

Jacob Schnebbelie,  
Draughtsman to the Society  
of Antiquaries (1760-92), and the  
Politics of Preservation in Late  
Eighteenth Century England

by

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*'If you are, as I have heard tell, a talented draughtsman, then I imagine that you could suppose that the objects that I have drawn your attention to form no plan, stratagem, or indictment.'*

Peter Greenaway, *The Draughtsman's Contract*, 1993.

Jacob Schnebbelie occupies a prominent place among English topographical artists and English antiquarians in the late eighteenth century. He is now best known as the artist of some of the earliest antiquarian publications in England, such as Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786-99), the second and third volumes of *Vetusta Monumenta*, Schnebbelie's own *The Antiquary's Museum* (1791) (Fig. 1) and John Nichols' *History of Leicestershire*, in which his small signature reads 'SCHNEBBELIE DELIN.' or 'J. Schnebbelie d and s'. For historians of medieval art, he is the antiquary whose quick but accurate draughtsmanship preserved the original appearance of the thirteenth-century vault paintings of Salisbury Cathedral before they were whitewashed by James Wyatt in 1789, and who produced a series of other views of the cathedral and other monuments in the city. Throughout the period of the publication of these seminal studies, Schnebbelie occupied the position

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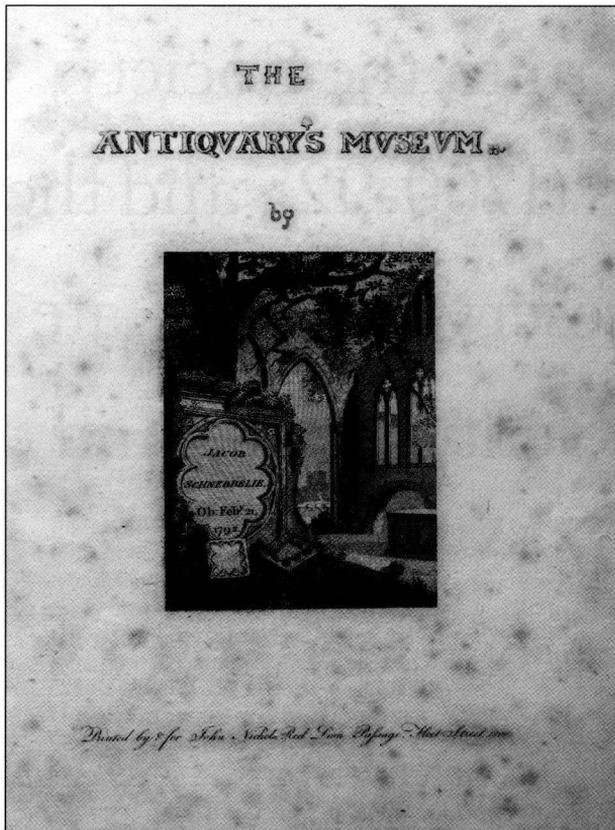


Fig. 1  
Frontispiece to J. Schnebbelie  
*The Antiquary's Museum*

of 'Official Draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries of London', which placed him within the circle of Richard Gough, Director of the Society of Antiquaries (1771-97), including John Milner and John Nichols, as well as collectors outside of this circle such as Horace Walpole, and within the orbit of leading artists including Sir Joshua Reynolds. Schnebbelie was thus a prominent figure in the sphere of antiquarian studies in England in the last decades of the eighteenth century, making it all the more remarkable that his career and contribution to antiquarianism in England has yet to be considered.<sup>2</sup>

The careers of English antiquarians in the second half of the eighteenth century are now under revision. Rosemary Sweet's studies of Richard Gough and his circle, and Joseph Mordaunt Crook's study of John Carter (a competitor of Schnebbelie), have done much to resurrect English antiquarian studies in the period from the depths of snobbish (or

foppish) pedantry to locate them within the mainstream of English meditations on national history, and within the developing role of the arts as a constitutive element of English polite society.<sup>3</sup> Although informed by these important publications, the present paper cannot claim to provide a full account of Schnebbelie's works or his contribution to topographical and antiquarian studies in the period, but it hopes to move in that direction by discussing three aspects of his career. First, I will explore Schnebbelie's short and occasionally troubled relationship with the Society of Antiquaries and particularly with Richard Gough, who acted as his principal patron from the mid 1780s to his death in 1792. Second, by way of a case study in antiquarian studies and sentiments, I will consider Schnebbelie's preservationist interventions at Salisbury Cathedral prior to James Wyatt's 'improvements' to the fabric in 1791 and the polarised opinions on the preservation of ancient monuments in the period. In conclusion, I will aim to provide some account of Schnebbelie's rightful position as a draughtsman and antiquary of significant merit in late eighteenth century England.

This paper would be inconceivable without the benefit of three largely overlooked manuscripts now in the Society of Antiquaries of London Library (hereafter SAL). The first, SAL MS 267 comprises a collection of letters and drawings, most of which were written by Schnebbelie to Gough, and were related to Gough's many commissions which sent Schnebbelie to a variety of medieval sites in southern England. Typical of letter collections of this sort, it tells only half the story: while MS 267 contains a wealth of letters from Jacob Schnebbelie (and after his death, Mrs Schnebbelie) to Gough, there are few written by Gough to the artist, most of which have now been lost. These letters nevertheless provide an illuminating and remarkably frank account of Schnebbelie's work as draughtsman to the Society, and provide much of the foundation for what follows. Second, MS 263 is a collection of 106 folios of Schnebbelie's drawings – most of which remain unpublished – all given to Gough, which provide something of a pictorial account of MS 267. Finally, and of lesser consequence to the present study, is MS 796, a small oblong folio of drawings made at Salisbury in 1789, again at the request of Gough.

