The Early History of Abingdon, Berkshire, and its Abbey

By M. BIDDLE, *the late* MRS. H. T. LAMBRICK*

and

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I. THE FOUNDATION-TRADITIONS OF THE ABBEY

By GABRIELLE LAMBRICK

IN 1913 Sir Frank Stenton examined the three manuscripts which make up the greater part of the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, endeavouring to find evidence which would illuminate the obscurities of West Saxon political history from the 7th to 10th centuries.[1] From among the mass of forged and suspect charters and two highly coloured accounts of the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the monastery in the late 7th century he found little that could be regarded as reliable historical evidence, and for Abingdon itself he was unable to accept more than the bare fact that a monastery for monks had been established there *c.* 670 under a West Saxon nobleman called Hean (*Haeha*), who had received endowments first from the under-king Cissa and later from King Ine. The remainder of the traditions surrounding this factual nucleus Stenton rejected as 'incoherent invention'.[2] For him, the inventions included the attempt to found the monastery on the hill of *Abbandune* and its removal to a place called Seuekesham; the establishment at Abingdon by Hean's sister Cilla of a nunnery dedicated to the Holy Cross and St. Helen; and the story of the discovery of the Black Cross of Abingdon on the site of the nunnery at Helenstow.

Consideration of the archaeological discoveries which have been made in Abingdon since Stenton wrote in 1913, of certain topographical factors, and of the early history of the house as recorded in Abingdon manuscripts other than the three Cotton MSS. with which Stenton was concerned, suggests that the time has come for a reassessment of the foundation-traditions of Abingdon Abbey.

Let us look first at the archaeological evidence which was not available in 1913.[3] There was, undoubtedly, a large Romano-British settlement at Abingdon, although its nature and extent have never been determined. At several points in

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* To our great regret Mrs. Lambrick died suddenly before this paper went to press. Her portions of the text have been printed essentially as she wrote them. [Ed.]

[1] F. M. Stenton, *The Early History of Abingdon Abbey* (Oxford, 1913); *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson (Rolls Series, 1858) 2 vols. (hereafter cited as *C.M.A.*). The manuscripts in question are three Cotton MSS. in the British Museum, Claudius C ix, Claudius B vi and Vitellius A xiii (p. 68, Appendix II, nos. 2–4).   [2] Stenton, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 7.

[3] I am greatly indebted to Dr. J. N. L. Myres for information and guidance on the archaeological matters dealt with in this section of the paper; for the conclusions reached, I am responsible.

the areas uncovered during the excavations in 1922 on the site of the abbey, considerable quantities of Romano-British pottery were found (p. 62), and evidence of the same kind, together with building-debris and coins has come from other parts of the borough, notably from Stert Street, East St. Helen's Street and the churchyards of St. Nicholas and St. Helen.4 The Roman coin-series from Abingdon, comprising in 1931 at least 400 specimens from the borough alone, extends from Republican times to the 2nd half of the 4th century.5 It is notable for the number of pieces belonging to the mid 1st century and earlier, which suggests that the place could well have started with temporary military occupation in the course of the Claudian conquest.6 It is however remarkable that Abingdon, unlike Dorchester, does not appear to have lain on any known Roman road, although its situation at an important crossing of the Thames, where it is joined by one of its principal upper tributaries, the Ock, closely resembles that of Roman Dorchester, similarly placed in relation to the Thames and the Thame. The absence of roads suggests that the Abingdon settlement can have played no significant part in the administrative arrangements of Roman Britain.

As with other Thames-side settlements in Berkshire, there can have been little, if any, gap between the late Roman and early Anglo-Saxon occupation at Abingdon. In 1934 there came to light just across the Ock, and close to the point at which it falls into the Thames, a very substantial pagan Anglo-Saxon cemetery, recognized by its excavators as providing clear evidence for its use as early as the 5th century.7 Later in this paper (p. 41) it will be suggested that it probably began well before 450, so that virtual contemporaneity with the last stages of Romano-British occupation on the site of the present town is by no means ruled out.

For the period of transition from paganism to Christianity in this northern outpost of Wessex the archaeological significance of the Black Cross of Abingdon should not be overlooked. This object, a much revered relic said to have been made from a nail of the True Cross, which belonged to Cilla, the supposed founder of the 7th-century nunnery, is illustrated in one of the 13th-century Abingdon manuscripts (PL. III), which describes its discovery by Ethelwold's monks in the 10th century, apparently on the site of Cilla's nunnery at Helenstow, close to St. Helen's Church. The illustration makes it clear that the Black Cross was one of those open-work disc-headed pins which have been found on several sites of the late 7th and 8th centuries, including that of Hilda's monastery at Whitby.8 Whatever may be thought of the personal connexion which it was later believed

4 H. Peake, *The Archaeology of Berkshire* (London, 1931), pp. 108–9, 171–2.

5 The latest mentioned is of Valens (365–78).

6 In addition to those recorded by Peake, a coin of Claudius in very good condition has recently been found in the lowest Roman levels behind a house on the E. side of East St. Helen's Street.

7 E. T. Leeds and D. B. Harden, *The Anglo-Saxon Cemetery at Abingdon, Berkshire* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, 1936).

8 The type is well illustrated by the much more elaborate Witham pins (D. M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork, 700–1100. in the British Museum* (London, British Museum, 1964), pl. xviii) one of which has a similar Greek cross-head carried out, as on the Black Cross, with open-work ellipses. Simpler examples of the same form and proportions from the Whitby monastery are illustrated in *Archaeologia*, LXXXIX (1943), fig. 13. The date is more likely to be early 8th than late 7th century and, though probably English, the style may owe something to Celtic influences.

at Abingdon to have had with Cilla and her nail of the True Cross, there is no reason to dispute the claim that it was dug up in the 10th century, apparently along with other recognizable Christian relics, on the site of the supposed nunnery at Helenstow.[9] The Black Cross in fact constitutes independent evidence of the
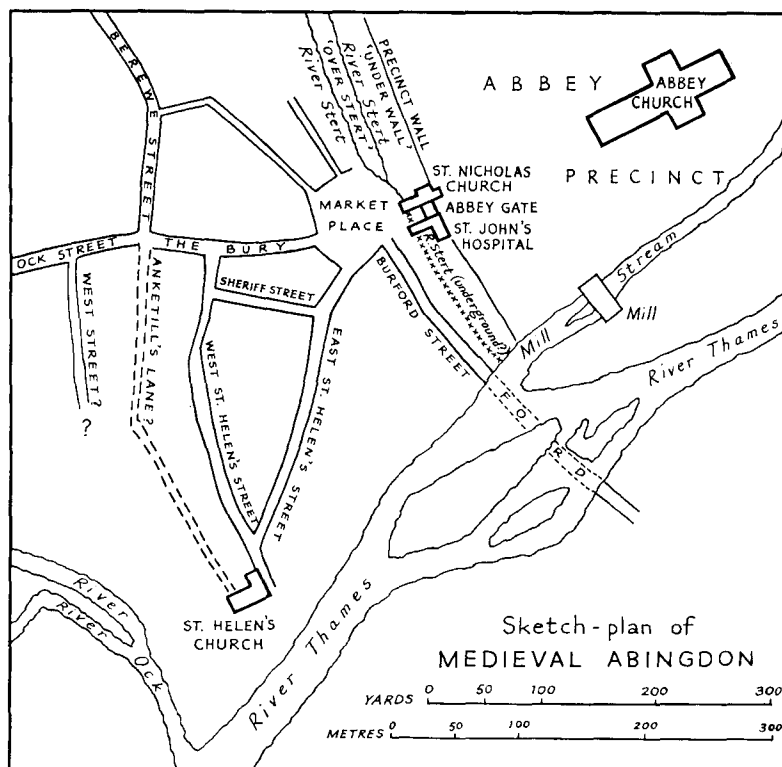

FIG. 5
SKETCH-PLAN OF ABINGDON, BERKS., IN MEDIEVAL TIMES,
SHOWING THE SITE OF THE ABBEY AND ITS PRECINCT (pp. 29, 47).

most convincing kind for the existence of an early Christian establishment of some description on this site: all unknowingly, the monks chose to emphasize, and to illustrate, the one item in their discoveries at Helenstow which confirms for the modern archaeologist the essential truth of the traditions about this matter which they recorded.

The topographical evidence for the relative antiquity of Abingdon brings into prominence the parish church of St. Helen, and associates the place with royal administration in Anglo-Saxon times. The layout of the medieval streets of Abing-

9 *C.M.A.*, 1, 7 (from Cott. Claud, B vi, fo. 5); II, 269–70. The special association of the Holy Cross with Abingdon, and the stories surrounding the Black Cross, are, in some ways, comparable with the cross of St. Amphibalus at St. Albans. See *Life of St. Alban* (Oxford, 1924), where the pictorial 'Life', of Trinity College, Dublin, MS. E. i. 40, is reproduced, with the cross of St. Amphibalus appearing in many of the illustrations.

don, with East and West St. Helen's Streets and at least one other street or lane all leading to St. Helen's Church, shows the parish church, standing at the confluence of the Ock and the Thames, as a focal point—one which must have dated from a period before the market place was established outside the main gate of the abbey, and the 'ten traders' of Domesday Book began to sell their merchandise there (FIG. 5).

The earliest documentary evidence for St. Helen's occurs in a charter of 995 (it is not mentioned in Domesday Book), but it seems likely that it was founded long before this. It was called a *monasterium* in the 10th century, according to Cotton MS. Vitellius A xiii and in the 13th century was still receiving church-scot.[10] The later medieval status of the church as a wealthy rectory in the abbey's gift (not appropriated by the monks until 1270) suggests that it was a royal foundation given to the abbey with the territorial estate of Abingdon in late Saxon times. Sir Frank Stenton regarded Abingdon as a royal hundredal manor for Hormer hundred in the 9th and earlier 10th centuries,[11] so that St. Helen's may have been, originally, a head-church or old minster for Hormer hundred when this was still a royal administrative unit. But the matter can perhaps be taken even further back: for Hormer was probably one of a group of hundreds, being at first joined with Sutton and possibly Ock hundreds. The group of three have a natural geographical unity; and while Hormer was granted to Abingdon Abbey by Edward the Confessor, Sutton and Ock (called Marcham in Domesday Book) remained royal hundreds and were undergoing an administrative merger in the 13th century such as to suggest that they were harking back to a very old administrative arrangement.[12] Moreover the village of Sutton (now Sutton Courtenay) must have acquired its name as the south-tun of Abingdon, which points to its being an early dependency of the more important site of royal administration.[13] In addition to all this there are suggestive facts linking the old ecclesiastical organization with the ancient royal administration: the medieval parish of St. Helen's covered not only the southern part of Hormer hundred but also extended into Sutton hundred to include Drayton and other land on the further side of the Ock (FIG. 6); and the old meeting-place for Hormer hundred up to Henry I's time, in Dry Sandford, was for centuries in the ecclesiastical parish of St. Helen and is still, to this day, in the civil parish of St. Helen Without.[14] The idea of St. Helen's as an old minster, the parish church established in the royal hundredal vill of Abingdon, which was in its turn the administrative centre of a group of hundreds, argues considerable antiquity for the vill itself.

[10] *C.M.A.*, II, 270, 278–9. Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 67. F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1947), p. 154, calls church-scot 'the fundamental endowment of the ancient "minsters" '.

[11] Stenton, *op. cit.* in note 1, p. 47.

[12] See H. M. Cam, 'Early groups of hundreds', *Liberties and Communities in Mediaeval England* (1963), pp. 91–106. Dr. Cam (p. 91) calls them archaic units, 'going back in all probability to an arrangement older than the hundredal system itself'.

[13] Dr. Myres tells me that some of the pottery excavated from the pagan Anglo-Saxon village at Sutton Courtenay is so early as to indicate occupation of the site by the mid 5th century. Thus the place may already have been linked with Abingdon, as its south town, in the earliest period of Anglo-Saxon settlement; they are only a mile or two apart.

[14] *C.M.A.*, II, 114. The meeting-place was perhaps by the marshy lake-filled area, close to Dry Sandford mill (FIG. 6).
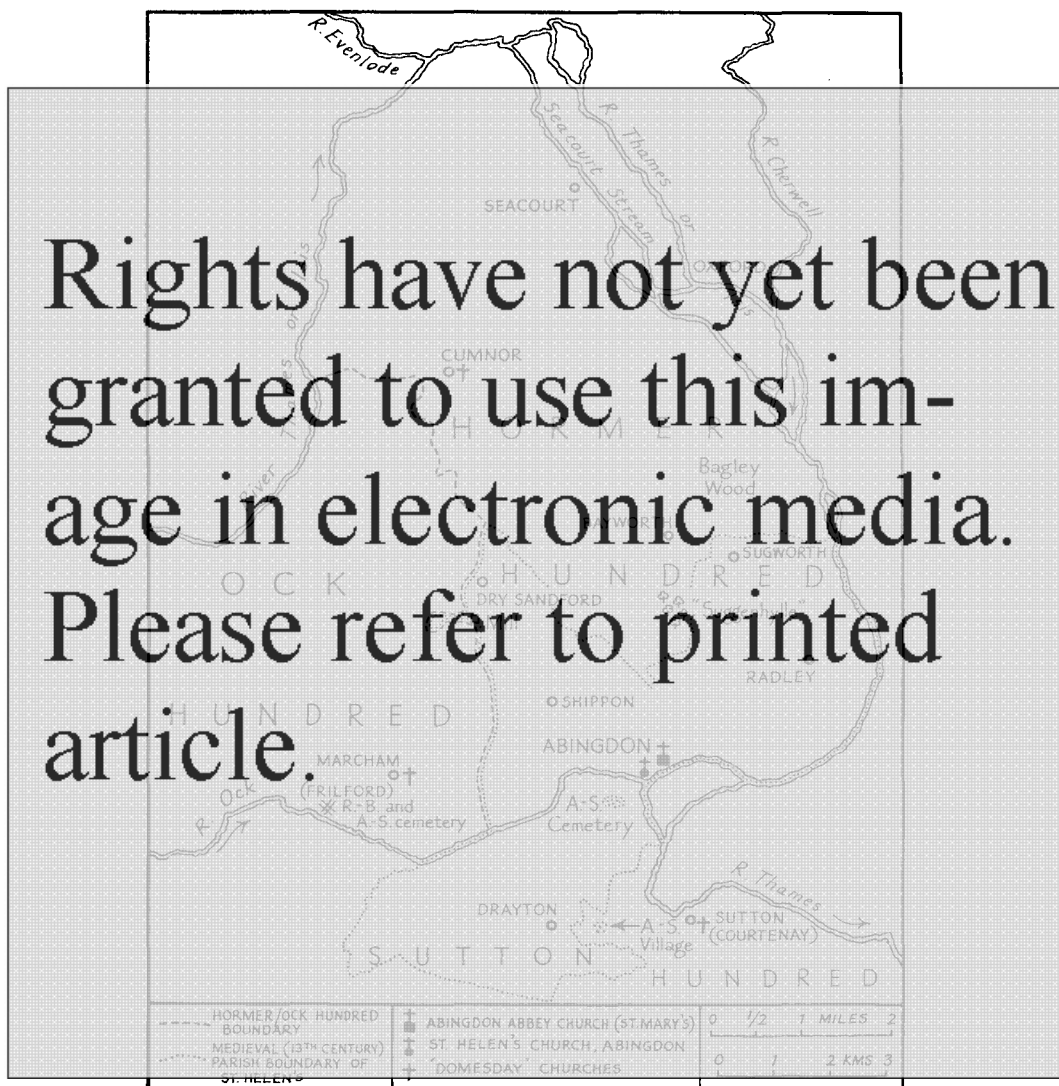
FIG. 6
SKETCH-MAP OF ABINGDON, BERKS., AND ITS ENVIRONS,
SHOWING THE BOUNDARY OF ST. HELEN'S PARISH (p. 29)

*Based on the O.S. map with the sanction of the Controller of
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Lastly we come to the documentary evidence. In addition to the three Cotton manuscripts which Sir Frank Stenton criticized in 1913 (see p. 26, note 1) there are, or were, at least four other Abingdon chronicles giving some account, however brief, of the foundation of the 7th-century monastery.

