

ANGLO-SAXON LABOURS OF THE MONTHS:  
REPRESENTING MAY – A CASE STUDY

by

SIANNE LAUREN SHEPHERD

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## **Abstract**

Labours of the Months iconography is widely recognised in medieval studies, but the focus of research on the subject is most often trained on images from manuscripts of the twelfth century onwards, or representations found in sculptured decorations around church doorways from the same period. In contrast, illustrations of the Labours of the Months from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts are rarely considered and, when they are, too often are dismissed as being little more than simple depictions of agricultural activities to identify the month in the calendar pages they embellish.

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate the importance of these Anglo-Saxon illustrations, as well as the calendar pages on which they appear, and to show that the images have a far deeper meaning than has hitherto been applied in attempts to place an interpretation on the illustrations. The research uses May as a case study to look at the text of the calendar pages, as well as other contemporary Anglo-Saxon texts, and consider a variety of artistic forms from Classical times onward in order to find potential inspiration for the Anglo-Saxon calendar illustration, and from there suggest a deeper and more context-appropriate interpretation for the Labours of the Months imagery.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my family,  
with gratitude for their constant support and inexhaustible faith.

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## **Introduction**

Most medievalists are aware of the decorated calendars which appear in manuscript Books of Hours from the Middle Ages, and that these were usually illustrated by a picture cycle referred to as the Labours of the Months. However, the tradition of decorated calendars has a much longer history – a history that can be traced back at least to the Classical period – and this tradition, like so many other artistic conventions, was adopted and adapted by people in a multiplicity of social spheres from the early Christian period onwards in order to suit their own circumstances, objectives, beliefs, and aesthetic.

There are just two surviving manuscripts from Anglo-Saxon England which contain calendars which feature Labours of the Months illustrations, although there are numerous other calendars, and fragments of calendars, from the period scattered across Western Europe which do not include this – or indeed any other – imagery. Therefore, these two manuscripts stand out from their peers since they provide the earliest surviving evidence of Labours of the Months imagery in a tableau-style, scenic composition as decoration for calendar pages. Despite this, scholars interested in the Labours of the Months picture cycle tend to bypass the Anglo-Saxon evidence; their existence is given cursory mention before studies focus on the comparatively abundant number of richly decorated examples from the later Middle Ages. The reason for such dismissive treatment is unclear, though it is possible that the Anglo-Saxon manuscript illustrations are considered an ‘inconvenient blip’ in the tradition of calendar decoration, since they are not entirely congruent with surviving evidence of Classical calendar imagery or the later medieval Book of Hours illustrative cycle.

Illustrations of the months in Classical sources customarily feature a solitary figure as the dominant focal point, usually engaged in an activity representative of the relevant month,



with other elements decorating the background. In designs such as these it may be observed that both the activity in which the central figure is engaged and the choice of additional decorative background elements are commonly linked to the observance of a pagan festival. Neither the relatively simple layouts used in the Classical decorations, nor the pagan themes, appear to bear any resemblance to what is found in the Anglo-Saxon illustrated calendars. In later times calendar decoration conformed to what Hourihane calls “standard iconographic compositions for the individual months” (lvi). While some of the themes used in these later decorations are similar to those found in the Anglo-Saxon calendars they rarely appear in the same order, and courtly contexts of the later calendar pictures are certainly not apparent in the Anglo-Saxon illustrations.

A comparison of the evidence in Anglo-Saxon calendars with that from the Classical and later medieval periods raises interesting questions.<sup>1</sup> Where did the Anglo-Saxon artists find inspiration for the style and subject matter of the images used in their calendars if not from Classical exemplars? What is the significance of these illustrations, and how were they meant to be interpreted by the viewer? David Hill proposes that the answer to this last question may be found in a contemporary text – *Gerefa* – “a homiletic account of the duties and needs of the steward of a large estate” (36). While this seems plausible on the surface, it does not explain why images based on an agricultural theme would be considered appropriate in manuscripts that were clearly compiled to assist in the education of a monastic audience; one manuscript which facilitates the study of the organisation of the Christian year, and the other manuscript a book of hymns to be used in the daily liturgy. However, if it were the case that the *Gerefa* was an influence on the subject matter of the calendar illustrations, there is the

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix: A Comparison of Traditions in Calendar Illustration

additional question of whether the text of the *Gerefa* itself was originally written with the purpose of being an instruction book for land managers in the first place, since “we are shown an estate where grass was mown in the autumn but not in the early summer, where madder and vines were planted and beans, flax, and woad were sown, but not wheat, rye, barley, or oats” (Harvey 8). While it is true that treatises on the Three Estates equate the work of *labores* with *oratores*, this alone is not in itself a robust rationalization for the inclusion of illustrations ostensibly based on secular occupations in this context; we need to move away from considering the illustrations simply as representations of agricultural labour if we are to find a more convincing reason for their selection as a suitable form of decoration for the Anglo-Saxon calendar pages.

Michael Lapidge and David Dumville have both highlighted links between entries on the calendars of BL MS Cotton Julius A.vi. (the Julius Hymnal) and BL MS Cotton Tiberius B.v. Part I (the Tiberius Miscellany) and the text of the Anglo-Saxon metrical martyrology of York, with Lapidge suggesting the function of the calendar entries may have been to act as a mnemonic – a ready record of feast days for reference and to be committed to memory (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 343). Given that the Benedictine Rule asserts the need for monks to study and memorise the psalms, it is but a small leap from this to suggest they were also required to memorise the feast days around which the liturgical year was organised, although that was not a specified requirement of the Rule. This suggests that we should stop thinking of the documents as ‘calendars’ in the sense of purely marking time and recognise that, although part of their function is undoubtedly a visual organisation of the liturgical year, the textual content is primarily an abridged version of what is found in martyrologies. What

remains then is to give proper consideration to the relationship between the text of the calendars and the decorative images selected to accompany it.

Research into Classical calendar iconography by scholars such as Levi, Stern, and Salzman demonstrates the significance of decorations in this context to the contemporary audience. Given the reverence with which Classical sources were treated by early medieval scholars, and the evidence of rich symbolism and range of interpretation that can be applied to other Anglo-Saxon manuscript iconography, it is extremely unlikely that the images adorning Anglo-Saxon calendar pages were not imbued with a similar layer of meaning for the viewer. Furthermore, the time and materials needed to produce the illustrations suggest they are more than mere markers intended to identify the month when looking through the codex, especially as each page also bears the zodiac symbol for the month – a much more reliable indication of the time of year than the representation of an agricultural activity which may be seasonally inappropriate, depending on the location of the reader.

The aim of this particular piece of research is to use May as a case study in order to investigate whether it is possible to identify sources for the Anglo-Saxon Labours of the Months picture cycle, and to suggest possible interpretations of these particular images by analysing their relationship to the text of the calendar pages.

The first chapter will focus on investigating and understanding the context of the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in which the calendars appear, including a discussion of manuscript collections in Anglo-Saxon England – places where Anglo-Saxon libraries were established and by whom, where the books came from to create these libraries, and the general content of manuscript collections from the time of Augustine's mission onward – along with an examination of the content, context and probable uses of calendars specifically. In this I am

indebted to the previous research undertaken by Professor Michael Lapidge on Anglo-Saxon libraries and both Professor Lapidge and Dr. Patrick McGurk on the development of metrical calendars.

The second chapter comprises the case study of the illustrations selected to decorate the Anglo-Saxon calendar pages for the month of May. This will include: a comparison of the illustrations' subject matter with contemporary liturgical, hagiographical, and poetic texts; an in-depth examination of the composition and content of the calendar images themselves, including a close analysis of the illustrations' figures to identify firmly their position and function in society based on their appearance and physical attributes; an exploration of the style and content of calendar illustrations from Classical times; consideration of the origins and development of themes selected to represent the faith in early Christian art; and a discussion of the influence of Classical art on the development of Anglo-Saxon art. The chapter aims to formulate a reasoned explanation for the inclusion of art based on agricultural pursuits on calendar pages in manuscripts produced in a Christian monastic context, to include a possible interpretation of the meaning embedded within the imagery.

## **Manuscript Context**

Manuscript images can work in several ways, the most obvious being to act as a direct illustration of the text which they accompany on the page. However, such a simplistic use of images is uncommon in medieval manuscripts; instead illustrations tend to function within a specific tradition, often as a component in a cycle of images the intention of which is to provide representation of an abstract concept. This does not mean that manuscript illustrations have no correlation to the text of the page on which they appear, but it does highlight how relationships between text and image are often more complex than is immediately apparent, and why it is unwise to take these images purely at face value. It is for this reason that thorough palaeographical and codicological examination of manuscripts has such an essential part to play in the study illustrations such as those of the Labours of the Months cycle.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to provide a detailed appraisal of the manuscripts containing Labours of the Months images; one which includes an assessment of the physical and palaeographical attributes of the manuscripts, and an investigation of the texts bound within them, so that reasons for compiling a codex containing these texts, and the purposes they may have been intended to fulfil, can be proposed. All these factors hold myriad clues which can help reveal the potential meaning of manuscript images, and the results of this review will provide valuable information for the analysis and interpretation of Labours of the Months illustrations later.

Anglo-Saxon calendars featuring Labours of the Months illustrations survive in two manuscripts, both of which are now preserved at the British Library in London: MS Cotton

Julius A. vi, referred to hereafter as the Julius Hymnal, and MS Cotton Tiberius B. v Part 1, referred to as the Tiberius Miscellany.

### **The Julius Hymnal**

Cotton Julius A. vi comprises ninety vellum leaves measuring 196x126 mm, and it can be stated with some certainty that the manuscript was produced during the eleventh century. The contents of the codex include: a Latin hymnal with continuous interlinear Old English glosses, which is described by Temple as a “basic collection of ninety-five hymns used in the English Church in the eleventh century” (80); the calendar featuring Labours of the Months images and metrical entries; Easter Tables for 969-87, 988-1006, and 1007-14; and extracts from a computus text, possibly that of Bede.