#### 'DRAUGHTSMAN TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES'

When Schnebbelie came into the employ of Gough is not known precisely, but is unlikely to have been before 1786. The earliest correspondence between them dates to January 1787, although it is clear that their acquaintance was not new at that point. Gough appears to have hired Schnebbelie in 1786 to produce images of medieval funerary art for the second and third volumes of his *Sepulchral Monuments* (the first volume of which was published in 1786). In October 1787 Schnebbelie was advising Gough on the frontispiece for the forthcoming second volume which was to include a wealth of his drawings, and in January of the following year he was looking over the page proofs.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Schnebbelie did not contribute to the first volume or any other of Gough's publications before 1786, provides a *terminus post quem* for his employment. This interpretation is underscored by the formal language of Schnebbelie's early letters to Gough throughout 1787, which, during the later 1780s and early 1790s relaxed into friendly, even conversational banter.

It appears that Schnebbelie adopted the title of 'Official Draughtsman' to the Society by June 1788 when Gough and John Nichols accompanied him on a trip to Winchester to draw a series of monuments.<sup>5</sup> Schnebbelie thus came into the employ of Gough as a young man of twenty-six, while Gough, by this point Director of the Society, was fifty-one, a fact that well explains the remarkable and even fatherly respect that Schnebbelie showed for his patron. Both men met through the Earl of Leicester, President of the Society of Antiquaries and Schnebbelie's first important patron.<sup>6</sup> The draughtsman came to the Earl's attention by 'accidentally' sketching a view in the Earl's park near Hartford.<sup>7</sup> Between 1786 and 1791 Schnebbelie travelled throughout southern England from Canterbury to Winchester, and to St Albans, Salisbury and Westminster, as well as a large number of lesser churches, drawing funerary monuments for Gough. Although he took other smaller commissions, his peripatetic schedule and his letters reveal that he must have had little time to take on other work.

Gough found in Schnebbelie an exceptionally able and faithful draughtsman. He was keenly aware of the fact that earlier antiquarian scholarship on medieval monuments had

served present scholars poorly. Earlier scholarship of the sort practiced by antiquarians such as William Stukeley had emphasised the visual effect of monuments rather than their details and ornament, thus providing poor subjects of study in a field that was becoming increasingly aware of the stylistic chronology – and thus the periodisation and taxonomy – of medieval art.<sup>8</sup> ‘Far from being insensible to the difficulty of procuring accurate drawings of monuments’ stated Gough in his *Sepulchral Monuments*, ‘I have experienced [this] too often when I have been obliged to borrow an inferior pencil, and have frequently been left without any help at all ... Nor is it only the distance of the draughtsman from the spot, but the little practice of the subject’. Gough’s hiring of Schnebbelie can thus be understood to fulfil a single policy aim of the Society, namely to employ and foster artists who were able to make faithful renditions of antiquities, not ‘forget[ting] Gothic and more domestic monuments’, with an eye to producing a corpus of drawings for the study of medieval art.<sup>9</sup> Implicit in Gough’s promotion of Schnebbelie was also a none-too-subtle critique of earlier eighteenth-century antiquarian methodology, rooted in part in the decline of the English topographical tradition from the late seventeenth century to Gough’s own time.<sup>10</sup>

Correspondence between Gough and Schnebbelie provide ample evidence of the mutual insistence on stylistic and iconographic verisimilitude in recording ancient monuments. In September 1787 Gough penned a characteristically scrawled note to Schnebbelie asking him to record aspects of the medieval monuments at Canterbury Cathedral:

‘In the Choir  
Henry and the Queen

Elevation  
Bird’s eye  
Portraits of both

Attend to the ornaments of the drapery, take the shield round the top of the canopy and the devices and letters on the roof of it.

The Black Prince

Elevation  
Bird’s eye  
Portrait

Take the coat, and shield and sword, helmet and crest above and the roof of the canopy, and an inscription on a pillow at her head. Examine if the shield above ever had handles.

Etc...? <sup>11</sup>

Despite Schnebbelie’s insistence that his patron ‘may depend on my paying strict attention to everything’,<sup>12</sup> Gough was careful to ensure that the artist produced faithful representations of medieval monuments. Gough critiqued his drawing of the effigy of Henry IV, notably its ‘wrinkles in the forehead and [the] appearance of high shoulders’, which did not agree with his own memory of the tomb. Schnebbelie provided a quick but judicious retort, ‘I made Mr Jackson acquainted with your doubts concerning the Portrait of Henry the fourth. Mr J has since examined the monument and paid strict attention to every feature and told me yesterday he would write to you, and I have not the least doubt but Mr J’s description will agree with my drawing – as the figure of Henry is very short necked’.<sup>13</sup>

Schnebbelie’s work for Gough extended far beyond the typical purview of a

draughtsman for hire to include the duties of messenger, reporter, and even spy. In a large number of letters, Schnebbelie communicates the good wishes of friends and acquaintances who wished to be remembered to Gough, thus shedding bright light on the polite social web of antiquarian studies in the period. His travels also meant that he could keep close tabs on other antiquarians with whom he was in direct competition, namely James Wyatt and John Carter. Scholars have paid little attention to the remarkably competitive nature of antiquarian study in the period: aside from personal rivalries, professional rivalry was a motivating factor for keeping up to date with the commissions of fellow draughtsmen. Carter was engaged in drawing many of the same monuments as Schnebbelie in the 1780s and 1790s, and Schnebbelie's letters reveal a clear sense of competition between the two men as they traced each other's footsteps around the country. While in Winchester in June 1788, Schnebbelie records the discovery of the paintings in the Holy Sepulchre chapel as well as those in the north transept (published thereafter by John Milner in *The Antiquary's Museum*). He is quick to note that Mr Carter has not yet seen them, and asks thus if he should make drawings before he does.<sup>14</sup> In July 1790 Carter and Schnebbelie happened to be drawing in Westminster Abbey. Schnebbelie writes to Gough: 'When I made application to an officer in Westminster abbey for the use of a machine used that I might be raised on a level with the figures representing the coronations on the chapel over the tomb of King Henry V, I found Mr Carter had been there the day before and had permission to have a scaffold erected for him he was there on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday morning'.<sup>15</sup> Carter was employed by the Society unofficially from 1780, semi-officially from 1784, and officially one year after Schnebbelie's death in 1792 as draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>16</sup> Aside from their roles as draughtsmen, they were bound to be rivals on ideological grounds, since both advocated – although Carter far more passionately than Schnebbelie – the preservation of ancient monuments against modern 'improvements'.<sup>17</sup>