(*a*) Lambeth Palace Library MS. 42 (p. 68, Appendix II, no. 1), an edition

of the John (Florence) of Worcester Chronicle which has entries, some of them long, relating to the history of Abingdon Abbey, though the main chronicle is on a national scale. It ends in 1131 and its authorship probably dates from the mid 12th century; the extant Abingdon manuscript is believed to have been written before c. 1170.[15]

(b) Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 993 (p. 68, Appendix II, no. 5), a chronicle of England which starts in A.D. 473 with Hengist and Horsa, and ends in 1302. It was written in the 1st half of the 14th century and it, too, like (a) above, has special Abingdon additions.

(c) The now lost 'Chronicle roll of the abbots of Abingdon' (p. 69, Appendix II, no. 6), which the Oxford antiquarian Brian Twyne copied, was published by H. E. Salter in 1911 without the defective opening paragraph;[16] there is enough of this paragraph in Twyne's notes, however, to show that it dealt with the foundation of the monastery in the late 7th century, and that it was akin to the equivalent passages in Cotton Claudius B vi (p. 68, Appendix II, no. 4) and in

(d) another Abingdon chronicle roll (p. 69, Appendix II, no. 8), now missing. This seems to have been written in a peculiar mixture of Latin and English and dated from Richard II's time. Nicholas Charles's copy of it is in B. M. Cotton Julius C vii.[17] An Abingdon cleric and schoolmaster of the late 18th century, John Stevenson, also used this roll in the original, as well as the 'Lost Chronicle' which Twyne had transcribed, and his notes show that in his time both these rolls were in Ashmole's Library.[18]

(e) Twyne also made odd notes about Abingdon Abbey's early history from other sources which he does not specify. One of the passages he copied (p. 69, Appendix II, no. 7) closely resembles the foundation-story given in (a) above, particularly as it uses the same 'flash-back' technique from Ethelwold's refoundation in 954 to Hean's original foundation. Twyne may have paraphrased it; but it is more likely that he was using yet another unknown chronicle source, for the preceding entry in his Abingdon notes records a battle in the Oxford-Abingdon district at *Suggenhylle* in 830, and this (as far as is known) is mentioned nowhere else.[19]

Stenton thought that Cotton Claudius C ix (p. 68, Appendix II, no. 2) contained the only reliable account of the foundation of the monastery under Hean; Lambeth 42 should be ranked on a par with it, seeing that its Abingdon additions make the same statements in almost identical words. Of all the foundation-stories, those in the 13th-century Cotton MSS., Vitellius A xiii and Claudius B vi (p. 68, Appendix II, nos. 3 and 4), are by far the longest, the most highly coloured, and the most diverse. For the rest, there are family likenesses between themselves, and between them and Cotton Claudius C ix and Lambeth 42; but no two are identical and generally speaking they all use different permu-

[15] The Abingdon additions were printed by Henry Wharton in *Anglia Sacra* (London, 1691), I, 163–6.
[16] Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 255, where the defective paragraph is copied on fo. 55; *Engl. Historical Review*, XXVI (1911), 727–38 (hereafter cited as 'Lost Chronicle').
[17] On fos. 305–305[v].
[18] Bodl. MS. Gough Berks. 4 and 6, *passim*.
[19] C.C.C., Oxford, MS. 255, fo. 54.

tations and combinations of the component parts of the traditions. Taken as a whole, this suggests that each Abingdon chronicler, from the 12th to the 14th century, made use of a much earlier corpus of traditions of the house, whence he picked out those features he found, for reasons of his own, the most acceptable; and some of the 'historians', notably the authors of Claudius B vi and Vitellius A xiii, proceeded to embellish, with embroidery of their own imagining, the bare outlines with which other chroniclers were content.

Two important features of the traditions are expressed briefly in the words of Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 993:

> 'Regnante Kentwino rege Westsaxonum quidam vir nobilis nomine Cissa qui quasi regulus ab omnibus putabatur nepoti suo Heno montem Abendoun ad construendum ibidem monasterium monachorum concessit, sed quiquid operabantur ibidem uno die cementarii corruit nocte vel die secundo. Et hoc sepissime contigit donec Heano predicto diviniter inspirato ostensus fuerat quidam locus in villa de Souekesham, modo Abendon nuncupata, in quo monasterium edificare deberet . . .'

And again, for the year 688:

> Rex Cedwalla, mortuo Cissa, contulit Heano abbati Abendon' et monachis ibidem Deo servientibus villam de Souekesham modo Abendon' nuncupatam, cum xx. cassatis terre et omnibus aliis pertinentibus ad eandem.'[20]

It has now been established that *Abendoun* was originally an upland area on the SE. slope of Boars Hill, about half-way between Oxford and Abingdon.[21] What remains in dispute is the story of Hean's move downhill to the site beside the Thames, taking the name Abendun, or Abbandune, with him; and the existence there already of a place called Seuekesham. Some versions of the story omit the move down to the valley, but state that Seuekesham was named after a pagan Sevecus, and Abendun after a Christian, Aben or Abbenus.[22] The name Seueke- sham clearly contains the same personal name as Seacourt (*Sevecurda, Sevekeworth,* etc.), a medieval village in Hormer hundred, deserted in the 15th century. It is difficult to believe that the 12th-century monks invented this name. They had no reason to pick on any particular one that was not genuinely mentioned in their records; and pairs of early personal names from which place-names derive are found elsewhere in this district of north Berkshire, suggesting a close relationship between communities settled in Hormer hundred in the early Anglo-Saxon period.

It behoves us, then, to look carefully at the place-name as well as the docu- mentary, topographical and archaeological evidence, before we reject, out of hand, the Abingdon tradition that there was a settlement called Seuekesham in pagan Saxon times at the place by the Thames now known as Abingdon. Several of the chronicles say that its name was changed by royal order of Cedwalla, when the

[20] Trinity College, Cambridge, MS. 993, fo. 3. Cf. *C.M.A.*, I, 3, 6–9; II, 270–1.

[21] O. G. S. Crawford, *Antiquity*, IV (1930) 487–9; Margaret Gelling, 'The hill of Abingdon', *Oxoniensia*, XXII (1957), 54–62.

[22] 'Lost Chronicle' and Cotton Julius C vii. Cf. Claudius B vi and Vitellius A xiii, printed *C.M.A.*, I, 2–3; II, 268.

monastery was built by the Thames.[23] Claudius B vi gives Abingdon itself a double place-name derivation, one Anglo-Saxon and the other Celtic, the latter arising from the legend of the Irish monk Aben, who was said to have founded a monastery for three hundred monks on the hill of Abingdon in 'British' times.[24]

Turning now to the traditions regarding Hean's sister Cilla, and the alleged nunnery, we find that although she is ignored altogether by the authors of the 14th-century Abingdon chronicles, she is given a brief but significant mention by the compilers of the two earliest—and most reliable(?)—histories, Lambeth 42 and Claudius c ix. Both say that the original endowment by Cissa of land whereon to build a monastery was made to Hean *and* to his sister Cilla—'Cissa . . . Heano cuidam religiosae vitae-viro . . . simulque sorori ejusdem Cille nomine, locum ad Omnipotentis Dei cultum construendi coenobii dedit . . .'.[25] This is suggestive of an intention to build a double monastery, which accords well with 7th-century practice. The two houses cannot, however, have been juxtaposed, for, if Cilla's nunnery did in fact come into being, tradition and topography place it at Helenstow, whereas the monks' monastery of Hean's time stood on the same site as the abbey buildings of the 10th and 12th centuries. Moreover, it is said specifically that no women were allowed to enter the walled precinct of Hean's monastery (p. 43). The richly-embroidered accounts of Claudius B vi and Vitellius A xiii have much more to say than the earlier chronicles about Cilla and the nunnery at Helenstow; about her instructions for the making of the Black Cross from a nail of the True Cross and for its burial with her; and about the dedication of her nunnery to the Holy Cross and St. Helen.[26] The author of Vitellius A xiii says that Ethelwold's monks of the 10th century discovered the Black Cross when they were digging near the *monasterium* of St. Helen.[27] This word *monasterium* is just as appropriate to the old-minster church of St. Helen as to the ruins of a 7th-century nunnery; the topographical evidence only makes sense if the two establishments are taken to have been set up on the same site; and if the nunnery did at one time exist, it is even possible that there was some kind of continuous development from one to the other. Claudius B vi takes the St. Helen's tradition even further back, claiming that there was a chapel dedicated to St. Helen in the time of the Angles (by which is meant, no doubt, pagan Saxon times) and furthermore that many Christian relics from the early 'British' era were found at Seuekesham.[28]

[23] 'Lost Chronicle', Julius c vii, Vitellius A xiii.

[24] *C.M.A.*, I, 2–3; II, 268. There is a parallel here with the story of Maeldubh and the foundation of Malmesbury Abbey. It is of some interest to note that the great Abbot Faritius, of Abingdon (1100–17), had previously been cellarer at Malmesbury and might be suspected of introducing the Irish-monk legend into the Abingdon traditions. Yet the author of Claudius c ix, who was a young monk in Faritius's time, makes no mention of Aben or of any other Irish monk, nor does his fellow-chronicler, the writer of Lambeth 42.

[25] Claudius c ix, fo. 102, printed *C.M.A.*, , p. 1, note 1; Lambeth 42, as in Wharton, *op. cit.* in note 15, I, 163.

[26] *C.M.A.*, I, 7–8; II, 269–70, 278–9.   [27] *C.M.A.*, II, 270, 278–9.

[28] *C.M.A.*, I, 6–7; see also text of PL. III: 'Hic sedes regia; huc cum de regni praecipuis et arduis tractaretur negotiis, concursus fiebat populi, ubi etiam a primis Britonum temporibus locus fuit religionis, tam tempore religionis fanaticae, quam tempore religionis Christianae. In hac etiam civitate plura fuerunt indicia Christianitatis ex antiquorum conversatione Britonum, ut supra dictum est. Cruces etenim et imagines quae in villa ipsa nunc hic nunc illic effossae reperiebantur, hujus rei praebent experimentum.'

It would be fruitless to attempt a definitive analysis of this amalgam of legend, tradition and history. There are, however, certain elements in the traditions and certain features we have already discovered in the early history, topography and archaeology of Abingdon which lend support to each other. The possibility that there was a 7th-century nunnery at Helenstow links up with the conception of an early-Saxon old minster also dedicated to St. Helen and built on the same site. The ideas associated with the Holy Cross and St. Helen take one back to early, Roman Christianity, since it is known that there was a Romano-British settlement here in the 4th and perhaps the 5th century. The picture of the Black Cross in Claudius B vi (PL. III) shows it to have been an early-Saxon Christian relic and links it with the monks' belief that Abingdon as a place was renamed in the 7th century after a Christian who had been associated with the district in Romano-British or early Saxon times.[29] And not only did Abingdon Abbey always claim to be a royal foundation, in the first place by virtue of the endowments made by Cedwalla and Ine: the monks said that even the change of name was brought about by royal decree when Christianity superseded paganism at Seuekesham. Here we have another reminder that Abingdon was at one time a royal estate of Anglo-Saxon kings, and probably the district centre for an ancient unit of royal administration and of early ecclesiastical organization.

No attempt has been made here to examine the early history of Abingdon in the context of the political history of Wessex and Mercia in the 7th and 8th centuries, or of the ecclesiastical history of the period which followed the conversion of Wessex by Birinus. In concentrating, as has been done in these introductory paragraphs, on Abingdon Abbey in the setting of its immediate neighbourhood there is danger of losing sight of the fact that this area of north Berkshire was often in the nature of border-country, changing hands relatively frequently and much fought over, during most of the Anglo-Saxon period. But of Abingdon's antiquity there can be no doubt; and for the probable continuity of its existence from Roman times onwards, as well as the character of some of its early inhabitants, there are certain valuable indications in the medieval monks' traditions which can be confirmed by modern archaeology, as Dr. Myres and Mr. Biddle show in parts II and IV of this paper.

[29] The derivation of Abingdon, according to modern place-name scholars, is from a woman's name, Aebba. There is a church dedicated to St. Ebbe in Oxford. The historical Ebba was founder-abbess of a nunnery, which was part of a double monastery, at Coldingham, near St. Abb's Head in Northumberland; she died *c.* 683.

II. THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY

By J. N. L. MYRES

The Anglo-Saxon cemetery was discovered in 1934 to the south of Abingdon in the course of laying out the Saxton Road housing estate, and it was excavated by the Ashmolean Museum and the Oxford University Archaeological Society in 1934 and 1935. It introduced a fresh feature into the early history of Abingdon wholly unknown to Stenton when he wrote on this subject twenty years earlier. Its existence provided a link between the sporadic but extensive archaeological evidence for Roman occupation in the centre of the present town, and the traditions preserved by the medieval monastic community regarding the origin of their own foundation in the 7th century and its relation to the previous history of the site. While Stenton could derive little certainty from these traditions beyond the bare existence of a 7th-century monastic house, the evidence of the pagan Saxon cemetery at once gave substance to the claim that this had been established in a pre-existing community of pagan origin. It hinted, moreover, that the possibility of links between such a community and its Romano-British predecessor suggested in some of the monastic stories, could no longer be rejected out of hand. There was indeed every reason to suppose that the burial-place of the pagan Saxon folk of *Seuekesham*, for whose existence on the site later known as Abingdon the monastic traditions (pp. 32 ff.) were otherwise the only witness, had now been found.