Temple states that the “calendar is attributable to Christ Church, Canterbury, on stylistic evidence” but also mentions that the calendar and hymnal texts were not written by the same scribe, or even at the same time (80). However, the scribal hands suggest the dates for both elements of the manuscript are reasonably close, dated to the early eleventh century for the calendar and mid eleventh century for the hymnal. Furthermore, we can be relatively certain that the two texts were bound together at an early stage, since it is possible to identify the manuscript from a description given in the catalogue of Durham Priory from 1391 (Temple 80).

While there is some decoration in the hymnal section of the manuscript, it is far less widespread and less ornate than that found on the calendar pages:

The Hymnal [...] contains one ornamental initial O (f. 72<sup>v</sup>) introducing the canticles which is embellished with straggly acanthus foliage and a dragon appended across the top, the whole being painted in green and ochre. Other initials are plain red or green capital letters. (Temple 80)

The difference in decorative style emphasises the separateness of the two main parts of the manuscript, and causes curiosity as to how these unrelated texts ended up bound together. One possibility is that they were originally contained in two separate codices obtained by the library at Durham Priory, and were combined to form a particular genre of manuscript at a later date. During the period of its reformation from secular community to Benedictine monastery in the late eleventh century, Durham Priory undertook to improve its library holdings by acquiring manuscripts from other monasteries. This may explain the appearance of a Canterbury-style calendar, richly ornamented with gold leaf, in the same codex with a modestly decorated liturgical text.

The hymnal, a liturgical manuscript, would be required to include a calendar and perhaps, if the calendar which originally accompanied the hymnal was damaged or missing, one was taken to replace it from another manuscript in which the inclusion of a calendar was not considered obligatory. While it is difficult to prove this theory, it nevertheless offers a reasonable explanation for the differences of style and date in the texts of the Julius Hymnal.

### **The Tiberius Miscellany**

Cotton Tiberius B. v Part 1 comprises eighty-eight vellum leaves measuring 260x218 mm, and was produced in the second quarter of the eleventh century. It is considered to be a product of the Winchester school, a theory based on 'SUUIÐHUN' being the only name in

the list of bishops to be written in capitals (Temple 104; Ker 256) and supported by the “affinity of the calendar with that of Winchester” as witnessed in the *Æthelstan and Junius Psalters* (Temple 104). The written space of *c.* 225x190mm is positioned neatly on the centre of each page and has suffered no loss of text, despite having been trimmed during preservation and rebinding. It should be noted that all the leaves in *Tiberius* as it is presented today are inlaid and single due to the preservation binding which was carried out at the British Library in 1843, making “reconstruction of the gatherings [...] extremely tentative” (McGurk et al. 28). Similarly, current foliation, as used in the facsimile and referenced throughout this thesis, does not match the earliest evidence of folio numbering, which would seem to have been made after Cotton rearranged the contents of the manuscript, but before the fire at Ashburnham House (McGurk et al. 28).

McGurk carried out a thorough analysis of the palaeographical features of the *Tiberius Miscellany* for the facsimile introduction, drawing particular attention to “the general conformity of letter forms within a distinctive range”, and states:

*Tiberius* was written at one scriptorium and mostly by one scribe. The general uniformity in written space measurements and in the number of lines written, the aspect of the script, the style and colours of the illumination, and some particular scribal habits throughout the book suggest it was made at one time and one place. (McGurk et al. 30)

While it is clear that there are variations in size and style of script across the sundry texts of the codex, there are sufficient similarities in the handwriting to justify McGurk’s claims for the circumstances of the manuscript’s production.



Further examination of the palaeographical features of the Tiberius Miscellany demonstrates that the painted miniatures of the calendar, *Aratea*, and *Marvels of the East* are the work of a single artist, and this hypothesis is supported by the obvious parallels in colour schemes, landscape features, and clothing details across the three illustration cycles (McGurk et al. 36-7). The only illustrated item which gives cause for uncertainty in this respect is the world map; McGurk suggests the style of some of the writing on the map may be dated to the late eleventh or early twelfth century, which does not fit with the dating of the rest of the codex, but also notes that it shares sufficient characteristics of script and colour scheme with the rest of the manuscript to make “attribution to the same scriptorium as Tiberius very reasonable” (McGurk et al. 30). Therefore, in light of palaeographical evidence, it may be stated with a degree of confidence that the manuscript as it survives today is representative of the original codex, although the initial order of the texts is uncertain.

The content of the Tiberius Miscellany will be discussed in the section of this chapter concerned with the uses of the manuscript, since the textual make-up of the codex is directly relevant when considering the purpose for which it was created.

### **The Importance of Education**

When we think of education in Anglo-Saxon monasteries, we inevitably think of studies related to the seven liberal arts of the trivium – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – and the quadrivium – arithmetic, astrology, geography, and music. However, this style of Classical education has more in common with the later medieval period, from the twelfth century onwards, where it is associated with the education provided in the great secular universities of

Milan and Paris rather than monastic learning designed to support the praise of God and train priests and missionaries.

Their principle concern was not with Classical literature [...] their sole work was God's work, the *opus Dei*, that is, the performance of the Divine Office at regular intervals during each day; [...] when a monk was not performing the Office, he could most profitably be engaged in reading, as the Rule of St Benedict tells us [...] or, during meal times, in listening to others read edifying works aloud (Lendinara 'Anglo-Saxon Learning' 270).

On their arrival in England in 597, Augustine and his band of missionaries would have found few signs of Latinate knowledge among the Anglo-Saxons, and therefore a lack of literate allies in whom they could rely to spread the Good News of Roman Christianity further among the people. Indeed, Bede tells his readers that the Britons, who had been exposed to Christianity through the Romans, “never preached the faith to the Saxons or Angles who inhabited Britain with them” (36); that Augustine had to send to Rome for assistance because “the harvest was great and the workers were few” (55); and in return:

Pope Gregory sent more colleagues and ministers of the word [...] and he sent with them all such things as were generally necessary for the worship and ministry of the Church, such as sacred vessels, altar cloths and church ornaments, vestments for priests and clerks, relics of the holy apostles and martyrs, *and very many manuscripts* (McClure and Collins 55 [emphasis added]).

In order for them to achieve the mission given to them by Gregory the Great they had to train willing subjects in the required Latin texts so that the religion might proliferate and

flourish throughout the land, and so this was the purpose of the first schools which were established by the Roman missionaries. As the religion spread so new monastic houses were founded, and the need for schools increased in order to cope with the demands for clergy to minister to both the monks and the converted lay population. Future generations of priests and monks drawn from the Anglo-Saxon populace needed to be able to read and understand the Latin texts of the Church – not only the Scriptures and liturgical rites, but decrees of the Church councils, legal documents pertaining to property grants and holdings, and treatises on other subjects such as scriptural exegesis, martyrology, and computus.

It was not enough merely to be able to read the core texts required for the liturgy; the prayers, psalms, and hymns that formed the nucleus of the Divine Office needed to be understood and memorised by those that were required to recite them. Books were rarely used during church services unless it was a high-profile ceremonious occasion – the ordination of a bishop or coronation of a monarch, for example – or during one of the major feasts of the Christian year such as Easter, where the church would be filled with the laity in their annual pilgrimage of repentance and penitence. In these circumstances the manuscripts used would have been prestigious display books, lavishly ornamented with bindings of jewels and precious metals, containing painted and gilded writing intended to glorify the Word rather than render it readable. In contrast, the manuscripts most likely to have been used for learning and meditation are those such as the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany.

## **Uses of the Manuscripts**

The style and content of the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany suggest that they were both intended to be used as educational tools, possibly in a classroom environment, but almost certainly as objects of personal study.

### ***The Julius Hymnal***

The Julius Hymnal is identifiable as an educational manuscript because the text of the hymns has an accompanying interlinear Old English gloss, suggesting a purpose for the codex other than direct use in the daily liturgy. Gretsch discusses how “memorising the psalms would have gone hand in hand with learning the language in which they were transmitted” (16) and that glossed psalters were also used as a “tool for mature students in their scrutiny of the language and the meaning of the psalms” (17). This theory of probable use for the Julius Hymnal is supported by Lendinara’s definition of an *Expositio hymnorum*, “a teaching instrument in which the hymns sung in the Divine Office are set out in plain prose and furnished with glosses” (‘Instructional Manuscripts’ 68-9), which is a close description of the content of the Julius Hymnal. Since hymns comprised an essential element of the Liturgy of the Hours, it is possible that a manuscript such as the Julius Hymnal served students in both pedagogical and meditational use.

However, there is an element of doubt in suggesting that the Julius Hymnal may have been a classroom manuscript, and this is to do with the decoration of the calendar pages; not because the subject matter of the Labours of the Months would have been unsuitable for a school environment, but because it features a gilded kalends sigil on each page. While the basic coloured initials and small piece of decorative art evident in the hymnal text may not

have been out of place in a classroom, rich ornamentation such as a large gilded abbreviation is unlikely to have featured in a text intended for novice students. It is possible, however, that the Julius Hymnal was given to the keeping of the schoolmaster; meditation on the hymns and canticles contained in the Julius Hymnal is the kind of activity that would be considered suitable for the daily *lectio* stipulated in the Benedictine Rule, and the images of the calendar would serve as a reminder of his duties to his charges too – as will become evident when we consider the individual Labours of the Months illustration for May.

### ***The Tiberius Miscellany***

David Hill claims that the Tiberius Miscellany is a Cottonian oddity – a hotchpotch of materials bound together for convenience (29-30) – while Temple lists it as a “large composite volume of uncertain origin” (104), and McGurk describes it as “an illustrated miscellany of largely secular content” (McGurk et al. 109). Hill’s suggestion is easily refuted by the palaeographical evidence described earlier in this chapter, while the unease displayed by both Temple and McGurk in specifying a genre for the codex seems timid in light of recent scholarship in the field of educational manuscripts.

Both Ker and McGurk identify the Tiberius Miscellany as being a manuscript owned by Lumley prior to it becoming part of Cotton’s collection (Ker 256; McGurk et al. 25). The Lumley Catalogue of 1609 describes a manuscript bearing remarkable resemblance to the Tiberius Miscellany in terms of its content, although listed in a slightly different order, and with the inclusion of a lavishly decorated version of Hrabanus Maurus’s *De laude crucis* that has since been lost.