Schnebbelie also acted as a publicist and even as a bookseller for Gough's publications. His peripatetic travels meant that he was well placed to advertise Gough's publications (and his own drawings within them) to prominent clergy, fellow artists, and the lower aristocracy. On several occasions he even took book orders.<sup>18</sup> This mutually beneficial obligation is made clear in Schnebbelie's dealings with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir William Chambers in 1789.<sup>19</sup> A letter from Schnebbelie to Gough, dated 7 March of that year records that Schnebbelie had occasion to show his drawings of the Beaufort tomb at Winchester. Schnebbelie records that he received high praise from his superiors – clearly an important accolade for an aspiring young draughtsman from England's most prominent artists and architects – as well as a place at the next Royal Academy exhibition. According to him, Reynolds lamented that his drawings had not been available previously, because they would have prevented him from making the error of giving Beaufort 'a long beard when by the figure on his tomb he had none' in his own *Death of Cardinal Beaufort*.<sup>20</sup> One week later, Schnebbelie and Reynolds met again, and the latter asked to purchase a copy of *Sepulchral Monuments* because he 'thought it a great and very useful work particularly for the artists who studied or painted British Historical pictures it was work the Royal Academy should not be without for the Royal Academy'.<sup>21</sup> This exchange is interesting because it illustrates the intended use of Schnebbelie's drawings, but

also, perhaps, something of a changing view of the value of representations of medieval art in the period in forming a visual and mnemonic corpus of 'real' historical characters. Schnebbelie's rendering of the story suggests that antiquarian drawings consciously informed by a bookish approach to the study of monuments were understood to provide, by late eighteenth-century standards at least, positive representations of the *virii illustrii* of national history above and beyond tertiary representations in the arts of the academy.

Schnebbelie's brief career in the employ of the Society ended abruptly in February 1791. In a letter to Gough, datable to early February 1791, he records his astonishment at being told he could no longer use the title 'Draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries' at a meeting of the Society, with the implication that it was never his to use in the first place.<sup>22</sup> Schnebbelie was justifiably furious for losing a title that carried considerable prestige and that also allowed him entry into the privileged class of antiquarian studies. He is clear that his obligations to the Society meant that he did not take work from other patrons. His surprise and disbelief was heightened by the fact that he had just completed the first volume of his *Antiquary's Museum* which he dedicated with permission to the Society under his official title.<sup>23</sup> After a short but apparently prosperous career with the Society in which he produced a wealth of outstanding drawings for their publications, why was Schnebbelie rebuked?

Partial answers to this question are provided by a vitriolic letter written to Gough, dated 5 February 1791. One problem was semantic: although draughtsman to the Society in name, Schnebbelie never received the traditional stipend of a Society draughtsman, but was rather paid on a commission-by-commission basis. As such, we may surmise that his status was secure only in his own eyes, and, he thought, those of Gough. Schnebbelie's letter records Gough's characterisation of his position as 'that empty name as you are pleased to title it'. The truth may in fact be that Schnebbelie's status as draughtsman was similar to that of Carter in his early years, 'semi-official'. Gough, it seems, had exercised his authority and led an aspiring young artist to believe that he held a prestigious position that he did not (perhaps with promise of future promotion), undoubtedly in order that he would remain in his employ. But – and Schnebbelie makes this point himself – why was his dedication of the *Antiquary's Museum*, which clearly recorded his title, not corrected by the Society when they looked at it at an earlier stage before it went to press?<sup>24</sup>

This question is one of a number of problems in Schnebbelie's career than cannot be readily answered. Schnebbelie's dedication of the text to the Society should be understood as an attempt to further ingratiate himself with its members, to prove himself an antiquary of significant merit, and may reflect his own optimism of being elected to the Fellowship. Despite Schnebbelie's obvious skill as a draughtsman and an antiquary, Schnebbelie was not likely to gain access to the privileged ranks of the Society as a Fellow. Born to a German soldier, and having worked as a drawing master at Westminster school and elsewhere, Schnebbelie was not a member of the proper class for admission to the Society in the late eighteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Further, the Society was not quick to admit to the Fellowship those who were in its employ.<sup>26</sup> This aspiring, obsequious, and even haughty young draughtsman, however talented, was not cut from the right cloth. How this problem was resolved is not known. Schnebbelie continued to accept work from Gough afterward, and he and his patron were on good enough terms for him to ask his

patron for a loan of £20 to purchase the remainder of his home on No. 7 Poland Street, Soho, later the same year. This relationship was remembered by Gough in the support of Schnebbelie's widow and family for many years after his death in 1792.<sup>27</sup> Somehow it appears that Schnebbelie's rift with the Society was patched up: upon his death in 1792, his colleagues, Gough and Nichols published his *Antiquary's Museum*, under the name 'Jacob Schnebbelie, Draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries of London'.

#### JACOB SCHNEBBELIE, RICHARD GOUGH, JAMES WYATT, AND THE DEBATE OVER SALISBURY CATHEDRAL

James Wyatt's 'improvements' to Salisbury Cathedral in 1789 have often been cited as an important event in the history of English antiquarian study, and more broadly, in the development of a preservationist mentality toward ancient buildings in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England.<sup>28</sup> In 1789, at the request of the bishop, James Wyatt began to modernise the interior of the cathedral in order to bring it into



Fig. 2

Salisbury Cathedral nave looking east showing original position of thirteenth-century choir screen  
*Oxford, Bodleian MS Gough Maps, vol. 32 f. 47v*

line with late eighteenth-century taste and liturgical use. His work involved the removal of the Beauchamp and Hungerford chantry chapels on either side of the Lady Chapel; the opening of the Lady Chapel to the choir by removing the Perpendicular screen and placing it on the inner walls of the chapel; the removal of the thirteenth-century choir screen (which was set into the north transept) (Fig. 2), and the erection of a monumental organ screen; and the whitewashing of the cathedral vaults, thus obscuring the original early thirteenth-century painted cycle that covered the choir, crossing, ambulatory and eastern transept vaults.<sup>29</sup> Wyatt's work opened up what had been a series of separate spatial compartments in the eastern arm, designed to adhere to the liturgical Use of Sarum; they also served to 'purify' and homogenise the interior by completely obscuring the paintings, which had originally served to map out and distinguish liturgical space in the medieval cathedral.

