Henry of Blois

Lecture by James Rothwell in East Meon church on 11 November 2021

Well, so now to the subject in hand. This is him on the screen and we'll talk more about this particular object later. But first, I'll start with actually what was said about him. He was described as, "That old-deceiver of Winchester." And, "A new kind of monster. Part pure, and part corrupt."

Those were contemporary assessments of Henry, by two of his many enemies. So bear that in mind, there are enemies. But he himself described himself as England was relying upon him, both for peace and for war. That sets the scene actually, about what an extraordinarily significant figure he was; the builder of the church that we are in today.

But who was he? And why was he so significant? Well, he was Bishop of Winchester for over 40 years. He was England's richest man. And yet, by the time he died, he had given away almost all his wealth. He was the maker of kings and he was the builder of palaces and churches, once again including where we are now.

He was very learned and articulate. He was an extraordinary patron of the arts and all of these aspects that I'm going to touch upon.

He was born probably, we don't know for certain the exact year, but probably in 1096. He was the son of Étienne, Count of Blois, hence he's Henry of Blois, and Étienne's wife, who was Princess Adela of England. She was the daughter of William the Conqueror. Therefore, our Henry was the grandson of the Conqueror and the nephew of the successive kings William Rufus and Henry I.

Because of his royal birth, and because he was the fourth son, his three elder brothers were destined to be warriors and leaders, but he was intended for the church. Being of very elevated birth, the place for the child of a monarch or great noble to go was Cluny in Burgundy. Some of you may have been here. If not, you will recognise it by places you will see in a minute.

This was one of the richest and most important monasteries in Europe, supported by many Kings and other rulers. When Henry was there, this great church was being rebuilt. By the time it was finished, during his lifetime, it was the largest building in Europe. It remained so until the 16th century rebuilding of St Peter's in Rome, so a really extraordinary structure.

To give you an idea of how big it was, it stretched from here to the shop if you compare it to where we are now. That shows you how vast it was. Unfortunately, it survived until the French revolution, and was then almost completely torn down. The only element that survives is that small fragment of the south transept that you can see there, which is on the drawing. It's on the left hand side, beyond the crossing tower.

Cluny was highly influential to Henry of Blois. It set him up for his career as an ecclesiastic. And senior ecclesiastics were, in the Middle Ages, also statesmen. Because the Cluniac

order very much believed in the mix between church and state and was rather more earthly than the opposing Cistercian order.

On top of that, it also believed in the ornamentation of its buildings, both in the structures themselves and the artefacts within, and in the books that were associated with them. And we will be talking about a very significant book relating to Henry Blois later.

Another key fact about it was that it was probably the greatest building in the architectural style known as the Romanesque. I'll just explain what the Romanesque is. The basic characteristic of the Romanesque style is fortunately depicted behind me. It's the style of the round arch. It's known as Romanesque because it was an evolution from the Roman. That's the basic summing-up of it.

It was the first real flourishing in architecture after the Roman period. England very much led the way, but prompted by what had been going on, on the continent, including at Cluny.

It was predominant in the 11th and 12th centuries. So at the time of the Conquest and through to the end of the subsequent century and it was succeeded by the Gothic. What distinguished the Gothic is the pointed arch, which we have here. I didn't need slides for these fortunately, because we have the examples.

If you look at this building, the south arm is later, therefore there would have been a solid wall there. By the organ, you can see one of the surviving Romanesque windows at the back; simple, small and round-headed. Very different to later when you get much larger areas of glass. The Romanesque style is often referred to in England as the Norman style, but that's very specific to England, rather than on the continent generally.

In terms of decoration, the Romanesque was very strong lines as again, you see here, and bold ornamentation as on the south and west doors. Here is the west door. I could have tripped you all outside to look at it, but I thought maybe it's better if I showed you on a screen.

The moulding you can see in the middle range there is known as zig-zag moulding. It's very, very simple. Once you get to the Gothic, then you tend to get much more florid carving, and more true to nature. So, you're looking like twisting leaves and so forth. That's the Romanesque.

