'*Sedilia in choro sunt fracta*': The Medieval Nomenclature of Seating in Churches

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The ubiquitous use of the Latin word 'sedilia' to refer to the ritual seats to the south of an altar for the use of the celebrant priest and his assistants has led to the notion that it is an authentic medieval term. This paper shows the results of a survey of documentary references to seats of all kinds in medieval England, and demonstrates that in the medieval period the word sedilia *was of no especial distinction, meaning merely 'bench', only gaining its current meaning in the late 18th century. The word was used along with a variety of others to refer to now lost seating in medieval churches, including benches and individual chairs in the chancel as well as seating in the nave. This piece will make some suggestions for the distinctions made in the terminology in medieval documents regarding the different types of seating in churches. To avoid confusion, the word 'sedilia' is italicised when it refers to medieval use of the Latin word, but not when it refers to the modern definition.*

SEDILIA are familiar to students of English church architecture as the seats, usually three in number, taking the form of deep arched niches built into the wall to the south of an altar. They were provided for the use of the celebrant priest and his assisting deacon and subdeacon in the early parts of the Mass before the celebration of the Eucharist proper began at the altar, such as during the singing of the *Gloria*. However, they have received very little attention as to their formal development as a permanent fixture of so many English chancels or their precise function within the ritual and daily life of a medieval church.[1] The 'classic' type of English sedilia, characterised by clearly demarcated seats recessed into the thickness of a wall, with the appearance of a short length of decorative arcading, appear to be largely peculiar to England and are much less commonly found on the Continent (Fig. 1).[2] Simple single niches in the south wall wide enough for three men can be found from the mid-12th century, such as at Kirkstall Abbey (N. Yorkshire), and are a precursor to the more familiar 'classic' type described above, the earliest example of which appears to be the late 12th-century Romanesque set in St Mary de Castro, Leicester. 'Classic' sedilia become popular in England parish and middle-rank churches at the beginning of the 13th century, and reach the height of their popularity by the mid-14th century, but the construction of new sets declines greatly in the 15th century. The form initially develops in the British Isles due to the Anglo-Norman taste for thick walls covered with lavish dado arcading, which supplies the architectural language for a genre that becomes an English speciality. The distribution of sedilia across the country, however, is not uniform, with some counties, such as Oxfordshire, featuring sedilia in almost a third of their

FIG. 1.   Coulsdon (London Borough of Croydon, formerly Surrey): sedilia in chancel
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medieval chancels, whereas Cornwall, which has a similar number of surviving chancels, a total in single figures.

Use of the Latin word *sedilia*, the plural of *sedile*, as the exclusive name for seats intended for the clergy officiating at the altar appears to be entirely modern, with no continuity with the medieval period.[3] This contrasts with the term piscina, which is an authentic medieval word given to the stone niches for the washing of the sacred vessels, often part of a single design with sedilia.[4] The following discussion results from a survey of medieval documents intended to ascertain whether sedilia had any specific nomenclature in the Middle Ages, with the hope of finding documentary references that could illuminate their function and significance in the medieval church.[5]

'SEDILIA' AND THE GOTHIC REVIVAL

THE use of the word sedilia to refer to the seats for the officiating clergy is rare before the Victorian era. Eighteenth- and early-19th-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.[6] 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 18th century.[7] At the end of his article he reveals that he has derived his neologism from the expression 'seats that have been prepared', which he has found was used in liturgical rubrics to refer to officiating clergy's seats, and simply chosen one of a number of Latin words that are used for 'seats' in these texts:

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.[8]

In the early 19th century, sedilia are still usually referred with the straightforward appellations of 'stone stalls' or 'stone seats'. For instance, the wooden Westminster Abbey sedilia, previously only considered as a canopy to the tomb of King Sebert, were recognised in an article of 1825 to be 'answering in every respect to the exact situation to the *Sedilia Parata* of the Officiating Priests', thus applying Clarke's terminology, although they are subsequently referred to as 'stalls'.[9] 'Sedilia' is included as an entry in Kendall's glossary of 1818, with clear reference to the *Archaeologia* correspondence.[10] In 1838 the entry for 'seat' in Britton's dictionary of medieval architecture clearly attributes the word 'sedilia' as an invention of Clarke.[11] However, other terms persist in the literature in the first half of the 19th century, such as 'altar-seats' or 'subsellia' (the latter more often associated with wooden choir-stalls and misericords).[12] It is from the late 1840s, with the promotion of Ecclesiological correctness and the physical revival of sedilia by the Cambridge Camden Society, that the term becomes firmly established.[13] Although the influential Gothic-Revivalist A. W. N. Pugin wrote that he was putting sedilia in his churches at the beginning of the 1840s, he complained to the ecclesiologist Dr Daniel Rock that he was he was 'compleatly *alone*' in doing so, but it was not long until they would become a common feature in Victorian churches.[14] It should be noted that, although the term was coined with reference to the stone seats common in English chancels, it is now used for any seats for the officiating clergy at the altar, whatever their form or appearance.[15]

LITURGICAL REFERENCES TO SEDILIA

THE Latin word *sedes* is described in the British Academy *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* as a seat that usually carries an implication of status.[16] By contrast, *sedile* generally lacks this prestige, commonly used for more simple seats, often in the form of benches.[17] Mention of the seats for the officiating clergy in rubrics are slight, and do not account for their elaborate appearance in so many English chancels. The *Liber Niger* of Lincoln Cathedral, a collection of mid-13th-century statutes compiled in the early 14th century, contains a reference to the priest's seat, presumably by the altar, but not for his assistants.

[. . .] *et sacerdos cum suis ministris dicet epistolam et Gradale et Alleluia et sequenciam et hiis dictis* **eat ad suum sedile** *et ibi dicet oraciones*.[18]

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.

The Sarum Rite was overwhelmingly the most popular Order of the Mass used in England in the Late Middle Ages and therefore has been much studied and reconstructed, although its origins and development are still a matter of much debate.[19] It contains a more detailed reference to the seats of the officiating clergy and their use.

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.*[20]

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 shows that seats should be provided near the altar for use during the intoning of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*, and that here, they are not termed *sedile*, but the apparently more prestigious *sedes*. The implication 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*' shows their continuing use throughout the service into the Eucharistic rite.[21] However, there is no indication that they need be permanent stone fixtures of any pretence; Salisbury Cathedral itself shows no evidence of such sedilia at the high altar.[22]

Indeed, surviving high altar sedilia in the greater churches of England are surprisingly uncommon. For instance, of the sixteen surviving original diocesan cathedrals, only Exeter (*c.* 1316–26), Durham (*c.* 1372–80) and Rochester (*c.* 1373–79) have prominent surviving medieval sedilia at the high altar.[23] This is because stone sedilia initially appear and develop in the walls of unaisled chancels, and were not initially a form that lent itself to presbyteries with a sanctuary divided from aisles by an open arcade. At Worcester Cathedral in 1302, the archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Winchelsey, in a dispute over a newly installed tomb of incumbent bishop Godfrey Giffard, refers to '*sedilia preparari*' that are obviated by the current arrangement around the high altar.[24] This is so far the only time I have found the seats for the officiating clergy referred to with this familiar plural noun in the Middle Ages. Before the wooden sedilia of Westminster Abbey of *c.* 1307 and the sedilia of the Exeter altar-screen of the 1310s, both retro-fits to earlier buildings, there is no evidence for the form of sedilia in aisled choirs, where recessing niches into the wall by the altar was not possible as it was in the unaisled chancels of parish churches. The archbishop's use of the word *sedilia* is in part a coincidence, but carries an important shade of meaning. It indicates that the seating that Winchelsey had in mind was perhaps very simple indeed, no more than a wooden bench between the piers of the arcade scandalously occupied by Giffard's tomb.[25] What is most revealing is Winchelsey's use of '*preparari*' and thus his knowledge of liturgical rubrics, and his preference for cathedral liturgy over personal commemoration.