As John Milner politely stated in his *A Dissertation on the Modern Style of Altering Antient Cathedrals as Exemplified at the Cathedral of Salisbury*, 'Ever since the year 1789, when the alterations in Salisbury Cathedral took place ... a difference of opinion and, more or less, a controversy has subsisted concerning the taste and propriety of them' (Milner 1798). The sheer weight of printed discourse on Wyatt's work at Salisbury ensured its status as a major media event of the late eighteenth century. Two prominent and diametrically opposed discourses emerge, each justifying its perspective by aligning it with one side of the bifurcated eighteenth-century view of 'restoration'. Those in support of Wyatt's work considered the project to be an aesthetic and functional 'improvement' to the medieval interior. It is not surprising that the passionate advocates for Wyatt's work harshly denigrated the medieval fabric, thus minimising its aesthetic and historical value. 'An Enthusiastic Admirer of Salisbury Cathedral' argued in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* that the paintings were 'wretched daubings' whose 'colours have in general long since faded off these uncouth, disproportioned figures, the offspring of a humble brush'. He continues to doubt their authenticity as thirteenth-century works of art, locating them somewhere within the reigns of Henry IV or Henry VIII, and concludes, 'they have been a constant laughing stock of every intelligent observer'.<sup>30</sup> The strongest support for Wyatt was William Dodsworth's *A Guide to the cathedral Church of Salisbury With a Particular Account of the Late Great Improvements Made Therein Under the Directions of James Wyatt Esq*, published in 1792, which reads more like an *apologia* than a guide book.<sup>31</sup>

This view was attacked with the greatest force by Gough and other members of the Society.<sup>32</sup> Subscribing to the preservationist school of thought on medieval antiquities, Gough and his circle, notably Schnebbelie and John Milner, considered restoration an act of conducting 'necessary repairs' to maintain medieval buildings rather than aesthetic 'improvements' or alterations.<sup>33</sup> Gough was a pioneer in the preservation of ancient buildings, penning what John Frew has called 'the first coherent preservationist manifesto' on ancient buildings in 1788.<sup>34</sup> Gough articulated this view with characteristic fire in a number of letters in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, as did John Milner in his *Dissertation* of 1798.<sup>35</sup> Gough correctly opined, contrary to detractors, that the Salisbury vaults did indeed date from the earliest phases of building and that they were executed in the finest possible craftsmanship. As a preservationist of ancient monuments as much as ancient buildings, Gough could appeal on the grounds that a gothic building was a *gesamtkunstwerk*,

Fig. 3  
Christ in  
Majesty, sketch  
by Jacob  
Schnebbelie  
*Society of  
Antiquaries of  
London MS 263,  
f. 31r*



an inherently composite structure of glass, paint, and funerary monuments (an approach that is now called ‘artistic integration’).<sup>37</sup> Gough also railed against the displacement of the funerary monuments from the eastern arm: ‘the removal of such [funerary] monuments, though 500 years afterwards, on a plea of uniformity, symmetry, or taste, is a breach of faith in *foro conscientiae*, whether the law can reach it or not – as much as a breach of gratitude to make the memorial of one national worthy give place to that of another, though 500 years apart’. The debate was thus an aesthetic and intellectual one waged between antiquarianism and aestheticism (an ideological schism that Gough readily acknowledged),<sup>38</sup> and its interests to contemporary studies of antiquarian thought lie in its remarkably clear vision of two conflicting schools of thought on ancient buildings prevalent in eighteenth-century England: one conservative, classicising, and overtly modernist, and the other intellectual, historicizing, and scholarly. Where did Jacob Schnebbelie fit into this picture?

Schnebbelie arrived at Salisbury in 1789 just prior to Wyatt’s ‘improvements’. He may have been aware of Wyatt’s plan prior to his arrival, a hypothesis which would explain the draughtsman unsuccessfully hounding Wyatt at his home and at the Cathedral in September of that year.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps anticipating the arrival of detractors (and he must have known that there would be many since Wyatt and Gough had already battled over the



Fig. 4  
 Angels, sketch by  
 Jacob Schnebbelie  
 Society of Antiquaries  
 of London MS 263,  
 f. 33v

formers' restorations of Lichfield Cathedral), Wyatt ensured that the cathedral was shut to visitors, who had to make application to his clerk. Perhaps Wyatt's plans were anticipatory, since Schnebbelie wrote to Gough on October 5 stating 'I made all the interest I could to preserve the paintings but found it was impossible'.<sup>40</sup> Schnebbelie corresponded with Gough over the proposed changes. Gough created a considerable amount of interest in the project through letters to the *General Evening Post*, which enraged the bishop.<sup>41</sup>

In order to preserve the work at Salisbury, Gough ordered his draughtsman immediately to begin making sketches of the vault paintings. Between 14 September and 5 October, Schnebbelie sketched the full painted cycle. His haste is apparent in the sketches themselves: the colours are frequently indicated only with a written note rather than a colour wash and the surrounds of the medallions are only partially executed (Figs 3-4).<sup>42</sup> In

spite of the varying degrees of detail, the sketches are nevertheless systematic. Schnebbelie began by making sketches of each of the roundels, occasionally filling in details in pencil annotations. Rather than producing a 'view' of the vaults as they originally appeared, something we might expect of antiquarians of the preceding generation, Schnebbelie's own analytical eye for the form of the original cycle is evident in the fact that he produced a much more valuable, if less visually compelling, plan of the imagery with a textual key on an accompanying plan (Fig. 5). This now provides students of medieval art with the fullest account of the original form and content of the cycle. Schnebbelie's sketches, however, were only intended as preparatory drawings that would be developed into full colour presentation drawings, again at the request of Gough.<sup>43</sup> Full colour drawings were eventually produced by Schnebbelie from the sketches, including the plan of the entire cycle (Fig. 6). Systematic though he was, it is clear that a certain amount of invention took place in the translation between preparatory and final pictures. In some places, Schnebbelie was not above adding details of colour or completing a garment in the

finished drawings for which there is no information on the original sketches. Schnebbelie's works are nevertheless of exceptional importance: not only do they provide the only full account of the original painted cycle, but also they probably represent the earliest systematic antiquarian study of a medieval painted cycle in Great Britain. In this respect, Gough's and Schnebbelie's work represents an important precedent for the celebrated copying of the former murals in the Painted Chamber at Westminster in 1819 by Charles Stothard, Edward Crocker and John Buckler before they were concealed and hidden beneath modern decorations.<sup>44</sup>

