



IN QUESTION RELICS IN QUESTION

Tuesday 21 July

In recompense to God for the destructions of the Norman Conquest, William I gave hundreds of relics to Battle Abbey, a number even surpassing those of Westminster Abbey. A list of these has just been researched by Michael Carter, and he has discovered they included a piece of wood from the manger of Christ, a hair shirt said to have been worn by St Nicholas, and some rocks said to have been used in the stoning of St Stephen. Later, King John donated a relic of the Holy Sepulchre where Christ was buried, and a portion of the Cross which his brother Richard was able to bring back from his Crusade. Henry II commissioned numerous reliquaries containing parts of Thomas a Becket and had them distributed throughout Europe as part of his penance for having his archbishop murdered. Much of the architecture of the east end of Canterbury Cathedral, and of the Ste Chapelle in Paris, can be seen as reliquaries. A century later Henry III preserved the relics of Edward the Confessor in a special chapel in Westminster Abbey. Whole abbeys in the Middle Ages were funded by donations from pilgrims coming to view relics. What were relics? What were they for? Were they genuine?

All **Culture in Question** lectures take place in the Art Workers Guild, Queen Square, Bloomsbury, unless otherwise indicated. Coffee is served at 10.30, the lectures begin at 11, and a light lunch with wine is served at 1 pm. The day ends at 3.30 pm. £90 members, £100 non-members.