'Seats that have been prepared' is the closest sedilia came to a single liturgical name in the Middle Ages. The phrase was certainly not invented by the Sarum Rite, as it appears in the *Ordo Romanus* X (Mainz, *c.* 900–50), '*dextro cornu altaris ubi etiam sibi sedes parata est*', as where the episcopal celebrant is to sit after he kisses the Gospels.[26] The phrase remains in the Counter Reformation Roman liturgy, styled '*parato scammo oblongo*' in Gavanti.[27] In medieval England, it also appears in the distinct order, closely related to Sarum, for Exeter Cathedral introduced by Bishop Grandisson in 1337 where it is styled '*sedibus ad hoc peractis*'.[28] A French Dominican

ordinary of *c.* 1260–70 goes further, stating the location of the prepared seats to be on the right of the presbytery: '*in dextra parte presbyterii in qua parte semper sedes huiusmodi sunt parande sedente*', and also describes the officiating clergy's seating order as the deacon and subdeacon sitting to the left of the priest.[29] The preparation may have included the placing of cushions on the seats, as four cushions specifically for the use of 'ministers of the altar' are recorded in a 1315 inventory of Canterbury Cathedral ('*Item quatuor pulvinaria magna. R. Archiepiscopi consuta de serico pro ministris altaris.*').[30] However, it is much more likely that 'prepared' is a retrospective instruction reminding the reader that the seats need to present before the Mass begins, otherwise the enactment of this rubric will be problematic.

An armed wooden bench prepared with three cushions is illustrated often in the plates of *Dat Boexken vander Missen* of *c.* 1506 (Fig. 2).[31] This printed guide to the performance of the Mass was originally printed in Dutch and subsequently translated into English in 1532. The trio of wooden seats on the south side of the altar appear in the background throughout the *Boexken*, but are only seen occupied during the epistle, with the priest wearing his crossed chasuble in the easternmost seat and the deacon immediately to his right.[32] The seats are referred to at this point in Dutch as '*gestoelte*'. *Gestoelte* is a rather uncommon Dutch word for seat used most frequently now to refer to choir-stalls and pews, but is first recorded from the 15th century onwards to mean 'seats of important people', and there is no indication it was specific to the seats of the officiating clergy.[33] Unfortunately, in the English edition it is translated as 'the priest and the deacon do sytte them [*sic*] downe'.[34]

MEDIEVAL USE OF THE WORD '*SEDILIA*' FOR CHANCEL SEATING

WE shall now move away from the consideration of the usually triple seats for the officiating clergy into the wider issues of nomenclature of seating in churches. In documents regarding medieval churches, *sedilia* is most commonly used to describe the benches in a church for the clergy, choir, canons or monks who are not directly involved with the celebration of the Eucharist at the altar.

FIG. 2.   The reading of the Epistle from Dat Boexken vander Missen

Sedilia appears to have been used most often with regards to church furniture to describe benches for the whole staff of a church in the western space of the chancel, not just the three celebrating at the altar in the sanctuary. A set of visitations made to churches belonging to St Paul's Cathedral in 1297 provides 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.[35] It is unusual for detailed records of parochial visitations to survive from such an early date, and they give an insight towards the modest seating present in parish churches at this time. Fourteen churches are noted to possess *sedilia* in their chancels, always *distincta* (separate) and often '*cum formis et lectrinis*' (with a bench and a desk).[36] *Forma* is often used in the customaries of Salisbury to describe parts of the choir seating in a similar way: the minor clerics sit on the '*secunda forma*'.[37] The precise wording would seem to imply that the seating was a continuous bench divided by arms, rather than fully separate chairs or ornate choir-stalls.

A similar use of *sedilia* to refer to choir seating occurs in a later set of visitations made in the diocese of Lincoln in 1517–31.[38] Surviving records of visitations are more common by this period, but these are useful for their breadth, for they cover all the arch-deaconries of England's largest diocese and thus hundreds of churches. The accounts are much more succinct than the St Paul's set, and only record problems in the building or the governance of the parish, many receiving the single stamp of approval '*Omnia bene*'. A number of churches are recorded as having '*sedilia in choro*', but only when their state is unacceptable, described as '*ruinosa*', '*defectiva*' and most commonly '*sunt fracta*'.[39] This latter description, as stone sedilia are not easily broken or subject to decay, carries the strong implication that they were made of wood. For a single church, there is a reference to '*Sedilie choro et **cancelli** sunt fracta*'.[40] It may be that this church was unique in the diocese for having separate wooden seats for the officiating clergy further east that were in poor state of repair, which in turn all but confirms that all the '*sedilia in choro*' refer to the choir benches.[41]

One might expect this type of seating to receive the familiar appellation of 'stalls'. However, although this term is authentically medieval, it was used to denote an alto-gether grander type of furniture than that which appears to have been used both in early greater churches and modest parish churches. An early use is found when timber is ordered for the new choir seating at Westminster Abbey (*stalla monochorum*) in the middle of the 13th century, other examples of the mid 14th century can be found regarding the sets at St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster and Gloucester Abbey.[42] The *OED* defines 'stall' primarily as 'Standing-place, place, position; place in a series, degree of rank.'[43] Indeed, choir-stalls were an important indicator of rank and the presence of lavishly carved misericords on tip-up seats from the mid 13th century onwards shows they were used as much, if not more, for standing rather than sitting in. Some customaries show that it was only permitted to sit at the epistle and gradual in the Mass, and the responses at vespers.[44] Although fragments of 15th- and 16th-century stalls with misericords, termed by O'Connell 'classic stalls', are common in rural churches today, these are very often post-medieval imports of dismembered furniture from larger town churches and monasteries and not representative of the original furniture of the church, and authentic surviving ensembles are relatively rare.[45] The use of the word *stall* should be recognised as indicating a place for stand-ing in, and often more advanced works of carpentry with individual seats with misericords, and should not be applicable to describing simple lateral benches with

desks which may have instead been called *sedilia*. Gervase's use of '*monachorum sedilia*' in his account of the fire at Canterbury Cathedral, to refer to choir seating burnt in 1174, is an indication of the type of furniture present in Conrad's choir, a more modest bench compared to the stalls of later centuries.[46]

Scamnum is an apparently less commonly used medieval Latin word for bench.[47] It appears in a description of the proper condition and furnishings of a church in a text which is often attributed to the 13th-century Archbishop of York, Walter de Grey.[48]

*Ad rectores vero vel vicarios, iuxta varias ordinationes, omnia alia pertinebunt; scilicet cancellus principalis cum eiusdem reparatione, tam parietibus quam tecturis et fenestris vitreis eidem pertinentibus, **cum descis et scamnis**, et aliis ornamentis honestis, et cum Propheta cantare valeant 'Domine, dilexi decorem domus tuae'.*[49]

All others things will be responsibility of the rectors or even the vicars, according to the various ordinances, such as the principal chancel together with its maintenance, both of the walls and the coverings and the glass windows belonging to it, along **with the desks and benches** and other fine ornaments, and let them be able to sing with the Prophet, 'O Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house'.