Schnebbelie may have felt that his work was in vain, since on 5 October 1789 he wrote to Gough with the news that, according to the bishop, 'it was entirely opposite to Mr Wyatt's plan to make the whole of one uniform colour and the expense of painting them too great'.<sup>45</sup> It seems difficult to make sense of this information, given Wyatt's earlier intentions, and it may be possible that Schnebbelie, who must have been a nuisance to Wyatt's

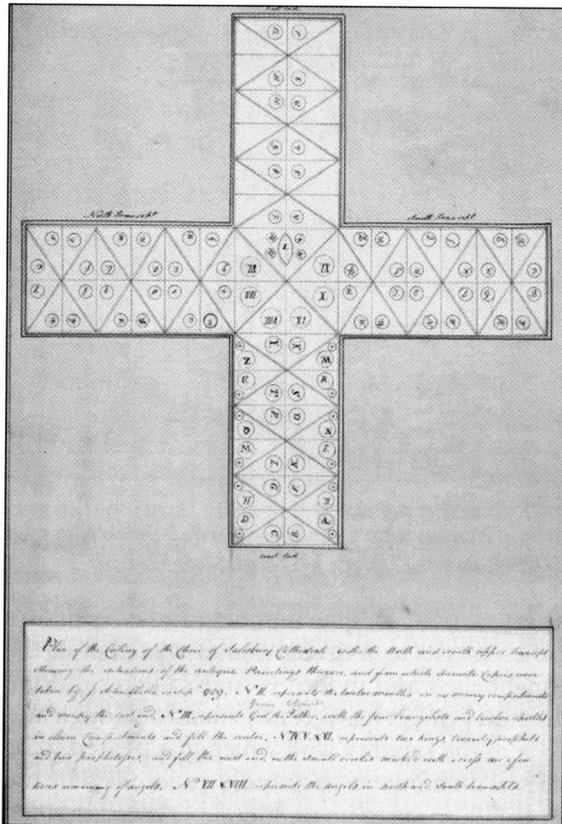


Fig. 5

'Plan of the Ceiling of the Choir of Salisbury Cathedral',  
Jacob Schnebbelie  
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Maps 32, f. 54r

work, was being deliberately put off. At the end of October, Schnebbelie and Gough met to look at the drawings at the Society while it was out of session. The draughtsman then produced the finished drawings in Oxford Bodleian MS Gough Maps over the next few months and presented them to Gough in 29 March 1790, once the painted cycle had been fully covered.<sup>46</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS: JACOB SCHNEBBELIE AND ANTIQUARIAN STUDIES

Where does Schnebbelie stand in the development of antiquarian studies in late eighteenth-century England? As Gough kindly but somewhat unhelpfully wrote in Schnebbelie's posthumous biography in the *Antiquary's Museum*, 'the merits of his pencil are too generally known and acknowledged to require any exaggerated eulogium. Happy in a quick eye and discriminating taste, he caught the most beautiful objects in the happiest points of view; and, for fidelity and elegance of delineation,

may be ranked high among the list of first-rate artists'. Despite the congratulatory nature of such eulogies, estimation of Schnebbelie's merits as a draughtsman was high in the 1780s and 1790s. But estimations of Schnebbelie's and indeed Gough's talents did not long sustain such a laudatory tone. As Rosemary Sweet has recently stated of Gough and his circle, 'their success is perhaps best seen in the rapidity with which it appeared to be outdated'. The phase of research on medieval monuments so grandly announced by the work published by Gough in the 1780s and 1790s was to be rapidly superseded in some of the earliest scale drawings produced by artists such as John Carter shortly after 1800, which represent the first truly scientific and analytic approach to the study of medieval monuments. So much was stated by Charles Stothard who critiqued *Sepulchral Monuments* in 1817, 'Whatever information we may receive from his writings, the delineating part

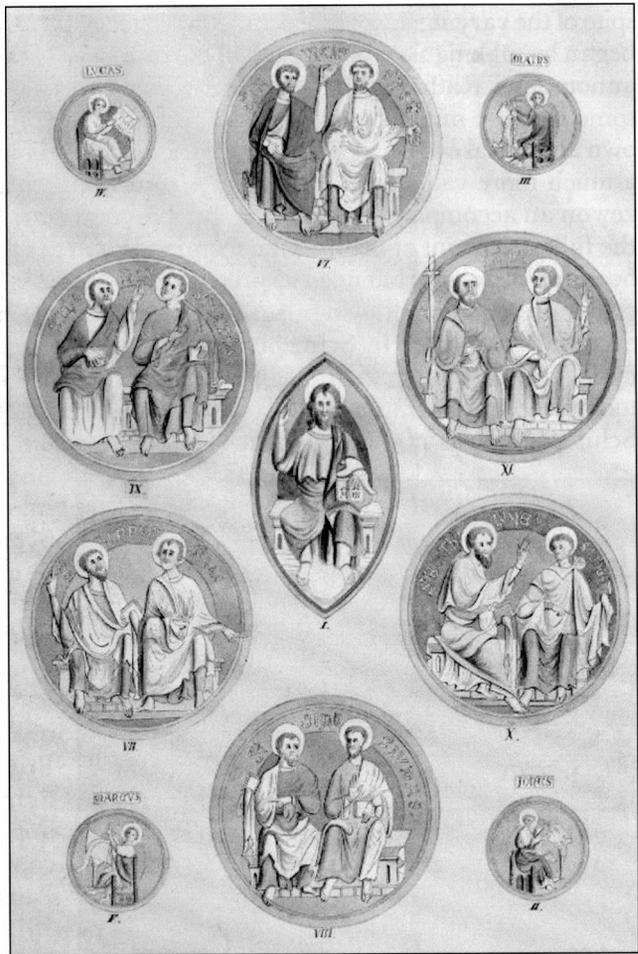


Fig. 6

Christ in Majesty with Evangelists, Jacob Schnebbelie  
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Maps 32, f. 57r

is so extremely incorrect, and full of errors, that at a future period, when the originals no longer exist, it will be impossible to form any correct idea of what they really were'. As such, in estimating Schnebbelie's achievement, we do not do him service to compare his work with that of his fanatical contemporary and successor John Carter.