Also, it's a time of where ornamentation was of high relief, so it was deeply carved, as on our wonderful Tournai marble font. Which actually, as George Atkinson pointed out, that he and many members of his family have been christened in. Of course, I wasn't thinking about that when I was writing, but many of you in here might have been christened in that font. It's a great thought but I will be talking much more about that later.

Henry of Blois arrived in England in the early 1120s. He was brought over probably with his brother Stephen, by their uncle, King Henry I of England. A bit of a warning here, there are an awful lot of Henry's in this story, so I will try to always refer to Henry of Blois as Henry of Blois because otherwise it gets terribly complicated.

Anyway, so they were brought over. Henry I, the king, was a great patron of Cluny himself and also saw his nephews, Stephen and Henry as being great supporters of his.

When Henry of Blois first came over, he was probably appointed to be the prior of the Cluniac monastery of Montacute in Somerset. Nothing of his time survives. This is the main survival there, which is a much later gatehouse actually of the priory.

In 1120, shortly after he'd gone to Montacute, through the influence of the king, he was raised to be abbot of the richest abbey, or monastery rather, in the country, Glastonbury. He's known, whilst he was there, to have done a great deal of building. But sadly, there was a very dramatic fire in 1184 after his death, which destroyed everything he'd done.

This is the Lady Chapel which was built in the Romanesque style, as you can see from the round arches, after his death. Fortunately there are some fragments of the work that he undertook. Here's a reconstruction using some of those fragments, of the cloister that he had built at Glastonbury. You can see these wonderful, carved capitals very much in the very bold style of the Romanesque.

He'd only been Abbot of Glastonbury, the richest monastery in Britain, for three years when he was consecrated as Bishop of Winchester in 1129. Winchester was the richest diocese in England, so he was Abbot of Glastonbury and he then became Bishop of Winchester. This is a map showing the diocese of Winchester, some of us were talking about this before the talk, as it was before the 19th century.

Essentially, it's Hampshire, the Isle of Wight and Surrey. At some point, Guernsey was also part of the diocese. So that shows you it and the diocese of Salisbury immediately next door. But it's stretching right up. I don't know if you can make it out, but at the very top it says, in capital letters, 'London', so it goes right up to London, the diocese.

It had enormous estates. This is a map showing the estates of the bishop. You might notice that they're not just within the diocese either. They go as far west as Taunton, and as far north as Adderbury in Oxfordshire.

He was almost undoubtedly, we can't say for certain, the richest man in the kingdom. You might think it odd; why, when he moved from Glastonbury, did he not give up the abbey? Well, he didn't wish to and it had a very substantial income, so he remained as both.

That is known as pluralism which was frowned upon. It was not actually banned until after his death, and even then if you had influence you could actually get round the regulations. That's one of the reasons for the Reformation in the 16th century.

It's these estates that bring us to East Meon because East Meon and Taunton were the two richest estates of the diocese of Winchester. Although he did not actually have control of East Meon when he became bishop. It was granted to him in 1136, so shortly afterwards.

We'll return to East Meon later. But before we do so, I just wanted to outline Henry's really rather remarkable political career. We start with a tragedy. Henry I of England, seen here looking very sad, because his only son William was drowned on the journal from Normandy to England in 1120 on what is famously known as the White Ship.

There were 300 aboard, a substantial number, and they had been drinking heavily before they set out from Normandy, including the crew. As a consequence, the ship was recklessly driven onto rocks and everybody drowned apart from one man, who is recorded as being a butcher from Rouen. But everybody else drowned including Henry's only son, William.

Fortunately for him, Stephen, who was the next male heir had a bout of diarrhoea just before the ship was about to set off and didn't get on it, so he survived. But Henry then had a quandary. He married again very soon after this. He was a widower at the time of the tragedy, but had no more children.

In 1126 he decided to do something for then, very remarkable and make his daughter, his only surviving child Matilda, his heir. To ensure that she succeeded, he asked all his nobles and great churchmen to swear allegiance to Matilda, which Henry of Blois, and his brother Stephen, both did.