Here again we see a glimpse of the simple desks and benches that rural churches were expected to possess. No other seats, in the nave or by the altar for the officiating clergy, are stipulated in the full passage.

Despite these records regarding the presence of seating in parish churches, the material evidence for parish choir seating much before *c*. 1400 is all but absent.[50] The earliest candidate for parochial choir seating are the classic stalls at Clifton Campville (Staffordshire) which have been dated from its misericords as 14th-century.[51] Instead, it seems these benches referred to in the 13th-century visitations were furniture of the simplest form, of which identifiable examples have not survived.[52] It has been assumed that part of the reason that the chancels of the 13th century were rebuilt much longer than those they replaced was to incorporate extra seating, but who these benches were intended to seat at this time — further clerics, some sort of choir or even worthy laypeople — is beyond the scope of this particular paper.[53]

'SEDILIA IN ECCLESIA' — SEATS IN THE NAVE FOR THE LAITY

AS well as the choir benches, some churches in the 1297 St Paul's visitations are described as having further sets of seats. In addition to '*sedilia satis distincta cum formis congruentibus et lectrino*' in the chancel, West Drayton is recorded as having '*sedilia in ecclesia satis distincta*'.[54] Aldbury also has '*sedilia satis distincta*' in the portion of the report that deals with the nave as well as '*sedilia bene distincta cum formis et lectrinis congruentibus*' in the section that documents the chancel.[55] These must represent seating provided for the laity. That *sedilia* was used to refer lay seating at this date is confirmed by a well-known statute from the bishop of Exeter in 1287, which bars all but noble patrons from claiming a seat in church as their own due to quarrels which have occurred: '*quod propter sedilia in ecclesia rixantur multotiens parochiani*'.[56]

Another term that seems to have been used often to refer to lay seating was *reclinatoria*. Durandus' late 13th-century *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, a source for much medieval architectural symbolism particularly in the later Middle Ages and

the 19th century, describes two sets of seats in its description of the symbolism of a church and its fittings. Firstly:

Reclinatoria in Ecclesia signat contemplativos, in quibus Deus sine offensa quiescit. Qui per summam dignitatem, et aeternae vitae claritatem contemplantur, auro comparantur; unde in Cantcis dictur: Reclinatorium fecit aureum.[57]

The seats in the church signify the contemplative, in which God dwelleth without hindrance, who from their high dignity and the glory of eternal life, are compared to gold. When he said in the Canticles: *He made a golden seat.*

It is often stated that this word was used to refer to choir-stalls, derived from the practice of providing leaning staffs termed *reclinatoria*, particularly for aged or infirm monks or canons, before the provision of benches in the 12th century.[58] However, these *reclinatoria* are in the nave, as, moving east, Durandus describes the second set of seating in the choir.

Stallus ad sedendum in choro designat quod aliquando corpus recreandum est, quia quod caret alterna requie, durabile non est.[59]

The stalls for sitting in the choir admonish us that the body must sometimes be refreshed: because that which hath not alternate rest wanteth durability.

The identity of these seats is made clear by Durandus, as both their type and precise location is described. A late medieval poem (*c.* 1475) further shows that the '*reclinatoria in Ecclesia*' instead refers to the laity's seating.

> The seets in þe churche where men rest in to pray
> Tho be þe **reclinatoryes** wyche setys signyfy
> The holy contemplacion of men & wemen I say
> Wyche in holy þoughtes in her seetes byn besy
> In wyche pepyll oure lord haþ hys sete verryly
> And resteþ in þeyre soules with full gret plesaunce
> Those be þe goldyn seetes ocupyed with þynges heuynly
> lo of þe **reclinatoryes** þis ys þe signifaunce[60]

It is apparent that the writer, in using the same imagery from Canticles 3:10 of the 'golden seat', is drawing on Durandus, and 'seats in the church' for 'men and women' are a very good indication that *reclinatoria* was used in the later Middle Ages to refer to undivided public nave seating rather than to individual choir-stalls.[61]

Like choir seating, surviving examples of medieval pews are most likely to be of 15th-century date, and much caution should be taken when considering possible candidates from a date as early as the 13th century. The church of Dunsfold (Surrey) was consistently referred to in academic literature as having benches dating from *c.* 1270 coeval with the fabric of the church. However, recent dendrochronology has revealed them as originating only from 1409–41, still making them the oldest nave furniture dated by scientific analysis.[62]

CHAIRS OF THE OFFICIATING CLERGY: '*CATHEDRAE MINISTRORUM ALTARIS*'

STONE sedilia are not ubiquitous in the chancels of English churches. My survey of the *Buildings of England* shows that of all surviving medieval chancels, only approximately 20 per cent have medieval sedilia.[63] It has often been suspected that many churches had alternative arrangements for seating for officiating clergy involving wooden furniture more susceptible to decay and destruction, but this assumption has

never been proven through documentary sources. Surviving furniture does not suggest wooden benches serving as sedilia were widespread, especially in parish churches. The 14th-century wooden sets in the arcades between ambulatory and high altar at Westminster Abbey (*c.* 1307) and Beverley Minster (1340s), both dating much later than the buildings in which they stand, may demonstrate what was commonly provided from the early 14th century onward for great churches with aisled chancels built before sedilia were popularised as an important feature of English architecture.[64] In the 15th century, when stone sedilia become much rarer, we might expect to find more examples of wooden sedilia in parish church chancels. However, the freestanding coved bench in St Peter, Sheffield (now cathedral), a dismembered pair of high-backed seats in Much Hadham (Hertfordshire) and two nearly adjacent parishes in Kent, Rodmersham and Doddington, which featured coved benches as part of their screen enclosure, appear to constitute the entire corpus in parish churches.[65]

However, there is documentary evidence that chairs may have been used in the absence of stone sedilia. The 1297 St Paul's Visitations record four parish churches as having '*Cathedre Ministrorum altaris*', or 'chairs for the ministers at the altar'.[66] All of these churches have these *cathedrae* in addition to *sedilia* (benches), showing that they are distinct and not an alternative. The use of *minister* is compatible with the nomenclature used for the officiating clergy given in the Sarum Missal above ('*sacerdos et sui **ministri** in sedibus ad hoc paratis*'). Unlike the choir benches, their described condition is not as revealing as to their material, Navestock's described as '*deficiunt*' and Aldbury's as '*distincta*'. The visitations also suggest that separate seats for the officiating clergy by the altar were not as widespread as seating for the whole staff of the church in the choir, which may also be demonstrated by the single occurrence of *sedilia* in the *cancelli* noted above in the 16th-century Lincoln visitations.