This being so, it is plainly of importance to assess any evidence the cemetery may provide for determining the character of the community who used it, and especially the date of its establishment and the duration of its use. In publishing the results of their excavation, which probably uncovered between a half and two-thirds of the cemetery, E. T. Leeds and D. B. Harden drew attention to some unusual features which suggested that it had come into use very early in the age of Saxon settlement.[30]

In the first place it appeared to contain a far higher proportion of cremations to inhumations than is normal among the cemeteries of the Oxford region. The excavated area produced 82 cremations and 119 inhumations, a proportion which makes Abingdon far more comparable to the early mixed cemeteries of middle Anglia than it is to those of the Thames valley, where its nearest rival in numbers of cremations, Long Wittenham, produced only 46 against 188 inhumations. In all the other N. Berkshire sites cremation is far less strongly in evidence, and in Oxfordshire it is even more unusual.[31]

Then again the number and nature of the metal objects found in the graves that indicate a really early date give the Abingdon cemetery a special interest. The significance of these was pointed out in the report and there is no need to

[30] Leeds and Harden, *op. cit.* in note 7.

[31] See further Joan R. Kirk, 'Anglo-Saxon cremation and inhumation in the upper Thames valley in pagan Saxon times', in *Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E. T. Leeds*, ed. D. B. Harden (London, 1956), pp. 123–31.

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describe them in detail here. They include the early 5th-century sword from grave B 42, the remarkable tutulus-brooch, unique in this country, from grave B 106, which could be even earlier, the fragments of an open-work bronze mount and of an equal-armed brooch from cremation C 26, and the pair of early saucer-brooches with five running scrolls from grave B 60. All these indicate 5th-century burials, and the first two could well have taken place before 450.

What was not made clear in the report is that the early date suggested by these metal objects is strongly supported by the evidence of the pottery. The special interest of the Abingdon pots was not stressed in the publication and was, indeed, rendered impossible to appreciate because both the drawings and the photographs used to illustrate it were reduced to such a small scale that decorative detail was almost invisible. The main purpose of the present note is to republish, at a more acceptable scale, drawings of those pots which seem especially significant for dating the beginning of the cemetery and to indicate the grounds on which some of these pieces can be placed within a generation or two of the end of Roman rule in Britain.[32]

The first point which must strike any student of the Abingdon pots is the comparatively large number which bear decoration consisting of simple linear designs, emphasized, if at all, only by the use of dots or jabs. While stamped decoration is by no means absent, it is much less frequently used than would be expected in such a collection, appearing, indeed, on fewer than half the decorated urns which were capable of more or less complete restoration. Most of these stamped vessels, e.g. C 8, C 23, C 47, C 81, carry designs characteristic of 6th-century ceramic fashions in the upper Thames region, and need not concern this enquiry further, apart from indicating that cremation evidently persisted alongside inhumation at Abingdon at least until the last quarter of the 6th century. It may be added that several of the plain pots buried in the topsoil without grave-goods such as C 42 and C 49, are of types which make an early 7th-century date probable.

Among the earlier urns decorated with simple linear or line-and-dot patterns, special interest attaches to the group which displays linear arcading—or, in the convenient German terminology, *stehende Bogen*, 'standing arches'—as the sole or dominant element in the design. At least five of these were capable of restoration (FIG. 7), and it will be seen that two of them (C 64 and C 74) shows such schemes in their simplest linear form, in two others (C 5 and C 67) the designs are reinforced with dots or jabs, and in one (C 76) the *stehende Bogen* play a prominent part in a more complex linear design.

Now this type of decoration is characteristic of the late 4th and early 5th-century pottery of the Saxon homeland in the Elbe/Weser region of N. Germany. It is especially common on the urns of rounded form with short cylindrical or concave necks and well-moulded rims that belong to Plettke's type A 7 (a),[33] called by Tischler the 'Cuxhaven/Galgenberg Typ'[34] and datable for the most

[32] I am grateful to the authorities of the Ashmolean Museum for permission to use tracings of the original drawings for this purpose.

[33] A. Plettke, *Ursprung und Ausbreitung der Angeln und Sachsen* (Hannover, 1920), p. 46 and pl. 42.

[34] F. Tischler in *35 Bericht der Röm.-Germanischen Kommission* (1954), p. 48, fig. 8.
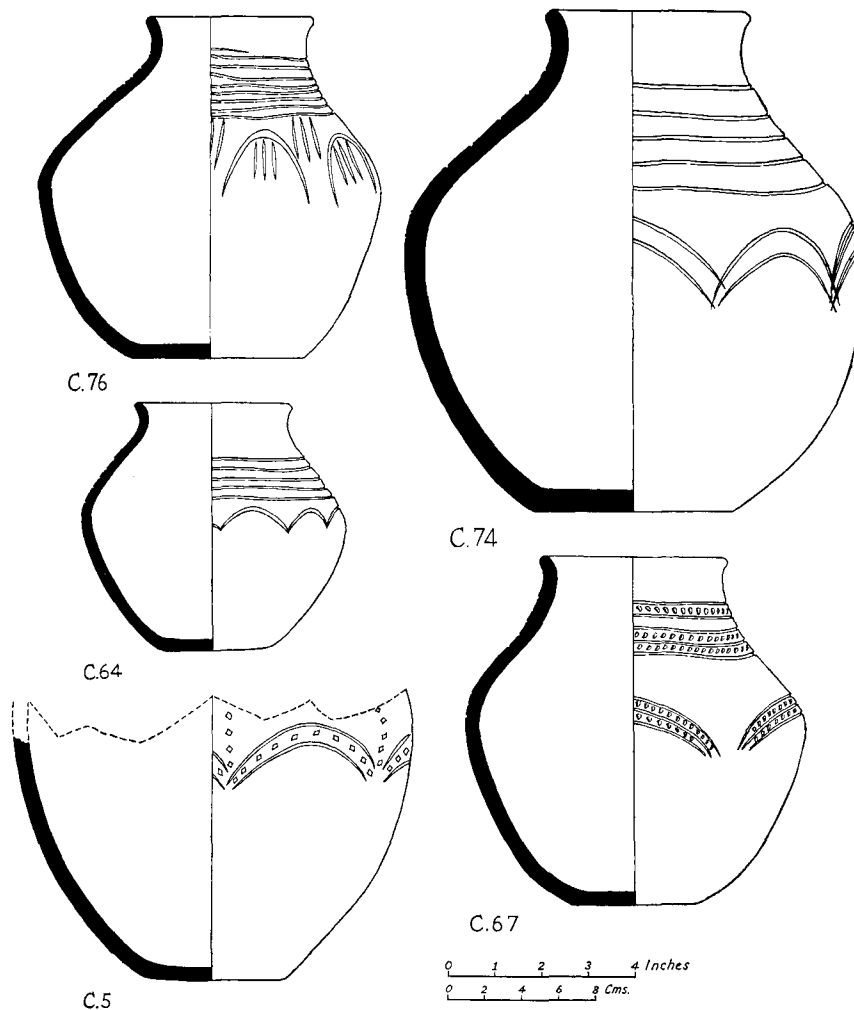
ABINGDON

FIG. 7

FIVE CREMATION-POTS FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT ABINGDON, BERKS.,
SHOWING *STEHENDE BOGEN* DECORATION (pp. 36 ff.)

part in the decades immediately before and after 400.[35] None of the Abingdon
pieces need be so early as this, for none quite shows the characteristic rounded
profile of the type, though c 74 closely approaches it. But this *stehende Bogen* linear
decoration belongs typologically to the phase preceding the elaborate Saxon
Buckelurnen of the 2nd half of the 5th century, and forms indeed one of the main

[35] E.g. K. Zimmer-Linnfeld *et al.*, *Westerwanna*, 1 (Hamburg, 1960) pl. 8, no. 45, with early 5th-century
equal-armed brooch; pl. 19, no. 148, with late 4th-century brooch; and pl. 157, no. 1239, with tubular
bronze fitting of 'Dorchester' type.

elements in the evolution of that style. The distribution of the simple *stehende Bogen* urns in England is concentrated in areas of primary settlement, E. Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk, with single outliers in Nottinghamshire, E. and W. Suffolk, Cambridge, Bedfordshire, Kent and Middlesex. The presence of several examples on a site so far to the west and south as Abingdon is thus remarkable, for its seems unlikely that in this form the style persisted anywhere after about 450.
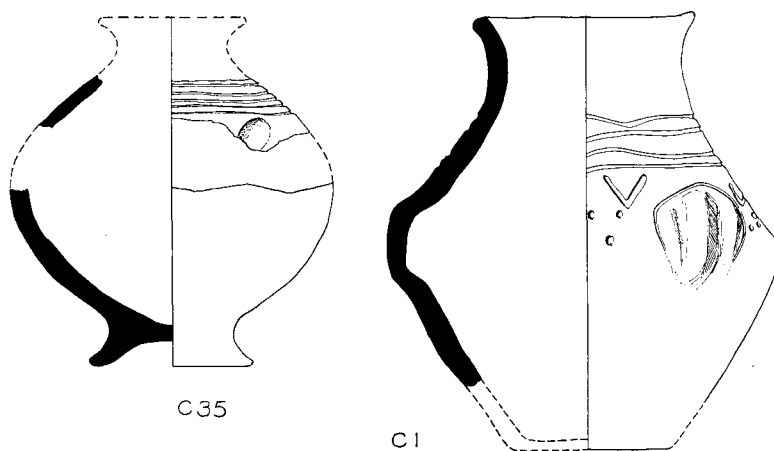

FIG. 8

TWO CREMATION-POTS OF EARLY DATE FROM THE ANGLO-SAXON
CEMETERY AT ABINGDON, BERKS. (p. 38). Sc. ¼

Some other pieces reinforce the argument for this early dating of the Abingdon cemetery. Pot c 35 (FIG. 8), though unfortunately incomplete, is a pedestal vase whose unusually elegant contour clearly owes something to recent memories of Roman wheel-made pottery. Pot c 1 (FIG. 8), with its bossed biconical form and tall flaring rim, is certainly a 5th-century piece, but its decoration is of particular interest for retaining the little triangular groups of large dots or dimples that derive from an earlier ceramic fashion of the continental iron age.[36] The fashion persisted in Britain as a characteristic feature of some groups of the so-called Romano-Saxon pottery of the 4th century.[37] Nor is c1 the only Abingdon pot to echo these earlier decorative fashions. The accessory vessel from inhumation B 24 (FIG. 9) has the characteristic chevron-and-dot pattern that also appears both on 4th-century Romano-Saxon wares of my group F,[38] and on continental pottery associated with Germanic *Kriegergrab* burials containing belt-fittings of

[36] See, e.g., *Probleme der Küstenforschung im südlichen Nordseegebiet*, VI (1957), pl. 16, nos. 2, 12, pl. 17, no. 5 (a), pl. 23, no. 2, from Berensen, Holssel and Dötlingen, or the examples from Westphalian sites illustrated by me in *Med. Archaeol.*, III (1959), 10, fig. 2.

[37] J. N. L. Myres, 'Romano-Saxon pottery' in *Dark-Age Britain: studies presented to E. T. Leeds*, ed. D. B. Harden (London, 1956), pp. 24, fig. 3 (where Abingdon c 1 is shown side by side with 4th-century Roman pieces), and 27, fig. 4.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 30, fig. 5, where the B 24 vessel is shown side by side both with Roman examples and with a large Anglo-Saxon urn from Cambridge that must certainly be no later than the early 5th century.

'Dorchester' type.[39] A somewhat confused but doubtless still early development of this chevron-and-dot ornament appears also on c 17 (FIG. 9).

There is, of course, no need to insist that this type of decoration must always be as early in England as the more obvious continental parallels suggest. Indeed, like *stehende Bogen* designs, chevron-and-dot ornament persisted into the middle years of the 5th century as one of the basic elements in the decoration of the earlier *Buckelurnen*. It so happens that Abingdon can produce a splendid example of this combination on c x (FIG. 9), the magnificent urn whose accidental discovery in a sewer-trench first led to the exploration of the cemetery. The elaborate decoration of this fine piece includes a flat collar of small *stehende Bogen* and another of straightforward chevron-and-dot, while the two main zones are largely composed of *stehende Bogen*, both linear and as bosses, embellished in various ways with lines and groups of dots. Such a piece stands typologically at the very start of the *Buckelurne* series, and is hardly likely to have been made much later than 450.

Of the other pots on FIG. 9, c 22 is also likely to be contemporary with the early days of the *Buckelurne* series. While its groups of diagnonal lines and its slightly raised plain collars do not bring it fully into that class, the diagonal decoration is clearly feeling its way towards the whirling effects produced on a well-defined group of *Buckelurnen* by massed diagonal bosses:[40] it is mounted, moreover, like many early examples of the type, on a well-moulded foot, which is here emphasized by four horizontal lines at the base of the body, an unusual feature evidently echoing a practice common on the pedestalled beakers and thumbpots of 4th-century Romano-British manufacture.[41] Pot c 38, on the other hand, is a good example of the 5th-century biconical type whose neatly executed line-and-dot decoration in two wide chevron zones resting on the carination is characteristic of the earlier products of that style.

There remains the little biconical accessory vessel from inhumation-grave B 111 with its raised slashed collar, faceted carination and rounded base. This is a well-known form originating in the *Schalenurne* culture of Holstein in the Roman iron age and spreading thence west and south into the N. German coastlands beyond the Elbe. It is common in the final phase of the main occupation at Feddersen Wierde, believed to have ended about 450. In this country it appears in the very early Saxon settlement-sites at Mucking on the N. side of the Thames estuary, which may well have been established before 400, in the earliest huts at West Stow Heath, Suffolk, and in a few inhumation-graves in the east midlands, Sussex, and elsewhere in the upper Thames basin. Its occurrence here at Abingdon is another sure sign that the site was in use around the middle of the 5th century at latest.

The upshot of this enquiry is, therefore, to show that the evidence of the pottery confirms the conclusion derived by its excavators from the metalwork and the prevalence of cremation. The Abingdon cemetery came into use unexpectedly

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[39] As, e.g., the pot from Liebenau, gr. 57/1.

[40] E.g., the urns from Perlberg-bei-Stade (*Antiq. J.*, xxxiv (1954), 205, fig. 2, no. 8), or Castle Acre and Rushford, Norfolk (*Norfolk Archaeol.*, xxvii, pls. 2, no. 7, and 8, no. 3).