According to the Lumley Catalogue entry, reproduced in McGurk's introduction to the facsimile (25), the Tiberius Miscellany was collated in the following order at that time:

- A short annal covering a span from the birth of Christ to the year 1206 (now part of BL MS Cotton Nero D. ii, fols. 238-41);
- *The Marvels of the East*;
- Notes concerning donations given to Battle Abbey and in its ownership in the first year of the reign of *Henrici iunioris* – a reference to Henry, count of Anjou, who was anointed co-king of England with his father, Henry II, in 1170 and known as “Henry the Young” during his lifetime (Hallam);
- Hrabanus Maurus's *De laude crucis* “cum pulchris variorum crucium formis etc., in modum tabularum expressis”, now lost;
- Calendar and computistical materials;
- Excerpt from Bede *De temporibus* – this is a misidentification of a copy of Ælfric's *De temporibus*, though the Tiberius Miscellany does also contain excerpts from the Bede text among its computistical matter;
- The illustrated *Aratea*;
- Treatise *De concordia solari et lunari*;
- Priscian's *Periegesis*
- The Miracles of Saint Nicholas.

Tracing the provenance of the Tiberius Miscellany between the date of its last additions, made at Battle Abbey *c.* 1206 (Ker 255), and its appearance in the Lumley Catalogue of 1609, placing it in Lumley's possession by 1596 (McGurk et al. 25), may give grounds for a suggestion that the manuscript contents could have been compiled at any time in the intervening period. However, any such suggestion has already been countered by consideration of the palaeographic evidence earlier in this chapter.

Although there is mention of neither the chronological lists of popes, English bishops and kings, nor the illustrated *Mambres and Jannes*, in the Lumley Catalogue entry, both Ker

and McGurk identify the items listed as being fols. 78-88, 2-54, 57-73, 55, 56, and 77 of the Tiberius Miscellany as it exists today, which includes the unstipulated texts (Ker 256; McGurk et al. 25). This can easily be verified by identifying the start and finish of these texts, and checking their locations against items which are mentioned in the Lumley Catalogue entry.

The list matter, beginning with the Popes of Rome, commences on fol. 19v in the Tiberius Miscellany as we have it today, being the verso of the last part of a collection of computus texts headed *Ratio. Quarta Decimae Lunae*. This demonstrates that the list matter, though not specifically itemised in the Lumley Catalogue entry, was present in the manuscript at that time. The presence of *Mambres and Jannes* is easier still to prove, since the text follows on immediately from the end of *Marvels of the East* on fol. 87r, with the full-page illustration appearing on the verso of the same. From this examination of the content, it is clear that the Tiberius Miscellany was deliberately compiled as a codex for a specific purpose before it was acquired by Cotton, although it has suffered the loss of the Hrabanus Maurus text at some point, and the contents were reorganised and added to while in Cotton's possession.

Lendinara cites Petrucci's definition of a miscellaneous manuscript as being "a library without a library" combining "a series of different texts on the basis of a given pedagogical aim" ('Instructional Manuscripts' 61), but later classifies the Tiberius Miscellany as a de-luxe display book rather than a classroom book, though she does not rule out its use for private study ('Instructional Manuscripts' 72). It is quite possible that the manuscript could fall into the category of a precious book produced for the benefit of a single – presumably high status – churchman, though it is unlikely that the identity of this individual will ever be discovered.

If this is the case, what is the purpose of the texts selected for inclusion in the codex – is it, as McGurk suggested, simply a collection of illustrated texts, or was the manuscript assembled with more reasoned intent?

In his monograph on the Anglo-Saxon library, Lapidge claims the “contents of Anglo-Saxon libraries...reflect choice rather than random acquisition” (*Library* 128). If we accept this premise for the construction of a library, why should we think that the composition of a miscellaneous manuscript would not be equally as carefully considered – especially if a miscellany manuscript may be considered a microcosm of a library? Lapidge comments that the choice of texts for an Anglo-Saxon library – and by extension, for the purposes of this discussion, a miscellaneous manuscript – was based on the need of Christian scholars to have resources on which to draw when “interpreting the Bible and explaining the organisation of the Church” (*Library* 129), and this may well be the key to understanding the selection of texts for inclusion in the Tiberius Miscellany manuscript.

Edson identifies the Tiberius Miscellany as a computus manuscript, and describes a typical example as containing “an assortment of documents to support its central features, which are a calendar (often embellished with a martyrology) and a set of Easter tables”, documents such as:

[...] astronomical excerpts from pagan and Christian writers, such as Pliny the Elder, Macrobius, Martianus Capella and Isidore. Bede’s relevant works, sometimes edited by later writers [...] chronologies and lists of rulers (emperors, kings, bishops, even abbots of the local monastery), a chart of the names of the months (Hebrew, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Germanic), a description of the six ages of world history (from Isidore and others), and



mnemonic verses to aid the novice computist. [...] Genealogies[...] extend the idea of time, marked by generations, into the sphere of human life. (27)

According to Semper, “knowledge of creation and the ordering of the world must be maintained to uphold biblical authority and to facilitate the festivals and observances built into the Church year” (125), and “computus...is merely a means of discussing a world that is regulated and experienced through God’s law and power” (136). If we consider the selected texts of the Tiberius Miscellany, both those with illustrations and those without, there is a clear link between creation and computus through the geographical and astronomical items, excerpts from texts concerning the order of nature such as Pliny and Isidore, the calendar and tables, Ælfric’s *De temporibus anni*, and the excerpts from other computistical texts. The computistical texts enable the reader to practise calculation of the date of Easter, while the *Aratea* provides descriptions of the constellations to assist with determining the time of year by the patterns in the sky, and the geographic materials – especially the *mappa mundi* with its references to biblical places and elements (Teresi 355) – keep the focus of the codex on the Earth as God’s creation.

McGurk suggests the contents identify the Tiberius Miscellany as little more than a compilation of largely unrelated secular texts (McGurk et al. 107). However, it is clear that the Tiberius Miscellany was specifically designed by its compiler to remind the reader that the world is part of God’s Creation, and that the measurement of time by observation of the stars, the natural phenomena in the heavens which are also part of God’s great design, demonstrates the “function of God’s involvement in creation on a daily basis” (Semper 136).

This hypothesis would have even greater support had the illustrated *De laude crucis* of Hrabanus Maurus not been removed from the manuscript, since Semper states “the reckoning

of time [...] is always related back to the central operation of computus, that is, the calculation of Easter, marking the culmination of divine intervention in human experience” (136). Given that the *De laude crucis* is decorated with images designed to facilitate meditation on and adoration of the crucifixion – the whole point of celebrating the feast of Easter – this would have given the Tiberius Miscellany a most decidedly non-secular, Easter-centric, emphasis.

### **The Development of Anglo-Saxon Metrical Calendars**

The veneration of saints was already an integral part of the Christian tradition which was brought to Anglo-Saxon England from the Continent at the time of the conversion mission by Augustine in the late sixth century. As Christianity became more wide-spread and established during the ensuing century, a thorough knowledge of the saints honoured by the Anglo-Saxon Church and their commemoration dates, and where these days fell in the Christian year, was required for proper observance of the Divine Office. Given this fact it comes as little surprise that calendars featuring information of this nature were essential requirements for inclusion in liturgical and computistical codices such as the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany. We should be wary, however, of thinking that the only use for these calendars is to facilitate the organisation of the liturgical year and assist in the calculation of the dates for moveable feasts, since illustrated calendars with metrical text entries, such as those contained in the Tiberius Miscellany and Julius Hymnal, would have had other uses also – as educational tools, for example.

### ***The Metrical Calendar of York***

Previous research has linked the metrical text of the calendars in the Tiberius Miscellany and Julius Hymnal to the *Martyrologium Poeticum*, also known as the Metrical Calendar of York (referred to hereafter as MCY). MCY is not a ‘calendar’ in the usual definition of the term; its earliest extant copy is contained in London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vespasian B. vi, a Mercian manuscript dating to c. 805 x 814, and comprises a verse text of 82 hexameters commemorating “a number of saints known from (some redaction of) the *Martyrologium Hieronymian* as well as a substantial number of specifically Northumbrian saints” (Lapidge *Anglo-Latin Literature* 344-5).

Lapidge has determined the origin and date of MCY from a close examination of the English saints commemorated in the poem, deducing that it was originally composed in the diocese of York sometime between 754 and 766, and that it bears striking resemblance to Alcuin’s poem on the saints of York (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 347-8). Furthermore, Lapidge shows how MCY spread across the continent – either through Alcuin’s influence directly or that of his intellectual associates – and was gradually adapted for use in liturgical calendars, where Anglo-Saxon saints were removed and replaced with more suitable commemorations depending on location. The earliest example of this style of redaction dates from the mid-ninth century and appears in a ‘Gregorian’ sacramentary from Riechenau (Vienna, *Österreichische Nationalbibl.* 1815) and this redaction style of MCY into a more readily recognisable ‘calendar’ format then made its way back to England, most probably from northern France at some point in the tenth century (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 349-59).

### ***The Æthelstan Psalter***

The earliest extant English version of the redacted MCY in liturgical calendar format appears in the Æthelstan Psalter (London, British Library MS. Cotton Galba A. xviii), which is a composite manuscript that originated on the continent and was expanded upon later in England.

The psalter element of the manuscript is Carolingian, produced during the ninth century possibly in the Liège region, and the Latin text is unglossed. English additions were incorporated in the tenth century, possibly executed at Winchester, and comprise: four painted miniatures – Christ in Majesty placed as a frontispiece to the manuscript, plus Christ enthroned surrounded by martyrs, confessors, and virgins, the Ascension of Christ, and the Nativity of Christ on leaves interspersed with the text of the psalms; prayers and a litany in Greek added after the text of the psalms; and a metrical calendar based on MCY, with computus material, inserted before the text of the psalms. The calendar has also been richly decorated, featuring elaborate kalends abbreviations and figures of saints “closely reminiscent of the prophets on the St. Cuthbert vestments” (Temple 36-7).

It is widely believed that the Psalter was probably donated to the Old Minster at Winchester by King Æthelstan, who may have received it as a gift from a one of his contemporaries on the continent, and that the supplementary content was added at Old Minster at some point before 939. Matters such as the manuscript possibly being a gift from the king, the psalter text unglossed, and the codex enhanced with lavish decoration after coming into the ownership of the monastery, point to the Æthelstan Psalter being a prized possession of Winchester Old Minster, suggesting it was intended to be used for display purposes on major occasions rather than daily use.