However, when Henry died in 1135, Henry of Blois decided to do all he could to get his brother Stephen on the throne instead of Matilda. Don't feel too sorry for Matilda because at that time, she was in Normandy fighting her father. So they're a pretty ruthless lot, all of these people. Henry I himself had seized the throne. It wasn't really his rightfully.

Anyway, Henry of Blois got all the great nobles in England behind him, and he also made promises on behalf of Stephen to the church that the monarch would not interfere in church affairs. This was a very important principle in Medieval England, hence all the hoo-ha over Thomas Becket later on.

Stephen, who actually at that time had been in Boulogne, got across very quickly to England and was crowned King of England at Canterbury on 22nd December 1135, just three weeks after Henry I died. So his brother, Henry of Blois, had achieved, a fait accompli, a coup d'état essentially, and got Stephen on the throne.

That was solidified when the chief Arbiter of Europe in the Middle Ages, the Pope, recognised him as king. So, all well at the moment.

However, there were many supporters for Matilda and they soon took up arms against Stephen and civil war broke out. A civil war that lasted for a very long time, for over 20 years. Near 20 years, I beg your pardon. And was known as The Anarchy because it was so devastating to the country.

Stephen, to try to improve his position of authority, imprisoned the bishops of Salisbury, Lincoln and Ely, and then dashed to Salisbury to seize the Bishop of Salisbury's treasure. His brother, Henry, was not very happy about this because he had made promises on Stephen's behalf that the independence of the church would be respected.

However, he tried to keep the peace. And when Matilda landed in England in 1139, Henry negotiated for her to have safe passage to meet her half-brother at Bristol, and accompanied her himself through his diocese. Here she is looking rather glum. She certainly doesn't look terribly well.

He did that, and then he continued to try to keep the peace the following year. But in early 1141, at the Battle of Lincoln between Matilda's and Stephen's forces, Stephen lost and he was imprisoned. Henry of Blois, being ever the pragmatist, abandoned his brother and supported Matilda who he recognised essentially, as Queen of England. Or as he termed it, 'The Lady of the English'.

Unfortunately, Matilda was not a great diplomat. She promptly fell out with the citizens of London, presumably the more senior citizens of London, and was thrown out of London, and made her way to Winchester where Henry of Blois, it is stated by a contemporary account, as Matilda went in by one gate, Henry of Blois went out by the other. And he then took up arms again for his brother, Stephen.

I'm sorry, this is terribly complicated, but it is very important in terms of Henry's role at this time. And indeed, in due course, Stephen was put back on the throne again. That though, did not end the civil war, which carried on for another 12 years until 1153, pretty much stalemate. One of the key areas that was maintained for the king was the diocese of Winchester because of Henry.

But in 1153, Henry of Blois was critical to the negotiation of a peace, by which Matilda's son, Henry- another Henry- of Anjou would secede Stephen as king when he died. And that peace was sealed by a kiss of peace in Winchester Cathedral and the treaty was known as the Treaty of Winchester.

That is a gallop through, and probably horribly confusing. But in summary, Henry of Blois had been responsible for making his brother king. He was then responsible for dethroning him and bringing Matilda in theory to the throne, although she's not really recognised as reigning, then for putting his brother back on the throne again. And finally, for bringing an end to the terrible civil war that had been raging for so long in the country. So you can see what a remarkable figure he was in the history of England.

When Henry II seceded, obviously the son of his former enemy, Matilda, he was not persecuted, but he felt unsafe and he went into voluntary exile for a while at Cluny. And then when he came back in the late 1150s, he was not such a powerful figure anymore and concentrated really on his diocese and estates.

But he did come out into the spotlight once again in 1162 when he was responsible for overseeing the consecration of Thomas Becket as Archbishop of Canterbury, and we will be returning to Thomas Becket later.

So, that's a run-through of Henry of Blois, the main events of his life. I will now return to him as builder, and as a patron of the arts. I've already touched on his works at Glastonbury, and briefly to say that he built an enormous palace at Southwark when he was attending to business in London, which as a major figure in the court he needed to do.

