

4-30-2024

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Recommended Citation

Blick, Sarah. "Medieval Zines: A New-Old Way to Study Medieval Art." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 9, 1 (2024): 91-95. <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol9/iss1/4>

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PEREGRINATIONS

JOURNAL OF MEDIEVAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE
VOLUME IX, NUMBER 1 (SPRING 2024)

Medieval Zines: A New-Old Way to Study Medieval Art

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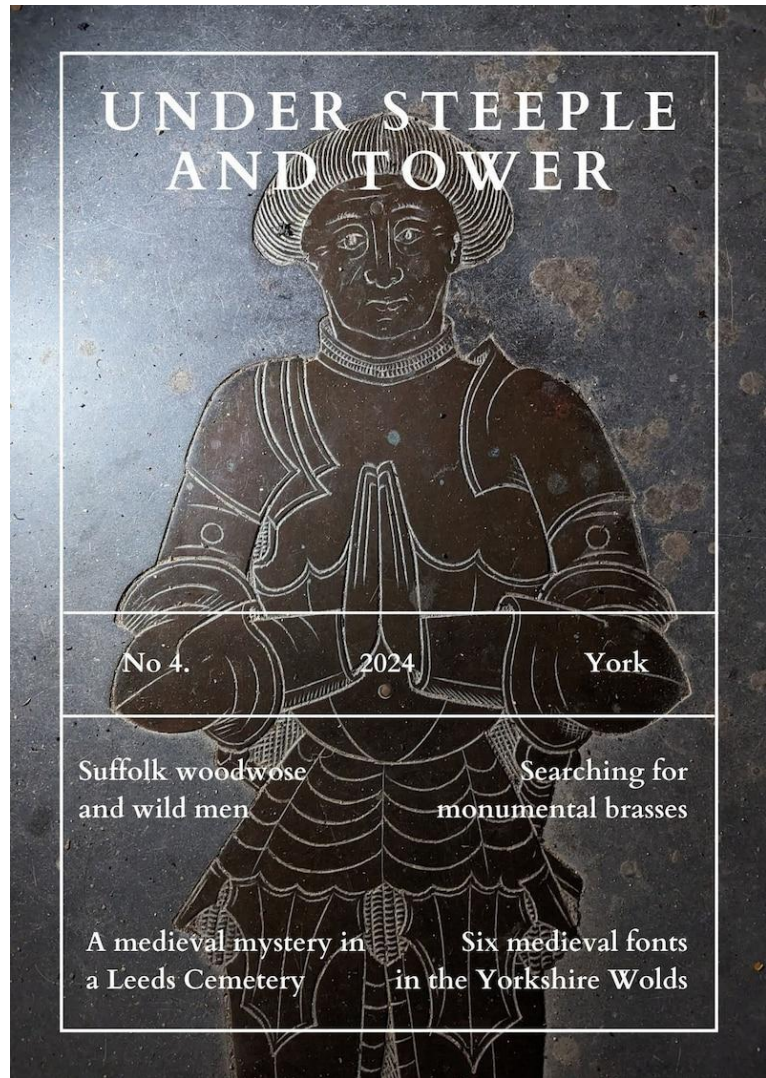
When *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art & Architecture* switched from being a print newsletter to an online journal in 2004, some folks asked if it by doing so it was selling out in terms of serious scholarship and whether serious research would be counted because it appeared online instead of in print. Now that journals are more online than in print, those questions no longer arise. Instead, what's happening is a quiet revolution back to print through the return of the Zine. Most have been started within the past few years and are usually the work of a single, dedicated scholar eager to share their findings and incredible photographs with others both inside and outside academia. The articles based on scrupulous scholarship are generously illustrated with lovely color photographs and written in an engaging style. Their smaller format makes them a pleasure to handle and read. Funded through subscriptions and individual issue purchases, the authors and publishers of the Zines want to involve everyone who is interested in the topic by making them easily accessible at a reasonable price.¹