[41] It occurs similarly on some Romano-Saxon types, e.g. *op. cit.* in note 37, p. 24, fig. 3, no. 3, from the Roman port at Caister-on-Sea, Norfolk.
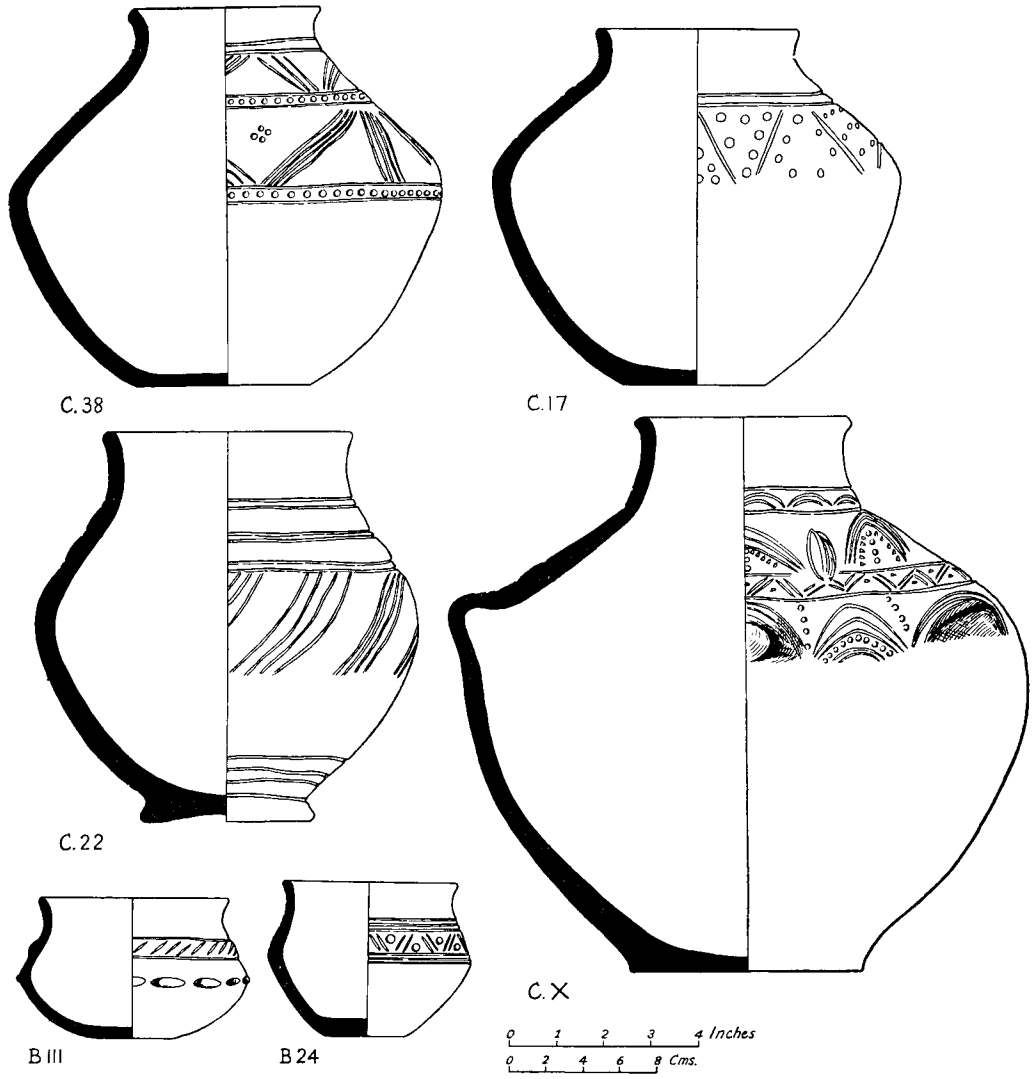
ABINGDON

FIG. 9

FOUR CREMATION-POTS AND TWO ACCESSORY VESSELS FROM GRAVES FROM THE
ANGLO-SAXON CEMETERY AT ABINGDON, BERKS. (p. 38 f.)

early for a site so far from the east coast and so centrally placed in the southern midlands. It cannot in fact be doubted that Saxon folk were established here, in whatever capacity, within a generation or so of the breakdown of Roman rule in Britain and very possibly before the final extinction of Romano-British life on the site of the later abbey and in the centre of the present town. This is not the place to consider the implications of this for the general history of the transition from Roman Britain to Saxon England, though it is not without interest to note how closely the evidence for a possible overlap at Abingdon seems to parallel that from the burials of Germanic *laeti*[42] at Dorchester and from other neighbouring sites in the upper Thames area, such as Frilford and Long Wittenham. But for the early history of Abingdon itself the implications are quite clear. A Saxon community was settled here early enough to make some continuity of tradition possible from Romano-British times, and it continued in existence long enough for its presence to be remembered by those who established the 7th-century monastery. The last generation of its pagan people could well have transmitted to the first monks not only its original name, *Seuekesham*, but perhaps even some remote and misty memories of their Christian predecessors, for whose protection it may perhaps have been originally established in the last days of Roman Britain.

[42] *Oxoniensia*, xvii/xviii (1953), 63–76.

III. BUILDINGS OF THE MONASTERIES AT ABINGDON FROM THE LATE SEVENTH CENTURY TO 1538

By GABRIELLE LAMBRICK

My aim in this section is to collect together the widely-scattered references in documentary sources to Abingdon Abbey buildings of all periods, from the time the monastery was first founded *c.* 675 until its dissolution in 1538. The conjectural plan (FIG. 10) purports to indicate the layout of the buildings as they *may* have stood in 1538. It embodies a great deal of guess-work which, though it may be informed in that it is founded on the plan of the 1922 excavations (FIG. 12) and on what documentary evidence is available, may yet prove to be misleading.[43]
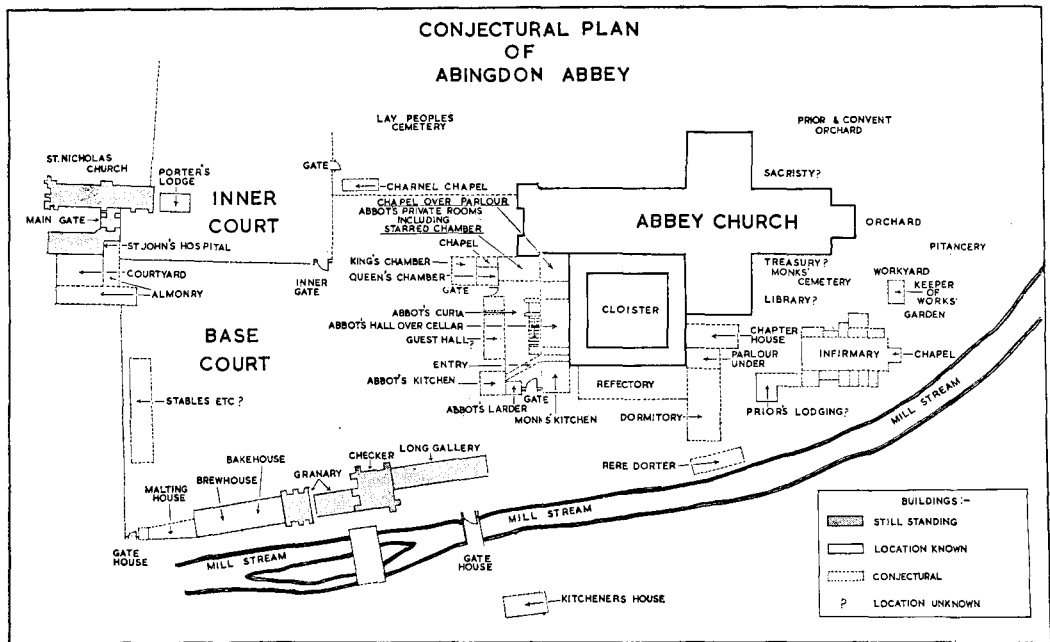

FIG. 10

CONJECTURAL PLAN OF THE PRECINCT OF ABINGDON ABBEY, BERKS., AS IT MAY HAVE STOOD AT THE TIME OF THE DISSOLUTION IN 1538. Sc. 1 in. = *c.* 225 ft. (p. 42)

A. THE FIRST SAXON MONASTERY

1. The first monastery at Abingdon was founded by Hean *c.* 675. There is a description of it in B.M. Cotton Vitellius A xiii, a manuscript which is considered

unreliable. historically; however, owing to the comparatively full and circumstantial details which it gives, both of the church and of the arrangement of the buildings within the precinct, it was regarded by A. W. Clapham as providing a guide for the style and layout of Hean's monastery. If the description can, in fact, be relied upon, it supplies the modern archaeologist with some very useful pieces of information; confirmation of its accuracy, if such proved to be the result of excavation, would be valuable to historians. The paragraph in question reads as follows:

'Quomodo constructum est primo Monasterium Abbendoniae.

Monasterium Abbendoniae, quod construxit Heane primus abbas ejusdem loci, tale erat:

Habebat in longitudine c. et xx. pedes, et erat rotundum, tam in parte occidentali quam in parte orientali. Fundatum erat hoc monasterium in loco ubi nunc est cellarium monachorum, ita quod altare stetit ubi nunc est lavatorium. In circuitu hujus monasterii erant habitacula xij. et totidem capellae et in habitaculis xij. monachi ibidem manducantes et bibentes et dormientes; nec habebant clausam sicut nunc habent, sed erant circumdati muro alto qui erat eis pro claustro . . . Habebant juxta portam domum pro locutorio . . . Diebus Dominicis et praecipuis festivitatibus simul conveniebant, et in ecclesia Missam celebrabant, et simul manducabant.'

No women were allowed in the precinct ('infra terminum illum').[44]

In discussing this description Clapham drew particular attention to the double apse of the church, since a date for it of *c.* 680 would make it roughly a century earlier than the earliest instance, known to him in 1930, of the double apse in Germany. The only example preceding this alleged one at Abingdon that he could suggest was that of a church in Orléansville (Algeria) built in 324, to which a W. apse was added in 473 to serve as a burial chapel.[45] He also pointed out the nature of the monastic buildings in this 7th-century monastery—the enclosure of the precinct within a wall (paralleled at Iona by a bank and at Oundle by a thorn hedge), and the monks' cells grouped round the church, each with its own oratory attached. Foundations of buildings excavated at the 7th-century monastery at Whitby seemed to him and his contemporaries to indicate similar grouping of individual cells there. More recently, work on the near-island site at Tintagel has disclosed another example of groups of thin-walled monastic cells, disposed about the terrace-like areas within the almost inaccessible peninsula. But of these two, Whitby was Northumbrian-Celtic by origin, and Tintagel Cornish-Celtic; and it is a far cry from them to the Wessex foundation at Abingdon.[46]

2. A refectory is mentioned twice in accounts of miracles worked by a holy image there.[47]

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[44] *C.M.A.*, II, 272–3. In this quotation 'nunc' refers to some date in the 1st half of the 13th century.

[45] A. W. Clapham, *English Romanesque Architecture before the Conquest* (Oxford, 1930), p. 36.

[46] *Ibid.*, 51, 53; C. A. Ralegh Radford, 'The Celtic monastery in Britain', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, CXI (1962), 1–21. For the latest interpretation of the Whitby evidence see note 162.

[47] *C.M.A.*, I, 48, 49; 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 728.

3. Burials said to have taken place at this monastery:

a. The *regulus* Cissa, who was believed to have granted the land for his nephew Hean to build the monastery.

b. A defective passage in B.M. Cotton Vitellius A xiii records the burial in the church of Abingdon of either Coenwulf, king of Mercia (d. 821), or Rethun, abbot of Abingdon (d., when bp. of Leicester, in 839/40).

c. Coenwulf's sisters made a benefaction to the monks of St. Mary at Abingdon, 'ubi corpora nostra temporalem habebunt sepulturam . . .'.[48]

4. By the mid 10th century the monastery was in a much reduced state, and Vitellius A xiii says that when Ethelwold went to Abingdon to refound the monastery *c.* 954, although the monks' cells and chapels were still intact, the church had been destroyed by the Danes.[49]

B. ETHELWOLD'S CHURCH AND THE LATE SAXON MONASTERY

All documentary sources seem to be agreed that the community of the early Saxon monastery at Abingdon had almost disappeared and that the fabric was in very poor condition by the mid 10th century: '. . . erat tunc destitutum et neglectum, vilibus aedificiis consistens . . .' is a typical observation on the situation when Ethelwold arrived in Abingdon about 954.[50] We have to allow for the tendency of medieval chroniclers in general to exaggerate the amount of destruction wrought by the Danes, and for the natural desire of Abingdon chroniclers in particular to impress upon their readers the magnitude of the task undertaken by the great Ethelwold when he was made responsible by King Edred for refounding the monastery. Even so, the picture provided by Aelfric, in his near-contemporary *Life* of St. Ethelwold, of the king acting as architectural surveyor at Abingdon—giving instructions how the walls should be built and himself measuring the foundations—tends to confirm a belief that Ethelwold had to make a fresh start.[51] It was surely in the business of designing and constructing new buildings, rather than of rebuilding and enlarging what remained of the old ones, that the king took so personal an interest.

i. ETHELWOLD'S CHURCH

a. Again it is the author of Vitellius A xiii who supplies a rudimentary architectural description of the church:

'Cancellus rotundus erat; ecclesia et rotunda, duplicem habens longitudinem quam cancellus; turris quoque rotunda erat.'[52]

This is ambiguous because the exact meaning of the adjective 'rotundus' is not

[48] *C.M.A.*, I, 271; II, 274–5; I, 19.

[49] *Ibid.*, II, 277.

[50] The quotation is from the printed version of Aelfric's 'Vita Sancti Aethelwoldi', *C.M.A.*, II, 257.

[51] *Ibid.*, II, 258: 'Venit ergo rex quodam die ad monasterium, ut aedificiorum structuram per seipsum ordinaret; mensusque est omnia fundamenta monasterii propria manu quemadmodum muros erigere decreverat'.

[52] *C.M.A.*, II, 277–8.

clear; does it mean circular, or round-ended? If the latter, it is reminiscent of the same author's description of Hean's church (A, 1, p. 42 f.); without more knowledge of the evidence (documentary or visual) on which the statements of Vitellius A xiii are based, we are bound to question whether there is not in that 13th-century manuscript some confusion with regard to old ecclesiastical buildings on the Abingdon Abbey site, and the periods to which they belonged.

b. The abbey church, by 977, had a porticus-chapel on the north (see iv, *b*, p. 46) and by the late 11th century it had another on the east (see *c*, below). It would be surprising if there had not been a third on the south.

c. Part of this church, called by the Norman monks the 'old' church, collapsed in 1091. Abbot Rainald (1084–96) planned to enlarge the oratorium of the old church; the new work was to adjoin the old tower 'on the east', where an attached porticus-chapel had been pulled down. The builders were careless, and one night, as the monks were making their way to the church for a service, the whole tower collapsed. The monks took refuge in the chapter-house, which was next ('proximum') to the tower.[53] This suggests that the church had a central tower with a porticus-chapel forming the E. end of the church. The chapter-house was perhaps immediately south of the central tower. Clapham does not seem to have had this evidence before him when discussing the conjectural architecture of Ethelwold's church.[54]

d. As regards the location of Ethelwold's abbey church within the precinct, it seems to have been assumed at the time of the 1922 excavations that it was on exactly the same site as the Norman church; but Leland said that it was farther to the north 'where now the orchard is', that is, a little to the north-east of the Norman abbey church. Browne Willis and Dugdale support Leland, but it is doubtful whether they had any independent source of information.

ii. CLAUSTRAL BUILDINGS

a. There are two mentions of the *refectory* in Ethelwold's time. The *cloister* and *dormitory* would have dated from the same period. The circumstances of the story of Aethelstan plunging his hand into the boiling cooking-pot suggest that there was a *kitchen*. In addition to the reference to the *chapter-house* when the tower fell down (i, *c*, above), there is a record of Robert d'Oilly's burial there in 1091.[55]

In 1100 the cloister, chapter-house and dormitory were pulled down, so that the monks had to sleep in the church and hold their chapters there, 'ita ut monachi in monasterio jacerent, et capitulum ibidem tenerent'. Abbot Faritius (1100–17), who succeeded after a four-year vacancy, undertook the rebuilding from the foundations of almost all the 'fratrum habitacula'. It is worth noting that there must have been at Abingdon an exceptionally early chapter-house of the late Saxon period.[56]

Since the rebuilding and enlargement of the abbey church had begun before

53 *Ibid.*, II, 23–4. See C, i, 7, p. 48, for a reference to St. Ethelwold's tower.
54 Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 45, pp. 148, 156.
55 J. Leland, *Itinerary in England*, ed. L. Toulmin Smith (London, 1910), V, 75–6.
56 *C.M.A.*, II, 279; II, 259 (Vita Sancti Aethelwoldi); II, 15.