There is still a fragment surviving of Winchester Palace in London. Many of the bishops had palaces in London, but his was the largest of them all and there's a fragment of the great hall, actually of a later rebuilding than Henry. But his palace was not only the largest amongst the bishops, but one of the largest buildings in Medieval London.

Another aspect that came with owning Southwark was that there were two areas in London where prostitution was tolerated. One of them was Southwark. So Henry of Blois received rents from brothels as part of his great wealth. That continued with Bishops of Winchester in the medieval period and resulted in prostitutes in London being known as Winchester Geese. So if ever you hear a reference to Winchester Geese, it's not the feathered kind.

Nothing of his time survives there, other than the name. Nearer to home, there is much more surviving. Winchester Cathedral itself had only recently been rebuilt, a great Romanesque reconstruction. But Henry did make one significant addition which is symptomatic of his own wealth and the wealth of the diocese. He added a treasury in the south transept which is still there and includes these rather wonderful underground caverns for the keeping of the treasure.

He also reinterred and rearranged the bodies of the early English kings, because Winchester was the burial place for all the early kings from Alfred the Great until William Rufus, so just after the Conquest as well. These are actually 16th century chests, but they're probably in a very similar arrangement as put up by Henry of Blois. They include King Canute, Hardicanute and, as I said, William Rufus.

There's been a lot of archaeological work going on in recent years to try and identify exactly who is in the different chests. That's partly necessary because after the Battle of Cheriton in 1644, the parliamentarian soldiers ransacked the cathedral and broke into two of the chests and used some of the bones, presumably the longer ones, to smash the stained glass in the cathedral. And though the bones were recovered a put back in the chests, they weren't necessarily put in the right ones so we're left with a bit of a dilemma.

Just to the south of Winchester, Henry founded the Hospital of St Cross which was an alms-house for 13 aged brethren and the feeding of 100 poor people daily. I'm sure many of you have been to St Cross. If you haven't, you must go because it is the most wonderful place, and still is an operating hospital.

You'll know that still to this day, they give out a wayfarer's dole of beer and bread. Not enough to keep you going for very long, but nevertheless the custom keeps going.

The domestic buildings, and you can see with the series of chimneys behind of the gatehouse, are 14th and 15th century. But the bulk of the church was constructed in the later years of Henry of Blois and is a very fine example of Romanesque architecture with an [aisled cross 0:35:22] plan, round arches and this very bold ornamentation of [ribs] and window surrounds, particularly in the Lady Chapel which is on the right hand side.

Henry also embellished and rebuilt churches associated with his estates. Those included Bishop's Waltham, although there's virtually nothing there now you can see of the church that he constructed. Bishop Sutton, where there's more. Last, but very definitely most importantly, here. And here we are.

East Meon, although the current building was commenced whilst actually the parish was under royal control in the very late 11th century, or early 12th, it's now generally agreed that Henry of Blois was responsible for the magnificent tower.

If you see on the gable end, which is the east façade of the church, you can see those round windows at the top, or oculi is the technical term for them. These are very much a distinctive feature of Henry's architecture. We have them here and there should be a series of three on each face. And obviously three of them, or on three faces are covered by the clock. But there they are with the tripartite round-headed windows below with zig-zag, indented mouldings on them, to give you the technical descriptions.

This is an exceptionally fine piece of architecture. Probably the most accomplished and sophisticated pieces of Normal architecture in any parish church in England, so it's something to be immensely proud of.

The original plan to, I've mentioned earlier, that you wouldn't have had a south aisle, you wouldn't have had a Lady Chapel, it was a very simple cross. The best of Norman buildings are made all the more effective by the simplicity of their plans and ornamentation being primarily focussed on the tower and on the west and south doors. The south door has been shifted southwards when the aisle was added.

Again, were these Henry of Blois' work? My thinking is they were because churches were almost invariably built from the east end, westwards. You needed to have the working bit going first of all and therefore, these would have been done quite late on. Therefore it's highly likely that if he did the tower, he would have done the two doors as well.

Now, the reason for each of these three churches I've mentioned, so Bishop's Waltham, Bishop Sutton and here, being focussed on by him was because he had estates in each of those places. And at each of those places there was also a hunting park, and that's why the church here is built up against what is now known as Park Hill.

