.[100] The sedilia at Isle Abbotts (fig. 54) are difficult to classify, but the chancel is even more outstanding for the gigantic canopied surround to its piscina, which lies outside the scope of this thesis, but goes towards illustrating their extraordinary context.[101]

The stone-chair type of sedilia, and other aberrant forms that shall be encountered along the way, such as the remarkable freestanding sedilia in the aisled sanctuaries of great cathedrals and abbeys, are the exceptions that prove the rule. The apparent widespread avoidance of using the form of a chair highlights the essential character of the 'classic' sedilia. It sets sedilia apart from seats of authority, such as the *synthronon* thrones and the later medieval moveable *cathedrae* which filled many treasuries and sacristies of great churches.[102] In sedilia, the armrest, potentially an index of an absent person, is eschewed in favour of a purely architectural language. Their niches, most often identical in appearance, show no formal resemblance to moveable furniture, and are instead a purely architectural feature. Like a tabernacle that holds the Host, or a niche which contains the piscina drain, these places are not so much chairs or seats, but instead, following their nomenclature in the 1505 Bristol contract: 'howsyngs' for the three caretakers of the body of Christ, which takes centre stage at the altar over their own corporeal bodies.

DATING THE CORPUS: STYLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF 'C13', 'DEC' AND 'PERP'

So far we have seen sedilia given a variety of broad dates, and assigning them to such periodisation is necessary to show their chronological development and spread. However, dating the work in parish churches, where little documentation exists before the fifteenth century, is extremely difficult.[103] In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there is not the evidence of the later Middle Ages such as churchwarden's accounts, wills, chantry foundations and recorded inscriptions in stained glass that

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[100] This set will be considered in detail in Chapter Four.
[101] *BoE South and West Somerset* 1958, 206. I do not agree with Pevsner that shafts must have stood on the armrests. This is the only time I have not followed the spelling given in the *BoE,* which spells the village 'Ile Abbots', which the village itself does not follow.
[102] See Chapter One.
[103] Butler 1976; Owen 1976.

can provide many securely-dateable examples.[104] Until a comprehensive database of parish churches that allows for wide-ranging statistical analysis is begun, dates, particularly in the early thirteenth century, are subject to much conjecture.[105]

Even when documents do exist, the dates they provide are often taken for granted in the literature, even if they do not specifically regard the church's fabric. Consecration dates have been long known to be unreliable as precise indicators of date, as there were many buildings consecrated some time after they were finished.[106] A notable instance is the Temple Church in London, almost certainly ready when the community moved there in 1161, but not consecrated until 1185.[107] While a consecration date can at least imply a *terminus ante quem* for the fabric, other dates and documents are used that are not even concerned with the building itself.[108] Often the rebuilding of a chancel is connected to the date of the advowson or rectorship of a parish being transferred to a religious institution, such as a cathedral or monastery. The advowson was the right to nominate the parish priest, and represented no legal responsibility for fabric maintenance. In the case of appropriation of the rectory it represents quite the opposite: a monastery was likely to present itself as corporate rector a church of which it held the advowson in times of financial hardship, to fund the religious community from parochial tithes.[109] Similarly, although cathedrals are not regarded as being quite so exploitative of their appropriated parishes, the relationship was still in their favour.[110] Instead, scholarship is beginning to consider the role of the laity together with the clergy as important funders of the rebuilding of their parish churches in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, as the evidence shows for later periods.[111]

On parish level, a good example of a date taken for granted is Monyash (Derbyshire), the 'classic' sedilia (fig. 55) of which are often considered

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[104] For an assessment of this problem; Draper 2006a, 175–178. For churchwardens accounts of the later Middle Ages; Drew 1954 and Kümin 1996.

[105] Draper notes there is 'urgent need' for such a database in his chapter on parish churches in Draper 2006a, 178.

[106] Dimock 1852.

[107] Wilson 2010.

[108] Cragoe 1999a, 92–93.

[109] Thompson 1912, 16–17, 30; Crossley 1939; Platt 1981, 72–78; Morris 1979, 87–89; Cunningham 1995, 269–271; Alexander 1996, 74–75.

[110] Lepine 2006, 49–50. Prebendal churches are a different matter, and will considered as paragons of advanced style for their locality in Chapter Four.

[111] Mason 1976; Morris 1989, 284–287; Cragoe 1999a.

precociously early and therefore must be considered by this thesis.[112] This is because the chancel is usually connected with a deed dated *c*.1199-1200.[113] However, this concerns granting the mother parish of Bakewell an oxgang of land and a house in Monyash on the condition that it provided a chaplain to serve in its dependent chapel in the village (*cantariam capelle de Moniassche*) on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and says nothing whatsoever about construction.[114] The chancel of the chapel of Monyash (only in modern times upgraded to parish church), refaced on the exterior and plastered inside, is eminently Gothic and not Romanesque, with thick walls but small lancets with gently pointed heads (figs. 56). A nearby stylistic parallel is the south transept of Bakewell, known as the newark or 'new work', largely rebuilt in the nineteenth century, but the preserved lancets with nook-shafts and arcade profiles dated as *c*.1220-40.[115] Although the Monyash sedilia are a notable set, a date in the second quarter of the thirteenth century does not give them the remarkable, prototypical quality that previous studies have assigned them: something which should instead be reserved for the St Mary de Castro, Leicester sedilia (fig. 80).

Although closely-dateable and documented sedilia do exist and will be further investigated in detail in the following chapters, the vast majority of the corpus has to be dated purely from style. Rather than dating hundreds of features independently, I have chosen to follow the labels given to them by the primary source for the database, the *Pevsner Architectural Guides,* very often still those applied by Pevsner himself in the first editions. Dating sedilia was often a particular concern in Pevsner's methodology, as they are often the most stylistically interesting feature of a chancel and important in understanding the chronology of a building. Pevsner dated medieval parish church architecture in a manner both idiosyncratic and rooted in a historical tradition, derived from Thomas Rickman's pre-Victorian

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[112] Bond 1916, 179 refers to them as 'Norman'. In photographs the dog-tooth can look very much like chevron, making them look even more Romanesque.

[113] Cox 1906, 5–6, with full Latin transcription in Cox 1875, Vol. 2, 585–586. Originally Cox dated the deed 1198-1223 by the witness of Roger, Dean of Lincoln who served in that office between those dates; Cox 1875, Vol. 2, 105. In his later article focusing on Monyash alone, Cox redated the deed to 'between 1199 and 1200', but without explanation; Cox 1906, 5. The *BoE* states 'founded *c*. 1198'; *BoE Derbyshire* 1978, 282, which is misleading as the deed does imply there was already a church at Monyash.

[114] At this time *cantaria* meant licence to say Mass in a particular place, and should not be confused with a chantry chapel; Crouch 2001, 175–176.

[115] *BoE Derbyshire* 1978, 72. This architectural relationship with the mother church continued, as the inserted Y-traceried window on the south side of Monyash's chancel can be paralleled with the fenestration of the late-thirteenth-century chancel at Bakewell.

classification of the periods of English medieval architecture: Norman, Early English, Decorated English and Perpendicular English.[116] Although these categories were originally defined around evolution in the forms of window tracery, they are still useful stages in which to frame the peculiar path that Gothic architecture took in England. Anyone closely familiar with the *Buildings of England* series will realise that Pevsner's labels are consistent, but were often applied with regard to the degree of confidence to which he felt he could date a feature by means of its complexity. Pevsner's scholarship has been criticised for his intellectual clinging to broad historical models of stylistic change rather than nuanced accounts.[117] Yet, for the largely undocumented corpus that this thesis is dealing with, such a broad treatment is necessary if we want to be able to visualise the growth and spread of a particular feature over a long period of time.

My own interpretation has had to be employed to make his labels conform to a wide-ranging categorisation. The primary categories that have emerged through the course of my cataloguing are 'C13', 'Dec' and 'Perp', as sedilia before *c.*1200 are so rare as to be unsuitable for statistical analysis. 'C13' is Pevsner's most common label for early parish church architecture, although he also uses 'E.E.' rather selectively for monuments that characterise the 'classic' nature of the first half of the thirteenth century.[118] Pevsner avoids the term 'Geometrical', instead referring to buildings representing the phase when bar-tracery became popular with the term 'late C13'.[119] His frequently-used label '*c.*1300' represents his influence from Victorian writers, and the 'perfection' of this style before the introduction of the ogee arch.[120] Although the labels 'E.E.' and references to the Geometric style have been recorded in my database, for the purposes of the maps and broader statements on chronological distribution in this thesis, they have been combined together with 'C13' into one category. Unlike some writers, Pevsner's label 'Dec' (for him, largely used interchangeably with 'C14') is deployed to denote the post-ogee style of the

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[116] Rickman 1817; Newman in Cherry 1998, 53. It would not be until the fourth edition of 1835 that an appendix 'On Saxon Architecture' would be added.
[117] Coldstream 2004, 121–122; also Crossley 2004, 4–19.
[118] Current editions of the *BoE*'s glossaries define 'Early English' as c.1190-1250, e.g. *BoE Essex* 2007, 870.
[119] 'Geometric' was coined as an interim period between Rickman's Early and Decorated English by Edmund Sharpe; Sharpe 1852; Sharpe 1871, 25–29.
[120] e.g.: Isle Abbots (Somerset), where the chancel windows also have authentic bar-tracery. For the ancestry of Pevsner's thought in Pugin; Watkin 1977.

fourteenth century. [121] Strictly this ought to be called the Curvilinear Decorated, separate from the pre-ogee 'Early Decorated' as identified by Bony.[122] However, because the ogee is such an easily identifiable and ubiquitous motif, unknown before the 1290s and only commonly used in parish churches from the second decade of the fourteenth century at the very earliest, I have used it to demarcate 'Dec' as the second major chronological group.[123] The Perpendicular Style provides fewer problems on nomenclature, particularly since there are far less examples of sedilia from this period, and it will form only a relatively small part of this thesis. [124] 'Perp' (used interchangeably with 'C15') is a notoriously dismissive label of Pevsner, applied with apparent disdain for the established style of fifteenth-century England which remained largely unchanged from 1400 onwards. Chapter Six will investigate sedilia from the transition between Decorated and Perpendicular, and some of these have had to be categorised on a case-by-case basis. Such a chronology based on style can never avoid some potential overlap in date, but has allowed me to deduce totals of some 15 sedilia of Norman date of any type, and then of the familiar 'classic' type: 276 'C13' examples, 415 'Dec' and 114 'Perp' (see charts 2 and 3).

MAPPING THE CORPUS: GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

When the database is mapped onto the traditional counties of England, an uneven distribution is revealed (map 1). Broadly speaking, the numbers of medieval sedilia are highest in the South East of England and lowest in the South West. The only counties of which I have found no examples are in the sparsely-populated centre of Wales. Of course, it is not a surprise to see that church-dense Norfolk has the highest numbers, and that Rutland, the smallest traditional English county, has very few. Yet

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[121] Coldstream 1994 and Bony 1979 include the late thirteenth century in their monographs on the Decorated Style; but Wilson 1992, 191 and Wilson 2007, 121 clearly states that 'Decorated' applies only to the period c.1300-1350. The most recent monograph puts its start 'some time in the later thirteenth century'; Binski 2004, 1, 132.

[122] Bony 1979, 1, 28–29. Clark 2010a also argues for Geometric as a distinct style, based upon different defining elements from the succeeding Decorated.

[123] Bony 1979, 22–25; Coldstream 1994, 44.

[124] The term 'Rectilinear' was also coined by Sharpe as an improvement to Rickman's Perpendicular. Sharpe 1871, 33–37. It was used by Frankl (together with Curvilinear for the predominant style of the early fourteenth century), but with little influence on later authors; Frankl 2000, 194.

the dearth of sedilia in the West Country and in large, not unprosperous counties like Hampshire and Shropshire is not so easily explained.[125]

Of course for these absolute numbers of sedilia to make sense they must be placed within their specific regional contexts. The number of medieval churches in England is usually given as around 9,500.[126] However, although most medieval parish churches have survived in some form, the chancel, where sedilia are most commonly found, has suffered the most: a significant proportion being demolished after neglect or entirely rebuilt in the Victorian period. An investigation of chancel survival would be extremely welcome to the study of the English parish church, but for this thesis I have had to approximate the number of authentic medieval chancels in each county by an assessment of each church's description in the *Pevsner Architectural Guides,* resulting in an estimate of 5,850 in the modern counties of England, with 338 in Wales, making a total of 6,208. This allows us to compare counties such as Oxfordshire and Cornwall, both with counts of around 150 surviving medieval chancels, but Oxfordshire with around fifty sedilia and Cornwall a total in single figures.

However, since these are very much estimates, the counts of churches I have decided to rely on in this thesis are those of each diocese, archdeaconry and subdeanery in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of 1291.[127] This survey of the value of the incomes of every parish church in England was ordered by Pope Nicholas IV in order to raise money for a crusade led by Edward I that never took place.[128] The survey itself has some omissions: parishes worth under two marks were not recorded, and of course the data does not necessarily reflect the medieval fabric that remains, but totals 8,792 parochial churches in England and Wales.

With the *Taxatio* as the primary source, the extent of the corpus is delimited: by 1291 the conquered dioceses of Wales were incorporated into the archdiocese of Canterbury. With this context for the data, further maps can be produced, based on the medieval archdeaconries, which are roughly comparable in size and number to the traditional English counties. The overall map broadly reflects the total numbers, but removes some of the statistical irregularities (map 2). The thirteenth-century

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[125] An article on 'Ecclesiology in Worcestershire' noted that 'sedilia are scarce', with only ten examples of the 'triple arrangement'; Walker 1862, 289.
[126] Swanson 1989, 4; Morris 1989, 276.
[127] Record Commission 1802; Pounds 2000, 84–86.
[128] Hartridge 1930, 78–80; Denton 1993, 232.

(map 3) further highlights the high densities in the South East (Kent and Sussex) and North East (Northumberland) that are seen in the overall distribution. The fourteenth century (map 4) marks an overall spread of high-density regions, but still conforms to a broad east-west divide. Finally the overall decline in the numbers of sedilia across the entire country is evident in the fifteenth century (map 5). The low number of sedilia in the west is conspicuous in all the maps, and is not straightforward to account for.

There are two factors that one would expect to have had impact on the distribution of sedilia. First is the social factor of wealth of different regions of England. Not because sedilia were necessarily expensive objects in themselves, but because that they imply an ideal level of divine service with three ordained men, one would expect them most often to be found in more wealthy regions where extra clergy could be supported on the rector's tithes, something that will be looked at in more detail in Chapter Seven. The second is that since sedilia are generally not found before the thirteenth century and are much less common after *c.*1400, areas with a high amount of Romanesque and Perpendicular fabric should be poor in surviving sedilia.

Regarding the first factor, to ascertain the wealth of a region we can use the data of the *Taxatio*. Of the 8,792 parishes assessed in England and Wales, the average value of a living in 1292, that is, the combined income from the tithes, the value of the glebe land and spiritual fees, was reckoned at £10.[129] Since the tax was an unpopular one, and carried out by the English Church itself, one can assume that the benefices were valued at the lowest possible amount, possibly only often half their true value.[130] However, the scope of the figures is geographically representative of the very high livings found particularly in the far north of England where parishes were extremely large.[131] In addition, the *Taxatio*'s reputation has improved since the production of a digital edition in the 1990s, which has been able to correct many mistakes from the 1802 edition. It is now available online and has been used to add

[129] Moorman 1945, 136. The average total value for whole parishes, including in addition to the rectory's value, the value of vicarages, pensions, etc. (i.e.: money not going to the rector whose responsibility it is to rebuild the chancel) is £15; Davall et al. 1992, 108.
[130] Graham 1908, 446; Hartridge 1930, 78–79. Certainly, one excuse for using the *Taxatio*'s valuations despite its flaws is that the assessments were considered representative enough to use as the basis for all further taxations in the rest of the Middle Ages, and therefore could very plausibly represent the parish's aspirations; Denton 1993, 232, Graham 1908, 434.
[131] Moorman 1945, 135–137.

all the information on ecclesiastical divisions, valuations and institutional patronages to my sedilia database.[132]

The diocese of Exeter (Devon and Cornwall) would seem to fulfil the factors of low wealth and fabric outside of the periods of the highest popularity of sedilia rather well. Despite the splendid canopied example beside the high altar of its cathedral church that will be considered in Chapter Five (fig. 168), it is a particularly poor region for sedilia of any date. The archdeaconry of Exeter itself, in its 886 churches recorded by the *Taxatio,* has only 6 'classic' sedilia. Cornwall has an average value of £7 and 5 sedilia in its 153 recorded churches, and Barnstaple £6 with only 2 from its 119. That Totnes can produce 11 sedilia, 10% of its recorded churches, may be significant as it was the highest average value of all the Exeter archdeaconries at £8, but still below the national average. The sedilia at Bere Ferrers and Broadhempston (fig. 57) are unusually plain, and both date from chancels of the thirteenth century, an unusual date for a building in this area.[133] Instead, 95% of pre-nineteenth-century churches in Devon are reckoned to be Perpendicular, and over three quarters in Cornwall.[134] This, along with the lack of wealth would explain the dearth of sedilia in the south-westernmost corner of England.

In another western area, the churches in the archdeaconry of Worcester were assessed in 1291 as worth an average of £11, but there are only fifteen 'classic' sedilia from the 197 recorded medieval churches. This could be explained by the great number of buildings from the later Norman period in the area causing a saturation which lasted throughout the rest of the Middle Ages.[135] Hampshire's sparse numbers of sedilia may be explained by the peak of its building period being 1170-1230, before sedilia become popular, with little later work: even enlargement of parish churches generally uncommon.[136] Somerset is largely thought of as having its greatest period of building in the fifteenth century, which explains its well-below average 6% of surviving chancels with sedilia.[137]

Yet some areas do seem neither to fall into the economic or chronological situation which could account for a low distribution of sedilia. The medieval diocese

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[132] Davall et al. 1992; Denton 1993; Denton 1997; Denton 2002, 280. The database has been available online since 2005 at URL: www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio.
[133] *BoE Devon* 1989, 39, 163, 218.
[134] *BoE Devon* 1989, 41-42; Atkinson 1947, 136; *BoE Cornwall* 2014, 28.
[135] *BoE Worcestershire* 2007, 20, 27-8, 30.
[136] *BoE Hampshire: North* 2012*,* 19, 21-22.
[137] *BoE Somerset: North* 2011, 27; *BoE Somerset: South* 1958, 20.

of Hereford was roughly equal to the county of Herefordshire and the southern half of Shropshire, and has a particularly low number of 'classic' sedilia: in the 316 churches recorded in 1291, there are only 11 apparently medieval sets. This is surprising, as it has been observed that the majority of the surviving chancels in Herefordshire date around the years 1300, and there is relatively little Perpendicular fabric.[138] The sedilia at Eaton Bishop, Madley (fig. 58) and the parochial south aisle at Leominster Priory (fig. 59) are particularly characteristic of the Decorated Style in the region in their ballflower ornament applied over the framework of the 'classic' type.[139] Madley even manages to fit them into its polygonal apse, a highly unusual form for England that, as will be suggested in Chapter Three, seems to have discouraged sedilia developing outside of this country. Of the 316 churches recorded in the *Taxatio,* the average value across Hereford diocese is approximately £12, although in the archdeaconry of Shropshire which makes up a third of the total diocesan churches, there are only two 'classic' sedilia, and the average value of its churches in 1291 is the lowest in the country, only £2. The reason for the West Country scarcity seems to be due to local style, and will be examined in Chapter Four.

LOCATION IN THE CHURCH

Most of the sedilia in my database are in parish churches, and almost invariably placed in the south wall, to the west of a piscina niche. Many sedilia have survived when piscinas apparently have not (and presumably vice-versa) but it is extremely rare to find a piscina and sedilia that are different in date, except when Norman pillar piscinas have been preserved and relocated to the south wall, as at Deal (Kent) (fig. 121). I have noted just over 350 piscinas that are close enough to the sedilia to be considered an integral part of their design, including angle piscinas at the corners of drop-sill sedilia. Sedilia at altars other than the high altar, such as the east end of an aisle or a chapel attached to the chancel are roughly equivalent in proportion to the total for all three centuries from the thirteenth to the fifteenth, around 10%. This is

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[138] *BoE Herefordshire* 2012, 30-32.
[139] More plain 'classic' sedilia can be found in Eardisland, All Saints in Hereford, Lentwardine and Little Hereford. Aside from a few drop-sills and an unusual double and single niche in Kingsland, this is the entire corpus in Herefordshire. I thank Elizabeth Maggs for obtaining pictures of all these sedilia for me.

surprising, considering the rise for licences granted for perpetual chantries throughout the Middle Ages and the increase of Solemn divine service outside of the chancel that this implies.[140] Sedilia in north aisles are extremely unusual: an arcade to the south of an altar usually obviates their presence. At the extremely elaborate north aisle at Kersey (Suffolk) (fig. 60) the lofty vaulted sedilia are built into a blank extending section of wall before the beginning of the aisle arcade and have pierced backs to allow visibility to the high altar, and the magnificence of which outshine the entirely functional drop-sill sedilia in the chancel (fig. 32).[141] At New Romney (Kent), identical stepped sedilia are present at all three altars at the completely flat east end, the north and high altar sets being built into low walls between the first two piers of the arcades.[142]

Sedilia in a north wall are almost unknown. At Houghton-on-the-Hill (Leicestershire), only one shallow niche of what appears to have been a triple stepped set of sedilia survives in the north aisle wall (fig. 61), the eastern two seats apparently destroyed when a later medieval window was inserted, further showing how unusual they were. Wilmslow (Cheshire) is the only other set of apparent north-wall sedilia, with three arched niches on the north side of its crypt. We should seriously question their often-assumed function as sedilia, particularly since a Solemn Mass taking place in a cramped parochial crypt seems absurd, and instead deduce that they were aumbries. These two examples are so bizarre as to be the exceptions that prove the rule that the seating of the officiating clergy to the south of the altar was the ubiquitous custom, caused by the essential requirements of the liturgy. It should be noted that sometimes seats can be found on both sides of the altar, for instance at Durham Cathedral's high altar (fig. 171), and in Ely Lady Chapel (fig. 188), where the full perimeter arcading on both sides of the altar steps receives the extra treatment of armrests, presumably for reasons of symmetry and conspicuous display rather than a direct response to the personnel of the liturgy.

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[140] The founding of chantries became popular from the mid-thirteenth century, and in England such licences started in 1279, reaching a peak in the first half of the fourteenth century; Colvin 2000, 164–165.

[141] A similar open design is in Cirencester's (Gloucestershire) Trinity chapel, see Chapter Six. At the north aisle of North Elmham (Norfolk) a single niche for one or two individuals is built into the older fabric of the former outer wall of the chancel before the beginning of the nave arcade.

[142] A similar arrangement is found with three sets of sedile and piscina in Chaddesden (Derbyshire). The chapelry was refounded as a chantry of three priests in the will of an archdeacon of Leicester, d.1354; Cox 1875, Vol. 3, 304; Maddison 1978, 251. The sedile in the chancel is essentially nineteenth-century, but that in the north aisle authentic Decorated-style, with the south apparently of a later date due to its cruder execution.

NUMBER OF SEATS

The sedile, as we have seen, is very unusual, and accounts for less than 5% of all sedilia. Instead two-seat sedilia form the vast majority of the quarter that are not three-seaters. Around three-quarters of sedilia are sized as to comfortably seat three individuals, as expected for the retinue of priest, deacon and subdeacon demanded in the celebration of High Mass. In purely 'classic' medieval sedilia, there are over four times more three-seaters than two-seaters, 579 to 124. Two-seaters are proportionally twice as common at side altars as three-seaters, but still 85% are at the main altar of the church. Four-seat sedilia are extremely rare and generally only found in great churches, such as Gloucester Cathedral, Furness Abbey (fig. 289), Westminster Abbey (fig. 159) Selby Abbey (fig. 176), Durham Cathedral (fig. 171), Bristol Cathedral retrochoir Lady Chapel (fig. 191), Worcester Cathedral (fig. 152), Beverley Minster (fig. 165) and Newark (Lincolnshire). They are also found in the Lady Chapel of the episcopal collegiate foundation of Ottery Saint Mary (Devon), the collegiate church at Maidstone (Kent) (fig. 177) and in the chancel of the Gaunt's Chapel in Bristol rebuilt by the Bishop of Llandaff in the early sixteenth century (fig. 288). Parish four-seaters are almost unknown, and when they do occur they are usually explainable as a destroyed piscina in the eastern niche, the only completely convincing example is at the remarkably long church of Rothwell (Northamptonshire) (fig. 140) (see Chapter Four).[143] Southwell Minster's high altar set is unique in the corpus for having five seats, and although much restored, does seem to be authentic in general form (fig. 179).[144] The variance in the number of seats poses questions about the intention behind the provision of two-seater sedilia. This, and the question of whether the presence of sedilia reflects the status of a church and its clerical staff, will be considered in Chapter Seven.

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[143] The sedilia in Ludlow (Shropshire) may be four seats, but the easternmost is on the same level as the piscina so may be a credence table. The four-seater in the south aisle at Skipton (West Yorkshire) is reset Decorated-Style work from the original chancel, and may originally have incorporated a piscina, as suggested by the unique ashlar and mortaring pattern in the back of the easternmost 'seat'. The elaborate drop-sill in Luton (Bedfordshire) (fig. 216) was recorded in the eighteenth century as incorporating a piscina; Cobbe 1899, 294–295. A number of other churches are mentioned with four-seaters in Bond 1916, 195, but he is occasionally inaccurate, apparently confusing the piscina with a seat in a number of cases, even describing Maidstone as having *five* seats.

[144] Hexham Abbey has a wooden set usually regarded as having five seats, but see Chapter Four for discussion of the problems of its ascertaining its original construction.

FITTINGS, POLYCHROMY AND QUESTIONS OF ORIGINAL APPEARANCE

Much as in the liturgical rubrics, physical evidence for whether extra fittings were placed inside sedilia is extremely limited. Unlike piscinas, which occasionally contain evidence for wooden shelves, I have found no such sign that medieval stone sedilia in parish churches were originally fitted out with wooden seats, cushions or rails for hangings as many of them are today.[145] The early 'single-niche' sedilia at Kirkstall Abbey from the late 1150s have an H-shaped scar at the back of the niche (fig. 75), but this would seem to have been from a 'modernisation' in the late Middle Ages when a wooden canopy was added.

Only a small amount of evidence for sedilia receiving special treatment through painting has been found.[146] The sedilia at Crediton (fig. 178) preserve a significant amount of paint, but these fall into the category of freestanding great-church sedilia, and therefore are not representative of the ordinary situation in parish churches.[147] There are a small number of sedilia with patterns or textiles painted behind the seats that suggests the actual practice of hanging fabrics in sedilia, at least in great churches. The best-preserved such scheme is in the high altar set at Exeter Cathedral (fig. 168). The painting that survives at the back of each seat is an illusionistic *tour de force*, and coeval with the construction of the sedilia in the decade following 1316 (fig. 62).[148] Each seat has a piece of fabric held in the mouths of two small lions in each corner, the top of which is folded over in the middle so we can see the plain reverse. The two western seats show dark green cloths, with bands running across, enlivened with scroll-work. The eastern seat for the celebrant is

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[145] The wooden sedilia at Beverley have been observed as displaying drill holes for a curtain rail behind the seats; Woodworth 2011, 213–214. The sedilia at the Franciscan church in Esslingen (Germany) have been found in a recent investigation to have had wooden panelling behind the seats. Schöbel 2012, URL: www.iek.uni-hd.de/forschung/esslingen_franziskanerkirche.html. I thank Christian Nikolaus Opitz for this reference.

[146] Some sedilia with recorded traces of such decorative paint are: Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), with alternate bands of green and red; Blackburne 1847, 73; St Nicholas in Kings Lynn (Norfolk) preserves paint on the canopies; Keyser 1883, 168. Salwarpe (Worcestershire) is recorded as having 'bore traces of having been coloured blue and vermillion'; *AASRP* 1859-60 (5), x. The problem with nineteenth-century accounts of lost polychrome on sedilia is ascertaining whether the paint is merely part of a wider scheme surviving on the back wall (see below).

[147] Some other great church sedilia that unsurprisingly were painted include Bristol Lady Chapel (fig. 191); Tristram 1950, 510; and Furness Abbey (fig. 289) which was gilded; Park 1986, 194.

[148] Possibly between 1320 and 1325 when painters are recorded as employed in the fabric rolls; Tristram 1955, 169.

rather different, for it has a pattern of intersecting ogees around rosettes.[149] Exeter's high altar sedilia are also notable for their brass studs and plug holes along the tops of the seats that may have been used for *real* fabrics, and indeed these paintings that we value highly today may have originally been obscured for much of the time.

The Tewkesbury Abbey sedilia (fig. 172) are also significant for the amount of red, green and gilt polychrome they preserve.[150] They contain remains of patterning behind the seats, with diagonal quarries containing fleur-de-lys, vine ornaments and rosettes. A similar pattern was apparently present on the Dorchester Abbey sedilia (fig. 258) before they were thoroughly cleaned in the 1840s restoration.[151] The method involved in decorating the Tewkesbury sedilia cannot have been too widespread, because even if the pigments had been lost, the painting has been set out with incised lines. Indications of such setting out, to my knowledge, are not evident on any other sedilia. It is possible that carved diaper was also intended to convey a similar effect of creating a fabric-like patterned surface. Carved diaper is actually a rather rare phenomenon, one count proposing only forty medieval examples existing in total: four, including the earliest, in French cathedrals, the rest in England.[152] However, a number of these are found in the back of sedilia; at Winchelsea high altar (Sussex), Preston-Next-Faversham (Kent) (fig. 141) and Harpley (Norfolk) (fig. 220).

In Chapter Five we shall examine the few sedilia that incorporate figural painted decoration behind the seats, but in the context of the wider corpus they appear to be an elite group. Nearly always painting found inside parish church sedilia is not indicative of special treatment of this feature, but part of a wider scheme that has only survived inside their sheltered niches.[153] For instance, at Brook (Kent) the masonry pattern inside the sedilia (fig. 63) is part of a later thirteenth century scheme that was mostly removed in the early nineteenth century to reveal the finer mid-thirteenth-century narrative roundels underneath.[154] However, at the *cappella extra portas* of Hailes Abbey (Gloucestershire) within part of a well-preserved painting

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[149] This ogee pattern is the same as the section of screen, purported to be the original sedilia, partly preserved inside the Stratford tomb at Canterbury Cathedral (fig. 154).
[150] Said to represent one of the most common methods for the painting of architectural mouldings in medieval England; Street 1855, 360–361.
[151] Ayers 1991, 88.
[152] Gerald 2011.
[153] E.g. the flower-petal motifs in the drop-sill at Edstaston (Shropshire); Cranage 1912, 684.
[154] Tristram 1950, 277; Paine and Stewart 2000, 4–5.

scheme in the chancel *c*.1320-30, in both splays of the drop-sill there is a pattern of intersecting lines that form triangles that were alternately coloured to form a pinwheel effect.[155] This is not found elsewhere in the lavish chancel scheme, and therefore may represent a special treatment given to the otherwise modest sedilia, intended to imitate fabric patterns. Consecration crosses are also occasionally found in the back of sedilia, such as in the three seats at the *cappella extra portas* at Coggeshall (Essex) and the central seat at Charlton-on-Otmoor (Oxfordshire).[156] However, since twelve crosses were supposed to have been made when consecrating a building, it is unlikely that this shows the sedilia were particularly important in the rite, just that the sheltered niches (possibly filled in) in were spared the stripping of the wall around them. Otherwise, the lack of evidence for painted sedilia should lead to the conclusion that it was not normal for sedilia to receive special treatment beyond the rest of the architecture. In many regular parish churches sedilia may have accentuated their stone material much as they do today.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER TWO

Hopefully now the reader can appreciate the size, richness, but also the standardised character of the corpus of sedilia in England and Wales, where the majority conform to the architectural vocabulary of what has been dubbed the 'classic' type. As it appears there was a consensus – albeit perhaps unconsciously – on how sedilia ought to look, it can be observed in retrospect that they represented a single 'genre' or idea. Therefore we can now begin a narrative of the earliest origins, spread and development of this idea, that eventually led to some of the finest sculpture surviving from the fourteenth century, and ultimately its eventual decline in popularity in the fifteenth century.

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[155] Park 1986, 200–203. Tristram also mentions quatrefoils at the intersections, which are difficult to see, and thought the pattern may imitate vault ribs; Tristram 1955, 179. David Park has related the pattern to the wall paintings in the Chateau de Theys, which feature similarly coloured intersecting triangles intended to imitate textiles.

[156] Coggeshall: Tristram 1950, 532; Charlton-on-Otmoor: Tristram 1955, 155. The crosses at Coggeshall were originally interpreted as nimbuses for figures, Dale 1863, 73; Keyser 1883, 72. For an overview of consecration crosses from an English perspective; Spicer 2013.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ORIGINS OF SEDILIA

The corpus survey has established that sedilia recessed into the south wall of chancels are rare in the twelfth century and not found at all before this. This chapter will first investigate the forerunner of sedilia: the eastern bench from the apsed east ends of the first millennium, and how this changed to a new arrangement – the unaisled square-ended chancel – in middle-rank churches. Then the earliest sedilia of the familiar 'classic' type will be identified. The development of this soon-to-be popular appearance will be explained through England's national style, resulting from the unique architectural situation bestowed on this country in the wake of the Norman Conquest.

THE APSED EAST END AND *SYNTHRONA* OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

The earliest evidence for the ritual seating of the presiding clergy is found in the third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum,* which describes the throne of the bishop in the east part of the church surrounded by places reserved for the presbyters, or elders.[1] The fifth-century *Testamentum Domini* builds on this tradition by mentioning that the throne should be raised three steps up, with the more exalted presbyters to the right-hand side.[2] The most important early first-millennium source for the liturgy is the series referred to as the *Ordines Romani,* beginning with *Ordo* I *c.*700.[3] Although it concerns pontifical celebration, the first of the *Ordines* represents a new period of textual stability for the liturgy across the churches of Europe.[4] In the *Ordo* I, it is stated that the bishops sit on the left side of the basilica as they enter, the presbyters on the right, with the pontiff in the centre.[5] This reference to an axial seating position is represented by the apsed east end that endured well into the twelfth century across Europe, consisting of an area for singers in front of the altar

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[1] II, 57, 4–5. In Syriac and English translation: Gibson 1903, 65, in Latin: Funk 1905, 160. Krautheimer 1979, 26. Dated c.230 in Vogel 1986, 32.
[2] Mango 1986, 25. Dated c.450 in Vogel 1986, 32.
[3] The full modern critical edition of all *Ordines* is Andrieu 1971. An English translation beside the text of *Ordo I* is given in Atchley 1905. For a list of the *Ordines*, their proposed date and location of composition; Palazzo 1998, 179–181. For more consideration of their dates and context; Vogel 1986, 135–224.
[4] Jungmann 1951, Vol. 1, 67; Vogel 1986, 155–156.
[5] Atchley 1905, 122–123; Andrieu 1971, 74–75.

marked off by *cancelli*, with the altar on, or just west of, the chord of an apse behind.[6]

The seating for the presiding clergy in the Roman basilicas at the time of the *Ordo* I consisted of a stone throne, raised on steps, flanked by a stone bench that ran around the curve of the apse, adopting the plan of the tribunal basilica of the Roman Empire.[7] In eastern Christian and Byzantine churches, such clergy benches are referred to as the *synthronon*, and in larger churches could rise in an impressive, amphitheatre-like arrangement in the back of the apse.[8] In the late fourth and fifth centuries, the standardised type of Christian basilica became widespread in Europe, comprising a nave, two aisles, and terminating in a semi-circular apse.[9] With the new standardisation of liturgy and architecture in the later first millennium, it is almost certain that having seats behind the altar in the curve of the apse was the prevailing tradition.[10]

Later changes often resulted in the destruction of many arrangements of axial thrones and flanking apsidal benches, particularly in the West; however a number of examples are preserved in working churches, and also found through excavation of abandoned sites. Santa Balbina, Rome, *c*.370, has a shallow niche in its apse which holds a thirteenth-century Cosmati throne, but it was doubtless designed to contain a seat originally.[11] An early full *synthronon* of apsidal bench and central throne is found in the remarkably well-preserved Cathedral at Poreč (Croatia), *c*.550 (fig. 64).[12] In Gerasa (Jordan), a site abandoned by the twelfth century, many of the excavated churches, securely dated between the fourth and late sixth centuries, display *synthronon* arrangements with stepped bench and axial throne, such as S.S. Peter and Paul.[13] Italian churches, particularly in Rome, appear to have been unusual by the second millennium in the Christian West in preserving the apsidal seat. San Clemente (fig. 65) was rebuilt in 1084 to a plan of 817-24 and the new Santa Maria

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[6] Fernie 2000, 247–248.
[7] King 1957, 87; Krautheimer 1967; Krautheimer 1979, 39; Fernie 1993, 107.
[8] The term is often used as synonymous with semi-circular apsidal benches, but strictly it is also used to refer to lateral seats in Byzantine churches; Krautheimer 1979, 521; Duval 1994, 188–191.
[9] Krautheimer 1979, 94.
[10] Dix 1945, 590–591.
[11] Radford 1959, 123.
[12] Radford 1959, 122; Krautheimer 1979, 278–280; Ivancevic 2000, 189–190.
[13] Crowfoot in Kraeling 1938, 183–184; Radford 1959, 122–123; Krautheimer 1979, 159–160.

in Cosmedin was dedicated 1123, both retaining a throne at the back of the apse with flanking apsidal bench.[14]

Material evidence of this sort is hard to find in northern Europe and England, because later changes in the position of the altar almost entirely destroyed the old arrangements in buildings where they were originally present, as will be detailed shortly.[15] Chapter Two has shown that there are a number of surviving upright armrests from pre-twelfth-century stone thrones. It can be shown through excavations that these were almost certainly part of this first-millennium tradition of an axial throne and flanking bench set behind the altar for the clergy as preserved around the Mediterranean. The churches built in Kent in the seventh century after St Augustine's mission to England represent our best evidence for first-millennium churches in the British Isles.[16] One of the clearest early plans we have is that of Reculver (Kent) (Fig. 66).[17] The much-criticised destruction of the church except for its facade in the early nineteenth century allowed for a full excavation of the original seventh-century apse in 1929, which suggested that it incorporated a stone bench, although unfortunately the axial point was destroyed by medieval graves dug in the later chancel.[18] Evidence for the foundations of an altar platform was also found to be west of the chancel arch at the east end of the nave, showing that – important to churches of this time – the eastern apsed cell was not a sanctuary for the altar, but a place for the clergy to sit.[19] Similar evidence for a bench was found during the excavation of a freestanding apsed chapel underneath the crossing of Hexham Abbey, a possible location for the seventh-century throne which stands in the choir today (fig. 43).[20]

A rectangular east end was more usual than an apse in smaller churches during the Anglo-Saxon and Early Norman period.[21] Such east ends characterise the seventh-century Northumbrian group of churches, represented by Monkwearmouth, Jarrow and Escomb, connected to Bishop Benedict Biscop who Bede recorded

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[14] Radford 1959, 123–124. San Clemente: Nolan 1925, 19–20; Conant 1974, 370; Krautheimer 1980, 164, 170. Santa Maria in Cosmedin: Giovenale 1927, 31; Riccioni 2000, 146–147.
[15] Parsons 1986, 107–108.
[16] Peers 1902; Clapham 1930, 25–33;Taylor 1969a; Fernie 1983, 43–46; McClendon 2005, 61–64.
[17] Gem 2005, 277–278.
[18] Taylor 1969b, 296; Fernie 1983, 42.
[19] Taylor 1973; Fernie 1983, 35. The problem of inaccurate and inconsistent nomenclature in the labelling of church plans is discussed in Barnwell 2004, 42–43.
[20] Taylor and Taylor 1965-78, Vol. 1, 307–308; Cambridge and Williams 1995, 79–80.
[21] Fernie 2000, 251.

brought over Gaulish masons to build churches 'according to the Roman manner'.[22] These square ends should not preclude the notion of eastern clergy seating in the then conventional manner. The *synthronon* could either retain a semi-circular form, the latter an arrangement known in some churches on the continent, or run straight across the east wall.[23]

The liturgical evidence such as the *Ordines Romani* gathered at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates that, through its identification of a high-ranking episcopal celebrant, the Eucharist was performed much more rarely in the first millennium. Therefore stone-built churches designed and furnished for such ritual represented an elite: for instance Escomb (County Durham) may have originally been a monastic cell rather than having a function akin to a late medieval parish church.[24] Even for Anglo-Saxon monasteries we have little evidence regarding liturgical performance beyond purely what was said or sung, and for the local churches we can only extrapolate that they performed an extremely stripped-down version said by a single priest.[25] In the generally-accepted theory for pastoral care before the parish system: the 'Minster Model', local churches were served not by a resident priest but by visitors from a central minster.[26] Therefore, we should not assume that these *synthronon* and axial thrones were as numerous relative to the number of churches as sedilia came to be after the establishment of the parochial system. Instead we can assume that pastoral liturgy was not sophisticated enough to allow a priest to have time to sit down, as he would be largely performing it all by himself. We do however have one example of an Anglo-Saxon local church with evidence for the eastern seating position. The excavation of the church of Raunds Furnells (Northamptonshire), abandoned as a church in the late twelfth or thirteenth century and thus avoiding later modifications, is often cited as the prime example of the plan of a typical stone-built local Anglo-Saxon church (fig. 67).[27] The church in its second phase in the late ninth or tenth century had an eastern cell added, which

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[22] Cramp 1986; Fernie 1983, 56–57; McClendon 2005, 72–84. Jarrow and Escomb's Saxon masonry is well-preserved above ground as parish churches, for the excavation of Monkwearmouth; Cramp 2005, 67–69.

[23] Noted in some fifth-century churches in the north Adriatic region and the Alps, an area that is also noted to have influence on the Kentish group churches in England; Krautheimer 1979, 179.

[24] Cambridge 1984, 75–76. For a challenge to this interpretation; Blair 1988a, 36–37.

[25] Gem 2001, 7; Gittos 2005.

[26] Blair 1988b, 7; Blair 2005. For the debate over the Saxon organisation of pastoral care central to the 'Minster Model'; Cambridge and Rollason 1995, and the rebuttal in Blair 1995.

[27] Boddington, Cadman, and Evans 1996.

Parsons interprets as being too small to enclose decorous celebration of the Mass, and therefore was not a chancel, despite its formal similarity to later parish churches.[28] Instead, the discovery of what would seem to be a bench against the east wall suggests a function similar to that of a Roman apse, used to seat a cleric who would come forward and celebrate Mass at the end of the nave.

It is generally accepted that the altar began to be moved eastwards *c.*1000 towards a more exclusive clerical setting: first onto the threshold of an eastern cell, then to fully within it, forming the beginnings of the nave/chancel divide we are familiar with from the later Middle Ages.[29] The excavated late-tenth-century square-ended church at St Peter, Barton-upon-Humber (Lincolnshire), contemporary with the lower stages of the surviving west tower, had the altar against a timber screen which ran north/south in the middle of the cell (Fig. 68).[30] Excavations of smaller churches in Norwich and Lincoln from the eleventh century have demonstrated that they had their altar positioned just east of the chancel arch.[31] In the excavated apsed chancel at Rivenhall (Essex), *c.*1090, a skew in the south-east window has been suggested by Rodwell as intended to focus light on an altar placed two-thirds of the way down the chancel, on the chord of the stilted apse (Fig. 69).[32] The excavations of churches such as Rivenhall and Barton-Upon-Humber, and also the abandoned Wharram Percy (North Yorkshire), demonstrate this phenomenon of what, in retrospect, seems like a gradual migration of the altar further into the east end.[33]

Paul Barnwell has proposed that three-cell Norman churches, such as Kilpeck (Herefordshire) and Elkstone (Gloucestershire) retained what he calls the 'basilican' plan for their liturgical topography: the altar towards the east of the central cell, and that the eastern cell – whether apsed like Kilpeck or squared like Elkstone – was occupied by seated clergy.[34] This seating could have been wooden furniture: although there are no surviving twelfth-century examples of apsidal benches, the curved thirteenth-century bench in Winchester Cathedral south transept may have been designed for the apse behind the high altar before the choir was rebuilt in the

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[28] Parsons 1986, 106; Parsons 1996, 63; Barnwell 2004, 46.
[29] Taylor 1973; Parsons 1986, 105–106; Blaauw 1991, 23.
[30] Rodwell 2007, 350.
[31] Parsons 1986, 106–107.
[32] Rodwell 1985, 133–136.
[33] Fernie 2000, 251.
[34] Barnwell 2004, 42–45.

fourteenth century.[35] One possible partial survivor of a mid-twelfth-century stone clergy bench in an eastern cell is at Stewkley (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 70). The Norman church survives almost entirely, and has a roofed nave, followed by a two-cell vaulted east end with a central tower over a pair of heavily-decorated 'chancel arches'. Following Barnwell's hypothesis for three-cell churches, the altar would have been originally somewhere in the central cell under the tower, with the eastern cell serving as a space for the clergy. Stewkley's current sedilia arrangement is unusual as the piscina is behind a short stone bench ending in a rather crudely-carved and dilapidated armrest, an arrangement that appears most awkward and not ideal.[36] Like the late-thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century armrests of stone chairs discussed in Chapter Two, its original situation and function is uncertain. It is possible that the armrest is part of the original axial seat, akin to Monkwearmouth (fig. 42) and that the bench is the southern return of the original *synthronon* arrangement which went round the three sides of the east end. As Stewkley church remained in use throughout the Middle Ages, this arrangement would have been mostly destroyed when the altar was moved east, leaving only remnants to serve as the Epistle-side sedilia.

THE SQUARE-ENDED CHANCEL AND THE FIRST SEDILIA

From *c*.1200 onwards, it became standard to place the altar almost at the eastern end of the church. The most persuasive evidence for this new arrangement is the position of the sedilia and piscina in the south wall. The reasons behind this apparently gradual 'migration' of the altar to this position are myriad and complex. The idea that it was due to a change in the direction of the celebration of the Mass should be strongly dismissed, as it has been shown that the most important prayers were always said to the east, and that widespread *versus populum* celebration is a very recent phenomenon in the Christian Church.[37] It has been said that the change in position of the celebrant's seat was due to the display of relics on the altar, blocking access or visibility to it.[38] However, the effect of relics and shrines on liturgical

[35] Jervis 1976, 11–12.
[36] The walls and bench are entirely plastered so it is not possible to see if the fabric is continuous.
[37] Blaauw 2000; Blaauw 2006; Lang 2009, 59; Kroesen and Schmidt 2009, 8; Schmidt 2009, 218.
[38] Dix 1945, 591; Phillips 1949, 27; Radford 1959, 129.

topography has been exaggerated as the single cause of its rearrangement.[39] The change was ultimately due to the desire for a more prominent and exclusive position of the altar as the rite of the Eucharist became ever-more important in Christian society, towards the official recognition of the Real Presence marked by the use of the term *transsubstantiatio* in the canons of Lateran IV in 1215.[40]

However, there are other benefits to having the altar against the east wall. It allows the clerical east end of a church (the chancel) to be further subdivided into two sections. The area at the easternmost end becomes the exclusive place for the altar and its ceremonies: the sanctuary; while the western half becomes a longer space for further clerical staff not involved in the celebration of the Mass itself: what we would now term the 'choir'. This entirely replaced the apsed arrangement in England during the thirteenth century, and became the standard layout for an English parish church until the Reformation, now familiar to us through the Gothic Revival. Like the lack of a term for the normative 'classic' sedilia, this plan is so familiar that no term exists to differentiate it from what came before, therefore will be referred to as the square-ended plan. It seems to be connected originally to accommodate larger clerical staffs and collegiate foundations, but would later become typical in parish churches.

EARLY EXTANT EXAMPLES OF SEDILIA ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF ENGLISH CHANCELS

As has been shown in Chapter One, if a lateral wall is to be used to house the sedilia and piscina, the tradition of Epistle and Gospel side means it can only ever be that to the south of the altar. Piscinas also appear to have occupied an axial position in the first millennium: no south wall examples can be found in England before the late Norman period.[41] The penitential of Egbert, Archbishop of York (735-66) explicitly recommended the disposal of spoiled Eucharistic wafers in a position described as '*sub altare*', which if we assume a block-like altar, would have to mean to the west of, but with a slab-like altar, could be directly underneath.[42] This view is corroborated by the discovery of a buried pot in a central position during the excavation of Raunds Furnells (fig. 67), paralleled by similar discoveries such as a

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[39] Nilson 2001, 63–91, but especially for this discussion, 81.
[40] Barnwell 2004, 56–57.
[41] Jessiman 1957, 53–54; Parsons 1986, 110.
[42] Parsons 1996, 61.

*c.*1050 pot in the same position at Oosterbeck (Netherlands). [43] By the twelfth century, the 'pillar piscina' had been developed, and was placed over this floor-drain to allow for greater convenience and dignity when disposing of ablutions. [44] Pillar piscinas generally survive when they have been moved and set into the south wall in the thirteenth century. At Deal (Kent), such a Romanesque pillar piscina has been reset in a Gothic niche by the mid-thirteenth-century sedilia (fig. 121). For some time new mural piscinas retained the then-familiar form of the 'half-pillar', before the now-familiar niche piscina became ubiquitous. [45]

The formal process was different for sedilia, which were not so easily transportable. 'Single-niche' sedilia, wide round-arched openings in the south wall with no demarcation of individual seats, have been collected together in the corpus survey, and have been shown to be represented by a handful of examples from each century between 1100 and 1500. The high amount from the twelfth century relative to other types as well as the lesser amount of church fabric from this date strongly suggests that single-niche sedilia were the precursor of the 'classic' type. However, despite presenting a logical model of formal development from simplicity to complexity, single-niche sedilia have never been proposed as such. [46] There is an important connection between the sorts of buildings that contain sedilia throughout the twelfth century to be observed. This is that they all have square-ended chancels: the plan that was then unusual, but would become ubiquitous in the parish church of the thirteenth century. It is significant that no Romanesque churches with apses, such as Copford (Essex) or Kilpeck (Herefordshire), contain Romanesque sedilia niches in the south wall.

Unlike the plethora of later centuries, there are so few examples of twelfth-century sedilia that this thesis can mention them individually and investigate their contexts. At Avington (Berkshire), the elaborate scheme of beakhead on the chancel arch and vault has been attributed to the same group of sculptors employed by Reading Abbey and Bishop Roger at his castle at Sherborne and Old Sarum Cathedral, dating it to the 1130s. [47] This largely unmodified Romanesque church

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[43] Parsons 1986, 110–114; Parsons 1996, 58–63
[44] Clapham 1934, 153; Parsons 1986, 110.
[45] Jessiman 1957, 56–57; Parsons 1986, 114–115.
[46] Cox and Harvey 1908, 68 and Bond 1916, 176–179 both begin their account of sedilia with examples of the 'classic' type from the late twelfth century. Parsons 1986, 107 also does not mention single-niche sedilia.
[47] Stalley 1971, 78–80; Zarnecki 1986, 22–23.

consists of a nave and two-cell chancel (fig. 71) which at least was planned to have a vault, and a niche piscina in the south wall at almost its extreme east end implies an eastern altar position. This wall piscina leaves little doubt that the larger round-headed opening to its west is, by comparison to later tradition, a seat for the celebrant (fig. 72). While it is physically capable of seating two men, it is not wide enough to sit them in a suitably decorous manner. Unlike the apparently Gothic priest's door, the sedile could not have been added after the stylistically sophisticated 1130s vault as its arch is partly behind the pilaster that would have supported the transverse rib. Avington is not directly documented, but its stylistic link to Roger of Sarum, who is known for establishing a number of clerical communities, could explain the context for this elaborate building.[48] The two-cell chancel could be seen as necessary to provide space for benches in the western part, akin to late medieval choir stalls for the larger community, and a distinct eastern sanctuary area for the celebration of Mass.

A similar case is the two-cell mid-twelfth-century east end almost fully preserved at Horbling (Lincolnshire) (figs. 73), originally part of a rather long Romanesque church with central tower. That the twelfth-century nave was the same length as the thirteenth-century arcades is proven by the survival of part of a Romanesque arcaded west front with waterleaf capitals either side of an inserted Perpendicular window. The stylistic diagnostic of the waterleaf suggests that the church was completed by the late twelfth century, and the advanced bead ornament of the crossing tower – in contrast to the stark chancel – suggests that the Romanesque church had three separate campaigns moving eastward.[49] The chancel is austere yet sophisticated externally and internally, with a plain corbel table and shafted windows. In the south wall there are wide single-niche sedilia integral with an adjacent piscina (fig. 74). Although, unlike Avington, this niche is comfortably wide enough for three men, it should still be considered that it may still have only been intended as a generous seat for one or two individuals. As the single roll-moulding of these furnishings is consistent with those of the windows, they are not a

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[48] Blair 1998, 277.
[49] Waterleaf may first appear in England in the London Templar church in the late 1150s; Wilson 2010, 33. It is also used in combination with Anglo-Norman motifs, like on the Leicester sedilia, in the eastern guest house at Fountains, which may also date to the late 1150s; Wilson 1986, 106, n.69. For waterleaf's English distribution; Morris 1989, 310–315.

later addition.[50] The reason for such a large Norman church at Horbling is undocumented, but its apparent cruciform plan could reflect its status as either an ex-Anglo-Saxon minster reiterating its status or a new collegiate foundation like Avington.[51] However, single-niche sedilia are by no means common in Romanesque churches. Other Romanesque-Style examples in parish churches can be found in the chancels of Thurlby (Lincolnshire) and Broadwater (Sussex).[52] Both of these churches were rebuilt in the later Middle Ages, but it is possible that they display Gothic re-use of Romanesque sedilia niches, akin to the preservation of many Norman pillar piscinas.