1100, the church in which the monks slept and held their chapters when their claustral buildings had been demolished was probably the choir of the new Norman church. This should be borne in mind when considering the location of the late Saxon and Norman churches in relation to each other (see also i, *d*, p. 45).

b. The *double mill* below the *curia*, and the *mill-stream* were constructed in Ethelwold's time (see also vi, p. 47).[57]

iii. CRAFTSMANSHIP

Ethelwold is said to have made with his own hands a pair of organs and two bells. It is not clear whether he and his monks themselves made gold and silver ornaments also: Ethelwold may have had them made elsewhere. Cloth weaving was carried on in his time. Abbot Sparhavoc (*c.* 1047–*c.* 1050) was a king's gold-smith: 'mirabilis fuit in omne opere et sculptura auri et argenti'.[58]

iv. BURIALS

a. ? K. Edgar (d. 975). 'Osgar monachus erat Praefectus, in cujus tempore Rex Pacificus Edgarus traditur sepulturae.'[59]

b. Bp. Sideman of Crediton in 977: 'at the north side in St. Paul's chapel', 'in porticu Sancti Pauli apostoli'.[60]

c. Bp. Aelfstan of Ramsbury, d. 981.[60]

d. Edwin the ealdorman of Sussex, d. 982.[60]

e. Aelfric, archbp. of Canterbury, d. 1005: 'sepultus est Abbandoniea unde monachus exstiterat'.[61]

f. Bp. Siward, abbot of Abingdon and suffragan bishop of Canterbury, d. 1048.[62]

g. Bp. Ethelwin of Durham, d. 1071. He was imprisoned at Abingdon after he had been deprived.[63]

h. Robert d'Oilly, and his wife by his side. Robert d. Sept. 1091 and was buried on the N. side of the chapter-house.[64]

v. RELICS, DEDICATIONS, ETC.

a. Edward the Martyr ?. 'Temporibus etiam hujus regis (sc. Ethelred) reliquiae Sancti Aedwardi regis et martyris sunt Abbendone delatae.'[65]

b. St. Vincent. Monks of Abingdon stole the relics of St. Vincent and the head of St. Apollinaris from monks of Glastonbury, it was said, when the latter were staying overnight at Abingdon. K. Cnut gave Abingdon a magnificent

[57] *Ibid.*, II, 285 and 45.

[58] *Ibid.*, I, 344–5, 462–3; II, 278, 281.

[59] B. M. Cotton Julius c vii, fo. 305.

[60] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, sub annis; C.M.A.*, I, 356.

[61] Wharton, *op. cit.* in note 15, I, 166, *sub anno* 1006.

[62] *C.M.A.*, I, 461.

[63] Bodl. MS. Gough Berks. 6, fo. 236.

[64] *C.M.A.*, II, 15, 284.

[65] *C.M.A.*, I, 442, from MS. Cotton Claudius c ix, which is considered the most reliable of the *Chronicon* manuscripts.

reliquary for the relics of St. Vincent. This was sold by Abbot Ingulf in the mid 11th century to raise money for the poor in time of famine.[66]

c. The altar of St. Mary—i.e. the high altar—was dedicated when Dunstan was archbishop and Ethelwold bishop. Lambeth MS. 42 gives the date as v.kal. jan. 963.[67]

d. The N. porticus-chapel was dedicated to St. Paul (see iv, b, p. 46).

vi. THE MILL-STREAM AND THE RIVER AT ABINGDON

The *mill-stream* now rejoins the River Thames at Abingdon bridge. If, as was alleged, Ethelwold's monks had to dig near St. Helen's Church while they were making the mill-stream,[68] it must, in those days, have debouched into the river lower down; this would have been so if the course of the river then lay only on the farther (S.) side of the islands near the town ford (now the bridge), as it might have done before the mid 11th century, when the monks made a '*new channel*' for the River Thames at Abingdon because the old one was silted up. It is not clear, from the two differing accounts, exactly where the operation took place and whether it involved more than widening and deepening an existing channel.[69]

Both these factors may be important in relation to the water-table and building levels on the abbey site (FIG. 5).

C. THE BUILDINGS FROM NORMAN TIMES ONWARDS

i. THE ABBEY CHURCH

1. The building of the E. end of the new abbey church was begun in Abbot Rainald's time (1084–96), after the tower of Ethelwold's church had fallen (see B, i, c, p. 45). The altar of St. Peter and St. Paul was dedicated before Rainald's death.[70] There is no direct mention of the dedication of the church itself, but many Abingdon documents prove that it was still to St. Mary.

2. The 'sanctuarium oratorii' was enlarged by Abbot Faritius (1100–17). He built the nave of the church, two towers, and the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, and 'the tower up to the windows'. Leland, who had seen the church before it was finally pulled down, says that Faritius made the E. end of the church and 'the transepte' and adorned it with small marble pillars.[71]

3. Abbot Vincent (1121–30) built the great tower, which may have been the central bell-tower, and he also gave two bells.[72]

[66] Trin. Coll., Cambridge, MS. 993, fo. 8; *C.M.A.*, I, 433–4, 443; II, 291. No mention is made here of a chapel dedicated to St. Vincent, because I agree with Mrs. M. D. Lobel's interpretation of the record (*C.M.A.*, I, 92), i.e. that the chapel in question was built at Culham (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, VII (1962), 35). Culham Church belonged to Abingdon Abbey from an early, pre-conquest, date and the place constituted what was virtually a 'peculiar' of Abingdon Abbey. But see note 157 for Mr. Biddle's view.

[67] *C.M.A.*, II, 13; Wharton, *op. cit.* in note 15, I, 166.

[68] *C.M.A.*, II, 270, 278–9.

[69] *Ibid.*, I, 480–1; II, 282.

[70] *C.M.A.*, II, 29.

[71] *C.M.A.*, II, 45, 150, 286; Leland, *op. cit.* in note 55, v, 76.

[72] *C.M.A.*, II, 171.

4. In the late 12th century, in addition to the altar of SS. Peter and Paul, and the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene, there were also in the church the chapels of St. Vincent and St. Katherine, and altars dedicated to the Holy Trinity and the Apostles. There was a choir ambulatory ('. . . circumcunque chori . . .', '. . . in circuitu chori . . .') and at least three steps, probably more, at the entrance to the choir. A rood-screen is indicated in the use of the phrase 'ante crucem'.[73]

5. Abbot Hugh (1189–1221) planned extensive additions to the church, including transepts, and started building the 'new work'. He was buried in the N. part of the new building. He also built the campanile 'to the east', perhaps a separate tower standing free of the church. Ten cart-loads of lead for roofing the 'new work' was the price of a lease granted at this time.[74]

6. 1238. Oaks from Windsor Forest were used to make choir stalls.[75]

7. The church was (re)dedicated 'decimo kalend. novembris die dominice ab anno centesimo quadragesimo nono quo turris Sancti Adelwoldi cecidit . . .', i.e. 23 October 1239.[76]

8. Abbot John Blosmeville (1241–56) built the chapel(s) of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary at the E. end of the church (see also ii, 5, p. 50). He continued with the building of N. and S. aisles according to Abbot Hugh's plan, but it is not clear just what this amounted to: 'Fundamentum etiam crucis ecclesie, videlicet duas alas ex parte septentrionali et australi inchoavit, et usque ad supremas fenesstras parietes exaltavit; quas alas secundum formam operis Hugonis abbatis proposuit consummasse.'[77]

9. In 1259 benefactions were made for building the 'new work' in the church.[78]

10. 1265. The SW. tower of the church was struck by lightning and the building was set on fire.[79]

11. In the 14th and 15th centuries there were the following additions and alterations:

About 1300–15. A new aisle was built. This is mentioned about 1368, in an entirely different context, as having happened fifty years earlier.

1334. 50 marks 'ad novum opus . . .'

1375/6. The S. part of church was reroofed. Extensive new work on which William Wynford, the well-known master mason, and his assistant William Stevens were engaged, probably included additions to the church.

1361–99. During Abbot Peter Hanney's rule the amount of property recovered and newly acquired in aid of 'new work' was considerable; this also suggests extensive work on the church.

73 *Ibid.*, II, 318, 336, 375, 378, 382.

74 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, pp. 729, 730; *Abingdon Chronicle, being excerpts from Cambridge University Library MS. Dd.* 2.5, ed. J. O. Halliwell (Berks. Ashmolean Soc., 1844), p. 1; Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 79.

75 *Cal. Close Rolls*, 1237–42, p. 84.

76 Brian Twyne's notes, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 255, fo. 54ᵛ, quoting an unknown chronicle source.

77 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 731; Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 74.

78 Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 115ᵛ. Reference to this Abingdon Abbey cartulary in the Chatsworth Library is made by kind permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement.

79 *V.C.H. Berks.*, II (1907), 54, citing *Annales Waverleia*.

1412/13. 'New work' took place on the N. part of the nave.

1414/15. Payments were made to convent treasurers for new work. The treasurers were by now responsible for financing all major building work, including that for the abbey church.

1420/21. Repairs took place in the church. Freestone from Taynton was used for the S. aisle. Lead was purchased for an aisle.

1436/7. 'New work' took place on the church.[80]

12. For William of Worcester's 15th-century account of the church and its measurements, see Appendix I, p. 68.

13. Post-dissolution evidence:

a. Leland's statement that the tower in the middle of the church, all the body of the church, and the towers at the W. end, were made by four 15th-century abbots (Salford, 1427-8; Hamme, 1428-35; Asshenden, 1436-68; Sante, 1468-96), suggests that much of the church had finally been rebuilt in 15th-century style. Browne Willis thought, from Leland's description, that it must have looked like Wells Cathedral.[81]

b. John Stevenson, a late 18th-century Abingdon schoolmaster, described the buildings within the precinct still standing in his day; and though nothing remained of the body of the church, there was a building which had been converted into a pigeon-house, with the lower floor used for gardeners' tools. This he took to be:

> '... part of one of the west towers, from a door at the east into the loft which corresponds with many of our belfreys in parish churches, and in the southern tower probably the bells hung. The roof of the under part is arched and ribbed with stone. To the north and east it appears to have been connected with other buildings. There is an arched entrance to the west into the arched part below ...'[82]

ii. ALTARS AND CHAPELS

Some of these may not have been, some definitely were not, in the abbey church.

1. For the altars of SS. Peter and Paul, the Holy Trinity, and the Apostles; and the chapels of St. Vincent, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Katherine, see i, 4, p. 48. All these were in the church.

2. Abbot Vincent (1121–30) founded the hospital of St. John (vii, 1, p. 55) on the W. perimeter of the precinct; the E. end of the chapel was inside the precinct.

3. Abbot Ingulf (1130–58)

'fecit et cameram abbatis super cellarium, et capellam sancti Suithuni, et

[80] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fos. 176 and 82; *Accounts of the Obedientiars of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. R. E. G. Kirk (Camden Soc., 1892), pp. 27–8, 75, 80, 89, 90, 113 (hereafter referred to as *O.A.*). For the convent treasurers' functions see my 'Abingdon Abbey administration', *J. Eccles. History*, xvii, 2 (October, 1966), 177–8.

[81] Leland, *op. cit.* in note 55, i, 121; Browne Willis, *Mitred Abbeys* (1718), i, 2.

[82] Bodl. MS. Gough Berks. 7.

infirmaria(m), capellam sancti Adelvvoldi, et cameram prioris, et capellam sancti Michaelis.'

The way in which this passage is expressed suggests that each chapel may have been associated with the building mentioned immediately before it; this is partially confirmed by the mention, in 1436, of the chapel of St. Ethelwold in the infirmary of the monastery.[83]

4. The chapel of the Holy Trinity and St. Mary was built *c.* 1250 at the E. end of the church (see i, 8, p. 48). The question arises whether there were two chapels, the lady chapel forming the undercroft of the Trinity chapel, with the Trinity warden looking after both chapels; there is a hint of such combined duties in the 'obit' of Abbot William Newbury, who had himself been Trinity warden. In 1448/9 the Trinity warden was providing wax from his stock to each chapel separately; and the pitancery wall (beyond the E. end of the church) was said to be 'contra Trinitatem', as though only the Trinity chapel was visible from there and the lady chapel hidden from view, being below, or partly below, the external ground level. One or two burials in the lady chapel are on record, but nothing of this kind for the Trinity chapel.[84]

5. The chapel of the Holy Cross, St. Edmund (of Abingdon), and St. Guthlac was built by Abbot John Blosmeville, also about 1250. Holy Cross dedications were important in Abingdon; there is reason to believe the other dedications would have been Abbot John's personal preferences. The chapel was built in, or more probably at the entrance to, the lay people's cemetery in the abbey precinct. Later it was known as the chapel of St. Edmund's Mother because her relics were translated there from St. Nicholas's Church.[85] It was probably derelict by 1479, but the charnel chapel, still standing at the dissolution, may have taken its place on the same site. A complicated history of endowments attaches to both of these two chapels, and also to the church of St. Nicholas, tending to link all of them together. St. Nicholas's Church stands at the abbey gateway, with its E. end within the confines of the old abbey precinct; it was founded *c.* 1170. Can it have been the successor of an even earlier cemetery chapel?

6. An endowment was made in 1309 for mass to be celebrated daily at the altar of St. Thomas the Martyr in the abbey church. A chapel of the same dedication is mentioned in 1492.[86]

7. 1396/7. There were images of St. Mary at the door (N. door?) of the church and in the N. aisle.

8. 1396/7. The sacrist accounts for oblations at the Black Cross, and at the new image of the Crucifix in the N. part of the church.[87]

[83] *C.M.A.*, II, 291; A. E. Preston, 'Notes on abbots', Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/5, file 7. (The Preston 'notes' at the Berks. Record Office have proved a most useful quarry for material which I might otherwise have overlooked.)