In placing Schnebbelie in his appropriate light, we may reiterate a point already implicit in this paper: antiquarian drawings in late eighteenth century Britain were frequently driven by the impending destruction of ancient monuments. As such, the drawings themselves were not only tasteful images of antiquities for educated eyes, they were also triggers to memories of British antiquities, and by extension, to British history. An excellent example of Schnebbelie's own take on this discourse of preservation is provided by his work at Salisbury; another is provided by his view of Chatham Church in Kent sketched in March 1788 as it was being destroyed (Fig. 7). As through to transform his subject into a biological specimen, Schnebbelie produces an image of three panels, each given a border and labelled with a key to guide the viewer's eye to decode the image. In image one, we witness the scene of the destruction of the church: three workmen are engaged in pick-axing the vaults while internally two antiquaries are commenting on the details of the architecture. The object of their gaze is produced as the largest image, image two: the sedelia which were discovered in the destruction of the church. Seen in this light, the first and second images tell a history of discovery: the first image provides a narrative view of discovery and the second the fruits of antiquarian labour. In concluding this narrative, the third image presents a series of *dissecta membra*: seven marginal sculptures originally placed within the sculptural ensemble of the sedelia, set upon a blank background. The lapidoptery presentation of these objects indicates that they are objects that have been preserved by antiquarian intervention. Schnebbelie's drawing thus consciously illustrates this passage from destruction to discovery and from preservation to curiosity. The damaged state of the fragments, each showing clear damage, suggests a moral dimension to the image: a gothic building has gone from physical monument in place in the terrestrial world to a series of objectified fragments, presented as specimens from the gothic past. As Maria Grazia Lolla has recently reminded us, this mode of antiquarian mortification of the monument through its representation amounts to a veritable 'ritual of preservation'. It also amounts, however, to a self-conscious attempt to raise British art, and particularly British medieval antiquities, to the level of the much more widely published monuments of classical Antiquity in Rome. Schnebbelie, like his coterie of antiquaries and draughtsmen, was engaged in a process by which medieval antiquities, viewed through the chromatic lens of the engraving, achieved the elevated status of works of art.

Schnebbelie's own drawings now provide the best evidence of his personal antiquarian interests and sentiments. Unlike Carter, Schnebbelie has left little outside of his letters to Gough and a few notices in *The Antiquary's Museum* to elucidate his own particular antiquarian and scholarly bent. To cite Gough, 'Mr Schnebbelie was not contented with drawing the remains of antiquity: his close pursuits had made him proficient in the study of our National Antiquities, and a judge of the different styles of Gothic Architecture and Monuments. His description of the various places and buildings which he had examined were judicious and accurate, and discovered what attention he paid to them'. It

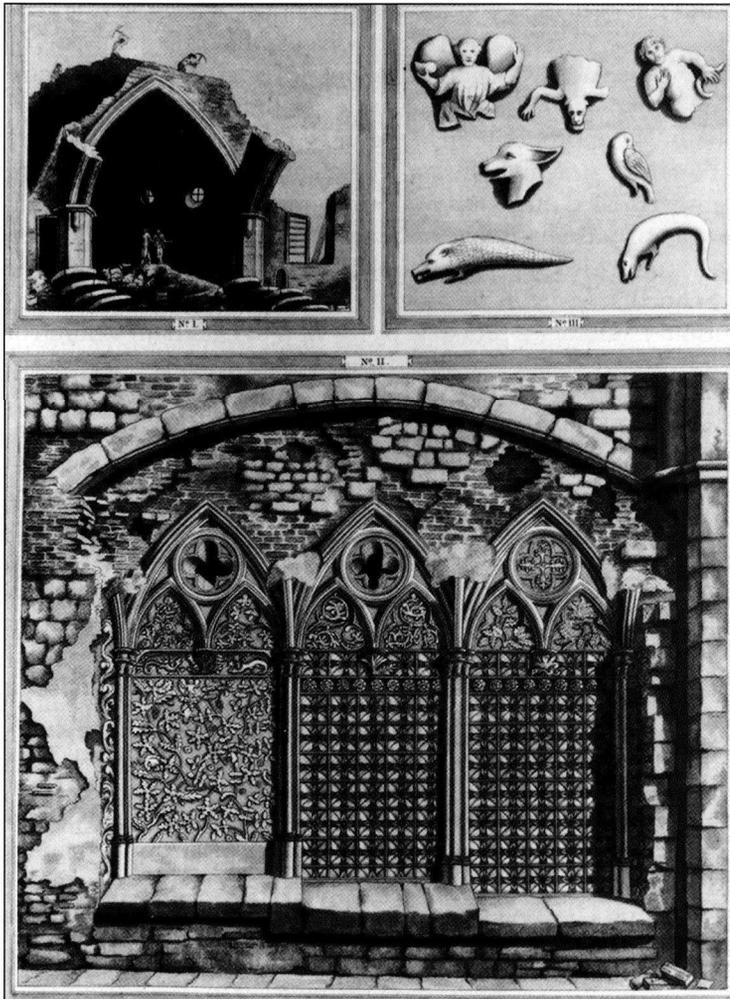


Fig. 7

'The Chancel of Chatham Church, Kent' 1788 by  
J. Schnebbelie in *Vetusta Monumenta*

is difficult to know how seriously such eulogies can be taken. To judge from Schnebbelie's own writings alone, he would appear, however talented as a draughtsman, to have been little more than a seasoned amateur as an antiquary or scholar. Yet it seems clear that there is much that was not completed during his very short life that would undoubtedly have presented a fuller view of his output. Before his death, Schnebbelie was preparing to compose a chronological account of Gothic architecture, which was begun under the provisional title, 'Antique Dresses since the reign of William the Conqueror, collected from various works; with their authorities'. This is, perhaps, of some importance, because it not only indicates a scholarly and taxonomic cast of

mind, but the study may have stood favourably alongside Carter's own work on gothic produced in the early nineteenth century, itself a predecessor to Thomas Rickman's important *An attempt to discriminate the Styles of English architecture from the Conquest to the Reformation*, published in 1817.