Comparing these informative church accounts with the material evidence is not straightforward. Many of the churches on the Cathedral's itinerary had rebuildings in the later Middle Ages.[67] Some were all but entirely rebuilt in the 19th century, making them useless as evidence.[68] Others were destroyed after the Reformation and leave no trace.[69] However, these *cathedre* do not seem to be references to stone sedilia following a comparison to the material evidence. Three churches on the itinerary — Tillingham (Essex), Caddington (Bedfordshire) and Furneaux Pelham (Hertfordshire) — preserve stone sedilia in their chancels that are dated stylistically to the 13th century and therefore could have been present at the time of the visitations.[70] While these stone seats are not mentioned in the visitations, none of these three churches were recorded as to having *cathedrae*. Piscinas, unlike sedilia, were required by episcopal legislation.[71] These are also not recorded, except indirectly: a veil over the *sacrarium* is mentioned in several churches.[72] 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 before been recognised.[73]

In the Middle Ages, as now, the primary definition of *cathedra* was the chair of a bishop, cathedral being a metonym derived from it.[74] For instance, in the 12th century Reginald of Durham refers to the '*cathedram itaque episcopalem*' at the high altar.[75] However, it is often used for ecclesiastical chairs not related to the bishop.[76] An inventory of St Paul's Cathedral in 1245 describes nine *cathedrae*, five of wood, three of iron, and one of silver-plated iron, gilded and adorned with human heads.[77] Although two are 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. Even lesser members of the clergy also appeared to have had *cathedrae*; the assessment of the property of an early 14th-century vicar of St Peter's church, Leicester after his imprisonment for murder records he owned a '*cathedram*'.[78] The use of these *cathedrae* is not described, but the iron chair at St Paul's is described as being in the Chapel of St Radegund, which implies they were spread around the Cathedral, and thus may have been used by the celebrants at various altars. The most distinguished chantry in York Minster, under the east window and dedicated to the Virgin, is recorded as having a '*cathedra lignae*' in 1364.[79]

Such altar chairs noted above, all dating from the mid-13th to early 14th centuries, may represent a largely unpreserved alternative to stone sedilia. Their symbolic charge and personal significance to individuals may be another reason why permanent sedilia are relatively rare in cathedrals as compared to parish churches. An inventory of St Paul's of 1295 records textiles made for the '*cathedras ministrantium in choro*'; demonstrating that unfixed chairs may have been used by priests at the high altar.[80] In identifying any extant examples of such furniture however, the problem of establishing both provenance and authenticity arises. The famous chair at Hereford Cathedral, dated as late 12th or early 13th century, is now in a place of importance near the altar, but its oldest known location was in the adjacent bishop's palace.[81] A chair at Little Dunmow (Essex) is often described as a 13th-century wooden sedile, but the most recent *Buildings of England* describes it as 'C15, made up of part of a C13 stall'.[82]

The closest we have to a surviving example of a chair with a documented function as the seat of a celebrant priest may be the Coronation Chair at Westminster, commissioned by Edward I to hold the Stone of Scone (Fig. 3).[83] The chair is referred to in the document recording its manufacture as a *cathedra*.[84] This is significant as previously in the King's Works royal thrones were not termed as such. For instance, in 1238, Henry III orders that the story of Joseph be painted over the '*sedem regis*' in St Stephen's Chapel, Westminster.[85] In 1245, when Henry discusses the making of a pair of leopards to flank his throne in Westminster Hall in 1245, it again is referred to with the Latin *sedes*.[86] The Coronation Chair is recorded in an inventory of *c.* 1307 as next to the shrine of St Edward the Confessor, and it is stated that 'the king had the chair made in order that the kings of England and Scotland might sit on it on the day of their coronation' (*quadam cathedra lignea deaurata quam Rex fieri precepit ~~ut Reges Angliae et Scociae infra sederent die Coronationis eorundem~~*), however, the latter part regarding the use for coronation has been struck out at unknown date, as if it were an error.[87] Indeed, the first documented use of either the stone or the chair in the coronation is not until Henry IV in 1399, which broke with Plantagenet tradition in a number of aspects.[88] The use of this nomenclature seems to suggest it was not at first used in the Coronation Rite. In the *Liber Regalis,* preserved in manuscript of the late 14th century, the seat in Westminster Hall is called *sedes* and *thronus*.[89] The seat which the king is initially brought to, placed on a constructed stage set up between the Abbey's choir and high altar, is also referred to in these terms.[90] However, other seats in the coronation ceremony, including the chairs set to the south side in which the king sits to await enthronement and the chairs for the archbishop and bishops are termed *cathedrae*.[91] This use of nomenclature does not debar the use of St Edward's Chair at coronations even by Edward II, but it does show that *cathedra* is essentially a liturgical object. 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 very

FIG. 3.   The Coronation Chair, pre-1996 position before the Shrine of St Edward,
Westminster Abbey
Dean and Chapter of Westminster

early on.[92] A contemporary Scottish chronicler records that at least the stone itself was used as the 'seat of the priest at the high altar' ('*Ou ore le sege du prestre a le haute auter*') after it was brought to Westminster, and William Rishanger reports Edward I 'decreed it to become the chair of the celebrants' ('*jubens inde fieri celebrantium cathedram sacerdotum*').[93] The early 15th-century chronicler John Harding clearly shows the chair's use by the shrine:

> And sent [the stone] forth to Westminster for ay,
> To be there in a cheire clenely wrought,
> For a masse preaste to sytte in when he ought;
> Which [there was] standing there besyde the shryne,
> In a cheire, of old tyme made full fyne[94]

Furthermore, recent investigations have shown that a neat square of the Cosmati pavement to the south side of the shrine has been destroyed, and this is almost certainly where the chair was chained down in the 1320s when there was a threat of removing the stone back to Scotland.[95] In the second half of the 14th century it must have once again become unchained to become a piece of moveable furniture, but this material evidence of its position in the ritual seat of the celebrant on the Epistle side of the altar further supports its everyday status as a sedile. These records of the chair's use as a seat for a priest shows the multiple functions of these elaborate chairs in greater churches and may even represent a general appearance, although the Westminster chair would be an extraordinary example which had a unique function as a trophy case for a symbol of the king's conquests.

WHAT WERE SEDILIA CALLED IN THE MIDDLE AGES?

WE have already seen Archbishop Winchelsey's reference to the non-existent sedilia in Worcester Cathedral. Medieval references to surviving sedilia, in contracts or descriptions, are, however, very rare indeed. A contract dated 1412, written in the vernacular for the rebuilding of the church at Catterick (N. Yorkshire) between the Katherine, widow of the Lord of the Manor John de Burgh, and the mason Richard of Cracall contains an exceedingly rare, if not unique, extra-liturgical reference to stone sedilia which have survived to the present day (Fig. 4). 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'.[96] Since the word 'Prismatories' has never been found outside of the Catterick document, it is widely held that it is an error on the part of the clerk for the Latin *presbyteries*.[97] Much as the term *Cathedrae Ministrorum*, this name identifies the sedilia in a functional manner through its occupants: the *presbyter*, priest (or literally, 'elder'). However, my research so far does not reveal if *presbyteries* was ever in common usage as a name for what we now call sedilia.[98] At St Stephen's, Coleman Street, London, an inventory of 1466 records '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.[99] 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').[100] 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; therefore this item is most likely to refer to a cloth hung in the chancel area.