The east ends of twelfth-century Cistercian churches provide us with the largest number of these early sedilia, as noticed by Cragoe.[53] Later the order would adopt the standard great-church aisled east end, but in their earliest churches the Cistercians almost unanimously chose unaisled, rectilinear east ends, a larger version of the chancels with sedilia noted above.[54] Many of their later churches displayed a preference for a freestanding altar one or two bays before the east wall.[55] However, in the earliest churches the original position may have differed. The excavations of Waverley Abbey, the order's first English church founded in 1128 (replaced by a second church in 1203) suggested that originally the altar was against the east wall, and the discovery of a nook-shaft in the south wall nearby was interpreted as the twelfth-century sedilia niche.[56] Kirkstall Abbey (West Yorkshire) has a presbytery which, apart from its fifteenth century east window, dates from 1152-9.[57] It shows an early ensemble of stone liturgical furnishings of unparalleled condition and completeness, consisting of niches for a credence shelf, piscina drain and single wide

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[50] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 392–393, which notes sedilia of such date as 'a rarity'.

[51] The church is listed as cruciform in Fernie 2000, 225–226. However, there are buttresses inside the transepts which look they are designed to be exposed, and one could imagine a central tower with no transepts like Stewkley (see above). For cruciform ex-minsters generally; Blair 1998a; Thurlby 2002.

[52] Thurlby: *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 765-766. Broadwater's sedilia only seem to use original fabric in the base and lower shafts, so the arch itself could be an invention of the particularly savage restoration. It is considered as a possible survival from the largely-destroyed first phase of 1135-60 in Harrison and Leeney 1933, 110. Similar reuse may have occurred in All Saints in Theddlethorpe (Lincolnshire), which reuses Late Norman capitals in its late-fourteenth-century chancel sedilia; *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 754.

[53] Cragoe 1999a, 166–174. While sedilia have been examined in Cistercian literature, e.g.: Stalley 1987, 199–202, no other author seems to have recognised how early they are in a wider context.

[54] For the much discussed possibility of a Europe-wide 'Bernardine plan'; Fergusson 1984, 34–35; Halsey 1986, 68, and particular opposition to the idea of a uniform plan in Swartling 1967a.

[55] Brakspear 1909, 305; Braunfels and Laing 1972, 91; Kinder 2002, 172.

[56] Brakspear 1905, 18–19.

[57] Robinson 1998, 132–134, with bibliography.

sedilia niche set into the south wall (fig. 75). The position of the step in the chancel floor and the extreme eastern position of the piscina imply that the presbytery was designed for an altar close to the east wall.[58] The sedilia niche is surprisingly large, nearly three metres across, easily wide enough for three men to stand inside it today. It is ornamented with a billet moulding of the arch and scalloped capitals of the flanking shafts which, although simple, makes it one of the most ornate features of the church's fabric. The fitting of what may have been a wooden canopied bench in the later Middle Ages has left an H-shaped scar in the back of the niche and presumably destroyed the original stone seat. The niche at Kirkstall is remarkably tall compared to the sedilia niches in Avington and Horbling, some four metres high. The great churches of other orders and the cathedrals more frequently had ambulatories and aisled choirs (fig. 76). They would not have been presented with the idea of incorporating the officiating clergy's bench into the south wall, as this would have been divided from the sanctuary by the south aisle arcade. These great churches must have had their own solution, such as placing a piece of furniture between two piers. This effect of a seat under an arcade is perhaps what is being emulated at Kirkstall with the tall sedilia arch.

In England, the only other standing example of this type of sedilia in a Cistercian church is at Roche Abbey (West Yorkshire), where the presbytery dates from the 1160s-70s.[59] Although the sedilia niche was updated with Gothic stone canopies, the all-but-complete obliteration of these has revealed the original semi-circular form (fig. 77).[60] There is also evidence that such wide sedilia niches occurred in the twelfth-century Cistercian choirs at Sawley (Lancashire) and Bordesley (Worcestershire).[61] In Ireland, a number of late-twelfth and early-thirteenth-century Cistercian presbyteries display evidence of single-niche sedilia, the earliest being Boyle in 1162 (fig. 78).[62] They are also present in the Augustinian Abbeys of Ballintober (1216-24) and Cong (*c.*1200-20), buildings both noted as

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[58] The east wall up to the sill of the Perpendicular east window is rebuilt.

[59] Fergusson 1984, 63.

[60] Aveling 1870, 172.

[61] A niche 0.54m deep and 3.14m long is noted, but not identified as sedilia, in Coppack, Hayfield, and Williams 2002, 46. In a personal communication Coppack recognised it was a sedilia niche and reconsidered the ornament as dating it slightly later than the 1170s-80s given in print, to the 1190s. Bordesley: *BoE Worcestershire* 2007, 550; Robinson 1998, 72–73.

[62] Stalley 1987, 199–200. Other buildings are Inch (1187), Abbeyknockmoy (1190), Grey (1193) and Corcomroe (1195), here with two arches on three corbels attractively dividing it into two seats. It was recorded that 'remains of sedilia' were present at the premiere Irish house at Mellifont, f.1142; Hennessey 1897, 10, but it has been noted there is no trace of sedilia now; Stalley 1980, 282.

'transparent emulation' of late-twelfth-century Anglo-Norman Cistercian buildings.[63] On the continent, single-niche sedilia appear in some twelfth-century Cistercian churches in Sweden and southern France (fig. 79).[64] For the unaisled presbyteries of the Cistercians, sedilia niches must have been viewed as a necessity in keeping the area in front of the altar unencumbered by furniture, and also part of their stripped-down and highly functional liturgy that we have seen expressed by their lucid rubrics in Chapter One. Following recent reassessments of their architecture as imitative rather than innovatory, the Cistercians should not be seen as the inventors or 'missionaries' of sedilia.[65] However, the use of simple integrated ledges is characteristic of what we might term their 'machines for worshipping in'.

Even taking into account the replacement of Romanesque east ends, single-niche sedilia appear to have been rare. As twelfth-century single-niche sedilia are extremely plain, they do not have same sanctifying quality as the embellished niches of the later 'classic' type. Nor with their undemarcated seat, do they quite as eloquently perpetually represent their function of housing the three ministers beside the altar. Instead, they are a simple way to use the building's walls for practical means, much as stone *armaria* developed to hold books in monastic libraries.[66] They were not installed for the aggrandisement of the sitters, but instead were responses to the function of the building. In this way, sedilia are not unlike the fireplace in the domestic interior: an entirely practical feature which subsequently became a site of display.[67] The adaption of the walls of buildings to contain furnishings is as old as architecture itself: for instance the cupboards built into the Neolithic complex at Skara Brae in Orkney. There is no reason then to account for some grand prototype in the appearance of the earliest sedilia: they are merely a stamp of the Eucharistic rite upon the interiors built for its performance.

THE EARLIEST 'CLASSIC' SEDILIA

However, sedilia appear to have quickly assumed an identity in their forms, representing what Chapter Two has dubbed the 'classic' type: three carefully

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[63] O'Keeffe 2003, 204; Stalley 2012, 38. For Cong; Salter 2009, 130.
[64] In Sweden, Roma and Nydala Abbeys, founded 1143 and 1164 respectively: Swartling 1967b, 97–98; Swartling 1967c, 50–51. In France, Senanque (Vaucluse); Aubert and Maillé 1947, 324.
[65] Wilson 2010, 38, fn.59.
[66] Kinder 2002, 133–134.
[67] Shuffrey 1912.

demarcated niches recessed into the wall, surmounted with arches and separated by shafts. Romanesque 'classic' sedilia are extremely rare, to the point that there is only one well-preserved authentic example in England.

These are the sedilia in the 'old chancel' of the collegiate church of St Mary de Castro, Leicester (fig. 80).[68] St Mary is a complicated building to phase accurately, a formerly unaisled nave and chancel of at least three Romanesque campaigns, of which the central part has been almost obliterated by Gothic arcades.[69] There may have been a Saxon church on the site, and there must have been a church to serve the castle in the late eleventh century, but we have no direct records of this.[70] The subsequent college has been considered as an important prototype of the late medieval secular chantry foundation, when intercessory masses moved out of monasteries and towards dedicated secular priests.[71] It was first provided with a dean and twelve canons by the newly-made first Earl of Leicester, Robert de Beaumont *c*.1107, of which the plain blind arcading at the west end may belong. In 1143 his son transferred the original endowments to the new Augustinian Abbey in Leicester, and in 1164-7 the church was refounded as a college of eight clerks subordinate to the Abbey.[72] This period may be represented by a second phase of work where motifs of diapered triangles and chevron are introduced, although the shape and extent of the east end at this stage is unknown.[73] The church was extended in the late twelfth century to its current length with an ornate long chancel containing large windows with rich chevron work, shafted inside and out (fig. 81).[74]

The sedilia may be part of this third Romanesque campaign, but it has been suggested that they were inserted after the wall was built.[75] Their eastern capital

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[68] This is the term used in early-nineteenth-century accounts, e.g.; *Gent. Mag.* 1843 (174), 155, because the Gothic south aisle, with its own set of triple Early English sedilia, is so vast that some earlier accounts term the Romanesque sedilia as being in the north aisle. They are noted as such, and also, accurately as extraordinary specimens of round-arch style sedilia, in Denne 1794, 392.

[69] The twelfth-century transepts in the plan of Radford 1955 have no archaeological evidence. Pevsner's account in *BoE Leicestershire* 1960 144-146 only recognised two Romanesque stages, and has been altered significantly by Brandwood in *BoE Leicestershire* 1984, 212-214, incorporating material from Brandwood 1984, 15–17.

[70] Brandwood 1984, 15.

[71] Crouch 2001, 174.

[72] *VCH Leicester Vol. 2* 1954, 45-46.

[73] Brandwood 1984, 16.

[74] The east wall is rebuilt in Neo-Norman, as predictably the original termination had been refenestrated with a larger window.

[75] Brandwood mentions that the stone has been noted as the same as dressings at Leicester Abbey, and that the sedilia 'may have been brought for (sic) there'; Brandwood 1984, 17. At what date this reuse was made is not stated, but seems extremely unlikely it could be post-Reformation.

partly covers an earlier reeded example (fig. 82), no doubt an earlier feature from the second-phase east end: perhaps an undemarcated single sedile niche akin to Horbling. The piscina is some distance to the east of the sedilia, and an almost entirely plain arch which may attribute it to an earlier campaign, although it was damaged by the installation of a memorial over it that was not removed until the 1840s.[76] The sedilia consist of three stepped seats, surmounted by arches with four orders of brashly carved chevron ornament, divided by double shafts and capitals. The carving appears to have been always intended to be used as sedilia: most notably the differing lengths of the columns to allow for the stepping. The capitals (fig. 82) are skilfully carved, uniquely so in the county, and are comparable to mid-century work such as the cloister capitals from Glastonbury Abbey.[77] However, the westernmost capitals incorporate distinctive waterleaf ornament (fig. 83), which as mentioned above, were a form popular in England *c.*1170-1200.

The Leicester sedilia are unique for their authentic display of the Romanesque Style on a 'classic' set, however, they are not alone as evidence that 'classic' sedilia were present as part of Anglo-Norman architecture. The splendid chancel at Castle Hedingham is a specimen of Transitional Romanesque with pointed lancets and a wheel window in the east wall, dating to the 1180s or 90s (fig. 84).[78] The sedilia appear extremely similar to Leicester in their basic design: rounded arches with orders of chevron supported on columns, with abaci and capitals, over three stepped seats (fig. 85). All this carving however is entirely the work of Henry Woodyer when he restored the church in 1870-2.[79] These sedilia niches are unusually small, and under the plaster it is possible to see further round arches enclosing this work, touching the window sills, revealing that Woodyer inserted his new carving within an original feature. That sedilia existed before Woodyer's restoration is also proven by an account of 1852 that describes a painting of a bishop or abbot in 'one of the narrow niches of the south side'.[80] The original appearance of the Castle Hedingham sedilia may have resembled the arches in Porchester

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[76] *Gent. Mag.* 1843 (174), 155. The projecting bowl is modern.

[77] *BoE Leicestershire* 1984, 18; Gibson 1984, 184–185; Brandwood 1984, 17.

[78] The RCHM dates the whole building as c.1180; *RCHM Essex Vol. 1* 1916, 47. Pevsner gives a date after c.1190 for the chancel; *BoE Essex* 2007, 196.

[79] Despite their illustrated appearance in Bond 1916, 176, 179, Pevsner, like the RCHM, did not even mention the sedilia in his first edition; *BoE Essex* 1954, 99-101, reviser James Bettley considers them 'all too perfect' in *BoE Essex* 2007, 195-196. They are also ignored by Harris 1992.

[80] Cutts 1852, 133–134; Repeated in Anon 1864, 724. A fragment of this painting survives in an ex-situ stone under the tower and is of a later date, and will be investigated in Chapter Five.

(Hampshire), built between 1133 and 1145, also a castle church, intended as a foundation of Austin Canons by Henry I.[81] In Porchester, on both sides of the formerly vaulted chancel, are large rectangular recesses with four plain arches that appear to have lost supporting corbels. Porchester may in turn have resembled the arches set on corbels by the double piscina in the chancel of the priory church of Deeping St James (Norfolk), of early-thirteenth-century date.[82] It is not certain then that Castle Hedingham did have a set of purely 'classic' sedilia in its chancel, or even an integral stone seat. However, this appearance of such wall-arcading in sophisticated churches with long, square-ended chancels in close proximity to an important castle is significant.[83] It demonstrates further how the origins of sedilia can be connected with middle-rank churches designed for clerical communities, the arrangement and forms of which came to subsequently characterise the Gothic parish church.

As well as having early examples of single-niche sedilia, some early 'classic' sedilia can be found in Cistercian Abbeys, which is not surprising due to the retention of so many of their unaisled square-ended chancels. Well-preserved are the set in Jerpoint Abbey in Ireland (fig. 86). They are formed of three equal, round-headed niches, unstepped, surrounded down to the level of the seats by two orders of incised hyphenated chevron ornament, the easternmost seat emphasised through syncopation with the other two.[84] The abbey was founded in 1160, and its sedilia are subsequently dated by Roger Stalley to 1160-70, although it is possible that the church was not originally Cistercian and that it was rebuilt in the 1180s.[85] Stalley, however, regards the foundation as Cistercian from the start, as the building uses proportional methods characteristic of the order: albeit in a 'somewhat cavalier fashion'.[86] It is possible that the sedilia are an insertion in a *retardataire* style that is

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[81] *VCH Hampshire Vol. 3* 1908, 159.

[82] Pevsner describes this work as 'fully E.E.'; *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 248.

[83] Castle Hedingham was the seat of the powerful de Vere family, and the exceptional five-storey great tower was probably begun by Aubrey de Vere, 1st earl Oxford (d. 1194) in the 1140s; Goodall 2011, 117, 120–121.

[84] Hyphenated chevron is first found on Hereford Cathedral's crossing arch in 1108/15-25 but is a motif more commonly found in the wider repertoire of the late Romanesque; Cunningham 1995, 152; Thurlby 2006, 38; Moss 2009, 26.

[85] O'Conbhuidhe 1963; Stalley 1987, 199–200.

[86] Stalley 1987, 69–70, 261–262.

characteristic of much other work at the Abbey in the fifteenth century.[87] The more weathered sedilia at Cymmer Abbey (Gwynedd, Wales) could be plausibly dated to shortly after the 1198 foundation of the house by their still strongly Romanesque style capitals (fig. 87).[88]

The final few Romanesque sedilia are problematic due to a lack of documentary context. Hook Norton (Oxfordshire) has a two-bay Norman chancel similar to Horbling. The architectural traces of a Saxon church present again the possibility that it was a former minster.[89] The double piscina is fairly well preserved, a round arch niche with a single chamfer on simple imposts, but the adjacent traces of a sedile consist of a right jamb and parts of the imposts and springings of the arch that are left uncovered in an otherwise plastered wall (fig. 88). It is possible that left and right of the traces of this sedile were two more arches creating 'classic' sedilia. At Wellingore (Lincolnshire), the sedilia are clearly late-twelfth-century, with slightly chamfered rounded arches and waterleaf capitals, the latter advising a date of *c.*1200 at the latest. The church building shows no further signs of standing fabric earlier than the otherwise fourteenth-century chancel. Without excavation, it is impossible to ascertain the original context of these sedilia that appear have to have been kept from an earlier building.[90]

The sedilia at Earl's Barton (Northamptonshire) (fig. 89) are well-known, but can be dismissed as precociously early. They undoubtedly use authentic Romanesque fabric, but the awkward joins of the chevron of the arches, as well as the fact that one arch has clearly been rotated to rest on two responds of unequal height, shows that they are partly work from the original Norman east end, related to the fine blind arcading further west on the north and south sides.[91] They must have

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[87] This opinion is included as 'personal communication' from Aisling O'Donoghue in Cragoe 1999a, 171. Leask 1958, 28 also suspects a later medieval building of the presbytery. Chapter Six will consider further fifteenth-century sedilia using older forms.

[88] The sedilia are set in what on a standard Cistercian plan would be the presbytery, which proves that the sanctuary and side chapels beyond the apparent temporary east wall were never built; Brock 1878, 466–467; Butler 2004, 116–118; Robinson 2006, 237–239.

[89] Thurlby 2002, 243.

[90] A Norman pillar piscina, probably early-twelfth-century on account of the crude bead ornament, has been recently discovered, which would suggest an earlier building with a freestanding altar and an axial piscina.

[91] 'The Summer Meeting at Northampton' *AJ* 69 1912, 513 and *VCH Northampton Vol. 4* 1937, 120-121, both date the chancel extension and resetting of the Romanesque sculpture as mid-thirteenth century. This opinion is reiterated in *CRSBI*; URL: www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/500/, which dates the arcading as third quarter of the twelfth century.

been reused in the thirteenth-century lengthening and remodelling of the chancel, represented by the lancets, east window and the rounded-trefoiled piscina.

CONCLUSION ON THE FUNCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The above discussion has demonstrated that the earliest sedilia of the twelfth century appear in churches which have in common the square-ended, unaisled, east ends which would later become ubiquitous in the English parish church. As well as Cistercian monasteries, who are well-known for using this device, these churches appear to have been either former minsters surviving as 'crypto-collegiate' churches, or newly-endowed foundations of clerical communities.[92]

There is certainly no single reason for the development of the square-ended chancel, which would come to entirely supplant the apsed layout in England by the early thirteenth century. In the Gothic period, the lessening importance of having a prominent throne behind the altar may be linked to a decline in the frequency of episcopal celebration.[93] In both monastic and secular cathedrals it became to be increasingly rare for the bishop to be present in choir, and the Eucharist was more often celebrated by lesser clergy.[94] The axial stone throne with flanking bench may have stayed the longest in great churches that still had the prestige of a high-ranking celebrant such as a bishop or abbot, until the visual unity of the long vista to his throne was disrupted by Gothic screens and furnishings.[95] The factors of greater emphasis on the separation of clergy from people, the belief in the Real Presence, relic display and the increasing frequency of celebration all contributed to the various changes that occurred in churches across western Christendom. Yet the most important issue for the spread of sedilia, as will be investigated in Chapter Seven, is the situation of having enough clergy present in parish churches to fill them. As John Blair has shown, the distinction between ex-minsters and new colleges from regular parish churches diminished to the point where the former were no longer exceptional.[96] This means that the forms and arrangements of the square-ended chancel could be adopted on a wider scale.

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[92] For the phrase 'crypto-collegiate' churches; Blair 1998.
[93] Frere 1906, 38–39.
[94] Edwards 1967, 98–99. For the staff performing Mass in great churches, see Chapter Seven.
[95] Brooke 1971.
[96] Blair 1998, 287.

Malcolm Thurlby's survey of Romanesque churches in the diocese of Rochester suggested, in its diversity of forms such as scale of chancels and number and placement of doorways, a variety of liturgical practices.[97] In this period of the development of the parochial system, it is not surprising to see a lack of consensus on the arrangement of churches. Richard Gem has demonstrated the limits to what analysis of plans and fabric alone can tell us about function: recognising that forms can be ascribed new functions that go against their original purpose, meaning we may always remain in the dark about early liturgical practice in these buildings.[98] However, the apparent rapid consensus that took place around the use of the 'classic' sedilia, following the sporadic use of the single niche, is striking. It may mark in stone the beginnings of liturgical conformity outside of great cathedrals and monasteries. Before we see how the genre spread in parish churches and up to the great church, first we must address the issue of why the 'distinctive' classic type became so uniquely established in England alone.

THE 'ENGLISHNESS OF ENGLISH SEDILIA': THE FORMAL DEVELOPMENT

Much work has been done regarding the peculiarity of English (or British) art, most famously Pevsner's controversial '*The Englishness of English Art*' based on his Reith Lectures of 1955.[99] Pevsner ambitiously tried to associate all British art – whether the flaming line of William Blake, the Decorated Style and the landscape garden; or the rectilinear grid of Perpendicular and Georgian architecture – as essentially linear. Pevsner's thesis, a *kunstgeographie* that is largely descriptive rather than explanatory of causal factors, has been criticised by a number of scholars.[100] This section will however use such notions of broad trends in national style to explain the precedence of sedilia in England, ultimately relating to the unique situation of the wholesale rebuilding after the Norman Conquest.

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[97] Thurlby 2004.
[98] Gem 2005, 274.
[99] Pevsner 1956.
[100] From a medievalist perspective; Alexander 1998; Causey 2004; Marks 2011.

DECORATIVE ARCADING

The most important formal precedent for 'classic' sedilia is decorative blind arcades, most specifically those at dado level. The use of these has been noted to be particularly common in England for both Romanesque and Gothic architecture, a linear approach to ornament at odds from the Gothic space of France.[101] An interest in the decorative potential of miniature arches and shafts was not confined to England, but nevertheless the country does display a particular fondness for the motif.[102] Anglo-Norman twelfth-century church facades stand in particular contrast to the French tradition of the harmonic façade with grand portals encasing figural sculpture.[103] Decorative arcading has been called the 'Englishman's favourite motif', and the English great church west front referred to as an 'orgy of arcading'.[104] More importantly for sedilia, blind arcades are also used in profusion at dado level in many second-generation Anglo-Norman buildings, such as Durham (begun 1093) (fig. 90), Anselm's choir at Canterbury (*c*.1093) (fig. 91) Norwich (1096), Ely (in the work after 1100) (fig. 92) and Peterborough (1118). At Durham and Peterborough such round-arched dado arcading is developed through interlacing into an even more elaborate and noticeable feature.[105] This arcading along the dado level of nave and transepts would of course not have been intended to mark out seats, although the plinth for the shafts in English buildings is frequently large enough for its use as such. Dado arcading is much less common in French Gothic churches, absent from Suger's choir at St Denis (1130s), Paris (1160-), Chartres (1194-), Bourges (1195-) and Soissons (*c*.1200).[106] When they are present, French dado arcades are often less like sedilia, either much larger or with no substantial plinth on which to sit, for instance the choir of Saint-Remi in Rheims (1170).[107] It is very unusual for English

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[101] Bony 1983, 93.
[102] Tyrrell-Green 1924, 100–101.
[103] McAleer 1984, 277–278, 289; McAleer 1988.
[104] *BoE Cathedrals of England: North and East Anglia* 2005, 79; McAleer 1984, 308–311.
[105] Reilly 1997, 69; Fernie 1993, 153–154; Fernie 2000, 273. The inside walls of the ambulatory at Norwich between sanctuary and aisle are also interlaced.
[106] The choir chapels are dado-arcaded at Noyon (*c*.1148) and St Germain de Pres (1163), as are the transepts at Noyon. Rouen (1200) and Le Mans (1217) have dado-arcading in their choir chapels, and Sens (1140), St Remi, Rheims (1170), Rheims (1211) and Amiens (1218) have fully dado-arcaded choirs.
[107] In addition, the plinth is stepped up very high at Rheims Cathedral to the point it would be impractical (but not impossible) to sit on. A rare example of English dado arcading without a significant plinth is Stone-by-Dartford (Kent) (fig. 102), which will be discussed in Chapter Four as an example as how sedilia were not necessarily ubiquitous in England by 1250.

Gothic great churches to exclude dado arcading like in France: Canterbury choir under William the Englishman (1177-1184), Wells (1170s) and Salisbury (1220) being notable exceptions, and significant in that the latter two are in the South West where sedilia did not become widespread in Gothic parish churches.[108]

The use of such arcading as demarcating the seats of clerics has its clearest precedent in chapter houses. Worcester's is one of the earliest surviving such structures in Europe, convincingly dated stylistically *c.*1100-15, and the first in a long line of the peculiarly English genre of the centrally-planned chapter house.[109] The interior is encircled by 95 tall, rounded arches which were intended to accentuate the seats of a stone perimeter bench (fig. 93).[110] Yet because this number exceeds the community by so many, combined with the narrowness of the arches, means they could not be prescribed seats like in sedilia.[111] Above this is another storey of intersecting arcading, and as a whole the building is characteristic of the ornamental treatment of the later Anglo-Norman Romanesque.[112] The later, rectangular, chapter house at Bristol Cathedral (1160s) has an even richer treatment of surfaces and a similar arrangement of shallowly recessed arches over a perimeter bench of twenty seats on each lateral wall (fig. 94).[113] Bristol is typical of twelfth-century chapter houses, the earliest of which being Gloucester, and many subsequent examples, where integral benches and blind arcading were *de rigueur*.[114]

Dado arcading also appears in Anglo-Norman church east ends. St John, Devizes (Wiltshire), is a three-cell Norman church dating from the 1160s.[115] The

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[108] For the English William's paradoxically more French manner than William of Sens; Woodman 1981, 108–109, 125–130. Wells has very lavish arcading in its north porch; Draper 2006a, 93–94, a feature also found at Salisbury.

[109] Stratford 1978.

[110] The bench itself was probably destroyed in 1641 to accommodate bookcases, and is now modern; Stratford 1978, 56.

[111] Stratford thinks this number reflects the dramatic increase from scarcely twelve monks to fifty described before 1089, further increased to 62 c.1104; Stratford 1978, 68–69. Thirty spare seats is an over-provision beyond that of later chapter houses such as Lincoln, Salisbury, Wells and York; Zukowsky 1977, 40–41.

[112] Stratford 1978, 63.

[113] McNeill 2011a, 33, 44–46. The total number of seats would again outnumber the community which probably never exceeded thirty, but would leave places for guests and visitors; Oakes 2000, 82.

[114] Reading, Durham, Lewes, Rochester, Castle Acre, Wenlock, St Albans, Kenilworth and Keynsham are listed in McNeill 2011a, 51–53. Of these, Reading is the only one that has no definite evidence for blind arcading.

[115] Attempts have been made to link this work with Bishop Roger of Sarum, who built the adjacent castle and along with St Mary in Devizes was built to house a clerical community as discussed above with regard to Avington; *BoE Wiltshire* 1971, 206; Blair 1998, 277; Thurlby 2002, 256. However, the fact that the churches are not mentioned in King Stephen's dispute over the town with the Bishop, and also stylistic advancements, such as chevron curving round the soffit, pointed arches in the transept

eastern cell has a lavish display of arcading, six arches with curved chevron against each wall (fig. 95). With the uncertain position of altars at this time, it is difficult to be sure whether this cell was designed for the altar in a similar position to its current location, or with a now-destroyed clergy bench against the east wall.[116] However, in the thirteenth century, when the move of the altar inevitably occurred, the arches on the south side would then mark out places for the moved pillar piscina and the priest, deacon and subdeacon. This is demonstrative of the link between decorative practice and its practical potential that was instrumental in the development of the familiar 'classic' type of sedilia. In this context, we can see how St Mary de Castro, Leicester (fig. 81) may have been looking to a church such as Stow (Lincolnshire), certainly of ex-minster status, with a lavish arcading scheme round the whole late-twelfth-century chancel (fig. 96).[117] At Leicester, only the bare minimum of arches needed for the seating of the officiating clergy were inserted into the dado. As they were not part of a larger decorative scheme, modifications could be made to make them better suit their function: making them more deeply recessed for greater shelter and practicality, and the placement of them over the chancel steps with the levels of the seats ranked accordingly.

Succeeding the Anglo-Norman Romanesque, English Gothic has also been characterised as primarily a means of transforming thick-wall construction into rich and lively decoration.[118] It is with St Hugh's choir at Lincoln (begun *c*.1192), the first true 'Early English Gothic' building, that the characteristic Anglo-Norman motif of blind arcading is taken to new levels of development: the famous syncopated arcading of the choir and transept dados taking Romanesque interlaced arcading into a third dimension.[119] The later nave dado, however, continues as richly-moulded pointed-trefoiled arcades (dogtoothed on the south) in a manner that

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and the less refined execution of the architectural sculpture compared to the castle suggests a date well after Roger's death; Stalley 1971, 81–83.

[116] The whole east wall has been much rebuilt as it was knocked through for a three-light Perpendicular window, visible in Britton 1809, pl. I following 5.

[117] The literature on Stow concentrates on its monumental pre-Conquest Romanesque fabric, but its history only illustrates its importance; Fernie 1983, 124-127.

[118] Wilson 1992, 82, 191.

[119] Frankl 2000, 101; Webb 1965, 77; Nordstrom 1955, 259–262; Draper 2006a, 133, 145. For Lincoln as a crucial building in the development of the distinctive 'Early English' Gothic style see Draper 2006a, 125–145.

is more like the linear richness of Durham.[120] Importantly, this nave may be contemporary with Lincoln's chapter house, the first extant polygonal example following Worcester's centrally-planned design.[121] Its interior uses the design of the south nave aisle dado arcades with stiff-leaf capitals and dogtooth to demarcate the seats of the canons.

Decorative arcading from the late twelfth century onward became progressively more detached from the wall, emphasising and exploiting the three-dimensional possibilities within thick-wall construction.[122] Dado arcades would become an essential motif of English Gothic great-church architecture, such as the retrochoir of Worcester (begun 1224) (fig. 97), York transepts (*c.*1220) and Beverley Minster (1220s) (fig. 98).[123] This would continue through to the fourteenth century with the particularly lavish dados of St Stephen's, Westminster, and subsequently the Lady Chapels of Lichfield and Ely (fig. 188). It is then a certain *horror vacui* aesthetic typical of late Norman architecture in England, along with thick walls, that led to the embellishment of dado levels with deeply recessed arcading. This in turn encouraged the development of the simple single-niche sedilia into a more compact version of dado arcading, suitable for churches that could not afford the expense of a full scheme.

The reason this aesthetic developed is not due to nationalism, through either a conscious revival of Saxon forms or an irrepressibly 'irrational' English character, but instead can be attributed to a way of dealing with the legacy of the Conquest. The Norman rebuilding of the second half of the eleventh century was unprecedented in Europe, with all of the former Anglo-Saxon cathedrals demolished and rebuilt on a heroic scale within a timespan of around 50 years.[124] This gives English architecture an unavoidable inheritance of Romanesque buildings that would govern their appearance for the rest of the Middle Ages.[125] The Gothic style of France, a

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[120] The nave is usually dated to the 1220s due to Hugh de Wells' will of 1233 mentioning much timber, presumably for its roof; *BoE Cathedrals: North and East Anglia* 2005, 136-138; Draper 2006a, 139–140.

[121] The chapter house appears to have begun before 1220 as is it is mentioned in the metrical life of St Hugh, written 1220-30, and completed by Hugh de Wells (d. 1235). While the upper parts may be 1235 or later, the closeness of the dado to the nave may indicate building proceeded rather slowly until the nave was complete; *BoE Cathedrals of England: North and East Anglia* 2005, 164-167.

[122] Draper 2006a, 93–94.

[123] Worcester: Engel 2007, 112–167, York: Hoey 1986, Beverley: Hoey 1984.

[124] Gem 1988, 21–22.

[125] Binski 2014, 22–24. I also owe much of this thought to the draft of Hoey's book left unfinished at his death; Hoey 2000, which I thank Richard Plant for sharing with me.

novel conception of shaping space coupled with a quest for verticality, could not be transplanted on to these massive buildings, and instead an alternative aesthetic solution was developed. For a number of scholars, Durham and its successors were fusing the Norman Romanesque with an earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition, which also showed a general taste for elaborate surface and blind arcading in architecture.[126] However, it was the unique combination of forms and aesthetics in the Anglo-Norman Romanesque, and its subsequent influence on Early English Gothic, that was fundamental for the development and popularisation of the forms of 'classic' sedilia.

THE REJECTION OF THE APSIDAL EAST END

There is another particularly English tendency which must have been a deciding factor in the popularity of sedilia in this country: the flat east end. It has been observed that all the early examples of sedilia, whether 'classic' or simple single niches, only ever appear in long square-ended chancels, never those with apsidal east ends. That the apse, in polygonal form, remained popular on the Continent throughout the Middle Ages but became almost unknown in English church architecture after 1200 must be a factor in the popularity of sedilia in this country. In English great churches, the chevet, immensely popular in French Gothic from its very beginning at St Denis in the 1130s to its end in the Flamboyant, is almost unknown, except of course the unusually French form of Westminster Abbey and its subsequent imitation at Hailes Abbey. One of a meagre handful of English Gothic parish church apses is at Madley (Herefordshire) (fig. 58), *c.*1318, which has been attributed to knowledge of the polygonal terminations of Tewkesbury Lady Chapel (designed *c.*1318-20, demolished) and Winchelsea Greyfriars (1290s).[127] Maddisson has noted how many English apses were connected to the Virgin, as the dedication of Madley to St Mary was shared by the Lady Chapels at Patrington, Tewkesbury, Wells and Lichfield Cathedrals, as well as the parish churches at nearby Marden, and Bluntisham (Cambridgeshire).[128] Madley shows that sedilia and apse are not incompatible, as it has a rather fine stepped triple 'classic' set decorated with

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[126] Webb 1965, 23, 37–38; Bony 1981. Also; Fernie 2000, 34; Geddes 2008, 32.
[127] Morris 1974b, 187–191. The nearby polygonal apse of Marden is a local emulation of Madley well into the 1320s; Morris 1974b, 187-188.
[128] Maddison 1989, 141.

ballflower (fig. 58). However, just like a rounded apse, a polygonal apse of small size would make the insertion of large niches difficult, and this must have been one of the factors that discouraged the development of sedilia outside of England.

The reason for the English popularity of the square east end after *c.*1200, or more accurately, the rejection of the apse, is difficult to account for. As discussed above, between *c.*1000 to *c.*1200, the altar in local/parish churches appears to have been sited progressively further east. From the late eleventh to the late twelfth century, previously square-ended churches such as Rivenhall (fig. 69) and Wharram Percy were extended by an eastern apse, which in the later Middle Ages were once again modified to become rectilinear. Cragoe has hypothesised that this final flat-end phase was brought about by the altar being placed flush against the east wall, an entirely functional response to an eastern 'migration' of the altar.[129] This however does not explain why the apse, circular and polygonal, continued to endure on the continent as a major aspect of church architecture and only seemed to be excised from common vocabulary in England. It is not even certain, due to their comprehensive destruction in the English Reformation, that all Gothic altars were flush with the east wall so as to have such a manifest effect on architectural planning.[130] Churches of the three-cell plan with square eastern cells: such as Elkstone or Stewkley, the latter of which was argued above as once having a clergy bench against the east wall (fig. 70), are most likely to have been originally designed for an altar in the central cell. Thus the relationship between architectural form and altar placement may be related, but is not directly causal. The same problem applies to the proposal that the flat east end came about from a desire for the opportunity for the display of glass in grouped lancets, and later as large traceried windows.[131] It is just as easy to say that these are a symptom of the flat east end rather than the cause, particularly as stained glass was no more popular or desirable in England than elsewhere, and a well-fenestrated apse can give a just as impressive show of glazing.

These chicken-and-egg causalities are not unimportant to consider, but can never fully explain the stylistic choice of the flat east end in England. The suppression of the apse for the square east end has been seen as part of a re-emergence of an Anglo-Saxon identity after the imposition of a foreign form by the

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[129] Cragoe 1999b. Also in Parsons 1986, 106–107.
[130] Rodwell 2005, 158.
[131] Hearn 1971, 203; Draper 2006a, 153–154.

Norman invaders, either a gradual 'naturalisation' into English institutions, or even part of a conscious formation of a national style.[132] For instance the Romanesque choir of Southwell, *c.*1109, one of the first Romanesque great churches with a rectilinear east end (although probably with an interior apse) has been seen as exhibiting a conscious continuity with the earlier Saxon Minster.[133] The apse was however a major element in pre-Conquest church architecture, certainly in the early Kentish churches, the basilicas of Mercia, and early Romanesque buildings such as the Confessor's Abbey at Westminster. The rectangular east end may have been the most common form in Anglo-Saxon churches, but there were as many rectangular east ends in Normandy before the conquest as there were in Anglo-Saxon England.[134] This makes the idea of a conscious idea of the square east end as distinctively Saxon untenable. Furthermore, it is debatable whether there could have been such a concept of a 'national style' of architecture at this period, and such deliberate political intent behind the forms of buildings.[135]

Pevsner, in his *Englishness of English Art*, considered the square east end as part of his characterisation of the English tendency toward the linear.[136] His main reasoning for the trend is that the irrational English character avoids shaping space, instead preferring a preference, for flat, linear decoration.[137] His underlying cause for this essentially Wolfflinian treatment of art as diagnostic of a Heglian zeitgeist is a weak association with geography, climate and insularity, not unlike Wincklemann's eighteenth-century understanding of the climate of Ancient Greece as providing the perfect conditions for Athenian art.[138] However, Pevsner's observations on common forms do prove useful, despite the insufficient grounding in historical context, as in helping to understand the unconscious formation of distinctive national styles which we can now observe in retrospect. Therefore, the fundamental cause of 'classic' sedilia is the thick-walled, bulky forms of the wholesale Romanesque rebuilding

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[132] Bond 1905, 156–157; Hearn 1971, 203.
[133] Coffman 1998, 2–3; Fernie 2000, 252.
[134] Clapham 1934, 101–102; Hearn 1971, 202; Fernie 2000, 251–252.
[135] Engel 2008, 38.
[136] Pevsner 1956, 84–86.
[137] For Pevsner's opposition to race as a cause in artistic form; Causey 2004, 166–167; Engel 2008, 54. Pevsner himself acknowledges race as a 'dangerous tool'; Pevsner 1956, 184. For more implicit reading; Alexander 1998.
[138] Pevsner 1956, 11–19. For an overview of Pevsner's methodology, his background and engagement with social theories of art see Crossley 2004, 4–19.

following the Conquest, which in turn developed into an architecture concerned more with surface ornament than spatial play.

CONCLUSION ON THE FORMAL DEVELOPMENT

It has been suggested that sedilia first developed as a utilitarian solution, probably in multiple places all over Europe as independent innovations facilitating the primary function of the concept of the eastern sanctuary: to contain the altar, its ceremonies, and also its performers. Then in England, the tendency for perimeter dado arcading and straight-ended chancels conditioned the popularity of the basic elements fundamental to 'classic' sedilia. This basis in fashionable forms allows a model for the otherwise unrecoverable situation of the 'invention' of what we can hitherto observe to be a 'genre'. It permits its genesis in multiple, autonomous centres, even in continental Europe. But only in England were these developments more numerous as to be so reciprocally reinforcing to affirm sedilia not just as a simple practical feature, but also to lend them a distinctive appearance. It is in the thirteenth century, to which the next chapter shall turn, that this distinctive fitting would subsequently become an object of desire.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SPREAD AND DEVELOPMENT OF SEDILIA

Now that the earliest 'classic' sedilia have been identified and the context for their development has been presented, the thirteenth century – which provided around a third of the extant corpus of English medieval sedilia – can be considered as a time of the genre's consolidation and proliferation. This chapter will show how sedilia initially spread as a utilitarian aspect within many first-generation Gothic parish church chancels: an economy of forms rather than conspicuous innovation. It shall then demonstrate how they eventually became desirable objects, and subsequently that they made their way into cathedral high altar enclosures where they had not previously been present, and became almost ubiquitous in fourteenth-century parish churches.

SEDILIA IN THE EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURY: THE CONSOLIDATION OF AN IDEA

When 'classic' sedilia began to appear more numerously in the thirteenth century, their association with the dado arcades that had formed the initial context for their development was still strong. Despite the change in formal repertoire, Early English Gothic retains the Anglo-Norman obsession with ornamenting flat surface. One consequence of this is that it seems that it was still highly desirable in a church building to have a full perimeter dado arcade. A good example demonstrating this enduring aesthetic is the Elder Lady Chapel of Bristol Cathedral (fig. 99), under construction 1218-22, which has been noted as owing considerable debt to its late-twelfth-century counterpart at Glastonbury Abbey.[1] There is a full scheme of arcading on the interior lateral walls of the building, with four arches in each bay (the second bay on the south side destroyed by a passage to the fourteenth-century choir), with richly-decorated spandrels including figurative subjects on the south side. On both sides the eastern bay of arcading is raised for the altar, and if viewed in isolation, these four arches would be indistinguishable from a set of 'classic' sedilia other than their lack of an integral

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[1] Hill 1944, 152; Thurlby 1995, 162–163; Reeve 2010, 82–84. For some doubt of the precise date, Boss 2011, 61–62.

piscina.[2] However, these places that likely served as seats for the officiating clergy are not visually demarcated from the rest of the arcading as a distinct entity.

The ideal of dado arcades with no demarcated sedilia in a parochial context is demonstrated by the sophisticated chancel of Burgh-Next-Aylsham (Norfolk) (fig. 100) of around *c*.1220-30.[3] The roughly-contemporary chancel at Cheriton (Kent) articulates this taste on a smaller scale, with dado arcades of richly-moulded arches on fully-developed Early English capitals and Bethersden marble shafts: six arches, each wide enough for two men to sit under, across each lateral wall of the chancel up to half its height (fig. 101).[4] The seat or plinth underneath these arcades, like Bristol Elder Lady Chapel, is raised under the final arch for the altar platform, and presumably served as the sedilia. It appears that as at Bristol, accentuating the sedilia was not considered necessary in Cheriton's design. However that the plinth must almost certainly have been used as the sedilia is suggested by the extreme narrowness of the chancel: the modern, more comfortable furniture that has since been added makes the space very cluttered today. However, dado arcading could not always fulfil this function as seating. At Stone-by-Dartford (Kent), a church built for the Bishop of Rochester's manor in the 1260s by masons from Westminster Abbey, the chancel walls have large dado arcades which descend to the floor with no plinth to sit upon (fig. 102), rather like the French great-church examples gathered in Chapter Three.[5]

At the same time, some churches began to have their dado arcading schemes designed in a way to accentuate the arches close to the altar that would seat the officiating clergy. At the former conventual church of St Radegund's, Cambridge (now Jesus College chapel), the gently pointed-trefoiled blind arcading is only present on the south side of the chancel. That this feature had been consciously installed as seating is shown by the eastern arch, which is wider than the others, and contains a two-levelled seat (fig. 103).[6] Similar connection of arcades with sedilia can be seen later in the century at Cooling (Kent) (fig. 104). In the long chancel, the deep arches on both the

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[2] There is a plain square aumbry cut into the third niche from the east, presumably a later addition.

[3] Dated as such in *BoE Norfolk 1:* 1997, 418, presumably accounting for influence of Lincoln nave.

[4] Hoey 1995, 49–52. Robinson 1889 dated this chancel as 'not later than 1225', while Tatton-Brown dates it as mid-thirteenth-century; *Kent Churches Committee*: URL: www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/01/03/CHE.htm. The small size of the mound on which the preceding Anglo-Saxon church was built (the place name a corruption of 'Church tun') may have some bearing on the narrow chancel; Morris 1989, 268.

[5] The patron of the work was likely Lawrence de Sancto Martino who as Bishop of Rochester 1251-1274 was also lord of Stone manor; Crossley 2001, 195, 203–204. An alternative chronology is given by Tatton-Brown, which sees the current chancel as *c*.1250 appended to a nave of the first half of the thirteenth century; *Kent Churches Committee*: URL: www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/01/03/STOD.htm.

[6] Similar sedilia, accompanied by an identical piscina, are found in the transepts of Histon church; Atkinson 1944, 44–45.

south and north walls continue only as sedilia on the south side, where the arches are wider and trefoiled, climaxing in a bar-traceried piscina.[7]

This varied evidence demonstrates that dado arcades were being used in the design of church interiors decoratively, practically, and in isolation as pure 'classic' sedilia simultaneously, making it difficult to ascertain when the idea of 'classic' sedilia was widely accepted as the way that sedilia ought to look. The earliest securely-datable 'classic' sedilia, which stand in isolation on an otherwise blank dado, appear to be at the Hospital church in Portsmouth (now the Royal Garrison church) which was founded anew by royal charter and called 'recently built' in 1214 (fig. 105).[8] The sedilia were entirely renewed in the restoration by George Edmund Street, but it is likely he reproduced what was originally there.[9] The design is simple: a single level seat under three chamfered trefoil arches with a hood-mould, supported by three freestanding columns. There is also a separate double piscina further east. This rib-vaulted chancel does not feature dado arcading, instead the sedilia are an isolated display of such ornament. Of course, these simple sedilia are almost certainly antedated by the Romanesque sedilia at St Mary de Castro in Leicester, which like the other very early 'classic' sedilia discussed in Chapter Three show a conscious acknowledgement of their liturgical function by the motif of stepping the seats over the chancel floor levels which the Portsmouth set does not.

Cherry Hinton (Cambridgeshire) possesses an extremely fine chancel from the middle of the first half of the thirteenth century, dominated by a single motif indicating knowledge of great-church repertoire: the lavishly moulded cinquefoil rere-arches to the tall lancets (fig. 106). These can be related to Bishop Eustace's (1198-1216) work at Ely Cathedral, such as the arcading on the exterior of the north and south walls of the galilee porch (fig. 107).[10] The dado at Cherry Hinton appears to have been blank (it is now obscured by wainscoting), except for one of the most perfect examples of an Early English sedilia and piscina group (cover illustration). The sedilia consist of moulded arches over three stepped seats with detached columns, the squared-off double piscina accentuated by clustered columns and trefoiled arches with an order of dogtooth. The

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[7] 'Meeting held at Gravesend, 1876; *Arch. Cant.* 1877 (11), lvi.
[8] *VCH Hampshire Vol. 2* 1903, 206–207.
[9] An account of the circumstances of restoration is given in Wright 1873, 35–53. As Street recognised the building for its 'extreme architectural value and interest'; Wright 1873, 39, it is fairly safe to assume he did not make egregious additions.
[10] *VCH Cambridge Vol. 10,* 2002, 115 dates Cherry Hinton as *c.*1215-25. Pevsner was rather later, stating 'E.E. at its best, that is c.1230-50'; *BoE Cambridgeshire* 1970, 316. For dating the phases of the Ely galilee, see *BoE Cambridgeshire* 1970, 345–346; Maddison 2000a, 53–56.

general forms of the sedilia could be related to the blind arches on the lower levels of the Ely galilee, demonstrating that the designer of Cherry Hinton emulated the vertical hierarchy of forms from this great church project into a parish church context. Cherry Hinton's sedilia were clearly not conceived as a mere economy of motifs borrowed from Ely. Instead they represent an idea of distinct piece of furniture with an essential formal language: embodying the 'classic' sedilia.

Although in the thirteenth century there is little to no evidence as to the form of the seats for the officiating clergy at the high altars of great churches, sedilia do start to appear in the south walls beside their auxiliary altars, but much later in date than those at the high altars of lower-rank churches. The earliest 'classic' sedilia in a great church are at Southwell Minster's east end, built between *c.*1234-48 (plan: fig. 108).[11] Adjoining the fifth bay of the choir from the west are a pair of eastern transepts, with two one-bay chapels directly to their east adjoining the sixth bay of the choir.[12] In the south-east chapel, there is a set of three arches with clustered columns with a hood-mould decorated by headstops, which is unarguably intended as sedilia (fig. 109) supported by the inclusion of both a small niche for the cruets and a piscina with projecting bowl. These then would appear to be for an altar against the east wall of the chapel, and the first time that a great church has made the leap from an arcade serving incidentally as seats like Bristol Elder Lady Chapel (fig. 99) or the equivalent retrochoir location at Worcester (fig. 97) to bona-fide 'classic' sedilia. McNeill sees the care taken in strengthening the central tower as suggesting that the western bays of the choir were built after the collapse of the tower at Lincoln in 1237/9, but that the foundation of a chantry may imply the east portion of the choir, and these sedilia, was ready by 1241.[13] Although they are certainly planned as sedilia, there are other features in Southwell's east end that use identical forms but clearly do not have the same function. The south-east transept from which the south-east chapel projects has a double piscina in its south wall, suggesting another altar, but no apparent sedilia: instead it has a low, wide semi-circular niche in their place, but three arches in the west wall almost identical in their elements to the afore-mentioned sedilia (fig. 110).[14] Similarly, the north-east transept on

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[11] McNeill 1998.

[12] All this was set out and built separately to the western bays which occupied the site of the Romanesque presbytery; McNeill 1998, 24–26.

[13] McNeill 1998, 29–30. For more on this chantry and the provision of clergy for the south-east chapel sedilia see Chapter Seven.

[14] The rest of the west dado wall is comprised of modern stonework with a square-headed recession like a door, but it is clear that the arches always terminated at this point. The southern niche is evidently too low to be sedilia and finds closest parallel with tomb niches.

the opposite side of the building has an uninterrupted dado arcade on the west wall of five arches of the same sign design once again (fig. 111).[15]

At Filey (East Yorkshire), a Transitional nave, formerly with a western tower, was given a sizeable chancel and a new crossing tower with transepts *c*.1230-60, and also displays this formal similarity of sedilia with apparently non-ritual spans of arcading.[16] The chancel sedilia (fig. 112) consist of three trefoiled and moulded arches on short shafts, with quatrefoils in their spandrels, and topped with their own string-course. The trefoil arches, and the spandrel quatrefoils with inner lobes, are recurrent in the Lincoln-derived decorative language of Beverley Minster choir and transepts that was common parlance in architecture of the region at this time.[17] An almost identical triplet of arches, only missing the string-course, can be found against the west wall of the south transept (fig. 113). This position, and the absence of a piscina, suggests that these arches did not have the same ritual function for seating as the sedilia in the chancel.[18] Full perimeter dado arcading was a desirable motif in Early English transepts, such as at Thurlby (Lincolnshire) (fig. 114) and Polebrook (Northamptonshire).[19] Like fully arcaded chancel dados, this seems to have been an aesthetic, rather than a functional motif, and Filey's south transept may have been intended to have a full arcading scheme.[20] When this was abandoned, the design of the arcade was used for the sedilia. This shows how when a decorative architectural *form* was united with the context and *function* of sedilia, it became an example of a wider *genre*.

Just by these few examples it can be shown that there was no neat, linear evolution from a period of full dado arcades to when the notion of sedilia as a genre was comprehensively understood. The ideas of full dado arcading, sedilia within dado arcading, and sedilia as separate objects appear to be coexistent in English architecture

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[15] It has been suggested that the north-east transept served as a chapter house before the current late-thirteenth-century octagonal example was built; McNeill 1998, 32.

[16] Milner 2005, 102 compares the crossing piers, with circular and keeled shafts with fillets to Beverley Minster (1230s), and *BoE Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* 1995, 416 compares the chamfered buttresses to Bridlington Priory, *c*.1250.

[17] Milner 2005, 102. For Beverley's formal context in the second quarter of the thirteenth century; Hoey 1984.

[18] Milner 2005, 111 hypothesises these may have been moved from the south wall which shows disturbance.

[19] Polebrook is dated to the second quarter of the thirteenth century in *BoE Northamptonshire* 2013, 528-530, although the stated direct connection with the granting of the advowson to Peterborough Abbey in 1232 is unlikely. The church had a resident rector in the 1292 *Taxatio* and paid portions to four monasteries, and was not appropriated. For a treatment of Polebrook's phases of building in a wider context; Draper 2006a, 181–193.

[20] The south transept or aisle seems to have been quite a common starting point in ambitious rebuilds of the later thirteenth and fourteenth century, and could house sedilia that may have been used for a surrogate high altar while the chancel was under construction, as seen at Heckington, Claypole and Harpley, considered in Chapter Five.

throughout the thirteenth century. It is impossible to know whether the dado arcades in Bristol Elder Lady Chapel (fig. 99) or Cheriton parish church (fig. 101), were designed as seats or only used as such, opportunistically, post-factum. This situation demonstrates why the medieval nomenclature of sedilia is such a difficult issue, as they had not yet assumed a status as an independent art object, but were merely functional niches for housing a body, manifested by forms in the builders' repertoire. Such niches were everywhere in medieval life: just as they were created for piscina drains, saints' tabernacles and sedilia in churches, they were installed as book cupboards or *armaria* in monastic libraries, as places for pilgrims along the bases of saints' shrines, and even in domestic cellars.[21] Before we move on to when sedilia did apparently assume a status as a conscious and deliberate site of display, we should first remain in this early period to use this idea of formal repertoire to investigate why sedilia became established in some regions of England but not others.

CASE STUDIES OF PARISH CHURCH REGIONAL STYLE

The thirteenth-century totals of 'classic' sedilia divided by the number of parishes in each archdeaconry (map 3) displays a stronger version of the overall medieval distribution: high numbers in south-east and central England, with few in the South West. Chapter Two has suggested that the regional distribution of sedilia cannot be explained by any one factor. In addition to the factors of the amount of fabric from outside of the periods when the popularity of sedilia was highest and the average value of rectories in a region examined in Chapter Two, this chapter will demonstrate that sedilia became established in some areas but not others due to regional architectural style. It shall focus separately on the two most conspicuous densities on the thirteenth-century map, the South East and the North East, and the noticeable absence in the South West. Kent and Sussex will be argued as to contain early developments in sedilia in the first quarter of the century; and then subsequently Northumberland and County Durham to represent a consolidation of the genre in the second quarter. The county of Wiltshire and the wider medieval diocese of Salisbury will then be investigated to ascertain why its early-thirteenth-century chancels are, in contrast, so poorly provided with sedilia.