### ***The Junius Psalter***

The Junius Psalter (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Junius 27) is a Latin text *Psalterium Romanum* with continuous interlinear Old English gloss. Palaeographical evidence suggests it was produced at Winchester in the second quarter of the tenth century, since it shares characteristics of script with several other manuscripts that have been identified as being produced by the Winchester school in this period. The psalms are separated into three sets of fifty by large decorated initials and lines of part-coloured capitals emphasising the first psalm of each set, i.e. Psalms 1, 51, and 101 (Temple 38). There are various other decorations of beasts, birds, and plants throughout the psalter text, including a “large initial D historiated with David and the lion” at the beginning of Psalm 109 (Temple 39). The calendar in the Junius Psalter is also ornamented, having large decorative kalends abbreviations and depictions of half-length figures representing different saints – a style of decoration far removed from that found in the calendars of the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany, but very similar to that of the Æthelstan Psalter discussed above.

The text of the calendar in the Junius Psalter is incomplete; that is to say there are pages for each month of the year, but there is not an entry for every day of each month. In addition, the calendar pages have suffered considerable damage, with some further entries having been lost as a result. Of the surviving entries in the calendar of the Junius Psalter, only twenty-eight are metrical in style while ninety-eight are non-metrical. However, comparison of the content of metrical and prose entries in the Junius Psalter calendar to those in the predominantly metrical entries of the Æthelstan Psalter calendar suggests there are sufficient similarities to posit a common exemplar having been used in the compilation of both items (Dumville 24).

The style and scale of decoration throughout the *Æthelstan Psalter* is suggestive of intent for it to be used as a display book rather than a ‘working’ school-room manuscript, and this makes the inclusion of Old English glosses rather puzzling. One explanation may be that the manuscript was created for a high profile clergyman, either commissioned by the man himself or else as a gift from a high status nobleman, and that the Old English glosses were probably included as an aide to meditation on and exegesis of the texts of the psalms.

### **Uses of Anglo-Saxon Metrical Calendars**

Evidence of the transmission of the text of MCY, its original form and later redaction, and the genres of manuscript in which the later tradition of illustrated metrical calendars are contained, should tell us a great deal about the intended uses of the texts. As has been discussed above, the earliest surviving example of MCY is poetic rather than set out in tabular calendrical form, and Lapidge suggests that this illustrated a non-liturgical function:

rather, it appears to have been intended as a sort of poetic martyrology whose function may have been purely mnemonic: to commit such a poem to memory would provide a concise and ready record of the various feast-days commemorated in the church where the poem was composed. It is also conceivable that the metrical calendar was regarded by its practitioners primarily as a sort of scholastic exercise whereby the would-be poet was taxed with the problems of fitting intractable expressions of date-reckoning into the framework of the hexameter (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 343)

The idea of the original poetic version being a “scholastic exercise” fits in with the theory of its composition in York during the time of Alcuin, especially when one is reminded

of Alcuin's similar composition as mentioned in the discussion of MCY above. The poetic 'calendar' and the redacted liturgical calendar form both survive in manuscripts from the Anglo-Saxon period, though it is interesting that the most complete poetic version from England is preserved in a manuscript that was written in the early twelfth century – Cambridge, Trinity College O.2.24. This may suggest that the revised text interpolated into liturgical calendars was viewed more favourably by an Anglo-Saxon monastic audience, perhaps even that the combination of the two genres – a liturgical calendar featuring martyrological entries – was considered to have a higher educational value than the poetic text alone. Attention has already been drawn to the place of education in the monastic milieu, along with suggestions of how the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany manuscripts may have contributed to this programme. What remains to be examined is the place of illustrated metrical calendars in the monastic curriculum.

In every manuscript the calendars are accompanied by extracts from computus texts and lunar charts with tables of information that correspond to the columns of letters on the calendar pages. Armed with these tools, the reader is able to calculate the dates of Easter and other moveable feasts in the Christian year. However, it should be understood that provision of tables and charts alone are not sufficient for the practice of computus. The dates of Easter and associated moveable events such as Lent were – and still are – based on the ancient Jewish lunar calendar, whereas other methods of measuring the year were based on the seasons and movements of the zodiac constellations. Calculating the correspondences between these two methods of measuring time is a complex art, one that could not be mastered quickly or simply by the application of charted comparisons. Indeed, when

discussing one of the most celebrated texts on the subject of computus – Bede’s *De temporum ratione* – Bullough notes:

certainly the bulk of the material in later chapters, with their climax in the interpretation of Easter and the Resurrection as a foreshadowing of Eternity, must always have been intended for more mature minds. Whatever the nature of Bede’s own oral teaching of computus as a practical discipline and its place in Creation and the Divine purpose, to which he several times alludes, older students ‘were expected to master a few sections each year’ (218-9).

From this one small comment alone we are able to deduce that providing a set of tables and a calendar with columns of data were not tools with which to teach the art of computus to a group of young novices. They are, however, useful equipment in the hands of someone that has already mastered the techniques, and this supports the earlier discussion of the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany as manuscripts more in keeping with the idea of codices that were used for private study and meditation by older, experienced members of the monastic community – possibly the teachers, who may have used them for personal reference.

In terms of the calendars, it is possible that they served a dual purpose; firstly as a computistical tool, highlighting key celestial events by which the time of year may be deduced, and secondly as an extra-liturgical text – a martyrology – abridged and set down in metrical rhythms that would assist in its memorisation. It may seem incredible that anyone would have been able to fix a text of such length into memory, but even in modern times we see prodigious feats of memory – though in this age of information technology they are most often used as forms of general entertainment, such as an individual memorising the random content of several shuffled decks of cards. The realisation that these wonders should stir in us



is the amazing capacity of the human mind, even in a modern age where ‘mental agility’ is the preserve of electrical devices rather than bio-electrical impulses. Anglo-Saxon society was traditionally oral rather than literate, and the memorisation of long pieces for later recitation – whether these were poetic for entertainment or religious for liturgical observance – was a skill with which people would have been quite familiar. Furthermore, there are the numerous exhortations in texts such as the Benedictine Rule and the Pastoral Care in favour of the memorisation of key liturgical texts such as the psalms and hymns. If we then consider the importance of the martyrology when read at the chapter mass as part of the daily Divine Office, it is a small leap to suggest that memorisation of a shortened metrical martyrology – such as that which features on our illustrated calendars – would also be a desirable practice.

The use of illustrations as aids to mnemonic function has been understood for many years, and we can be sure that the Anglo-Saxons were also aware of their value since images are clearly used for that purpose in many texts. Bearing this in mind, the following chapter will focus on the function of Labours of the Months illustrations from the pages for May in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany, and in this way find an interpretation of the concepts these images were intended to convey to their audience and therefore their use as a mnemonic aid for key concepts in the text of the metrical calendar.

## Representing May

May is the beginning of summer; the season when days become long and warm, foliage flourishes, flowers burst into bloom, fruits begin to grow, and the world seems to be a brighter place. This is reflected in Anglo-Saxon texts such as the “Menologium”, which describes the benefits of the arrival of May in the following manner:

Swylce in burh raþe  
embe siex niht þæs, smicere on gearwum,  
wudum and wyrtum cymeð wlitig scriðan  
þrymilce on tun, þearfe bringeð  
Maius micle geond menigeo gehwær.

(“Menologium” 75b-89).

[Likewise around six nights later quickly happens to come the beautiful time  
“Threemilk” to town, unto the manor with trees and plants in fine attire, May  
brings many benefits everywhere among the multitude.]

The term *wlitig* can mean either “beauty that appeals to the senses” – earthly or celestial beauty, such as fields and trees, creation generally, or heaven and its inhabitants – or “beauty that appeals to the mind”, such as wise or pleasing speech, or clean living (Bosworth and Toller 1260). The entry for *wlitig* in the Bosworth-Toller dictionary suggests that the word as used in line 77b of the “Menologium” is of the first part of the definition, a sensory beauty. However, there is an argument that the word could be performing a dual function in this section of the poem, suggesting the visual beauty of the trees and plants as they blossom among the homesteads, but also representing the blessings of nature as pleasing to the soul, as

this physical beauty is symbolic of God providing for His people through the bounty of His creation.

Duality of meaning is not restricted to the wordplay that is prevalent in Old English texts; it is also present in the illustrations which accompany texts in the manuscripts. The aim of this chapter therefore is to examine the Labours of the Months illustrations which decorate the calendar pages for May in the Julius Hymnal and the Tiberius Miscellany in order to determine what additional meaning the illustrations may have, rather than simply taking them at face value and dismissing them as nothing more than depictions of everyday activities. The Anglo-Saxon illustrations will be discussed in relation to the text of the calendars and a range of other texts from the period, as well as being compared with classical images used to represent the month of May and with early Christian artworks of a similar nature. In this way it should be possible to suggest a reasonable reading of the images by the end of this chapter.

### **Illustrating May in Anglo-Saxon Calendars**

The theme of the Labours of the Months illustration for May in the Tiberius Miscellany and Julius Hymnal calendars is shepherding, a scene which does not often appear in calendar imagery from either earlier or later periods: surviving mosaic and manuscript evidence from the Classical period does not attest to the presence of pastoral scenes in themes used for decoration in this context, while the later medieval tradition of calendar decoration relegates shepherding to the background in favour of other thematic choices.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Hourihane *Time in the Medieval World* for numerous examples of Labours of the Months imagery in medieval manuscripts, stained glass and sculpture.

### *The Julius Hymnal Illustration*



**Fig. 1. “Shepherding” London, British Library, MS. Cotton Julius A. vi, fol. 5r**

The illustration of shepherding in the Julius Hymnal is framed on three edges, the tops of the side frames are decorated with foliage, and the composition is made to fit within these boundaries. The drawing is attractively lively in style and well composed, the artist having achieved a balance across the picture and included all the elements – shepherd, sheep, and observers – while maintaining the feeling of an outdoor place due to the space left free throughout the composition and the open top to the frame.