A contract for the rebuilding of the church at Sandon (Hertfordshire) in 1348 between a canon of St Paul's and the mason, this time in Latin, details the general

Fɪɢ. 4.   Catterick (North Yorkshire): sedilia in chancel
Graham White

design of the chancel, but does not reference the sedilia.[101] The sedilia survive at the church and consist of once fairly elaborate canopies built into the sill of a south window.[102] The time of this contract at the height of the Decorated style on the eve of the Black Death also marks the height of the popularity of sedilia. By the early decades of the 15th century, when Catterick's contract was made, they were much less frequently being constructed in chancels. The Catterick sedilia are a rather debased form of Decorated, with crudely rigid leaf crocketing, and, with their anti-structural ogee arches, no sign of the then fashionable Perpendicular style one might expect for their date. Therefore, they may have been a rather old-fashioned commission that

required more careful outlining in the contract and unusually specific language being used, perhaps even unique to this contract. As Salzman says:

the clerks who wrote these documents were not only, like all men, 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.[103]

In a 1505 contract with the carver Roger Rydge regarding new parclose screening of the choir of St James, Bristol (of which now only the nave survives), three 'howsyngs' are specified opposite the sepulchre, which further suggest sedilia were referred to with a variety of descriptive terms by craftsmen, and that one document's usage should not be considered definitive.[104]

A burial in the Cisterican abbey of Newenham (Devon) in the mid-13th 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'.[105] Later medieval vernacular also seems to refer to the officiating clergy's seats in this straightforward descriptive fashion. A list of items left to the church of Somerby (Lincolnshire) in 1440 includes of 'three peces of [stened Clothe with byrdes of golde] for the sitting of the priest deken & subdecon' for the high altar.[106] Mention of sedilia in immediately post-Reformation confiscations of church furniture is rare, for instance such as in 1569–70 when St John Bow, Exeter, removes 'the seage that the priest sitteth in'.[107] The destruction of the furnishings of St Paul's Cathedral on the occasion of the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer in 1552 as recorded in the *Greyfriars' Chronicle* further demonstrates a lack of specific nomenclature. Due to confusion in the literature about this reference, it is worth quoting at length.[108]

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** [. . .][109]

Since they are described separately from the 'goodly stoneworke' their manufacture is ambiguous, and it is possible the 'place' could have consisted of three of the *cathedrae* discussed above. However it seems clear there was no special word for these seats for the former mendicant chronicler to employ. Such a noun occasionally considered as an authentic period term for sedilia, *presbyteries*, requires further evidence for its widespread use, since currently it rests entirely on its apparently misspelled appearance in the contract for Catterick church.

CONCLUSION

THIS article has demonstrated the importance of a preliminary understanding of the medieval nomenclature if one wishes to find instances of documentary references to a specific genre of material object or architectural feature. It has also shown that wooden chairs for officiating clergy, as often suspected, did indeed represent an alternative to architecturally integrated seating for the officiating clergy in medieval English parish churches and cathedrals, although they have seldom survived.

'Sedilia' was not a term used specifically to refer to the seats for officiating clergy at any point in the Middle Ages. Instead it is a coinage of the late 18th century, taken up in the 19th century in the renewed frenzy of building chancels designed around more elaborate ritual in the celebration of the Eucharist. In fact, it has been shown

that the word is actually one of the less likely words to be used to refer to the clearly demarcated stone seats found most frequently in parish church chancels, instead being more commonly used to refer to continuous benches. Instead of a particular noun, references to seats for the officiating clergy can be recognised in medieval inventories through the use of a qualifying word such as *Ministrorum* that clearly identifies the occupants, and in a ritual or liturgical context through the additional use of *preparari* or *parata*.

   In light of this, 'sedilia' was a necessary invention for the antiquarian to conveniently refer to this piece of liturgical furniture and its conspicuous manifestation in stone in English parish churches. However, it should be used carefully with respect to the circumstances of its coinage, only for fittings or furniture that are used for seating the officiating clergy by the south side of the altar. It ought not be applied to features of similar appearance, such as the arcades over stone benches in some chapter houses and porches, which should be referred to with plain English words such as 'arches' or 'seats'. Similarly, the word 'stall' is not appropriate to use for these stone seats, as it originally was used to refer to choir furniture with misericords that were stood in as much as sat upon, and it is desirable that this shade of meaning from the medieval usage is retained.

NOTES

   1. Hence my Ph.D. at the Courtauld Institute of Art, 'Sedilia in Medieval England' (2015). This includes a narrative of their origin, spread and development in England, based on a comprehensive survey of the medieval corpus of England and Wales where any statistical observations mentioned in this paper are obtained. A summary of their initial origins and development is due to be published in the transactions for the Mellon Centre/British Museum conference on Invention and Imagination in British Art held in autumn 2014: 'The Englishness of English Sedilia: The invention of a genre', *British Art Studies*, 6 (forthcoming, June 2017). The best published overview of sedilia, despite some factual errors, is still F. Bond, *The Chancel of English Churches* (London 1916), 176–203.
   2. This term 'classic' type is my neologism as there is otherwise no term to describe the normative form of stone sedilia so common in English churches to distinguish it from other types, e.g., the simple drop-sill sedilia, where the sill of the south window is lowered to form a seat.

3. J. Turner ed., *The Grove Dictionary of Art*, 28 (London and New York 1996), 34; N. Coldstream, 'sedilia', in *The Oxford Companion to Western Art*, ed. H. Brigstocke (Oxford 2001), 690–91; F. R. H. Du Boulay ed., *A Handlist of Medieval Ecclesiastical Terms* (London 1952), 28.

4. *Sacrarium* and *lavacrum* (and the vernacular 'lavatory') appear to be more common in inventories, but Durandus uses both *piscina* and *lavacrum*. Durandus of Mende, *Rationale Divinorum Officorum*, ed. A. Davril and T. M. Thibodeau (Turnhout 1995), 23. For the development of the piscine, see I. Jessiman, 'The Piscina in the English Medieval Church', *JBAA*, 20 (1957), 53–71.

5. The Latin and English terms searched for, primarily through O. Lehmann-Brockhaus, *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales and Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307*, 5 vols (Munich 1955) were: *Sedes, Sedile, Seges, Stallum, Cathedra, Sella, Forma, Presbyter, Presbytery, Reclinatorium, Scamnum, Pulvinaria* and *minister altaris*.

6. Rebutted in favour of the modern, ritual interpretation in '&c. to Mr. Urban', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, LVI (1786), 751–52; and 'W. & D. to Mr. Urban', ibid., 934–35. Although this interpretation was based on an anachronistic misconception, I have found that the figurative decoration on a small number of sedilia, including Heckington (Lincolnshire) and Croft-on-Tees (N. Yorkshire) suggests that by the 14th century some sedilia did serve as a site for lay confession to their priest.

7. C. Clarke, 'Observations on Episcopal Chairs and Stone Seats; as also on Piscinas and other appendages to Altars still remaining in Chancels; with a Description of Chalk Church, in the Diocese of Rochester', *Archaeologia*, XI (1793), 335. This origin is recognised by the *OED*: 'sedile, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn 1989, Online version 2000), oed.com/view/Entry/174697 [accessed 25 February 2013].

8. C. Clarke, 'Observations' (as n. 7), 347. These 16th-century uses of the phrase 'seats that have been prepared' are derived from liturgies that go back at least as far as the Sarum Rite, see below.

9. T. Moule and G. P. Harding, *Antiquities in Westminster Abbey. Ancient oil paintings, and sepulchral brasses* (London 1825), 1–7.

10. J. Kendall, *An Elucidation of the Principles of English Architecture, Usually Denominated Gothic* (London 1818), 48–49.

11. J. Britton, *A Dictionary of the Architecture and Archaeology of the Middle Ages* (London 1838), 416–17, 418.

12. At Marshfield (Gloucestershire) 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'. R. Atkyns, *The History of the County of Gloucester: Compressed, and Brought down to the Year 1803* (Gloucester 1803), 333–34.

At Rochester Cathedral: 'the remains of three rich pointed arches, called the confessional, but more properly altar-seats', J. Storer, *History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Churches of Great Britain*, 3 (London 1817), Rochester, p (paginated by letter).