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[21] The formal development of the piscina is given in Jessiman 1957. For stone image frames, see Marks 2004, 240–241.

SOUTH EAST: KENT AND SUSSEX / CANTERBURY AND CHICHESTER DIOCESES

The area of the far South East of England makes a significant case study for this early period of sedilia dissemination because of its large amount of thick-walled chancels with unsophisticated but clearly Gothic motifs: most notably pointed lancet windows. These chancels frequently have plain sedilia, often with a comparatively unusual form to the majority of the corpus. Nearly all of these churches are entirely undocumented, and also difficult to date stylistically. Hythe (Kent) is exceptional – not just in the region, but in the whole country – for its scale and ambition: a rare example of a parochial building utilising a great-church vocabulary.[22] The church is usually dated to the 1230s on account of the mouldings used.[23] It has a pair of sedilia with a matching double piscina in the chancel (fig. 115). The sedilia are unusual both for their height, far taller than they need to be to house a seated person, and their manner of cusping the arches with a large circle. The frieze across the chancel that fits around the sedilia, consisting of squares filled with circles and quatrefoils, is comparable to work in the cloister at Canterbury Cathedral in 1226-36 (fig. 116).[24] Yet the relationship is not straightforward: the Canterbury cloister walk dado arcade is trefoiled, a motif that does not occur in the decorative arcading at Hythe, and does not provide a parallel for the thin, blade-like mouldings of the Hythe sedilia or the architect's unusual manner of cusping. Although Hythe is a case apart, that its sedilia are of a peculiar form to the majority of the corpus does not suggest direct knowledge of an established 'classic' type.

This something that is shared by many other early-thirteenth-century sedilia in Kent that potentially pre-date Hythe by a few decades. Noticeable immediate influence from Canterbury Cathedral's choir of 1174-84 in smaller churches is limited, making it difficult to identify the earliest parochial Gothic work in the county.[25] A pre-stiff-leaf capital is found on the two-seat sedilia at Eythorne (fig. 117). It was described by Newman as 'just like a capital of the 1170s in some unimportant part of Canterbury

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[22] Hoey 1995, 48–49 sees the building as the result of a parish church architect aspiring towards great church design, rather than a great church architect building a parish church.
Hythe was, remarkably, technically only a dependent chapel of Saltwood throughout the Middle Ages rather than a fully-fledged parish.

[23] Cooper 2010, 22; *BoE Kent: East* 2013, 410-412.

[24] Grant 1990, 114. For the date of Canterbury cloister see Woodman 1981, 138–139; Sparks 2007, 14–15. This frieze also occurs in the chancel at Minster-in-Thanet, which has an entirely blank dado.

[25] The south aisle at Rodmersham (Kent) has two bays of arcading in the south wall which are called sedilia by Newman; *BoE Kent: East* 1983, 434-435. However, they are so large, shallow, and isolated both from the high altar and any contemporary work to understand their context, that they cannot be considered as important early sedilia.

Cathedral, but with trefoil leaves in place of the crockets'.[26] The Eythorne sedilia are the most detailed part of an otherwise austere building of possibly *c.*1200 which has been much expanded in the later Middle Ages, the original chancel elevation difficult to recover from later fenestration and additions of aisles. Many of these early sedilia in Kent do not yet seem to reflect a concept of an ideal form, instead tailoring simple architectural motifs to the ritual demands of the buildings. The chancel at Lydden (Kent), which has relatively thick walls with deeply-splayed lancet windows and an unusual array of niches at dado level (fig. 118) is exemplary for its simplicity.[27] There are two wide niches each side, and to the east in the south wall, two individual stepped seats next to a piscina. Lydden is usually dated in the first quarter of the century on account of its simple lancets adorned only with chamfers.[28] Hoey has described Lydden chancel in the context of the thoughtful and restrained use of simple motifs in Early-Gothic Kentish chancels, characterising Lydden as 'tensely vertical'.[29] This demonstrates the problem of whether we can assign an early-thirteenth-century date to the building purely on account of its plainness, and instead whether restraint can also be a form of sophistication continuing throughout the century. The only actual motif we have to date Lydden with is the trefoiled-cusped arch of the piscina, which does at least prove a date into the mature Early English of the thirteenth century.[30]

Many chancels comparable to Lydden, with minimal motifs and similarly simple and slightly unusual sedilia, can be found in the Chichester archdeaconry of Lewes to the west.[31] Peasmarsh, a prebend of Chichester Cathedral, has plain two-seat sedilia with a piscina, only decorated with a single chamfer (fig. 119), part of a lanceted extension to a *c.*1100 cell.[32] They are very similar to the Lydden sedilia, although lacking the wide niches further west. Litlington has two-seat sedilia underneath a small

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[26] *BoE Kent: East* 1983, 314. Newman has since revised the account to be purely descriptive: 'trefoil-leaf cap and double abacus, richly moulded arches'; *BoE Kent: East* 2013, 346. The angel above is very obviously Victorian. Special thanks to Peter Moore for photographing these sedilia in detail for me, as I could not gain access to the church on my visit.

[27] The triplet of small lancets in the east wall is modern, replacing a large (presumably Perpendicular) window as seen in sharp perspective in a drawing of 1807; Vallance 1931, 6.

[28] Newman does not provide a date beyond 'C13'; *BoE Kent: East* 2013, 431. Torr 1931b suggests a date definitely in the first half of the thirteenth century and possibly from the first quarter. It could not be much earlier on account of the trefoiled piscina niche.

[29] Hoey 1995, 60.

[30] The trefoil is essentially a Gothic motif, occurring in the blind triforium storey of the choir of Noyon Cathedral, designed around 1160; Bony 1983, 106–107. Trefoils occur on the fifth storey of Ely Cathedral west front, a Gothic-influenced phase of work begun after 1174; Maddison 2000a, 29, 37–40, pl. 18, and the gallery windows of William of Sens' choir at Canterbury.

[31] Chichester diocese in the Middle Ages was only divided into two archdeaconries: Chichester and Lewes, so this does not prove an administrative influence.

[32] Livett 1904; *BoE Sussex: East* 2013, 575.

deeply-splayed lancet, appearing as part of the original design of this unsophisticated thick-walled chancel.[33] The grander chancel with internal string-course at Rotherfield has similar two-seat sedilia with a wider west seat for a pair of assistants, still with only a single chamfer to the arch, but a freestanding moulded capital (fig. 120).[34] Bodiam's two-seater is more highly restored, seemingly with falsified details, but the similarity within this local group heightens its potentiality as representing an original feature.[35]

Some more sophisticated parish church work that can be more precisely assigned later in the first half of the thirteenth century suggests that 'classic' sedilia were still not established at that time in Kent. Deal and Great Mongeham, adjacent parishes in East Kent, are notable for their sedilia which form a minor but significant variation on the 'classic' three-seat type: where the priest was provided with a separate seat and his assistants appear to have shared a wider second niche. This form is not common, even less so after 1300, so here it is diagnostic that sedilia were an emerging idea and that the 'classic' type had not yet become firmly established.[36] At Deal a Norman pillar piscina is preserved in a low Gothic niche, and then to the west the priest's seat is under a trefoil, while a lower, wider niche adjoining appears to have been intended for his deacon and subdeacon (fig. 121). Deal's chancel externally appears entirely Victorian, but the small Norman window in the east gable shows that a Romanesque predecessor underwent a thirteenth-century remodelling.[37] At Great Mongeham the sedilia design, apparently part of an entirely new chancel, is slightly different as no pillar piscina is retained. The piscina niche is under a trefoil adjoining a round-arched but richly-moulded priest's seat, with a lower round-arched assistants' seat with only a single chamfer (fig. 122).[38] The mouldings of the two sets of sedilia (a filleted central roll flanked by two hollows and rolls) are extremely similar, suggesting

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[33] Clarke and Leach 1985, 95–108; *BoE Sussex: East* 2013, 540.
[34] *BoE Sussex: East* 2013*, 596.*
[35] The sedilia are not mentioned in *BoE Sussex: East* 2013, 136.
[36] Hardingham (Norfolk), Limpsfield (Surrey), Rotherfield (Sussex) (fig. 120) and Aston-le-Walls (Northamptonshire). The set at Southburgh (Suffolk) I have not seen but may be nineteenth-century. After 1300 the only ones I have found are Castlethorpe (Buckinghamshire), Graveney (Kent) and Cheshunt (Hertfordshire). In Kingsland (Herefordshire), the eastern seats (stepped) are combined and the western seat is narrower.
[37] The nave, although much mutilated in the bizarre seventeenth- and early-nineteenth-century expansions of the church, is *c.*1170s and the crocket capitals draw on details from Canterbury; *BoE Kent: East*, 2013, 294.
[38] The *BoE* notes the sedilia as 'early C13'. The stiff-leaf capital is entirely that of Butterfield, who greatly restored the sedilia in his 'cruel' restoration of 1851; *BoE Kent: East*, 2013, 384-385. An account written shortly after Butterfield's work notes that the 'double piscina and single sedile' have been well restored; *Ecclesiologist* 15 1854, 436. This account was subsequently criticised by the rector of the church in *Ecclesiologist* 16 1855, 60. Butterfield's recollections of the restoration noted 'you can hardly imagine a church in a more deplorable condition'; 'Proceedings at the Sandwich Meeting, 1885' *Arch. Cant.* 1886 (16), lxii-lxv.

that the same masons were adapting motifs to different requirements, rather than installing identical sets of sedilia in the churches they worked on. By contrast, a pair of sets of assertively 'classic' sedilia can be found at Brookland and Woodchurch in the Romney Marsh area, both similar chancels with marble-shafted lancets. Brookland's set of sedilia are the simpler, with less complicated mouldings and only two seats (fig. 123). Woodchurch has the familiar three seats, albeit with the unusual detail of the arch as well as the seat of the western niche being lowered (fig. 124). This pair of churches is more representative of the broad conformity in sedilia design in the later thirteenth century.

The otherwise more diverse forms of sedilia in what must, in some cases, be the earliest Gothic architecture in English parish churches recommends the absence of an 'ideal' that appears to have been present for sedilia later on. The simple chamfered niches in chancels like Peasmarsh and Lydden could be simplified versions of more advanced sedilia, but could also be plausibly independent developments using the limited motifs that the builders of these churches had available. As well as the relatively unsophisticated forms of many Gothic chancels in Kent, these sedilia which appear aberrant in comparison to the majority of the corpus suggest that the genre was developing, and indeed many such sedilia and their related buildings may date from the first quarter of the thirteenth century. That many are also of only two seats also suggests that they are from a period before the high Mass by priest, deacon and subdeacon became widespread in parish churches.

NORTH EAST: NORTHUMBERLAND AND COUNTY DURHAM / DIOCESE OF DURHAM

In the analysis of the ratios of sedilia to medieval churches, the county of Northumberland (also the name of the northern archdeaconry of Durham diocese) shows a very high proportion of surviving medieval chancels with sedilia: 40%. This is partly due to the statistics being somewhat skewed by the relatively small number of surviving churches. Pevsner stated that there are 62 'entirely medieval' churches in the county of Northumberland, which is not far off the count of 65 for the archdeaconry in the *Taxatio* of 1291.[39] It may not be a coincidence that as well as sharing a conspicuous density of sedilia, the South East and North East of England share the notable characteristic of being settled by the earliest Christian missionaries to Britain at the turn of the seventh century, and home to many of the early Anglo-Saxon buildings

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[39] *BoE Northumberland* 1957, 30; Davall et al. 1992, 108. My count gave 42 authentic medieval chancels.

considered in Chapter Three for their pre-sedilia *synthronon*. In lieu of accurate documentation for numbers of clerics until the mid-thirteenth century (see Chapter Seven), it is possible that these areas still had larger than usual communities of clergy that encouraged a higher level of divine service.

Northumberland also has a certain economic advantage that begets a small number of fairly sophisticated large churches with high numbers of resident clergy. The parishes in the area were so large that the tithes of their rectors were extremely high: Bamburgh was assessed in 1291 at an astonishing £230, 9s, 4d, one of the highest in the country, Hartburn was worth £67, 18s, 8d and Bothal £37. The average value was subsequently by far the highest in the country: £104. Such availability of funds to the rector (who had legal responsibility for the chancel fabric) may be the cause of the chancels often being relatively large, with a degree of stylistic sophistication.[40] A high proportion of these buildings went on to be largely unaltered, because of the lack of much work in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries due to the Scottish wars.[41] Therefore, unlike some other regions that remained prosperous in the fifteenth century when sedilia were less popular, the evidence has been preserved.

Rather than evidence for Early-Gothic chancels with thick walls, deeply-splayed lancets containing unusual, often two-seat sedilia as in the South East, we find assured Early-English-Style chancels with tall lancets, sometimes shafted or with blind narrow pointed arches in between, and the all but abandonment of the rounded arch for the pointed. These devices represent the northern variety of Early English Gothic, as pioneered in St Hugh's Choir at Lincoln (begun 1192), and subsequently York Minster transepts (underway 1225, finished by *c.*1250), Fountains Abbey choir and Durham Cathedral Nine Altars (begun 1242).[42] In the middle rank, Coldingham Priory (Berwickshire) is a fragment that represents continuous dado arcading in an unaisled presbytery.[43] We can see that fully developed 'classic' sedilia were proliferating within this style in Northumberland in the 1230s and 40s from some documented monastic buildings. Finchale Priory has the remains of a set of sedilia: now two decayed arches set high up the ruined south wall of the presbytery. Finchale's high altar was consecrated in 1239, so a date for the presbytery is usually assumed as the late 1230s.[44]

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[40] The great size of Northumbrian thirteenth-century choirs in comparison to other counties is demonstrated in Honeyman 1931, 134.
[41] *BoE Northumberland* 1957, 35.
[42] Lincoln: Kidson 1986; York: Hoey 1986, Fountains and Durham: Draper 1980.
[43] Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 104–106.
[44] The church is recorded as begun in 1241, but the high altar and two others were consecrated in 1239; Peers 1933, 13; Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 188.

Hulne Priory, founded 1242, has exemplary Early English sedilia, with architectural capitals and fairly restrained mouldings, and the slightly unusual aspect that the arches, as well as the seats, are stepped.[45]

Bamburgh (Northumberland) could be said to occupy a 'point of contact' between the middle rank and the parish church.[46] It is more securely dateable than other parish churches in Durham diocese, as after a dispute over its advowson was settled in 1228, the parish church became a cell of Nostell Priory and was subsequently staffed by five to six Augustinian canons under a master.[47] This highly unusual clerical occupation was no doubt due to its exceptional wealth, and plausibly marks the date of the very long chancel. It only had full dado arcading against the east wall (sadly obliterated by the 1895 reredos), but in its south wall, there are sedilia with trefoil heads and continuous arch mouldings in the otherwise blank dado (fig. 125). These sedilia are sometimes considered as later additions.[48] However, as the arches are carved directly onto the ashlar of the chancel wall in higher relief, this is impossible.

Some chancels in the Wansbeck Valley area further south in Northumberland clearly relate to the model of Bamburgh, with long lanceted chancels and sedilia. Bothal, Hartburn (fig. 126) and Mitford can all be reckoned to be of a date in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, with assured triple 'classic' sedilia integral with their long square-ended lanceted chancels, with moulded arches supported by shafts.[49] Haltwhistle's trefoiled and richly-moulded sedilia must date along with the excellently-preserved Early English church to the mid-century, and the fact that they ignore the rhythm and sill of the lancets demonstrates the growing independence of sedilia as a fitting.[50] Staindrop's sedilia make a particularly elegant show, noted in Chapter Two for their unusual lack of dividing shafts, the arches resting upon a pair of finely-carved corbels of stiff-leaf and a male head (fig. 127). The chancel which they are a part of is usually dated as mid-thirteenth-century (refenestrated in the fifteenth century).[51] At Tynemouth Priory, the sedilia in the Early Gothic presbytery extension are generally

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[45] *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 353.
[46] Cunningham 1995, Vol. 1, 131.
[47] Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 24.
[48] *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 152-154; Cunningham 1995, 25.
[49] Bothal: *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 199; Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 65–66. At Bothal the sedilia have been mutilated by the destruction of the shafts after the raising of the seat with the floor level. Hartburn: Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 218; *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 304-305. Mitford: Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 307–308; *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 304-305.
[50] Although not stated in Cunningham 1995, Vol. 2, 212 or *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 299, the use of bold trefoil rere-arches in the east window clearly shows an advance in style upon the Bamburgh model.
[51] *BoE County Durham* 1983, 427; Cunningham 1995, 416–417.

understood as integral with the original dado arcade scheme (fig. 128).[52] However, the large trefoil arches over the deep niches of the sedilia cut into the neighbouring pointed blind arcading, rather than fitting into the system of both springings of adjacent arches being on the same piece of stone. Furthermore, such a bold trefoil is not a motif used in the rest of the standing fabric at Tynemouth or the contemporary Early Gothic work at the nearby presbytery of Hexham Abbey: instead having a great similarity to the richer work of the north transept at Hexham which dates well into the thirteenth century.[53] This suggests that the Tynemouth sedilia were added some fifty years later, and that such were not a standard feature in this earlier, transitional style of northern Gothic when Tynemouth's presbytery was originally erected in the late 1180s.[54]

The churches of the diocese of Durham could therefore be taken to largely represent a relatively brief period in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, when 'classic' sedilia were becoming established vocabulary in parochial architecture and considered essential features. We see there is an influence from the style of greater monuments in the local area. But it was a trickle-down of formal language, not fully-formed genres. The basic idea of mural sedilia may have been communicated from elsewhere *c*.1225, but the overall attitude to wall treatment and decorative dado arcades of Tynemouth, Hexham, York transepts, Durham Nine Altars and Coldingham provided the motifs to help the genre spread.

SOUTH WEST: DIOCESE OF SALISBURY / WILTSHIRE

It has been noted that Wiltshire is 'not a Decorated county', with little building from period when sedilia were most popular.[55] But when the same could be said of the North East, and Wiltshire also has a large number of chancels dating from around the second quarter of the thirteenth century, this is not sufficient to explain why there are so few sedilia there. Instead, the cause must be connected with local style. Virginia Jansen has related the noble simplicity of the architectural style associated with Salisbury Cathedral with the 'mental habits' of bishops active in liturgical reforms and the codification of

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[52] Fawcett 2013, 175. As well as being double rather than triple, the niches are abnormally large and deep for sedilia. The original Pevsner identifies them as sedilia; *BoE Northumberland* 1957, 303, but this has been revised to include a theory they represent the location of a shrine; *BoE Northumberland* 1992, 592. Fawcett 2013, 180 accepts the feature as sedilia.

[53] Alexander 2013.

[54] For date; Fawcett 2013.

[55] *BoE Wiltshire* 1971, 25.

the Sarum Rite.[56] Despite this link of reforming clerics with architecture, there are very few sedilia in the orbit of the Cathedral and the wider diocese (Wiltshire and parts of Devon, Dorset and Berkshire). This rather surprising situation does indicate that sedilia are not representative of an architectural strategy to disseminate and promote the liturgy, and that architectural form and ritual practice were potentially disconnected.[57] A church such as Potterne, dating around the same time as Salisbury's rebuilding at the beginning of the second quarter of the century has an exceedingly grand and well-preserved interior of singular date.[58] The sophistication of the single-build plan of disciplined lancets akin to Salisbury's 'episcopal style' can surely be attributed to the fact that the prebend was held by the '*rector*' of the Cathedral fabric, canon Elias of Dereham.[59] Despite being a well-endowed prebend with surely a high number of clergy and level of celebration, Potterne shows no provision for stone seating in the chancel that we might find in Kent or Northumberland at the same time (fig. 129). There is a niche with a double piscina drain at the east end of the south wall, then a gap, and then a priest's door. The latter of these is accommodated for by raising the sill of the second lancet, showing that practical, liturgical concerns were still considered by the architect. The chancels at Stockton (fig. 130) and Berwick St James (fig. 131) are other examples of Early English chancels in Wiltshire displaying the same sober manner with no provision for sedilia.[60] This is attributable to the lack of dado arcading in Salisbury Cathedral, a unique omission for a thirteenth-century English cathedral.[61] It seems that the motif of dado arcading was not provided by the area's great-church architecture, and therefore was not part of the vocabulary of the masons who built parish churches, and thus the opportunity to deploy such arches as sedilia was not available. When decorative practice was not present, the relation between it and ritual could not manifest.

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[56] For commentary on the aesthetic current of Langtonism in the first half of the thirteenth century, as an essentially modern, de-Romanizing manner, and a critique of the question of patronal 'mental habits'; Binski 2004, 62–77. For more pointed scepticism; Reeve 2008, 42–44.

[57] Binski 2004, 73.

[58] Only the fine fifteenth-century crossing tower breaks the single-build, and this does not much affect the interior.

[59] Potterne was the site of the Bishop of Salisbury's manor house. Elias is recorded to be holding the prebend in 1226; McGlashan and Sandell 1974, 86; Harvey 1984, 81–82; Vincent 2002; Binski 2004, 72–73. There is also thirteenth-century building recorded at two more of his churches, Harrow and Brightwalton; Vincent 2002, 144–146.

[60] Ferrers and Cocke 1987, 109.

[61] As was noted in Chapter Three, twelfth-century Wells also eschews wall-arcading in the nave and what remains of the original choir; Draper 1996, 23–24; Binski 2004, 68. Also like Wells, lavish arcading is used in Salisbury's north porch. The cusping of the arches here suggests a date later than the east arm of the Cathedral; Tatton-Brown and Crook 2009, 69.

The earliest sets of sedilia in Salisbury diocese may be the set with low rounded trefoils in the chancel at Boyton (Wiltshire) and the similarly shaped set but with more slender shafts at Uffington (Berkshire).[62] Otherwise in Wiltshire, with the exception of the prebend of Bishopstone (fig. 204) (see below), sedilia are all insertions, mostly of the fourteenth century (for instance, the much-restored set at Stapleford).[63] A fourteenth-century Decorated chancel such as Dinton (fig. 240), with the same blank wall-space next to the piscina as Potterne, shows how conditioned sedilia distribution remained by local style at that time.

CONCLUSION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL STYLE

These three case studies demonstrate that the Cathedral is not an ideological, Foucaldian centre of power, promoting sedilia as material encouragement for the proper performance of Mass through prototypical exemplars in its own fabric. Rather than providing established genres, instead the great church serves more as an ornamental exemplar and collection of forms for the parish church. This theory of local style adds another factor to explain the uneven distribution of sedilia, along with wealth and chronological patterns of building that were shown in Chapter Two to be relevant, but not the whole story. The styles that were in currency in the early thirteenth century appear to have influenced the overall pattern of sedilia distribution with its broad east/west divide throughout the rest of the Middle Ages. For instance, we have seen that many examples of Romanesque dado arcades are found in the West Country: the chapter houses of Worcester and Bristol, and the work at Devizes. Indeed, Roger's Old Sarum Cathedral itself may have been suitably lavish with dado arcading.[64] However, these seem to have come too early to influence the wave of parish church rebuilding in the region.

This theory of sedilia dissemination could be used as an aid in the dating of parish churches. Because the documentation in Northumberland seems to advise a date for most of the work in the 1230s or later, a comparison of the more rigidly 'classic' sedilia in this county to the more varied and aberrant forms in the South East suggests (but does not prove) that the sedilia in Kent date earlier, to the first quarter of the century. Like all methods of dating undocumented objects through their appearance, it

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[62] See below for the sedilia in Boyton's south chapel of the 1280s (fig. 144), and the adjacent parish of Codford St Peter (fig. 146).
[63] Ferrers and Cocke 1987, 193.
[64] Stalley 1971, 75

is not infallible, but, along with style, how closely the form of sedilia matches the developed three-seat 'classic' type should be considered when dating a chancel.

DEVELOPMENT OF SEDILIA AS A SITE OF DISPLAY IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

It shall now be explored how formal experimentation on sedilia caused the genre to become a prominent and desirable object. The most elaborate sedilia, in design, structure and iconography, date from the first half of the fourteenth century, including the lavish sculptural *tours de force* of Heckington (fig. 206) and Hawton (figs. 207) and the fantastic freestanding sets inserted into great churches such as Exeter Cathedral (fig. 168). However, as has been suggested above, the earliest sedilia were not a particularly ornate or desirable feature outside of their convenience. These niches were as much of a part of the design of the chancel as the windows above them. The next step for sedilia, along with the piscina, was for them to build on their identity as an independent genre with an increased decorative prominence, becoming an entity in themselves.

The concept of the church building as a large-scale reliquary became a prevailing aesthetic from the mid-century onwards, spurred on by the new taste for brittleness, complexity and small-scale forms in the Parisian style of the 1250s.[65] This is part of the increasing self-referentiality between macro- and micro-architecture, due in part to the increasing use of architectural drafting.[66] A new focus on the small-scale meant that elaboration of the furniture for the performance, reservation and general promotion of the Eucharist became *de rigeur*.[67] As was noted in Chapter Two, the difficulty in dating much thirteenth-century parish church architecture means that it is more difficult to compare the popularity of sedilia before and after *c*.1250 than it is before and after *c*.1300. However, we can observe that some sedilia in stylistically-advanced late-thirteenth-century chancels began to develop ornamentation following the general trends for other lengths of decorative arcading. Enrichment of the blank space within the spandrels of arcading was a common habit of the Early English Style, an early example being the blind arcading of Bristol Elder Lady Chapel (fig. 99), developed in the new work at the east end of Worcester (begun 1224) (fig. 97) and eventually the richness of Westminster Abbey and Lincoln Angel Choir in the mid-

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[65] Coldstream 2002, 164; Bony 1983, 396–405.
[66] Bucher 1976; Freigang 2007; Bugslag 2008.
[67] Bucher 1976, 74; Timmermann 2009.

century.[68] In the later thirteenth century it became more common for the sedilia spandrels to be treated with more elaborate ornament, such as those of the 1260s at Kempsey (Worcestershire), which as well as foliage decoration has figurative headstops (fig. 8).[69] One of the results of this decorative habit is that the sedilia appear isolated from the wall as a unit, increasing their sense as a piece of furniture separate from the architecture and subsequently their importance as a standalone object.

What begin to truly take sedilia beyond the requirements of mere utilitarianism are triangular gables placed over the initial arches of the seats, which begin to appear on some sets after the mid-century. John Summerson and others have drawn attention to the aedicular effect of the Gothic arch and how the gable further exaggerates this sense of creating and enclosing sacred space.[70] With the ever-increasing emphasis on the cult of the Eucharist, it is perfectly fitting that sedilia should be considered more sacred, as those within their seats were, in essence, three instruments directly involved with the transubstantiation of the sacred Host. The prevalence of sedilia with canopies, in the sense of extra elements over the initial arch of the seat, is exaggerated by the attention in the literature given to the finest sets such as Heckington and Hawton. Indeed, the majority of canopied sets date to the fourteenth century (see below), and there are less than twenty sets before this, but these represent a significant indication of the increasing attention given to sedilia towards the end of the thirteenth century.

While it seems that simpler sedilia were nearly always coeval with the chancel, the more elaborate and ostentatious examples are often later than the surrounding fabric.[71] The Romanesque fabric of the chancel at Bampton (Oxfordshire) contains what are arguably the earliest extant sedilia designed as an independent unit squared off from the wall (fig. 132). They have heads looking through quatrefoils and trefoils in the spandrels, and tiny triangular gables over moulded pointed-trefoil arches. The simple trefoil stiff-leaf is firmly Early English, mirroring the 'many mansions' for statuary that cover Wells Cathedral west front, motifs established at the stage that work must have

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[68] Singleton 1978, 111–112. The wall arcades of Bristol and Worcester are also closely compared in Draper 2006a, 164.

[69] In one of the spandrels of the sedilia is a fleur-de-lys, which was used in triplicate on the arms of Walter Cantelupe, Bishop of Worcester 1237-66; *BoE Worcestershire* 2007, 391. The Bishop of Worcester only held advowson at the church (which was a vicarage in 1291/2), but the church had two dependent chapels and the village is close to the Cathedral town.

[70] Summerson 1963, 18. The function of canopies as bestowing 'holiness' also noted in Crossley 1987, 65–66; Wilson 1992, 8–9; Coldstream 1994, 37–38.

[71] An exception is Brook (Kent) (fig. 63), but here the sedile is linked to a repainting of the chancel, see Chapter Two.

reached before the documented change in master mason in 1229.[72] However a broad formal parallel that allows for a later date is Salisbury west front, as unlike Wells' earlier façade it also makes use of trefoils to fill smaller spaces like on the Bampton sedilia, and this may not have been finished until 1266.[73]

Bampton was an important ex-minster church that had a sizeable clerical community.[74] Given the date and square-ended shape of the Romanesque chancel, it is possible that the current sedilia could have replaced utilitarian Romanesque single-niche sedilia, and that they were part of a campaign largely concerned with remodelling the north transept which held the shrine of St Beornwald.[75] The use of gabled niches on the sedilia in this context is significant. Wells west front in the 1220s has been said to be the first appearance of the gabled niche in an architectural context: a motif which has parallels in shrine micro-architecture as found at Aachen (1220-38) (fig. 133).[76] Kidson has drawn attention to busts inside quatrefoils in St Hugh's Choir at Lincoln, not unlike those on the Bampton sedilia, as supposed to articulate the sense of the building as a reliquary.[77] St Frideswide's shrine base (prepared 1269, relics translated 1289) at Oxford Cathedral also has the motif of heads looking through quatrefoils along the base.[78] Likewise, Archbishop Hubert Walter's (d.1205) tomb at Canterbury has this striking motif on its hipped gable lid (fig. 134), and has been noted as reminiscent of goldsmith's work and metal feretra (of which England is particularly bereft of survivals).[79] Archbishop Walter was never a candidate for canonisation, and the issue of whether bishop's tombs were directly emulating those of saints, or simply part of a greater trend for ostentation, has been debated.[80] Yet the fact that they and sedilia were sharing such a taste towards increased ornament of a similar type shows that an increasing emphasis was being placed upon both, and that sedilia were thought of as enclosing sacred bodies in a similar way as reliquaries were. The effect of deep niches scooped out of its structure would have been attractive to patrons trying to accentuate the role of a church building as guardian of the sacred.[81] As part of the building, sedilia

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[72] Sampson 1998, 49–51.
[73] Ayers 2000, 14.
[74] Blair 1998, 275.
[75] Blair 1985; *VCH Oxford Vol. 13* 1996, 55.
[76] Malone 2004, 95–97.
[77] Kidson 1986, 41.
[78] Coldstream 1976, 16–17.
[79] Wilson 1995, 454–458. Wilson compares the heads to Roman funerary monuments and cautiously interpets their meaning as representing the archbishop's spiritual governance.
[80] Coales 1987, 23.
[81] Coldstream 2002, 164.

occupied a similar multi-functional status as the pilgrim niches around shrine bases: simultaneously practical, symbolic, promotional and aesthetic.

The sedilia at Faringdon (pre-1974 Berkshire, now Oxfordshire) are outstanding (fig. 135), for although they have the exuberance of the fourteenth-century Decorated, all their formal elements can be found in earlier milieu. Their dogtoothed cinquefoil arches are most similar to those at Carlisle Cathedral south aisle (mid-1220s), although southern parallels can be found for the shape at Ely galilee porch in the early thirteenth century (fig. 107), and Salisbury chapter house, complete by 1266.[82] The low crocketed gables however have foliage that has more in common with the semi-naturalistic work at Exeter towards the end of the century rather than the stiff-leaf of the Early English, and therefore a date in the 1280s is possible. The long, austere, lanceted chancel with an otherwise blank dado added to this ex-minster church (fig. 136) resembles the 'episcopal style' churches such as Potterne in the orbit of Salisbury discussed above and therefore may have originally been without sedilia. The insertion of this set is also no doubt related to Faringdon's status as a wealthy prebend of Salisbury Cathedral. In 1227, a vicarage ordinance from the bishop reveals that the perpetual vicar and three priests or chaplains (*sacerdotes* or *capellani*) were given a number of liturgical duties: including celebration of anniversaries and major feasts, and daily celebration of the Hours wearing black copes and surplices, adding up to what Blair describes as a miniature version of the liturgy of the cathedral church.[83] The instruction that the Hours were to be said with the vicar and a chaplain on one side of the choir and the other two chaplains on the other 'decently standing in suitable places' (*locis conventientibus decenter consistentibus*) may indicate that some sort of wooden stalls were provided in 1227. The sedilia may have been added some decades later to encourage the continuing proper performance of the Mass with a stone fitting that was not found in the ordinary parish churches of the diocese, demonstrating that valuable prebends were a case apart, as will be further demonstrated below.

These two sets of ostentatious sedilia added to important parish churches probably around the third quarter of the thirteenth century show an important change from the twelfth- and early-thirteenth-century examples. Rather than being utilitarian niches reflecting ritual and function, they are ostentatious, desirable objects, which have been specifically requested and installed: clearly at some effort and expense. Generally

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[82] Alexander 2004, 114. This date of the Early English choir of Carlisle is supported by the appointment of Bishop Hugh who was appointed after being abbot at Beaulieu Abbey, which had just been rebuilt; Bulman 1947, 92. For date of the Ely galilee, see above.

[83] Blair 1998, 286.

gabled sedilia built as part of late-thirteenth-century pre-ogival chancels are rare. The sedilia at Rushden (Northamptonshire) along with the associated small bar-traceried window above are the earliest part of an essentially Perpendicular building, and have modest pointed gables (fig. 137).[84] At St Peter in Sandwich (Kent), the chancel sedilia are much restored from fragments but are reliable in their overall appearance (fig. 138). Over the arches are low gables which put them into this group which suggests that they date into the second half of the thirteenth century. The sedilia in the *cappella extra portas* outside Furness Abbey (Cumbria) are, despite their damaged state, also important examples of turning the officiating clergy's seats into a site of display and aggrandisement: a rather plain set of steep gables and pinnacles, part of an extensive suite of furnishings built as part of the south wall (fig. 139).[85]

In the last quarter of the thirteenth century, there are some even more remarkable insertions of sedilia, of complex enough structure to incorporate miniature rib-vaults. Along with the pointed arch, the rib-vault has been considered as one of the defining elements of the Gothic style, when its aesthetic function and symbolism rather than perceived structural purpose was exploited.[86] This visual element certainly adds to the creation of sacred space in the same way as lofty gables. In his otherwise rather sober account of the rebuilding of the Cathedral, Gervase of Canterbury refers to the rib-vaults as *ciboria*, which attests to their symbolism.[87] In shrines and tombs, the vault becomes an entirely symbolic or aesthetic element: like the ciborium over the reliquary of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris in the 1240s, of a scale between macro- and micro-architecture. The first vaulted tombs in England are the tomb to Bishop Bingham (d.1246) and the shrine-like tomb of Bishop Bridport (d.1262), both in Salisbury.[88] Then in 1290s follow the more ciboria-like tombs of Westminster Abbey, a decade that also seems to provide the earliest vaulted sedilia.[89]

Rothwell (Northamptonshire) is a remarkably long church, and its Romanesque fabric suggests that it had long been as such, again pointing to ex-minster or collegiate status.[90] The sedilia and piscina inserted into the Norman fabric of the chancel are unfortunately damaged (or, positively, unrestored) and remarkable both for having four

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[84] *BoE Northamptonshire* 2013, 557.
[85] The chapel here has Norman origins but was remodelled in the late thirteenth century; *BoE Cumbria* 2010, 359.
[86] Frankl 2000, 41–50.
[87] Gervase of Canterbury, 20–21.
[88] Bingham's canopy was destroyed by Wyatt and entirely rebuilt by Scott, but it was noted that it originally had a 'rich arched ceiling'; Roberts 1983, 560.
[89] Gee 1979.
[90] *BoE Northamptonshire* 2013, 552-555.

seats and three piscina drains (fig. 140) both extremely rare features that also attest to the importance of the church.[91] The crisp naturalistic foliage within the small gables dates these sedilia to the last couple of decades of the thirteenth century, thus possibly the first extant set to have miniature rib-vaults over the seats. A more spectacular, but highly-restored set of sedilia are at Preston-next-Faversham (Kent). The early-thirteenth-century chancel has an orderly array of tall lancets, shafted inside, and a nineteenth-century geometric window in a shafted rere-arch. In the otherwise blank dado this lavish set of vaulted and canopied sedilia has been inserted (fig. 141), almost certainly after 1300 due to the bold ogee of the piscina niche.[92] Their back wall is among the most ornate of any surviving sedilia, covered with diaper showing many traces of paint, and head and foliage corbels supporting a vault. The front of the sedilia has arches surmounted by tall crocketed gables pierced with a trefoil. Three heads mounted on the string-course behind peek through these trefoils, in a manner similar to the shrine-like motif noted at Bampton. A great deal of their fabric dates to 1855, with the gables and shafts variously heavily recut or entirely remade, suggesting that the whole front section of the sedilia was ruined.[93] However, close inspection of the authentic fabric does not suggest an alternative design.[94] It has been placed into a Canterbury-London court milieu through motifs such as the rounded-trefoil arches (as on the Pecham tomb at Canterbury) and the use of trefoils (as on the gable of the Crouchback tomb at Westminster), but dated to around 1310 on account of the naturalistic Exeter-style foliage.[95] It is difficult to propose reasons for the presence of this extraordinary set of sedilia in what was apparently only a vicarage.[96] The advowson of Preston was owned by the archbishop of Canterbury, but it was among many churches for which he had this privilege. It has been suggested that it may be significant that the church was near to Watling Street and its 'streams of pilgrims' to Canterbury.[97] If not adequately explaining the financing or patronage behind this work, it would at

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[91] Another triple piscina is next to the sedilia in Brecon Cathedral; Parkinson and Jenkins 1994, 32.

[92] The campaign also included a rather plain ogee niche on the north side of the chancel, and a two-light decorated south-west window; *Kent Churches Committee* URL: www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/01/03/PRS.htm.

[93] Robinson wrote that the canopies were entirely the invention of the restorers, but a side of an original canopy with part of the rounded trefoil arch survives loose in the church so this is an extreme statement; Robinson 1895, 127.

[94] The only strange feature is that the foliage bosses in between the heads on the string course are largely obscured by the gables.

[95] Matthiesen 1962, also see the Introduction regarding the peculiar terminology of this article.

[96] In Chapter Seven, I will note that whether a church has a resident rector or not does not seem to condition the presence of sedilia. The rectory was worth £29, 6s, 8d in 1291/2 which is rather above average, but not excessive.

[97] James 1994, Vol. 2, 22–23.

least explain the craftsmanship as being from a Canterbury-London workshop that must have travelled on this route.

The sedilia at nearby Chatham (Kent) seem also to have been from this metropolitan school, sadly rediscovered only shortly before the entire church except portions of the west end was destroyed for expansion in 1788. Fortunately they were engraved and published in *Vetusta Monumenta* by the talented draftsman Jacob Schnebbelie, along with a view of the church under demolition (fig. 142).[98] The chancel arch and nave arcade have lozenge details that go well with the Late Norman features that survive at the west end of the church.[99] The rib-vault of the chancel and the porthole windows recorded rather casually by Schnebbelie, in the small scene of two antiquarians observing the sedilia while workmen hammer away at the vault, also advise the chancel as Romanesque fabric.[100] Therefore the sedilia appear again to have been inserted in a separate campaign. Their destruction is regrettable, as the decoration behind the seats appears to have been of such high quality so that if they had survived, they would make good claim to be among the most important sets of medieval sedilia. The back-wall decoration appears to have consisted of diaper work and foliage carved in low relief under bar-tracery style blind quatrefoils, and was clearly advanced work almost certainly related to the London court of the late thirteenth century. The diapering finds its ultimate source in Westminster Abbey, but similar work along with studded rosette motifs, trefoiled arches with a few orders of mouldings can be found on the portal at Higham Ferrers (Northamptonshire) (fig. 143), widely regarded as a provincial emulation of the Abbey's north transept portal.[101] The use of swirling stiff-leaf forms and the interpolation of inventive faunal motifs, such as dragons, is similar to nearby Stone-by-Dartford (fig. 102), an example which illustrates the presence of Abbey masons in west Kent. The patterns featuring a variety of naturalistic foliage that fill the east seat and the lights of the west seat recommend a later date, and can be paralleled in the largely destroyed gilding on the Westminster Coronation Chair (fig. 6).[102] As the entire front of the sedilia has been cut back leaving only the remains of a rib-vault and the backs of the niches, that they had canopies akin to Preston is highly probable.

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[98] Schnebbelie 1796.

[99] The surviving twelfth-century work, including what may have been a portal with figurative sculpture in the French Gothic manner, suggests a very grand church; Thurlby 2004, 67–69. It is also unfortunate that the demolition occurred before Hasted's *Survey of Kent* covered Chatham in 1798, so his account of the medieval church is similarly retrospective.

[100] Partly as rib-vaults are much more common in Romanesque parish churches than Gothic ones; Hoey 1994, 41.

[101] Egbert 1959. For diaper's rarity in parish churches; Gerald 2011.

[102] Rodwell 2013, 79–87.

Particularly since the building has gone, explaining the marvellous sedilia at Chatham is once again difficult. Yet Chatham clearly had, once again, a stylistically-advanced square-ended Late Romanesque chancel. In a situation similar to the vandalised sedilia at Roche Abbey (fig. 77), the relieving arch above the Chatham sedilia niches revealed by their partial destruction may have been the original Romanesque single-niche sedilia, made even more probable by the fact that the arch goes behind the pilaster of the original vault. Therefore, these churches with inserted sedilia seem to have been important buildings constructed before the 'classic' type was well-known, and these remarkable sets the first demonstration that stone sedilia were becoming a desirable object, enough to spend considerable expense in having them inserted post-factum.

EPISCOPAL PATRONAGE OF CANOPIED SEDILIA, AND THE POINTED-TREFOIL GABLE

If the patronage of the sedilia added to the chancels at Bampton, Faringdon, Rothwell, Preston and Chatham is unknown, it is notable how many early gabled sedilia appear in appended chantry chapels founded by high-ranking clerics, implying that prelates had become aware of sedilia and viewed them as a desirable fitting. The south chapel at Boyton (Wiltshire) is early example of a chantry chapel that is in effect, a second chancel appended to a parish church, founded off the nave in 1279 by Bishop Giffard of Worcester for the souls of his parents.[103] Its sedilia (fig. 144) take the basic trefoiled form of the earlier sedilia in the chancel, and 'improve' on it with small triangular gables with stops of balled-up foliage.[104] These low triangular gables suggest local workmen, rather than the Bishop sending a team from Worcester. Such gables appear rather early in Salisbury Cathedral on the pulpitum *c.*1236 (fig. 145), but also over the effigy of Bishop Bridport (d.1262), where they have similar shell-like foliage stops, and also on the west front, finished by 1266.[105] In the Boyton chantry chapel, the gables do not sanctify an effigy of a bishop, but the actual clergy inside the sedilia celebrating at his behest. The ambition of the Giffard chapel sedilia seems to have been emulated at the chancel at the adjacent parish of Codford St Peter in what is an unusually close

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[103] McNeill 2011b, 18–19. We should also note that this is the same Bishop Giffard who we shall see was rebuked by the Archbishop of Canterbury for occupying the place of the sedilia in his Cathedral with an ostentatious tomb.
[104] *BoE Wiltshire* 1975, 126.
[105] Ayers 2000, 14.

emulation of sedilia between adjacent churches (fig. 146).[106] The invention of gabled sedilia at Boyton is paralleled by what is presumably an independent development in the north chapel at Yaxley (Huntingdonshire) constructed roughly a decade later. The sedilia here have rather simple, but steeper gables, terminating in a modest trefoil leaf and are probably related to a chantry founded in 1291/2 by William of Yaxley, Abbot of Thorney (d.1293).[107]

There is one particular type of canopy that became frequently used above sedilia in the fourteenth century: the steep, crocketed gable, of which the interior is artfully filled with a pointed trefoil. The source of this distinctive form has an interesting pedigree with regard to the ornamentation of liturgical furnishings under high-ranking clerical patronage external to the church. The collegiate church of St Urbain, Troyes (France) had a great effect upon English buildings, particularly in micro-architecture. In this context it is significant that the church has in its apse the most elaborate stone liturgical fitting of its date in France: the piscina, dating to either the 1260s or early 1270s (fig. 147). In the spandrels between its extravagant gables, the supplicant figures of Pope Urban IV and his nephew Cardinal Ancher show the patrons behind this exceptional furnishing.[108] Urban's institution of the feast of Corpus Christi shows his interest in his promulgation of the Eucharist, hence this manifest tribute to it.[109] Yet because mural sedilia were not an established genre in France (the dado in St Urbain is otherwise blank), such embellishment through lofty patronage could not extend itself to the officiating clergy's seating.

In England however, extravagant piling-on of micro-architectural motifs could manifest not just on the seats of sedilia, but also those of the peculiarly English centrally-planned chapter house. Chapter Three has implied that chapter house seating ran parallel to the origins of sedilia, also developing decorative dado arcades into functional demarcated seats. Yet lack of parallels between the design of chapter house seats and sedilia show that the former were not direct prototypes for the latter. York chapter house, in building in the early 1280s, has been noted as the earliest known building to use the micro-architecture of French portals on such a wide scale, something

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[106] Pevsner notes that the chancel is 'nearly all Victorian' and does not mention the sedilia, however they do seem to be authentic work; *BoE Wiltshire* 1975, 184.

[107] That the Yaxley north chapel has lancets with impaled trefoils helps confirm this date; *RCHM Huntingdonshire*, 1926, 343-305, 307; *VCH Huntingdonshire: Vol. 3* 1936, 244; Robinson 2008, 73.

[108] Gardner 1996. Binski has also placed the allusion to castle imagery that the piscina makes into an intellectual context, which suggests such high-level agency in its formulation; Binski 2011.

[109] Gardner 1996, 71.

that would become peculiar to England in the years around 1290-1300.[110] The specific influence of the Troyes piscina has been traced at York by Christopher Wilson: the canopies with figures looking out over the seats flanking the entrance.[111] However, the undulating canopies of York do not find any immediate parallels in sedilia design.[112] Similarly, the wonderfully varied foliate gables of Southwell chapter house, of a date in the 1280s, seem also not to find any counterparts on contemporary sedilia.[113] Rather, a parallel development can be seen between Wells chapter house of the 1290s (fig. 148) and nearly all late-thirteenth-century canopied sedilia, which utilise the disciplined Parisian Rayonnant exemplar of cinquefoil arches topped with steep crocketed gables enclosing sharply-pointed trefoils, flanked by pinnacles. The motif of the sharply-pointed trefoil in a gable has its ultimate ancestor in St Urbain, Troyes, both in the skeleton tracery in the apse and over the doors of the south transept façade (fig. 149), and came to England in the 1270s.[114] Wells chapter house exemplifies a style fashionable in the London court as represented by the new choir of St Paul's Cathedral and the Bishop of Ely's chapel at Holborn.[115] Identical in their formal elements to the Wells chapter house seats are the sedilia at Merton College Chapel (fig. 150), begun 1289, an ambitious transepted church with an unaisled choir. This is a plan noted by Ayers to have been borrowed from ex-minster and collegiate churches, which it will be remembered were important for the earliest development of sedilia.[116] Merton College's sedilia have been directly related by John Goodall to the sumptuous ensemble at Great Haseley (Oxfordshire) of sedilia, a piscina and tomb recess all in the south wall which although lacking the pointed trefoil, have identically proportioned gables, angled pinnacles and distinctive mouldings (three miniature quadrants with flanking fillets separated by hollows).[117] The north chapel at Bitton (Gloucestershire) (fig. 151) once again, display advances in formal invention promulgated by a prelate in an annex to a parish church. Like Boyton, this chapel was endowed by a bishop, Thomas Bitton of Exeter in 1299, and the sedilia again have the cinquefoil arch topped with tall crocketed

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[110] Coldstream 1972; Wilson 2007, 114; Bony 1979, 14–16.

[111] Wilson 2007, 114–115; Binski 2014, 148–154.

[112] Such three-dimensional canopies find parallel in some fifteenth-century sedilia for which see Chapter Six. Though perhaps a coincidence, this is interesting to consider with the assessment of the York nave as 'proto-Perp'; *BoE Cathedrals of England: North and East Anglia* 2005, xxxi. For the sources for York nave, see Coldstream 1972, 21; Böker 1991.

[113] Coldstream 1972, 19.

[114] Bony 1979, 10–11.

[115] Draper 1981, 19. For further identification of the Geometrical motifs in the repertoire of the London-Canterbury Court school; Hastings 1945.

[116] Ayers 2007, 124; Ayers 2013, lxx.

[117] Goodall 1995, 277. A similar set of gabled sedilia, here once again with a pointed-trefoil, can be found at Long Itchington (Warwickshire).

gables with a pointed trefoil, identical Wells chapter house.[118] Also as at Boyton, the close resemblance to Wells demonstrates that the labour was local rather than sent by the Bishop from Exeter. This repeated use of a similar form does seem to represent, like the 'classic' type, an unconscious consensus as to the manner in which sedilia should be ornamented.

CONCLUSION ON THE LATE-THIRTEENTH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

Sedilia first formed as a truncation of the dado arcade, which allowed for useful sheltered seats for the officiating clergy, confined to buildings of a middle rank. Later, they became an established idea in smaller churches. In the second half of the century we can see a new interest in sedilia from a higher level. The simple individual niches were enhanced with a micro-architectural repertoire borrowed from other furnishings that developed sedilia as a separate *tour de force* of display, intended to excite the eye and elicit thoughts of salvation in the Heavenly Jerusalem.[119] Gables and rib-vaults are a signifier that patrons, often episcopal, had a desire to emphasise the sedilia in their building projects as sanctified places for the ministers of the altar and the esteemed nature of their duty. These initial commissions in annexed chantry chapels may have formed a 'tipping-point': whereupon prelates first became involved with the hitherto humble genre of sedilia, and subsequently led to the commissioning of sumptuous versions for great-church high altars.

THE SEDILIA IN THE GOTHIC GREAT CHURCH

So far this chapter has concentrated on sedilia in thirteenth-century parish churches. This is because medieval sedilia are surprisingly uncommon throughout the great churches of England.[120] Of the sixteen surviving original diocesan cathedrals, only Exeter, Rochester and Durham have authentic medieval sedilia of any prominence at the high altar and, as will be shown, these are not coeval with the original builds but fourteenth-century additions.[121] Clearly great churches, in the sense of the term used by

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[118] McNeill 2011b, 19.

[119] Bucher 1976.

[120] This was noticed by Denne 1794, 382.

[121] Of the six abbeys raised to cathedrals by Henry VIII; Gloucester, Westminster and Chester have high altar sedilia. Wells has five-seat sedilia with nodding-ogee canopies that are part of Salvin's controversial stone choir enclosure of 1848-54 that swept away the previous wooden stalls preserving only the misericords; Walcott 1865, 34. Lichfield's high altar sedilia are made up of the remains of the Perpendicular altar screen demolished by Wyatt, re-assembled by Scott around 1860; Lockett 1993, 122.

Wilson to refer to elite architecture of cathedral rank, still needed some sort of seating for the officiating clergy at their high altars.[122] This is shown by a famous and remarkable complaint by the Primate of England against another cathedral. On 10 January 1302, Archbishop Robert Winchelsey sent a letter from the archiepiscopal palace in Mayfield (Sussex) to the Prior and Sacrist of Worcester Cathedral following his metropolitan visitation. It regarded the arrangement by the high altar of the tomb of the revered John of Countances and the exuberant pinnacled monument that the incumbent bishop Godfrey Giffard (d. 26 January 1302) had erected for himself next to the shrine of St Oswald.[123]

> '… *locum occupat ubi pro sacerdote et aliis ministris ipsius altaris in missarum celebracione deberent juxta morem aliarum ecclesiarum* **sedilia preparari** *ac lumen sufficens eidem altari a locus oportunis inferri, impeditur per hoc nichilominus indecenter. Quidem eciam alia inconveniencia ex hoc notantur a vulgo obloquente que ad presens exprimere non decent.*'[124]

> '[the two tombs] occupy the place where according to the custom of other churches **benches should be prepared** for the priest and other ministers of the altar at the celebration of the Mass and improperly prevent sufficient light from falling from the natural quarter upon the altar. Also other inconveniences are commented on by the public which it would be unbecoming here to mention.'[125]

The Archbishop clearly did not think that John of Countances was in an ideal place for public veneration, and instructed that his tomb be removed to its former position, and that, again, '*sedilia*' should be prepared.[126] But his concerns that the central focus of the Cathedral liturgy was literally overshadowed seemed to be even greater, for he demanded that Giffard's own tomb be taken down (*totaliter demoliri*) and that the area should be restored back to how it was, suitable for the ministers of the altar (*ministris*

Otherwise the nineteenth century did not (perhaps due to the lack of medieval examples) provide cathedrals with extravagant neo-Gothic sedilia in the way that they did with Bishop's Throne canopies and choir stalls. Undistinguished wooden chairs are now generally used for the liturgy of the diocesan high altar.

[122] Wilson 1992. A combination of elements such as three-storey elevations, vaults and fully-aisled choirs goes toward distinguishing them from the middle or lower rank, although of course these elements can be found in lesser churches or absent from great ones. It does not include most collegiate or large parish churches such as Hull (East Yorkshire) and Ludlow (Shropshire).

[123] The monument is implied as existing in Giffard's will of 1301, as he instructs he wishes his interment in 'the tomb which is situated near the high altar, on the right'; Hall 1895, 144–145.

[124] Graham 1952, 762.

[125] Full translation of the episode in Wilson 1920, 21–23. Commentary on the Latin text and consequences for the shrine of St Oswald can be found in Engel 2007, 202–206.