There are four grazing sheep plus a ewe and suckling lamb, which stands in the centre of the composition with its back to the viewer. However, while the flock are visually at the centre of the composition, they are of less importance to an interpretation of the image than the human figures which flank them, their primary purpose being to identify the occupation of the shepherd and to serve as an allegorical representation of the body of the church as God’s flock.

A solitary shepherd is seated to the left of the picture as we look at it, keeping watch over the flock. He is dressed in a tunic made of what appears to be plain woven cloth with no decoration; the manner in which the fabric is draped at the waist suggest that the tunic is probably belted, though the way it has been drawn by the artist hides any direct evidence of

this. The shepherd figure also wears: a short cloak of un-patterned fabric fastened at the right shoulder with a plain round brooch; some form of hose or stockings, suggested by the wrinkle at his right knee; garters wound around the shins; and commonplace plain black shoes. The style of clothing chosen to depict the shepherd in the illustration – unadorned fabric with no suggestion of it being made from fine cloth – identifies him as being a low-status member of society, as we would expect for someone of his occupation, although his beard is suggestive of a kind of authority that comes from mature wisdom – a point of detail that will be discussed later. Comparison of the shepherd’s style of dress with that of the other figures depicted in the illustration supports the idea of him being of lower status.

To the right of the composition as we look at it are two figures which appear to be outsiders to the main activity, separated from the shepherd and sheep by rocky ground, and depicted in an attitude that suggests they are discussing the scene before them – indeed the figure on the left of the pair is clearly pointing toward the sheep. The furthest forward of these two figures, who will be referred to from here on as the first observer, is dressed in a manner which indicates that he is of a different social milieu to the shepherd. He is wearing a long, close-fitting gown that reaches just below the knee, and which has the frill of a fine undershirt showing below its hem, with a cloak fastened at the right shoulder by a brooch; the first observer’s cloak also looks to be longer than that worn by the shepherd. It is difficult to discern the style of dress worn by the second observer, since he is largely obscured by both the first observer and the rocky ground in front of him. However, given the manner of the interaction between these two figures it is reasonable to assume that they are of a similar social level and that the second observer would therefore be attired in a like style to the first observer. This assumption is supported by what we can see of the second observer; his arms

are shown covered by long sleeves in the same style as those of the first observer, and there is the indication of a cloak – possibly the shoulder part of a *pallium*, a classical-style cloak regularly associated with depictions of angels and the four evangelists in Anglo-Saxon art (Owen-Crocker 324), since there is no suggestion that the cloak covers both shoulders or has a brooch fastening.

It should be noted that, despite the noble style of dress suggested by the fine fabric of the undershirt worn by the first observer, the figure himself is depicted as being barefoot and bare legged which, in Anglo-Saxon art, is generally a way of telling the viewer that they should recognise the figure is either an angel or ecclesiastic (Owen-Crocker 324). Clearly the observers are not angels – they have no other indicators that they are to be recognised as such – but the bare feet and legs alone are also not enough to identify them as clerics. However, close inspection of the first observer reveals that he appears to be wearing a chasuble, a clerical garment which ends in points at the front and the back. Triangular points are clearly visible resting in the figure’s lap below the hem of his cloak, and this alongside the rest of the evidence in the illustration, suggests that he is wearing clerical costume: a fine-cloth undershirt (*alb*) beneath an outer tunic (*dalmatic*), with the chasuble and then a cloak on top.



Fig. 2. Observers (detail) London, British Library, MS. Cotton Julius A. vi, fol. 5r

Finally, the clothing evidence of the first observer should alert us to the fact that the second observer is not necessarily balding in middle age, but instead is likely being depicted with tonsured hair in the Celtic style, which is to shave the hair above the forehead. Owen-Crocker points out that this style of tonsure had already been described by Bede, and may also be observed on the illustration of St Dunstan in the *Regularis Concordia*, BL MS Cotton Tiberius A iii, fol. 2v (325). While it may seem something of a leap to suggest that an early eleventh-century, Anglo-Saxon manuscript would contain an illustration featuring a figure sporting an older, Celtic-style of tonsure rather than a style that would have been commonly observed in monastic and ecclesiastic persons of the day – who would have worn a ‘crown of thorns’ style tonsure – there is good reason to believe this proposition.

The Manuscripts context chapter of this thesis (pp. 17-24) discussed how the calendar pages were part of a pattern of development based on an early version that came from York. However, the versions found in the *Julius Hymnal* and *Tiberius Miscellany* are not directly descended from the York calendar; rather the York calendar travelled across Europe from the early ninth century, picking up amendments at various times and in diverse places to take account of veneration of local saints. This extended version of the York metrical calendar then made its way back to England in the early tenth century and underwent further redaction, as detailed by Lapidge in his analysis of surviving metrical calendars in England and Europe (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 349-59). When considering the possibility that the second observer in the *Julius Hymnal* is depicted wearing a Celtic style tonsure, Lapidge’s discussion of the composer of the metrical calendar redaction on which the version in the *Julius Hymnal* is based offers an interesting point in support of this theory. Based on the number of Irish saints and feasts which are commemorated in the text of the calendar, along with its close textual

similarities with the tradition of Irish *féliri*, Lapidge concludes that the metrical calendar of which the versions in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany are descendants was “composed...by an anonymous Irishman resident in England” (*Anglo-Latin Literature* 364-5). The Labours of the Months illustrations, however, are unlikely to have originated in the Irish *féliri*, such as that of Oengus the Culdee or the Martyrology of Tallaght, since there is no manuscript evidence to suggest that the *féliri* were illustrated with picture cycles of any kind.<sup>3</sup>

Details such as those identified in the first observer’s dress and the second observer’s hairstyle make identification of these two figures as nothing more than noblemen idling away the time by watching a peasant at work somewhat problematic. Rather the evidence points much more strongly toward them being members of the clergy, and therefore the use of pastoral imagery on the calendar page for May having greater significance than simply ‘agricultural chore of the month’. What its meaning might be will be discussed later in this chapter.

### ***The Tiberius Miscellany Illustration***

The illustration from the Tiberius Miscellany calendar has many similarities of style and composition to that from the Julius Hymnal, as well as some very obvious differences. The illustration in the Tiberius Miscellany is positioned at the top of the page rather than at the foot of the text, and is surrounded on all sides by a decorative frame.

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<sup>3</sup> Only two surviving Irish *féliri* pre-date the Anglo-Saxon metrical calendars: The *Martyrology of Tallaght* (MT) which is dated to *c.* late eighth century, and the *Félire Oengusso* (FO) from the early ninth century. The earliest surviving example of MT is in the twelfth-century Book of Leinster (University College Dublin, MS Franciscan A3), while the earliest example of FO is the early fifteenth-century transcript in the Leabhar Breac (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 P 16).





**Fig. 3. "Shepherding" London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B. v Part 1, fol. 5r**

The composition fits within this frame for the most part, though it is breached at the bottom by the feet of three of the figures and the hoof of one of the sheep. The drawing is less dynamic in style than that in the Julius Hymnal, and seems crowded in comparison despite being similarly composed; both illustrations are weighted toward the right of the picture as we look at it, but the fact that the figures on the right of the Tiberius image are crushed into the frame makes it appear more congested and less well composed.

As in the Julius Hymnal illustration, the Tiberius Miscellany miniature contains four grazing sheep and a ewe-and-lamb combination, but the positioning of the animals has been subtly changed. This could be the result of attempts to make the image more compact in order to incorporate additional elements, a change that could have been made either by the Tiberius Miscellany artist or, more likely, by the artist who created the exemplar used by the Tiberius Miscellany artist. Alternatively it may be as a result of the Julius Hymnal artist, or the artist that created his exemplar, expanding the composition to fill excess space left by the removal of other elements. Without any additional examples of calendars from the period, or direct comparisons from earlier times, it is impossible to say which of them could be the

‘correct’ version. Once again the flock occupies the centre of the visual composition in the illustration, though it remains on the periphery of meaning when interpreting the image.

There are two shepherds caring for the sheep in the Tiberius Miscellany illustration. To the far left as we look at the image there is a seated shepherd in similar pose and dress to the shepherd in the Julius Hymnal image, with a second shepherd standing holding a lamb close to the flock on their right. The seated shepherd in the Tiberius Miscellany illustration differs from his counterpart in the Julius Hymnal image in that he has no beard or leg garters, and his right arm is angled upwards to hold his staff – which is more recognisable as a shepherd’s crook in the Tiberius image – in a position that parallels the observer who is holding a staff on the right hand side of the Julius Hymnal picture, suggesting that this would be the manner in which we should have expected to see the seated shepherds in both illustrations were the common source still in existence.

The standing shepherd also is shown clothed in the style to be expected of a peasant worker of low social status. He is depicted wearing a typical unadorned worker’s tunic, belted at the waist, which features a reinforced collar and slit neckline, along with hose and shoes of a common style: “flat black ankle shoes, with a white stripe down the front, are the usual footwear for men in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts” (Owen-Crocker 259). He is holding the lamb by its back legs with his right hand, with the lamb’s front legs folded and cradled by his left arm, and its front hooves resting in his left hand. The shepherd’s posture is awkward and visually inelegant, perhaps because we are used to seeing this type of figure carrying a lamb across his shoulders in the style of “the good shepherd” rather than in this maladroit fashion, or perhaps because that is the way the figure should have been drawn and the Tiberius

Miscellany artist, or the artist of his exemplar, either made a mistake or had a defective image on which to base his copy.

To the right of the Tiberius Miscellany illustration as we look at it are three figures rather than the two depicted in the Julius Hymnal illustration. In comparison to the corresponding figures in the Julius Hymnal image, these three observing figures are not as physically far removed from the main activity of the picture, yet the viewer is still given the sense of 'separateness' between the shepherds and observers through a combination of their attire and body language. The attention of the three figures is clearly directed at the two shepherds, as can be seen from the direction of their gaze though, unlike the Julius Hymnal illustration, there is no suggestion that they are discussing the events being played out in front of them.

The figure nearest to the edge of the Tiberius Miscellany illustration is clad in a like manner to the first observer in the Julius Hymnal image – a gown that reaches past the knee with an undershirt of very fine cloth to the ankles, a cloak, with his legs and feet left bare. On close inspection there is also the suggestion of a point showing just beneath the edge of the cloak, seated in the lap of the outer observer, almost identical to that shown on the first observer of the Julius Hymnal image. However, it appears that the illustrator of the Tiberius Miscellany version, or perhaps of the exemplar he was copying from, may not have been sure what this detail was supposed to be since it is coloured the same shade as the cloak, making it easy to mistake as just another fold in the cloak fabric.