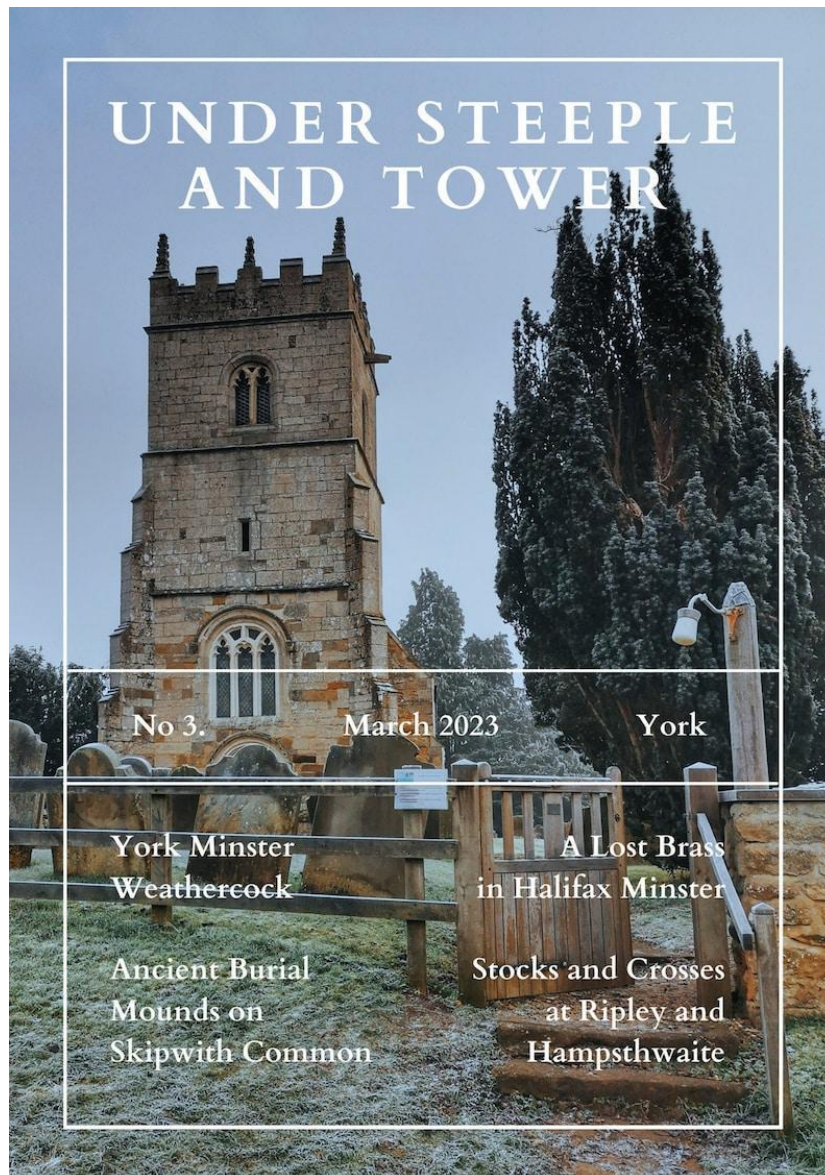
Most relevant to *Peregrinations* readers are two that focus on English medieval art: *Under Steeple and Tower* <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/ChurchCrawling> is published annually and *The Antiquary* <https://theantiquary.online> is published monthly.

¹ Journals like *Peregrinations* are indirectly underwritten by institutions, such as Kenyon College, by paying my salary as a teacher, so I can edit for free, and by providing server space and archival backup at no cost. As a refereed journal, many others provide free labor in terms of refereeing articles, reviewing books, etc.

In June 2022, Rob Andrews, Diocese of Leeds, Church of England, published the first issue of *Under Steeple and Tower*. Curious as to why he chose to make a zine as well as digital downloads, I asked him, and he wrote that “I was inspired by homemade 90's fanzines about ghost stories taking inspiration from M.R. James and H. P. Lovecraft and I wanted to create something that was physical. I wanted to include my own drawings. I love collecting things as well. Physical media seemed to be a revival of tradition and also the most fulfilling way to send things to interested people. I am fed up with blogs.”

“I love physical media and I want to make my findings affordable and accessible. I charge less than £10 for each issue, which includes several short articles with a full bibliography for each article. Anyone who is interested can either dismiss or follow up my findings and use them as they wish. I am not bothered. When I was a student, I found it immensely unhelpful that publishers who included essays from authors and historians I wanted to read, in edited volumes, charged upwards of £15 - 30 per essay in an edited volume costing £150+. No one can afford that. The essays in my zines are not academic. I reference, footnote (in a shortened version suited to my zine) and give





bibliography for further reading. I never claim anything for myself. I simply want to write about things which interest me. And share this with the world - if the world is interested."

"The focus of my articles is anything which interests me whilst I go about my day job. For example, I read a QI report for a Victorian church in Leeds the other day and it made no mention of a stained-glass window which included medieval fragments from a

demolished churches in the 1840's. I was able to trace the reinstatement of those pieces and update the historical record."

A similar wish to engage in the fascinating twists and turns of medieval history and art is the focus of *The Antiquary*, created by Allan Barton, an art historian who published a fascinating blog for many years that examined the intricacies and sometimes the strangeness of medieval art at <https://medievalart.co.uk/> when he began publishing *The Antiquary* in 2022. Barton read History at University College London, earned his MA in Medieval Studies and PhD in Art History at the University of York.

This was followed by a degree in Theology from Oxford University. He is a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Each monthly issue of *The Antiquary* history magazine is twenty-eight pages of intriguing articles relating to medieval history, art, architecture, people and places, monuments, traditions, culture, folklore, customs, the macabre, and occasionally, the uncanny and supernatural. It is filled with beautiful color illustrations printed to a high specification. It presents fascinating stories and objects “pulled out of the rabbit holes of history.”



I posed the same question to him as to what inspired his decision to start a Zine. He wrote that “I started it after reflecting on the ephemeral nature both of blogging and of digital media - I wanted a way to capture some of the essence. I always wanted to engage a wider audience with the things I was interested in and the blog just wasn't doing that, and the zine and the YouTube channel are a tandem project that do seem to be doing that. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGPU2PD0Zmliah8C9AfhRMO> The zine attracted hundreds of subscribers and YouTube has grown to 80,000 subscribers - all of which astonishes. It has allowed me to make my passion my fulltime living, which is wonderful. I have no set pattern I follow with respect to focus, as with

the blog I simply follow the rabbit holes that my mind offers at the time. What I tend to do is try to balance articles on medieval churches and art, with aspects of iconography, biography, and folklore. A lot of my subscribers, and most are in the USA now, have found their way to my content through my coronation focused videos." For information, see <https://theantiquary.online>

With Zines like these, the study of medieval art history is entering a new age, where the joy, intrigue, and beauty of this historical era can be shared broadly, complementing the online journals and blogs. Top-notch scholarship, interesting approaches and ideas, and truly beautiful photography and art in the classic physical format ensures these Zines will be welcomed for many years to come. 🐣