13. A number of quotes dealing with sedilia can be found in W. H. Pinnock, *The laws and usages of the church and the clergy* (Cambridge 1855), 740–47.

14. 'To Daniel Rock: Ramsgate, Sunday 13 December 1840', in *The Collected Letters of A. W. N. Pugin: Volume 1 1830–1842*, ed. M. Belcher (Oxford 2001), 173–74.

15. For instance, A. Fortescue, *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (London 1918), 8.

16. D. R. Howlett and R. K. Ashdowne ed., *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British sources. Fascicule XV Sal–Sol* (Oxford 2012), 3003; R. E. Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin word-list: from British and Irish sources* (London 1980), 429; H. Kurath ed., *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1956–), Vol. S–SL, 291. See also related Middle English 'sege', ibid., 295.

17. Howlett and Ashdowne, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin, Fascicule XV* (as n. 16), 3004; Latham, *Medieval Latin Word List* (as n. 16), 429; *Middle English Dictionary* (as n. 16), Vol. S–SL, 293.

18. H. Bradshaw ed., *Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral: Part 1. containing the complete text of the 'Liber Niger'* (Cambridge 1892), 377; Bond, *Chancel* (as n. 1), 176.

19. R. Pfaff, *Liturgy in Medieval England: A History* (Cambridge 2009), 350–88. 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. Ibid., 377–78. It is not until the 14th century that the use began to dominate the province of Canterbury. Ibid., 412–44; N. Morgan, 'The Introduction of the Sarum Calendar into the Dioceses of England in Thirteenth Century', in *Thirteenth Century England VIII: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1999*, ed. M. Prestwich, R. H. Britnell and R. Frame (Woodbridge 2001), 179–206.

20. W. H. Frere ed., *The Use of Sarum: I. The Sarum Customs as set forth in the consuetudinary and customary* (Cambridge 1898), 66. This rubric allowing the ministers to sit down does not appear in the uses of Bangor, York or Hereford. W. Maskell, *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of England, according to the Uses of Sarum, Bangor, York & Hereford and the Modern Roman Liturgy Arranged in Parallel Columns* (London 1846), 24–25.

21. Frere, *Use of Sarum* (as n. 20), 71.

22. A description in 1773 of 'niches, marble pillars and tender ornaments on top' is tentatively interpreted as lost sedilia at Salisbury in S. Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd: The Decoration of Salisbury Cathedral* (London 1999), 15.

23. At Exeter they are coeval with the documented altar screen added to the recently completed east end, but are not itemised separately in the fabric rolls. P. Morris, 'Exeter Cathedral: A Conjectural Restoration of the Fourteenth-Century Altar Screen, Part I', *Antiq. J.*, XXIII (1943), 131.

Much as Exeter, Durham's are integral with the documented altar-screen, but not referred to directly in the accounts. C. Wilson, 'The Neville Screen', in *Medieval Art and Architecture at Durham Cathedral*, ed. N. Coldstream and P. Draper, *BAA Trans.*, III (Leeds 1980), 90–91. It has been suggested the division of the accounts 3:1 between Lord Neville and the priory means the monks paid for the sedilia. E. Cambridge, 'The Masons and Building Works of Durham Priory, 1339–1539' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, 1992), 66.

Rochester's sedilia are undocumented, the date comes from the episcopate of Bishop Brinton, whose arms have appear over the westernmost seat. P. McAleer, *Rochester Cathedral (604–1540): An Architectural History* (Toronto and London 1999), 148, 276. Unlike the above two sets, they are not part of a freestanding altar screen, but mural, set in the wall of the unaisled east end.

24. R. Graham ed., *Registrum Roberti Winchelsey, Cantuariensis archiepiscopi*, II (Oxford 1956), 762; J. M. Wilson, *The Worcester Liber albus: glimpses of life in a great Benedictine monastery in the fourteenth century* (London, 1920), 21–23.

25. It appears that, following Winchelsey's orders, the Giffard tomb was demolished. All that survives today is his effigy in the crypt-like section of the 16th-century chantry of Prince Arthur, which has four seats projecting on its north side to serve as sedilia for the high altar: a unique arrangement. D. Park, 'The Giffard Monument', in *Archaeology at Worcester Cathedral. Report of the Sixth Annual Symposium*, ed. P. Barker and C. Guy (Worcester 1996), 20–21; L. Monckton, 'Regional Architecture or National Monument? The Architecture of Prince Arthur's Chantry Chapel', in *Arthur Tudor, Prince of Wales: life, death & commemoration*, ed. S. Gunn and L. Monckton (Woodbridge 2009), 119. I explore this episode in more depth in my paper given at the Courtauld Institute, 'Competing for *dextra cornu magnum altaris*: funerary monuments and liturgical seating in English churches', to be published in *Fifty Years after Panofsky's Tomb Sculpture: New Approaches, New Material*, ed. A. Adams and J. Barker, Courtauld Books Online (forthcoming 2016).

26. M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani Du Haut Moyen Âge: Vol. 2, Les Textes (Ordines I–XIII)* (Leuven 1971), 355. Date taken from E. Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century* (Minnesota 1998), 179.

27. B. Gavanti, *Thesaurus sacrorum rituum* (Venice 1749), 170.

28. Some manuscripts render it verbatim to Sarum, as *paratis*. J. N. Dalton ed., *Ordinale Exon*, 1 (London 1909), 295.

29. London, British Library, MS 23935. Reproduced in J. W. Legg, *Tracts on the Mass* (London 1904), 75. A. A. King, *Liturgies of the Past* (London 1959), 307 notes that the Dominican Rite had many points in common with Sarum.

30. J. W. Legg and W. H. St John Hope ed., *Inventories of Christchurch Canterbury with historical and topographical introductions and illustrative documents* (Westminster 1902), 74. They could also be used for comfort when kneeling rather than sitting.

31. P. Dearmer ed., *Dat boexken vander missen 'The Booklet of the Mass' by Brother Gherit Vander Goude, 1507*, Alcuin Club Publications, V (London 1903).

32. Ibid., 24–25.

33. M. Philippa ed., *Etymologisch woordenboek van het Nederlands* (Amsterdam 2003–09), etymologiebank.nl/trefwoord/gestoelte [accessed 25 February 2013].

34. *Boexken vander missen* (as n. 31), 142.

35. W. S. Simpson ed., *Visitations of Churches Belonging to St. Paul's Cathedral: In 1297 and 1458* (Cambridge 1895). 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 W. S. Simpson ed., *Visitations of Churches Belonging to St. Paul's Cathedral: 1249–1252* (Cambridge 1895).

36. *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35), <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 simply having '*sedile sufficiens*', 2.

37. Latham, *Medieval Latin Word List* (as n. 16), 197. E.g., Frere, 'Use of Sarum' (as n. 20), 13.

38. A. H. Thompson ed., *Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln 1517–1531: Vol. 1. Visitations of Rural Deaneries by William Atwater, Bishop of Lincoln, and his Commissaries 1517–1520* (Lincoln 1940). The

spelling of *sedilia* varies with uses of '*sedilie*' and '*scedile*', but in consistent groups, showing it is the habit of certain scribes rather than different terminology.

39. '*Ruinosa*', ibid.: 2, 111, 133 (2 instances). '*Defectiva*', ibid.: 11, 55, 80, 100, 109, 131. '*Sunt Fracta*', ibid.: 43, 89, 91, 96, 115, 119 (2), 120 (2), 122, 124, 125 (2), 131, 135, 139.