He was resident, at least in part of the year he would be here, so he wanted the church to be impressive. Here we have again the church, but also showing the Court House which is the very significant remnant of William of Wykeham's bishop's palace, or bishop's house, the manor house. And at Bishop Sutton there was also a building, a house.

We don't know, or at least George Bartlett will probably be able to correct me if I'm wrong, I don't think we know the form of the building before William of Wykeham's house. There are theories about it, but there certainly appears to have been a bishop's house here in the Norman period.

At Bishop Sutton too, that's pretty much entirely disappeared. Recently, a scholar of Henry of Blois called Nicholas Ryle has suggested that this maybe a drawing showing the palace at Bishop Sutton. But both East Meon and Bishop Sutton, the houses that were there were not really palaces. They were manor houses and they would act as hunting lodges and as administrative centres for the estates.

Whereas at Bishop's Waltham, I'm sure again many of you will have been there, you'll know if you've visited how vast it is. Even the scale of the ruin is vast. And this was a fully functioning and enormous palace that was sufficiently big that it could house the royal court when they visited in 1182 and on many occasions subsequently, including when Queen Mary met Philip II of Spain before her marriage.

Henry, after he came back from exile, built this enormous place and although it's in ruins now, this is a reconstruction done by Historic England to give you an idea of its appearance much later on. But the substantial stone bits; the structure of most of that was Henry of Blois. Although because it was the Bishop of Winchester's principal country palace, it was constantly updated and there's very little Romanesque detail actually evident now.

Fortunately there are some fragments. I don't know if anybody has visited the very charming museum in the palace grounds at Bishop's Waltham. It's well worth it if you haven't. The fragments are in there. Again from reconstruction, they show a very similar door to the west door here as part of what he undertook at Bishop's Waltham.

Henry of Blois' town palace was Wolvesey, next to the cathedral. You can see here on the two plans to the left, how he's massively increased the size of the palace, more than doubling it during his life. And also the sheer scale is given by this aerial view when you compare it to the cathedral, although admittedly, because of the angle it does emphasise that even more. But nevertheless, it was enormous.

Once again, sadly it's in ruin, but a reconstruction has been done including of the hall and you can see again, the use of the oculi, the round windows within that.

Wolvesey had a moat and a defensive wall added at the beginning of the civil war, prudently. Henry of Blois also created magnificent gardens there and built a menagerie, so it was quite some establishment.

He also made very innovative use of materials. Tournai marble, which we'll be talking about with the font here, and Purbeck marble, and some very fine carving. An example of a fragment of surviving carving from his time is this door jamb. You can see very beautiful ornamented carving with a creature peeping out in amongst the scrolling foliage.

That brings us to the subject of Tournai marble because in Hampshire there are four Tournai marble fonts. St Michael's at Southampton, St Mary Bourne in Winchester Cathedral and all of them are mid-12th century. It's possible that Henry of Blois was responsible for commissioning all of them.

To my mind, there is such a clear similarity between the Winchester one on the right and ours, and at both of those places he had that very direct connection that those must be him. I'm not so sure about the other ones because they're very different stylistically.

He set a trend for it. There are four in Hampshire and there are six in other parts of the country. It was a very short-lived trend. There's much discussion about whether they were carved here or at Tournai which is in modern day Belgium. It's almost impossible to say for certain.

The stone doesn't become much harder with age and of course, there would be less of it to transport if you did the carving elsewhere. But then, I get the impression that Henry was very concerned about exactly how things were done and would have wanted to know. There is a record of a [gilded 0:45:05] Tournai cross in Winchester, so they may have been carved there.

And because I know there are many sailing folk in the audience, I must point out at this point, and I have to read it because it means nothing to me, that the Winchester font on the right hand side includes, you can see that boat, it's the earliest depiction of a boat with a sternpost rudder. So you sailing folk, when you go to Winchester, you must go and look at that and bow down in appreciation.