**Fig. 4. Comparison of the main observer figure illustrations from London, British Library, MS. Cotton Julius A. vi, fol. 5r and London, British Library, MS. Cotton Tiberius B. v Part 1, fol. 5r**

The costume of the innermost observer figure on the Tiberius Miscellany illustration is subtly different to that of the outermost observer: his main gown is longer, there is no obvious undershirt and, from the colour applied to his legs, he appears to be wearing tight-fitting hose and shoes. The final figure of the three is placed behind the other two and is mostly obscured from view. It is made clear to the viewer that he is part of the group of observers both from his positioning and physical attitude, and from the use of white highlight on the faces of all these three, something that has not been applied to the two shepherds. Furthermore, he is shown to be wearing a cloak in the same style, which suggests that his general attire is likely to be the same as that of his companions.

An interesting point in both the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany versions of the illustration is the physical positioning of the seated shepherds and the observers on either side of the image. In the Julius Hymnal illustration the shepherd and foremost observer each sit with their left leg bent and right leg angled in front of it. Furthermore they both have a staff in their right hand which they hold at approximately the same angle. The same is true with the seated shepherd and outermost observer in the Tiberius Miscellany image, though in this case

the observer does not have a staff and his legs have been rearranged slightly in an attempt to keep the figure within the boundaries of the frame. The innermost figure of the Tiberius Miscellany image is both a mirror and parallel of the seated shepherd, with the legs being close to a mirror-image position – again mitigated by the available space due to the placement of the sheep – and the upper body in parallel position. It may be suggested that this was done to create an aesthetically pleasing balance between the figures on either side of the illustration, which it would most certainly do if he was the sole observer. However, the inclusion of the other two observers, especially the figure on the far right, disturbs any visual balance that may have been intended by arranging the figures in this way. The other purpose of depicting the shepherds and observers in parallel or mirror-image poses may have been metaphorical.

Following on from the examination of the individual images of May in the two Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, the next step is to determine possible sources and interpretations of the illustrations.

### **Sources and Analogues**

Certain details have previously led scholars to cite the Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, University Library, MS. 32) as the source of illustrations featured in the Anglo-Saxon calendars (Hill 32). An example of this could be the ewe which has its back to the viewer, an element of the composition that is identical in form in both the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany illustrations, and which bears some similarity to a sheep used as part of the illustration for Psalm 94 on folio 55v of the Utrecht Psalter.



**Fig. 5. Sheep detail from London, British Library, MS Cotton Julius A. vi and London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. v Part 1**



**Fig. 6. Sheep detail from Utrecht, University Library, MS. 32, fol. 55v**

While it is commonly accepted that illustrations from a range of manuscripts were frequently used as templates when dealing with problematic elements of a composition, and commentators on the illustrations in Anglo-Saxon calendars have pointed out the similarities between the “charming and vivacious” style of the drawings in the Utrecht Psalter and the Julius Hymnal (Temple 80), there is no firm basis on which to claim the Labours of the Months illustrations of the Anglo-Saxon calendars were copied from, or influenced by, the Utrecht Psalter, either directly or indirectly. It is rather more likely that the calendar illustrations in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany were copied from exemplars that have since been lost, and which were witness to an earlier tradition of use for these images. This may perhaps have been a specifically Anglo-Saxon tradition of calendar iconography, or possibly an early continental cycle of images which either evolved into, or was abandoned in favour of, Labours of the Months imagery of the type which is evident on twelfth-century French church facades and the illustrations seen in later medieval European manuscripts. However, lack of evidence makes it impossible to do more than suggest the possibility of an earlier tradition of Labours of the Months pictures being attached to illustrated calendars, and efforts must therefore concentrate on investigating links between the Anglo-Saxon calendar illustrations and imagery used in other traditions and contexts. A logical starting point for this

investigation is to consider what other Anglo-Saxon texts have to say about the month of May.

### *Contemporary Analogues*

The entries for May in the Old English Martyrology start with a description of the month itself:

Ponne in þone fiftan monað on gēare bið an  
ond þritig daga. Se monað is nemned on Læden  
Maias, ond on ure geðeode Ðrymilce, forþon  
swylc genihtsumnes wæs geo on Brytone ond eac  
on Germania lande, of ðæm Ongla ðeod com on  
þas Breotone, þæt hi on þæm monðe þriwa on  
dæge mylcedon heora neat.

(Kotzor ch. 73b)

[Then in the fifth month of the year are one and thirty days.

The month is called Maias in Latin, and three-milk in our tongue,

because there was once such abundance in Britain and also the

land of Germania, from which the people of the Angles came

to Britain, that in this month they milked their cattle three times a day.]

The Old English name for May is a reference to the abundance of summer expressed in terms of animal husbandry, and it may seem reasonable to extrapolate this to an image of pasturing sheep, with the suckling lamb representing the availability of milk. However, the word “neat” is a specific term for cattle rather than sheep, and it is therefore unlikely that

shepherding would have been considered to be a relevant representation for the name of the month based on this perspective.

More interesting among the entries for the month of May in the Old English Martyrology are those for Pope Urban – the first Pope Urban, bishop of Rome from 222 to 230 – on 25<sup>th</sup> May and Saint Augustine of Canterbury on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Urban I is credited with the conversion to Christianity of many members of the Roman nobility, while Augustine is celebrated for his late sixth-century mission from Rome to convert the English. In this way both Augustine and Urban epitomise the principles of pastoral care – the conversion of pagans to the faith of Christ, and the consequent support and teaching which priests must provide for their congregation, God’s people – the faithful flock.

We know of the importance of pastoral care to the Anglo-Saxon Church because Gregory the Great’s *Cura Pastoralis*, “On Pastoral Care” – or the *Hierdeboc* (“shepherd-book”) as King Alfred referred to it – was one of the first texts which Alfred translated into English during his education reform programme in the late tenth century. If we return to the calendar pages with this in mind, we find the references to Pope Urban on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month, and St Augustine on the following day. Furthermore, Pope Urban is specifically described as ‘Urbanus Pastor’, that is ‘Urban the Shepherd’, on the calendar pages from the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany: he is the ultimate example of what is expected of a leader of the Church as God’s representative on earth, emulating the acts of the good shepherd from Christ’s parable as told in John 10:11-16. This also brings us back to the bearded shepherd in the Julius Hymnal illustration. The shepherd has not been depicted as being particularly old, but the artist needed some way of indicating that he is a good example of experience and wisdom for the two observers to be considering as worthy of emulation. To



this end, the shepherd has been endowed with the generally accepted symbol of wisdom in Christian art – a beard. He is not just any shepherd; he is a wise and conscientious one.

St Augustine of Canterbury and Pope Urban I hold an important place in the tradition of martyrologies produced in Britain and Ireland, with both of them being included in the eighth-century Latin prose *Martyrology of Tallaght* and its close antecedent the Irish vernacular metrical copy, the *Féilire Óengusso*, as well as Bede's Martyrology. It is generally recognised that the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, which dates back to the first half of the fifth century in its Latin form, was the basis for these martyrologies and, ultimately, all other European martyrologies irrespective of their style – short and metrical or lengthy and historiographic. Pope Urban is included in the recension of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* which was produced at Auxerre in the sixth century, a copy of which is known to have been available to the monasteries of Northumbria by the early seventh century, and most likely revised to include English saints at that time – including the addition of St Augustine of Canterbury – then used by Bede and his Northumbrian contemporaries to create the earliest surviving martyrologies from the British Isles.<sup>4</sup>

As discussed earlier, however, none of the surviving manuscripts which contain these prose and metrical martyrologies features any kind of picture cycle that could have influenced the artists of the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany. Neither does any of the contemporary Anglo-Saxon texts give an indication of why the Labours of the Months picture cycle, and particularly a shepherding scene, should be chosen to illustrate the page for May in

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<sup>4</sup> An excellent discussion of the transmission of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* and proof of its influence on both Anglo-Saxon and Irish martyrologies may be found in Michael Lapidge's article 'Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the *Old English Martyrology*' (*Analecta Bollandiana* 123 (2005): 29-78).

a metrical martyrology. The quest to find the possible inspiration for the artists' choice must now move back further to consider the influence of Classical art.

### ***Illustrating May in Classical Art***

Doro Levi's essay on 'The Allegories of the Months in Classical Art' discusses extant classical sources of calendar illustrations, such as the Calendar of 354, the Calendar of Ptolemy, a mosaic from the Aventine, the Beulé mosaic of Carthage, and the mosaic at Beit She'an in Israel. He states that the iconography used to represent May in classical art is a figure standing near a bush blooming with buds and holding a basket of flowers, and that this is consistent in all surviving evidence with one exception: the image that differs comes from a very early mosaic of Antioch, and depicts a figure involved in ritual to celebrate the feast of Maiuma – an “orgiastic festivity...comparable with the mysteries of Bacchus and Venus” (Levi 261). This is not to say that the Antioch mosaic is the only surviving image of May which differs; it is the only image that deviates from the model described by Levi among the sources he considered, but variants of the Antioch mosaic are also evident in other extant classical artwork such as the third-century mosaic displayed in the museum at El-Djem, Tunisia.



**Fig. 7. Illustration of “May” in Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS. 3416, fol. 6v**



**Fig. 8. “May” detail from a 3<sup>rd</sup> century mosaic. Tunisia, El-Djem, Musée Archéologique. Photo courtesy of Sitesandphotos.com**

Given the time and circumstances of production for the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, we can understand why the monks may have chosen not to include imagery that carries a strong pagan subtext in calendars designed for educational use in a Christian context; Bacchanalian orgies aside, a figure carrying a basket of flowers does not particularly commend itself to a community focussed on celebration of the Work of God. So, since the tradition of pagan-style calendar imagery has clearly been discarded by the Anglo-Saxon artists, the question remains: where did the inspiration for the alternative imagery to replace it come from?