[126] '*corpusque predicti sancti in locum pristinum restitui et predicta sedilia preparari*'. For further suggestion that the saint's location was only a secondary concern of Winchelsey; Webb 2001, 70.

altaris).[127] There is no record of when the letter arrived at Worcester, but Bishop Giffard died twelve days after its date of composition. The Prior replied on 12 February, just over two weeks after the Bishop's death, to say that he wished to postpone the removal of the tomb to avoid a public scandal.[128] The canopy was dismantled by at least 1504 when Prince Arthur Tudor's cage chantry was established in its place on the south side of the altar. Giffard's effigy may be the Purbeck bishop encased in a crypt-like section of this Tudor monument, with an elaborate canopy over his head and part of the sides of a tomb chest which seem to show the Apostles gesturing towards Christ displaying his wounds.[129] There are no parallels for the lost canopy of the tomb from monuments directly related to these two components, but it would appear to have been stylistically in between the monument to Bishop Aquablanca (d.1268) in the north transept of Hereford Cathedral and the works of the Kentish-London masons responsible for the Crouchback Tomb at Westminster Abbey and the de Luda tomb at Ely.[130] The enormous Tudor cage chantry which replaced it – perhaps remembering the complaint two centuries before – prudently has four individual seats projecting on the altar side, which, while modest, are unique in the corpus of sedilia (fig. 152).[131]

Winchesley's use of the word '*sedilia*' is potentially deceptive to a modern reader, as now the word is used ubiquitously to refer to the seats for the officiating clergy. However, Chapter One has shown that this is a modern coinage, and instead it would appear that Winchelsey was indicating that a simple, bench-like seat ought to be placed on the Epistle side for the ministers of the altar. The use of '*preparari*': 'seats that have been prepared', also recalls the phrase '*sedibus ad hoc paratis*' in the Sarum Rite and other liturgies. '*Morem aliarum ecclesiarum*' may refer to such textual rubrics, or perhaps to a growing architectural trend for mural stone sedilia that great churches were only recently beginning to adapt to the requirements of their high altars. What is clear is that Worcester Cathedral's high altar, in the east end extended and remodelled

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[127] Winchelsey's own tomb occupied the centre of the south wall of the south-east transept, and has subsequently been destroyed; Wilson 1995, 464 so he cannot be accused of hypocrisy. However, as will be shown, his successors Stratford and Sudbury had their tombs built on the south side of Canterbury's high altar enclosure.

[128] Wilson 1920, 23.

[129] Park 1996 shows the tomb chest to be of the 1290s through a comparison to the monument of Joan de Vere (d.1292) in Chichester Cathedral. The effigy itself is less certain to be Giffard's, as it could possibly represent Walter Cantilupe (d. 1266), as a fourteenth-century date would make it the latest Purbeck effigy in England; Guy and Brain 2004. I thank Christopher Guy for sharing his thoughts with me on the monument.

[130] The tomb is described by Winchelsey as '*quisbusdam pinnaculis ad modum tabernaculi superius fabricatis alta et sumptuosa structura lapidum excisorum*'; Wilson 1995, 451–452; Park 1996; Luxford 2005, 80.

[131] Monckton 2009, 119. These seats are visible in a view of the choir in 1823; Cobb 1980, 173.

beginning 1224, did not have permanent sedilia at the time of Winchelsey's visitation.[132]

Winchelsey's complaint, at the turn of the fourteenth century, comes at a time when stone sedilia began to make their way into great churches where they previously had not been present. It has been suggested that the earliest 'classic' sedilia appeared during the twelfth century in unaisled buildings of the middle rank. One of the common attributes of the great church is the incorporation of aisles around the presbytery and high altar.[133] This obviates any installation of niches embedded into the wall, simply because there is no such wall next to the high altar. Thus the initially practical form of permanent stone sedilia was not suitable for these buildings. While sometimes embellished, the primary function of sedilia in parish churches and other buildings until the mid-thirteenth century was not to aggrandise their occupants, but to seat the officiating clergy in the vicinity of the altar in a convenient manner. It was only by the later part of the thirteenth century that sedilia began to be more lavishly adorned with features such as tall gables, and subsequently became familiar and desirable to high-ranking clergy, as has been demonstrated with the episcopal chantry chapels at Bitton and Boyton. This sets the scene for the fourteenth century, when the first examples of freestanding sedilia were installed in aisled presbyteries of great churches.

It appears that sedilia were not permanent fixtures of thirteenth-century great churches in the same way that they were in contemporary parish churches. Destroyed sedilia in cathedrals are sometimes interpreted from fragmentary work or early descriptions, but are based on an incorrect assumption of a ubiquitous presence rather than *a priori* proof. From the evidence of a pre-restoration drawing it has been suggested that Peterborough had an early example of gabled sedilia in its choir.[134] Yet this would make them extremely early as great church sedilia, and instead the drawing is more likely to show a late-thirteenth-century lost tomb canopy on the north side of the altar.[135] The possible site of the sedilia at Salisbury was occupied from 1779 by the Radnor family pew, but in *c.*1773 it was noted that the choir enclosure was adorned a fitting featuring 'niches, marble pillars and tender ornaments on top' which has been

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[132] Singleton 1978.

[133] The other sort of plan was the triapsidal eschelon plan, with three unaisled apses at the east end. The central apse survives at Peterborough, now embraced by the sixteenth-century Lady Chapel, but other such plans are only known through excavation; Bond 1905, 159–164. These apses would presumably have originally incorporated *synthronon*, as preserved in part at Norwich, see Chapter Three. A freestanding high altar is considered a defining element of a great church in Batsford and Fry 1940, 46.

[134] Dean 1984, 123.

[135] Bridges 1791, plate following 546.

cited as a description of the sedilia.[136] The situation at Salisbury is complicated by the fact that the original position of the altar is debated, and hence, even if by chance this vague description *was* of the high altar sedilia, they are most unlikely to have been the set from the initial early thirteenth-century campaign.[137] Norwich Cathedral has a strangely empty site on the south side of the choir, now rather unattractively filled in with plain masonry. The aisle side is occupied by the chantry of Prior Thomas Bozoun (d.1480) which appears to pre-date the Perpendicular remodelling of the Romanesque east end.[138] Woodman hypothesises that another tomb was inserted *c.*1500 on the sanctuary side, but it has also been proposed that this was the site of the sedilia, either wooden furniture or a lost stone set.[139]

More convincing than these entirely lost sedilia, but still inconclusive, is the material evidence preserved in a pair of cathedral altar enclosures. In the set of stone screens added around the sanctuaries of Lincoln and Canterbury in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century respectively, later tombs now truncate sections of the stonework that may have formed sedilia of sorts. At Lincoln the choir was enclosed by screening associated with the tomb of the founding bishop Remigius and the Tomb of Christ/Sacrament Shrine in *c.*1296.[140] There is a small projecting ledge on the south side, surmounted by diapering and blind tracery with two flanking shafts cut short by a classical cornice added in the eighteenth century. It has been suggested that this is one seat of the sedilia.[141] If so, the three further seats were obliterated by the chantry to Katherine Swynford, wife to John of Gaunt (d.1403) (fig. 153).[142] At Canterbury, it is generally accepted that part of the sedilia survive next to the tomb of John Stratford (d.1348) (fig. 154).[143] Stratford's tomb only occupies the western half of the first south bay after the eastern crossing of the choir, and thus has preserved the most authentic section of Prior Eastry's screening, documented 1304-5.[144] What distinguishes this from the other (much more heavily restored) screening in the rest of the sanctuary is their section covered by elaborate diaper of intersecting ogees – the pattern of which is

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[136] Brown 1999, 15.

[137] Reeve 2008, 91, following Jones 1878, argues that the high altar was under the eastern crossing, under the painting of Christ in Majesty on the vault, against Brown 1999, 13, who believes it must have been further east.

[138] Woodman 1996, 194.

[139] *BoE Norfolk 1* 1997, 202.

[140] The date comes from a comparison with the cloister arcading, which is documented as under construction in 1296; Sekules 1986, 118.

[141] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 473.

[142] Harvey 1971.

[143] Reader-Moore 1979, 30–31, followed by Wilson 1995, 468.

[144] Woodman 1981, 142–143.

practically identical with the fictive painted fabric behind the priest's seat in the Exeter sedilia (fig. 62) – and two small canopies poking above the cornice.[145] However, on close inspection there is no clear evidence that this incorporated a projecting seat, and the sedilia could also have been sited in the next bay, now totally occupied by the tomb of Simon Sudbury (d.1381). After the initial controversy between the Metropolitan bishop and Worcester Cathedral acting in favour of liturgical furniture, it appears that the decline in the popularity of stone sedilia and the increasing emphasis on personal commemoration in the later Middle Ages meant that the former lost out in the ensuing competition for space at the high altar.

Sedilia do appear in the long Lady Chapels that it was popular to append to great churches from the thirteenth century onwards, that frequently have an unaisled plan similar to many parish church chancels. These have not been mentioned before in this thesis as none of them are as early as the parish church sedilia that have been studied above for the initial spread of the 'classic' type. The evidence is also difficult to interpret because the majority of such Lady Chapels were turned over to secular use after the Reformation, and subsequently the dado area of these buildings where sedilia were installed has suffered greatly. Bristol Elder Lady Chapel (fig. 99) has been discussed above as an important illustration of how sedilia evolved from dado arcading, but here there is no attempt to differentiate the arches that would have inevitably been used as sedilia. One of the earliest Gothic axial Lady Chapels is at Hereford Cathedral, heavily dependent on the work on Wells under Adam Lock (fl. *c*.1225-29), which only displays an aumbry cupboard and large double piscina on the south side.[146] The sedilia, however, could have been destroyed by the sixteenth-century Audley Chapel which occupies the entirety of the next bay.[147] In the later thirteenth century, there are single-niche sedilia, subdivided into two by Y-tracery, in the Lady Chapel at Chester Cathedral (fig. 155). Chester Lady Chapel is difficult to date due to extensive refenestration and subsequent 'restoration' to 'First Pointed' under George Gilbert Scott, but was possibly

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[145] For the relation of the stellate diaper work to the oeuvre of Michael of Canterbury; Wilson 2011, 107.
[146] Morris 2000, 237. The double piscina was first noted after the Lady Chapel was cleared in Merewether 1842, 10–11. It can be seen with the arch partly destroyed, with the aumbry apparently filled in, in an engraving in Britton's Cathedrals, dated 1831; Britton Vol. 3, pl.XVI.
[147] There are 'classic' sedilia and a triple piscina, much restored by Scott, in the former Benedictine Priory of Brecon Cathedral with which this building is closely related. The choir is now dated to *c*.1230, reversing previous opinions about its relationship to Hereford Lady Chapel; *BoW Powys* 2013, 431, 435. For the sedilia; Parkinson and Jenkins 1994, 32.

as early as the 1260s.[148] An engraving in Winkles' *Cathedrals* shows the Lady Chapel with its Perpendicular windows, and that there were originally two subdivided niches of equal size, suggesting Scott's integrated piscina to be an invention (fig. 156).[149] This would mean that four seats were originally provided, unless a larger seat was provided for the celebrant to demonstrate his importance.

It is only from the late thirteenth century that we have the first examples of 'classic' sedilia in great church Lady Chapels. The axial Lady Chapels at Exeter (early 1280s),[150] Chichester (*c*.1288-1304) (fig. 157),[151] Bristol (1298) (fig. 191),[152] St Albans (*c*.1315) (fig. 158)[153] and Wells (begun *c*.1323/4)[154] all have prominent 'classic'-type sedilia. Unlike the continuous arcades of early-thirteenth-century Bristol Elder Lady chapel, the sedilia are either distinguished by canopies and different arches (Exeter, St Albans) or are in isolation on a blank dado (Chichester, Bristol and Wells), that testify to the Solemn Mass at their altars.[155] The lavish Lady Chapel at Ely, begun in 1321, is famous for its scheme of nodding-ogee arcading around the whole perimeter of the building, showing a conceptual kinship with Bristol's arcading a century before, and the four bays over the altar steps are distinguished as sedilia by armrests on both the north and south sides (fig. 188).[156] The insertion in the fifteenth century of twenty-four stone canopied seats in the eastern projection of the Trinity Chapel at Salisbury also indicates the provision for sedilia-type seating in these axial chapels. This demonstrates that seats

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[148] Much of this is a speculative restoration begun by Hussey and completed by Scott. However the dogtooth, naturalistic foliage bosses and the bar-tracery dividing the sedilia suggest a date *c*.1260s-80s; Maddison 2000b. For the restoration; Jansen 2000, 84–87.

[149] Winkles 1836, Vol. 3, plate following 106. The subdivided single-niche form is very unusual, the closest parallel being at Corcomroe Abbey in Ireland, *c*.1195, part of the group of Irish Cistercian single-niche sedilia noted in Chapter Three.

[150] An aumbry in the vestry for the Lady Chapel was recorded in 1285, therefore the dado level was likely completed by this date; Jansen 1991, 37–38.

[151] Willis 1861, 31.

[152] Following the dating championed in Wilson 2011. See below for the unusual design of the sedilia and their condition.

[153] The *Gesta Abbatum* tells us that Abbot Hugh of Eversdon (1302-26) completed the Lady Chapel. McNeill in Herbert, Martin, and Thomas 2008, 65–66; Roberts 1993, 116–120. The dado level and vault were all restored in a subsequent restoration by Lord Grimthorpe; Cook 1951, 43–44. The sedilia niches themselves had survived, if not their decoration, but also the tabernacles above can be seen in a pre-restoration photograph; Cook 1951, 94.

[154] Draper 1981, 22. The sedilia are recorded as discovered by Salvin, along with the fragments of the reredos in the *Illustrated London News* Vol. 29, 241 (Sept. 6 1856). The bench only extends to the second canopy, suggesting a three-seat set of sedilia with a missing piscina.

[155] See Chapter Seven for Solemn Mass in Lady Chapels.

[156] The appearance of sculptures of higher-ranking ecclesiastics in the niches; James 1895, 11 also may demarcate the sedilia from the rest of the scheme.

were not included when Salisbury Cathedral was begun in the 1220s, and that, like Faringdon (fig. 135), the plain 'Episcopal Style' had become functionally deficient.[157]

WOODEN SEDILIA IN AISLED CHOIRS

Therefore there is no certain evidence for the appearance of sedilia by the high altars of great churches at the time of Winchelsey's complaint. Instead, the most plausible hypothesis is that a piece of wooden furniture would be accommodated between the piers of the arcade. This may have been a single long bench, or the individual *cathedrae* such as documented in St Paul's Cathedral in 1245 and referred to indirectly as *cathedras ministrantium in choro* in 1295.[158] It is notable that the earliest surviving freestanding sedilia next to an aisled high altar are indeed made of wood. These are the set at Westminster Abbey, usually dated to *c.*1307 (fig. 159), 38 years after the high altar was consecrated in 1269 and five years after the Worcester episode. An oak canopy with a rib-vault was erected over a stone plinth, creating sedilia of four seats facing the high altar. Its front elevation has cinquefoil-sub-cusped pointed arches surmounted by crocketed gables and now truncated pinnacles, the former enclosing a trefoil that was once filled with coloured glass.[159] The sedilia are broadly datable by their architectural style, which is consistent with the Rayonnant-derived vocabulary of the King's Works in Westminster in the 1290s and early 1300s, as well as the fine paintings of ecclesiastics and kings which will be examined in Chapter Five.[160] A more precise date is arrived at from when King Sebert was recorded as being translated into a new tomb in the Abbey church. The medieval chronicles only state that Sebert was reinterred by the high altar, that his right arm was incorrupt, and that he was honoured as the founder of the church.[161] The painted imagery of the sedilia almost certainly means that Sebert is in the niche facing the ambulatory directly underneath the sedilia (fig.160), which has been called 'Sebert's tomb' since the seventeenth century, which has many paint fragments inside (fig. 161).[162] The back wall is filled with blind tracery of a pattern that suggests it was added to the niche much later – at the same time as

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[157] Although dedicated to the Trinity, this building is explicitly intended as the site for the daily Lady Mass attended by the whole chapter; Hearn and Willis 1996, 40.

[158] See Chapter One.

[159] Wrapson 2006.

[160] Binski 2003, 210–211.

[161] Walsingham only says '*in novam basilicam*'; Thomas of Walsingham, 114. Flete adds '*juxta altare quod sanctus Petri dedicaverat*'; Robinson 1909, 45.

[162] Keepe 1682, 35. Binski relates the honouring of an ancient founder king in this position with the Dagobert monument at St Denis; Binski 1995, 123. However there are a great deal of founders' tombs on the north, see especially Sekules 1986.

Henry V's reredos and chantry – and therefore that the arch was before then also open to the sanctuary side.[163] Indeed, the relieving arch is still discernible underneath the seat of the sedilia (best visible under the westernmost chair in fig. 159). This, of course, has serious implications for the height of the sedilia's seat above the sanctuary pavement, as will be considered shortly.

The first mention of the sedilia themselves (called 'the canopy of Sebert's tomb') was by Dart in 1723, and his engraving of only the four panels on the rear suggest that the front was generally covered by other fittings (fig. 162).[164] The sanctuary side was first represented in 1775, when a member of the Society of Antiquaries (almost certainly the young William Blake) made a fine coloured and gilded drawing (fig. 163), which was engraved by Basire for publication in *Vetusta Monumentua*.[165] This shows the floor level in front of the sedilia much lower than it is now, with wooden panelling covering the area now buried under the pavement. A drawing from 1825 shows the high altar pavement almost brought up to the modern level, the niche's relieving arch more clearly visible than today (fig. 164).[166] The sanctuary floor in the medieval Abbey can be seen in the sixteenth-century Islip Roll to be straight-through without the current step before the bay of the sedilia and Crouchback Tomb.[167] Therefore the sedilia must have been almost unusably high, unless there was some sort of wooden staircase over the niche.

The reason for this impractical situation is because the tomb niche and sedilia were evidently not designed at the same time. A painting of a Catherine wheel (fig. 161) and head of a young queen survive at each end of the niche, with a trailing vine on the soffit.[168] This suggests that the niche originally held either Henry III's Princess Katherine (d.1257), for whom he expended an enormous amount of £51, 12s, 4d on her funeral, or Edward I's daughter of the same name (d.1264), who had burial expenses of £40, and also two gold cloths decorated with Catherine wheels at her funeral.[169] It has been shown that the royal infants were often relocated as competition for space around St Edward's shrine became heated, and therefore Princess Katherine must have been

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[163] Binski 1995, 124.
[164] Dart 1723, 6, pl. 4.
[165] Ayloffe 1789. Wrapson 2006, 117–118 suggests that the mullions in this image may be partly original.
[166] Moule 1825, 1–12; *Gent. Mag.* 1825 (20), 301-306.
[167] Hope 1906.
[168] Scott 1863b, 165; Binski and Massing 2009, 310. Currently the painting is in a very poor state, with the head and much of the soffit covered in tissue paper.
[169] Tanner 1953, 26–27; Badham 2007, 130–134. There is also a strong tradition of the burial of Katherine in the south ambulatory, but this could be attributed to the presence of the moved Cosmati tomb chest in the outer wall, which is within sight of the sedilia niche; Badham and Oosterwijk 2012, 173.

ejected for the more revered founder.[170] Thus the sedilia at Westminster are a very significant example in the history of sedilia. They seem to have been an experiment in installing sedilia in a great church beginning to be crowded by tombs, and their cheaper material and compromised position suggest that at this point, grand sedilia were still not a common feature in the great church.[171]

The next set of wooden sedilia are at Beverley Minster, with quite elaborately carved nodding ogee canopies with low gables over four seats, from the mid-1240s (fig. 165).[172] They stand between two piers of the *c.*1230s choir, west of the reredos erected in the late 1330s or early 1340s.[173] Unlike the Westminster set, the Beverley sedilia are not built up against the piers, but are self-supporting, as seen when they were moved from the high altar to form a screen between the retrochoir and south-east transept between 1822 and 1867, when one seat was destroyed to allow for a passage under the current eastern canopy.[174] Subsequently they were restored and returned to the high altar, but suffered an unfortunate episode in 1876 when they were submerged in a tank to remove all remaining traces of paint.[175] The only other wooden sedilia in great churches are two fifteenth-century sets. In the choir begun 1182 at St David's Cathedral, there are three-seat sedilia with delicate Perpendicular canopy work placed in the second bay from the east (fig. 166).[176] Hexham Abbey has a much-mutilated fifteenth-century set with vaults and some sculpture of angels (fig. 167) in its choir of a similar late-twelfth-century date.[177] It is almost certain that there were more wooden sedilia in

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[170] Badham 2007; Badham and Oosterwijk 2012.

[171] Although Binski hypothesises that the wooden construction of the sedilia was to render them moveable for important events such as coronations; Binski 1995, 141, this has been shown to be untenable due to the tin-relief over structural dowels; Wrapson 2006, 131–132. Alternatively the material may due to the rush to get the sanctuary ready for Edward II's coronation on 25 February 1308; Wrapson 2006, 121, 131. The hierarchy of material finds parallel in the Coronation Chair, which is documented as originally intended to be bronze; Binski 2003, 208–209.

[172] Usually dated precisely coeval to the Percy Tomb opposite; Petch 1986, 46; Woodworth 2011, 205–231.

[173] For the largely-accepted date of the Minster's east end; Hoey 1984; Wilson 1991. For the reredos; Dawton 2000, 120.

[174] Woodworth 2011, 209–212. The extra length of screen extending to the reredos is part of this restoration.

[175] Dawton 1983, 146 n.8, citing *Beverley Minster Magazine* 119, July 1876. Some small traces of gilding apparently still remain; Woodworth 2011, 212–213.

[176] Howard and Crossley 1919, 140. The cross-beams of the sedilia cut into the piers and the whole structure is raised up on a stone plinth, which at the back also incorporates a base for a fourteenth-century effigy of a knight, perhaps a posthumous monument for Rhys ap Gruffyd, d.1197; *BoW Pembrokeshire* 2004, 411-412.

[177] The Hexham set have the current appearance of five seats. Clark 2010b, 387–389 states that the eastern seat accommodated a credence shelf, but the rebate cut into the left-hand side of the second upright is clearly not part of the original design. The canopy over the second seat is some 10cm wider than the other four, but since the sedilia have been previously recorded as being of four and three seats, it is clear their current appearance is not reliable to their original form. The sedilia were described in Raine

great churches that have not survived. It is surprising, however, considering that so many great wooden canopied choir stalls survive in English cathedrals, that no similar sedilia survive: suggesting that sedilia and stalls were not created as ensembles.[178]

STONE SEDILIA IN AISLED CHOIRS

It was only further into the fourteenth century that great churches with ambulatories began to render the officiating clergy's seats in stone. These seem to be often associated with the new phenomenon of large stone screens behind the altar. Shortly after Westminster came the sedilia at Exeter: the earliest extant freestanding stone set in an aisle arcade (fig. 168).[179] Like Westminster, they were not part of the original campaign of the presbytery, the east portion of which was completed by *c.*1301-2.[180] They were added as an east-west return of the enormous high altar screen-type reredos under the tenure of Bishop Walter Stapledon. This work is documented in the fabric rolls of 1316-28, although the sedilia are not itemised separately as to give any indication of their nomenclature.[181] Their semi-transparent and exceedingly lofty form is unlike any sedilia before them: three stepped seats with polygonal backs built into a short wall in front of the choir aisle, with brass columns on small lions supporting a magnificent set of canopies. The canopies' first stage is an arch with ogee gable with flanking side canopies, and then a stage of ogee'd tabernacles for statues, topped with an array of pinnacles. The arches on the back of the sedilia are off-set, giving a very English syncopation.

In a visitation by Archbishop Laud, the sedilia were said to be dilapidated, and subsequently restored in 1639 at the cost of £22, 4s. 9d.[182] An engraving by James Basire after a drawing by John Carter in 1797 shows their form to be much the same as today (fig. 169), and a paragraph accompanying the plate praises the syncopation as showing 'great richness, united with lightness and strength'.[183] In 1797 Carter recorded

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1864, Vol.2, lv–lvi, as being over a stone seat, so should be understood like the Westminster sedilia rather than potentially moveable furniture like Beverley.

[178] Tracy 1987.

[179] Sekules 1991a, 172; Sekules 1991b, 115.

[180] Jansen 1991, 43. The western choir went up in 1309-10, and the east portion was then remodelled with a triforium in 1318 when the altar screen was being erected; Jansen 1991, 46–49.

[181] Morris 1943, 131.

[182] Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 61, citing the Dean and Chapter Act book, 155. The sedilia are referred to as an 'ancient monument contiguous to the altar, set up in the memory of King Edward the Confessor, of Egytha his Queen, and Leofric first bishop of Exeter'. This will be investigated more in Chapter Five.

[183] Society of Antiquaries 1797, 22, pl. X. It is said in Sekules 1991a, 173 and Morris 1943, 137–138 that in 1745 'the pinnacles were pared down and stunted', the latter citing Oliver 1861, 210. However, Oliver

the seats as being adorned with 'enriched mosaic work', and shows in his engraving patterns approximating the fictive fabrics, but without the painted lions.[184] The details of the carving must have been decayed, as the sedilia were restored by John Kendall around 1820.[185] Kendall himself published an engraving of the syncopated arches on the back of the sedilia in 1818.[186] In the light of their appearance in the engraving of 1797, a 1843 description of Kendall's restoration is surprising. It was said that this 'so-called restorer' had 'stunted the pinnacles, altered the form of the canopies' and sarcastically noted that he had improved upon the original carving with 'something like cabbages for finials'.[187] The accompanying measured drawings show that Kendall partly truncated the shafts of the stage of canopy work above the initial ogee-niche stage to about half its original height, but his allegedly poor vegetative carving is not evident (fig. 170). [188] Scott's restoration of the canopies in the 1870s, which used at least 1,400 pieces of new stone, must have partly replaced Kendall's detail, but also re-extended the canopies, when Kendall's reredos with Strawberry Hill-gothick-style detail (which had replaced the scant remains of Stapledon's once colossal altar screen) was demolished and replaced.[189] It can be said that the sedilia are much restored in detail, but overall their delicate structure reliably reflects their medieval form (fig. 168), and therefore they can be used as evidence towards the investigation in Chapter Five of the three medieval statues that they appear to have formerly housed in their canopies.[190] The status of Exeter's high altar set as the first freestanding stone sedilia may be down to specific circumstances. Firstly, Exeter's altar screen may well be the first 'canopy-type' reredos

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makes it clear that he is talking about the wooden choir stalls ('miseries or subsellia, or seats of the canons and vicars'), now destroyed except for the misericords.

[184] Society of Antiquaries 1797, 22.

[185] Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 57.

[186] Kendall 1818, pl. 22.

[187] *Exeter Dioc. Archi. Soc.* I, 1843, 179. It is also said in the account that the colouring behind the seats was covered in whitewash.

[188] ibid, pls. XX-XIII. An account written during the period of Kendall's arrangement gives high acclaim to the 'feathering' (crocketing) of the priest's seat in particular, but does not convey their lofty verticality at all. The author then goes on to praise Kendall's reredos; Winkles 1836, Vol. 2, 112. The sedilia are not properly illustrated in this volume, but can be seen, apparently complete, in the background of the engraving of the bishop's throne in Britton, where they are described as 'sedelia'; Britton, Vol. 4, 1826, 124-125.

[189] Sekules 1991a, 173; Sekules 1991b, 115. This figure is according to contemporary newspaper accounts cited in Morris 1943, 137–138.

[190] There is a tiny statue inside a small ogee'd niche on the aisle side which is absent on the antiquarian images of the back and which therefore must be Scott's invention. The large statues are twentieth-century but their identities (Leofric, Edward the Confessor and his queen), as will be shown, follow seventeenth-century tradition.

built.[191] This means that it was the first time that such a complicated stone construction could inform the material and form of the adjacent sedilia. Secondly, the lack of a major saint cult at Exeter means that to compensate, as Sekules has argued, the liturgy and subsequently its furnishings could be given more elaboration to magnify the authority of the Church.[192] The magnificence of the wooden Bishop's throne of 1316-18 also appears never to have been equalled and rarely approached in the Middle Ages.[193] While the sedilia at Exeter show no signs of being encumbered by a pre-existing tomb like those at Westminster, their imagery does suggest that they may have incorporated a monument to the founding Bishop Leofric, as will be argued in Chapter Five.

While there are no surviving parallels for the wooden ensemble at Westminster of its sedilia and the retable of *c*.1270, Exeter's arrangement of stone screen-type reredos and integral sedilia does seem to have influenced a number of subsequent examples.[194] Reredoses comparable to the scale of Exeter included Peterborough Cathedral (destroyed in the Civil War, but recorded through a relatively crude drawing) and the Neville Screen at Durham Cathedral erected *c*.1380 which survives, albeit denuded of statuary, with an ensemble of four sedilia both south and north of the altar which continue its canopy design as hypothesised for Exeter (fig. 171).[195] As at Exeter, the accounts for the Neville Screen do not identify the sedilia separately from the work on the reredos, although the division of the cost 3:1 between Lord Neville and the priory has been suggested by Eric Cambridge to imply that the monks were paying for the sedilia.[196] The account in the *Greyfriars' Chronicle* of the destruction wrought on the interior of St Paul's Cathedral at the upon the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer in 1552 records the destruction of a canopied reredos and what appear to be related sedilia like those at Exeter and Durham:

> 'Item the xxv. day of October was the pluckynge downe of alle the alteres and chappelles in alle Powlles churche, with alle the toumes, at the commandment of the byshoppe then beynge Nicolas Rydley, **and alle the goodly stoneworke that stode behynde the hye alter, and the place for the prest, dekyne, and subdekyne** […]'[197]

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[191] Wilson 1980, 91–93. Sekules plays down the comparison as, unlike Durham, we know from its survival into the nineteenth century that Exeter's reredos was partly built against a wall; Sekules 1991a, 173.
[192] Sekules 1991a, 178.
[193] Sekules 1991a, 175–176.
[194] Binski and Massing 2009.
[195] Wilson 1980.
[196] Cambridge 1992, 66.
[197] Nichols 1852, 75. Bond 1916, 176 quotes from the passage with no direct citation to the chronicle, and by excluding the reference to St Paul's, the implication is that it occurred at the friars' church.

As well as parts of high altar reredoses, sedilia were retrofitted into great churches as part of larger scale campaigns. They were inserted between the presbytery arcades as part of the fourteenth-century remodellings of the Romanesque east ends at the abbeys at Tewkesbury and Gloucester. Gloucester has four polygonal seats, with panelled backs going well with the rest of the revolutionary Perpendicular remodelling, but the intricate canopies, having been almost entirely destroyed, are now mostly the work of Scott in the 1870s.[198] Their precise date may be from Abbot Horton's completion of the east end and its furnishings after 1351.[199] At Tewkesbury, the three-seat sedilia have a piscina built into the angle with the Romanesque pier, which again suggests that they may have continued as a reredos (fig. 172). The back of the Tewkesbury sedilia form a tomb niche (most likely interring the infamous Hugh the younger Despenser, d.1326) facing into the ambulatory as at Westminster. That this solution for accommodating both liturgical furniture and a tomb in an esteemed position was seemingly emulated strengthens the concept that the English Crown's mausoleum was a model for the Despensers.[200] Rather than any particular desire for an interment under the sedilia, it may be that the combination of the two monuments was simply due to the competition for space around the high altar, but unlike Giffard at Worcester, a happy compromise was achieved.

While the above sets were due to major programmes of installing altar screens or remodelling Romanesque buildings, there are some fourteenth-century sedilia that are currently the only evidence of a particular campaign in the building. Milton Abbey, rebuilt after a fire in 1309, has a simple set of open-backed sedilia between sanctuary and aisle (fig. 173), of a much more modest design than the fantastic open-work tabernacles of Exeter and Durham. It has simple triangular crocketed gables

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[198] The sedilia are mentioned in 1814 as 'four subsellias, the canopy of which have a flat entablature of intagliated tracery. Upon the architecture is carved a wand entwined with a ribbon, and at each end T.O.. Above this tabernacle work is continued with several lancet apertures, through which the relics were formerly exhibited'; Storer 1819, Vol. 2, Gloucester, (m). This description is partly quoted in Britton's Cathedrals, and they can be glimpsed as no more than a plain two-storey structure in his view of the choir to the north east; Britton Vol. 5, 1829, 62. The sedilia canopies are described as 'rich, but mutilated' in 1867 before Scott's restoration; Haines and Waller 1867, 16–17. Scott said 'The sedilia had been sadly mutilated but have been restored according to evidence and my best judgement'; Scott 1995, 338, 481. As usual with Scott, as we do not seem to have a pre-restoration drawing, his judgement is now embodied in the object itself (as argued in Steven Brindle's paper from the 2013 British Archaeological Association conference at Westminster). The angels above the cornice however are authentic medieval sculpture, but may not be in their original position.
[199] Welander 1991, 166, 478.
[200] Morris 1975. The sedilia and the recess are dated to the resumption of work on the choir in the early 1330s, after work had come to a halt in the 1320s with the downfall of the Despensers; Morris 1975, 149–150.

with cusping, looking rather cramped between the short pinnacles. Also unlike those other examples, Milton has an extant reredos of a later date, from the fifteenth century. Although it has been noted that the vaulting shaft terminates so as to make room for them, the sedilia are of a different stone, suggesting that they were a slightly later addition, as at Exeter.[201]

Ripon Minster is an important monument of the Early Gothic in England of the late twelfth century, the precocity and appearance of the eastern termination of which is much debated.[202] But certainly by the late thirteenth century, it had assumed its current shape as a standard English square-ended aisled choir with the three eastern bays rebuilt in the Geometric style. The sedilia and piscina (fig. 174) are probably the result of restoration to the building after the Scottish raids of 1317-18, under the sponsorship of William de Melton, Archbishop of York, who granted an indulgence for 'new work' in 1328.[203] These sedilia were found in a mutilated condition by Scott in the second bay from the east, and moved east to suit the modern location of the high altar.[204] His restoration placed the arches, seats and shafts against a new wall dividing the sanctuary from the south choir aisle and added tall gables over the arches which may not be part of the original design. The arches are composed of single ogees, the shafts decorated with rosettes. The use of simple trefoils along the base suggests a relatively early post-ogee date, plausible as the late 1320s for the north of England.[205] The undersides of the arches contain high-quality figurative sculpture which will be considered at length in Chapter Five.

Chester Cathedral choir was under construction from 1275-82.[206] The sedilia, of the second quarter of the fourteenth century, are surprisingly unconsidered in the literature as they are an impressive insertion of four nodding-ogee arched seats, topped by telescoping canopies not unlike Exeter's (fig. 175). It is possible, due to their resemblance to Exeter and Durham, that they were part of a lost altar screen. It is often thought that they were brought from the ruined choir of the church of St John at the

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[201] *RCHM Dorset Vol. 3* 1970, 185.
[202] Harrison and Barker 1998 argue against the early date in the 1160s advanced by Wilson 1986, 88. See also Hearn 1983.
[203] Hallett 1901, 25–26, 60. Hallett himself dismisses Scott's prudent position of the sedilia as 'late Decorated' in favour of the surprising opinion that 'they have the appearance of Late Perpendicular'; Hallett 1901, 104–106.
[204] Scott 1995, 341.
[205] Coldstream states there were no ogees in the north of England until c.1315; Coldstream 1973, 89.
[206] Jansen 1979, 228–229.

other side of Chester, as one of the current canopies was found there by Scott.[207] It is possible that both churches commissioned sedilia from the same fourteenth-century workshop that has led to this confusion about their origin. Finally, the fourteenth-century choir arcades at Selby Abbey were built at the same time as a stone high altar reredos in *c*.1321-40, but the sedilia are a good fifty years later (fig. 176), as they are clearly related to the Neville Screen at Durham of *c*.1380.[208] The cage-like canopies are close to those at Durham, although here only of one stage.

As was demonstrated in the corpus survey, freestanding sedilia of this sort are extremely unusual, and these delicate, impressive canopied forms are rarely found outside of the greatest churches. Only the most unusual collegiate churches have any comparison. The sedilia and screen at Bishop Grandisson's collegiate refounding of Ottery St Mary (Devon) represent a simplified version of the novel ensemble at his cathedral at Exeter.[209] In terms of their sheer scale and intricate structure, the sedilia at the collegiate churches of Maidstone (Kent), after 1417 (fig. 177) and Crediton (Devon), after 1413 (fig. 178) are the grandest sedilia outside of a cathedral-scale building. Both stand free of walls between two piers of the chancel arcade, an unusual characteristic: as we have seen in Chapter Two. The Crediton sedilia are a frustrating fragment, preserving much paint, incorporating a shaft with a figure of a bishop, and with complicated lierne vaults over the seats supporting entirely lost canopies. Crediton choir is dated after 1416, but the sedilia seem to have been constructed separately as is the case for such sets in great churches.[210] They appear to be connected with the unattributed, apparently relocated tomb monument that backs on to them from the south

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[207] Scott wrote 'The sedilia have been completed according to their own evidence, and one, which had a modern canopy (though far from new), has been replaced by the original one, strangely discovered in the ruins of St John's Church. This seems to prove they all came from thence'; Scott 1995, 334. This is taken by Pevsner to mean they were brought from the Norman choir of St John, now demolished except for one bay, at an unspecified 'early date'; *BoE Cheshire* 1971, 140. The Decorated sedilia are mentioned as being in the Cathedral prior to Scott's restoration in 1848; *Archaeological Journal* 1848 (5), 18. The recent Pevsner revision compares them to the shrine of St Werburgh further east in the Cathedral; *BoE Cheshire* 2011, 225. Maddison attributes the shrine of St Werburgh, the Cathedral sedilia and the eastern chapels of St John's church to the same master mason, 'The Yorkshire Master'; Maddison 1978, 265–266.

[208] The arcades at Selby choir are dated by Coldstream 1980, 109. Harvey says that the sedilia may well be from the same hand as the Neville Screen, who in turn may be Henry Yevele; Harvey 1944, 37.

[209] The college was founded in 1337 and the shields on the reredos indicate a date of completion between 1342-5; *BoE Devon* 1989, 618.

[210] The will of William Langeton d.1413 left the profits from his prebend to the rebuilding of the nave which is said to be in a ruinous condition; Worthy 1896, 300. The chancel arcades are of the same design so may have been under construction at this time.

aisle.[211] The loss of the easternmost canopies of the sedilia implies that they were connected to a destroyed reredos behind the high altar, and as at Exeter, they were created as a return to a larger ensemble. Maidstone church was rebuilt beginning *c*.1395, but the sedilia are clearly later than this as they partly overlap the brass matrix on the tomb chest which forms their back commemorating John Wotton, first provost of the college, who died in 1417.[212] Along with those of the college and the see of Canterbury, the arms of Archbishops Courtnay, the founder of the college, and his successor Arundel were once recorded as present on the sedilia. Both of these men were dead before Wotton, therefore they could represent emblems of the continuing control of the Cathedral church.[213] Ottery St Mary, Crediton and Maidstone stand as rare examples of cathedral sedilia influence in middle-rank churches, and all may have been constructed as claims to associations with episcopal-rank buildings.

MURAL SEDILIA AT UNAISLED HIGH ALTARS IN GREAT CHURCHES

Even in buildings where the sanctuary continues unaisled under the high vault of the choir, the sedilia appear to be later than the original fabric. This demonstrates that even these great churches did not have sedilia until the turn of the fourteenth century, but also the increasing desirability of elaborate stone sets. Southwell Minster has a five-seat set of sedilia, much restored, in the south wall of the two-bay projecting east end (fig. 179). They are usually dated to *c*.1337, when the *Liber Albus* of Southwell records a large amount of stone being carried to the Minster, and subsequently this is assumed to be for their manufacture along with the sizeable pulpitum.[214] It is often insisted that the Southwell sedilia were moved from an open arcade of the choir.[215] However, it is more plausible that they have never been moved. They were uncovered after 10 July 1792, when a nine-year-old chorister, Thomas Bucklow, on attempting to climb into the Minster through 'the last window in the lower tier on the south side of the choir next to the altar' held on to part of the oak screen that was covering the sedilia, which fell with

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[211] The monument is often called, due to its wide-niche form with no effigy and a mutilated frieze of Christological and Mariological scenes, an Easter Sepulchre. Since it is badly aligned with the sedilia, it is possible it was moved from the opposite north arcade which is now occupied by a Jacobean monument.
[212] The painting above Wotton's tomb on the back of the sedilia is compatible with a date in the 1420s; Cave-Browne 1889, 46–51; Monckton 2006, 311–314.
[213] Monckton 2006, 312.
[214] *BoE Nottinghamshire* 1979, 140-141; Sekules 1990, 131–139. Both Hamilton Thompson 1911b, 53–54 and Dimock 1898, 83–84 dated the sedilia later than the screen which they put into the 1320s.
[215] McNeill 1998, 53.

him to the pavement, where he was killed.[216] This means we know exactly where they were in 1792, and that they could not have been moved to their current position in the nineteenth century. [217] The sedilia were subsequently restored in Roman cement by the Bernasconi brothers in the 1820s, who also made reparations to the pulpitum and new plaster choir stalls. This restoration unfortunately obscures and confuses the remnants of authentic figurative sculpture in the spandrels and makes them a highly problematic monument to interpret. If the 1820s restoration did not move the sedilia, it has been proposed that there were moved in 1711 after a serious fire.[218] However it is surely inconceivable that already heavily vandalised freestanding sedilia would have been relocated after the 1711 fire, only to be subsequently covered up by the oak screening. The form of the sedilia is also entirely unlike any other freestanding sets, such as the telescoping canopies of Exeter or the gables of Ripon, and they were clearly always designed to be mural. Two further mural great-church sedilia are less complicated. Wimborne Minster's unaisled thirteenth-century eastern extension also contains triple-stepped fourteenth-century sedilia with a piscina that are unrelated to any other surviving work in the building (fig. 180).[219] The Early Gothic unaisled east end at Rochester Cathedral has sedilia with the appearance of late-fourteenth-century Perpendicular (fig. 181), corroborated by the arms of Bishop Brinton (1373-89) over the west seat.[220]

These mural sedilia are particularly intriguing since, unlike the freestanding examples, it is surprising that they were provided for their buildings so long after they were built. It is possible, therefore, that they indicate that the high altar was moved from a previously aisled location. At Southwell it has been proposed that the original location of the high altar sedilia was in the third bay from the east, marked by a curious palmette sculpture over the point of the arcade.[221] This would leave the next bay for the altar, the subsequent bay as a squared-ended ambulatory, and the aisleless projection with the

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[216] Shilton 1818, 282–283.
[217] Killpack and Clarke 1839, 52 describes that they were 'made up' from ornament taken from elsewhere in the Minster after the oak screen was pulled down after the fatal incident, but Dimock says it is 'impossible' that they are 'a mere piece of patchwork'; Buckler and Dimock 1853, unpaginated; Livett 1883, 116, also disagreed with this.
[218] Hamilton Thompson 1911b, 53–54.
[219] Mayo 1860, 42–43.
[220] McAleer 1999, 148, 276, following Hope 1900, 117–118. For the date (probably begun 1180s) and context of the unusual unaisled eastern presbytery, see Draper 2006b. The tall ogee gable as late-fourteenth-century court work will be discussed in Chapter Six.
[221] McNeill 1998, 27.

fourteenth-century sedilia as an eastern axial chapel.[222] It is possible that the five-seat sedilia represent a new site for the high altar at Southwell. This is more clear at Wimborne, where the thirteenth-century unaisled extension in which the sedilia were inserted may have been designed as a Lady Chapel, and in the fourteenth century, when its floor was raised for a construction of a crypt underneath, the Lady Altar moved down to this undercroft and the presbytery and high altar moved eastward.[223] At Rochester, however, the position of the medieval high altar at the east end is relatively well established, as a sizeable platform was discovered under the easternmost bay, and here there is no reason to assume the sedilia represent the high altar being moved from an original position further west.[224] However, absence of sedilia does not mean absence of an altar, and generally these inserted stone sedilia demonstrate the increased perceived importance to have such seats at the high altar, a high value placed upon their form and materiality because of their ubiquity in England's churches.

CONCLUSION ON GREAT-CHURCH SEDILIA

Therefore, we can see that stone sedilia do not appear to have become an established feature at the high altars of great churches until the fourteenth century, when they began to be installed as a part of new screen enclosures and reredoses. These great-church sedilia represent the formal apex of the developmental narrative. A genre that was initially a cost-effective and attractive solution for lower-rank churches had become noticed by prelates, and now, enhanced by the most advanced micro-architectural forms, testified to the permanent majesty of the liturgy of the great church.

SEDILIA DESIGN IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Alongside these outstanding examples in great churches, it must be remembered that sedilia continued in great numbers in the fourteenth-century parish church. It has been shown in the corpus survey that a small majority (around 52%) of all medieval 'classic' sedilia fall into the Curvilinear Decorated Style that dominated during the reigns of Edward II and Edward III, of which the ogee arch is a major defining element. It is

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[222] Southwell was already dedicated to the Virgin, and a separate Marian altar is thought to have been situated elsewhere, which makes it unlikely that this eastern chapel could have been a literal Lady Chapel. McNeill 1998, 27. For the problem of identifying the dedication of prominent axial chapels; Draper 1990, 138.

[223] Rees and Lewis 2014, 136.

[224] McAleer 1999, 132, 267.

generally accepted that the ogee does not become common vocabulary in parish church architecture until the 1320s.[225] With the end of what we regard as Decorated by the fourth quarter (see Chapter Six), this means that a period of only half a century was an extraordinary time for the building of parish church chancels and their integral liturgical furnishings.

The distribution of sedilia across England in the fourteenth century remains uneven (map 4). A comparison to the thirteenth century (map 3) implies that sedilia grew in popularity in districts where they had previously been less common. The highest concentration is towards the centre and east of England, the dioceses with the largest share of the grand total of Decorated sedilia being Canterbury with 12%, Coventry & Lichfield with 11% and Lincoln with 10%. It seems plausible that if a new chancel was built in the fourteenth century in these areas, then it was *de rigueur* that sedilia would be included in its south wall. Yet in the East of England sedilia remained comparatively rare: the counties of Somerset, Hereford, Exeter, Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire; represented in the Middle Ages by the dioceses of Exeter, Salisbury, Hereford and Bath & Wells having relatively low figures, both total and proportionate to the number of churches. As discussed in Chapter Two, this is due to many factors, including a lack of building from the period, but also shows how there was a continuity in local style from the thirteenth century that conditioned the presence of sedilia in parish churches.

The established mural 'classic' type continued as the norm for stone sedilia, embellished by an expanded, but generally still rather limited, vocabulary. Whereas thirteenth-century sedilia often displayed their relationship to the architectural dado arcade, with capitals and moulded arches, fourteenth-century sedilia began to take on forms from other sources, often jettisoning capitals for continuous shafts. Aside from window tracery, sedilia provided one of the biggest opportunities for masons to make prominent use of the fashionable but inherently non-structural ogee arch. Of the 418 Decorated 'classic' sedilia in my database, I have confirmed that 178 have major ogees over the seats (that is, the form of the arch itself and not the cusping) as opposed to 147 confirmed without. The general trend towards the micro-architectural embellishment of sedilia that began in the late thirteenth century continued as new motifs entered the repertoire. Crockets, before the turn of the century present on only a handful of sedilia

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[225] Bony 1979, 28.

such as the unusual Faringdon (fig. 135), became extremely popular.[226] I have confirmed 129 Decorated sedilia with crockets, 89 of these over major ogee arches, an example being Car Colston (Nottinghamshire) (fig. 182).[227] Common also are standing pinnacles between the arches, which receive in turn the 'manneristic' motif of miniature buttresses with set-offs, a device with a clear relation to large-scale architecture.[228] Sedilia that do not feature crockets often fill the spandrels with simple tracery motifs that separate the sedilia off from the rest of the wall as a more distinct object, such as Shottesbrooke (Berkshire) (fig. 183).[229] Then there are a great many sedilia that simply feature moulded ogee arches, for example Compton Dundon (Somerset) (fig. 184), such sets still achieving prominence from the wall through thick mouldings.

There is not a huge increase during the fourteenth century in the amount of sedilia with canopies or gables over the initial arches. Therefore, the towering sedilia at Heckington (Lincolnshire) (fig. 206) and Hawton (Nottinghamshire) (fig. 207), are unusual in their most basic forms, disregarding the lavish sculpture applied to their framework. We have seen above that in the late thirteenth century there are a handful of sedilia, less than twenty, with some sort of extra element over the arches of the seats. For the fourteenth century there is only a slight proportional increase to 17% (69 out of 400). Nearly all of those with tall gables still have the motif previously demonstrated as almost ubiquitous in the late thirteenth century: the placement of a sharply pointed trefoil inside, although now the major arch underneath is an ogee. Decorated-Style pointed-trefoil sedilia can be found at Ewerby (Lincolnshire) (fig. 185) and Lowick (Northamptonshire) (fig. 315).[230] The well-known Winchelsea (Sussex) south aisle set are no doubt associated with the lay tombs they connect with, and emulate the template of the chancel set with added cusping, headstops and sinuous ogees within their gables.[231] What can also be considered as canopied sedilia are those with straight-topped parapets, extending the elevation of the sedilia high enough to give a domineering impression as if they had gables. Claypole (Lincolnshire) (fig. 217) and Kersey north aisle (Suffolk) (fig. 60) are two of the handful of Decorated examples of

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[226] I counted eight pre-Decorated sedilia with crocketing.

[227] Thompson 1912, 42; Wilson 1979, 84–86; Alexander 1996, 70.

[228] Bony 1979, 16. These buttresses become proportionally more popular in fifteenth-century sedilia. I have noted 19 Decorated sets with this motif, and 18 Perpendicular.

[229] License for a college at Shottesbrooke was granted 1337; *BoE Berkshire* 2010, 216.

[230] Further examples: Besthorpe (Norfolk), Great Leighs (Essex), Meysey Hampton (Gloucestershire) (albeit relatively low gables), Stockport (Cheshire), Whitwell (Derbyshire) and Rudston (East Yorkshire). Alford (Lincolnshire), Warmington (Warwickshire) and Pickering (North Yorkshire) have simple crocketed gables with no in-fills at all.

[231] For the dating of the tombs; Blair, Goodall, and Lankester 2000.

this type, but both showing a tendency towards the Perpendicular Style when it becomes a more common idea.[232]

Sedilia encrusted with carved foliage within the gables rather than just geometrical motifs, like the bravado display of virtuoso mimesis at Southwell chapter house in the 1280s, or the more stylised but equally lavish vegetation on the sedilia at Hawton are also rare. Great Snoring (Norfolk), Piddington (Oxfordshire), Tewkesbury Abbey (fig. 172) and Old Leake (Lincolnshire), all damaged, are the closest parallels to such exuberance. Interesting ornamental foliage fills the spandrels of the sedilia at Swannington (Norfolk) and Great Tey (Essex); Thompson (Norfolk) adding in sculpture of green men. The crisp naturalistic foliage in the spandrels of the otherwise quite ordinary sedilia at Warfield (Berkshire) (fig. 186) is exceptional for its quality. These sedilia appear to have been an ensemble with a freestanding screen that divided off the east end of the chancel as a vestry, which was reinstated by Scott after the discovery of its foundations.[233] Today, there are so few surviving examples of parish church high altar reredoses that it is difficult to judge how often they formed an ensemble with sedilia in this way, as with Durham Cathedral's Neville Screen (fig. 171). Yet it is increasingly important to consider sedilia in the context of their chancels in the fourteenth century. The sedilia at Lawford (Essex), although following the basic crocketed-ogee type, are utterly exceptional for the carving of foliage and musicians in the spandrels (fig. 187). However this is part of an ensemble with a piscina and priest's door, and indeed a chancel that is encrusted with sculpture of the highest Decorated exuberance – where even the window jambs have continuous bands of foliate and figural carving – and the sedilia sculpture can only be studied in the context of this.

One motif that might surprise by its rarity on medieval sedilia is the nodding ogee, identified on a few single sedile in Chapter Two.[234] Nodding ogees are found on a few great church sedilia: as well as part of the elaborate scheme in Ely Lady Chapel (fig. 188), also in isolation in Wells Cathedral Lady Chapel, at Chester Cathedral's high altar set (fig. 175), its south transept sedile (fig. 29) and carved in wood at Beverley

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[232] Other Decorated sedilia with these straight-topped crenellated cornices (and thus classified as 'canopied' sedilia) are Aldington (Kent), Alpheton (Suffolk), Bradwell (Suffolk), Chislet (Kent), Southwell Minster (fig. 179), Waltham (Kent) (fig. 141414), Westerleigh (Gloucestershire), Westwell (Kent) (fig. 202), Willesborough (Kent), Woodnesborough (Kent). Laxton (Nottinghamshire) is apparently unique for its fleur-de-lys-topped cornice, and also unusual for its armrests and lack of dividing shafts.
[233] *BoE Berkshire* 2010, 597-598.
[234] It is often said that the motif of the nodding ogee originated in woodwork: specifically the Bishop's Throne canopy at Exeter; Frankl 2000, 192, although it was probably present in St Stephens Chapel when it was designed in the 1290s.