The Winchester font shows the life of St Nicholas and ours shows the story of Adam and Eve going from the right to the left. And also actually including the other sides, but they're just really about the creation of the earth and the produce of the earth and then Adam and Eve make an appearance on the third side.

It took me nearly ten years to work out there was a special light for the font. So I would bring guests staying in here and talk about it in the dinge. And then one of my friends who I was with said, "What does this do?" And pressed it. And ah, you could see it. (Laughter) It's very effective.

Wherever it was carved, it's certain that the carvers themselves were from Tournai because of the style of the carving which is very bold, but stiffer and less refined than the indigenous carvers were producing for Henry, such as that door jamb that I showed you at Wolseley.

Not only did Henry's Winchester attract the best of craftsmen from the continent, he also travelled much as well to the continent. Many times relatively for the times. Primarily to Rome and Cluny, but he is also thought to have travelled across Spain. We have a contemporary account of him visiting Rome from John of Salisbury, the Bishop of Chartres.

John of Salisbury teased him for having Damsipitous craze which, of course, we all know what that is. Damsipitous is a character from the writings of Horace, who ruined himself by obsessively buying antiques. Well, Henry certainly didn't ruin himself because he had plenty of money, but he did buy, and again John of Salisbury [calls him for an anti-Roman sculpture].

That's quite a brave thing for a cleric to do because they're heathen. Therefore, he was bucking the trend as he did in other ways as well. None of that sculpture is around or at least been identified.

But what we do have is a carving that was done for Henry for Wolvesey Palace, and elsewhere, that shows classical influence. This is a particularly important piece which has a capital that has a centaur on one side and a griffin on the other which are undoubtedly of classical inspiration.

Also, we don't have his intaglio, which means incised, stone seal, but we do have the impression of it. This is showing the gods Zeus, and Isis. This was a Roman intaglio stone that Henry would have bought in Rome and then used- this is his counter-seal actually. And therefore we have that direct evidence of him collecting items whilst he was in Rome.

Now we come back to the image that was on the screen at the very start of the talk. Henry is probably carrying a slab made up of Roman marbles. Perhaps as an alternative, he's giving an offering and he's bowing down.

But this plaque was one of two surviving but it would have been intended to adorn a large crucifix. You can see here a reconstruction showing how there would have been four originally, on the ends of a crucifix.

As well as showing Henry, this would have been made- although it's made actually of copper with enamel- it would have been made by a goldsmith because it needed the finest of workmanship to produce it. It's from this school known as the Meusen School, that's the Meuse Valley in Belgium.

Once again, there are known to have been Meusen craftsmen working in Winchester. Winchester was an absolute cultural hive of activity at this time, thanks to Henry of Blois.

It would have been absolutely festooned in gold originally. You can see little fragments surviving by his feet, but that's sadly all gone. Henry is known to have commissioned huge quantities of items in gold and silver from his legacies he'd left at Winchester Cathedral and Cluny, and elsewhere.

Undoubtedly, there would have been wonderful pieces of gold and silver here. Maybe they're buried somewhere, you never know. But they certainly don't survive as far as we know now.

But what we do know about his commissioning is that he gave 500 ounces of gold to the Abbot at Cluny to create an enormous crucifix. The gold would have been plates that would have been pinned to a timber core. 500 ounces of gold is today worth £700,000. So that gives you a sense of the scale of Henry's patronage.

Gold today is worth much less comparatively than it would have been in the 12th century, so that's even more remarkable. That's one of his gifts that's recorded during his life.

One piece of silver that we know absolutely East Meon church would have had, thanks to Henry, is a silver chalice. I should say, very little survived of 12th century church silver. This is actually gilded copper, and even gilded copper is very rare to survive. This comes originally from Gloucester Cathedral. It went to France and then ended up in the V&A. But there's very little.

Now I'm going on to the chalice. This is a contemporary chalice from Henry Blois' time, but actually from Canterbury Cathedral. Henry was horrified to find that many of the churches in his diocese had no silver. And particularly had no silver chalices, which was considered to be irreverent. They were laturn which was a sort of copper and tin, I think, alloy.