### *Alternative Classical Sources*

The clear references to shepherds of the Church, in the persons of Pope Urban I and St Augustine of Canterbury as discussed above, suggests that the artist has settled on more appropriate, long-standing Christian imagery in an effort to celebrate these two influential figures with reputations for the conversion, or salvation, of Christian souls – the Good Shepherd. Furthermore, the composition of the Anglo-Saxon illustrations shows strong evidence of early Christian influence, such as the early fifth-century mosaic of Christ as the Good Shepherd in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna.



**Fig. 7. Mosaic of the Good Shepherd, Ravenna, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia  
Photo: Public Domain (Wikimedia Commons)**

If we compare the Ravenna mosaic to the illustrations in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany, we see Christ as the Good Shepherd depicted as a seated, watchful guardian leaning on his staff. This same attitude is captured in the positions of the seated shepherds of the calendar images, and the rocky terrain with tufts of grass on which the sheep graze is also identifiable in all examples.

Evidence shows that the shepherd was a popular motif in Greco-Roman art for some time before the arrival of Christianity, and that it could convey a range of meanings depending on its context:

The sheep-carrying figure had an antecedent in Hermes the guide to the underworld (*psychopomp*), a character associated with hopes for a blessed afterlife and particularly appropriate in a funereal environment. However, in late antiquity, the image of the shepherd could have developed a more generic meaning of philanthropy, or humanitarian care. (Jensen 37).

Jensen goes on to explain that since both the pagan and Christian communities valued the ideals of philanthropy, and shared concerns about the afterlife, the shepherd was a figure that had similar meaning for both groups of people. Furthermore: “Because of the ubiquity of shepherd imagery in both Old and New Testaments (cf. Ezekiel 34 or John 10), the shepherd was a symbol Christians could easily incorporate and endow with specifically Christian meanings” (Jensen 38). The shepherd figure, along with other pre-existing, non-faith-specific imagery was of great symbolic value to the early Christian community of Rome; it gave them the opportunity to decorate the spaces used as meeting places with unimpeachable images that became for them coded representations of the various aspects of God and the Christian faith at a time when they faced an inexorable threat of persecution and death for the beliefs they held.

Being able to use a form of acceptable artistic expression would lift the otherwise oppressive atmosphere of catacombs without being so blatant as to betray the purpose for which the people were gathering – a strong motivation for adopting and adapting existing imagery for a new purpose – and Jensen points out the appearance of shepherd figures “more than one hundred and twenty times in extant Roman catacomb frescoes alone” (38).

Once the imagery had been adopted and imbued with Christian meaning, both in the context of symbolising the idyllic nature of an afterlife in heaven and signifying the ideals of philanthropy at the core of Christian teaching, as well as Christ’s care for the church – and the need therefore to spread the good news through missions of conversion – its continued use and the development of additional layers of symbolism was a matter of natural progression.

The idea that examples of early Christian art were available in manuscript form in seventh-century England to act as reference points for the production of manuscript copies in Anglo-Saxon monasteries is hardly new, yet, while it has been applied by scholars to explain similarities between the illustrations in manuscripts of both Anglo-Saxon and post-conquest England and art from the catacombs of Rome (Haney), it seems that no one has thought to apply the same logic to the Labours of the Months picture cycle in the Anglo-Saxon calendars. It is possible that this is because those other manuscript images and their Roman antecedents share a common frame of reference – the stories of the Old Testament – while the Labours of the Months illustration cycle has no direct link in tradition from which to start such a study. However, given the lack of reference points available from any other potential source, it seems that this is the last logical avenue of investigation. The earlier chapter concerning manuscript contexts discussed the existence and loss of early Anglo-Saxon libraries that contained the manuscripts from which these early Roman Christian examples of

illustration would have been drawn. Since the libraries and their imported manuscripts no longer exist, the search must move directly to the comparative Classical art-forms themselves.

When considering potential sources from among early Christian or Greco-Roman art for the illustration of May in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany, we must be aware that the manuscript images which eventually arrived in England would also have their place in forms of art that may have survived while the manuscripts have not, such as wall paintings, mosaics, and sculpture. With this in mind, there is a particular sarcophagus panel dating from the second half of the third century that is of special interest.



**Fig. 8. Via Salaria sarcophagus (c.250-75), Vatican Museums, Rome**

**Photo: Belmont University**

**<http://campus.belmont.edu/honors/SarcPix/RomeOvalSarcophagus.jpg> (Permission applied for)**

This sarcophagus, discovered on the Via Salaria in Rome and now displayed at the Pio Cristiano Museum in Vatican City, shows the good shepherd as the central figure of the tableau with two groups of three figures on either side. The carving shares many common features with the May illustrations from the Anglo-Saxon calendar pages: the seated man is present in both images as the shepherd and the standing shepherd in the Tiberius Miscellany image has some shared characteristics with the innermost companion to the seated man, while the seated woman and her companions are echoed by the observers, despite the change of gender for these figures in both pictures and the loss of one of the observers in the Julius

Hymnal version. Furthermore, the attitudes of the characters – contemplative for the seated man and discussional for the seated woman and her companions – are also represented in the Anglo-Saxon illustrations.

The two seated figures on the sarcophagus are most likely “idealized representations of the dead couple” (Lowden 29) for whom the sarcophagus was crafted. However, it is not their personal identities that are important so much as the characters they are meant to portray in the carving and the positioning of the figures in the composition. In the carving, the seated man is representative of a philosopher from the Greco-Roman tradition while the female standing close to the centre of the composition is identifiable as an *orant* figure, both of which appear frequently in tableaux with the good shepherd figure, especially in the context of funerary art.

By the time these figures reach the Anglo-Saxon calendar illustrations, having passed through several centuries of appropriation and reinterpretation in different media as discussed concerning the Good Shepherd imagery above, the philosopher and seated woman have transformed into other figures – a shepherd and the observers – which are arguably more appropriate for the context in which they appear at this later time. That said, there is also a point of view which identifies the philosopher, orant and shepherd as symbols of the “three aspects of the Church’s ministry: prayer, study of scripture, and pastoral care” because of their proximity in “several significant Christian monuments” (Jensen 45). Whatever the case, the initial association of these figural types with funerary arts, and the identification of the calendar as an abridged martyrology, lends authority to the theory which is being put forward in this paper – that the shepherding image was chosen to illustrate May in the Anglo-Saxon calendar because of its links with the traditional images used in Greco-Roman art in

commemoration of the dead and celebration of joys to come in the afterlife. In the particular instance of May, featuring as it does remembrance of two shepherds of the Church in the persons of Pope Urban I and St Augustine of Canterbury, the link with the shepherd as *psychopomp* mentioned earlier is a compelling reason to believe this is a valid hypothesis; it makes much more sense for a monastic community to use an image which celebrates the memory of these men who were renowned for their work in guiding souls to heaven through Christ than it does to believe the image is simply a reminder to the viewer of their seasonal obligations on earth.

While the funerary wall paintings, mosaics and carved sarcophagus panels of early Christian Rome would not themselves have been direct influences or exemplars for the Anglo-Saxon manuscript artists, it is extremely likely that similar images, or variations on them, were used to illustrate manuscripts that came to England in any number of ways: as part of the collections belonging to scholarly churchmen such as Augustine and Theodore; received as gifts or borrowed by any of the many monastic houses that had links with the continent; or bought into England by wealthy Anglo-Saxons such as Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid for the religious houses that they founded. Even details such as the frames used to surround the illustrations may be subconscious links back to the rectangular shapes which confined the images in their earlier, stonework form. With so many manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon period having long since been lost it is impossible to prove that this was the case, but the similarities in style, subject matter, and compositional arrangements are compelling arguments in favour of such a theory.

What the viewer sees on the Anglo-Saxon calendar pages for May, therefore, are two types of “shepherd” sharing the same iconographic context: the temporal shepherd in



workman's garb tending the animals representing the good shepherd of the parable, and a spiritual shepherd giving instruction on caring for God's flock as required of His representatives on earth. Far from being relatively meaningless depictions of the agricultural activity for the given month, they are mnemonic aids to memorising the festivals for the month – in this case the days on which eminent pastors of the Church are commemorated – as well as part of a larger cycle that traditionally commemorates the dead and celebrates the afterlife.

## **Conclusion**

The introduction to this research paper outlined the aims and objectives of the study to be undertaken. This section will review the research objectives and consolidate the evidence that has been detailed in the previous chapters as a means of demonstrating how the case study centred on May opens the way for further investigation to be undertaken concerning the role and interpretation of Anglo-Saxon Labours of the Months illustrations, and giving a brief overview of where evidence may be sought in relation to unlocking the meaning behind the remaining illustrations used in the calendar pages.

Chapter one discussed the importance of the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany as educational manuscripts, demonstrating how their content was selected and designed for this purpose, and suggested that the inclusion of calendars in these manuscripts was a significant aspect of their purpose as tools for education and personal study. The chapter also introduced the concept of the calendars as abridged martyrologies, written in metrical prose as a means for facilitating memorisation of liturgical information which would have been considered vital in a milieu where the commemoration of saints' and martyrs' holy days was an occupational requirement. This in turn raised the issue of illustrations being used as vital mnemonic aids, and the recognition that the inclusion of pictorial narrative would have been of tremendous value in acting as an extra prompt to assist memorisation and recollection, due to the greater amount of information that may be conveyed in a comparatively small space on the page – and that this is attributable to the relative ease with which abstracts are communicated through imagery in contrast to words.

Having thus put forward a strong case for the educational purpose of the manuscripts generally, the calendars particularly, and the illustrations by association, the following chapter

focused on investigating how the contemporary reader may have interpreted the images – in this case specifically the theme chosen to decorate the calendar pages for May. This required research into the older tradition of calendar decoration in order to either establish or dismiss a link between Classical tradition and Anglo-Saxon illustration choices and, once it had been shown that there was no definitive link between these illustrative cycles, the search had to be widened to discover what other illustrative cycles may have the potential to have inspired the Anglo-Saxon manuscript artist. The analysis of evidence in the case study chapter presents a compelling case in support of the writer’s theory that the theme of shepherding used in the illustration to accompany the martyrological calendar text for the month of May has strong links to Classical funerary art. The number of similarities between the Anglo-Saxon calendar illustrations and the examples of mausoleum wall art and sarcophagus sculptures provided in this research are too close to be ignored, though proving how the iconography was transmitted from these alternate forms and locations to the Anglo-Saxon milieu is virtually impossible.