Minster (fig. 165).[235] But in parish churches, there are the unusual display of far-north Decorated at Morpeth (Northumberland) (fig. 189), the south aisle at Cartmel Priory (Cumbria), Nantwich (Cheshire) (fig. 190), the decayed arches at Muchelney (Somerset), Rushton (Northamptonshire) and the south chapel at Baldock (Hertfordshire) that are the limited collection of sedilia that show the use of one of the most famous devices of English Decorated.[236]

There are very few sedilia in the fourteenth century that depart from the 'classic' type into other forms. Bristol Cathedral's retrochoir Lady Chapel has an unusual linear design for its mural sedilia, which has inverted arches set on top of the conventional arches over the seats (fig. 191).[237] However, it should be noted that these sedilia were all but destroyed by a monument inserted into the centre (fig. 192), and are mostly re-imagined from the evidence of the parts that survived at the edges.[238] At Halsham (East Yorkshire) (fig. 193), a stone bench is backed by concave recessions, but instead of being treated like an arcade, a composition of blind curvilinear tracery surmounted by a single crocketed ogee unites the seats.[239] The impetus for this strange design may be the incorporation of an older stone seat (see Chapter Two) into the structure, preserved to its west, also with a concave niche behind. At East Brent (Somerset) (fig. 194), a seat separate from the wall is enclosed by three relatively high divisions into two separate seats, and along the top is a frieze of crenellation and stylised leaves.[240] However, these sorts of aberrations are extremely rare, and go to show how ubiquitous the familiar 'classic' type of sedilia was by the fourteenth century.

Despite that sedilia generally used a limited number of elements and motifs, it is surprising how few are identical, even in local groups. A pair such as Breadsall (fig.

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[235] The design of the arches at Wells, with an ogee on top of flanking rounded arches projecting them forward is extremely similar to those in St Stephen's Chapel dado arcading; Wilson 1979, 48.

[236] The parochial south aisle at Cartmel Priory is widely associated with the patronage of John Harington (d. 1347), but I have suggested that the south aisle dates earlier than his c.1340 tomb; Cameron 2011, 13–14. The lower levels of Nantwich chancel is attributed to the master responsible for the Chester Cathedral sedilia by Maddison 1978, 266, 270–271. Nearby Nantwich are the unusual sedilia in St Giles, Wrexham (Clwyd) which seem to have been kept from an earlier building, with unusually bent ogee arches and profuse sculpture of green men . I thank Richard Halsey for sharing and discussing these sedilia with me. Despite being considered 'major indeed' by Pevsner, I have not been able to obtain an image of Rushton, nor Baldock, to confirm the arches as true nodding ogees.

[237] Webb 1965, 125. Pevsner 1953, 92 notes this recurs on a gigantic scale in the Wells Cathedral strainer arch of c.1338. Wilson however sees it as derived from a decorative conceit in the crenellation of the St Augustine's Canterbury gatehouse; Wilson 2011, 101–102.

[238] This image is the frontispiece to Cobb 1980, who captions it as from 1839, but I have not been able to find the source.

[239] A parallel to this idea of having the seats as 'lights' in a tracery pattern is the fifteenth-century Sherington (Buckinghamshire) where a single shallow semi-circular niche with three stepped seats is backed by a three-light Perpendicular tracery design.

[240] As the chancel was rebuilt in the 1840s, these unusual sedilia are removed from their context. Pevsner only says they 'seem original'; *BoE Somerset: South* 1958, 160. I have not seen them in person.

195) and Horsley (Derbyshire) (fig. 196), three miles apart, clearly made by the same late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth-century Perpendicular workshop to the same design, is very unusual.[241] It will be shown in Chapter Five that Hawton's sedilia appears to have been the product of a separate workshop precisely copying the design of Heckington's, and this sort of competitive emulation could be the general framework that leads to some of the more extravagant sets in seemingly isolated parish churches. Local emulation and competition is represented by a concentration of gabled sedilia in the Richmond area of West Yorkshire. Patrick Brompton has a fully Curvilinear Decorated chancel ensemble including niches flanking the east window with reticulated tracery. Its sedilia (fig. 197) are well-carved, with disciplined pre-ogee motifs such as trefoil-arches and pointed-trefoil gables, and two headstops of a bishop and layman. These almost certainly influenced the much more coarsely-carved set at Ainderby Steeple, now just on the other side of the A1 motorway, which has surviving authentic chancel windows of ogee forms. The sedilia at Ainderby Steeple (fig. 198) have the major arches pinched into ogees, but otherwise very similar elements to Patrick Brompton: flanking pinnacles, pointed trefoils in the gables, two large heads between the seats, but overall are poorly composed. That one of the heads is again mitred indicates a direct connection, as this is not otherwise a common motif on sedilia. The sedilia in the Perpendicular-fenestrated chancel at Burneston (fig. 199), not far from these two churches, once again have tall gables with large head stops, again one being mitred. The basic architectural ideas have been simplified even more: the trefoil in the gable has disappeared, and the seat arches only have a single circular cusp. These sedilia seem not to have copied each other precisely, as between Heckington and Hawton, but instead certain elements – the gables and bishops' heads – seem to have been communicated between each other in local circulation of ideas.

Unlike in great churches, it remains rare for sedilia to be inserted into an existing chancel wall without being accompanied by major rebuilding or remodelling.[242] This shows that sedilia were still not a necessity for a parish and only added as a consequence of masons being brought in for larger-scale works. At Rainham (Kent)

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[241] They are noted as a pair and this date given in *BoE Derbyshire* 1976, 70. It should be noted there are minor differences in the sets, such as hanging threads at the top of the shields at Breadsall and differences in the bases of the shafts, and they are not a mechanical copy. As noted in Chapter Two, late-fourteenth-century Chelmorton and Kirk Langley (also Derbyshire) are also clearly to the same design. The sedilia of Chipping Campden (Gloucestershire) and Chipping Norton (Oxfordshire) in the Cotswolds are extremely similar, although Chipping Norton is called Victorian and attributed to Bruton in 1876 by *BoE Oxfordshire* 1976, 538.

[242] Stated by Clark in his comprehensive survey of chancels *c*.1250-1350 in Leicestershire; Clark 2010a, 253.

stepped sedilia with gables have been added over the early-thirteenth-century full-height blind arcades along with two Decorated windows in place of the former thin lancets (fig. 200).[243] Blockley (Gloucestershire) is identifiable from the exterior as a Norman chancel, and had planned vaulting (fig. 201).[244] Its sedilia are seamlessly inserted under the old shafted windows, which were clearly fitted with curvilinear tracery at the same time. The exceptions to this are, once again, parish churches directly related to great churches and prelates. At Westwell (Kent), large sedilia set within a frame with curvilinear trefoils in the spandrels have been built over the wide blind arcades of the ambitious early-thirteenth-century vaulted chancel (fig. 202). At Darlington (County Durham), one of the most sophisticated middle-rank churches of the early Gothic in England, there is a two-seat mid-fourteenth-century set of sedilia (fig. 214) inserted in the blank dado of the chancel.[245] Westwell manor was owned by Christ Church Priory in Canterbury, and Darlington was a wealthy college with its own prebends, appropriated by the Bishop of Durham.[246] This shows that in the fourteenth century, as in the late thirteenth but not before, external institutional patrons evidently saw 'classic' sedilia as a desirable feature for 'their' churches. This is especially clear at Westwell, which already had a wide-arched dado arcade which could have functioned as seating.

Another two examples of cathedral influence in parish churches are exceptional for how they are not built into the thickness of the wall, but instead are fully built-up structures, akin to a canopied tomb or ossified choir stalls. The magnificence of the sedilia at Sandiacre (Derbyshire) (fig. 203) and their accompanying chancel may be explained by the fact that this church was a prebend held by the Bishop of Lichfield in 1342-7, although this far from certain.[247] Bishopstone (fig. 204), a local prebend of Salisbury Cathedral, also has sedilia, that, although they are coeval with the chancel, were similarly conceived as a semi-freestanding structure. The Norman church at Bishopstone appears to have been rebuilt beginning at the end of the thirteenth century, judging by the nave's west window with impaled trefoils. The subsequent chancel and south transept are rib-vaulted – a very rare feature in English parish churches – with

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[243] Hoey 1995, 59.
[244] Hoey 1997, 166.
[245] For Westwell, Hoey 1995, 64–66. The church's original glazing is dated *c*.1220 in Marks 1993, 140. Darlington is documented in-building in 1192; Cunningham 1980, 166–167.
[246] Surtees 1823, 350–377; Hasted 1797, Vol. 7, 412–429.
[247] Cox 1875, Vol. 4, 370. Maddison shows that the building is essentially using motifs from Lichfield presbytery and Lady Chapel, but associates it with the 'Tideswell Master' and places it in the mid-1390s; Maddison 1978, 305–308.

naturalistic foliage bosses, and simple flowing and reticulated tracery in the windows.[248] The sedilia were described as in 'tolerable' condition in 1845 but were engraved precisely as they appear now, and there is little restoration clearly visible on them today.[249] The forms of Bishopstone's titanic sedilia are relatable to local style. The small triangular gables over the initial cusped arches are comparable to Boyton's Giffard chapel sedilia (fig. 144), while the foliage pinnacles directly over the seats have proportions and blind tracery with a diamond similar to those flanking the tomb of Simon of Ghent (d. 1315) in Salisbury Cathedral (fig. 205). The only ogees are in the divisions separating the seats, and this use, rather than on the major arches, can be paralleled by the Crouchback Tomb in Westminster Abbey which also uses ogees at its terminal ends. Therefore the Bishopstone chancel and transepts are conceivably an early work of Curvilinear Decorated, with tentative and experimental use of the ogee, probably of the 1310s.[250] Both chancels, but particularly Sandiacre, are striking for their breadth and sparseness, and their western halves must have originally contained further wooden furniture for the presiding clergy. Although it is possible that the sedilia originally would have been painted, it is likely that the furniture's wooden material would have stood in marked distinction to them.[251] Sandiacre and Bishopstone particularly embody the notion of how the genre of sedilia was moving toward the notion of being a distinct object, breaking out from the wall. This growing ambition and competition with carpentry may have ultimately contributed to the decline of stone sedilia as a common feature, as will be suggested in Chapter Six.

The sheer quantity of sedilia generally – over 400 of the 'classic' type and perhaps over a hundred more of the simple 'drop-sills' – from the Curvilinear Decorated Style raises many questions about the sheer extent of sophisticated chancel building at this period. However, such enquiry is beyond the scope of this thesis, partly because such a study should not be confined to sedilia, but open to other types and genres of stone furnishings. Instead, now having established a general context for them, the thesis will now turn to the finest examples of sedilia and their surviving decoration to try to understand the audiences they engaged with their imagery.

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[248] *BoE Wiltshire* 1975, 115–116.
[249] Carter 1845, 5, pls. 9, 10
[250] The first fourteenth-century prebend holder we know of is Richard de Havering, d.1342; Horne 1962, 33-35. The previous recorded holder is last recorded 1284; Horne 1991, 50-51, meaning that the holder during the apparent rebuilding period is undocumented.
[251] Paint remains in the vaults of the piscinas in the east wall of Bishopstone: red and blue on the ribs with foliage in the compartments. We could imagine something similar for the sedilia and also on the vaults of the chancel itself. Charles Tracy has stated that evidence of general polychromy on choir stalls is very rare, and only the finials of great canopied stalls illuminated; Tracy 2009, 121, n.20.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE IMAGERY OF FOURTEENTH-CENTURY SEDILIA

So far this thesis has outlined the twelfth-century origins of sedilia in England, their growth in popularity in the first half of the thirteenth century and how they related to local practice. It was argued that they subsequently developed beyond a mere practicality into a widely-understood genre that was used as a site of display, especially in great churches. Faced with a plethora of fourteenth-century examples of a generally established form, the focus now changes from a straight-forward formal narrative. It is really only by the fourteenth century that significant imagery, in painting and sculpture, is evident upon sedilia. In this chapter such sedilia, in particular the magnificent sets at the parish churches of Heckington and Hawton, will be investigated to elucidate the mechanisms of patronage that may have conditioned the appearance of sedilia; how the real bodies of priests may have been drawn into an ensemble with the imagery; and the possible extra-liturgical function of sedilia as a seat for a priest hearing confessions.

THE SEDILIA OF HECKINGTON AND HAWTON

The sedilia at Heckington (Lincolnshire), late 1320s (Fig. 206) and Hawton (Nottinghamshire), late 1330s (Fig. 207) are arguably the finest specimens of their genre in the country, and as mentioned in the introduction, have together been given extended treatment by Sekules in her thesis on Heckington church.[1] They have been widely recognised as some of the best examples of sculpture from the English Decorated Style of the early fourteenth century, and rarely fail to be included as examples in definitions and surveys of sedilia.[2] Yet, when seen in context with the rest of the fourteenth-century corpus, their profusion of carving, both decorative and figurative, is exceptional.[3] Unlike the sacrament shrines opposite them on the north side of the chancel (so-called 'Easter Sepulchres'), the sedilia at Heckington and Hawton are remarkably similar in design and can be described together in such a

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[1] Sekules 1990, 113–128.
[2] E.g.: Bond 1916, 191; Cox and Ford 1954, 80; Cook 1954, 170; Nye 1965, 56; Coldstream 2001, 690–691; Kroesen 2004, 151–153.
[3] They are recognised to be exceptional as early as Place 1852, 117.

way as to show their allegiance. The three unstepped seats are divided by detached shafts, which are topped with foliate clustered capitals that support the identically-cusped crocketed ogee arches over the seats which are surmounted by leafy finials. Over each seat is a miniature four-rib vault with simple foliage bosses. The front of each shaft terminates with gablets, immediately above which are four arch-stops: lively scenes featuring humans and animals, which shall be discussed in detail below. These arch-stops are at the bases of the three tall blind gables which dominate the overall composition: crocketed with lush foliage and separated by angled pinnacles of two storeys. The surface inside and around each gable is ornamented by foliate patterns, with figure sculpture in the space between each gable and pinnacle. Both sets are topped with a string-course, with two male busts at the terminal ends supporting it with their hands, and in between the finials of the gables and pinnacles are angels, most of whom place crowns on the figures immediately below. Neither sedilia show any traces of polychromy, and the back walls behind the seats are simply well-finished ashlar.

The very large and ornate chancel at the parish church at Heckington, along with its extensive scheme of exterior sculpture (fig. 208, 209) can be shown by a lost glass inscription recorded in the seventeenth century to have been ascribed to the munificence of the rector Richard de Potesgrave, a chaplain to Kings Edward I and II. A fourteenth-century date was recorded in the glass inscription, but both sets of antiquarian notes imply that the last two digits had been lost.[4] It completed the deceptively cohesive whole of Heckington church: the current nave and north transept seem to have been built at the end of the thirteenth century.[5] Although Potesgrave was appointed as rector of Heckington by Edward I in 1307 and is first recorded building there with an extension to the parsonage in 1319, the parish church chancel completion is usually placed into the late 1320s, when an auxiliary altar was founded in 1328, and its first chaplain appointed in 1336.[6] All the stone chancel furnishings at Heckington are coursed with the masonry and therefore can be

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[4] Sekules published that the date 1333 was recorded in the east window by Francis Thynne (d.1608) (British Library Add. MS. 36295); Sekules 1986, 129–130, but her later full transcript of Thynne's notes shows that he transcribed '*Richard de Potesgrave rector istie ecclie hoc cancellu fecit in honore beata Mariae et Sci Andree et Omnia scorum aᵒ dni millo trecetes…*'; Sekules 1990, 12.
Gervase Holles, possibly following Thynne, recorded: '*Ricus de Potesgrave…. Istius ecclie hoc cancellum fecit in honore beae Mariae et Sci Andreae et oim soorum. Ano. Dni MCCCᵒ*'; Cole 1911, 191.
[5] Sekules 1990, 15-16.
[6] Sekules 1990, 10, 18, 20–21.

considered coeval with the building.[7] Regarding the sedilia, the figural sculpture of the eastern arch-stop (fig. 244) is carved on the same block of stone as the adjacent mouldings of the window jamb, showing that they are part of a single campaign.

Although Heckington's architecture was widely influential in the area, its influence at Hawton (Nottinghamshire) seems to have been limited to the stone furnishings, as the Hawton chancel itself is of much lesser dimensions than Heckington (figs. 210, 211). Hawton has often been dated erroneously because of an incorrect identification of the tomb in the chancel as that of the lord of Hawton manor Robert de Compton, who was mistakenly thought to have died in 1330.[8] Sekules has advocated that the principal benefactor was the rector, John de Swine (1331-44), who previously had a minor ecclesiastical career in the diocese of York, and he is the most likely candidate considering the stylistic context of the sculpture.[9] Lawrence Stone considered the Hawton sedilia to be the same date as those at Heckington.[10] Stone's connoisseurial approach was apparently corroborated by W.D. Wilson's analysis of the peculiar moulding patterns of each sedilia as nearly identical.[11] However, although the proportion, design and mouldings are the same, study of the sculpture clearly shows that the Hawton sedilia were made by a different team of artists than Heckington. Sekules has shown how the Hawton Master's style displays more mannered draperies than the heavy, naturalistically pedantic folds at Heckington, much closer to that of the Decorated work at Southwell Minster: the pulpitum and over-restored five-seat sedilia (fig. 179), dated c.1337.[12] The figure sculpture of Christ rising from the tomb on the Hawton sacrament shrine has been compared to the Percy Tomb at Beverley, which would suggest a date towards the

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[7] Sekules 1990, 40. Sekules 1983, 161–163 acknowledges that the sacrament shrine and sedilia are of a different stone but maintains that they were carved in-situ at roughly the same time. This goes against Stone's dating of the sacrament shrine to c.1310, twenty years earlier than the sedilia; Stone 1955, 169.

[8] Burnside 1925, who relied on an inaccurate transcription; Sekules 1990, 127–128. This error is still persistent in the literature, and was followed by the current *BoE Nottinghamshire* 1979, 79. An amateur historian has proposed that the well-documented collegiate foundation by Thomas de Sibthorpe, usually assumed to be at Sibthorpe church, was actually intended for Hawton, but while it makes some interesting suggestions, the overall thesis is untenable; Quarrell 1994. Alexander 1996 dismisses both Quarrell and Sekules 1986's opinions on the patron behind Hawton, but does not refer to Sekules 1990.

[9] Sekules 1990, 123–124. It should be remembered that Nottinghamshire was in the diocese of York.

[10] Stone 1955, 169. One should be cautious in taking Stone's statements as authoritative, as they are incidental to a wider narrative of national style. Also his mention of a reredos at Heckington is puzzling, as there is no such medieval work surviving under the east window.

[11] Wilson 1979, 4–5; Wilson 1980, 23–24.

[12] Thompson 1912, 43–44; *BoE Nottinghamshire* 1979, 140-141; Sekules 1990, 131–139. See Chapter Four for the Southwell sedilia.

early 1340s.[13] Hawton's foliage is also like that at Beverley, more exuberant, bulbous and consistently more deeply undercut than at Heckington. The sedilia and other furnishings at Hawton then appear to have been a *modo et forma* commission undertaken by different masons trained in the most advanced forms of the Yorkshire Decorated, but following the formal design of Heckington's sedilia down to the mouldings around a decade later.[14] A comparison of the designs of the sacrament shrines also suggests that Hawton was a commission made after the model of Heckington.[15] Now that they have been accurately dated and shown to have had an extremely close relationship, this chapter will investigate three aspects of the iconography of this pair of sedilia, and demonstrate how they can be related to wider trends in the elaboration of the seats for the officiating clergy.

MECHANISMS OF PATRONAGE

Before we look at the specific subjects of the sculpture upon the sedilia at Heckington and Hawton, we should consider the patronage behind these exceptional commissions, and imagery directly associated with these concepts: such as heraldry. Sedilia in chancels might be expected to be entirely due to the desires of the rectors, as they were the individuals legally responsible for the upkeep of the chancel, as the parishioners were for the nave.[16] However, it will be argued that the structures of agency relating to the production of sedilia were much more complex than they may first appear.[17] So far in this thesis, the only patrons behind sedilia appear to have been prelates commissioning new settings for altars in great and prebendal churches: for example at Sandiacre (fig. 203) and Bishopstone (fig. 204); and in chantry chapels, as at Boyton (fig. 144) and Bitton (fig. 151).

Heckington church appears to have been an influential model for other elite patrons from the royal court. Sekules has argued that it was the earliest of a number of parish church chancels rebuilt by clerics from this circle, to provide a permanent

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[13] Dawton 1983, 145. Dawton prefers a date for the Percy Tomb as 1340-7; Dawton 1983, 120, while Lindley prefers *c*.1345-50; Lindley 2007, 179.

[14] Sekules 1990, 139; Sekules 1983, 163. Echoed and emphasised by Coldstream 1991, 66.

[15] This is due to the way the fictive flying buttresses at Hawton no longer make any structural sense as they did at Heckington; Sekules 1983, 163.

[16] For the history of this agreement; Cragoe 2010.

[17] For a recent overview of theoretical approaches to the mechanisms of patronage; Caskey 2013.

place for the reservation of the consecrated host directly next to their graves.[18] These sacrament shrines (popularly, still mistermed 'Easter sepulchres') were evidently a very restricted phenomenon, and Herbert has argued that this small group has misled a great deal of scholarship regarding their wider presence in parish churches.[19] The chancel at Navenby (fig. 212) was also fitted out with sedilia (fig. 213) a founder's tomb, piscina and sacrament shrine clearly inspired by, but of a lower order than, the similar furnishings at Heckington. Although not documented, Navenby's new chancel was probably initiated by its rector: William Herlaston, Chancellor and Keeper of the Privy seal, who was appointed by Edward II in 1325.[20] Sekules has shown how some of the hands established in the sculpture of the furnishings at Heckington can also be identified on the more modest furniture at Navenby. This suggests that a number of churches in stone-rich Lincolnshire were deemed suitable to grant to royal clerks, as it was relatively uncomplicated to source materials and skilled labour to reconstruct their chancels as these clerics' own personal monuments: the liturgy of the parish church in service of the salvation of their souls.

Potesgrave, however, does not appear to have funded the new chancel of Heckington and its extensive external sculptural programme alone, and clearly, many chancels were funded by sources other than the legally-obliged rectors.[21] The arms of the Beaumont and Vesci families were recorded throughout the church alongside those of the incumbent rector.[22] Sekules loosely attributes the control over the exterior sculpture to the resident Lady of the Manor of Heckington Isabella de Vesci, proposing that her Dominican sympathies indicate that its alleged programme of exemplary sin was conceived by her mendicant confessor.[23] The exterior sculpture

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[18] For the attribution of the sacrament shrines at Heckington, Navenby, Sibthorpe, Arnold and Patrington to clerics connected to the royal court; Sekules 1990, 84–88.

[19] For the reinterpretation of the Lincolnshire/Nottinghamshire 'Easter sepulchres' as having the dual function as Tombs of Christ intended to add prestige to the nearby burial of the patron of the new work and sacrament shrines linked to the growing popularity to the devotion of the Real Presence in the Eucharistic Host; Sekules 1986. A recent study concludes that permanent stone Easter sepulchres may have been entirely unknown in the Middle Ages, and were an ideological creation of the nineteenth century, particularly due to A.W.N. Pugin and his emulation of Heckington; Herbert 2006; Herbert 2007.

[20] Herlaston left the parish to become a canon at Llandaff in 1329, perhaps leaving work unfinished. It may have been completed under new rector John de Fenton, also a cleric in the royal court, and this may be why the clerical effigy in the tomb niche appears to be from a different workshop; Sekules 1986, 130; Sekules 1990, 38–39. The rector and his status was not noticed in Wilson 1979, 125–127.

[21] Coldstream advances that priests rebuilding their chancels tended to be out of the ordinary; Coldstream 1994, 144–145.

[22] Sekules 1995, 39–40; Sekules 1990, 21–24.

[23] Sekules 1995, 57–58.

therefore represents for Sekules a mutually reinforcing lay 'margin' to the ecclesiastical 'centre' of the stone furnishings.[24] However, sedilia are by no means so easily attributable solely to the clergy.

One of the key pieces of art-historical evidence for general medieval patronage from the fourteenth century onwards is heraldry. Heraldic shields become a part of the decorative vocabulary in church architecture as early as the mid-thirteenth century, in, for example, the east bays of Westminster Abbey nave.[25] Examples become more frequent with the beginnings of Decorated: notably at York Minster nave, and the south-west bay of Ely presbytery.[26] However, it is only from the fifteenth century that such spandrel shields are used on parish church arcades, for instance at Lavenham (Suffolk) of 1495-1515.[27] It should not be considered unusual, however, that the sedilia at Heckington or Hawton do not show such badges of individuals or organisations, as shields of any sort are uncommon on sedilia. Middleton (Buckinghamshire) is a very rare example in a pure Curvilinear chancel, but no blazon survives on its shields.[28] There are not many sedilia with heraldry in Perpendicular chancels, but proportionally far more than in the fourteenth-century corpus.[29] However, when we begin to investigate such blazon that does survive, we see that it does not suggest a single type of patronage behind the installation of these seats: either clerical or lay. The sedilia added to the unaisled presbytery of Bolton Priory (West Yorkshire) when it was rebuilt and extended in the mid-fourteenth century are sadly now totally mutilated, with only the polygonal seats with pointed-trefoil decoration surviving under the traces of the niches. However, in 1670 an account was made of their apparently more complete appearance with various shields. These represented powerful families, such as the Percys, Scroops and Haringtons; alongside royal arms such as John of Eltham and the fictive arms of

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[24] We will encounter 'marginalia' and the literature associated with it more fully toward the end of this chapter.
[25] Bony 1979, 20.
[26] Abandoned for the rest of the bays; Coldstream 1979, 32.
[27] Haward 1993, 292–293.
[28] The church of Middleton (old Milton Keynes), with an unusual unaisled nave is largely of one fourteenth-century campaign around a $c.$1200 chancel arch. The tracery of reticulated and ogival but not flowing designs suggests an early-fourteenth-century date. The low, chunky arches of the two-seat sedilia and piscina resemble those in the open arcading of the south porch.
[29] Fifteen in the Perpendicular Style compared to eight in the Decorated.

Edward the Confessor: all with no recorded connection to the Abbey.[30] The sedilia at Emberton (Buckinghamshire) have been recarved with pious Passion symbols, but originally had the arms of Tyringham, the long-standing advowson-holders of the living.[31] A shield on the sedilia at Darlington (fig. 214) features a star, said to represent the badge of prebendary Henry de Ingleby and thus inserted into the late-twelfth-century Early Gothic chancel around 1350.[32] The carved arms at Wickmere (Norfolk) display the arms of the rector Thomas de Hengham, presented 1378 (fig. 215).[33] Another set with surviving shields carved in relief is the elaborate drop-sill at Luton (Bedfordshire) (fig. 216), which displays the arms and motto of John Wheathampstead, who for 1420-40 and 1451-1464/5 was abbot of St Albans, the corporate rector of the church.[34] The other heraldry on Luton's sedilia represents William of Wykeham, the kingdom of Mercia (St Edmundsbury Abbey), the arms of the abbey of St Albans itself, Phillipa of Hainault and the fictive arms of Edward the Confessor.[35] Mostly, sedilia shields have entirely lost their blazon, such as the pair of identical sets at Breadsall (fig. 195) and Horsley (fig. 196) (both Derbyshire).[36] Also used on sedilia is the common fifteenth-century motif of the shield-carrying angel, for instance at South Creake (Norfolk), Burnham Thorpe (Norfolk) and Chipping Campden (Gloucestershire).[37] Therefore, shields on sedilia commemorate practically every group one could expect: local families, advowson holders, corporate rectors and incumbent priests. Consequently it is not especially useful for proposing a single mechanism of patronage. Like much of the vocabulary of sedilia, it is more plausible that the motif is used primarily in a decorative context. The blazon applied may have been only a post-factum consideration, taken from heraldry that was current in the

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[30] Whitaker 1812, 422–423. Nathaniel Johnston (b.1627) is credited by Whitaker for the description. Johnston's *Antiquities of the County of York* was never printed, and presumably was read by Whitaker in manuscript, so the location of the shields may be his misinterpretation.
[31] Sheahan 1862, 529–530.
[32] Maddison 1990, 16.
[33] *A cross engrailed,* the Hengham arms; Farrer 1887, Vol. 2, 61. The other shield, *fesse between three cinquefoils* is unidentified by Farrer, but paralleled with an example on the battlements of Hengham church.
[34] Cobbe 1899, 293–299.
[35] Cobbe 1899, 295–299. This connection of Edward III's queen with Luton was often thought to be related to her patronage of the unique mid-fourteenth-century font ciborium, and the baptism of her son by the Abbot of Saint Albans, but this has been challenged by Timmermann 2007, who does not mention the sedilia heraldry, but instead 'an ecutcheon on the interior of [the] west tower' as inspiring the connection. This detail is not mentioned by Cobbe 1899.
[36] Further examples: Hockwold (Norfolk), Silk Willoughby (Lincolnshire) and Felbrigg (Norfolk).
[37] Hardwick 1961, 7, 14–15.

local imagination, and that its main value for the art historian is for dating rather than attributing agency.

At Claypole, not far from Heckington, are the earliest sedilia to survive with blazoned shields (fig. 217). The phases of building campaigns on Claypole church is notably similar to Heckington. At Claypole the earliest surviving fabric is the base of the tower, its arcade responds with loose, late stiff-leaf and part of the south transept, the latter apparently originally a freestanding Lady Chapel, dated *c.*1275 by Pevsner.[38] This south transept has an earlier set of triple sedilia, something which is also found in the south transept of Heckington, which Sekules proposed were used for High Mass while the chancel was under construction.[39] The rebuilding of the nave, with its tight, expertly-carved naturalistic foliage capitals, on a par with Southwell chapter house, is evidently of a few decades later towards *c.*1300. The chancel (fig. 218) was apparently the last major part of the building to be rebuilt (apart from the fifteenth-century clerestory), around 30 or 40 years later than its counterpart at Heckington. Just as at Heckington, a glass inscription was recorded that clearly commemorated the rector as its prime patron: Nicholas de Howell (d. 1378), and also recorded were the arms of the Simeon, Hebden and Cressey families in the south chancel windows, and those of St Lowe in the clerestory.[40] It is the former three families' arms that survive today at Claypole: carved twice each into the spandrels of the chancel sedilia, with the two Hebden shields next to each other in the centre. Hebden appointed de Howell as rector after 1340, and it will be shown in Chapter Six that the chancel's style of architecture suggests a date into the Decorated-Perpendicular transition in the third quarter of the fourteenth century.

The magnificence of the sedilia at Claypole, rather than attributable solely to the laypeople commemorated on the shields, can be placed in context with other churches with multiple sedilia and phases of building. Harpley (Norfolk) also has this arrangement of earlier, simpler three-seat sedilia in the nave (fig. 219) (here the south aisle rather than a transept) and a formerly very ornate set in the chancel (fig. 220). The wide south aisle has a five-light east window with Y-tracery in the southern fenestration, and its sedilia have pointed trefoils in the spandrels, suggesting a date *c.*1300. The chancel, which before the addition of the fifteenth-

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[38] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 221.
[39] Sekules 1990, 38–39.
[40] '*Orate pro a[nim]iabus Nichi de Howell et … qui hanc fenestram fieri fecerunt*'; Hebgin-Barnes 1996, 67.

century clerestory, would have outstripped the nave in height, is generally attributed to advowson-holder, Lord of the Manor and self-appointed parish priest John de Gurney (incumbent from 1294 to his death in 1332). His brass matrix survives in the centre of the chancel in-situ (for his body, still clothed in vestments and clutching a chalice, was found under it around 1800).[41] The Gurney family have a history of generous church benefaction.[42] This, along with John's unusual triple status as patron, lord and rector, makes the attribution of the initiation of the construction of this architecturally-significant chancel to him almost certain. The wide possible dating of the chancel can be refined through the narrative of Norfolk Decorated under the Ramseys: the north door to the sacristy has the same design as the arch to the west door at Cley-next-Sea of the 1320s.[43] The tiny east window suggests a date before the emerging tendencies for large windows that almost entirely fill the terminal wall such as Snettisham in the 1330s.[44] The chancel sedilia are sadly mutilated, mostly just the unadorned niches, with the original relief sculpture only surviving around the piscina and edge of the eastern seat (fig. 220). The exceptional element here, rather than a tall canopy, is the lavish diapering: a comparably rare element in medieval architecture, but which may have been chosen to associate the sedilia with an all-over cloaking in precious fabric.[45]

Patrington is another church of the same period that was gradually rebuilt in separate campaigns, forming a remarkably and deceptively cohesive whole (fig. 221). Unlike the other churches, it is entirely undocumented and a chronology can only be applied from stylistic analysis, but it is clear that the campaign concluded with the chancel in the 1330s, which has rather ornate, if crudely carved sedilia (fig. 222) with a sacrament shrine opposite.[46] Here there are no sedilia in the south transept, but there is instead a remarkable chapel with a polygonal apse and a stone reredos that suggests knowledge of 1320s Lincolnshire Decorated.[47]

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[41] Jones 1879, 20. The inscription round the brass is still clearly legible as '*Hic jacet corpus Jon'is de Gurnay quondam rectoris patronique huius ecclesie cuius anime propricietur Deus. Amen*'.

[42] Pettigrew 1871, 196.

[43] *BoE Norfolk 2* 1999, 52-54, for Cley attribution; Whittingham 1980; Harvey 1984, 240.

[44] Fawcett 2008, 141. The current tracery is Victorian and replaces a Perpendicular window. It seems likely that its size however is authentic due to the Victorian taste for large east windows and also the fact that it was deemed necessary to replace in the fifteenth century; Pettigrew 1871, pl. 23.

[45] Gerald 2011.

[46] Maddison 1989. Coldstream noted that the chancel has tracery elements in common with Hawton, and that the similar stone furnishings are a direct emulation; Coldstream 1980, 107–108.

[47] Such as the buttress niches at Heckington.

We can see that Heckington, Claypole, Harpley and Patrington were built in a very similar way: all to an ambitious cruciform plan over a number of generations by different patrons, culminating in the chancel. It makes sense in this regard, that among these four case studies, the sedilia at Patrington, which have no internal competition, are the most modest. This short excursus into the architectural context of sedilia demonstrates that this, rather than heraldry, is the best way to understand the reasons for the appearance of the most exceptional sets: as part of emulation, competition and hierarchy of forms between and even within churches.

ASSOCIATION OF SITTERS WITH IMAGERY: THE ICONOGRAPHY OF HIERARCHY

Now to return fully to the sculpture of our two key examples. In their inclusion of images of holy figures in the spandrels between the gables, Sekules realised that Heckington and Hawton were extremely unusual, and hypothesised, although possibly conceived without precedent, that they were most probably aspiring towards the kind of furnishings found in great churches.[48] Her assumptions turn out to be very prudent in the light of the corpus survey. No parish church sedilia display clear evidence of such imagery being removed from above the seats in the form of empty niches, vacant corbels or vandalised spandrels. This discussion will attempt to put the figurative decoration of Heckington and Hawton into the context of the decoration on some similarly elite sets, and explore the parallels made with those occupying the seats and representations of other bodies behind and above them.

While the sedilia at Heckington and Hawton are almost identical in design, their choices of iconographic subjects differ, suggesting that when the Hawton/Southwell workshop copied Heckington, the patron placed different demands on the sculpture. At Heckington, the six figures between the gables form a triptych-like composition: the Virgin and Christ flanked by kneeling acolytes censing forming the centre, and two female saints as the flanking wings. Christ formerly had his hand raised in blessing with a book on His lap and has a bird at His feet (fig. 223). The angels on the string-course at the top edge of the sedilia place crowns on the heads of the saints and Christ, but the two above the acolytes hold

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[48] Sekules 1990, 118.

spoons and incense boats, filling the censers.[49] The composition in the spandrels of two kneeling figures beside a bisected Virgin and Christ group between gables is broadly similar to the St Urbain, Troyes piscina (fig. 147) discussed in Chapter Four, further demonstrating how this Papal liturgical furnishing may have exercised an influence in the English Royal court.[50] The two outer figures are a very common pairing in English Gothic art, Saints Margaret over her dragon (fig. 224) and Catherine with her wheel trampling a philosopher (fig. 225).[51]

At Hawton, the figures are turned in a more energetic contrapposto in character with the later style of the sculpture. All the figures in the six spaces between the gables and pinnacles are saints, held aloft by characterful atlas figures. Like Catherine and Margaret at Heckington, the four outermost saints are female, and all hold a book. First from the left is a female saint clutching a staff, the top of which is broken off, very likely St Helena with the True Cross. Next is a female saint holding no specific attribute beyond her book, hand on her chest (fig. 226), but in comparison to Heckington, could be St Catherine in her role as the learned lady who argued against the philosophers. Above the western seat is a second pair of female saints, the Magdalene with her ointment pot and St Margaret with her dragon in the place of the atlas figure. Replacing the Virgin and Christ is a pair of Popes, both receiving Papal tiaras from the angels of the string-course instead of the crowns of the other figures, clearly identifiable as St Peter with his key (fig. 227) and St Clement with his anchor. At Hawton, the foliated finials that sit over the seat arches at Heckington are replaced with additional figures on a smaller scale than those within the spandrels. They consist of two mitred bishops holding staffs, one of which has the hooked head of a crosier preserved (fig. 228), and in the central gable the crowned figure of the Anglo-Saxon king St Edmund the Martyr with his arrow (fig. 229). Their lower rank is not just shown by their position, but also their smaller size (they could easily have been larger if the finial were reduced) and the fact that they are not receiving heavenly crowns. The bishops are also clearly outranked by the saintly popes Peter and Clement who stand above them, and King Edmund is a comparatively recent saint compared with the female saints of early Christianity

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[49] Sekules 1990, 118–119.
[50] Pevsner 1953, 97; Binski 2011, 266.
[51] Park 1987a, 42. It is interesting to note Park's explanation of the Dominican context for Catherine and Margaret in light of the hypothesis Sekules presents for Dominican influence upon the exterior statuary of Heckington.

above. Edmund was a generally popular saint at this time, particularly in East Anglia, for instance appearing also on the Thornham Parva retable.[52] It is certainly possible he could have been included as a clearly identifiable synecdoche for the English monarchy, as he does as a predecessor of Edward the Confessor and Richard II on the Wilton Diptych.[53] In this sense of symbols for secular and ecclesiastical institutions, these three figures mediate between the top tier and the real clergy below.

If we return to the sedilia at Heckington, we can see that scene of Christ blessing the Virgin is in the place of the two popes at Hawton. Therefore the theme of hierarchy may be invoked at Heckington by the trope of the Virgin as *Ecclesia.* The scene at Heckington is unusual as, although it is usually called a Coronation of the Virgin, since both Christ and the Virgin are being crowned, this is not an accurate description.[54] The motif of an angel delivering Mary's crown while Christ offers His blessing is a common French idea, paralleled in England on the Beverley reredos of the 1330s and the Hugh de Hastings (d.1347) brass at Elsing.[55] However, that Christ also seems to be actively receiving a crown from an angel appears to be unique. The Coronation of the Virgin is a subject with a complex genesis, with the earliest examples appearing in England, subsequently appearing widely on French Cathedral facades, and also in a monumental Italian context, such as the apse of Santa Maria Trastevere, Rome.[56] In part the iconography of the Coronation lies in the depiction of *Ecclesia* as the crowned bride of Christ.[57] In the Romanesque period the concept of Mary and *Ecclesia* was said to be interchangeable.[58] With this complex array of meanings in mind, we should consider this apparently codified piece of iconography as having multivalent connotations in its many contexts, an approach taken by Beth Williamson for the Madonna of Humility.[59] The way this pairing was conceived and its intrinsic meaning must have varied between French

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[52] Park 1987a, 41–42.

[53] Gordon 1993, 53–54. Also, Joan Evans' view that the kings on the Wilton Diptych physiognomically resemble Edward III and the Black Prince; Evans 1948, 3; Evans 1949, 103.

[54] Four types of Coronation are usefully categorised in Cave 1948, 43–45.

[55] Binski 1985, 2–3.

[56] Verdier 1980; Heslop 2005, with further bibliography.

[57] Verdier 1980, 35–40, 86.

[58] Heslop 2005, 791–792, 797.

[59] Williamson 2010.

portal, Italian altarpiece and English tomb.[60] That this was perhaps the first and only time that the Virgin was used to represent *Ecclesia* directly above a set of sedilia may be the reason why the imagery does not quite fit our iconographic classifications. The unusual height of the canopies of the Heckington sedilia may be an attempt to broadcast this message of Heavenly authority conferred upon the officiating clergy to an audience at the threshold of the chancel, rather than the sculpture being intended for the attention of those using the seats.

Parallels for this association of figures representing the wider Church with its physical representatives inside the sedilia: perhaps the sources for the general idea of Heckington and Hawton, will now be investigated. The direct antecedents seem to be confined to elaborate sets in great churches that Potesgrave, through his Court connections, may well have known, but some also seem to be in similarly well-connected parish churches with elite patronage.

THE EXETER SEDILIA AND STATUES ABOVE SEATS

In investigating whether the sedilia at Heckington and Hawton were imitating some sedilia decoration in a great church, we should examine the most accomplished great church sedilia, those at Exeter (fig. 168), which, as was demonstrated in Chapter Four, date from the second decade of the fourteenth century when a giant altar screen was added to the recently-built presbytery. The tall canopies were identified to contain 'plugs' for figures at the base of the triangular niches in 1874, which seem to have been destroyed in the Civil War.[61] The identity of these lost figures however seems not to have simply carried on the programme of the altar screen with a generic display of saints.[62] Instead there is a notable similarity to the middle tier at Hawton: a Saxon king and a bishop. The identity of the three twentieth-century statues which occupy the three canopies today comes from a tradition first recorded in 1635 which says that the sedilia were formerly the seats of Bishop Leofric, Edward the

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[60] I have discussed the significance of the Coronation on English tombs, for instance, the Harington Tomb in Cartmel Priory, the Grandisson Tomb in Hereford Cathedral and the brass of Hugh de Hastings in Elsing as relating to judgement and salvation; Cameron 2011, 28–29, 38. For an interpretation of it as the choice of the subject for the high altar of San Pier Maggiore, Florence in 1370; Norman 1995a, 207–211.

[61] Cotton and Woollcombe 1877, pt. ii, 8–9; Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 58.

[62] Although well-documented, we know very little of the imagery of the screen, all that can be gleaned from the fabric rolls is that there were figures made of St Peter, Paul and the Virgin, and probably an Annunciation scene; Sekules 1991b, 115.

Confessor, and his queen, Egytha.[63] This ultimately refers to the account that Leofric was installed at his new cathedral, moved from Crediton, in a ceremony attended by the king and queen in 1050.[64] The sedilia are certainly mentioned three times in the Dean and Chapter record books between 1638-9, which record an 'ancient monument contiguous to the altar, set up in the memory of King Edward the Confessor, of Egytha his Queen, and Leofric first bishop of Exeter' that is to be repaired and decorated.[65] For this memory to survive, it seems likely that, like the rest of the sedilia, these statues were spared the Reformation iconoclasm that must have been wrought on the associated reredos.[66] Although there is no direct evidence for their loss in the Civil War, an account by Bruno Ryves in 1646 stated that the puritans 'pluck down and deface the statue of an ancient queen, the wife of Edward the Confessor, mistaking it for the statue of the blessed Virgin Mary', which at least suggests that the Leofric enthronement iconography was present somewhere in the cathedral.[67] There are also some heavily-restored heads directly behind the seats of the sedilia, but the identity of these is not clear enough to include them in an analysis of the programme.[68]

An important feature of the Exeter sedilia that has not been noticed is the uncommon emphasis that they have on lions. In addition to the drapery painting behind the seats (fig. 62) in which lions hold the edges of the fabric in their mouths (fig. 230), they appear as sculpted bases to the brass columns (fig. 231), and also consistently as stops to the initial arches of the canopies, looking down on a viewer before the seats (fig. 232). Lions are not typical iconography for sedilia. Some examples appear on the beheaded armrests of the fourteenth-century drop-sill sedilia in Earl Stonham (fig. 37) and Gazeley (both Suffolk). A pair of happy and sad lions appears among the characterful spandrel faces of Cossington (Leicestershire). Yet

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[63] Chope 1918, 89; Lyttleton 1754 in Society of Antiquaries 1797, 8–9; Gough 1786, 60; Denne 1789a, 266–267; Freeman 1888, 52–59. The latter associates the sedilia with the *cathedra episcopi* (suggested to be a lost wooden throne in Chapter One) in the fabric rolls to strengthen the association with Leofric. His theory is dismissed as 'fanciful' in Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 54.

[64] Thurmer 1991, 13; Hope, Lloyd, and Erskine 1988, 5–6.

[65] Cotton and Woollcombe 1877, vol. ii, 8.

[66] We do not know exactly how much was done to the altar screen at the Reformation, but the idolatrous images were almost certainly removed; Morris 1943, 123–124.

[67] Oliver 1821, 123.

[68] They are commonly interpreted as a bishop, king and queen, e.g. Tristram 1955, 169, yet neither of the supposed monarchs wears a crown, and before the Scott restoration they were said to be in a 'defaced condition'; Cotton and Woollcombe 1877, 9; Bishop and Prideaux 1922, 58. Carter describes them as a bishop and two priests; Society of Antiquaries 1797, 22, but Basire's engraving would not be contrary to their current appearance; Society of Antiquaries 1797, Fig. X.

the overwhelming emphasis on the animal cannot be paralleled in any other sedilia. Lions are, of course, common iconography on thrones, being part of the Biblical imagery of the throne of Solomon.[69] Yet as was suggested in Chapter Two, sedilia seem to generally eschew throne-like iconography and features of wooden furniture for the purely architectural appearance of sheltering arcades and tabernacles. Therefore the lions are plausibly a punning reference to Bishop Leofric, much as the plethora of owls in Bishop Oldham's (d.1519) chapel in the same cathedral, which represent the first half of his surname in a similar way.[70]

The tradition that the Exeter sedilia commemorated Bishop Leofric is strengthened by the parallel that it would form with the only previous sedilia in an aisled choir, those at Westminster Abbey. These, as it has been argued in Chapter Four, were erected over a tomb reappropriated by the Saxon King Sebert, and as will be shown, also display imagery relevant to this.[71] The resting place of Leofric's body, transferred from the Saxon to the Norman Cathedral in 1133, is not known.[72] The north wall of the south choir aisle under the sedilia is blank, except for a modern door to the sanctuary and late-eighteenth-century and later wall-monuments, so it is not impossible that Leofric's monument was somehow incorporated into the sedilia like Sebert at Westminster and Hugh the younger Despenser at Tewkesbury.

The sedilia at Exeter would then have used their enclosing micro-architectural forms to bring the priest, deacon and subdeacon into communion with the history of the Cathedral, and its refounding by a saintly king, endorsing the liturgy at the high altar with both royal and heavenly approval. However, widespread evidence of this tactic is not manifest. As has been said, there is no evidence in parish churches that statues were ever installed above the sedilia. The early fourteenth-century lady chapel at St Albans Abbey (fig. 158) has six undulating gabled niches over the sedilia, those directly above the seats adorned with a pinnacle breaking through the window sill, which suggests that these three niches contained some sort of imagery that was relevant to the furniture below. The lineage of ancient bishops above the seats of Gloucester Cathedral, and also much of the canopy-work surrounding them, are the product of the Scott and Redfern restoration, although the fact that the area was vandalised so badly in the first place does indicate the presence

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[69] 1 Kings 10:19; Wormald 1942.
[70] Cherry 1991, 162.
[71] Freeman 1888, 57; Binski 1995, 126.
[72] Hellins 1887; Hope, Lloyd, and Erskine 1988, 99–100.

of statues offensive to puritan taste there. We cannot take for granted that the most important surviving successor of Exeter's altar-screen and sedilia, the Neville Screen at Durham Cathedral, continued its display of saints from the preserved (but now denuded) reredos on to the sedilia canopies (fig. 171).[73] The original existence of statues above the Exeter sedilia is proven not just by the plugs, but also by the way that the canopies open out forward into ogee-headed niches allowing a clear view of their interior. The freestanding sedilia of the 1420s in Maidstone collegiate church may have tall canopies, but they are of a more cage-like appearance, which suggest that they and Durham probably did not contain statues (fig. 177). Such telescoping canopies, also found at Chester (fig. 175), are very like those found in stained glass above a single saint and therefore could have had the same purpose of framing a sacred body, and may always have been empty.[74] Certainly, the effect of the clergy under canopies like those of the reredos would present a powerful ensemble of the solidarity of the Earthly and Heavenly Church.

The heavily-damaged early fifteenth-century set of vaulted sedilia at Crediton (Devon) (fig. 178) shows a single remnant of a figurative programme.[75] All that survives is a niche containing a blessing bishop on the westernmost jamb. Owing to the extremely ruinous condition of the sedilia, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of the scheme he was a part of. The bishop has been defaced, but does not appear to be carrying any attributes of sainthood. His unique position on a set of sedilia may be due to the unusual attribute of the carved thin shafts on the backs of the seats that would have prevented any imagery being painted there. Such painting of figures behind the seats will now be investigated as another medium for this relationship between artistic representation and the bodies inside sedilia.

THE WESTMINSTER SEDILIA AND FIGURES BEHIND SEATS

The apparently precarious position of the unique oak sedilia at Westminster Abbey as 'skied' above a tomb niche south of the altar (fig. 159) has already been discussed in Chapter Four. It was argued that originally the tomb was for a royal princess, but

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[73] The obvious candidates for a king and bishop in the sedilia, St Cuthbert and King Oswald, were recorded by the *Rites of Durham* as present in the centre of the reredos, flanking the Virgin; Fowler 1903, 7. Otherwise the *Rites* does not expand on the programme of the Neville Screen or mention the sedilia.
[74] Bugslag 1991; Bugslag 1993; Bork 2003, 34–35.
[75] For precise dating see Chapter Four.

was reappropriated for the Saxon King Sebert in 1307, and the sedilia intended partly to accentuate its new identity. The figure paintings on the sedilia, particularly those facing the sanctuary, are of extremely high quality, and their style further supports the date in the first decade of the fourteenth century for the furniture.[76] These figures have been much remarked upon, but have not been put into a wider context of sedilia decoration, and it may be the case that they were influential on the decoration of other great-church sedilia such as Exeter. The side facing the ambulatory depicts four figures: the Baptist (entirely effaced) giving a ring to Edward the Confessor, and the Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary (both partly effaced, and only uncovered in 1922).[77] There is no reason to assume that this imagery was intended to be associated directly with the sedilia themselves, for like the paintings added to the back of the choir stalls at Carlisle and Gloucester Cathedrals, from the choir aisles their relationship to the seats on the other side is not apparent.[78] On the altar side behind the four seats there are over life-size paintings of two kings and two ecclesiastics, the latter pair only identifiable by the scant remains of their feet and vestments. The identification of these figures has garnered a plethora of interpretations, usually favouring founder imagery.[79] The easternmost king is clearly the elder, with a beard, while the second has youthful stubble and stands over a background of diapered lions *passant*. We need not necessarily assume that one of the kings represents Sebert, firstly because the tomb itself may have represented him, but also because we know there was an additional painted panel of Sebert and St Peter in the Abbey, described by Camden in 1606 but since lost.[80] In a comparable way to the over-restored heads behind the Exeter seats, there are three small pendant heads between each gable of the canopy, in this case with extremely well-preserved polychromy. In the same alternating way as the paintings, they depict two kings and a bishop. These have not attracted the same interest in attempting to attribute firm identities as have

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[76] Comparisons have been made between the work in the De Lisle Psalter, c.1310; Sandler 1987; and the chapel of St Faith c.1310; Park 1987b. The King's Painter in 1307 was Master Thomas, who was then employed with a team of twelve men on the Painted Chamber in Westminster Palace. It is likely that they were used by the monks of Westminster to decorate the sedilia; Lethaby and Tristram 1912, 69–70; Wrapson 2006, 118.

[77] Wrapson 2006, 132; Lethaby 1925, 297, n.5; note in *JBAA* 28, 1922, 127-178.

[78] Park and Cather 2004, 220; Wrapson 2006, 114. Technical analysis has proven that different artists were at work on the front and back; Wrapson 2006, 122–125

[79] These interpretations have been extensively considered by Binski 1995, 125–126 and subsequently by Wrapson 2006, 116.

[80] This is an important detail, as it subsequently was conflated with the description of the sedilia, thus leading to a number of subsequent authors assuming the fourth figure must be Peter; Wrapson 2006, 116.

the monumental figures behind, and remind us that an entirely generic appearance may have been intended for all the figures.

As it has been shown that the sedilia were erected very shortly before Edward II's coronation, the imagery may have been conceived with this ceremony in mind. Wrapson interpreted the king on the right as Edward I or Henry III, his contemporary hairstyle and lion *passant* background signifying that he is a post-Conquest, Plantagenet king.[81] Wrapson suggests that his pointing gesture to the east associates Edward with his namesake and the Confessor's shrine, but the gesture can be read more simply as to convey an association with the king painted to his right, who raises his left hand in reciprocation of the gesture. The simplest identification, would be that a Plantagenet king, even Edward I himself, is pointing back to an ancient predecessor, be it Sebert or Edward the Confessor, who in turn gives his blessing to the celebrant who has just anointed the new King of England, thus giving a circular conception of power between institutions, both ultimately under Heavenly authority.[82] This would also mean that the Abbey would have had a representation of Edward I, whose tomb chest by the shrine had no effigy. Like Exeter, the figures seem to be conditioned by a specific requirement of commemoration rather than a general trend for associating occupants of sedilia with paintings of uncanonised individuals. It is possible to suggest that Westminster was an influential prototype which may have directly influenced Exeter: as Bishop Elect of Exeter from 13 March 1307, Stapeldon would have likely have been present at the coronation of 25 February 1308, and he had strong court connections beforehand.[83] Of the very occasional remnants of figurative programmes remaining on sedilia across England, it is significant how many of them have a strong resemblance to the decoration at Westminster, with paintings of full-length clerics behind the seats. The most notable surviving examples can be identified as at the Cathedral of Rochester, the *capella extra portas* at Easby Abbey, and the parish church of Dittisham (Devon).