So he decided to do something about this. He did something about it by making all his parishes pay the 12th century equivalent of the parish share in the form of a silver chalice. So every church had to pay him with one of these. As soon as he got them, he gave them back to the churches again for use in the churches.

Of course, if he had just given them the money to make them, well, not all of them would have done so, so it was very clever and a very enlightened and generous act by him. And perhaps, the modern church wouldn't make quite such a generous act as that, maybe. Anyway, they did.

Now, there are probably only about a dozen surviving Norman chalices and almost all of them were actually grave goods. This was buried with an Archbishop of Canterbury. This is Archbishop Walter's chalice. Because silver and gold were money. They were the same as the coinage. If you fell on hard times you would send your gold and silver into a goldsmith who would melt it down and give it back to you essentially as coins [and that happened a lot 0:53:51].

And also, fashions changed. You would send your silver in to be melted and made into something in the new fashion. Therefore, there are a miniscule number of pieces of silver from this period surviving. This only survived because it was in a grave for 600 years.

Unfortunately, whereas the wrecker's ball which certainly did for many of Henry's buildings leave fragments, as I've shown you, the melting pot is rather more complete in its destruction, so there's very little surviving.

Returning back again to this Meusean plaque, another thing that's very remarkable about this is that it's a portrait of Henry. And a contemporary portrait of Henry by somebody who probably met him and knew what he looked like. I can't emphasise how significant that is because all the other characters in the story that I've shown you are later depictions and imaginary. This is as close as you get, at the time, to a portrait.

And notice that very distinct beard that he's got. That is really unusual because it was considered inappropriate for clergy to have beards and long hair. He has got a tonsure, you can see above. But this beard is very striking and it was actually commented upon by John of Salisbury who said that he was noticeable for his long beard and his philosophical solemnity.

Now, that says something else about Henry as well, because he was prepared to do something he shouldn't really have done and he could do that because he was so powerful. But it also shows that he was a man of fashion.

In the 11th century it was absolutely forbidden for knights and churchmen to have long hair and bears. Courtiers in the early 11th century, it became very fashionable. Still frowned upon by the older generation, but very fashionable. But Henry followed that fashion. So he isn't just a stodgy churchmen, he was also a follower of fashion, and indeed a leader of fashion in his use of architectural materials.

There are more contemporary depictions of Henry. This is from his principal seal, also surviving at Winchester College. His most perfectly preserved and significant survival from his time, the Winchester Bible. This is Henry depicted as [Darius 0:56:40] in the Winchester Bible. This is a very, very remarkable object indeed, which I'm pretty sure is now on display in the cathedral. I haven't been obviously, for quite a long time but when I last went, I'm pretty sure it was.

This shows you how big it is. Just getting a sense of his hands. Each page is 2ft by 1.5ft. It's the largest surviving 12th century bible, and one of the most lavishly illustrated. It is in essence, a picture gallery in itself because of these fantastic illuminated initials.

It was produced in Winchester. There was a famous scriptorium in Winchester, by the monks. One single scribe did all the lettering but an analysis by experts of the illuminated

initials shows that they were done by six different artists. This just shows you how superb they are but actually also, what an extraordinarily expensive production this was. Because not only do you have gold, but you have the blue for which you need lapis lazuli which is only available from Afghanistan and was much more expensive- I told you how expensive gold was- than gold.

Also, this remarkable object was produced for Winchester Cathedral by Henry and it has stayed at Winchester ever since, which is really remarkable. It did go to London for a couple of years in the 1650s, we can forgive it that.

The number of portable items in churches in this country that you could say have stayed there for that long, you can probably count on the fingers of one hand. So this is a very remarkable thing indeed.

I'm just going to read some of the words that the great authority on the Winchester Bible, Claire Donovan, because I can't do better than her description. She says, 'The consistently marvellous quality of the painting and gilding captures your breath as you turn to an opening to find a great, shiny, high-coloured storytelling initial, stylish and full of vitality.'

Here are a few examples of those wonderful initials. You can see there will be a monster's head grabbing a ball here. The details on them are absolutely superb and a number of these you can see online as well.