[84] Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 115ᵛ; *O.A.*, pp. 126 and 3.

[85] 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 731; Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 74; A. E. Preston, *St. Nicholas, Abingdon, etc.* (Oxford Historical Soc., XCIX, 1931), pp. 11–12.

[86] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 143ᵛ; *Cal. Patent Rolls*, 1485–94, p. 403.

[87] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, p. 60 (for both 7 and 8).

9. 1533. John Audlett, late abbey steward, was to be buried in a new chapel of Our Lady of Pity.[88]

10. When the abbey church was pulled down after the dissolution Sir Adrian Fortescue procured some blocks of marble on which were the images of St. Peter and St. Paul.[89]

iii. CLAUSTRAL BUILDINGS

1. Faritius built or rebuilt the monks' quarters from the foundations (see B, ii, *a*, p. 45), namely, the cloister, dormitory, refectory, parlour (on east, next to the chapter-house), lavatorium, cellar, monks' kitchen and chapter-house.[90] There were two steps between the lower and higher levels of the *chapter-house*. The *cellarium* probably adjoined the W. cloister walk, running S. from the W. locutorium which was under the abbot's chapel (see iv, 1, below). This must be assumed to be the monks' cellar—i.e. the *cellarium monachorum* of which the early 13th-century monk wrote when describing the site of the first Saxon church built by Hean *c.* 675 (A, 1, p. 43). A lavatorium of the very early 12th century would normally have been built on the SW. of the cloister, probably in the S. walk against the wall of the refectory. Now, in the 13th century Hean's church was said to have been built in the place 'ubi nunc est cellarium monachorum' and in such a way that the altar stood 'ubi nunc est lavatorium'. Thus it would be justifiable to take as a working hypothesis that the foundations of Hean's church are to be located somewhere near the SW. corner of the Norman cloister, at a lower level.

2. Additions, alterations and repairs in the 14th and 15th centuries:

1308. A lavatorium was constructed by the abbey church.

1375/6. Windows were made above the chapter-house.

1383/4. The cloister windows were glazed and money spent on cloister seats. Steps were made to the dormitory and the door repaired (10s. worth of stone rag was used for steps, at 3d. a foot). Work was done on the door of the locutorium.

1420/21. Repairs took place to lead-work in the cloister.[91]

iv. THE ABBOT'S LODGING

1. Faritius (1100–1117) built the *abbot's chamber* and his *chapel* with a *locutorium* under it, on the west of the cloister. The 'camera ipsius abbatis' is first mentioned in 1106.[92]

2. Ingulf (1130–58) built another *abbot's chamber* over a *cellarium*.[93]

3. By the late 12th century one of these chambers—probably the one built by Faritius on the west of the cloister—seems to have become a *hall*. Ale obtained 'de cellario aulae' at this period means (from the context) ale from the monks' cellar[94]

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[88] John Audlett's Will, P.C.C. 3 Dyngeley.

[89] R. J. Stonor, *Stonor* (Newport, Mon., 1951), p. 213.

[90] *C.M.A.*, II, 45, 49, 150, 286.

[91] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, pp. 27, 46, 47, 48, 49, 89.

[92] *C.M.A.*, II, 101, 150.

[93] *Ibid.*, II, 291.

[94] *Ibid.*, II, 237–8.

(see iii, 1, p. 51). The plan of the abbot's lodging at this time might have been thus:

In the angle of the S. wall of the nave of the church and the W. side of the cloister, a ground-level locutorium with abbot's chapel over it. Running south from these the monks' cellarage and above it the abbot's great chamber (early 12th-century), later converted into a hall. Running west from the parlour and chapel a slightly later range consisting of abbot's cellarage with abbot's chamber above, possibly with direct access to another private chapel at the SW. end of the church. These two ranges would have provided two sides of a courtyard; and the abbot's lodging may have been in a quadrangular enclosure quite early, for there is a late 12th-century reference to a certain Walter who had the custody of the gate 'ante cameram abbatis',[95] which suggests a special gate at the entrance to some special enclosure or courtyard.

4. 1245. There were *guest chambers* in the *abbot's court*:
'Abbates et priores . . . per disposicionem abbatis in cameris sue curie admittantur . . .'[96]

5. 1327. The abbot's *treasury* contained muniments which were burnt in his *curia* during the riots of that year.[97]

6. 1389. There was a gateway, with a chamber over it, between the monks' kitchen (SW. of cloister) and the abbot's *larder*. Thus the abbot's larder (and other associated buildings?) would seem to have been on the S. side of his courtyard. His *bakehouse* is mentioned 1414/15 and 1436/7.[98] (For the abbot's *kitchen*, see 7, p. 53.)

7. In 1554 Roger Amyce surveyed what was then left of the abbey buildings. It is very doubtful whether the whole of the abbot's complex of buildings was still standing, and it is difficult to determine the relationship of the component parts to each other from Amyce's description first of the buildings themselves and then of those from which lead was valued separately. He says that the abbot's lodgings then contained:

'A fair hall, botry, pantry, kechyn, two fair large chambers called the king's and queen's chambers, a chapel with divers other chambers and houses of office to the same belonging, well built of free stone and some of them covered with lead, others with slate.'

In his report on the lead Amyce enumerates the porch entering the stairs going up to the hall, the 'leneto' at the top of the same stairs, the great hall with the louver, the king's chapel, a 'leneto' at the corner of the hall, the entry leading from the hall to the kitchen, the louver of the kitchen, 'the abbots' lodging, the sterchamber and the black stole'.

The question of the hall or halls is discussed in v, p. 53 f. As for the rest, there still remained, evidently, at least part of the *state apartments* (king's and queen's

95 Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 93ᵛ.
96 Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 9.
97 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 733.
98 Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 176ᵛ; *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, pp. 79, 111.

chambers, king's chapel); the *abbot's private apartments* ('abbot's lodging'), perhaps including a room with a ceiling painted with stars (the *'sterchamber'*); the *abbot's kitchen* with central fireplace and louver; and the *'black stole'* of which the purpose is unknown:[98a] but compare Westminster Abbey, where there was a blackstole and a blackstole tower, which seem to have been connected with the cellarer's department. At Abingdon administrative arrangements were abnormal to the extent that a curtar fulfilled the functions of cellarer, but instead of being a convent official he was a member of the abbot's household, and his department may well have been, in part at least, contiguous to, or included in, the abbot's *curia*.

There is also a post-dissolution mention of a chamber 'next the porch', presumably of the hall.[99]

V. HALLS

As there is never mention of more than one hall at a time, in any one context, it is difficult to decide how many halls there were at Abingdon (even excluding those obviously in the 'private' apartments of the obedientiaries), or where they were situated.

1. Abbot Vincent (1121–30) built the 'aula hospitum' which at that period, as Professor Knowles suggests, must have been part of the almonry (vii, 2, p. 55). Compare the 'aula nova' of Christ Church, Canterbury, with its Norman staircase.

2. There are many references to lay servants of the abbey receiving part of their pay in the form of meals 'in aula'. Was this the abbot's hall? There are also references to servants of obedientiaries other than the almoner receiving meals in the almonry. Were all lay servants' meals served in the almonry hall?

3. In about 1245 a man was imprisoned by the abbot under the 'aula hospitum'.[100] Was this a guest-hall in the abbot's *curia*? If so, was it the same as the *aula abbatis* first mentioned in 1278 and frequently thereafter?[101] And the same as the late 12th-century hall over the monks' cellar (see iv, 3, p. 51 f.)? And the same as Amyce's hall with the stairs going up to it? And his 'great hall' with the louver (see iv, 7, p. 52)? None of this is impossible. A first-floor hall could have a central hearth, with louver above, if the hearth was supported on a pillar of the undercroft (cf. Castle Acre Priory). Even assuming there was a permanent prison under the hall, it could have been in one bay of the undercroft of a first-floor hall (cf. Doune Castle); or it could have been a sub-vault below the undercroft, with the cellarage occupying the whole of the undercroft. Alternatively the prison might have been under the almonry hall. Or again, there may have been two halls forming part of the abbot's curia in the 13th century, the old 12th-century hall over the monks' cellarage on the east, and a later one facing it on the west, the

[98a] Perhaps it was a dark garderobe, i.e. an 'unlit stool'.

[99] Roger Amyce, *Survey of Abingdon, 1554*, P.R.O., L.R.2/189, fos. 211ᵛ, 215 (hereafter cited as 'Amyce'); Preston notes, Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/36, citing a privately-owned Abingdon deed of 1555. For Abingdon Abbey administration in relation to the buildings, see my *Business Affairs at Abingdon Abbey* (The Friends of Abingdon, 1966).

[100] Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 8.   [101] *Ibid.*, fo. 5.

latter having under it, either as an undercroft or subterraneously, some place which could be used as a prison.

4. Evidence from the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries shows that the *abbot's hall* was used by guests, the abbot's household, pensioners, corrodians, the abbot's squires, and the servants of such people, and that they were supplied from the abbot's *buttery*.[102] On the other hand there is a passage in the late 12th-century records which implies that guests' servants at that time were housed in the almonry or St. John's hospital, and that if their masters wished to speak to them, they had to be summoned from the 'hospital court' to attend in the parlour:

> 'Si hospes cum famulis suis infra postas [*sic*] curiae hospitalis loqui voluerit, hostilarius per custodem loquutorii eos mandabit'.[103]

vi. THE INFIRMARY AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS

It is known from post-dissolution records that the *infirmary* stood to the SE. of the church, in the usual relationship with other buildings for a Benedictine monastery.

1. The 'domus infirmorum' is mentioned in Faritius's time (1100–17) and its chapel in Ingulf's time (1130–58). (With regard to the dedication of the chapel to St. Ethelwold, see ii, 3, p. 50.) The *infirmary refectory* is mentioned in the late 12th century.[104]

2. There seems to have been some sort of a passage-way between the monks' dormitory and the infirmary:

> 'In nocturna monachorum depositione secretarius inveniet ab ostio dormitorii usque ad infirmitorium, hac et illac candelas sufficientes.'

The passage-way to the infirmary was probably either a 'slype' immediately north of the chapter-house (between it and the S. transept) or a passage immediately south of it, underneath the dormitory; continuing eastwards it might have formed part of an infirmary cloister. The *monks' cemetery* was probably to the north of this passage-way.[105]

3. The *misericord* is not mentioned as a building until 1391/2, and then without indication of its whereabouts, but it was probably in, or attached to, the infirmary.[106]

4. The infirmarian had to look after the keys of the *private prison* or lock-up for the monks.[107]

5. By 1278 some of the monks had private rooms ('in cameris privatis . . .'), probably obedientiaries' quarters in or attached to the infirmary.[108]

6. The *pitancery* was to the east of the church, with a wall facing the Trinity chapel (see ii, 4, p. 50). It covered 3 acres of marshy ground, and there were

[102] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 8.
[103] *C.M.A.*, II, 414.
[104] *Ibid.*, II, 154, 214, 409.
[105] *Ibid.*, II, 376, 378–9.
[106] Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/140, keeper of the works accounts, 1391/2.
[107] *C.M.A.*, II, 408.
[108] Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 5.

bridges which had to be kept in repair. The first mention of the *pitancery houses* is in 1322/3.[109]

7. The *house of the keeper of the works*, with a workyard and garden, lay to the east of the church.[110]

8. In 1428 an ex-abbot was allotted a high chamber with parlour under, a small garden between the chamber and the running water in the 'hospice' of the keeper of the works, and another high double chamber for sleeping, in the infirmary.[111]

9. The location of the *chamberlain's 'hospice'* is not recorded, but it was probably attached to the infirmary. It included a hall and an exchequer room in 1428/9.[112]

10. The *hostilaria*, for which an endowment was made in the early 13th century, was evidently connected with the infirmary, since the relevant deed is the last of a batch headed 'infirmary rents' in one of the Abingdon Abbey cartularies.[113] The building may have been identical with the monks' guesthouse (see x, 4, p. 58).

vii. THE ALMONRY AND ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL

1. Abbot Vincent (1121–30) built various edifices round the base court, including the 'aula hospitum cum camera' and the almonry 'cum tribus magnis turribus'. He is also said to have founded, or rebuilt, St. John's hospital; part of this building still stands by the abbey gateway.[114]

There is no definite evidence for the location of the almonry, but it is fairly safe to assume that it was on the western perimeter of the precinct, particularly as St. John's hospital was closely connected with it. It may have formed one side of the hospital courtyard. We may compare the present-day layout of the Roysse courtyard, with the Guildhall on the site of St. John's hospital on the north, the Roysse Room on the east, and a block of houses, now offices, on the south of a courtyard open to the street.

2. Assuming that Abbot Vincent's 'aula hospitum' was part of the almonry or St. John's hospital, this was probably the hall in which the poor were fed, and which appears in the almoner's accounts, 1391/2, under the heads both of the hospital and of the almoner's 'domus'.[115] For other uses of this hall see section v (p. 53 f.). It may well have been on the site where the Roysse Room now stands.

3. St. John's hospital was run by resident brothers and sisters whose duties were to minister to the sick and infirm poor who lived there. This explains entries under 'Expense fratrum et sororum' in the almoner's accounts of 1391/2:

'Fratribus pro camera sua . . . Sororibus pro camera . . . Fratribus et sororibus

[109] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, pp. 3, 19. See also xi (p. 59), last item.
[110] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, p. 52; Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211[v].
[111] Salisbury Episcopal Register, Neville, fo. 30[v].
[112] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80, p. 110.
[113] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 106[v].
[114] *C.M.A.*, II, 171; 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 729.
[115] Berks. Record Office, MS. D/EP 7/140, almoner's accounts, 1391/2.

pro pauperibus in aula . . . In cera et oleo pro lampadibus in ecclesia et dormitor'. . .'[116]

Thus the hospital buildings consisted of a chamber for the brothers, a chamber for the sisters, a chapel, and either one or two dormitories for the sick and infirm poor living there. The latter could have had meals in the poor people's hall, common to the hospital and the almonry proper (see 2 above).

4. In the late 13th century permission was given for the enclosure of a narrow piece of waste ground between the wall of St. John's hospital and the street, for enlarging the hospital courtyard 'dum tamen shopas aut alias domos in placea illa non edificent per quas versus regiam viam exitus fiat.'[117] The piece of waste ground must have been on the W. side of the courtyard, because if new houses or shops were built on it they were to have access only to St. John's hospital courtyard and not to the street at their backs.