In conclusion, neglect of Schnebbelie's career has poorly served his reputation as a draughtsman of significant merit, whose work anticipated the flourishing of medievalist research that characterised the Victorian gothic revival. It has been the purpose of this study to resurrect his career; it will have succeeded if scholars carry the speculations presented here to their fuller and more final conclusions.

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## NOTES

1. I am grateful to the Society of Antiquaries of London, who kindly facilitated access to their manuscripts; Dr Pamela Tudor Craig FSA (Lady Wedgwood) enthusiastically discussed various aspects of Schnebbelie's career and capabilities with me while working at the Society; and Dr Rosemary Sweet at the University of Leicester provided some valuable citations, and her recent publications provided much inspiration.
2. The fullest accounts of Schnebbelie's career are the biographical memoir in J. Schnebbelie, *The Antiquary's Museum*, London 1791, v-viii written by Gough, and the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.
3. Among the most significant studies must be those of Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London and New York: Hambledon Press 2004; *Eadem*, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34:2 (2001), 181-206; *Eadem*, 'John Nichols and his Circle', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 74 (2000), 1-20; and R. Hill, 'The iv'd ruins of folorn Grace Dieu': Catholics, Romantics and late Georgian Gothic', in M. Hall (ed.), *Gothic Architecture and Its Meanings 1550-1850*, Reading 2002, 159-84.
4. SAL MS 267 f. 18, 23.
5. SAL MS 267 f. 141-2. In a vitriolic letter dated 5 Feb 1791, Schnebbelie remembers this point well: 'When I accompanied you and Mr Nichols to Winchester I was by you introduced to the Revd. Dr Wharton and to Revd. M. Milner as Draughtsman – and the same to the Revd. Mr Pegge and which I took as a confirmation of that empty name as you are pleased to title it'. Schnebbelie's visit to Winchester is recounted in SAL MS 267 f. 36, 75.
6. This pattern of patronage was common of Society draughtsmen. Compare the analogous employment of John Carter in J. Mordaunt Crook, *John Carter and the Mind of the Gothic Revival*, (Society of Antiquaries Occasional Paper), London 1995, 11.
7. Schnebbelie 1791, vi.
8. S. Lang, 'The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 25 (1966) 240-67, esp. 243-5.
9. R. Gough, *The Sepulchral Monuments of Great Britain*, London 1796, 9.
10. J. Frew, 'An Aspect of the Early Gothic Revival: The Transformation of Medievalist Research, 1770-1800', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43 (1980), 174-85; Sweet 2001.
11. SAL MS 267 f. 6.
12. SAL MS 267 f. 11v.
13. SAL MS 267 f. 8, 11.
14. SAL MS 267 f. 75. *Ibid.*, f. 89-90 Schnebbelie writes to Gough in October 1789 and notes, 'I left that place [Salisbury] on Sunday and reached Winchester the same evening but rather late .... Mr Carter has been at Winchester and St Cross only a fortnight ago making drawings for Dr Lockman'.
15. SAL MS 267 f. 115.
16. Mordaunt Crook 1995, 1, n. 6.
17. On Carter's defence of medieval buildings against his aptly named foe, the 'destroyer' Wyatt, see Mordaunt Crook, 23, 27ff. Carter saw himself as the 'Pilgrim of Antiquity, strangely garbed, with a cross of scarlet on his cloak and cockleshells in his hat – resolution around my staff, and information in my scrip; my sandals well shod with perseverance'. Mordaunt Crook, 31.
18. SAL MS 267 f. 5. 1st Sept 1787. Schnebbelie asks Gough to send him a copy of *Sepulchral Monuments* for Revd Brandon of Canterbury to sell 'and please to debet it out of my account'. f. 13 v. Dated 'Sept 29 1789'. 'Several gentlemen have expressed a great desire of having a copy of the first volume but as yet have given me no orders'.
19. The latter, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, had recently built the new rooms for the Society at Somerset House on the Strand. See J. Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1956, 170-97.
20. SAL MS 267 f. 63 7 Mar 1789 'Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir Wm Chambers have seen the drawings of the Winchester Monuments and were pleased to express very great approbation. Sir Wm thought it a pity that such beautiful pieces of Gothic architecture should be so neglected as little notice to

be take of them while our students were sent abroad to study the dull Grecian. Sir Joshua said they were the most elegant things of the kind he ever saw. He was sorry he had not seen them before particularly the figure of Cardinale Beaufort. He having finished his picture for Boydel being the Cardinal's death from Shakespeare and had given him a long beard when by the figure on his tomb he had none. Sir Joshua said they would be entitled to a proper place in the next exhibition shall therefore beg the favour of you to propose it to the auditors for permission. Shall be much obliged to you if you can spare the following drawings of monuments for a few days to show them to Sir Joshua Reynolds'. The drawing in question is Plate XVII in *The Boydell Shakespeare Prints*, London 1799.