40. Broughton Poggs (Oxfordshire), ibid., 131.

41. However, as suggested to me by Prof. Joanna Cannon, the word *cancelli* could be referring to the screen dividing the chancel from the nave. Benches with arm rests are part of the stone screens at Canterbury Cathedral and the church of Brympton D'Evercy (Somerset).

42. *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III (A.D. 1251–1253)*, 280; R. A. Brown, H. M. Colvin and A. J. Taylor, *A History of the King's Works*: *Vol. 2: The Middle Ages* (London 1963), 520; W. H. Hart ed., *Historia et cartularium monasterii Sancti Petri Gloucestriae Vol 1* (London 1863), 47, 50.

43. 'stall, n.1', *OED* (as n. 7), oed.com/view/Entry/188836.

44. C. Tracy, *English Gothic Choir-Stalls 1200–1400* (Woodbridge 1987), xix–xx.

45. D. O'Connell, 'Medieval Choir Stalls in English Churches', in *King's Lynn and the Fens: Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. J. McNeill, *BAA Trans.*, XXXI (Leeds 2008), 230–46.

46. Gervase of Canterbury, *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury. Vol. 1. The Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II. and Richard I*, ed. W. Stubbs (Rolls Series, LXXIII, 1879), 4.

47. Latham, *Medieval Latin Word List* (as n. 16), 421–42.

48. Ascribed to Gray by the 15th century. Cheney feels the prescriptions are far too elaborate for the 13th century and that it is a conflation of statutes attributed to the later Canterbury archbishops Pecham, Winchelsey and Reynolds. C. R. Cheney, 'The so-called Statutes of John Pecham and Robert Winchelsey for the Province of Canterbury', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, XII (1961), 18–19. None of these statutes, however, contain the references to desks and benches.

49. 'The register, or Rolls, of Walter Gray, lord Archbishop of York, p.217 sqq.', in Lehmann-Brockhaus (as n. 5), III, no. 5472, 89.

50. O'Connell, 'Choir stalls' (as n. 45), 233.

51. S. A. Jeaves, 'Medieval Woodwork in South Staffordshire', *Birmingham Archaeological Society Transactions*, LXVII (1947–48), 48. Dated early 14th-century by G. L. Remnant, *A Catalogue of Misericords in Great Britain* (Oxford 1969), 139–40.

52. For 15th-century lateral bench seats in parish churches, see O'Connell, 'Choir Stalls' (as n. 45), 236–41.

53. F. Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches. I. Stalls and Tabernacle Work II. Bishop's Thrones and Chancel Chairs* (London 1910), 85–100. Although Bond believes chancels were indeed lengthened for seating, he unequivocally states there is no documentary evidence for such furniture. Ibid., 88.

54. *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35), 55.

55. *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35), 45–46.

56. '16 April 1287. Synodal Statutes of Bishop Peter Quinel for the Diocese of Exeter', in *Councils & Synods: with other documents relating to the English Church. II A.D. 1205–1313*, ed. C. R. Cheney and M. Powicke (Oxford 1964), 1007–08.

57. Durandus, *Rationale* (as n. 4), 22.

58. For instance, in C. Corèdon with A. Williams, *A Dictionary of Medieval Latin Terms and Phrases* (Cambridge 2004), 235, ref. to 175. This along with many other surveys, state that such *reclinatoria* are mentioned in a customary of Lincoln, stemming from F. Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches I. Misericords* (London 1910), 208, who did not cite the particular Lincoln customary. It does not appear to be in the *Liber Niger*, and I have so far not been able to find a medieval source that refers to this use of the word. A possibility is confusion with *inclinitorium*, also called a *formula* and described as a stick, which appears in the 9th-century *Supplex Libellus* composed about the monastery of Fulda. J. L. Nelson, 'Medieval Monasticism', in *The Medieval World*, ed. P. Linehan and J. L. Nelson (London and New York 2001), 590.

59. Durandus, *Rationale* (as n. 4), 22.

60. H. N. MacCracken, 'Magnificencia Ecclesie', *PMLA*, 24 (1909), 696.

61. A view also shared in F. P. Lowe, 'On Open Seats', *Associated Architectural Societies Reports and Papers*, 2 (1852), 125–26.

62. A. Bott, *A Guide to the Parish Churches of Dunsfold and Hascombe, Surrey* (Godalming 2006), 38–41. Regarding the state of knowledge on the subject generally in England, see P. S. Barnwell, 'Seating in the nave of the pre-Reformation parish church', in *Pews Benches and Chairs: Church Seating in English Parish churches from the fourteenth century to the Present*, ed. T. Cooper and S. Brown (London 2011), 69–86.

63. This is based on a sedilia total, including drop-sills and other extant seating solutions as well as 'classic' sedilia, of approximately 1200 divided by a church count of approximately 6000. Since medieval churches with entirely modern chancels are common and would skew the result, each church was assessed from its *Buildings of England* entry whether the chancel can be considered as authentic medieval fabric.

64. L. Wrapson, 'The Materials and Techniques of the *c.* 1307 Westminster Abbey Sedilia', in *Medieval painting in Northern Europe: techniques, analysis, art history: studies in commemoration of the 70th birthday of Unn Plahter*, ed. J. Naldony (London 2006). For the dating of Beverley: M. R. Petch, 'Raughton Family Influence On The Curvilinear Style', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, LVIII (1986), 46; M. Woodworth, 'The Architectural History of Beverley Minster, 721–*c.* 1370' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Durham University, North Carolina, 2011), 205–31. There are 15th-century wooden sedilia at St David's Cathedral and Hexham Abbey. J. E. Clark, 'Hexham Abbey: the various movements of the fittings since the Dissolution', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, XXXIX (2010), 387–89.

65. Sheffield: N. Pevsner and P. Metcalf, *The Cathedrals of England: Midlands, eastern, and northern England* (London 1985), 298; F. G. Roe, *Ancient Church Chests and Chairs in the Home Counties Round Greater London, Being the Tour of an Antiquary with Pencil and Camera through the Churches of Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Essex, Kent and Surrey* (London 1929), 38–42. Doddington and Rodmersham: F. E. Howard and F. H. Crossley, *English Church Woodwork: A Study in medieval craftsmanship during the medieval period A.D. 1250–1550* (London 1917), 140; J. C. Cox, *English Church Fittings, Furniture and Accessories* (London 1923), 19.

66. *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35)*:* Navestock, 5; Brent Pelham, 44–45; Aldbury, 47; West Drayton, 56. Wickham St Paul is recorded simply as having '*i cathedra*', 35; much as Belchamp St Paul has '*i sella parva*' (a small seat) listed, 37.

67. Navestock: J. Bettley and N. Pevsner, B/E *Essex* (London and New Haven 2007), 608; Barling: ibid., 109; Wickham St Paul: ibid., 834; Belchamp St Paul: ibid., 128–29; Sandon: N. Pevsner rev. B. Cherry, *Hertfordshire* (Harmondsworth, 1977), 331 (for the contract of this rebuilding, see below); Brent Pelham: ibid., 109–10.

68. Kirkby-le-Soken: B/E *Essex* (as n. 67), 515; Thorpe-Le-Soken: ibid., 779; Chiswick: B. Cherry and N. Pevsner B/E *London 3: North-West* (Harmondsworth 1991), 393; Twyford: ibid., 197; St Pancras: B. Cherry and N. Pevsner, B/E *London 4: North* (London, 1998), 348.