As was discussed in the chapter on manuscript context, we know that there were many manuscripts that came to Anglo-Saxon England with Augustine, and yet more that were sent as later gifts from Rome, to assist with the missionary effort. What we cannot say for certain is that there were examples of the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, or something similar, among these library collections – but neither can it be definitively ruled out. Similarly, we cannot categorically state either that these condensed martyrologies – if they existed – had some similar form of decoration to that found in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany calendars, or that they did not. However, given that the cult of saints was flourishing in Rome at the time Pope Gregory commanded Augustine to take on the mission of converting the

Anglo-Saxons to Christianity, and that this tradition was also eagerly adopted by the converts, it would seem odd if decorated martyrologies of this type were not in existence at the time.

As regards evidence for the hypothesis that the iconography chosen to illustrate the martyrologies is based on funerary art; apart from the clear similarities in composition and subject matter, we should also be mindful of the fact that early Roman Christians were forced to practice their faith in places hidden from general view – a purpose for which the burial catacombs along the periphery roads such as the Via Salaria were eminently suited. The images which decorated these places were of necessity religiously ambiguous, and yet at the same time representative of God's salvation, with one of the most prevalent characters being the Good Shepherd. The significance of this entity, and the relationship of the individuals in the Anglo-Saxon illustrations to the Classical philosopher and orant figures, suggests that this is to be read as a message concerning the importance of the teaching undertaken by men of God which leads to salvation through Christ – and therefore the incalculable value of studying the scripture so that they are qualified to carry out these duties properly. This is also a fitting memorial to the great and learned teachers Pope Urban and Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who bought salvation to so many through their efforts to convert the people of Rome and the Anglo-Saxons respectively, and whose commemorative days fall in the month of May.

Other imagery adorning the walls of tombs or catacombs and the sarcophagi which were housed in them includes: feasting, hunting with dogs as depicted in an Etruscan tomb in Vulci (Copeland), and other scenes of hunting, viticulture and agriculture (Hanfmann 19) – often specifically concerned with wheat. It is arguable that we would be able to extrapolate similar lines of relationship between these funerary images and the remainder of the Labours of the Months cycle decorating the Anglo-Saxon calendars. For example: the tradition of

agape feasting in commemoration of the dead, which is evidenced even back to the Etruscans, was adopted by early Christians as part of the celebration of the cult of saints in Rome; the use of viticulture and wheat-based agriculture in images is potentially linked to the Eucharist, and maybe even representative of Christ the vine with its branches representing the Church. Such extrapolations and propositions are outside the scope of the current strand of research. However, what cannot be denied is the abundance of evidence to show that the images used in the Anglo-Saxon calendars had a multitude of meanings stretching from the pre-Christian Greco-Roman period, on through their adoption and evolution within the early Christian church, and so into Anglo-Saxon minds.

## Appendix: A Comparison of Traditions in Calendar Illustration

The following table provides a comparison of the most common iconographic forms used in calendar decoration from the Classical world, the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and medieval representations dating from the twelfth century onward. The information concerning Classical calendar art is based the Roman Calendar of 354, as described by Salzman in her book *On Roman Time* (63-115), and that concerning medieval iconography is based on the descriptions of “standard compositions” in late-medieval calendars set out by Hourihane in his book *Time in the Medieval World* (lvi-lix). Description of the forms used in Anglo-Saxon calendar illustration is based on the author’s own observations of the images in the Julius Hymnal and Tiberius Miscellany manuscripts.

	<b>Classical Period</b> <i>The illustrations are of single figures, and have supporting motifs on the page in the place of detailed backgrounds.</i>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Period</b> <i>The illustrations are all scenic, often featuring several figures, but lack the rich backgrounds of later illustrations.</i>	<b>Medieval Period</b> <i>The illustrations usually feature more than one figure and are often richly painted with detailed backgrounds.</i>
<b>January</b>	Nobleman sacrificing incense for good fortune in the coming year, accompanied by images representing good luck and the New Year.	Two men and a team of oxen pulling a plough. One man is leading the oxen, the other guiding the plough, with a third man following behind and sowing seed.	Representation of a feast featuring a courtly man, sometimes janiform in style, warming himself in front of a fire, with a food-laden table and a servant standing near by.
<b>February</b>	Woman wearing a long robe and hood, holding a duck, and surrounded by illustrations of sea creatures.  Represents wet-weather season.	Three men pruning vines.	A courtly man warming himself before a fire; similar to January, but without any suggestion of feasting.

	<b>Classical Period</b> <i>The illustrations are of single figures, and have supporting motifs on the page in the place of detailed backgrounds.</i>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Period</b> <i>The illustrations are all scenic, often featuring several figures, but lack the rich backgrounds of later illustrations.</i>	<b>Medieval Period</b> <i>The illustrations usually feature more than one figure and are often richly painted with detailed backgrounds.</i>
<b>March</b>	<p>Young shepherd with a goat (the appropriate sacrifice to Mars) and a woodpecker (bird sacred to Mars).</p> <p>Represents the festivals of Mars (1, 9, 12, and 23 Mar.)</p>	<p>Two men digging – one with a spade, the other with a pick – and a third man sowing seed. Julius Hymnal also features a fourth man raking earth over the seed.</p>	<p>Workers pruning vines in a field.</p>
<b>April</b>	<p>Dancer of the <i>Megalesia</i> festival (4-10 Apr.) in honour of Cybele and Attis, “the god who conquered death and was reborn in the spring”.</p>	<p>Feasting scene featuring three noblemen seated on a long, beast-ended bench, attended by two servants and a guard. The Tiberius Miscellany image also has a musician playing a horn.</p>	<p>Represented by a courtly couple in a garden – the man gathering flowers, the woman making a flower garland – which indicates courtship.</p>
<b>May</b>	<p>Youth wearing a festival robe and carrying a basket of roses.</p> <p>Represents the ‘king’ of the festival of roses (23 May).</p>	<p>Shepherd(s) tending the flock, with a group of observing figures nearby.</p>	<p>Represented by hawking or courtship: usually one or two men engaged in falconry, or a courting couple out walking.</p>

	<b>Classical Period</b> <i>The illustrations are of single figures, and have supporting motifs on the page in the place of detailed backgrounds.</i>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Period</b> <i>The illustrations are all scenic, often featuring several figures, but lack the rich backgrounds of later illustrations.</i>	<b>Medieval Period</b> <i>The illustrations usually feature more than one figure and are often richly painted with detailed backgrounds.</i>
<b>June</b>	<p>A naked male holding a torch and pointing to a sundial, accompanied by harvest imagery.</p> <p>Represents the summer solstice, which marks the start of the harvest season.</p> <p>(<i>dies lampadarum</i>, “day of torches”, 24 June)</p>	<p>Julius Hymnal: Woodcutting: two men cutting wood and a third man loading logs into a cart.</p> <p>Tiberius Miscellany: Haymaking: three workers mowing, with three more tying grass in bundles, a workman loading a cart, and a musician playing a horn.</p>	Workers mowing hay.
<b>July</b>	<p>A naked male holding a sack and a basket of plants, and another open sack of gold on the ground.</p> <p>Represents summer heat and rich harvests.</p>	<p>Julius Hymnal: Harvest: five workmen with scythes and one with a pitchfork.</p> <p>Tiberius Miscellany: Woodcutting: three men cutting wood and fourth loading the cut wood into a cart.</p>	Workers reaping grain.



	<b>Classical Period</b> <i>The illustrations are of single figures, and have supporting motifs on the page in the place of detailed backgrounds.</i>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Period</b> <i>The illustrations are all scenic, often featuring several figures, but lack the rich backgrounds of later illustrations.</i>	<b>Medieval Period</b> <i>The illustrations usually feature more than one figure and are often richly painted with detailed backgrounds.</i>
<b>August</b>	A naked man drinking from a glass bowl, the page decorated with a discarded jacket, flower-covered amphora, and peacock-feather fan above three melons. All these motifs represent the heat of summer.	Julius Hymnal Haymaking: two men mowing, three tying grass into bundles, one man loading wood into a cart, and another man holding a spear and blowing a horn. Tiberius Miscellany: Harvest: five workmen with scythes and one with pitchfork.	Workers threshing grain.
<b>September</b>	A man dangling a lizard above an urn sunk into the ground, with grapes and figs decorating the background. Represents the autumn wine harvest and <i>vindemial</i> festival (5 Sept.).	Hunting swine: two huntsmen both carrying spears and one with a horn, accompanied by a hunting dog (two dogs in Tiberius Miscellany), with five swine feeding on acorns.	A man treading grapes indoors, while raising a glass of wine in one hand as a toast.
<b>October</b>	Male hunter holding a hare caught with a basket-trap, the page decorated with motifs of hunting.	Falconry: two hunters – one on foot, the other on horseback – each with a bird of prey, hunting wild fowl.	A man sowing seed.

	<b>Classical Period</b> <i>The illustrations are of single figures, and have supporting motifs on the page in the place of detailed backgrounds.</i>	<b>Anglo-Saxon Period</b> <i>The illustrations are all scenic, often featuring several figures, but lack the rich backgrounds of later illustrations.</i>	<b>Medieval Period</b> <i>The illustrations usually feature more than one figure and are often richly painted with detailed backgrounds.</i>
<b>November</b>	<p>A priest of Isis, who is recognisable by the objects he holds – all of them specific to the Isis Festival, together with a goose (a bird that is sacred to Isis) and a statue of Anubis.</p> <p>(Isis Festival dates 28 Oct. – 3 Nov.)</p>	<p>Smithying: a smith at the fire, his servant carrying firewood from a store, and three other men warming themselves at the fire.</p>	<p>A man knocking acorns from the trees to feed the swine surrounding him.</p>
<b>December</b>	<p>Youth in hunter's garb holding a torch and playing a game of dice, with masks and hanging game birds in the background.</p> <p>Represents <i>Saturnalia</i> (17-23 Dec.)</p>	<p>Threshing grain: two men using threshers, another two carrying a basket on poles, a fifth winnowing with hand fans, and a sixth man keeping count with a tally stick.</p>	<p>Slaughter or butchering of livestock.</p>

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