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[81] Wrapson 2005, 37–38.
[82] The anointing and crowning was invariably performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury; Legg 1901, lxviii. Who actually performed the subsequent Mass is not as clear, but the late-fourteenth-century ms. of the *Liber Regalis* states 'the archbishop or bishop who is to celebrate Mass' in its Order. Legg 1901, 86, 116. At Edward II's coronation the Mass was performed by his Dominican confessor, but this may have been unusual due to Archbishop Winchelsey's non-attendance; Haines 2003, 55.
[83] Hingeston-Randoph 1892, xviii.

Like many great church sedilia, because of the pre-ecclesiological movement unfamiliarity with liturgical furnishings, the late-fourteenth-century mural sedilia in the late-twelfth-century unaisled presbytery of Rochester Cathedral (fig. 181) were also first identified in print as a funerary monument.[84] Today all that survives of the original polychromy are three coats of arms in the tall ogee gables.[85] These arms represent the Cathedral and See of Rochester, the Priory of Christchurch Canterbury and Bishop Thomas Brinton (1373-89), but as was suggested earlier in this chapter with other heraldry, it is difficult to interpret their precise relationship with the furniture other than their decorative effect.[86] An interesting programme of painting inside the sedilia, unfortunately not drawn before its destruction, places the Rochester sedilia into this context of figural decoration behind the seats. It was recorded that there were 'three bishops with their mitres and croziers, now almost defaced', with the interior terminal walls depicting angels carrying books bearing a Biblical inscription: '*O Altitudo divitiarum Sapientiae et Scientiae Dei! quam incomprehensibilia sunt Judicia eius, et invenstigabiles eius viae!*'.[87] The only date provided for this painting is the *terminus post quem* of the late-fourteenth-century sedilia, and it is not impossible that it was Laudian.[88] It is difficult to reconcile these figures with the heraldry. If the shields were intended as a label for the bishop painted underneath, then we would have a generic bishop of Rochester *and* a specific bishop in the form of Brinton, but more worryingly, it seems odd that the arms of the *See* of Canterbury were not used to identify one figure as the Primate. This demonstrates that the heraldry should not be directly associated with the seats, but instead is merely a representation of powerful local institutions. It also casts doubt on whether Brinton was in fact a direct patron of the sedilia, although they must have been installed at the time of, or just after his episcopate.[89]

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[84] As that of Bishop John de Sheppey, whose polychromed effigy was discovered in 1827; Weever 1767, 108; Thorpe 1788, 202.

[85] This has surely been repainted but the shields were recorded in Thorpe 1769, 701.

[86] Messenger 1927, 113, 114 is the most accurate. McAleer 1999, 276, n.29 does not reconcile the conflicting interpretations of Hope 1900, 117–118 and Palmer 1897, 95.

[87] 'O the depths of riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How incomprehensible his judgements, how unsearchable his ways!'; Romans 11:33. Thorpe 1769, 701; Thorpe 1788, 203. John Thorpe *fils* adds the angels to the inscription recorded by his father.

[88] The problem of distinguishing between late medieval and post-Reformation painting, particularly in entirely lost examples, will be discussed further in the following chapter.

[89] There was originally a brass matrix in front of the sedilia which was cleared away in 1743. This was identified as Bishop John de Bottlesham (1400-1404) by a process of elimination in Sedgwick 1903, 295, and is not contradicted by Sadler 1980, Pt. II, 6–27 or Saul 2001. Brinton asked in his will

To get an idea of what the destroyed Rochester bishops may have looked like, we can go to the other end of the country: to the parish church of Easby in North Yorkshire, a former *cappella extra portas* of the Premonstratensian Abbey. Here the simple pointed-trefoil-headed sedilia contains paintings of three blessing bishops as part of a larger chancel scheme of the Creation and Fall of man paralleled by the redemption by Christ, with the labours of the months in the window splays. Possibly because of the extent to which the scheme was repainted under Scott, the iconographical context of the scheme and its dating have been somewhat neglected. The original paintings are more likely to date from the early fourteenth century than the usual thirteenth-century date given.[90] Due to their sheltered position granting them greater protection, the sedilia paintings have escaped the heavy-handed repainting of the upper walls (fig. 233). They have been variously called archbishops or bishops.[91] The former identification is due to the Y-shaped vestment visible over the first two bishops' chests being interpreted as a pallium, but this could just be the orphrey of their chasubles.[92] The middle bishop has enough surviving of his lower portion to show that he is sitting on a flat-topped seat, but their areas of preservation are uneven, which makes it difficult to say how much they were meant to be distinguished from one another. All three hold staffs, but only the easternmost's behind the celebrant's seat has the curled head of a crozier preserved, and as at the destroyed sedilia at Chatham (fig. 142), the area behind him is elaborated by swirling vine-ornament. The final bishop is also beardless, which further accentuates the rank of the real clergy that sat in front of them by making him more youthful in appearance. It does seem most likely that no specific identity was intended, and that all three were painted so that their attitude of blessing, with two fingers outstretched, could clearly be seen over the heads of the occupants of the sedilia.

We can find more corroboration that this scheme of three uncanonised ecclesiastics behind the seats was widespread in more fragmentary examples. In Dittisham (Devon), the single remaining seat of the clearly truncated early-

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to be buried in the Lady Chapel of the Cathedral, and his brass matrix has been identified in the north choir aisle, so the sedilia did not operate as his monument.

[90] Tristram 1950, 539; *VCH Yorkshire North Riding* Vol. 1, 1914, 63 dates 1280-1300. *BoE Yorkshire: The North Riding* 1966, 147 dates mid-thirteenth-century. David Park has made unpublished comments towards a firmly fourteenth-century date, citing comparisons to the continuous presentation of subjects in the chancel scheme at Chalgrove (Oxfordshire).

[91] Archbishops: Rowe 1876, 68; Tristram 1950, 539; *BoE Yorkshire: The North Riding* 1966, 147. Bishops: *VCH Yorkshire North Riding Vol. 1*, 1914, 63.

[92] For similar ambiguity in costume, see the seal of Archbishop Gray of York; Sillence 2006, 15.

fourteenth-century sedilia has the very worn upper section of a contemporary painting of a prominently tonsured cleric in Eucharistic vestments (figs. 234). He is tonsured, and holds his hands in front of his chest, apparently with thumbs together, palms facing outwards. This gesture may seem curious until it is seen in conjunction with an individual sitting inside, appearing as granting authority upon them.[93] The ornaments and furnishings of Dittisham church were found to be deficient in a visitation in 1328, attributed to the neglect of the late rector, Richard de Inkpenne.[94] The church was rededicated by Bishop Grandisson and described as '*de novo constructam*' in 1333.[95] This almost certainly closely dates this painting and the chancel, with its small reticulated ogee window, to around 1330.[96] The new rector, Richard de Gomersale, was a friend whom Bishop Grandisson had brought from Wardone (Bedfordshire). He was active in the administration of the diocese and is recorded in the bishop's registers at hearings and proceedings at many abbeys.[97] This demonstrates that, although apparently an ordinary parish church, Dittisham's artistic patronage makes it a case apart.

Another cleric bestowing a blessing seems to have been present in the sedilia at Castle Hedingham (Essex) (fig. 85) which have been considered in Chapter Three. It was recorded in the 1850s that:

> 'In one of the narrow niches of the south side are the faded traces of a mural painting, a few years ago it was more perfect and presented the effigies of a bishop, or abbot, holding a pastoral staff in the left hand, with the right raised in the attitude of benediction; the low mitre, and the style of the costume, were of a date about coeval with the fabric itself.'[98]

As noted, the sedilia arches now in the chancel consist of Neo-Romanesque work of the 1870s, but may be placed inside the arches of the late twelfth-century originals which this writer must have seen. The fragment of a painted head preserved on a round-arched stone under the tower, dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth

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[93] Garnier 1988, 196–197. It is unlikely that the gesture is meant to represent ordination, which is usually shown with one hand extended over the head; Nichols 1994, 260–75.
[94] Hingeston-Randolph 1894, 379.
[95] Hingeston-Randolph 1894, 714.
[96] Otherwise the church has been much refenestrated in the fifteenth century, a modernisation programme that may have truncated the sedilia; *BoE Devon* 1989, 335. The *BoE* description of sedilia is in brackets meaning it has not been seen by the compiler, and it did not appear in *BoE South Devon* 1952, 120.
[97] Dalton 1917, 92.
[98] Cutts 1852, 133–134. Still noted as 'dimly visible' in Anon 1864, 734.

century is possibly a tiny survival of this scheme (fig. 235), although the figure's identity is difficult to confirm from the fragment alone.[99] Figures behind the seats were also recorded in the sedilia at Hornchurch (Essex) and Puckington (Somerset), but neither precise identification nor records of these were made before the paintings were entirely effaced.[100] It should be noted that there are very few sedilia with curved or patterned backs like Crediton, especially before the fifteenth century, and most are very much suitable for painting, so a great many more of these figure paintings inside sedilia could have existed.[101] Two single-niche sedilia on the island of Gotland in the Baltic (now Sweden), Barlingbo and Garde (fig. 236) preserve an early-fourteenth-century image of Christ painted on the back wall, who, as the celebrant of the very first Eucharist, is the ultimate figure in the priestly hierarchy.[102] These paintings however find little parallel in English sedilia.[103] In the wooden Beverley Minster sedilia of the 1340s, amongst simple bosses of foliage, a layman's head and a stylised grinning leopard, the central easternmost boss shows the face of Christ, the cruciform halo leaving no uncertainty as to His identity (fig. 237). A similar sculpture can be found in the western seat of the *c.*1465 sedilia at Stratford-upon-Avon (fig. 238, sedilia fig. 313).[104] These bosses signify very rare examples of an audience distinct from the non-specific on-lookers, instead the 'captive audience' of the cleric within, and an image for his personal contemplation and a reminder of his role in the Eucharist.

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[99] *RCHM Essex Vol. 1* 1916, 51; Tristram 1955, 149; *BoE Essex* 2007, 196.

[100] Hornchurch: 'At the back of each niche a figure had been painted with an inscribed scroll above the head. From the absence of the nimbus they were probably not sainted personages, neither did [The Reverend] think they represented ecclesiastics, though what little remained of them was scarcely discernible'; 'Annual meeting at Chelmsford' *Trans. Essex. Archaeo. Soc.* 1873 (5), 245-6. Puckington: It was recorded that a 'coarse daubing' of a figure with the titulus '*unum Eliae*' was behind one of the seats in the late eighteenth century, leading to the assumption that the other two seats featured Christ and Moses to make the '*tria tabernacula*' of the Transfiguration; *Gent. Mag.* 1787 (57), 755; Clarke 1794, 313; Blackburne 1847, 73. Hornchurch's sedilia have been excessively disrupted and the shafts inauthentically extended to deal with floor level changes, but the cinquefoil arches themselves are plausibly late-thirteenth-century as said in *BoE: London 5: East* 2005, 175, and red paint is preserved on the soffits of the niches. I have not obtained an image of Puckington, but Pevsner compared them to the sedilia in Shepton Beauchamp (Somerset) which are clearly fourteenth-century; *BoE Somerset: South and West* 1958, 279.

[101] Aside from sets with carved diaper, the only fourteenth-century sedilia with decorative carving on the rear wall are Gloucester Cathedral and Edington (Wiltshire), both important progenitors of the Perpendicular Style, and Shottesbrooke (fig. 183), made collegiate in 1337; *BoE Berkshire* 2010, 216. For fifteenth-century sedilia, panelling can be found at Adderbury (Oxfordshire), Friskney (Lincolnshire), Gloucester Lady Chapel, Oxborough (Norfolk), Oxford All Souls Chapel and Winchcombe (Gloucestershire).

[102] Kroesen 2004, 153.

[103] Except the Last Supper scene in Maids Moreton (Buckinghamshire), considered in Chapter Six.

[104] I cannot suggest why the head of Christ is present over the subdeacon's seat. It is clearly original carving, but it is not noted in the *BoE* and apparently was unnoticed by the church until recent years.

STAINED GLASS AND SEDILIA

There is a third medium that, after statuary and wall painting, could convey the iconography of parallels between sitter and depicted bodies: stained glass. This is most explicit in the sedilia at Dorchester Abbey, which Ayers has shown to be a later addition to the Decorated chancel built in the 1330s, as they cut through the interior string-course which appears to have been raised to allow for sedilia, but not ones of this magnitude (fig. 258).[105] The canopies feature more accomplished carving than the rest of the chancel, and are three-dimensional unlike the blind gables at Heckington and Hawton, finding comparison in carpentry in the Ely choir stall canopies of the 1340s.[106] In addition to their once painted backs, they have the unique feature of four glazed oculi behind each seat and the piscina, through to the exterior of the chancel. Today the piscina oculus contains a mixture of decorative medieval glass; and the easternmost seat has a Mass scene of a frontal priest holding a book with a kneeling deacon and subdeacon offering him their cruets of wine and water: an apparently unique medieval depiction of the offertory.[107] In the adjacent seats the oculi contain a figure often described as a Pope in a single-crown tiara holding a crossed staff and a bishop with a low mitre holding a crozier (fig. 239), both seated on a low throne and blessing, remarkably similar to the painted prelates at Easby. [108] It has been argued they are not original to the sedilia, yet in the light of the wider context of sedilia decoration, it would be too much of a coincidence for the iconography to be so apt.[109] The first nineteenth-century restoration by a Colonel Kennet in *c*.1805-6 reopened the oculi, and in doing so found some fragments of glass within the rebates, and it was recorded that some roundels were moved into them from the east window of the north aisle.[110] The glazing was in a different order during the Victorian period: the Mass scene in the piscina, and in the seats following; the pope, a scene of St Birinus now in the east window, and the bishop.[111] This

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[105] Ayers 1991, 77.
[106] Ayers 1991, 78–79.
[107] Newton 1979, 87.
[108] Ayers 1991, 82–84.
[109] The CVMA dates the Mass scene 'second quarter of the fourteenth century' and two the ecclesiastics as 'early-fourteenth-century', and says that all three are set on a composite ground of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century grisaille. The double crown was introduced by Boniface VIII (1294-1303), but as single crowns are seen placed on the heads of the popes at Hawton *c*.1330s, it cannot be a reliable *terminus ante quem*; Newton 1979, 87–88.
[110] Ayers 1991, 82–83.
[111] Parker and Addington 1860, 10–11.

configuration remained until into the twentieth century, but was changed in the releading of 1969, when the painted scalloped border around the Mass scene appears to have been lost.[112] We can suppose then that when the sedilia oculi were blocked up before the nineteenth century, their glass was then reset in the aisle window with each roundel's pointed trefoil form intact, which informed the restorer of their proper place within the sedilia.

Regular windows directly over sedilia – in the case of drop-sill sedilia, an integral part of them – may have also displayed stained glass figures that would have accentuated the concept of hierarchy and the institution of the Church with the clergy below. At Wells Cathedral Lady Chapel, the south-east window above the sedilia has been shown by Ayers to have a particular focus on ecclesiastical saints.[113] In the especially well-preserved band-window glazing at Merton College chapel, the windows above the sedilia (fig. 150) break with the scheme of having a lay supplicant figure flanking the central apostle. Instead, in the easternmost south window a blessing archbishop and St Nicholas flank St Paul, and in the next window above the western seats the apostle is flanked by the deacon saints Lawrence and Stephen.[114] Overall, as Ayers has shown, the glazing of Merton is intended to define the places of the sanctuary, altars and stalls rather than purely embellishing the architectural setting, like the vault paintings at Salisbury Cathedral.[115]

The difficulty of deciding whether parish churches also regularly made an explicit relation between sedilia and the windows above is exacerbated not just by the destruction of glass, but by its inevitable migrations around the church during restoration and resulting unreliable location. The Decorated chancel at Dinton (Wiltshire) has no stone sedilia, which as has been shown in Chapter Four, was typical of the area, but the entirely blank portion of wall under the sill of the south-east window next to an ogee'd double piscina must have been the location of some furniture for the officiating clergy (fig. 240). The surviving fourteenth-century tracery glazing shows portraits of clergymen of different ranks from bishop to priest, and presumably the lights of the windows could have held ecclesiastical saints, marking out the sanctuary as a clerical domain much as at Merton College. At

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[112] Ayers 1991, 82. See the photograph in Bond 1916, 199. The painted scalloped border can be seen prominently in an 1825 engraving reproduced in Ayers, and faintly in Newton's photographs published in the CVMA.
[113] Ayers 2004, 24.
[114] Ayers 2013, 48–49.
[115] Ayers 2007, 125–127; Reeve 2008, 79–103.

Standlake (Oxfordshire), the early-thirteenth-century lanceted chancel has simple double sedilia consisting only of two stepped sets divided by armrests, installed as part of an early-fourteenth-century window with impaled pointed trefoils (fig. 35). It was recorded in the seventeenth century that as well as a donor figure of the rector Richard Salter (1473-1509) in a south window of the chancel, there was a figure in another south window of a bishop in full pontificalia with a hart couchant at his feet.[116] There is another Decorated south window to the west of the chancel, and above the priest's door is a rectangular late Perpendicular window, now bricked up, probably inserted by Salter in a documented chancel refurbishment.[117] One might assume that Salter put himself in this new window and that the bishop was part of the original fourteenth-century glazing. If in the south east window, this episcopal figure would have increased the symbolic grandeur of the modest sedilia that is very much integral with the window behind it. However, it is very hard to find widespread evidence for this strategy of association between imagery and sitter in ordinary parish churches to suggest that it was a common phenomenon.

CONCLUSION ON THE ICONOGRAPHY OF HIERARCHY ON SEDILIA

Comparisons for figures of higher rank behind the sitter can be found in other genres of medieval architectural seating. Generally, the iconography of the canopies of English great church stalls is very uncertain, as apart from the misericords, they have been stripped of their imagery.[118] The *c.*1430s Carlisle Cathedral choir stalls, are exceptional as they preserve a single figure, apparently of an Austin Canon, surviving at the lower level as the top of one of the shafts that divides the seats.[119] This may have acted as an intermediary figure to the upper imagery of the canopies, otherwise lost. The late fourteenth-century choir stalls at Astley (Warwickshire), provided for a newly-founded college, are a notable exception to the lack of evidence for original polychrome on wooden choir stalls in that they have images of the

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[116] Wood and Rawlinson 1920, 287.
[117] Wood and Rawlinson 1920, 287; *VCH Oxford Vol. 13* 1996, 202.
[118] Both Winchester and Peterborough are recorded to have had scenes of the Old and New Testament removed from their canopies in the Civil War; Sandler 1970, 42; Jervis 1976, 19. Although all that survives of the Peterborough stalls are two thirteenth-century stiff-leaf collonettes, attempts have been made to reconstruct the scheme from the cycles in the fourteenth-century Peterborough Psalter; James 1897; Sandler 1970; Tracy 1987, 2–4.
[119] Tracy 1990, 2–4.

Apostles and Old Testament Prophets holding scrolls of the Creed.[120] This would promote the college as successors of the first Christian community. There is much evidence for the schemes above and around the seats in English chapter houses, with a remarkable variety of imagery.[121] Many make visual play with the sitters in front and below. In Westminster Abbey, the late-fourteenth-century Judgement scene with Christ as merciful judge would be very appropriate to the abbot's seat in the centre of the more deeply-recessed arcading in the east wall, particularly in the chapter of faults.[122] However, it is images of the Apostles that appear a recurring theme in chapter houses, for instance at Oxford Cathedral, no doubt reflecting the community as in the Astley stalls. [123] The chapter house of Santa Maria Novella, Florence was frescoed *c.*1366-8 by Andrea Bonaiuti's workshop, and particularly the left wall that showed the Dominicans' most revered theologian St Thomas Aquinas at the centre of a complex hierarchy of historical figures and personifications, is striking as forming an ensemble with the friars below, associating the current convent with universal and local hierarchies of ecclesiastical and secular power.[124]

This mode of descending hierarchy is not unlike the artistic schemes of cathedrals, promoting a harmonious clerical and aristocratic order with the statues of monarchs and saints on their facades and portals.[125] This comparison to grand holistic schemes is important, as it does seem that the idea of putting figures behind sedilia remained confined to certain circles, and was not found regularly in parish churches. The suggestion that painted imagery was passed through high-level institutions is supported by the *capella extra portas* at Premonstratensian Easby, which like Cistercian Hailes (Gloucestershire) mentioned in Chapter Two must owe its sophisticated painting to its proximity to the Abbey church. Castle Hedingham was clearly a wealthy institution in the twelfth century probably due to the benefaction of the de Veres: although we do not know much about its means and circumstance later, it is far from an ordinary parish church. The fragment at

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[120] Tracy 2009. Winchester are a rare exception in choir stalls as having evidence for polychrome, in this case gilt canopies; Tracy 1993, 199.

[121] Wilson 1983, 115. Binski and Howard 2010, 184. An unreferenced but useful summary of the schemes in Worcester, Oxford, Westminster, Salisbury, York, Canterbury, Hereford, Lichfield and Exeter is given in Wilson 1983, 120–121, n.51.

[122] Binski and Howard 2010, 184–190. For consideration of the capacity and seating in the chapter house; Carpenter 2010, 38.

[123] Seidel 1968; Wilson 1983; Boskovits 1990; Seidel 2005, 355–356, 377–385.

[124] Gardner 1979; Norman 1995b; Cannon 2013, 198.

[125] Crossley 2009, 160–161.

Dittisham at first seems to be in an entirely parochial context, but when we see the new rector in the circle of Bishop Grandisson, like the royal connections of Potesgrave at Heckington, it gains an unusual elite connection. It is even plausible to suggest that Westminster Abbey was the prototype of this idea, and it was emulated directly at Exeter, and was influential over Heckington and Hawton. On a wider scale, however, this demonstrates that painted iconography associated with sedilia did not spread as easily as their architectural form had done.

The depiction of the parish staff's superiors, and also the laypeople sometimes sculpted on the headstops and cornices, showed the unity of the Church militant, and when combined with ecclesiastical saints above, it would further show its solidarity with the Church triumphant. However, Sekules also interpreted in the sculpture of Heckington references to the priest's pastoral role in another sacrament other than the Eucharist: that of confession. The final element of Heckington and Hawton we need to contextualise: the scenes placed at the bases of their gables, will now be investigated, along with other grotesque and marginal imagery around the arches of sedilia.

THE POSSIBLE USE OF SEDILIA AS A SITE OF CONFESSION

In this chapter's final section, a secondary, extra-liturgical function will be hypothesised for sedilia to investigate some of their small-scale imagery from the point of view of a lay audience. As well as the differing choices of holy figures in the canopies, Heckington and Hawton also show different choices for the stops at the meeting point of the seat arches. At Hawton the arch-stops show, from the east: a man in a slightly pointed cap, bowing with his hand across his chest in a most reverential manner (fig. 241); the pelican piercing her breast over the nest of her young (fig. 242); two men shearing berries from foliage; and a bearded man in a cowl in a recumbent position surrounded by acorns, his right arm broken off (fig. 243).

At Heckington, the easternmost stop shows a figure in a hood who is feeding berries to a small bird in his hand (fig. 244). On the opposite side of the sedilia, on the westernmost boss, there is a similar scene of a lady in a headdress feeding a squirrel berries (fig. 245). To the east of this is a boss of two men crouching bottom-to-bottom, one of whom is pushing a bunch of berries into his mouth and while the

other head has been lost it can only be assumed it was shown doing the same (fig. 246). The remaining scene shows two figures, possibly a man and woman, viciously pulling at each other's mouths while a face in between appears to be attempting to separate them with his palms against their foreheads (fig. 247).

The difference between these two programmes of imagery has been read by Sekules as reflecting the different attitudes of the rectors who led the funding of the chancel rebuilding in the two churches. In an interpretation that finds correspondence with the above investigation of hierarchies of sitters and imagery, Hawton's sedilia were interpreted by Sekules as a self-aggrandising statement by the rector, referring to the priesthood's exclusive right to celebrate the Eucharist. The two exterior arch stops she understood as representing a high-class man and peasant bowing to the symbols of the Eucharist, of which priests have exclusive right to perform, and above are the ranks of the secular and sacred hierarchies: the king and bishops on earth and the saints in heaven.[126] The pelican was a bestiary subject that was commonly used as a symbol for Christ's Passion in a nourishing, Eucharistic context.[127] The image of shearing fruit could be classified as part of this thought, an idea that wittily treats the Decorated-Style ornament as a real, fruit-bearing plant, and served to increase the sense of the sedilia as a site of spiritual fecundity and nourishment.[128]

Heckington's arch stops were seen by Sekules as embodying a very different meaning from Hawton, and will be used here to explore the possibility that sedilia were occupied by a priest hearing confessions. Sekules interpreted that the sculptures emphasised the priest's role as pastoral confessor, representing the respective sins of the four seasons caused by an imbalance of the humours in the body that were tempered by the Ember day fasts, as described in the *Golden Legend* and subsequent vernacular adaptions.[129] Spring, noted as a season of lust, could be represented by the well-dressed woman feeding her pet squirrel: a noted sexual symbol.[130] Summer, a season of greed, is shown by the men eating berries, with comparison to the condemnation of those who 'As a beste to ete al day' in Robert Mannyng's

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[126] Sekules 1990, 124–126
[127] Rubin 1992, 310–312.
[128] For the symbolism of profuse foliage ornament in the choir at Ely, *c.*1234-52; Binski 2004, 87–104.
[129] Sekules 1990, 120–123; Jacobus de Voragine, 136.
[130] Sekules 1990, 122.

Handlyng Synne.[131] The pride of Autumn could well be represented by the brawl, chiding (quarrelling) noted as a variety of the sin by Mannyng.[132] Winter rests on the interpretation of the man as a 'large and fat' phlegmatic, thus embodying the cold and wet humours of winter, and the reading of the bird as a symbol of the season's sins of faithlessness and malice.[133] Although this interpretation is learned and appropriate to the period, its probability of being the actual programme that led to these sculptures, without the corroboration of a visual parallel, is ultimately a matter of faith. It is equally possible that all the scenes of gathering and consuming fruit may be simply be variations on the theme of treating ornament as real foliage as noted at Hawton to promote its sense as a place of spiritual nourishment. The so-called gluttons show no outward signs of bestiality or over-indulgence, and the sin is most often pictured in both medieval art and literature as excess in drink rather than overeating through the consequences of drunkenness, swollen belly and vomiting.[134] However, the brawl (fig. 247) clearly could not have had entirely positive connotations, nor be a simple *jeux d'espirit* on the part of the carver. The appearance of the third face in the centre is broadly similar to some sculpture relating to sin, but here representing demons facilitating a sinful embrace: for instance an early fourteenth-century misericord at Ely Cathedral (fig. 248) and a boss in Lincoln Angel Choir (fig. 249).[135] However at Heckington, the central head appears to have been recast as attempting to separate the pair. Since the brawl was replaced at Hawton by the pelican, clearly the most important scene on those sedilia, it may also have had the same significance on the prototype at Heckington.

Although Sekules' proposal of sin throughout the seasons at Heckington may be unverifiable, it could be also considered as part of her broader interpretation that the playful, monstrous and grotesque sculptures that cover the exterior of the Heckington church acted as exemplars of sin and therefore the cleansings and

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[131] Sekules 1990, 120; Robert Mannyng of Brunne, lines 7205-7212.
[132] Sekules 1990, 120–121; Robert Mannyng of Brunne, lines 3515-3526.
[133] As Sekules admits, animal symbolism is inconsistent, but is used in Roger Bacon's *Opus Maius* to attribute fickleness to the bird; Sekules 1990, 122, citing Bloomfield 1952, 89.
[134] For instance, the famous tavern scene for the confession of Gluttony in *Piers Plowman*; Bloomfield 1952, 198–199. Owst notes how intemperance is closely linked in homiletic lore with gluttony rather than the more modern and restricted sense of the term; Owst 1961, 425–449. All the depictions of Gluttony in Deadly Sins cycles that are described by Tristram concern drink rather than food; Tristram 1955, 137, 144, 160, 160, 185–186, 259.
[135] Heslop read the bosses in the south aisle of Lincoln Angel Choir as part of the west/east left/right dichotomy begun on the Judgement Porch by the pairing of Synagogue and Ecclesia, but does not state how the images of sin in the north aisle such as this boss function within the programme; Heslop 1990, 151–158.

punishments of purgatory.[136] Particularly important to her argument is the case of nearby Frampton, which has on its south transept a carving of a grinning man, accompanied by an inscription identifying him as a sinner.[137] With all this sinful imagery gazing from above priests' seats, the possible situation presents itself that this imagery was seen by lay people when they approached their priest for confession.

As Nicholas Rogers has shown, there does not appear to be any particularly sanctioned location in a church for the site of confession in the late Middle Ages.[138] Although confession, penance and absolution from sin go right back to the early Church, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 represented a new rigour towards the sacrament, requiring all Christians – along with annual communion – to confess to their priest once a year.[139] The constitutions of Odo de Sully, Archbishop of Paris *c.*1197, only required confession take place in an 'open place' in church, and that the priest should not look at the face of the penitent, especially that of a female.[140] A constitution by Archbishop Reynolds of Canterbury made in 1322 states:

> '*Item sacerdos et audiendum confessiones communem sibi eligat locum, ubi communiter ab omnibus videri poterit in ecclesia; et in locis abseonditis non recipiat sacerdos alicuius, et maxime mulieris, confessionem, nisi pro maxima necessitate, aut infirmitate poenitentis.*'[141]

> 'And let the priest choose such a place in the church for hearing confessions as is open to the view of all; and never take the confession of any, especially of a woman, in secret, unless in case of necessity or the sickness of the penitent.'[142]

The fifteenth-century *Instructions for Parish Priests* by John Myrk does not advise on what place to choose to hear confessions, but his instruction that the priest should 'sit still as a stone' demonstrates the idea that confessions were always heard while

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[136] Sekules 1995.

[137] 'Wot ye whi I stad her for / I forswor my Saviour /ego Ricardus in angulo'; Sekules 1995, 50–51; *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 285.

[138] Rogers 2009, with further bibliography. Rogers shows the ambiguity regarding the location, but concentrates on against the screen or in shriving pews, and also, it must be admitted in contradiction to the sedilia: the north side.

[139] Printed in translation in McNeill and Gamer 1938, 413–414. For early penitential manuals in general see McNeill and Gamer 1938.

[140] 'The Synodal Constitutions of Odo, Bishop of Paris (ca.1197) Mansi, XXII, 678 f.', McNeill and Gamer 1938, 412. Also this command is in Myrk; Peacock 1868, 27.

[141] Wilkins 1739, Vol. 2, 513; Lyndwood 1679, 39–40.

[142] *Gent. Mag.* 1786 (56:2), 935; Rogers 2009, 301.

seated was taken for granted.[143] As one of the seven sacraments, the act of confession began to be depicted in art from the mid-fourteenth century onward, which can give us some indication of its circumstances, and highlight the importance of the seat.[144] The fragmentary frescoes attributed to Roberto d'Oderisio *c.*1360 in the church of the Incoronata in Naples, through the artist's interest in plastic, descriptive and space-making forms, give us a uniquely detailed depiction of a fourteenth-century confession (fig. 250).[145] Penance shows the priest sitting in a chair with a tall curved back hearing the confession of a hooded penitent in a south chapel of a 'doll-house' scale church, very clearly lending his ear and avoiding the penitent's gaze.

With the sedilia as often the only furniture we know of in a fourteenth-century English parish church, the idea that they were used to seat the priest while he heard confessions is an attractive one. The major objection to this hypothesis might be their location in the sanctuary, the holiest part of the church, rather than the space usually occupied by the laypeople, the nave. This need not be a problem, as ecclesiastical legislation was always concerned with making sure the laity were not present in the chancel only during the celebration of Mass. The Decretals of Gregory IX, compiled 1230, state:

> '*Ut laici secus Altare, quando sacra mysteria celebrantur, stare vel sedere inter clericos non praesumant; sed pars illa, quae Cancellis ab Altari dividitur, tantum psallentibus pateat clericis. Ad orandum vero et communicandum, laicis et foeminis sicut mos est, pateant Sancta Sanctorum*'[146]

> 'That the laity do not presume to stand, or sit among the clerics near the Altar, during the celebration of the sacred mysteries; but for that part, which is divided by rails from the altar, should be open to the clerics who sing. But for the purposes of praying and communicating, that the Holy of Holies should, as is the custom, be open to laity and women.'[147]

English episcopal legislation, while never as direct as this in ensuring lay access to the chancel, by enforcing the ban on laity sitting in the chancel during the celebration

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[143] Peacock 1868, 27.
[144] Nichols 1994, 19–29.
[145] Vitolo 2008, 45–80
[146] Gregory IX decretals, lib. iii., t. i., c. i.; Richter and Friedberg 1959, 450. Almost identical wording can be found in Tours II (567), iv; Hardouin, Labbé, and Cossart 1714, 358.
[147] Translation from Radford 1849, 6–7.

of Mass (always making an exception for the patron who held advowson and other distinguished figures) imply that at other times, ordinary people were allowed to enter the east end of the church.[148]

Many informative representations of the Seven Sacraments are found on a number of parish church fonts dating between 1463 and 1533, the vast majority of which are found in East Anglia, and have been expertly assessed by Ann Eljenholm Nichols, both in a focused article on the etiquette of confession and a wide-ranging book.[149] In the scenes of Penance, the priest is always shown seated before a kneeling penitent, but the furniture varies tremendously, showing that it is in part a naturalistic representation of some of the actual arrangements for confession in the parish churches for which these fonts were made.[150] Occasionally the fonts appear to depict the confession taking place within what may be shriving pews, the forerunner of the confessional booth.[151] The problem with this late-fifteenth-century evidence is the low number of sets of sedilia from this period. However it is possible that some of the elaborate chairs represent fifteenth-century wooden sedilia, such as will be investigated in Chapter Six. The high-backed seat with a coved ceiling on the font at Alderford (Norfolk) (fig. 251) is noticeably similar to some fifteenth-century sedilia, such as that built into the parclose screen at Rodmersham (Kent) (fig. 303). Smaller but elaborately-worked chairs are shown on the fonts at Walsoken (fig. 252) and Great Witchingham (Norfolk). These could be representations of the sorts of documented parish *cathedrae* as presented in Chapter One: very simple alternatives to 'classic' sedilia.

Eighteenth-century antiquarians, before the term 'sedilia' was coined, often called chancel stone seats 'confessionaries'.[152] This was due to a perceived similarity with Roman Catholic wooden confessional booths on the continent, which they were unaware were largely a post-Tridentine phenomenon.[153] The earliest mention I can

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[148] Lincoln 1239: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 275; Worcester III 1240: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 297; Durham II 1241x1249: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 433; Exeter II 1287: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 1009–1010.
[149] Nichols 1986; Nichols 1994.
[150] Nichols 1986, 146, 161–163; Nichols 1994, 173–174, 229.
[151] Rogers 2009, 301.
[152] E.g.: 'In the chancel part yet remain two confessional stalls with mitred arches and seats in them; and nearer to the east end, on the same side, is the receptacle for holy water'; Thorpe 1782, 246.
[153] Boer 1991, 543–572. The Franciscans may have had small external structures to hear confessions at the Portizuncula near Assisi as early as *c.*1330, and the Observant Franciscans in the late fifteenth century began to provide and legislate for the provision of small rooms off the church nave that could

find of this is from the early seventeenth century by the antiquarian Richard Rawlinson (1690-1755), in a description of the slightly unusual stone-chair drop-sill sedilia at Standlake (Oxfordshire) (fig. 35).[154] The myth that this was the primary function of sedilia was rebutted by a pair of letters to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1786, after a use of the term in the journal earlier that year, yet neither adequately disproved the site of confession as being in the chancel.[155] I do not wish to propose that sedilia were originally conceived as confessionals. Certainly I do not suggest that, with 'classic' sedilia, the penitent sat in one of the seats and confessed through the openings between the shafts, which was the assumption that led to the antiquarian confusion. A pastoral handbook written *c*.1333 by Guido of Monte Rochen stated that the confessor ought to teach his penitents to sit humbly at his feet, and 'not sit as his equal'.[156] But certainly, if a location in the chancel was a possible one for the site of confession, then the concept of sedilia forming the confessor's seat becomes very plausible, if ultimately unprovable.

THE SEDILIA AT CROFT-ON-TEES AND THE NARRATIVE OF ABSOLUTION

A set of sedilia that most lucidly present a programme of imagery regarding the sacrament of Penance are those at Croft-on-Tees (North Yorkshire) (fig. 253), despite being of a much lower sculptural quality than the examples discussed so far in this chapter. Croft's chancel (fig. 254) has been much diminished by the truncation of its east window via the removal of the eastern gable for a lower-pitched roof. However its bar tracery suggests a date in the late thirteenth century or first quarter of the fourteenth century. The sedilia and piscina are, with their respective trefoil and cinquefoil cusps and slim mouldings, also of this emphatically pre-ogee

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be seen as a precursor to these now ubiquitous booths; Cobianchi 2006, 289–304. Also see Rogers 2009 for the origins of the private booth in the late Middle Ages.

[154] 'On the south side of the Chancell are two stone chairs in the wall, where the ministers, I suppose, formerly took confessions'; Wood and Rawlinson 1920, 288.

[155] 'In the wall on the south side of the communion table is an ancient seat of three arches; by the perforations in the sides of the middle arch, it is supposed to have been a seat for hearing confessions.'; Matt. Skinner *Gent. Mag* 1786 (56), 651. The first rebuttal succumbs to anachronism when he says that confession booths are made out of wood; *Gent. Mag.* 1786 (56), 751-752, also followed in Denne 1789a, 261–262. The second regarded the fact that the Lenten veil across the chancel would cause it not to be an 'open space', and that contemporary Roman Catholic custom had it that confession should take place at the west end of the nave; *Gent. Mag.* 1786 (56), 934-935.

[156] Guido de Monte Rocherii, 20.

style.[157] The ornamental carving, found on the exterior buttress niches outside, and inside on the piscina, sedilia and a ledge on the north wall of the chancel shows traits of the second quarter of the fourteenth century such as bubbling, seaweedy foliage. The sculptor was far from inept at his figures and foliage, and had talent for capturing characterful expression, but the absence of a capable hand to oversee an overall design is immediately evident. This suggests that the furnishings were the work of a single sculptor used to working as part of a larger workforce.

What is most interesting about the carving however is that its subjects are not merely generic faces and monsters, but instead appear to articulate a single programme from left to right. Two grinning figures in long gowns stand at each end of the sedilia, holding up the string-course enlivened by heads and animals. The figure on the left clearly has his head within his chest. He does not seem to depict a mythical blemyae, but nevertheless the deformation may have similar connotations to that creature's symbolism: relocating the head, signifier of human nature, deep within the corporeal, sinful body.[158] Next to him in the eastern half-spandrel there are two figures lying on top of each other above what looks very like a Romanesque-Style beakhead (fig. 255). Although it is possible that they are engaged in sexual activity, it is more likely that they are engaged in a brawl, partly as this would find parallel with the arch-stop on the Heckington sedilia (fig. 247). As mentioned above, *Handlyng Synne* includes chyding (quarrelling) as a variety of Pride, chief of the sins. A quarrel between a man and a woman is used to represent Discord in the scheme of Virtues and Vices at Amiens Cathedral, where the woman violently pulls at the man's head.[159]

The atonement to this display of sin comes in the next spandrel, where one figure kneels in front of another, each supported by two grotesque atlas figures, surrounded by three male heads with various facial expressions (fig. 256). The kneeling figure holds his hands in front of his chest. He has been literally defaced, but can be seen to wear a long gown with a hood and puffed shoulders, showing him as a wealthy layman. The figure on the right has V-shaped folds on his gown and a high collar, perhaps Eucharistic vestments. With his left hand he points to his face,

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[157] Coldstream 1973, 89. It is not unfeasible that parish churches featuring bar tracery we associate with late-thirteenth-century buildings such as Selby Abbey north choir aisle and St Mary's Abbey, York could be built until into the 1320s.
[158] Williams 1999, 127–136.
[159] Mâle 1984, 129.

and in the right he holds what appears to be a key. This could identify him as St Peter, the patron of the church at Croft.[160] However, his identification may be twofold. The two lines running from under his arms to his feet must be the sides of a chair in which he is sitting, which would explain why the two figures are the same height even though one is on his knees. This draws a connection with the common iconography for Penance where a priest is seated during hearing of confessions. The *c.*1333 Spanish pastoral handbook speaks at length of how the priest as confessor has the 'power of keys', which the writer indeed compares to the physical key of St Peter.[161] Nicholas Rogers has also related the presence of St Peter with a prominent key in a wall painting of the Sunday Christ in Purton (Wiltshire) to this concept, which he suggests may have been associated with the site of confession.[162] Therefore, the real penitent at Croft may have been encouraged to visualise his confessor as St Peter, who, as on the Hawton sedilia (fig. 227), represented the authority of the wider Roman Catholic Church.

The third spandrel shows a quadruped between two trees, eating berries while her young appear to suckle at her breast (fig. 257).[163] This is similar to the general scenes of fecundity, gathering and consumption at Heckington and Hawton, and like the pelican (fig. 242), would seem to represent the promise of spiritual nourishment by the Eucharist. Following a final half spandrel of foliage, the right-hand atlas figure, in contrast with his companion at the other end, has his head firmly on his shoulders. Thus he then represents the restoration of human nature after confession and communion. Therefore, despite their crude design, the sedilia at Croft seem to convey a rather eloquent programme of redemption via the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, with a number of parallels with Heckington and Hawton.

THE DORCHESTER ABBEY SEDILIA AND IMAGERY OF SIN

With this idea of confession at the sedilia in mind, another set will be investigated with a similar view of imagery aiding a healthy confession. These are the sedilia in

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[160] At Fyfield (Essex), a headstop of a bishop to the east of the early-fourteenth-century sedilia may represent the patron St Nicholas, for in the western spandrel are three circles, plausibly representing his attribute of the three golden balls; *BoE Essex* 2007, 374.

[161] Guido de Monte Rocherii, 184, 192–194, 238–246.

[162] Rogers 2009, 307.

[163] It is difficult to tell what species the animals are supposed to be. Suckling pigs can be found in a monumental context at found in the archivolts of the Exeter Cathedral façade and at Pisa Cathedral; Muratova 1989, 124, n.22, as well in misericords such as at Worcester Cathedral.

the chancel of the former Augustinian Abbey of Dorchester-on-Thames (Oxfordshire) (fig. 258) that, as have been shown above, were added to the chancel in the 1340s. The canopies, pinnacles and arches have dozens of inventive, yet typical ornament in the form of heads of laymen, lions and dragons. However, seven out of the ten capitals of the shafts supporting the vault above the piscina and the seats are particularly intriguing. They have unusually creative figures of grotesque semi-human and entirely demonic monsters, which Ayers proposed represented the seven deadly sins.[164] His interpretation has largely been accepted and now appears in many accounts of the church.[165] The Abbey also served as a parish church, and the provision of a Norman font shows that the church was active in administering the sacraments, and therefore it is likely that the canons also heard lay confession.[166]

Much as Sekules' reading, Ayers' specific identification of subject matter should not be taken for granted, since beyond their numerical concurrence the identification is far from definite. 'Covetousness', pulling at her hair and clutching a purse, is the only figure where Ayers identified a physical attribute, but its presence is dubious, instead it could be a partly-broken decorative stop at the base of the adjacent gablet (fig. 259).[167] Lust was identified by Ayers through its caressing the nearby headstop in much the same way.[168] The man pulling at the sides of his mouth, identified as Gluttony, could also be interpreted as simply pulling a grotesque face.[169] 'Sloth' (fig. 260) appears to be most concerned with thrusting his bare bottom outward from the sedilia in a similar display of grotesquery to 'Gluttony'. 'Envy', 'Anger' and 'Pride' (fig. 261) on their own would surely be regarded as no more than generic monsters or demons.

Certainly, as Ayers shows with his use of the contemporary text *Handlyng Synne,* the cardinal sins were well-known in the fourteenth-century English Church. The importance given to confession at the Fourth Lateran Council as part of pastoral care provoked the production of a large amount of literature to aid priests in the active task of interrogating penitents.[170] These texts often concentrated on combating

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[164] Ayers 1991, 80–81.
[165] Rodwell 2009, 124; Dixon 2012, 13.
[166] Rodwell 2009, 40.
[167] Ayers 1991, 80.
[168] Ayers cites Robert Mannyng of Brunne, lines 7695-6 and 7611-4 as emphasising the act of touch in the sin of Lust.
[169] Bloomfield 1952, 125. Ayers also proposes that he may represent Pride scorning a man; Ayers 1991, 80.
[170] Boyle 1985, 30.

the vices, and were instrumental in popularising the canonical seven deadly sins.[171] English diocesan legislation shortly after the 1215 Council often included short tracts on the seven deadly sins.[172] Worcester 1229 in particular stated that the clergy were to instruct the laity in the sins after confession.[173] Later episcopal statutes stated that priests should own treatises on the Ten Commandments and the seven deadly sins and use them to educate their congregation.[174] This seems to describe works such as *Manuel des Peches,* dating from around the 1260s, and subsequent texts, such as John Myrk's *Instructions for Parish Priests,* which contain advice on how to interrogate penitents through these same two concepts.[175] *Handlyng Synne,* written by the Gilbertine canon Robert Mannyng of Brunne in 1304, referenced above, is an adaption of this tradition, intended for laymen to prepare themselves for confession.[176] Therefore if there was a keen effort to educate the laity about sin to ensure proper confession, we might expect to see them represented in artworks at the site of Penance as what Rogers has called a 'visual mnemonic'.[177] However, direct parallels between homiletic literature and the public visual arts are far from straightforward.[178]

It is difficult to find any corroboration in other medieval art for the proposed monstrous cycle of the cardinal sins at Dorchester. Manuscript illustrations that could provide direct links with theological texts and the visual arts are rare.[179] The development of the fifth-century allegorical text of the *Psychomachia* into a more static depiction of the virtues triumphant suitable for monumental figure sculpture between the ninth and thirteenth centuries has been shown in a classic iconographical study by Adolf Katzenellenbogen.[180] Such a scheme of figures appears in the context

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[171] Bloomfield 1952, 123–125.
[172] Coventry and Lichfield 1224x1237: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 214–226*; Binski 2004, 181.
[173] Worcester II, 1229: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 172*; Binski 2004, 181.
[174] Robertson 1945. Lincoln 1239: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 268; Worcester III 1240: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 304–305; Exeter II 1287: Powicke and Cheney 1964, 1017–1018.
[175] Robertson 1945; Pantin 1955, 189–219; Peacock 1868, 30–46. The *Manuel* does not survive in an authoritative text, and is best known for its mention by Robert Manning as his source for *Handlyng Synne*.
[176] Robert Mannyng of Brunne, Robertson 1945, 162–185; Bloomfield 1952, 171–173; Pantin 1955, 220–243.
[177] Rogers 2009, 304–307.
[178] Gill 2002, 155–180.
[179] The lavishly illustrated *Somme le Roi* of 1279 (BL Add MS 54180) has personified Virtues next to Old Testament stories appropriate to the opposing vice; Binski 2004, 187–188. A book made for an English noblewoman in the second half of the thirteenth century (Princeton University Library, Taylor Medieval ms.1) has some of the deadly sins presented as exempla in the marginal illustrations; Bennett 1990, 168–172.
[180] Katzenellenbogen 1939, 1–21.

of pastoral care and the sacraments on the late-twelfth-century fonts at Southreps (Wiltshire) and Stanton Fitzwarren (Gloucestershire), showing the efficacy of the sacrament of Baptism against evil.[181] The doorway to the late-thirteenth-century chapter house at Salisbury Cathedral, with its depiction of the cardinal sins underneath their respective *remedia,* appears to be the first systematic representation of the seven deadly sins in English sculpture.[182]

Aside from the unique Doom painting of the early thirteenth century at Chaldon (Surrey), perhaps depicting appropriate purgatorial punishments for the deadly sins,[183] it is only from the later fourteenth century onward that schematic cycles of the seven sins appear to have become common in English wall painting.[184] The surviving English schemes such as the west wall at Trotton (Sussex), and other public cycles such as the bench ends at Blythburgh (Suffolk), represent the sins through human action and vignettes.[185] This much as in the literature of the time, such as *Handlyng Synne* and *Piers Ploughman*.[186] This 'exemplar' type, of everyday sin, has been interpreted in the subjects of many individual misericords, although never a systematic cycle of the cardinal sins.[187] In this way, the 'exemplar' method, showing individual examples of sinful behaviour, could be associated with the brawls at Heckington and Croft-on-Tees.[188] What connects all these examples of sinful images, is that while sometimes demons are shown around the figures, the sinners never show any signs of monstrosity themselves: unlike at Dorchester.

There are only a few examples I have been able to find of monstrous cardinal sins, and none are closely comparable to the proposed cycle at Dorchester. A misericord at the chapel of New College Oxford, which would date shortly after its founding in 1379, shows a seven-headed hydra with six lion-like heads surrounding

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[181] Anderson 1971, 145.
[182] Green 1968, 153–154.
[183] Tristram 1944, 108–109. This could also be interpreted in the illustration of Hell in the similarly dated *Hortus Deliciarum*; Weir and Jerman 1986, 76.
[184] Bloomfield 1952, 103. Of the twenty Seven Sin cycles recorded by Tristram 1955, none are dated in earlier than the late fourteenth century. Gill however considers Cranborne (Dorset) and Wooton Wawen (Warwickshire) as from the 1340s; Gill, *Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Corporal Works of Mercy*, URL: www.le.ac.uk/ha/seedcorn/faq-sds.html.
[185] Rogers 2009, 306. For the relationship with morality plays, see Anderson 1971, 60–71.
[186] Bloomfield 1952, 196–201.
[187] Grössinger 1997, 129–131; Bloomfield 1952, 103.
[188] For the roots of 'naturalistic' depiction of the sins in thirteenth-century France; Katzenellenbogen 1939, 78; Bloomfield 1952, 199; Mâle 1984, 101–133.

a woman's, inspired by the Beast of Revelation (fig. 262).[189] The supporters of a seated priest granting absolution to a kneeling penitent in the usual manner detailed above, and a man flagellating himself in penance makes the monster's significance indisputable. Another composite-sin monster is the so-called '*Frau Welt*', found in an early form in a Munich manuscript dated 1414 (fig. 263), which with its labelled attributes, has been suggested as to provide an index to earlier traditions of monstrous symbolism.[190] Another such drawing that may potentially help to decipher earlier emblems is a crude but forceful illustration in a book of Middle English verse, accompanying a poem describing souls in Hell (fig. 264).[191] The image shows several cadaver-like figures, led by a dark-skinned demon, marching into a hell mouth. The prose introduction directly corroborates the attributes of each one as emblematic of the Deadly Sins: horns for Pride, bears' teeth for Wrath, lions' nails for Avarice, a swollen belly for Gluttony, a rotten spine for Lust and deformed feet for Sloth.[192]

These fifteenth-century examples do show that there were imaginative approaches to depicting sin as monstrosity, and it is not inconceivable that the Dorchester sedilia are a unique surviving representation of the seven deadly sins. However the sedilia at Dorchester could also manifest sin which beset the medieval penitent in a much more general way. Like Sekules, Ayers' thoughtful approach to the carvings may reflect the original audiences' reception: that these monstrosities evoked the concept of wicked behaviour in an onlooker.[193] As Ayers shows in a diagram of the position of the carvings (but one assumes that he did not have space to mention in his masters' thesis text), all the gazes of these monsters face outward

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[189] The Deadly Sins had been identified with the Beast of the Apocalypse since Albertus Magnus and Hugh of St Victor, and was part of a literary and iconographical tradition. For instance, the beast was used to illustrate the sins in two English fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Somme de Roi,* MS. Bodl. 283; Bodleian: E mus. 23; Tuve 1964, 53, 64.

[190] *Biblia Pauperum*, Munich, Staatsbibliothek, MS cod. lat. 8201, f. 95; Saxl 1942, 126–129.

[191] Ross 1957. 'The Invitation' from *A Carthusian miscellany of poems, chronicles, and treatises in Northern English, including an epitome or summary of Mandeville's travels* (British Library Add MS 37049, fol. 74r)

[192] Transcription: Ross 1957, 279. The only exception is Pride, who is described as 'semed as þair eene hang opon þair chekys'. 'Eene' is used elsewhere in the manuscript to mean eyes; Ross 1957, 278. The illustration however, shows a cadaver with a unusually skeletal face, hands raised, with large cat-like ears protruding from his curly hair, and his intestines spilling out.

[193] For an overview of the historiography of monstrosity from artistic formalism to more intellectual approaches; Dale 2006, 253–273.

from the sedilia.[194] This implies that the carving was executed so that the primary audience was not those sitting in the seats, but to those just outside of them.

THE RIPON MINSTER SEDILIA AND THE MONSTROUS GAZE

The sedilia at the former collegiate church of Ripon Minster (fig. 174) are by far the most remarkable example of this sort of monstrous decoration with an engaging gaze focused on a viewer outside the seats. As at Dorchester, Ripon's possession of two fonts shows that it was active in administering the sacraments.[195] We have seen in Chapter Four that the Ripon sedilia were added into the second of the late thirteenth-century eastern bays of the building probably in the late 1320s, and subsequently moved to the easternmost bay by Scott. Under the level of Scott's added gables and finials, below the arches all is well-preserved fourteenth-century work. The undersides of the arches utilise a most witty and surprising conceit, which to my knowledge is unique. The small rosettes and faces on the cusps of the arches over the seats actually form the tops – like little hats – of the heads of four figures on the underside of each seat's ceiling. These 'hidden' figures are of very high quality, evident in the clever use of relief carving to show the bodies seamlessly recessing into the stone, and the great character and individual treatment bestowed upon each one. The figures can be grouped into two categories: naked and semi-clothed humans; and clothed hybrids of both human and animal sections. Under the easternmost seat's arch (fig. 265), two humans are entirely naked; while the one on the far left is partly wrapped in a shroud; and there is one monstrous hybrid, a ram wearing a cloak from under which protrudes a long tail and paw carved in relief. The centre seat (fig. 266) has two completely naked figures on the right, while the humans on the left reveal paws and tails from under their cloaks. In the western seat (fig. 267), all the figures have human heads on top of cloaked animal bodies, and one of the heads is clearly intended as a queen in crown and headdress. The capitals supporting the arches also show excellent foliage carving with grinning faces peering out, and one capital shows a chase scene featuring a dog and a rabbit. The fronts of the seats themselves have comparably coarsely carved heads in trefoils.