When I was putting this slide together, I suddenly noticed that there was an F and a U, and so I had to be a bit careful about my arrangement of the letters when I was putting it together. It also occurred to me that you could have an extremely grand poison pen letter using these illuminated initials. Of course, if one comes now, you'll know it's me.

Henry also oversaw the creation of many other books. This is his psalter, of book of Psalms, which survives in the British Library. Rather cruder illuminations, but notice lots of prominent [beards1:00:00] again in this fantastic depiction of hell on the right hand side, to put the fear of God into those who are looking at it.

Then the other really important book associated with Henry of Blois is the 'Survey of Winchester' which had been started by Henry I in 1110 and was completed by Henry of Blois in 1148. Has its original binding; this is a detail of it. You can see these wonderful stamped deer and wolves and exotic birds on it.

It's actually the earliest and most detailed record of a European city to survive, so another very remarkable item indeed. It's now in the Society of Antiquaries in London.

I'm showing you here, the first page of Henry's survey with a translation. As any good survey should, it starts by laying out questions at the very top. The questions were: what is the name of the landholder? How much does he hold? From whom does he hold it? How much does each person receive from the land?

Then it goes on; it starts with the high street. None of your Marks & Spencer and Greggs at that time. Actually, what is very wonderful about the 'Winton Domesday', as it's known- actually, I should say before I go onto that, there was no Domesday survey of Winchester

or London in the main Domesday in 1086. So this was catching up in a way. It's more detailed.

But one particularly wonderful thing is the recording of names. You have the personal, or first, or Christian names given. Then you have the origins of surnames and thereby four categories really. Thereby the place of origin, the parentage, employment and nicknames.

And you have here, Richard of [Beyer 1:02:19], number seven, and Godfrey, son of William. So, that's the second category. Then over here, you have got your various ones, but Richard the Needlemaker.

In terms of nicknames you have Robert the Weasel. Now, would you frequent a shop in the high street in Winchester run by Robert the Weasel? It made me rather think of Auntie Wainwright's shop in 'Last of the Summer Wine'. I think it would put me off, certainly.

And then also, what about Hugh Hackmouse? Well, maybe he was the 12th century equivalent of Rentokil. I don't know.

This extraordinary survey exemplifies the excellent administrative skills of Henry of Blois, of what an important role he played in the history not only of this parish and this county, but of the country as a whole. He was having to walk a precarious tightrope in the most turbulent of times but he survived throughout it and died in his own bed in 1171 after over 40 years, as I mentioned earlier, as Bishop of Winchester.

And as I said also at the beginning, by that time he was no longer the wealthiest man in the country because he'd given away most of his wealth. Now, that wasn't entirely altruistic because had he kept it, as soon as he'd died the king would have taken it, so therefore he got it [as 1:04:02] quickly as he could before he died.

In his life, he'd been responsible, you could say his critics accused him of greed for power and wealth. Well yes, but then most churchmen of that time were like that, so it was hardly unusual. And he was very principled and courageous in defending the rights of the independence of the church and he gave away his wealth, so it's much more of a mixed story than you'd get by just looking at the accounts of his enemies.

He was, albeit it every now and again would put somebody on the throne and take another person off, he did bring that horrendous civil war to an end.

Finally, it was him on his deathbed that King Henry II came after the murder of Thomas Becket to seek advice on what to do. It's recorded that Henry of Blois did not hold back in admonishing the king.

Two days after the King's visit on August 8th 1171, Henry of Blois died. He was buried in Winchester Cathedral. [Sorry, that should show you there 1:05:23]. That's [the story] of the various images which is remarkable in itself to have three images of him from his lifetime. And was buried in Winchester Cathedral, and probably in this tomb which is [an acquire] of limestone and Purbeck marble although it's also claimed for William Rufus. But actually the fact that when the tomb was opened it contained a chalice which you would get buried with a priest would suggest it's very likely that it is Henry of Blois.

His memory lives on in East Meon, thanks to this magnificent building and that wonderful font. And now I won't ever be able to look at it again without thinking of some of you, who I know, being dangled over it as babies. These are truly great treasures that we should nurture and celebrate. Thank you very much.