69. Westlee: *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35), xiv; Walton-on-the-Naze: B/E *Essex* (as n. 67), 816.

70. Tillingham: B/E *Essex* (as n. 67), 786; Caddington: N. Pevsner, B/E *Bedfordshire, Huntingdon and Peterborough* (Harmondsworth 1968), 61; Furneaux Pelham: B/E *Hertfordshire* (as n. 67), 144.

71. Worcester 1229 requires a '*sacrarium immobile*' *Councils & Synods II.* (as n. 56), 171 and Exeter 1286 a '*sacrarium lapideum et immobile*', ibid., 1006. C. F. Davidson, 'Written in Stone: Architecture, Liturgy and the Laity in English Parish Churches, *c.* 1125–*c.* 1250' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1998), 163–64.

72. Kirkby: *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 35) 25–26; Belchamp: ibid., 37; Furneaux Pelham: ibid., 41; Aldbury: ibid., 46; Drayton: ibid., 55.

73. Bond gives once again the best survey of surviving chairs in churches, but does not consider them as alternative seating for the celebrant. F. Bond, *Stalls and chancel chairs* (as n. 53), 111–30. Also see J. C. Cox and A. Harvey, *English Church Furniture* (London 1908), 253–55.

74. Latham, *Medieval Latin Word List* (as n. 16), 76.

75. Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti virtuibus*, ed. J. Raine, Publications of the Surtees Society, I (1835), 166. For an identification of the separate seats allocated to the bishop in Canterbury Cathedral, see C. S. Phillips, 'The Archbishop's Three Seats in Canterbury Cathedral', *Archaeol. J.*, XXIX (1949), 26–36.

76. *Middle English Dictionary* (as n. 16), Vol. C–D, 97 has a bishop's chair as its only definition.

77. W. S. Simpson, 'Two Inventories of the cathedral church of St. Paul, London, dated respectively 1245 and 1402', *Archaeologia*, L (1887) 474, 447–48.

78. M. Bateson ed., *Records of the Borough of Leicester: Being a series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Leicester, 1103–1327* (London 1899), 370.

79. J. Browne ed., *Fabric Rolls and Documents of York Minster* (York 1862), 294–95.

80. '*Visitatio facta in thesauria s. Pauli Londoniarum, anno 1295, p.316*' in Lehmann-Brockhaus (as n. 5), Vol. II, no. 2910, 193.

81. P. Eames, *Furniture in England, France and the Netherlands from the Twelfth to Fifteenth Century* (London 1977), 210–11.

82. B/E *Essex* (as n. 67), 548.

83. An enormous amount has been written on this object. Two recent works that both provide a good survey of the previous literature are W. Rodwell, *The Coronation Chair and Stone of Scone: History, Archaeology and Conservation* (Oxford 2013), and P. Binski, '"A Sign of Victory": The Coronation Chair, its manufacture, setting and symbolism', in *The Stone of Destiny: Artefact and Icon*, ed. R. Welander, D. J. Breeze and T. O. Clancy (Edinburgh 2003), 207–22.

84. Exchequer Roll (E/101/357/1), as translated in Binski, 'Sign of Victory' (as n. 83), 207–08.

85. *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III (A.D. 1237–1242)*, 26.

86. *Calendar of Close Rolls, Henry III (A.D. 1242–1247)*, 293.

87. J. Hunter, 'Edward's spoliations in Scotland in A.D. 1296 — the coronation stone — original and unpublished evidence', *Archaeol. J.*, XIII (1856), 252; Binski, 'Sign of Victory' (as n. 83), 216.

88. Binski, 'Sign of Victory' (as n. 83), 217.

89. J. W. Legg, *English Coronation Records* (Westminster 1901), 82, 83, 84.

90. Ibid., 85.

91. Ibid., 87, 91. The seat in which the queen on the left side however is termed *sedes*. Ibid., 101.

92. This is not the place to enter into a discussion about when the chair was first used in Coronations. For an overview of different theories, see Rodwell, *The Coronation Chair* (as n. 83).

93. 'Chronicle of the Picts and Scots (MS. Corpus Christi. Coll. Scalacronica)', in *Chronicles of the Picts and Scots and Other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. W. Skene (Edinburgh 1867), 197; William Rishanger, *Chronica et Annales*, ed. H. T. Riley (Rolls Series, XXVIII, London 1845), 162–63. Rishanger is repeated verbatim by early 15th-century chronicler Thomas of Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana Vol. I*, ed. H. T. Riley (Rolls Series, XXVIII, London 1863), 60.

94. H. Ellis ed., *The Chronicle of John Harding* (London 1812), 296.

95. Rodwell, *The Coronation Chair* (as n. 83), 39–41.

96. J. Raine and A. Salvin, *Catterick church, in the county of York. A correct copy of the contract for its building, dated in 1412, illustrated with remarks and notes* (London 1834), 9; L. F. Salzman, *Building in England down to 1540: a documentary history* (Oxford 1952), 488.

97. First suggested in Raine and Salvin, *Catterick* (as n. 96), 9. Kurath also regards it unique to the Catterick contract and suggests the error may have occurred via conflation with '*crismatorie*', *Middle English Dictionary* (as n. 16), Vol. O–P, 1230.

98. Dr Nicola Coldstream has suggested to me that it could perhaps refer to the 'primatic' form of the canopies. This is an attractive idea, as it would be specifying the unusual form of the gables, and the actual carving the mason was required to do, rather than the seats themselves.

99. E. Freshfield, 'Some Remarks upon the book of Records and History of the Parish of St. Stephen, Coleman Street, in the City of London', *Archaeologia*, L (1887), 42. Cited in *Middle English Dictionary* (as n. 16), Vol. O–P, 1230.

100. D. R. Howlett, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British sources. Fascicule XII Pos–Pro* (Oxford 2009), 2451; *Middle English Dictionary* (as n. 16), 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 Lehmann-Brockhaus (as n. 5), Vol. I, no. 1638, 444.

101. Salzman, *Building in England* (as n. 96), 437–38. The contract is with St Paul's as they held rectorship of the church, hence its inclusion in the 13th-century visitations detailed above. *St Paul's 1297 and 1458* (as n. 37), xx–xxi.

102. B/E *Hertfordshire* (as n. 67), 331.

103. Salzman, *Building in England* (as n. 96), v. This oft-quoted passage is adapted from R. Willis, *Architectural Nomenclature of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge 1844), 1.

104. J. H. Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects: A Biographical Dictionary down to 1550: Including Master Masons, Carpenters, Carvers, Building Contractors, and Others Responsible for Design*, 2nd edn (Gloucester 1984), 265; F. W. P. Hicks. 'Medieval History of St. James, Bristol' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Bristol, 1932) (Bristol Record Office P/St J/HM/A (a)).

105. W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Caley, H. Ellis and B. Bandinel (London 1825), V, 693.

106. '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 *English Church Furniture, Ornaments and Decorations, at the period of the Reformation*, ed. E. Peacock (London 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 (church of 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.

107. R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge 1989), 103; R. Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge 2010), 193. Originally from churchwardens' accounts in Devon Record Office.

108. Bond, *Chancel* (as n. 1), 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 Greyfriars' church.

109. J. G. Nichols ed., *Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London* (London 1852), 75.