

# Lost Letters found. A Neutron tomography study of Medieval

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The more modest funeral effigies in Medieval England of the period 1250- 1400 AD were made of incised tomb slabs with simple crosses. This type of monument evolved in slabs inlaid with Lombardic letters made of laiton (brass). Finally these letters were joined up in brass strips with the letters incised. Finally this process resulted in the monumental brass slab monuments of which many can still be found in the Medieval English Churches.

Only a few individual letters have survived and are mostly in museum collections. However, recently metal detector finds of Lombardic letters are regularly reported. One of these letters was found in the bank of a brook in South Stoke, Oxfordshire. We have been able to trace this Letter L back to the incised slab of Vicar Robert de Esthall (died 1274), still present in chancel of the Medieval Church of North Stoke,

A second example is a small brass strip of lettering which was removed from the Church of Shottesbrooke. This strip dates to the period of around 1370. The strip was spotted in an antique shop and recognised to be from one of the minor brass funeral monuments of St John the Baptist Church in Shottesbrooke Park, Berkshire.

We report a neutron tomographic study, performed at ANTARES, on both objects in order to study the corrosion and homogeneity of the objects. The information on the depth of the patina, the mineralisation and corrosion of the objects provides essential information for the conservation of these objects.

## Summary

The information from neutron tomographies are used for the conservation of Early Medieval Brass Letters and Brass plaques

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