21. SAL MS 267 f. 65 Mar 14 1789.
22. SAL MS 267 f. 46. This letter is sadly undated and out of chronological order, however, it can be dated to just previous to the letter from Schnebbelie to Gough on f. 141-2, dated 5 Feb 1791. It is worth quoting in full:  
 'Nothing can equal my astonishment – Mr Brereton [Owen Salusbury Brereton VP of the Society of Antiquaries] having said from the chair that I was not draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries that the name of the former one was still on the books it was Rogan. Sir I thought I was indebted to that appointment and title did I think I was inforced on Mr B. desiring me not to use that title for the future. It was you Sir that first introduced me to the Society and told me I was appointed by Council – now I have had permission to dedicate a work to them they find fault with me. Why did they not inform me before I had no right to that title when I laid before them the intended title page – they approved of it, at least you told me so. Believe me it is more than I can bear. I have devoted my time to them, been moderate in my charges, and perhaps too humble in deportment. I must say I little expected so severe a cut when I was first introduced. I had so many assignments? And that prospect of being constantly employed by the Society that I gave up any private instruction and this is the reward I am met with. As I am no longer in that situation I beg leave to decline attending the Society and request the favor of your immediate answer, and by that the council will discharge the enclosed bilet. The other things exhibited to the Society being ordered by you shall [be paid] by your acct.'
23. Schnebbelie 1791, i. Schnebbelie wrote to Gough on the dedication of *Antiquary's Museum* July 24 1791. See SAL MS 267 f. 140. Remarkably, the proofs for the dedication are still to be found in Gough's papers in SAL 267 f. 137.
24. Unsurprising, perhaps, nothing is said of this controversy in Schnebbelie's *Antiquary's Museum* of 1791, published posthumously by his 'friends', Richard Gough and John Nichols. His biographical memoir on v-viii simply states, 'At their noble President's [Earl of Leicester] express recommendation, he was appointed draughtsman of the Society of Antiquaries; and filled that office with equal credit to himself and his Patron'.
25. A biographical memoir with details of Schnebbelie's early life not fully discussed in this paper in Schnebbelie 1791, v-viii.
26. Sweet 2000, 19. As Rosemary Sweet notes, John Nichols' proposed election was initially rejected on these grounds. See also SAL MS 477/1, f. 189. Nichols had been responsible for printing the first edition of Schnebbelie's *Antiquaries Museum*.
27. SAL MS 267 168-92. The 1800 reference to his biographical memoirs is curious, since *The Antiquary's Museum* begins with a biographical memoir of its own. It is unclear what Mrs Schnebbelie did not want the world to see.
28. For the most recent discussion of Wyatt's works at Salisbury, see S. Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd: The Decoration of Salisbury Cathedral*, London: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1999, 43-7.
29. The fullest account is W. Dodsworth, *A Guide to the Cathedral Church of Salisbury With a Particular Account of the Late Great Improvements Made Therein Under the Directions of James Wyatt Esq*, London 1792.
30. A letter in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 59, pt 2, 1789, 1064-6. The author may be confidently identified as William Dodsworth. See J. Frew 'Richard Gough, James Wyatt, and Late 18th-Century Preservation', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 38 (1978), 366-74, at 372 n. 34.
31. Dodsworth 1792.

32. On the Society of Antiquaries' role as 'guardians of medieval monuments' in the period, see Evans 154-8.
33. Significantly, this view was also sustained by the Cathedral Chapter. Defining Wyatt's works as 'improvements', they fell outside the remit of the Chapter, whose funding was restricted to 'necessary repairs'. Frew 1979, 368, n. 16, citing Salisbury Cathedral Chapter Act Book, XXI 20 July 1789, 319.
34. Frew 1979, 367, citing Gough in *Gentleman's Magazine*, LVIII (1788), 689-91. See also J. Frew, 'Some Observations on James Wyatt's Gothic Style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 41 (1982) 144-9. Gough's writings reveal a keen awareness of the changing nature of historicism as it applied to the interpretation of ancient fabrics: 'were an architect of the eighteenth century to determine on the propriety, conformity, or correspondence of the parts of a building, of four preceding centuries, we might sacrifice every part of the most beautiful of our public structures to his ideas of elegance; for every other consideration is put out of the present question; even the few remaining beauties of these chapels are controverted, and it is thought less criminal to pervert their historical and chronological purposes than to deface them totally'. *Gentleman's Magazine*, LIX 1789, 1194-5.
35. Milner's condemnation of Wyatt's work at Salisbury did not have the desired effect within the Society of Antiquaries, since it was designed to damage Wyatt's chances for election to the Fellowship. J. Milner, *A Dissertation on the Modern Style of Altering Antient Cathedrals as Exemplified in the Cathedral of Salisbury*, London 1798, vi-viii.
36. 'The curious paintings of the choir and transepts [are] of an antiquity equal to that of the fabric, and in a style that would do honour to the Italian school'. R[ichard] G[ough] in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 59, pt 2, 873-5. In the same volume, see also 1194-5. The date and style of the vaults are discussed in M. M. Reeve, 'Mapping Time, Mapping Space: the Thirteenth-Century Vault Paintings of Salisbury Cathedral', *Antiquary's Journal*, 85, (2005), 47-102.
37. See for example V. C. Raguin, K. Brush, and P. Draper eds, *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, Toronto 1995.
38. *Gentleman's Magazine*, LIX 1789, 874-5: 'I am sensible the profession of the Antiquary is an object of the contempt and obloquy of modern connoisseurs; but I have the pleasure to inform you, Mr Urban, and you may proclaim it to the world at large, that what is doing to this fabric, and what has been done away from it, shall live as long as printing or engraving can contribute to its immortality'.
39. SAL MS 267 81, 85, 86.
40. SAL MS 267 f. 90.
41. SAL MS 267, f. 84. 24 Aug 1789. 'The bishop is very [sorry] he had not the pleasure of seeing you and wishes very much to have some conversation with you concerning the improvements to the Cathedrale and other Matters. He told this morning a paragraph had appeared in the Gen Evening Post of Saturday signed Victor at which he was much hurt and thought it must come from you which makes him the more regret his not seeing you as he could have given substantial reasons for the taking down of the Chapels etc as he always was a lover of antiquities and wished to preserve them as much as possible but here was a case of necessity in taken [sic] them down in order to preserve the main fabric'. He then hopes Gough will come to Salisbury to see him.
42. The sketches are now in Gough's own book of Schnebbelie's works SAL MS 263.
43. Oxford Bodleian MS Gough Maps. The finished drawings were given to Gough in 29 March 1790. SAL MS 267, f. 113.
44. See the thorough discussion in P. Binski, *The Painted Chamber at Westminster*, (Society of Antiquaries Occasional Paper), London 1986.
45. SAL MS 267 f. 89-90.
46. SAL MS 267 f. 113.
47. R. Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London and New York: Hambledon Press 2004, 275.
48. C. Stothard, *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain*, London 1817, 5.