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[194] Ayers 1991, pl.36.
[195] *BoE Yorkshire West Riding: North* 2009, 660, 663.

This remarkably assured, skilful and inventive work of Decorated Style art has received little attention. The grotesques under the seats are large and time-consuming pieces of sculpture for a simple *jeu d'esprit* on the part of the artist and must have been requested when the sedilia were designed. Furthermore, they show more than just the usual fascination with grotesque expression of the human face that is generally found as adornments on architecture. The robust and fantastic form of the monsters instead seems more associated with the images often found in the margins of contemporary illuminated manuscripts.[196] The Ripon creatures mostly fall into the 'sequential' category of the six types of marginal hybrid identified by Sandler, with human heads becoming animal with the juncture disguised by items of clothing.[197] Such radical yet apparently playful hybridity has been related to an appropriation in art of folk culture, such as found in some pictorial graffiti and the costumes worn in ritual plays.[198] Yet, following the trend of such sculptures being actively functional than passively decorative, Pamela Tudor-Craig considered the Ripon sedilia in connection with grotesque head-sculpture on parish church arcades.[199] She thought that the monsters may be intended to shock any wandering eye in church back to the appropriate direction of the altar. However the use of such creatures in lavish personal books shows their effect on the viewer cannot have been purely revulsion and horror.[200] Sandler has interpreted such monstrous hybrids as a part of a spiritual worldview that was highly conscious of the sin and evil that beset mankind.[201] David Williams described such hybrids of human and animal as signs which confound the very principle of order.[202] Yet disorder does not equal pure evil. Conrad Rudolph has described the monstrous semi-homines that populate the borders of the early-twelfth-century Citeaux *Moralia in Job* (Dijon, Bibliotheque Municipale MS 173) as creatures whose bodies lie in between the human and bestial, and the nature of which thus lies in between good and evil.[203] Such an image of

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[196] The literature on 'marginalia' is vast. For a summary and bibliography; Kendrick 2006, for a recent analysis and critique; Binski 2014, 283–305.

[197] Sandler 1981, 55–56. The lack of the usual 'vegetative' ending identified by Sandler is certainly because there is not the same need for the creatures to fuse with the decorative borders.

[198] Cawte 1978; Jones-Baker 1981, 160–167; Brighton and Evans 1985, 46; Camille 1998, 232–275.

[199] Tudor-Craig 2007. Her description of Ripon's sedilia is somewhat misleading as it implies that the faces of the grotesques are on the cusps as seen from the front, and looking under the seats reveals their bodies.

[200] Camille 1998, 234–235.

[201] Sandler 1981, 62.

[202] Williams 1999, 84.

[203] Rudolph 1997, 58.

disorder could be appropriate for representing all-too-human sin on the Ripon sedilia. In the case of the humans under the seat arches, their bold nakedness could be seen as an attribute of their baseness and foolishness, as can be seen in illuminated psalters in the initial to Psalm 52, 'the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God', where the fool is often shown naked, or in the case of the Macclesfield Psalter (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS I-2005), stripping in front of King David (fig. 268).[204]

Madeline Caviness has proposed that the monsters in the *Heures of Jean d'Evreux* (New York, The Cloisters, 54.1.2) are part of a strategy to objectify sexual temptations before the owner so she can reject them.[205] In a *bas-de-page* at the foot of the penitential psalms in the Clifford Hours (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 242), there is a confrontation of a coy, cloaked female head with a pair of hairy legs with a head in its groin (fig. 269). Michael Camille drew attention to this page, commenting how the former's bold stare almost appears to repel the sexualised monstrosity, citing medieval extramission theory as influential on the power of the gaze.[206] The proximity of this scene next to a supplicant portrait of the female owner of the book, along with the adjacent scene of fighting lions, further suggests how it was intended to illustrate positive spiritual combat in resisting sexual temptation. The rabbit and hare capital on the Ripon sedilia is also something one might expect to find in the margins of a lavish East Anglian manuscript and is a motif loaded with sexual connotations.[207]

This power of the monstrous gaze may be part of a strategy in intimidating the penitent at Ripon. While the figures in the middle of each arch of the sedilia meet the gaze of whoever might look towards the ceiling of the seats, those at the edges of each seat stare into each other's eyes as such hybrids often do in manuscripts such as the Gorleston Psalter (British Library, Add MS 49622). In this manuscript there are instances of a fully human body facing a monstrous parody of themselves (fig. 270), enacting the confrontation with their own sin, and in the case of this monk, dismissing it with his gesture. As was noted above, Sekules proposed that the exterior sculpture of Heckington may have been determined by Isabella de Vesci's

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[204] Jones 2004, 100–101; Panayotova 2008, f.77r.
[205] Caviness 1993; Tudor-Craig 2007, 489.
[206] Camille 1992, 37–38; Camille 2000, 197–223. Camille refers to this manuscript as the *Grey-Fitzpayne Hours,* which was later re-identified in Goodall 1997, 180–181.
[207] Caviness 1993, 343–344.

Mendicant confessor.[208] It has been shown that some illuminated books had the patron's confessor acting as mediator with the artists.[209] It is plausible that similar pictorial strategies for encouraging abstention from sin could be placed at the site of confession in a parish church. If the priest was the unremitting text, the bizarre figures that populated the 'marginal' space around his head could be conceived as confronting the repentant beholder with a tangible representation of their sins, folly and frail humanity.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER FIVE

The imagery associated with sedilia at their peak of desirability in the first half of the fourteenth century shows very different networks of development to their architectural formation shown in Chapters Three and Four. Instead of being conditioned by local building practice and regional style, the idea of placing figures above and behind sedilia to represent the church hierarchy appears to be traceable through identifiable patrons and their associations. The grotesques are a more comparable phenomenon to the formal development, part of a culture deeply concerned with sin and penitence, therefore common in all art-making of the period. These sophisticated ideas of ecclesiastical hierarchy and the embodiment of sin in a place appropriate to the bodies of the men that represented the Church in society demonstrate further how sedilia had reached their apex as an artistic genre: capable of both architectonic sophistication and being a site of thoughtful imagery. However, it was not to last, as shortly after the mid-century, sedilia entered a decline, both in numbers and such sophisticated examples.

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[208] Sekules 1995, 57–58.
[209] A potential patron for the early-fourteenth-century Macclesfield Psalter is a man preparing for the priesthood, and his Dominican confessor is represented under Psalm 107 (*confiteor*); Panayotova 2008, 44. The late-fourteenth-century Bohun manuscripts may have involved the mediation of the family's Austin Friar confessor; Dennison 1993, 33. Camille suggests it for the Luttrell Psalter, but with no direct evidence; Camille 1998, 144.

CHAPTER SIX: THE DECLINE OF SEDILIA

Even though the Perpendicular Style was established in England for more than a century, the total number of sedilia associated with it is less than half of the total from the thirteenth century, and around a quarter of the total from the Decorated Style. This chapter will show that the reasons for this are far from clear, but will ultimately be attributed to the growing notion of sedilia as a separate feature, and that this conflicted with the unifying aesthetic of the Perpendicular Style. The issue of wooden sedilia will also be reconsidered in context with the rise of the carpenter's art in the fifteenth-century parish church. Subsequently the chapter will bring the narrative of sedilia through the Reformation and up to the beginnings of their revival in the nineteenth century.

BEFORE THE DECLINE: THE TRANSITION FROM THE DECORATED TO PERPENDICULAR IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The Perpendicular Style was maligned by Victorian ecclesiologists and subsequent early twentieth-century art historians who saw it, like the French Rayonnant Style of *c.*1240-1350, in its uniformity and lack of progression, as demonstrating a long period of artistic malaise or lack of creativity.[1] Both Rayonnant and Perpendicular, however, can be seen as extremely successful systems for creating buildings where the overall effect is of harmonious order in elements.[2] It is perhaps this large-scale aesthetic that discouraged sedilia – which had developed into a small-scale site of display – appearing in new parish church chancels. The seminal effect of the Black Death of 1348 on English art and architecture has been much discussed in the context of the adoption of the Perpendicular as a 'national style'.[3] Modern scholarship has shown however that Perpendicular was not conceived as a formal reaction to the pestilence, but was present throughout the first half of the fourteenth century.[4]

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[1] Prior ends his *A History of Gothic Art in England* with a scant 23-page chapter on 'Gothic Architecture after 1350', more of an apologetic epilogue than an actual overview of late English Gothic; Prior 1900, 426–448. For a reappraisal of the Rayonnant; Hoey 2003, 183.
[2] Woodman 1986, 5; Wilson 1987, 80–82; Wilson 2003, 99–103.
[3] Lindley 1996; Binski 2014, 355–360.
[4] Wilson 1979; Hastings 1955.

The second half of the fourteenth century was a period of national transition from the curvilinear experimentation of the Decorated to the rectilinear orthodoxy of the Perpendicular. During this time, it could be argued that older traditions: such as sedilia, became less popular, and new ideas: such as normative Perpendicular tracery, were gradually incorporated with greater frequency. A church such as Etchingham (Sussex), under construction in 1363-66, has simply moulded cusped-ogee-arched sedilia which, without the documentation, could have been considered to date from the first half of the century.[5] There are closely comparable early-Perpendicular chancels nearby in Sussex with sedilia. The moulded ogee-headed arches of Poynings' sedilia, *c*.1368, resemble those of Etchingham.[6] The sedilia at Alfriston (fig. 271) have exuberant, if rather coarse, concave gables over the seats.[7] These examples demonstrate the continuity of practice regarding sedilia within parochial style in the 1360s, as new fashionable motifs began to enter the repertoire of parish church masons. The precise dating evidence for Etchingham is unusual, but there are likely many more outwardly Decorated-Style chancels that were in fact built in the 1360s and 70s.

The Perpendicular Style is, as has been shown in Chapter Two, a modern label that is largely defined by the forms of window tracery. The east wall at Alfriston has a good example of what would come to dominate many parish churches in the fifteenth century: a large Perpendicular east window of a clear three-part division, through a pair of mullions continuing straight through into the tracery and curving into the jambs, eschewing curvilinear and ogee forms. There are two particularly important chancels that demonstrate how Perpendicular ideas were brought into design of the second half of the fourteenth century, while retaining the exuberant treatment of elements beloved by the Decorated Style. The grand chancel at Claypole (fig. 218) has been discussed in Chapter Five and has been shown as dating from 1340-78 through the tenure of the benefacting rector. Although the

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[5] Pevsner called the church 'not Perp in any one motif'; *BoE Sussex* 1965, 496. Nicholas Antram has significantly revised the statement to 'still essentially Dec, though with enough details that point to the coming Perp style'; *BoE East Sussex* 2013, 375. It is dated from a court case in 1368 in which Sir William de Etchingham claims mason Thomas Esshyng had failed to honour a contract of 1363 to install five three-light windows at Etchingham church; Harvey 1984, 102; Saul 1986, 140–141.

[6] Dated from the 1368 will of Sir Michael de Poynings (d.1369) who left 200 marks for the rebuilding of the church; Saul 1986, 144.

[7] Alfriston is undocumented but it is said by Saul to look more Decorated than Perpendicular; Saul 1986, 144. Pevsner memorably noted the sedilia as looking 'rather perverse'; *BoE Sussex: East* 2013, 91.

sculpture of the tall, ornate sedilia (fig. 217) is varied and delicately-carved, particularly the tiny studded motifs on the arch soffits, as has been noted, the straight-topped parapet above exhibits the rectilinear tendency of the Perpendicular. This is further represented in Claypole's east window tracery, with the characteristic Perpendicular design with continuous super-mullions as described above. The quatrefoils under the transom have been suggested by Richard Fawcett as influenced by Norwich Cathedral clerestory of the 1360s, and a date in this decade is quite possible.[8] This complex arrangement of elements in Perpendicular tracery at Claypole resembles that at the well-known transitionary Perpendicular church at Edington (Wiltshire), documented 1352-61.[9] Edington's sedilia (fig. 272) were mutilated by a now-removed monument, but the fine patterned vaults remain. On closer inspection it can be observed that they had tall ogee canopies, of a similar shape to Alfriston's sedilia, which have left a shadow on the ashlar above the western seat. This tall, concave gable, like the upper section of an ogee, was a common motif of the second half of the fourteenth century, particularly in London court workshops, as seen on the wooden tester over the tomb of Edward III at Westminster Abbey.[10] It serves as the shape of a number of gables over sedilia from the second half of the fourteenth century: for instance the particularly fine set inserted into the chancel at Cobham (Kent) when it became collegiate, almost certainly created by the workshop of Henry Yevele in the 1380s (fig. 273).[11] Almost identical canopies are seen in the sedilia at St Mary-de-Crypt in Gloucester (fig. 274), a church called new in 1401, so conceivably built in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[12] We have also seen this sort of canopy used over the sedilia of the 1380s inserted into the presbytery at Rochester Cathedral (fig. 181) in Chapter Four.

The miniature decorative vaults over the seats at Edington are also characteristic of sedilia from the Decorated-Perpendicular transition. Quadripartite

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[8] Fawcett 1975, 86.

[9] Harvey links Edington to John Sponlee's work at Windsor in 1250-63; Harvey 1978, 85; Harvey 1984, 280–281.

[10] Webb 1965, 136.

[11] Yevele is not documented at Cobham but his close association with Lord Cobham in other projects make his workshop's involvement in the renovation of the chancel and new college almost certain;. Torr 1931a; Saul 2001, 48–51. Newman gives a date of *c*.1383, presumably dating Yevele's work immediately after his last documented job with Lord Cobham in March of that year; *BoE Kent: West* 2013, 178-179.

[12] *VCH Gloucester Vol. 4* 1988, 301. The reference is in Hockaday Abstracts, ccxix, in the Gloucester record office.

rib-vaults have been shown in Chapter Four to have first been used over sedilia in the late thirteenth century, and are often found in large sets such as Bishopstone (Wiltshire) (fig. 204), where the size of the sedilia almost demands that the ceiling over the seats to be given such treatment as if it were a miniature building. However, sedilia vaults became much more common after the second half of the fourteenth century.[13] This is because of the development of the 'tipped-up' lierne vault.[14] This is entirely decorative rather than structural, and thus can be used to ornament smaller sedilia, such as at Chesterton (Cambridgeshire) (fig. 275).[15] It is noticeable that a number of sedilia with vaults can be dated to the late-fourteenth-century transition, rather than well into the fifteenth century. Ulverscroft Priory (Leicestershire) has recently been connected to the mid-fourteenth-century 'court' work of William Ramsey on account of a similar quatrefoil frieze to that at Lichfield Cathedral.[16] Its sedilia are much damaged, but clearly had these tip-up decorative vaults.[17] Tunstead's (Lincolnshire) tip-up vaulted sedilia have delicately-carved ogee arches similar to many early-fourteenth-century Decorated sets (fig. 276). Tunstead's chancel must be later than its nave, which has been attributed by Fawcett to the Great Walsingham mason (active during the mid-century), although perhaps not much later, as both display a similar character.[18] The chancel of Sleaford (Lincolnshire) is dated quite precisely by an inscription of 1403 under the east window, and has tip-up vaulted sedilia with very flatly-carved crocketed ogee arches (fig. 277).[19] The chancel of Louth (Lincolnshire) is documented as being granted oaks for its roof in 1431 so its south chancel aisle sedilia with tip-up vaults are a late example of this motif.[20]

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[13] I have identified 23 Decorated sets with vaults, and 35 Perpendicular.

[14] Tip-up vaults can be found as early as the 1340s on the Exeter Cathedral west front image screen; Baylock and Allan 1991, 102.

[15] Other examples: St Nicholas in Kings Lynn (Norfolk), Leverton (Lincolnshire), Silk Willoughby (Lincolnshire), Walpole St Peter (Norfolk) and Old St Chad in Shrewsbury.

[16] Clark 2010a, 105–106; Bony 1979, 61. For Ramsey at Lichfield, see Wilson 1979, 223–240; Binski 2014, 62. *BoE Leicestershire* 1984, 415 states Ulverscroft simply to be a 'Perp remodelling'.The sedilia at Cottenham (Cambridgeshire) also have this distinctive quatrefoil frieze which may betray a mid-fourteenth-century date.

[17] Clark 2010a, 265, actually considers the sedilia earlier than his supposed work by Ramsey. However this would make them extremely precocious examples of this sort of decorative vault.

[18] Fawcett 1975, 76, 157–184. Brandon saw the church as one build, and restored much of the tracery himself, which obscures the chronology; Brandon and Brandon 1858, Vol. 2, 15–16.

[19] Pevsner and the CVMA mention an *orate* inscription for a Richard Dokke under the east window as dating it to the 1430s; *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 650; Hebgin-Barnes 1996, 257. However, the inscription was recorded as being followed by MCCCCIII; Pegge 1787, 50; Creasey 1825, 50.

[20] Harvey 1984, 234–235.

Although clear dates remain an issue for many examples, sedilia do appear to have remained a generally-established feature during the stylistic transition of the late fourteenth century, and perhaps into the early decades of the fifteenth. They also incorporated new forms such as the semi-ogee gable and tip-up rib-vault onto the basic two-dimensional structure of the 'classic' type.

PERPENDICULAR SEDILIA

This changes in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, when the ubiquity of the fully-developed Perpendicular eliminates any lingering memory of Decorated traditions and motifs. Sedilia certainly did not drop in popularity because of a plethora provided by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as has been said by some writers.[21] While only a full survey of the south wall of every medieval chancel in England could provide accurate statistics, it is safe to say that hundreds of new chancels were built in the fifteenth century with blank walls next to the altar, with no architectural provision for seating the officiating clergy.

Unlike the characteristic ogee arches of the Decorated, the decorative forms of the mature Perpendicular Style did not make their mark on the few sedilia that were still being designed to the same extent. It has been noted that, as the shafted arcade had been to the thirteenth, and the canopied niche to the fourteenth, the cusped panel was to the fifteenth century.[22] Such ornament, as precociously used in Gloucester choir's remodelling, could be seen as the ultimate solution to the English problem of developing a Gothic aesthetic that suits the Romanesque legacy of the Conquest that we have dealt with in Chapter Three. Perpendicular panelling is concerned with a much shallower shaping of space than the shafted arcade or niche, and leads to a much less formally interesting element with which to create sedilia. The most typical form for fifteenth-century sedilia is three round-headed or gently pointed arches set in a square frame with simple cusping: an example among dozens being Gayton (Norfolk) (fig. 278). Examples of this 'normative' Perp sedilia associated with dated chancels are Harmondsworth (Middlesex), 1396-8 (fig. 279), Battlefield (Shropshire), after 1403, and Tong (Oxfordshire) *c*.1410 suggesting that it

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[21] Platt 1981, 44.
[22] Prior 1900, 381.

became established by around the turn of the century.[23] A confirmable late set of this broad type is in the parish church of Fairford, rebuilt almost entirely in the early 1490s and famous for its glazing: these sedilia have a crenellated cornice, but otherwise are extremely plain.[24]

Thirsk (Lincolnshire), *c*.1431 (fig. 280) and St Mary in Oxford, 1459-65 (fig. 281) are unusual examples of fifteenth-century sedilia using this simple framework for greater display, as was common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[25] Generally, however, the repertoire of elements for sedilia design seems to have become more restrictive. It is notable that many of the most 'Perpendicular'-looking sedilia are either of the second half of the fourteenth century, or restoration of dubious authenticity. Ingham (Norfolk), documented as converted into a priory in 1360 and probably built into the 1370s, has sedilia with characteristic all-over panelling (fig. 282), but are greatly restored, with apparently only a few sections of the shafts original.[26] The attractively-panelled sedilia at Brisley (fig. 283) seem to be of a similar date as the chancel of one build with both curvilinear and Perpendicular windows: also recommending a date in the late-fourteenth-century transition.[27] Adderbury (Oxfordshire) is an especially well documented building of 1408-18, but unfortunately is much restored, and its lavish panelled sedilia must largely owe their appearance to the Buckler restoration of 1834.[28] Tattershall (Lincolnshire), *c*.1465 (fig. 284) has a similar use on the sedilia of panelling over the depressed four-centred arches with ogee hoods, and also an attractive frieze of animals in the cornice.[29] Friskney and Gressenhall (both Lincolnshire) are some rare sedilia that

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[23] Harmondsworth was rebuilt at the expense of corporate rectors Winchester College, and the date is recorded in the muniments; Harvey 1978, 135–136.
Battlefield was founded as a chantry for the Battle of Shrewsbury fought in 1403.
Tong was granted license as a college in 1410; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1408-13*, 280.
[24] Since the sedilia have crenellation resembling the exterior parapet, it is possible they are from the second phase of embellishment any time up to 1534; Eavis 2007, 30–41.
[25] A licence for a chantry at Thirsk founded by Robert Thirsk (d.1419) was granted 1431; *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1429-1436*, 212, and heraldic arguments give the east window glazing a *terminus ante quem c*.1460; *BoE Yorkshire North Riding,* 1966, 365; Harvey 1978, 172.
Work was in progress on the choir of St Mary Oxford in 1459-65; Harvey 1984, 50.
[26] Harvey 1978, 95. The sedilia and piscina are judged 'mostly Victorian' in *BoE Norfolk 1* 2002, 575. The church is noted as in a particularly dilapidated condition in 1824; Neale and Le Keux 1824, (Ingham), 4.
[27] *BoE Norfolk 2* 1999, 219. Similarly embellished are the sedilia at Shropham (Norfolk).
[28] Harvey 1978, 20.
[29] Tattershall is given a *terminus post quem* by the will of Ralph Lord Cromwell (d.1455/6) made 1454/5, which says that he should be buried 'in the midst of the quire of that Collegiate Church of Tatshall until the whole fabrick should be new built'; Nicolas 1826, Vol. 1, 276. A charter for the college was obtained 1440; *Cal. Pat. Rolls* 1436-1441, 292.

significantly utilise Perpendicular motifs in a totally free manner: in blind tracery behind the seats at Friskney and very unusual varied motifs in the straight-headed canopies at Gressenhall (fig. 285).

Therefore, not only do sedilia in parish church chancels fall in numbers, but they frequently are less interesting features than those of the early fourteenth century. This could be attributed to the general repertoire of the Perpendicular mason being more restricted. The widespread adoption and relevance of the Perpendicular at parish level was due to how it allowed buildings that fulfilled the aesthetic values of the style to be erected by workforces *en masse*.[30] Whereas before builders could incorporate motifs such as dado arcades from cathedrals, the more self-contained manner of the later parish church building industry meant that sedilia no longer manifested through the use of such forms. As has been argued, in the thirteenth century, building was more of a learning process, adapting great-church ideas in new contexts to suit the needs of the structure. There is an increasing sense for the fifteenth century of a much more systematic approach to parish church design that focused on the overall effect of a building rather than dwelling on individual sites of display like sedilia. Therefore, fifteenth-century stone sedilia were mostly either very simple features, executed with a minimum of motifs, or, more commonly, not installed at all.

GRAND SEDILIA OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO WOODWORK

There is, however, a notable group of exceptions to this wider trend of absence or simplicity. These are stone sedilia that project from the wall, with polygonal canopies in the manner of carpentered choir stalls. Before the fifteenth century, it may be observed that nearly all sedilia (except the inherently three-dimensional freestanding sets in great churches) are basically pieces of relief carving stuck into the wall above relieving arches. Even the gently projecting form of the nodding ogee has been shown to be very rare indeed. The two-dimensional tall gable over the arches of sedilia, first found in the late thirteenth century, was subsequently used as the basic model of the most lavish fourteenth-century mural sets, such as Heckington (fig. 206). After the brief interlude of the late-fourteenth-century semi-ogee detailed

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[30] Wilson 2003, 99, 114.

above, in the fifteenth century, such tall canopies in relief carving entirely disappeared. They found their closest successor in a small number of significant sets with projecting polygonal canopies with small tapering ogee gables on each face, which look rather similar to the wooden canopies of great-church choir stalls. As Joanne Allen has shown, such stalls are first extant at Lincoln Cathedral, and were subsequently imitated at Chester Cathedral (fig. 286) and Nantwich (Cheshire), whereupon they became a widely-accepted form.[31] A potentially early example showing this form in stone is the sedilia at Redgrave (Suffolk), in a chancel with flowing Decorated tracery.[32] Other examples of these canted canopies with close documentary evidence are Ludlow (Shropshire), 1422-47 and Gloucester Cathedral Lady Chapel, *c*.1465-82.[33] The sedilia at the chapel of All Souls College in Oxford (fig. 287) are some of the finest Perpendicular sedilia, with tall canted canopies featuring miniature ogee gables, and are datable to around its consecration in 1442.[34] The few sedilia that date from the early Tudor period often show this feature of a three-dimensional canopy. The sedilia at the former chapel of the Gaunt's Hospital, Bristol (now the Lord Mayor's chapel) (fig. 288) date to when the chancel was rebuilt along with the tomb of Bishop Salley of Llandaff (d.1515).[35] Furness Abbey's famous four-seat sedilia of similar grandeur relate to an undated Perpendicular remodelling of the twelfth-century east end, and could be of a similar Tudor date, as their tall, tapering ogees are very similar to those at Bristol (fig. 289).[36]

The sedilia at Maids Moreton (Buckinghamshire) (fig. 290) also feature tapering ogees on polygonal canopies.[37] Because of how the sedilia canopy

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[31] Allen 2008.

[32] *BoE Suffolk* 1974, 398-399. Pevsner labels the sedilia 'Perp'. The patterned rib-vaults does fit into our categorisation of early Perpendicular, separate from flowing Decorated, but as I have not seen this sedilia I would not like to hazard if they have been inserted later.

[33] Ludlow: Cranage 1901, 112, 115.
Gloucester: The dating under the abbacies of Hanley and Farley by Leland is confirmed by badges in the stained glass; *BoE Gloucestershire 2* 2002, 411, 417; Welander 1991, 265–266.

[34] Walker and Munby 2010, xxvii. The sedilia's details are different from those of the reredos documented *c*.1447 and are thought to represent the work of John Massyngham, who is referred to earlier in the accounts; Jacob 1933, 130–131. A photograph (Bodleian Library, Minn Coll., 22/4) of the newly-uncovered east wall in 1872 shows the sedilia with the gables of their canopies hacked off, but attests to their authenticity despite Scott's restoration.

[35] *BoE Somerset: North* 2011, 257-258 notes them as 'unusually three-dimensional'.

[36] Beck 1844, 379–381; Robinson 1998, 116; *BoE Cumbria* 2010, 355-356.

[37] The VCH calls them greatly restored, with the crowning cornice entirely modern; *VCH Buckingham Vol. 4*, 1927, 202, but they are illustrated in their current form in Lysons 1806, Vol. 1, 490.

unusually rests on two corbels, it appears to have been set at later date into a formerly plain drop-sill: as found in the opposite north window and nave windows. The church itself is traditionally but not firmly dated to the 1450s, unusual in that it has no arcades and a number of quite creative aspects. [38] However the sculpture elsewhere in the church, such as the fan vaults over the west porch (fig. 291), is not as finely carved as and uses different motifs from the sedilia. The sedilia could be dated by the large Last Supper painted on their back wall.[39] Although sometimes considered as Laudian, the consensus is currently that it is immediately pre-Reformation but entirely English, *c.*1520-30.[40] The appearance of a narrative Biblical scene is unique in the surviving corpus of sedilia.[41] Although it is an image that would be very apt for the Eucharist, it is problematic in that it would imply that the priest sat in front of Christ in the central seat: which is not the practiced seating order in medieval England, as demonstrated in Chapter One.

It could be argued that these stone sedilia were a consequence of a formal exchange with woodwork, which had begun to increase in grandeur and prominence in fifteenth-century churches. This may have been occurring on a limited scale for over a century before this. The early gabled sedilia at St Mary's Hospital Chichester, closely dateable to the 1290s, may owe their extravagant gables to the fact they accompany the earliest surviving set of canopied choir stalls in the country (fig. 47).[42] I have suggested in Chapter Five that the built-up form of the fourteenth-century sedilia at Bishopstone (fig. 204) and Sandiacre (fig. 203) may also have been competing with woodwork in the western chancel of these prebendal churches. We

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[38] *BoE Buckinghamshire* 1994, 454; Leedy 1980, 81–82. The date of the church is usually connected to the refounding of the church by the two maiden daughters of Thomas Pever (d.1429), *VCH Buckingham* Vol. 4, 1927, 202, 204; Lipscomb 1847, Vol. 3, 45; a tradition recorded as early as 1644, Long 1859, 21.

[39] Keyser 1901, 54. The Last Supper is mentioned in Willis 1755, 231 as drawn over by an 'unskilful dauber'. The painting is not visible in the illustration in Lysons 1806, Vol. 1, 490, the back instead being an ashlar pattern. Keyser also mentions a Crucifixion in the place corresponding the sedilia on the north wall, this must now be covered by the whitewash.

[40] Opinion of John Mitchell, in discussion with David Park, 2003. Pevsner originally gave the painting a date of *c.*1600; *BoE Buckinghamshire* 1960, 197, which has been revised to 'probably C16'; *BoE Buckinghamshire* 1994, 454.

[41] Formerly behind the seats of the sedilia of St Mary-de-Crypt in Gloucester (fig. 274) were paintings, described as the consecration of a bell, the brazen serpent, and a noble presenting a chalice to an abbot accompanied by a retinue of monks; Clarke 1850, 67–68. The work inside the sedilia is now completely lost, but was probably related to the exceptionally high-quality paintings further up the walls that were painted in the early sixteenth century; *BoE Gloucestershire 2* 2002, 452-453; Gill et al. 1996, 320–322.

[42] Tracy 1987, 9–12. The dating of 1290 comes from an order to close a public footpath across the site in that year, *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1282-92,* 356, supported by stylistic comparisons.

should be careful of assuming that a failure to meet with the challenge of woodwork was the cause of the overall decline in sedilia across parish churches, as even minor sets of stalls are rare beyond collegiate churches.[43] But with the undeniable growth in woodwork, it is certainly a plausible situation that simple benches were now being replaced with more sophisticated sets of seating built against wooden rood screens, with desking and poppy-heads.[44] Salle (Norfolk), a parish church on a collegiate scale famed for its surviving medieval furniture, demonstrates how the design of the 1440s chancel had shifted from an emphasis on stone furnishings to the provision of woodwork.[45] Salle's choir enclosure with misericords contrasts to the simple drop-sill sedilia provided for the officiating clergy at the altar. At Trunch (Norfolk), a smaller-scale chancel, the surviving choir woodwork of desks and benches accompanies drop-sill sedilia with a piscina built into the angle, with bare capitals indicating a lost canopy over the sedilia.[46] This missing element may also have been woodwork, like the famous font ciborium at the west end of the church.

However, this theoretical idea of wooden canopies over stone window-seats brings up a larger subject: the question of standalone wooden furniture serving as sedilia. Throughout this thesis, this issue has proven an epistemological quandary. There was no symbolic reason that sedilia had to be made of stone. Thus it is almost certain that wooden furniture was provided in the absence of sets of stone sedilia in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century parish churches. However the almost negligible physical and documentary evidence can only suggest that such furniture was often very simple indeed. The general increase of the amount of high-quality woodwork in English parish churches in the fifteenth century: rood screens, font covers, choir stalls, nave benches, hammer-beam roofs; all of which do not seem to have had much precedent before, makes the issue of wooden sedilia very different to earlier centuries.[47] There are also the issues of greater trade links with the continent and the increase of foreign craftsmen resident in England in the fifteenth century that have

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[43] The earliest candidate for parochial choir seating are the stalls at Clifton Campville (Staffordshire) which have been dated from its misericords as mid-fourteenth-century; Jeaves 1947, 48; Remnant 1969, 139–140. A great deal of choir furniture was imported from dissolved monasteries, and is therefore not always representative of the medieval choir furniture of the parish; O'Connell 2008, 230–233.
[44] O'Connell 2008, 233–241.
[45] Heslop 1988, 154–199; Parsons 1937, 59–61.
[46] For Trunch choir furniture: O'Connell 2008, 238.
[47] Cox and Harvey 1908; Bond 1910; Cox 1923.

been shown to have greatly affected English art.[48] Wooden sedilia survive throughout continental Europe in significant numbers, but much as for stone sedilia in England, I have found no survey of them as a group.[49] The sedilia from St Clement de Tahull (Spain), now preserved in the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya in Barcelona, are an extremely early survival, not at all Gothic in appearance, dating perhaps to the late thirteenth century (fig. 292).[50] The coved sedilia in the Johanneskirche, Osnabruck (Germany), with a variety of figurative carvings, sadly heavily damaged in the Second World War, date to around the early fourteenth century (fig. 293).[51] There are many examples of similar, cubicle-like wooden sedilia (*levitensitz*) in the Western European Florid Gothic Style of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Examples include the Carmelite church in Boppard (Germany) and Ennetach (Germany) (fig. 294), the latter signed and dated 1506 by Jörg Syrlin.[52] A late fifteenth-century Westphalian altarpiece of the Mystic Mass of St. Gregory in the Musée de Cluny, Paris (Cl. 840) (fig. 295) features so far the only depiction of such sedilia I have found in panel painting, usually a rich source for the equipment of late medieval liturgy. The lack of such representation in Netherlandish or French painting suggests that wooden sedilia seem to have been more of a tradition in Germany than anywhere else.[53]

There is, however, no evidence that sedilia like these, or other church furniture other than altarpieces, chests and occasionally lecterns, were shipped to England.[54] As often remarked in this thesis, wooden sedilia are extremely rare in England, but those we have are different from the cubicle-like form of *levitensitz*. Westminster Abbey (fig. 159) and Beverley Minster (fig. 165) have already been encountered, and are the only examples before 1400: also the former has been argued as owing its material to the context of being the first sedilia constructed in an aisled choir. The fifteenth-century sets at Hexham Abbey (fig. 167) and St David's

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[48] Reynolds 2003, with bibliography.

[49] German terminology, when not borrowing the English neologism, is either '*levitensitz*', essentially the same as the medieval '*sedes ministrorum*' that is identified in Chapter One as the closest medieval term for sedilia, or '*dreisitz*'.

[50] Morant and Gassiot-Talabot 1970, 275.

[51] Dated 1330s in Gunther 2004.

[52] *Dehio Handbuch: Baden-Wurtemberg II* 1997, 175. Artist bibliography in Baxandall 1980, 302.

[53] Similar wooden sedilia can be occasionally glimpsed in the Office of the Dead in Books of Hours, e.g.: the Llangattock Hours of *c*.1450 (Malibu, Getty Museum, Ludwig IX.7 fol. 131v) and a loose miniature from a Netherlandish late-fifteenth-century example (London, British Library, Add 25698, f.2). I thank my examiner Richard Fawcett for these two examples.

[54] Tracy 1999, 100.

Cathedral (fig. 166) may indeed be representative of many more such examples of great church sedilia that were set up between earlier arcades. It is notable that all the English great church wooden sedilia are designed to be freestanding in this way, perhaps using the material solely as a solution for the problem of constructing sedilia within an aisle arcade. In contrast, a great many of the continental wooden sedilia were placed flush against the wall, showing how the two traditions were divergent.

We have seen in Chapter One how extant chairs that could have been of liturgical function are either dubious in their provenance or authenticity. There are, in fact, only four sets of wooden furniture in English parish churches that appear to have been the medieval sedilia. The pair of high-backed chairs at Much Hadham (Hertfordshire) (figs. 296, 297) have been suggested as the dismembered remains of three-seat sedilia (fig. 298).[55] This furniture would have covered the thirteenth-century double piscina, forming a new ensemble with the contemporary single piscina to its east. The only comparable piece of church furniture to this is the little-known coved freestanding bench at St Peter, Sheffield (now the cathedral) (fig. 299).[56] Its current appearance is largely reiterated in an etching dated 1819 by the architect Edward Blore (fig. 300), which shows the third seat narrower than the others, cutting a light in half, as today, but with lost arcading under the seats.

Perhaps the two most important wooden sedilia survive in the parish churches at Doddington (figs. 301, 302) and Rodmersham (fig. 303) (both Kent).[58] These sedilia were both incorporated into the wooden parclose screening between the south chancel chapel and the sanctuary, and emphasise the seating below by the means of a wooden cove. The actual bench at Doddington no longer stands under this cove, and is currently kept on the north side of the chancel. Rodmersham, in contrast to this, is a more impressive and cohesive feature. The purpose for the choice of the material here is clear: as the chancels are aisled on the south side, traditional stone mural sedilia were impossible. While Rodmersham is wide enough for three men and has armrests and double panels of tracery behind to reflect this, Doddington is only wide enough for two, and its five open cinquefoil panels would not accentuate the occupants of the bench. However, since these sedilia are only a

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[55] Roe 1929, 38–42.

[56] The sedilia are missed in the current *BoE Yorkshire West Riding* 1962, 450-451. Until the publication of the revision of the southern half of the Riding, see brief mentions in *BoE Cathedrals of England: The North and East Anglia* 2005, 298; Harman and Minnis 2004, 54. They are mentioned in a list of wooden sedilia in Bond 1916, 198.

[58] Howard and Crossley 1919, 140; Cox 1923, 19.

few miles apart, we should be cautious about seeing them as typical, and instead as representing a peculiarly local phenomenon. Conversely, they do appear to be of quite separate dates, and not by the same workshop. The cinquecusped panels at Doddington are typical of a mid-fifteenth-century screen, with refined foliate in-fills to the spandrels. Rodmersham is of very different motifs: round-headed cusped panels and debased rose-window motifs that could suggest a post-1500 date. That these four sets of parish church wooden sedilia are survivors of a once much larger corpus cannot be taken for granted. I have shown in Chapter One how, beyond the documented *cathedrae ministrorum altaris* in the St Paul's visitations of the 1290s, references to wooden sedilia in documentation, medieval or Reformation, are rare indeed. This is in contrast to the well-documented phenomenon of wooden Easter Sepulchres, of which we can be sure many existed: even if the only extant example is at Cowthorpe (North Yorkshire).[59]

However, there are a number of examples of fifteenth-century stone sedilia that suggest emulation of wooden furniture in overall shape, indicating that the latter may have been more numerous. A significant stone parallel to the sedilia built into the screens at Rodmersham and Doddington can be found in the Trinity Chapel of Cirencester (Gloucestershire). The chapel, dating from around *c*.1430, is separated from the north aisle by an arcade with a built-in screen.[60] The bench-like sedilia, with delicate canopies above (fig. 304) are part of this screen and may be representative many more chantry enclosures that were partitioned off with woodwork, and that had no wall to the south of the altar in which to install mural sedilia. A number of mural sedilia also seem to have characteristics that imply a relationship to pieces of wooden furniture: exemplified by the partially-mutilated sedilia at Southwold (Suffolk) (fig. 305): a church documented in building from around 1430 to 1460.[61] It is an undivided stone bench with shields on its front, with nine bays of tracery from which springs a decorative vault that would seem to have originally extended into a coved ceiling. There is also a demarcated bay for a piscina decorated with a mouchette wheel underneath. This coved roof offers a formal similarity with the coves at Rodmersham, Doddington and Sheffield, as well as continental sets such as Lüne Abbey (Germany), *c*.1410 (fig. 306) and the

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[59] Tracy in Marks and Williamson 2003, 388–389; Whiting 2010, 103–106.
[60] This date is ascertained from a combination of heraldic and testamentary evidence; Verey 1976, 35.
[61] Haward 1993, 337.

Clemenskirche, Wissell (Netherlands) (fig. 307). The stone sedilia at Piddlehinton (Dorset) also has a very strong similarity to a piece of freestanding wooden furniture of this type (fig. 308).[62] Tattersett (Norfolk) has a simple cove made out of brick, suggesting a sixteenth-century date when this material, unique in the sedilia corpus, became more popular. The largely undecorated single-niche sedilia also became proportionally more common in the fifteenth century, as noted in Chapter Two. In the sedilia at Stokesley (North Yorkshire) (fig. 309) and Long Bennington (Lincolnshire) (fig. 310) the seat is clearly wide enough for three men, but the single wide niche has no demarcation. It is clear from these examples that the once ubiquitous 'classic' type was no longer being as widely held as an ideal as it had been in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

'CLASSIC' SEDILIA AS AN ARCHAISM IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Although the 'classic' type was being less often constructed in the fifteenth century, the corpus of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sedilia that survives to this day shows that they must still have remained appropriate fittings and kept in use. It raises the possibility that the characteristic formal language of 'classic' sedilia was regarded as 'old-fashioned'. This assumption can be supported by the *retardataire* style of some fifteenth-century sets. An especially well-documented case is the sedilia at Catterick, which, as we have seen in Chapter One, are mentioned in a vernacular contract of 1412 as 'prismatories'. The church has essentially Perpendicular-Style tracery, as one would expect by this date, but the sedilia are still like the Decorated Style in their general form (fig. 311), with ogee major arches and crocketed gables: except all very flatly carved, as might be expected with craftsmen artificially emulating an older style. It is difficult to draw conclusions regarding the form of the Catterick sedilia and how it represents the general status of sedilia in the fifteenth century, as the contract is an extremely unusual survival and there are only a handful of comparable examples. A contract for the rebuilding of the church at Sandon (Hertfordshire) in 1348 between a canon of St Paul's and a mason, wholly in

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[62] Oxborough and Upwell (both Norfolk) are further examples that represent this uniquely fifteenth-century type of stone sedilia.

Latin, details the general design of the chancel but does not mention the sedilia.[63] Nevertheless, sedilia were installed at Sandon: once fairly elaborate blind ogee arches carved into the sill of a south window (fig. 41).[64] The context for the unique term used at Catterick may be that, unlike Sandon, where they were included as a matter of course, sedilia had to be specifically requested as an archaic fitting, and perhaps why the term was a made-up one. The appearance of gables over the Catterick sedilia may have been related to the chain of influence in canopied sedilia around the Richmond area that we saw in Chapter Four: from Patrick Brompton (fig. 197) to Ainderby Steeple (fig. 198) and Burneston (fig. 199). The chancel at Bolton Percy (West Yorkshire) is dated 1411-23 by a lost inscription attributing its building to a rector of that tenure.[65] Its sedilia have tall, detached ogee canopies that also demonstrate the survival of Decorated-Style exuberance in the county (fig. 312). The coarse carving at Catterick would then seem to be a late manifestation of a northern local trend for gabled sedilia, and indicates how their Decorated-Style appearance remained constant as they were built along with Perpendicular fenestrated chancels.

Stratford-upon-Avon's (Warwickshire) chancel, documented as ascribed to Dean Thomas Balshall (1465-1491) has another set of fifteenth-century sedilia that use distinctly early-fourteenth-century forms.[66] They have nodding ogees surmounted by conical, bulky crocketed pinnacles, and figures of angels under the seats (fig. 313). The canopies are identical to those of the image niches flanking the east window, and also the execution is similar to Dean Balshall's tomb chest opposite, which has a Passion cycle under crocketed depressed ogees around its perimeter. These sedilia might pass as *c.*1330 out of context, but the execution is unrefined and very broadly carved, further confirming it as an emulation of a century-old style. Almost identically-designed sedilia, with both the tall conical canopies and angels under the seats, are found in Sudeley (Gloucestershire) parish church (fig. 314), rebuilt by Ralph Boetler, *c.*1460, lord of the adjacent castle.[67] The

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[63] Salzman 1952, 437–438. The contract is with St Paul's as they held the rectorship of the church, hence its inclusion in the thirteenth-century visitations investigated in Chapter One; Simpson 1895a, xx–xxi; Harvey 1978, 61–65.

[64] *BoE Hertfordshire* 1977, 331.

[65] Poole 1844, Vol. 1, pt. 4, 5, 9–10.

[66] From a recording of a glass inscription by Dugdale; *VCH Warwick Vol. 3,* 1945, 271.

[67] This is later than his work on the castle in the 1440s, and is obtained from the similarity of the work at Winchcombe parish church, which is dated *c.*1454-68, where Ralph Boetler is said by Leland to have contributed to the rebuilding begun by the Abbot of Winchcombe Abbey; Emery 1996, Vol. 3,

church was ransacked in the Civil War and left without a roof until the Scott restoration, and the interior has been very much restored.[68] However, the sedilia canopies are identical to those on Sudley's west front, which was drawn by Lysons akin to its current form in 1803.[69] This suggests a single workshop active in the 1460s, possibly connected to Winchcombe Abbey, was responsible for both Stratford and Sudley. That these two sets of old-fashioned sedilia were provided for apparently two very different funding patrons: rector and lord of the manor, makes it difficult to deduce the concepts behind this peculiar emulation of fourteenth-century style.

Sedilia could also be kept in new Perpendicular chancels as a manifest sign of continuity. The church at Lowick was entirely rebuilt in Perpendicular at the expense of the Greene family and the east end was probably complete by 1394.[70] The two-seat sedilia (fig. 315), of a style suggesting *c*.1330-40, are not late-fourteenth-century *retardataire* like Catterick, but legitimate Decorated-Style examples. They have been kept from the previous building: clearly rearranged from their earlier three-seat form, with one seat being taken to the north chapel to serve as a sedile (fig. 316).[71] Less dramatically, many sedilia were kept when chancels were refenestrated in the Perpendicular Style. Combe (Oxfordshire) has been called a one-build Perpendicular church, but the general fabric of the chancel and its ogee-and-finial sedilia are almost certainly second-quarter fourteenth-century and kept when the nave was rebuilt and the chancel remodelled accordingly *c*.1400.[72] This shows that 'classic' sedilia were never considered as outdated as the Romanesque single-niche possibly came to be in the later Middle Ages: examples that have been suggested above of these being refashioned identified in the twelfth-century

170–178; Haigh 1947, 158–159; Smith 1907, Vol. 2, 55. This is supported by the arms of Lord Boetler on the piscina at Winchcombe; Dent 1877, 119–120.

[68] In 1930 the sedilia were called 'very much restored, if not altogether modern'; Rushforth and Knowles 1930, 19.

[69] Lysons 1803, pl.XLVII. Sudley is also related to Stratford by doorways with depressed crocketed arches flanked by large busts.

[70] The instigator of the construction was Ralph Lord Greene who gained the manor in 1369, and whose arms appear most frequently in the chancel. The glazing contains a marriage of 1394 which provides this as a *terminus post quem*; Marks 1998, 126–127.

[71] An eighteenth-century monument in-fills the north aisle piscina. The pinnacles have also been distributed, but the full complement of four (for the three gables of the sedilia) survive.

[72] *VCH Oxford Vol. 12*, 1990, 94 convincingly shows that the chancel is of a separate design from the nave and that the 1395 date cited in *BoE Oxfordshire* 1974, 551 for the single-build of the church has no grounding. Harvey mentions the church and the 1395 date a number of times in Harvey 1978, 118, 139, 154, 277, but only cites Emden 1951, 7–8. The earliest mention of the 1395 date appears to be Kennett 1818, 149.

presbyteries at Kirkstall Abbey (fig. 75) and Roche Abbey (fig. 77) and in the chancel at Chatham (Kent) (fig. 142).

In addition to the decline in new examples, there is some seemingly careless damage to sedilia caused by modifications in the later Middle Ages that suggests that these furnishings were becoming less valued. It has been shown in Chapter Four how the tombs of Archbishops Stratford (fig. 154) and Sudbury at Canterbury and Katherine Swynford at Lincoln (fig. 153) may have caused disruption to the original sedilia arrangement in these cathedrals. Similarly, great number of mural sedilia built into thirteenth-century parish churches must have been destroyed when chapels embracing the chancel were constructed, and a south arcade erected within the earlier fabric.[73] At Upchurch (Kent), the entire upper part of the sedilia was destroyed by a late-fourteenth-century arcade, with a pierced wooden screen replacing the original upper section to maintain visibility from the south aisle to the high altar (fig. 51).[74] At least here, the fourteenth-century masons took care to retain the seats and armrests, but with fifteenth-century arcades, we can assume that total destruction was quite common. In All Saints in Hereford, the piscina has ballflower ornament that gives the chancel and its furnishings an early fourteenth-century date, but the sedilia's western seat is knocked through by a door with a four-centred arch, suggesting its redundancy by the sixteenth century. A similar Tudor-arched door clips the sedilia at St Peter, Sandwich (fig. 138). Doors have also been knocked through the very fine thirteenth-century sedilia at the chancel of the former monastery of Chetwode (Buckinghamshire), and the drop-sill lancet of the *cappella extra portas* at Hailes (Gloucestershire), although these are probably post-Dissolution and relate to parochial adaption of the buildings.

AFTER THE REFORMATION AND VICTORIAN ATTITUDES TO SEDILIA

Despite a noticeable decline in their production, stone sedilia never appear to have reached a point where they could be considered entirely redundant in the English Church.[75] At the former abbey of Wymondham (Norfolk), sedilia appear to have been constructed in the east end of the former monastic nave from a Renaissance

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[73] Prior describes how a large number of parish churches are governed by the imprint of a thirteenth-century chancel, with the side walls cut entirely away by later arcades; Prior 1900, 170.

[74] *BoE Kent: East,* 2013, 581-582. The screen, of early fourteenth-century date is clearly in-situ as its mouldings follow that of the terminal edge of the sedilia.

[75] As stated in Whiting 2010, 193.

terracotta monument brought from the demolished monastic choir after its dissolution in 1538 (fig. 317).[76] This may be due to Wymondham's final abbot becoming vicar of the parish for much of the year 1539.[77] This short span of continuity with the old religion may be why this church could be considered as possessing the distinction of having built the final set of sedilia of the English Middle Ages. Sedilia, unlike altar reredoses set against east walls, survive in such great numbers because they do not seem to have been targeted by Puritans wishing to purge the English Church of 'papist' fittings. It may be that a number of churches kept their sedilia in use for the priest's epistler and gospeller, in the same way that hierarchy of readings and duties of personnel was maintained in the triple-decker pulpit.[78] Many sedilia were no doubt filled in and plastered over, as per the instruction of Bishop Bentham of Coventry and Lichfield who in 1565 proclaimed intent 'to dam up all manner of hollow places in the chancel and church'.[79] Certainly many sedilia would have been incidentally obscured by funerary monuments or wainscoting. Subsequently, removing such post-Reformation accretions from the chancel and finding sedilia was, after structural consolidation, a primary goal of many Victorian restorations.

The provision of new stone sedilia between the Reformation and the Gothic Revival are extremely rare, if non-existent.[80] Instead they appear largely to have been replaced by wooden chairs of domestic character, often found in English parish churches of a Jacobean or neo-Jacobean style, placed north and south of the altar facing west. These were called 'altar-chairs' by Victorian ecclesiologists, and were viewed with much disdain. Pugin vociferously objected to 'the love of modern Italian design' which he thought must have led to the removal of stone sedilia from continental choirs, and led instead to chairs 'fit only for the saloon of a hotel frequently used'.[81] The Cambridge Camden Society refused to provide designs for 'altar-chairs' based on the prejudice against such furniture.[82] The position facing the

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[76] Rolfe 2007; Barnes 2007, 188.

[77] Rustell 2007, 110–111. The parish chancel was levelled around 1550 for a communion table, so it is surprising that the sedilia survived; Rustell 2007, 116. It is then possible that they were erected in the Marian Counter-Reformation; Barnes 2007, 197; Rustell 2007, 116–121.

[78] Anon 1843, 90–91; Hewett 1848, 10 quoted in Pinnock 1855, 745.

[79] Heales 1889, 321.

[80] The piscina and sedilia at Buxted (Sussex) was considered by Pevsner as seventeenth-century Gothic-survival; *BoE Sussex* 1965, 465.

[81] Pugin 1844, 54.

[82] Anon 1843.

congregation, found in continental churches and very popular today, was considered most inappropriate as it would extinguish all devotional feeling and present the priest as an object of undue prominence.[83] Instead, the ecclesiologists proposed that three folding stools be set up on the Epistle side, or new stone sedilia provided.[84]

The revival of ritualism in the Church of England beginning in the 1830s brought about a revival in medieval features such as stone sedilia, triggering much debate around their function. The opinion of a Rev. Thomas James, in a paper he gave at Northampton on the 'internal arrangement and fitting-up of parish churches' stated that 'the old sedilia where they exist, should be returned to use, and where they do not, they should be introduced' with particular objection to the 'domestic character' of altar-chairs.[85] In contradiction to this keen revival of their function, the Cambridge Camden Society's tract *A Few Words to Church-Builders* in 1841 considered sedilia 'only ornaments' and that their restoration should not be insisted upon.[86] A visit by the Bishop of Manchester and his denouncement of the new church of Upper Broughton is illustrative of the uncertainty around their use.[87] The bishop objected to the sedilia because he thought that 'our rubric' places the minister on the north, which *The Ecclesiologist* rebutted as a misreading of the liturgy and again, took the opportunity to condemn altar chairs north and south of the altar.[88] As was shown in Chapter One, there was very little medieval documentation regarding 'altar seating' for the ecclesiologists to unearth, and it was not until Pugin's revival of the medieval *function* of previously only decorative Gothic *forms* that the genre of sedilia was reborn.