5. An upper story was probably added over the old dormitory (on the north) *c.* 1460 and the whole of this part of the building may have been converted into a lodging for important guests; at the same time the old St. John's hospital establishment was probably reorganized on the lines of the then customary almshouses, for soon after the dissolution there are references to six almsmen living in almshouses on the south of the courtyard, and no hospital or almshouse purposes are indicated for the N. and E. wings.[118]

viii. OTHER OBEDIENTIARIES' HOUSES OR OFFICES

1. The prior's quarters. *a.* Abbot Ingulf (1130–58) built the *prior's chamber* and possibly a chapel for it;[119] the obvious place would be at the W. end of the infirmary buildings, close to the dormitory, but there is no evidence for this.

b. By a mid 13th-century agreement the prior was to have his own *camera* where he could entertain monks and visitors; and he was also to have his own horse, groom and stable.[120] This may indicate the provision of more elaborate and extensive lodgings for the prior.

c. A party-wall was made in the prior's lodgings in 1375/6; in 1468 there is mention of the prior's 'small east chamber'.[121]

2. The *kitchener* (one of the most important obedientiaries at Abingdon) had a garden by the Thames by 1219, and may already have had his own house there, on the spot where the 'Cosener's' (= kitchener's) house was situated after the dissolution; it then had its own gatehouse, dovecote, courtyard and orchard, as well as garden.[122]

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[116] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 104; MS. almoner's accounts, *loc. cit.* in note 115.

[117] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 159ᵛ, quoting from Berks. Assize Roll, 48.

[118] Dr. J. M. Fletcher and I deduced this from architectural and historical evidence relating to the Guildhall, Abingdon, which was originally St. John's hospital (N. range).

[119] *C.M.A.*, II, 214.

[120] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 21ᵛ.

[121] *O.A.*, *op. cit.* in note 80. p. 27; Preston notes, Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/5, file 7, citing Salisbury Register, Beauchamp, 2nd part, fo. 123.

[122] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 58ᵛ; Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211ᵛ; Preston notes, Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/36, citing a privately-owned Abingdon deed of 1593.

3. Amyce mentions the 'Sextary' (*sacristy*), but with no indication where it stood. If, however, as seems possible, he worked round the precinct buildings anti-clockwise in making his report, the sacristy would have been on the north of the church. The building included a hall and a chamber in 1396/7.[123]

4. The *gardener* had his own house before 1450; wherever it was situated, there was then room for a 'new garden' for it on the east.[124]

5. The keeper of the works, the precentor, and the sacrist all had *gardens*[125] (see also vi, 7, p. 55).

ix. GATEHOUSES AND GATES

1. Main gate and gatehouse; part of the 15th-century rebuilding still stands.

2. Gatehouse 'entering the base court', on the SW.[126]

3. Gatehouse over mill-stream, leading to kitchener's house.[127]

4. Gatehouse and gate leading to lay people's cemetery on the north of the precinct. It was on the opposite side of a courtyard lying between it and the porter's lodging, which was behind St. Nicholas's Church. By this gatehouse was a charnel chapel [128] (see ii, 5, p. 50).

Some of the following may be identical with each other:

5. Gate with a room over, between the monks' kitchen and abbot's larder, on south of abbot's curia (see iv, 6, p. 52).

6. Gate 'ante cameram abbatis' (see iv, 3, p. 52).

7. Gate to monks' cemetery SE. of church.[129]

8. Inner gate, guarded by 'janitor portae interioris'.[130]

9. 'Parva porta.'[131]

10. There was a custodian of the 'red gate'. [132]

x. MISCELLANEOUS

1. A *treasury* was being used by 1103/4. In 1327 it housed vestments, copes, chalices, books, and all church ornaments.[133] The abbot's treasury (see iv, 5, p. 52) is mentioned in the same context, and is clearly a different building.

2. *Library.* The 'bibliotheca' is mentioned several times in the late 12th century and is quite distinct from the cupboards where the church service and song books were kept.[134] This 12th-century 'bibliotheca' was probably a large

[123] Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211ᵛ.

[124] *O.A., op. cit.* in note 80, pp. 128, 150.

[125] *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 52.

[126] Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211.

[127] *Ibid.*, fo. 211.

[128] *Ibid.*, fo. 211ᵛ; Leland, *op. cit.* in note 55, I, 121; Preston notes, Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/36, citing privately-owned Abingdon deed of 1555.

[129] *C.M.A.*, II, 379.

[130] *Ibid.*, 415.

[131] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 57ᵛ.

[132] *O.A., op. cit.* in note 80, p. 105.

[133] *C.M.A.*, II, 137; 'Lost Chronicle', *op. cit.* in note 16, p. 732.

[134] *C.M.A.*, II, 371, 373, 374.

cupboard or closet opening off the cloisters, perhaps near the S. transept. If there was ever a separate library building at Abingdon, it might have been added in the 15th century, on the first floor above the cloister, or S. nave aisle, or slype between the chapter-house and S. transept, to judge from other monasteries.

3. *Baths.* Constructed for the monks by Abbot Vincent (1121–30). On the analogy of monastic baths elsewhere, they would have been close to the calefactory, probably near the S. end of the dormitory.[135]

4. There was a *monks' guest-house* by 1245, and it may have been here that party walls were made and doors repaired in 1375/6 (see also vi, 10, p. 55).[136] The *long gallery*, still standing, is thought to have been a guest-house; the building is of the 15th or early 16th century, and its row of rooms, some with one bay, some with two, are on the first floor, with a corridor running the whole length of the N. front, built on the same principle as the gallery of a medieval inn.[137]

5. A room or building called '*le Mongomery*' appears in the infirmarer's accounts, 1356/7; he bought a long 'mappa' (cloth) for it.[138]

6. *Checker.* This 13th-century building still stands on the south of the precinct, near the mill. It consists of a chamber over a vaulted undercroft, with a fine example of a 13th-century chimney. Alterations in the 14th century probably included the erection of a partition wall dividing the upper room in two.[139]

7. *Domestic buildings, etc.* A range on the south of the base court, including (from west to east) malthouse, brewhouse, bakehouse, granary, and then the checker. The E. portions of this range are still standing. Amyce enumerates the carters' stable and the slaughter-house beyond the checker and long gallery. He mentions a double stable in the base court.[140] There was also a laundry.[141] The fulling mills on the mill-stream, to the east of the corn mills (see section B, vi, p. 47), are only referred to for the first time at the dissolution.[142]

8. *Printing press.* Two books printed at Abingdon Abbey in 1528 are now in the libraries of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Exeter College, Oxford.[143]

xi. AMYCE'S ESTIMATES OF AREA MEASUREMENTS OF VARIOUS PARTS OF THE PRECINCT[144]

One little court between the porter's lodge and the gatehouse leading to the churchyard	½ acre
Base court	3 acres

[135] *Ibid.*, 290. I have to thank Mr. P. K. Baillie Reynolds for information on this subject.

[136] Chatsworth MS. 71 E, fo. 9; *O.A., op. cit.* in note 80, p. 27.

[137] Architectural and other details concerning the long gallery are given by A. C. Baker and Walter H. Godfrey, *Abingdon Abbey: Some Notes on its History and Buildings* (1963 edition), pp. 14–16. (This is the Abbey *Guide*, published by The Friends of Abingdon.)

[138] *O.A., op. cit.*, in note 80, p. 13.

[139] For architectural details see M. E. Wood, 'Thirteenth-century domestic architecture in England', *Archaeol. J.*, CV, Supplement (1950), 4–6.

[140] Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211; Preston notes, Berks. Record Office MS. D/EP 7/36, citing privately-owned Abingdon deeds of the mid 16th century.

[141] Bodl. MS. Lyell 15, fo. 58; *O.A., op. cit.* in note 80, p. 105.

[142] *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, XIII, pt. i, no. 332.

[143] *Mediaeval Libraries of Great Britain*, ed. N. R. Ker (London, 1964), pp. 2–3.

[144] Amyce, *op. cit.* in note 99, fo. 211v.

Churchyard 'with all the stones and walls of the late abbey church, with the soil of the Frater, the Cloyster Chapter and Dorter, the Workeyard and a little orchard at the east end of the church'   4 acres

The 'privy garden' (probably belonging to the abbot's lodging)   ½ acre

The orchard behind the parsonage of St. Nicholas (i.e. in the NW. corner of the precinct)   1 acre

Prior and convent orchard, with an applehouse   6 acres

'A parcell of marshe ground called the Pitancery'   3 acres

IV. THE EXCAVATIONS AT ABINGDON ABBEY, 1922

By MARTIN BIDDLE

In April 1922 the Berkshire Archaeological Society announced the formation of a small committee to undertake excavations at Abingdon Abbey. Mr. C. R. (later Sir Charles) Peers and Mr. A. W. (later Sir Alfred) Clapham gave a general oversight to the work, which began in June and lasted with intervals into the new year. No report was ever published.[145]

The aim of the excavation was to find the site of the Norman abbey church and conventual buildings, and to explore them and as much as might remain of
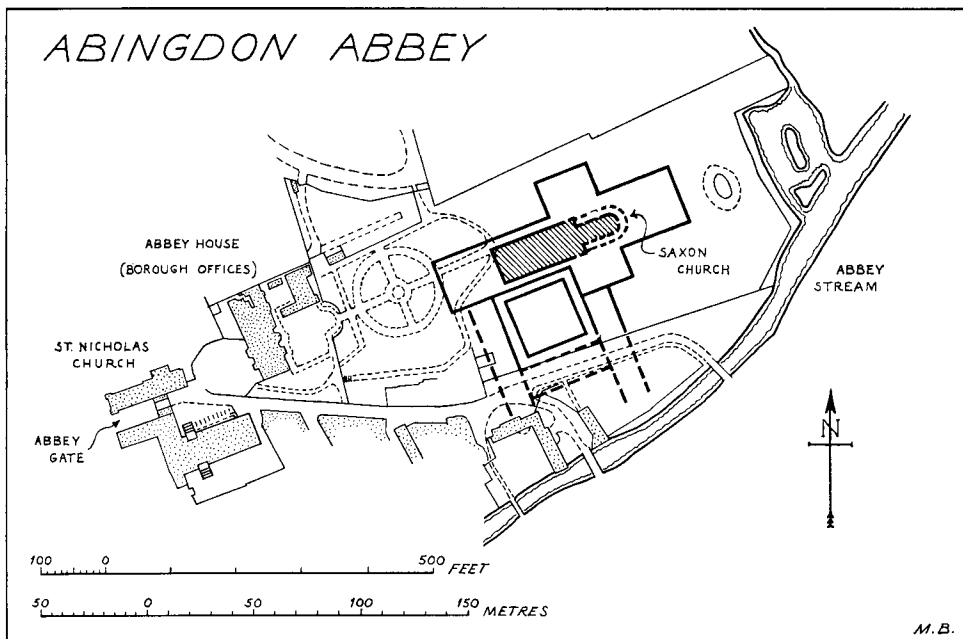

FIG. 11

LOCATION OF ABINGDON ABBEY, BASED ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE (p. 60)

the earlier Saxon churches. In spite of the thorough robbing of the foundations, an outline plan of the Norman monastery was recovered. In addition the excavators located an earlier building below the nave and crossing of the Norman church, as well as an extensive Roman site underlying the whole area. These results deserve publication, if only as an indication of the need for a complete excavation in the future (FIG. 11).

[145] Apart from newspaper articles, there was only a note in the *Antiquaries Journal*, II (1922), 386–8, written early in the excavation, and brief references in A. W. Clapham, *op. cit.* in note 45, pp. 36, 148–9, 156.

The records of the excavation are now preserved in the Berkshire Record Office.[146] They comprise an excavation diary, trench notes, a site plan, three albums of photographs, a draft report, a great deal of correspondence, reports on the human bones, and a mass of odd notes, transcripts, cuttings and leaflets. Unfortunately they are not as adequate as their quantity might suggest. The local director in charge of day-to-day work on the site was Mr. A. E. Preston of Abingdon, who also paid for the excavation. He in turn delegated most of the task to his personal secretary, Miss Agnes C. Baker. Without any previous experience of excavation, Miss Baker kept the diary and trench notes and wrote up the draft report. It is mostly due to her thoroughness that any publication is now possible. Preston was not always on the site and often the foreman was left in charge of the workmen, of whom there seem to have been not more than four. Preston had no previous digging experience and relied heavily on the advice of Peers and Clapham. Peers, however, only visited the excavation twice and it was left to Clapham, who went six times to the site, to make some sense of what was being found. He recognized the robber-trenches for what they were, and also that the mortar spreads were beddings for the tile floors of the church. The letters which Peers and Clapham exchanged with Preston, and their views recorded in the excavation diary and elsewhere, are vital to the interpretation of what was found.

Although there are over one hundred photographs among the records, they are not very useful except as an indication of the character of the excavation. More important is the site plan. This was begun by the Rev. Charles Overy, vicar of St. Frideswide's, Oxford.[147] After a disagreement, it was continued by Preston and others, with corrections by Clapham. Unfortunately the original compass survey, which was the basis for both the excavation-plan and the location of the abbey in relation to modern buildings, seems to have been poor, while the subsequent additions were made in an excessively haphazard manner.[148] A comparison of the written records with the plan shows that there are a number of important disagreements; the existence of two independent systems of trench letters, and the failure of the plan to identify many of the trenches has not made the preparation of a publishable plan any easier. The excavation was inadequate even by comparison with other amateur excavations of its day, but the robbing presented a formidable problem and the plan (FIG. 12) is perhaps the first obtained in Britain of a building that had been almost entirely removed.[149]

In the account which follows the surviving evidence has been used to give an outline picture of the main results. The difficulties presented by the plan cannot all be resolved, and no attempt has been made to place more weight on obscure

[146] We are most grateful to the then County Archivist, Mr. William Smith, for allowing these records to be deposited at the Bodleian Library and at the University Library, Exeter, and to the staffs of these two libraries for their assistance. The Berks. Record Office references for the excavation records among the Preston papers are D/EP 7/42, 43, 197, 198, 199 and 221.

[147] Overy, primarily a geologist, had some archaeological knowledge. He frequently worked with the late E. T. Leeds on excavations in the Oxford district and elsewhere. He was the first to point out to Preston the stratification of the site and the Roman date of some of the pottery.

[148] Excavations made after 29 December 1922, when Clapham removed the plan for study, were never properly recorded, and only sketched on the plan when it was returned the following May.

[149] For a consideration of the problems involved in the excavation of robbed structures see Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle, 'Metres, areas and robbing', *World Archaeology*, I, ii (1969), forthcoming.

points than the quality of the evidence will allow. The structural sequence of the site cannot be presented except in the broadest sweep, since only one section can be found among the records.

ROMAN

Roman pottery and other objects were found in a black earth layer, 18 in. to 2 ft. thick, the top of which was about 2½ ft. below the surface. It was present below the crossing of the Norman church and perhaps over the whole area investigated (FIG. 12). Roman pottery was found as far west as the centre of the flower garden in front of Abbey House and as far east as the E. end of the medieval church; it was also found north of the church and as far south as the limit of the excavated area. There were several almost complete vessels and there is an impression that the pottery was rather greater in quantity towards the south and west than to the north and east of the site. The focus of the settlement is likely therefore to lie towards the Thames and the southern part of the present town centre. No structures were recorded, with the exception of a patch of cobbling, 14 ft. by 8 ft., found below the eastern part of the Norman nave (trench v).