Consequently, the different attitudes to sedilia in the Victorian period led to many different approaches to them in churches, both newly installed and in restoration. However this thesis does not have space to consider Victorian sedilia as anything other than a barrier to interpreting the original medieval corpus. Occasionally medieval sedilia were left in a derelict state (e.g. Rothwell, fig. 140), sometimes restored with inserted sections of stone (e.g. Bampton, fig. 132), but quite

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[83] Anon 1843, 91. For the confusion of the priest with the presiding bishop facing west, particularly in Vatican II liturgy; Gatti 2001, 147–152.
[84] Anon 1843, 91–92.
[85] 'Northampton Archaeological Society [Annual meeting]' *The Ecclesiologist* 1847 (8:53), 177. This is in distinction to his opinion on rood screens, of which ancient examples be maintained, but new ones never introduced.
[86] Cambridge Camden Society 1841, 10–11.
[87] *The Ecclesiologist* 9, 1851, 45-49.
[88] *The Ecclesiologist* 9, 1851, 46-47.

frequently, as Rev. James recommended, new sedilia were inserted into the chancel fabric where they may not have previously been present. These entirely new sedilia are not the only problems caused by Victorian restoration. As has been shown in Chapter Two, the sedilia in Stepney (East London/Middlesex) (fig. 16) and Hayes (North-West London/Middlesex) (fig. 16) may represent a wider phenomenon of two-seat sedilia being 'restored' to the ideal three. It is rare to find a Victorian Neo-Gothic church without sedilia, and, conversely to the Middle Ages, they become more common than piscinas, as the latter's role was linked to transubstantiation which the Church of England did not revive.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER SIX

The dramatic fifteenth-century fall in popularity of sedilia, a feature that had been commonplace in chancels for around two centuries, is remarkable. It should be noted that unlike the origins of sedilia around 1200: linked to chancel rearrangements and extensions ultimately caused by changes in the rite of the Eucharist, the late decline does not seem to have been pressured by social, dogmatic or ritual concerns. Whatever observations can be made on the formal qualities of the majority of the fifteenth-century corpus, our conclusions must be drawn predominantly from their general scarcity and its relationship to the wider issues of church-building and style. The Rayonnant, on which the Perpendicular was heavily dependent in its development, has been seen as marking a change of patronage in French architecture, where secular patrons became more influential in shaping the design of buildings to their ideological concerns.[89] Much the same can be said of the later situation in England, as many parish naves in the fifteenth century were rebuilt on a scale never seen before, partly due to the wider patronage and benefactions from the laity. With the installation of sedilia becoming less habitual and more deliberate, this growth of lay over clerical agency in church buildings is potentially an important factor.

However, with medieval patronage such a difficult concept to attribute specifically (see Chapter Five), the main cause can be assigned to style. It has been suggested in the analysis of the geographical distribution that regional practice was the most important influence on the popularity of sedilia. Prior argued that the

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[89] Crossley in Frankl 2000, 23.

impact of the mid-century plague was decisive in supressing the individual regional styles that constituted the Decorated.[90] This idea of regional seizing-upon of the new 'national' style is confirmed by the important regional study by John Maddison on the introduction of Perpendicular into the north-west Midlands.[91] It could be said that, whereas the local style around Salisbury Cathedral discouraged sedilia in the surrounding area in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the fifteenth century a style was established with the same effect nationwide.

After the initial gathering of the limited liturgical and documentary evidence in Chapter One, this thesis has been very much concerned with such matters of style. Before we conclude the thesis, it will be considered whether the presence of sedilia and their number of seats actually represent the provision of clergy for parochial masses throughout medieval England.

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[90] Prior 1900, 445–448.
[91] Maddison 1978, 254; Maddison 1988.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SEDILIA AND CLERICAL STAFF

In the twelfth century, the earliest sedilia appear to have been exclusively confined to monastic, collegiate and ex-minster churches, such as St Mary de Castro, Leicester (fig. 80). These buildings are associated by long, straight-ended chancels suitable for staging a Solemn Mass at the high altar in the sanctuary while accommodating a sizeable collegiate community presiding to the west. By the mid-thirteenth century, these sorts of long chancels were appended to parish churches, with stone sedilia appearing within many of them. So far, this thesis has argued that the adoption and popularisation of sedilia was largely due to local building practice. Such formal analysis begs the question of whether sedilia were always used to capacity, and whether thirteenth-century parish churches were beginning to match the level of divine service and clerical staff that had previously only been found in collegiate churches. This chapter will briefly investigate the men who sat in the seats: how the many parish church sedilia considered throughout this thesis were actually filled.

DIOCESAN STIPULATIONS: THE IDEAL PARISH MASS

It has been acknowledged throughout this thesis that three-seat sedilia represent in stone the complement required by the liturgy of a Solemn Mass: priest, deacon and subdeacon. Certainly the presence of sedilia represents at least the *intention* for the regular performance of this. The sedilia in the south-east chapel of Southwell Minster's choir (fig. 109), one of the first closely-dateable examples of sedilia: to *c.*1241, can be demonstrated as specifically relating to a higher-than-usual provision of clergy. Seven chantry priests were endowed at the Minster by *c.*1268, but the location of their altars within the surviving fabric is elusive.[1] The altar of St Thomas the Martyr, at which a chantry of three priests was founded by Robert de Lexinton around 1241, is mentioned in its foundation deed as situated '*in novo opere*' , which indicates that it was situated in the Gothic east end then under construction.[2] If founded in the south-east chapel, these three clergy would explain why sedilia were installed there: because the patron was expecting Solemn, not low Masses to be said

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[1] McNeill 2011, 14–16; McNeill 1998, 27–28.
[2] McNeill 2011b, 15–16; Dimock 1869, 46–47.

in his honour.[3] This distinction is important because three-seat sedilia imply that a *missa solemnis* is being celebrated, not a *missa privata*: where all the parts are said by a single priest, which would mean he would not need to sit down. By extension, this would explain why sedilia begin to appear at altars in great church Lady Chapels (see Chapter Four), where it is attested that in the early thirteenth century a Solemn, sung Mass of the Virgin was to be celebrated daily 'in all the noble churches in England'.[4] Therefore we can see that sedilia only appeared at great church subsidiary altars where high Mass was intended, and that the same intent should be behind the sedilia at parish church high altars.

In a letter prepared in 1238-9 for distribution to all the parishes in his diocese, Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln (1235-1253) declared that:

> *'In singulis quoque ecclesiis, quarum faculentes ad hoc sufficiant, sint unus diaconus et unus subdiaconus in eisdem ut decet ministrantes: in aliis vero ecclesiis saltem sit clericus unus idoneus et honestus, qui sacerdoti cum habitu convenienti in divinis ministret officiis.*[5]

> 'In every church where sufficient funds are available for the purpose, there are to be one deacon and one subdeacon ministering, as is proper. But in the others, there should be at least one suitable and upright clerk, who, appropriately dressed, may serve the priest at divine services.'[6]

This seems to be the first version of this stipulation, which appears almost verbatim in the synods of Norwich 1240x1243, Durham II 1241x1249 and Ely [early fourteenth century].[7] At the synod of Exeter 1286, a deacon and subdeacon are listed (along with vestments and curtains for the altar) as desirable items in larger parish churches.[8] A decree often attributed to Archbishop Gray (1215-1255), but which has been suggested as no earlier than the fifteenth century, declared that the vestments of the deacon and subdeacon were the responsibility of the laity, attesting to the presence of two assisting clergy in a parish Mass.[9] This ideal complement can also be seen when the diocese interacts with specific churches, specifically in the staff

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[3] McNeill 2011b, 34, n.77. Compare with the chapels with a single sedile in Chester Cathedral in Chapter Two.
[4] Draper 1990, 141; Morgan 2003, 95–96.
[5] Robert Grosseteste, 188.
[6] Powicke and Cheney 1964, 273.
[7] Powicke and Cheney 1964, 350, 432; Feltoe and Minns 1917, 12.
[8] Powicke and Cheney 1964, 1006.
[9] *The Register, or Rolls, of Walter Gray, lord Archbishop of York p.217* Lehman-Brockhaus 1955-60, Nr. 5472; Cheney 1961, 18–19.

described in vicarage ordinations.[10] When in 1295 a vicarage was established at Aldington (Kent), it was stipulated that Mass was to be celebrated either by the vicar or a suitable minister, accompanied by the Holy Water clerk along with two men in the office of deacon, capable of reading and singing.[11] The advowson of Aldington was held by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but it was among many churches of which he held this privilege, and he was not the rector.[12] The church has late-fourteenth-century triple sedilia, unusually with no piscina but an integral priest's door. Unfortunately the shields are now unblazoned, but could have represented the Cathedral's right of advowson and continuing influence. Neither the sedilia nor the written stipulation prove that the ideal represented by both was actually fulfilled, but nevertheless show its widespread acceptance.

As Aldington's ordinance shows, the personnel requirements for parochial Mass did not demand two men who were in Holy Orders of deacon and subdeacon. This is unlike the staffing of cathedral churches. Originally cathedral prebends were equally distributed between the three offices of priest, deacon and subdeacon, but it eventually became a requirement for all cathedral canons to be priests.[13] Therefore, instead of being accompanied by fellow canons, it became the custom that the hebdomadary canon: the 'canon of the week' who amongst other duties celebrated all the Offices and High Mass, was assisted at the high altar by two vicars choral.[14] These vicars were partly appointed by absentee canons to take their place in choir, but also as a solution to the demands of the increase of liturgical activity in great churches.[15] The records of some continental cathedrals show that wherever possible, the proportions of priests, deacons and subdeacons within the vicars choral were kept equal.[16] These sources demonstrate that in a cathedral church, as one might expect, the Mass could be consistently executed with the ideal complement of clerical ranks.

Of course, such perfection could not be achieved throughout the diocese's parishes. While the preceding minor order of acolyte was not difficult to achieve, being ordained as a subdeacon generally meant that the ordinand would soon become

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[10] Townley 1991, 50.
[11] Hartridge 1930, 130; Graham 1952, 118–120.
[12] Hasted 1797, Vol. 8, 314–327.
[13] Edwards 1967, 34–35.
[14] Edwards 1967, 58.
[15] Barrow 2005, 11–16.
[16] Bamberg, Tournai and Hildesheim; Barrow 1989, 91–92.

a priest.[17] While many acolytes never became priests, it was rare for a man to suffer the restrictions of a clerical lifestyle under the office of subdeacon, without the benefits of being able to celebrate the Mass and the possibility of legitimately securing employment as a rector, vicar or perpetual chantry priest.[18] Canon law specified that diocesan ordinations took place four times a year: Ash Wednesday, Pentecost, and the feasts of the Holy Cross (14th September) and St Lucy (13th December).[19] Therefore it was possible and not uncommon for a man to progress from subdeacon to priest within a year.[20] Some parish churches in the later Middle Ages had a perpetually funded deaconate, as shown in a testament made at Bolingbroke (Lincolnshire) in 1515.[21] The duties of this parish deacon appear to have been largely liturgical. In 1500 at Sedgebrook (Lincolnshire) it was recorded that the parish deacon read the gospel at High Mass and rang the bells for the Hours.[22] Hereford chapter in 1402/3 employed two deacons and subdeacons at one of its appropriated churches.[23] Nevertheless it was clearly not the case that most parish churches could have had officiating clergy represented by the precise Holy Orders. The question is how many clerics, be they acolytes or deacons, were present in the parish to provide the adequate clerical complement for high Mass.

Alternatively to the three-minister ideal, the second section of Grosseteste's decree could be seen as admitting that this model could often not be achieved with parochial resources. Canon law required that a priest celebrated Mass with an assistant, so the bare minimum of liturgical performers was two.[24] The *clericus* allowed by Grosseteste as an acceptable assistant is held to be the parish clerk.[25] This

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[17] Robinson 1985, 7; Cullum 2004, 58–60. Subdeacon was originally ambiguous as to whether it was major or minor order, but by the thirteenth century was considered as major along with priest and deacon; Reynolds 1999.

[18] Robinson 2008, 52. While it was not infrequent to see deacons, subdeacons or even acolytes assigned benefices who never appear to attain the office of priest, these were clearly men who had support behind them meaning it was an appointment the bishop could not refuse; Moorman 1945, 201.

[19] Hill 1975, ix.

[20] In one survey, a quarter of clergy achieved this. Half took a further year to progress from deacon to priest; Robinson 1985, 7; Swanson 1989, 41–43.

[21] 'fowdynge off a dekyn perpetuall to have god the more honourably served in the church off Bolyngbroke'; Foster 1914, 68. Owen 1981, 105, states this is a bequest found in many fifteenth-century wills, but this is the only such bequest in the collection of wills published by the *Lincoln Record Society* as cited. For the parish deacon; Moorman 1945, 56.

[22] Owen 1981, 132. Similar duties were recorded at St Stephen's Coleman Street in the same period and other locations; Heath 1969, 20.

[23] Swanson 1989, 47.

[24] Alexander III to Bishop of Exeter (*Decret. Lib. V. tit. xli. c.14*); Reichel 1905, 122.

[25] Pounds 2000, 187–189.

was originally a religious office and tended to be held by a man ordained as acolyte, but by the later Middle Ages the position may have been secularised to the point where it could be held by a married man.[26] However, in the thirteenth century this was expressly forbidden. Diocesan stipulations against clerks marrying were issued, and enforced through threat of excommunication.[27] Simon Townley has shown that in the dioceses of Worcester and Hereford during the thirteenth century the presence of at least one assistant cleric was strictly enforced.[28] It is also recorded that in addition to the incumbent, assistant clergy and a clerk, parishes were required to have a holy water carrier (*aquebajulus*), who performed menial yet sacred duties.[29] It is these various types of unbeneficed clergy who are most likely to have been the men who assisted the rector, vicar or parochial chaplain in the roles of deacon and subdeacon at High Mass on feast days and Sundays.[30] Men who sat in the sedilia, therefore, could have been of variable rank and serving different roles within the parish.

NUMBERS OF CLERGY DOCUMENTED IN PARISHES: BISHOP'S REGISTERS, VISITATIONS AND THE POLL TAX SURVEYS OF 1377-81

Therefore, it needs to be ascertained if there were enough unbeneficed clergy in parish churches with sedilia to make up the complement for high Mass. However, determining the precise clerical staff of a given medieval parish church is not easy. Unlike churchwardens' accounts, there is a poverty of documents that attest to the finances and organisation of the clerical side of the parish church even by the late Middle Ages.[31] Parochial liturgy is also extremely poorly and unevenly preserved, making it both difficult to establish a norm or to tie manuscripts to specific

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[26] The extent of secularisation is debatable. Gasquet's comment that the office was 'often' held by a married man, Gasquet 1906, 112, was corrected by his perpetual critic Coulton to 'sometimes'; Coulton 1915, 155.

[27] In the 1241x49 Durham stipulation given above, it is added that marriage of the assisting *clericus* is forbidden; Powicke and Cheney 1964, 432.

[28] Townley 1991, 49.

[29] Hartridge records three churches in the last decade of the thirteenth century required to have an *aquebajulus* on their staff, alongside assistant clergy and a clerk, and in 1399 it was worthy of remark there was not one present at Leighton Buzzard; Hartridge 1930, 130.

[30] For an introduction to the general occupation and situation of the unbeneficed clergy (but unfootnoted); Hart 1971, 13–45. For a revision away from the idea of the unbeneficed as a largely incapable 'clerical proletariat'; McHardy 1989; Cooper 1999, 94–128.

[31] Collected together in Heath 1964.

churches.[32] The assumption is that cathedrals developed their own liturgical Uses and then disseminated them to their parishes. The ubiquity of Sarum Use by the mid-fourteenth century is most illustrative of this.[33] This source of the liturgy from cathedrals that had much greater resources of clergy at their disposal, suggests that such Uses could not be accurately followed by a parish church. Sven Helander has been pessimistic about parochial liturgy in late medieval Sweden, seeing requirements for three officiating clergy, acolytes, unspecified 'clerics' and school boys as a 'set of clothes too large' that would rarely, if ever, be achieved by a rural parish church.[34]

However, for late-thirteenth- and fourteenth-century England, it is possible to establish average numbers of clergy high enough to make use of the three-seat sedilia in parish churches. Bishop's Registers began at Lincoln and York in the 1210s and 20s respectively, and by the second half of the thirteenth century they had started to be kept in all the dioceses of England.[35] Initially they kept track of the institutions of rectors and vicars to parishes, who only represented the men who received the parish tithes, who may have never even seen the church.[36] It is common to find men presented as rector and approved by the bishop who were only in the orders of deacon, subdeacon or even acolyte, and also even as vicars who were supposed to act as the incumbent in lieu of a resident rector.[37] This situation frequently arises from the gentry using their jealously-guarded power of advowson as a reward for clerics in their service, or sheer nepotism.[38] The condition is usually that they become a priest within the year. A common trick to get around this was simply re-presenting the same cleric when they failed to attain the priesthood, often used by institutional rectors such as monasteries.[39] These vicars who were not priests means that the incumbents of many parish churches were not eligible to sit in the eastern seat of the sedilia. It is surprising that they were approved so often, although some bishops gave the condition that proper divine service was provided for the

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[32] Pfaff 1992, 197; also Pfaff 2009, 509–528.
[33] Lepine 2006, 51–52. See Chapter One.
[34] Helander 2005, 160–161.
[35] Smith 1981, vii.
[36] Owen 1982, 11–12; Swanson 1989, 28; Pounds 2000, 170–173.
[37] Moorman 1945, 34–37.
[38] Gemmill 2013, 68–97. For more on machinations of patronage; Swanson 1989, 64–79.
[39] For instance Lenton Priory with Wigston Magna (Leicestershire) in 1287 and 1288; Hill 1986, 37, 41. Its chancel is late thirteenth-century with three-seat sedilia.

church while the incumbent was studying at a seminary.[40] The man who provided divine service in place of an absentee or non-priestly incumbent was the parochial chaplain.[41] As they were waged on a stipend from the tithes rather than directly beneficed like a vicar, documentation for these men is sparse and comes rather late in the Middle Ages for this thesis, but they must have been fairly common even in the thirteenth century. The parochial chaplain's job was recorded in 1517 as to 'reside continually, to serve the chapel and its inhabitants, to administer to them all due sacraments and sacramentals'.[42] A parochial chaplain was recorded in a rare surviving clerical account for the vicarage of Hornsea in 1481-93 as being paid £5 a year.[43]

The earliest sources for the general medieval clerical population are the ordination lists that begin to be included in the bishops' registers starting from the 1260s.[44] These record the ordinations of men to the offices of priest, deacon, subdeacon and (less commonly) acolyte, providing a list of all the unbeneficed clergy across the country.[45] Evidence of such record-keeping dates as early as 1214 for Lincoln, but most dioceses' registers include ordinations from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards.[46] From these admittedly incomplete records showing the number of men ordained each year, and working on the basis of a thirty-year clerical career, the population of secular clergy at any given time in thirteenth-century England was estimated by John Moorman to be around 40,000 men.[47] This, when divided by an approximate figure of 9,500 churches, an estimate based on the *Taxatio*'s 8,792 parishes, gives an average of four to five clerics for each church. This, as Moorman himself remarked, is obviously a very broad calculation, and does not take into account the differing distribution between rich and poor churches. However, it reveals that behind the official documents recording the rectors and

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[40] Gemmill 2013, 93–94.

[41] Morris 1989, 327; some inferential evidence about the importance of chaplains over the vicar in McHardy 1991, 36–37. Unordained rectors became less of a problem towards the end of the Middle Ages, but widespread non-residence still meant that many non-beneficed clergy filled in for rectors and vicars; McHardy 1989, 116–117.

[42] Owen 1981, 132–134. '*ediem capelle et dictis inhabitantibus deserviturum ac sacramenta et sacramentalia eisdem debite minstratum*'; Bowker 1967, 38.

[43] Pounds 2000, 228.

[44] Robinson 2008, 53.

[45] Davis 1989; Smith 1981, ix. The other minor orders of doorkeeper, exorcist and lector are given so little official notice by the fourteenth century it is not clear to what extent they continued to exist; Cullum 2004, 55.

[46] Smith 1981, vii.

[47] Moorman 1945, 52–53; McHardy 1989, 111–114.

vicars, there was a largely undocumented world of unbeneficed clergy in parish churches.

This estimate can be confirmed by a number of subsequent sources. Episcopal visitations appear at first to more often record the deficiencies in parochial divine service. However, the evidence is often lacking, and it appears that many were simply not recorded, and we often have those with the most disagreeable findings.[48] A series of Canterbury visitations made under Archbishop Pecham during 1291-2, demonstrate that even by the late thirteenth century the provision of clergy for rural parishes was not without problems.[49] These record a number of missing vicars and rectors who ought to be resident. For instance, the church of Eastbridge (now destroyed) lacked even a chaplain, thus the parishioners pleaded that a fit priest be provided for them.[50] There is much concern about clerks aiding at the altar who are married, and even one case of a woman serving, transgressions of propriety that were threatened with excommunication.[51] However, the fact that these parishes were subject to episcopal surveillance and assessment demonstrates the concern by the diocese to provide proper parish staff. There is also the issue that all we see in the documents are the *problem* churches: either the parishes where all is proper are not recorded, or that churches were only subject to visitation as a response to complaints.[52] The church of Newchurch, visited 23 July 1291, was in a sorry state.[53] The impoverished vicar explained that he could no longer support a chaplain because his share of the living with the absent rector was not sufficient. The resulting inquest into the vicarage stated:

> 'At one time there was a resident rector there and no vicar, the rector served the church well with the aid of two chaplains, one a deacon, and other sufficient clerks; that after the death of that rector divers rectors were collated to the church at divers times who kept no residence, let the church to farm, and served the church in a miserable way with the aid of a single chaplain.'

Newchurch is not a small building, but has an unsophisticated thick-walled chancel with deeply-splayed lancets and no stone sedilia. By the time of the visitation it must

[48] Owen 1982, 17–21; Swanson 1989, 163–165. These are being worked on by Ian Forrest who kindly shared some of his research into them.
[49] Woodruff 1917; Forrest 2013. The records are catalogued under DCc/VR at Canterbury Cathedral archives.
[50] Woodruff 1917, 149–150.
[51] Fairfield, Selling, Lympne: Woodruff 1917, 161–162, 162–163, 164–165. Ivychurch: Woodruff 1917, 177–178.
[52] Bowker 1968, 3.
[53] Woodruff 1917, 156–8.

have had a pair of side chapels as evidenced by the arches either side of the chancel which are similarly unchamfered.[54] Yet the parish staff a generation prior to 1291 seems to be entirely adequate for Solemn Mass at the high altar: a single priest to celebrate Mass, a deacon, a subdeacon or acolyte and a number of 'clerks'. The latter were perhaps men in minor orders that helped to serve at the altar and provided the responses in emulation of a collegiate or monastic church choir.

A more comprehensive picture of the clerical staff of churches is not provided until the Poll Tax surveys conducted by Parliament between 1377 and 1381.[55] These have been used to estimate a lower population of secular clergy a few decades after the Black Death of 33,500 men; around 1.6% of the total population.[56] This was the first time that the government levied a tax on all clergy rather than just those holding benefices. The survey for Lincoln diocese survives in part – the archdeaconries of Stow, Lincoln, Leicester and the deanery of Rutland – for the three assessments made in 1377, 1379 and 1381.[57] A similar subsidy collected in the diocese of Lincoln in 1526 allows for a comparison of many of the same parishes with their situation a century and a half later.[58] In these sources, the entries for each parish consist of a number of names: one of whom is nearly always the rector or vicar, occasionally a parochial chaplain, then usually a number of men identified as chaplain, but often not specified in their rank. Specific mentions of deacons and subdeacons are very rare, and may indicate a subsidised deacon rather than just a cleric holding that rank. As we have seen, the majority would be in the priesthood within a few years of entering major orders, so their rank was clearly not considered worth recording.[59] The numbers cannot be taken as completely reliable, as it has been shown that the 1379 survey was subject to large-scale evasion, but they do provide an important insight into the character of parish staffs.[60]

Examining all the extant medieval chancels with sedilia in the county of Lincolnshire, nearly all of their churches record enough clergy present to fill their stone seats at high Mass, and, lower than Moorman's broad estimate for the

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[54] *Kent Churches Committee*, URL: www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/01/03/NEL.htm.

[55] McHardy 1992; McHardy 2013.

[56] Russell 1944, 178–179. The Black Death hit clergy, with their commitment to pastoral care, especially badly, leading to a 45% mortality rate across England; Moran 1983, 26.

[57] McHardy 1992.

[58] Salter 1909.

[59] In Staffordshire archdeaconry in 1531, the great majority of the employed assistant clergy were full priests; Cooper 1999, 105–106.

[60] Bennett 1972, 2.

thirteenth century, the average number of clergy in a parish church is three.[61] However, there are some exceptions, and therefore no direct correlation between the number of clergy and the seats of the church's sedilia. Swinstead, which has three-seat sedilia that could not have been more than a few decades old at the time of the Poll Tax, consistently had only the one incumbent recorded in all four assessments.[62] Wellingore, with its unusually early triple sedilia dating *c.*1200 (see Chapter Three), similarly recorded the vicar as the only cleric in 1381.[63] It may have been that fabric and integral furnishings were frequently built exceeding the means of the parish. Navenby's very large chancel (fig. 212) and three-seat sedilia (fig. 213), was almost certainly built, as was shown in Chapter Five, *c.*1325 at the behest of rector William Herlaston, Chancellor and Keeper of the Privy seal. This chancel, exemplary of the mature Curvilinear Decorated Style, housing some of the finest stone furnishings in a parish church, had only one cleric recorded in 1377 in the form of its rector, who was subsequently joined by two chaplains in 1381.[64] This shows that such an architectural *tour de force* may have served as a monument in stone to its original patrons, but that later generations may have struggled to utilise it to the heights that these rich men did, just as some large churches today struggle to cope with changing circumstances and dwindling congregations.

In contrast, the Poll Tax also shows some churches as having a relative plethora of clergy. Holland has the most sedilia of all the deaneries of the archdeaconry of Lincoln and therefore makes an interesting case study.[65] The average value of a parish in Holland deanery in the 1291 *Taxatio* was £51, 15s, 2d, which was nearly double the second-highest deanery (Loveden: £31, 18s, 6d).[66] The average numbers of resident clergy in the poll tax survey for Holland were double

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[61] This is based on a count of all the parochial clergy in the archdeaconry of Leicester in 1379, as well as five subdeaneries in Lincoln in the same year. For summaries of counts made from other dioceses, ranging from five in Lancashire and Cheshire to 1.9 in Westmorland; McHardy 2013, 88.

[62] McHardy 1992, 49, 105, 166; Salter 1909, 56. In all three Poll Tax assessments it is clear the incumbent is the same, John Ouseby, although there is no surname in 1377 and it is spelt Ownysby in 1381. In 1379 he is described as rector which must be a mistake, as the church is a vicarage, and he returns to being a vicar in 1381.

[63] McHardy 1992, 112.

[64] McHardy 1989, 37, 112. Here the incumbent has the same forename both times (his surname is not recorded).

[65] There are 31 parishes in Holland, compared to an average of 22 across the 22 deaneries of Lincoln (Lindsey and Kesteven) archdeaconry, not including the prebends of the Cathedral. I count 13 sedilia in Holland, Aveland being the second-highest deanery for sedilia with five. Seven of Holland's churches have had their chancels destroyed, rebuilt or shortened post-Reformation, meaning only four are confirmable having lacked sedilia.

[66] Davall et al. 1992, 102.

the Lincoln and Kesteven archdeaconry average of three.[67] Fleet, with a Decorated Style chancel and sedilia, is a good example of a church with a very healthy provision of clerics.[68] Fleet was assessed at the relatively high income of £53, 6s, 8d in 1291, and was recorded in 1377 as having a rector, parochial chaplain, seven chaplains and two private chaplains.[69] In 1381, there were a rector, nine chaplains and one personal chaplain.[70] However, in the 1526 subsidy, Fleet was reduced to a rector and one *cantarista*, and this could be explained by the fact its assessment in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535 had shown its living had halved in value, now reckoned as £25, 9s.[71] We see a similar tremendous reduction in clergy in the 1526 data across the whole of Holland deanery, as even including four parishes that were not included in the fourteenth-century poll taxes (Croiland, Quadryng, Fosdyke and Kirkton): there were 182 clergy recorded compared to the 233 in 1381. That this might suggest a decrease in clerical populations which could relate to the fifteenth-century decline in stone sedilia would require further research.

The other detail that emerges when comparing this historical documentation to medieval fabric is the great loss of the fabric of poorer churches. Of the 30 parishes visited in Holland deanery in 1381, 22 preserve their medieval chancels. In contrast, one of the poorest deaneries was Calcewaith, where the average church was valued at £9, 12s, 10d. Of the 28 Calcewaith parishes visited in 1377, 17 chancels have since been rebuilt or shortened (thus almost certainly destroying their sedilia if there were any), and three parishes have disappeared.[72] 14 of these 20 parishes were recorded with two or fewer clergy, while five of the eight extant chancels had three or more clergy recorded. There is no certain correlation in Calcewaith between the value of the church and whether it has survived, though Willougby, the richest, remains, albeit extensively rebuilt.[73] Of the six Calcewaith churches not recorded in

[67] A partial survey of parishes from the 1376 survey is printed in Owen 1981, 143. The 1379 manuscript is cut at this point. My surveys therefore are based on the 1381 survey. This count does not include the grand church at Boston, which has an extraordinary 62 clergy in 1381.
[68] Wilson 1979, 104–106.
[69] McHardy 1992, 52.
[70] McHardy 1992, 113. The same clergy are shown in the 1381 draft, with some differences in spelling; McHardy 1992, 146–147.
[71] Salter 1909, 63.
[72] Davall et al. 1992, 102; McHardy 1992, 40–42. Three are eighteenth-century, three early-nineteenth-century, seven Victorian, one of 1931, one shortened, one seventeenth-century. Calceby is only a ruinous tower with part of the nave. Greenfield, Stain and Sutton are completely gone. There were two churches at Mablethorpe: St Mary and St Peter. Two churches survive at Theddlethorpe, which was counted as a single visitation.
[73] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 799-800.

the *Taxatio*, and thus probably worth under 2 marks (i.e.: £1, 6s, 8d), only one survives (Haugh).[74] Markby, the lowest assessed at £2, was rebuilt in 1611.[75] Only two churches in Calcewaith preserve sedilia. Alford had the third-highest assessment at £15 with three staff in 1377, and preserves three canopied fourteenth-century sedilia. All Saints in Theddlethorpe, with an early Perpendicular chancel containing three-seat sedilia only had the rector recorded, compared to the two rectors and a chaplain at the moiety of St Helen in the same village.[76] The deanery of Calcewaith reminds the art historian how often they deal with the material evidence from the superior churches of the Middle Ages, and that there were a great number of badly-built or very simple churches that have not survived, and were perhaps less likely to have had three-seat sedilia built into their walls: such as the partly-preserved Warlingham (fig. 22) mentioned in Chapter Two.

The other issue that is assumed in the liturgical function of sedilia is the presence of a choir, so that all three officiating clergy can be seated during the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*. It has been shown in Chapter Five how laypeople, except those who held the right of advowson, were not allowed into the chancel during the celebration of Mass, and thus could not have fulfilled this role. Therefore, many of these surplus clergy in parish churches may have been present in order to sing as cantors, or even as part of small polyphonic ensembles. A most revealing reference to singing is at the chantry college founded at Epworth (Lincolnshire) in 1351, described as staffed by a warden, two priests and four clerks.[77] The stipulations of their vocal ranges and that they had to be capable of polyphony suggests that the standard of performance was unusual, but the size of the ensemble may have been typical for the parish church and suggest that many of these clergy were employed for their voices as much as their help in the administration of pastoral care.[78]

What the Poll Tax cannot show us is men in minor orders who had not yet received first tonsure or acolytes under the age of taxation (fourteen).[79] These individuals would have boosted the number of persons and the spectacle of

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[74] Described as 'small', with an eleventh-century chancel arch and much of 1873 restoration, *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 371

[75] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 552.

[76] *BoE Lincolnshire* 1989, 754-756. St Helen's chancel was rebuilt by Samuel Sanders Teulon in 1864-7.

[77] Boorman 1984, 178.

[78] McHardy 1989, 120–122.

[79] Cullum 2004, 62–63.

performance in the chancel, particularly acolytes in their liturgical role of carrying candles.[80] Indeed, as the only disapproval voiced by episcopal authorities concerning the personnel of the Mass regarded the presence of laypeople in the chancel, there is no reason that these clergy in minor orders could not sit in the sedilia to assist the priest. Overall, the documentary evidence for individual clergy in parish churches can often be interpreted as underrepresenting the number of personnel associated with the chancel, and helps give an optimistic picture regarding the day-to-day use of parish church sedilia.

SEDILIA SEATS AND VALUE OF THE RECTORY

The corpus survey has suggested that the majority of all parish church sedilia, some three-quarters, are of three seats. It might be assumed that these represent those parishes that were among the wealthiest. The statutes of Winchester 1262x1265 stipulated that any church valued at over 50 marks (£33, 6s, 8d) was to have the charge of a deacon and subdeacon, which advises a higher level of service in richer parishes.[81] When the corpus database is cross-referenced with the 1291 *Taxatio Ecclesiastica,* there does indeed appear to be a broad correlation between the value of the church and sedilia. As we have seen in Chapter Two, the average value of a church in the *Taxatio* was £10. Of the 500 churches with triple 'classic' sedilia, the average value is £23, more than double the norm. For two-seat sedilia found in 95 churches, it is £17, and for the 36 churches with a single sedile it is £14. If we restrict the data to sedilia from the thirteenth century (therefore existing at the time of or closely contemporary with the *Taxatio*), the picture remains the same: churches with triple sedilia worth an average £27, double £19 and a sedile £15. As with the number of clerical staff, there are many exceptions to a neat correlation of the value of the rectory with the number of seats in the sedilia. It has been demonstrated in Chapter Two that a single sedile in a parish church chancel is very rare from the thirteenth century, and even more so after *c.*1300. Nevertheless, there are some late-

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[80] Cullum 2004, 57.

[81] '*Volumus insuper quod in singulis ecclesiis que ad L marcas vel ultra communiter sunt taxate sint unus diaconus et unus subdiaconus continue ministrantes, et unum ad minus vestimentum solempne ac tunica et dalmatic competentes.*'; Powicke and Cheney 1964, 709. The average value of a church in the diocese was £10. The only church with sedilia worth over £30 is Blockley (Gloucestershire), which does indeed have fourteenth-century sedilia with three seats (fig. 201), but this is not compelling evidence for the effect of the diocesan synod on liturgical furnishings.

thirteenth-century chancels which have clearly only provided a single seat for the parish high altar. In the sedile at Chalk (Kent) (fig. 20), which has a well-carved head under its integral piscina, the mouldings of the trefoiled arch are suitably elaborate enough to propose a late-thirteenth-century date, and that the sedile was a later addition to the thick-walled chancel with deep lancets. Clarke, in his late-eighteenth-century article which coined the term sedilia, considered that Chalk's sedile was a mark of the poverty of the benefice.[82] Denne was correct to point out that this was not just an unfounded statement, but demonstrably incorrect.[83] The *Taxatio* valued the rectory at Chalk at £20: twice the national average. Thirteenth-century Chalk also could not have been deprived of its tithes by an institutional rector: the church was not appropriated by its advowson holders at Norwich Cathedral priory until 1327.[84] Raunds (Northamptonshire) is also a sophisticated church with a living worth £40 that suggests that its single sedile (fig. 24) does not prove a low number of clergy or level of liturgical performance. In contrast to these prosperous livings with a sedile, North Stoke (Sussex) and Water Newton (Huntingdonshire), both with late-thirteenth-century triple sedilia plausibly contemporary with the *Taxatio*, were assessed at £6, 13s, 4d. It is clear, therefore, that there can be no simple mathematical formula accounting for sedilia, as no parish can be expected to conform to an ideal model.[85] A church with a high living could be owned by a negligent rector who put as little into the parish as he could, and a church with a low living may have had generous endowments to the incumbent for the fabric and additional clergy from lay patrons whose munificence has not come down to us in the records.

It should also be noted that there is no relationship between the nature of the benefice of a parish church and whether it has sedilia. Vicarages, that is, where a perpetual vicar is catered for with a share of the tithes because of an absentee rector, made up a fifth of all parishes in England by 1291.[86] We might expect that if a rector was resident in the parish, his interest in fulfilling his duty might exceed the legal requirement of the mere upkeep of the chancel through its rebuilding or the installation of sedilia. However, regarding my sedilia database: while 696 of the

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[82] Clarke 1794, 343.
[83] Denne 1794, 385–386.
[84] A perpetual vicarage was installed at this time; Hasted 1797, Vol. 3 457–471.
[85] McHardy 1992, xxxii.
[86] Hartridge 1930, 80–81.

churches appear to have a rectory in the *Taxatio*, 179 are vicarages appropriated by a corporate rector (such as a monastery) and are 85 vicarages with an unappropriated rectory. Therefore, the proportions appear to be same as the overall national pattern. Especially taking into account the problem of rectories under two marks not being recorded in the *Taxatio*, there does seem to be no simple correlation to be found between the presence of a resident rector and the presence of sedilia.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER SEVEN

This short survey has shown that the art historian should have confidence in the physical object of sedilia, and what it indicates about parochial divine service.[87] A theme that has emerged in this thesis is a dilemma between, on one hand, the large material corpus, and on the other, a severe lack of textual evidence: both liturgical and documentary. An Anglican Protestant historian, such as Coulton, could have seen sedilia as barely-used features by ignorant priests scarcely capable of saying their Pater Noster; yet Cardinal Gasquet might have seen them as proof that divine service was performed to the highest standard in rural parishes.[88] Both views need to be accounted for in order to form a more balanced model of parochial liturgy. The sheer popularity of triple stone seats, along with the extension of parish chancels *c.*1200 onwards, is in itself a strong indication that incumbent parish priests across England were very often accompanied by a pair of assistants at high Mass. The evidence of constantly-changing parish staff suggests that many triple stone seats represented a striving toward an ideal that was sometimes achieved, but sometimes not. Sedilia are a *general* suggestion that high Mass was celebrated across many parish churches in England, but they cannot be taken as *specific* proof for the staff of an individual church at any given time.

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[87] Pounds 2000, 176; Townley 1991, 49.

[88] For a classic Protestant tirade against the late medieval parochial clergy; Coulton 1915, 69–78. For a reconsideration of Gasquet, and his bibliography; Knowles 1957. A positive view of the clergy on the eve of the Reformation, relying on all the sources rather than just the negative evidence is presented in Bowker 1968.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been concerned with the origin, spread and development of sedilia in medieval England, and the causes to which the phenomenon could be ascribed: liturgical function or architectural form. It has been shown that simple 'single-niche' sedilia were found occasionally throughout twelfth-century Europe, but it was England that first started to employ the 'classic' type – three niches in the thickness of the wall surmounted by arches and divided by shafts – as a consequence of more general decorative habits established in late Anglo-Norman Romanesque. This solution quickly gained currency in square-ended parish church chancels – another English peculiarity – and became so common as to have an influence in great churches where stone sedilia do not previously appear to have been present.

Chapter One has shown that the medieval liturgy only occasionally alluded to sedilia, and that the features which are so manifestly embodied in the material corpus – such as a location on the south side of the altar, the number of the seats and the order of clergy within them – are basically conditioned by the circumstances of the liturgy, but by no means consistently specified. Rubrics alone certainly cannot explain the distribution or form of sedilia, and certainly do not provide an answer for their broad confinement and geographical distribution within England during Middle Ages. The examination of medieval documentary evidence for sedilia has revealed the important point that references to them are descriptive rather than contained under a single noun such as the modern term 'sedilia'. This means that they were not necessarily a widely-understood genre in their early period. Instead sedilia were installed as a matter of habit rather than specifically requested, unlike the debate around them in the early days of the Anglican ritualist revival in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Two has established a taxonomy for sedilia based upon a nationwide survey of the corpus. As well as being able to determine their chronological and geographical distribution, this survey demonstrated the frequently normative rather than diverse appearance of English sedilia. This meant that deviations from the standard 'classic' type have not influenced the overall view of the majority. Indeed, the extremely rare 'stone chair' type has been tentatively reinterpreted as being often

composed of stone armrests from other contexts reconstructed as sedilia in the nineteenth century. The tool of a digital database has been used to show trends, for instance that: single sedile are relatively rare; if sedilia seats step they always do so towards the east; sets in the north wall are practically unknown; and that special treatment of sedilia through painting was not typical. These observed trends have not remained unexplained. A one-person sedile is a liturgical paradox, and was typically only installed where liturgical performance was limited by means other than funds. Sedilia always step towards the east for the primary reason of the eastern position of the celebrant, as well as following the level of the chancel steps which asserted the same hierarchy during liturgical peformance. Sedilia in the north wall would defy the basic liturgical topography of Epistle and Gospel side, and therefore would never have been considered by anyone attempting to construct a venue for the Eucharist. Regarding painting, it would seem that only extraordinary sedilia, such as those in cathedrals, were seen as a vehicle for imagery and special treatment beyond that generally given to the architecture.

Chapter Three began the chronological account of sedilia in England to account for their development into a formally-consistent genre. That the simple 'single-niche' sedilia had not been properly recognised as the forerunner of the 'classic' type, in the most basic art-historical methodology of simple to complex, is diagnostic of a lack of such a narrative. However, the co-existence of the 'single-niche' sedilia, the fully-fledged 'classic' type and sedilia formally in between these two types within the half-century around 1200 has demanded an account that allows for independent genesis and divergent practices. In the absence of any evidence for the influence of liturgical Uses, the unique rate of promulgation of sedilia in England has instead been linked to insular decorative practice, a consequence of the legacy of the wholesale Romanesque rebuilding following the Norman Conquest. The circumstances of the straight-walled eastern sanctuary as prime impetus for the functional aspects, and dado arcading for the characteristic forms, allows for the 'invention' of 'classic' sedilia to take place in a number of different centres at once. Since the forms were available elsewhere, it does not debar their independent development in continental Europe, but it was because of the distinctive traditions in England that the phenomenon of sedilia became uniquely popular here through mutually reinforcing trends of building practice. The centre of artistic invention itself proves elusive, and instead the creation of a genre's normative form appears as a

natural process of parallel development. It also has been suggested that the plan of the chancel of middle-rank Romanesque collegiate churches was an important prototype for the parish church when parochial provision of clergy began to equal these foundations in the thirteenth century: which marked the first major proliferation of sedilia across the country.

The early-thirteenth-century case studies that began Chapter Four have shown that sedilia were heavily dependent on local styles, and that there were some regional variations of English Gothic, such as the so-called 'episcopal style' of Salisbury Cathedral, that prevented sedilia from becoming established in some dialects of parish church architecture. It was only apparently in the second half of the century that stone sedilia transcended these regional habits to become a widely desirable genre, first installed as conspicuous features in churches with high patronage such as bishops' chapels, and eventually at the high altars of great cathedrals and abbeys.

With a taxonomy and developmental narrative established, Chapter Five focused on the most visually-richsedilia: those of the first half of the fourteenth century, and the associations that can be found within their visual imagery. The subject for this thesis was originally proposed with these examples in mind, through the concept of a clerical 'captive audience' for sedilia sculpture. However, in the light of the results of the corpus survey, it was realised that such sculpture was atypical. It was subsequently demonstrated that heraldry is not common enough on sedilia for it to give us a definite indication of the agency behind their installation and appearance; instead more revealing is the place of sedilia in the larger scheme and sequence of the church building. Sedilia with figures painted behind the seats were plausibly related through direct communication between patrons; perhaps with an ultimate prototype in the Westminster Abbey set, and they do not seem to have been generally found in parish churches. The interpretation of the sculpture of sedilia as facilitating confession was also something that has been substantiated by the linking of multiple examples. Initially, the idea was motivated by the concurrent interpretations of Sekules and Ayers on the imagery of the sedilia in their respective case-study churches, paralleled by the all-but-unknown programme on the sedilia in Croft-on-Tees. To corroborate this hypothesis, there are the factors of confession involving the priest being invariably seated in a church, the lack of other furniture in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century parish churches, and the absence on restrictions

regarding laypeople in the chancel outside of services. This means that it is almost certain that in some parish churches, medieval parish priests did hear their parishioners' confessions from the sedilia. To reject this because of the burden of proof – that parishioners did *not* confess at the sedilia is just as difficult to conclusively prove – leaves us with no other way to explore concepts of audience for these carvings, employing strategies that are part of wider trends in interpreting the visual arts of the Middle Ages.

The fifteenth-century decline of sedilia investigated in Chapter Six has suffered most of all from investigating an absence. Whereas the corpus survey helped me to identify the earliest examples of sedilia and the middle-rank churches they were confined to, the areas of their earliest popularity and geographical distribution, all it has really been able to demonstrate in the late Middle Ages is that there were fewer of them. It does, however, show that a new stylistic shift can be influential enough to affect notions of genre hitherto seemingly firmly established. It may be that sedilia were a victim of their own success in this regard. It could be broadly considered that the hegemony of Perpendicular uniformity combined with the idea of sedilia as a separate object rather than a utilitarian solution meant that they were more often only installed when talented stone carvers – those who could compete with the advanced three-dimensional forms of the carpenter – were available.

Chapter Seven attempted to answer the question of whether sedilia, in their presence or number of seats, could be presented as evidence for the clerical staff, standard of liturgy or wealth of a church. It has been shown that the evidence in both domains is selective. The documentary evidence is often weighted towards the negative with parochial visitations only being recorded when the situation was unsatisfactory, while the material evidence of parish churches is prejudiced towards the higher-end buildings more likely to have sedilia. As only a small part of an art-historical thesis ultimately most concerned with forms rather than with historical statistics, this chapter could only provide a tentative exploration of the relationship between architectural furnishing in parish churches and the human factor behind the celebration of the Eucharist. It appears that sedilia are generally found in churches with tithes above the national average, and that more often than not there are enough clergy documented to fill them on parish feast days. While there are exceptions, it is apparent that sedilia can be broadly seen as a general sign for the provision of Mass

with three clergy, rather than being an unattainable 'ideal' set by an institutional centre such as the cathedral. Yet a parish church was clearly a more complex institution than a few simple factors such as; whether it was a rectory or vicarage, the value of its tithes and numbers of clergy counted in a census or visitation, can tell us.

This Ph.D. subject has been undertaken at a fortunate moment. Ten or even five years ago, there was not the mass-sharing of social media networks that would have allowed the collection of such an extensive photographic record in such a short period. Indeed, it should be seen as a validation of the growing recognition of the concept of the 'digital humanities'. The main limitations of this positivistic approach to the topic (and indeed of my own field-trip itineraries) is that it focuses on churches known to have sedilia, and therefore the majority of churches that do not have sedilia and the reasons for their absence have not been as rigorously examined as one would have liked. Proving negatives has been a recurring obstacle: particularly the assumption of the rarity of stone sedilia in continental Europe, and that wooden sedilia must have been provided in the absence of stone examples. The evidence for wooden sedilia has been found to be remarkably slight: the mention of '*cathedrae ministrorum altaris*' in one set of late-thirteenth-century parochial visitations and four fifteenth-century wooden sedilia are all we have for the English parish church. This means that there is an epistemological threshold that forbids anything beyond speculation that wooden sedilia were frequently very simple indeed, and thus why they rarely survive or were documented.

Another challenge to be overcome in the course of this thesis was the lack of prototypes in the high-end, something that art history often assumes as necessary in the account of the development of an idea or genre. Certainly the taste for dado arcading was something that came out of the largest buildings such as Durham Cathedral, but that we do not have an example of sedilia in a great church until Southwell Minster of *c.*1234-48, and no sign of anything at a cathedral high altar until the turn of the fourteenth century, remind us that genres are not always originally defined by an elite. To cater for this, the earliest sedilia have been characterised as an economy of forms rather than a conspicuous innovation; a shortening of desirable full-length dado arcading to the required three bays. In essence, it can be broadly stated that sedilia began in the middle, trickled-down to the bottom, but then, as a consequence of their ubiquity, seeped up to influence the top.

With the wealth of material in the corpus, a great many different theses could have been written in the three years assigned. Some very attractively-carved sedilia have been omitted because their investigation would have resulted into too much of an excursus into an individual building. Now that English sedilia have been considered as a single corpus, future studies of individual parish churches, particularly the chancels, can better understand their wider significance. If the lack of liturgical and documentary references dismay, it is hoped that this thesis has managed to place the material object at the centre of its study, as primary evidence of the everyday life of the English parish church.

APPENDIX: HANDLIST OF THE SEDILIA CORPUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES

This handlist contains a portion from the content of my database of the sedilia in England and Wales that has been assembled during the course of this Ph.D. It cannot be as useful a tool as the digital database is for finding examples of multiple cross-referenced characteristics, for example: all the fourteenth-century 'classic' sedilia with armrests. It should however, give evidence for the breadth of the material considered for this thesis. Also, it should be remembered that it is essentially a research tool that has been added to gradually from a large amount of sources: some pictorial, some textual; and will contain a number of inaccuracies.

Every feature that may represent a set of seating for the officiating clergy at an individual church altar has its own entry in the database, under the name of the village or town it is in, followed by the dedication if there is more than one church in the settlement. If the sedilia are not at the high altar, the location ('s aisle', 's transept', 'lady chapel') is given as part of the name. The author or source of the best image I have of the sedilia has its own column, those taken by me are labelled 'My Image', those sent to me by individuals give their names, but most commonly the website (usually either Flickr or Geograph.org.uk) followed by the username of the individual is given. Images sourced from books cite the bibliography form.

The county is given as following the most recent editions of the *Buildings of England*. Wales follows the ceremonial counties used in the *Buildings of Wales*. The period of the sedilia is noted as Norman, E.E., C13, Geo, Dec or Perp (for an explanation of how these are defined, see Chapter Two). Any sedilia undateable from my current information are labelled 'Undated'. Victorian sedilia in medieval chancels mentioned by the *BoE* were initially recorded and pictures sought, some I have reconsidered as representing authentic medieval fabric, but otherwise I have deleted them from the final handlist. The survey of medieval drop-sill sedilia is far from comprehensive, and while it includes all of those mentioned in the *BoE* and others I have discovered through photographs or visits, there are no doubt many more that are missing, particularly in East Anglia. For reasons explained in Chapter Two, the threshold of when drop-sills begin to become uninteresting is very difficult to define, so all of them been left in this handlist.

The *Taxatio* of 1291-2, an assessment of the average income of the tithes of every parish church of England, has been partly incorporated. The medieval diocese and archdeaconry are included here (but for reasons of space, not the rural deanery) and locations of buildings not parish churches (chapels, cathedrals, monasteries) have been obtained from other sources and geographical proximities. Also from the *Taxatio,* the assessed yearly income of the rector has been included (in the rare incidence of a mediety, the income of both rectors has been combined) to show the wealth of the church. The status of the church (e.g.: parish, prebend, monastery, cathedral, chapel) has also largely been obtained from the *Taxatio* and also whether the parish is appropriated by an institution or has a vicarage.

The photographs and descriptions have been used to ascertain certain characteristics of each set. The sedilia type, including 'classic', 'sedile', 'classic/drop sill', 'sedile/single-niche' (for where the assistants share an undemarcated seat)

'drop-sill', 'single niche', 'stone chair', 'freestanding' is given, and these types are defined and explained in Chapter Two. A question mark is prefixed if the type is unclear from a textual description. 'Wooden' is the only category for carpentered sedilia since they are so very rare, even if their form can differ. There are also largely self-explanatory categories such as 'stone bench', and 'fragment': the latter where the sedilia are so badly damaged their form can hardly be ascertained.

The number of seats in each sedilia is recorded, through demarcation if present and practical assessment of the size of the seat if not. The 'stepping' of the seats is recorded simply as the number of different levels they are on: if the seat has been destroyed, this is marked '0'.

The dividing element that demarcates the seats, common to the great majority of sedilia, is categorised into 'attached shaft' when connected to the wall behind, and 'detached shaft' if they are freestanding. In the less usual cases when no shafts are present, the elements are categorised as: 'mullion' (most common category for drop-sill sedilia under windows, where the division of the lights reflects the seat below), 'step' (where the levels of the seats are the only form of demarcation), 'armrest', 'canopies', 'corbel' and 'back panel' are used in their absence. 'N/A' is used for single seats and 'none' in the rare cases where the seat is clearly wide enough for two or more men but there is no demarcation.

The last column, 'Features', collects together certain interesting features I have recorded, partly to provide statistics, and partly to collect together the most significant sets (e.g.: those with gables over the arches).
If the sedilia are confirmed as entirely plain with no stylistic motifs beyond the shape of the arch, they are marked '**Plain**'.
Capitals at the tops of the shafts are marked '**Cap**', and '**NoCap**' if confirmed absent.
Figurative ornament, including simple head-stops, is marked '**Fig**'.
If the arches have crocketing, they are marked '**Croc'.**
Canopies, defined as gables, coves or other sizeable elements above the arches over the seats are marked '**Canpy**'.
Vaulting above the seats is marked '**Vault**'.
When the sedilia can be considered as isolated from the rest of the wall as a separate unit, they are marked '**Framed**'.
Sedilia fully built-out from wall, where the whole sedilia projects in a box-like construction, are marked '**Built-out**'.
Armrests between the seats are marked '**Arm**'
Carved shields, blazoned or otherwise, are marked '**Shield**'.
Sedilia that emphasise the priest's seat through means other than stepping are marked '**EmphPriest**'.

It is the intention that the sedilia database will eventually be converted into a more flexible format and be made available online, hopefully eventually integrated with other parish church studies.

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Gent. Mag. – The Gentleman's Magazine

Trans. Essex. Archaeo. Soc. - Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society

Arch. Cant. – Archaeologia Cantiana

JBAA – Journal of the British Archaeological Association

AASRP – Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers

Other abbreviations:

Cal. Pat. Rolls – Calendar of Patent Rolls

Cal. Close Rolls – Calendar of Close Rolls

Websites:

CRSBI: *The Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland,* London.URL: www.crsbi.ac.uk.

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Seven Deadly Sins and Seven Corporal Works of Mercy: Gill, M. 2001, Leicester. URL: www.le.ac.uk/ha/seedcorn/faq-sds.html.

The Taxatio Database: Denton, J. 2005, Manchester. URL: www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio/.

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