Miss M. V. Taylor, who saw some of the sherds early in the excavation, is reported as saying that 'they prove a long occupation but of a rude uncivilized type. The pottery dates from the 2nd to the 4th century A.D. There are several pieces of good early Samian, perhaps 2nd century'. Three coins were found, a Tetricus I, a Constantine I and a very worn Valens.

The evidence of the 1922 excavation supports the view, discussed above, that there was a considerable Roman settlement at Abingdon.[150] Whatever is made of the foundations discovered in 1865 at the northern end of Fore Street (now the northern part of East St. Helen's Street; the structure need not be a villa as is usually assumed),[151] the settlement was extensive and lasted from the 1st or 2nd perhaps into the 5th century A.D. The Thames terrace, the gravel of which was found in most trenches, provides a suitable site, but the reasons for the growth of the Roman settlement and its character are still to be discovered.

SAXON

Without stratigraphic control it is difficult to isolate features that might belong to this period. No Saxon structures were recorded outside the limits of the Norman church, but an earlier building seems to have occupied its site (FIG. 12):

1. In the western part of the Norman choir a wall of rough rubble was found running east-west, returning south at 90° at its W. end and curving south at its E. end. The wall was 4½ ft. or more wide, founded 10 ft. below the surface and surviving to a height of 6 feet. It was built with a distinctive hard mortar containing small pebbles and was sealed by a mortar and stone layer, identified by Peers and Clapham as a bedding for the pavement of the choir.

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150 H. Peake, *loc. cit.* in note 4.
151 *Proc. Soc. Antiq. London*, 2 ser., III (1862–67), 145, 202.

Clapham was certain that the wall was Saxon. In trench xxvIII[152] the western continuation of the wall seems to appear immediately south of the robbed N. wall of the Norman choir. Here it was built of large stones set in light-coloured mortar.

2. Below the N. aisle of the Norman nave three fragments were found which may be parts of a wall running east-west down the middle of the space between the Norman foundations. In trench xxIV there was a deep stone foundation, $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft. wide and apparently sealed by the bedding for the aisle floor. In trench I there was an east-west wall about 4 ft. wide, which was traced for a distance of 10 feet. It was perhaps built with brown mortar, and had been cut into by burials below the aisle floor. In trenches II and III there was a massive foundation of large stones set in very good mortar. This was traced for 14 ft. from east to west, where it appeared to turn and was traced south for 13 feet. Clapham thought that part of the W. edge formed a proper face. The foundation was built at a depth of over $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. on a 6-in. layer of red ochre soil (probably a buried topsoil), overlying natural gravel. Built into this foundation at a depth of over 6 ft. was a stone with a cupped hollow, 5 in. in diameter and filled with charcoal. Peers thought that the foundations discovered in trenches I, II and III belonged to some building before the Norman church, because their level was too deep for the Norman church; they did not fit in with its plan, and the type of stone suggested an early building.

3. Below the Norman S. aisle in trench xx there was a deep stone foundation, 3 ft. wide, traced for a length of 5 feet.

The imprecise descriptions of the building technique and mortars make it difficult to be certain whether these fragments can all be regarded as parts of the same building. Their symmetrical relationship to the plan of the Norman church suggests that perhaps they may be. If so, the W. end of the building may have been located in trenches II and III, with the N. and S. walls below the aisles of the later nave. In view of the relatively low level and narrow diameter of the E. apse, Clapham suggested that it was the central chamber of a ring-crypt, but no trace was found of the outer wall of the encircling gallery, probably on account of the limited extent of the excavation.[153] There can, in fact, be little doubt that the building is a Saxon church and its relationship to the Norman layout may be thought to confirm this. On the basis of the evidence set out here the Saxon church would be at least 200 ft. long and 57 ft. wide. Clapham attributed the E. end to Ethelwold c. 960,[154] but did not attempt to relate the apse to the other traces of the building, even those he himself thought might be Saxon. The outline plan which now emerges can perhaps be most closely compared in general proportions, and (if Clapham was right) in the arrangement of the E. end, with the recently

[152] For convenience of reference the trenches have been renumbered in one series, I-XLIII.

[153] Clapham, op. cit. in note 45, p. 156. Cf. in this country, Wing (H. M. Taylor and Joan Taylor, Anglo-Saxon Architecture (Cambridge, 1965), II, 665–72), Brixworth (ibid., I, 108–14) and now more exactly Cirencester (P. D. C. Brown and Alan D. McWhirr, 'Cirencester 1965', Antiq. J., XLVI (1966), 245–48, fig. 3).

[154] Clapham, loc. cit. in note 153.

excavated church at Cirencester, which could be of 9th-century date. Brixworth church in its earliest form, normally ascribed to the later 7th century, may also be similar in general plan, though not in proportions.[155] Until further excavation has taken place, it must be emphasized that the early church found in 1922 need not be Ethelwold's church, which from its description in the Abingdon Chronicle was a centrally-planned structure.[156] Ethelwold's church, St. Vincent's chapel,[157] and the '1922' building may have formed a group of churches, or *Kirchen-familie*, on well-known 'Carolingian' lines.

An alternative interpretation might explain Ethelwold's work as a centrally-planned eastern or more likely western addition to the earlier church as now defined.[158] The resulting building, being rounded to both east and west, might justify the description of Ethelwold's church given on p. 44. It would, however, be closer perhaps to the description of Hean's church, 'rotundum, tam in parte occidentali quam in parte orientali' (p. 43). As Mrs. Lambrick points out, these descriptions are suspiciously similar; although purporting to describe two different churches, of different date, on different sites, they might in fact describe the same church as dimly recalled several generations after its disappearance. In conclusion, the '1922' church as now defined conforms to the descriptions and dimensions of neither Hean's church of the later 7th century, nor Ethelwold's of the mid 10th. The parallels, such as they are, might be taken to suggest a 9th-century date, but neither the Abingdon evidence, nor the dating of Anglo-Saxon churches in general is sufficiently certain to permit any firm conclusions.

The cemetery of the Saxon monastery may have lain south of the Norman nave. The burials found in the cloister-garth (see below) were in more than one layer and seem too many for the restricted use of this area as a burial-ground in a Benedictine monastery.[159] Furthermore some of the burials seem to lie under the walls of the cloister and the adjoining ranges. Even allowing for some rebuilding from the foundations in the later middle ages, it seems possible that many of the burials in this area belong to a Saxon cemetery.

This cemetery would perhaps have lain between the Saxon church(es) to the north and the 10th-century monastic buildings to the south, as at Glastonbury and probably at Winchester.[160] This would account for the failure of the 1922 excava-

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[155] The ratio of length to breadth at Abingdon and Cirencester appears to be identical, 3.5:1. At Brixworth the ratio is 2.3:1, if the ring-crypt is included in the length of the church; Taylor and Taylor (*op. cit.* in note 153, I, 109) suggest, however, that the ring-crypt is an 8th-century addition to the 7th-century fabric.

[156] See p. 44. Leland's statement (see p. 45) that Ethelwold's church lay north of the Norman church is more likely if a pre-Ethelwold date is accepted for the building under the Norman church.

[157] *C.M.A.*, I, 92. Said to have been built by a Culham woman at a date apparently subsequent to *c.* 940, it was probably a separate chapel. Although it has been claimed that it was built at Culham (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, VII (1962), 35), the dedication to St. Vincent suggests that it was an Abingdon building (see v, b, p. 46 f.).

[158] For an eastern centrally-planned addition, *cf.* Wulfric's octagon at St. Augustine's, Canterbury (Taylor and Taylor, *op. cit.* in note 153, I, fig. 61).

[159] Abingdon abbots were buried in the chapter-house, the cloister (i.e. probably the cloister-walks) or the church (*C.M.A.*, II, 355). The garth was seldom used for burials in a Benedictine or Cistercian monastery: David Knowles, *The Historian and Character* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 186.

[160] For Glastonbury, Taylor and Taylor, *op. cit.* in note 153, I, 250-57, esp. fig. 110 and p. 254; for Winchester, R. N. Quirk, 'Winchester Cathedral in the tenth century', *Archaeol. J.*, CXIV (1957), 38-9. At Winchester the monastic buildings must have been south of the cemetery, since the land north of the cathedral was occupied by the New Minster.

tion to uncover any trace of pre-Norman domestic buildings in the northern part of the site of the later conventual buildings, and would imply that the late Saxon buildings lay farther south, below the S. range of the Norman cloister and beyond, towards the mill-stream. It is also precisely in this area that Abingdon tradition (p. 43) located the site of Hean's 7th-century monastery, namely 'in loco ubi nunc [i.e., c. 1220] est cellarium monachorum, ita quod altare stetit ubi nunc est lavatorium'. In the early 13th century the lavatorium would most likely not be within the cloister-garth, but still in the cloister-walk, against the wall near the entrance to the refectory, at the SW. angle of the cloister (p. 51).[161] Although the loosely grouped cells and chapels of Hean's foundation are said to have been still standing when Ethelwold refounded the monastery c. 954, they were probably then rebuilt on a more formal Benedictine plan. As seems to have happened at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, the 10th-century cloister at Abingdon may well have occupied the site of the earlier buildings.[162]

In summary, the 1922 excavations located below the Norman church a very large Saxon church. They did not produce any structural evidence of its conventual buildings, but they did locate a possible Saxon cemetery and provide a certain amount of negative evidence which together enable some deductions to be drawn about the overall layout of the area before the Norman Conquest.

NORMAN

The robbing of the stone of the church and monastic buildings began in March 1538 and was so extensive that even the foundations were removed.[163] The robber-trenches with their filling of loose rubble were, however, quite easy to follow, once they had been identified by Clapham. The method used by the excavators was to cut at right angles across the probable site of the walls. Once rubble-filled trenches had been found, parallel cuts were taken and if rubble filling appeared at corresponding points, lines connecting these rubble fillings (i.e. at right angles to the cuts) were thought to give the lines of the required walls. In the few places where stonework was found it was uncovered until it came to an end. The excavation trenches were usually only 3 ft. wide. Since they were often far apart, and the buildings were complex, there was plenty of room for uncertainty and confusion.

The plan offered (FIG. 12) is the best that can now be reconstructed. Clapham borrowed the original at the end of 1922 so that he and Peers could mark their conclusions on it, but he wrote to Preston in April 1923, 'as to the plan I have

[161] Knowles, op. cit. in note 159, p. 186; R. Gilyard-Beer, Abbeys (H.M.S.O., 1958), pp. 29, 30.

[162] Archaeol. Cantiana, XLVI (1934), 179–94, especially 191–94 and plan in pocket at back. Cf. Archaeol. J., CXIX (1962), 171. In a recent lecture Miss Rosemary Cramp has cast doubt on previous interpretations of early English monastic sites as loose clusters of separate cells and chapels. Whitby, it seems, cannot now be interpreted in this way. Both there, and more clearly at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, the buildings were regularly planned and at Jarrow may even have approximated to a claustral arrangement.

[163] P.R.O. E101/458/1 is the account for demolitions between 4 March and 8 May 1538. Stone was provided for mending the roads between Abingdon and Culham, so that stone and lead might be taken there, presumably for dispatch down river to the royal works in and around London. Abingdon materials were extensively used in the building of Oatlands Palace, Weybridge, Surrey (P.R.O. E36/235 and 237, passim).

found more difficulty than I expected in making the lines work in with what we found. I have consulted Peers about it but he has not much to say'.[164] The original drawing now carries the outlines of a monastic church and cloister superimposed on the excavation plan. The result is not very satisfactory, partly because the plan and its inaccuracies seem to have been used without reference to Miss Baker's notes, which clear up some of the difficulties. Even when all the sources are combined, however, only the barest outline emerges.

The W. front, the N and S. walls of the aisles, and the sleeper walls of the N. and S. nave arcades all seem quite securely defined. The crossing is much less clear, owing to the placing of the trenches. The N. and S. transepts are likewise uncertain, although it seems possible on the evidence of trench XXVII (which was very poorly recorded) that each transept had two apsidal chapels. The N. and S. walls of the choir, as well as the choir arcades, are fairly clear, but there is no evidence for the form of the original Norman E. end, unless part of it appears at the N. end of trench X. The E. wall found in trench XXXVII was probably the E. wall of the extended 13th-century church.[165] The walls of the cloister-arcade were relatively well preserved, but little was discovered about the W. and nothing about the S. range. The E. range is very obscure and the plan and exact location of the chapter-house uncertain.

William of Worcester visited the church in the late 15th century and took a number of measurements which he recorded in *gressus* and *virgae*.[166] These fit the buildings revealed in the outline plan (FIG. 12) reasonably well if it is assumed that the *virga* equals a yard of 3 ft., a value which yields a *gressus* of very slightly under 22 inches. On the other hand William of Worcester's measurements of Cirencester Abbey seem to fit best if the *virga* is calculated at 2 ft. 9 in.,[167] a value which yields from the equations given for Abingdon a *gressus* of just over 20 inches. It seems pointless to pursue this further at Abingdon until the plan of the abbey church is better known. At present it may just be noted that the outline plan is not inconsistent with the church that William measured and may be quite an accurate representation of it.

BURIALS

The presence of a possible pre-conquest cemetery in the area of the Norman and later cloister has already been discussed. Burials were also found within and around the Norman abbey church.

Inside the church there were burials on the axis of the nave, one of which had an elaborate built tomb and another a slab with an (incised?) cross; other burials were found in the N. and S. aisles, in the transepts, and in the choir and its aisles. Further graves, at least one stone-built, were found in the cloister-walks,

[164] This is doubtless the reason why Clapham did not mention Abingdon in his *English Romanesque Architecture after the Conquest* (Oxford, 1934).

[165] See p. 48.

[166] Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 210, fo. 224. See J. Nasmith (ed.), *Itinerarium Willelmi de Worcestre* (1778), pp. 300–1, and, now, the new critical edition by J. H. Harvey, *William of Worcester: the Itineraries* (Oxford, 1969), forthcoming. The text copied from the original MS. is reproduced here in Appendix I, p. 68.

[167] Brown and McWhirr, *op. cit.* in note 153, pp. 251–2.

ABINGDON ABBEY
EXCAVATIONS IN 1922

LAY CEMETERY

I

III

IV

II

XIV

BURIALS

XV

XXX

XXIX

XXXVI

VII

XXXVIII

XIX

XXXIX

BURIALS

IX

BURIALS

CLOISTER

XXXIV

V

ROOD-
SCREEN ?

VI

XXIV

XX

XXV

XLIII

XXIII

XLI

XXXV

XLII

CHAPTER HOUSE ?

XXII

XXXI

XXXII

XXXIII

XL

XXI

PULPITUM ?

XXVI

XXVIII

BURIALS

X

XIII

XI

BURIALS

XXVII

MONKS' CEMETERY ?

XXXVII

KEY
■ SUPPOSED SAXON FOUNDATIONS

POST—CONQUEST
WALLS IN SITU
ROBBER—TRENCHES
CONJECTURAL
PAVING

N
W E
S

25 0 50 100 150 200 FEET

5 0 10 20 30 40 METRES

B.K-B., M.B.
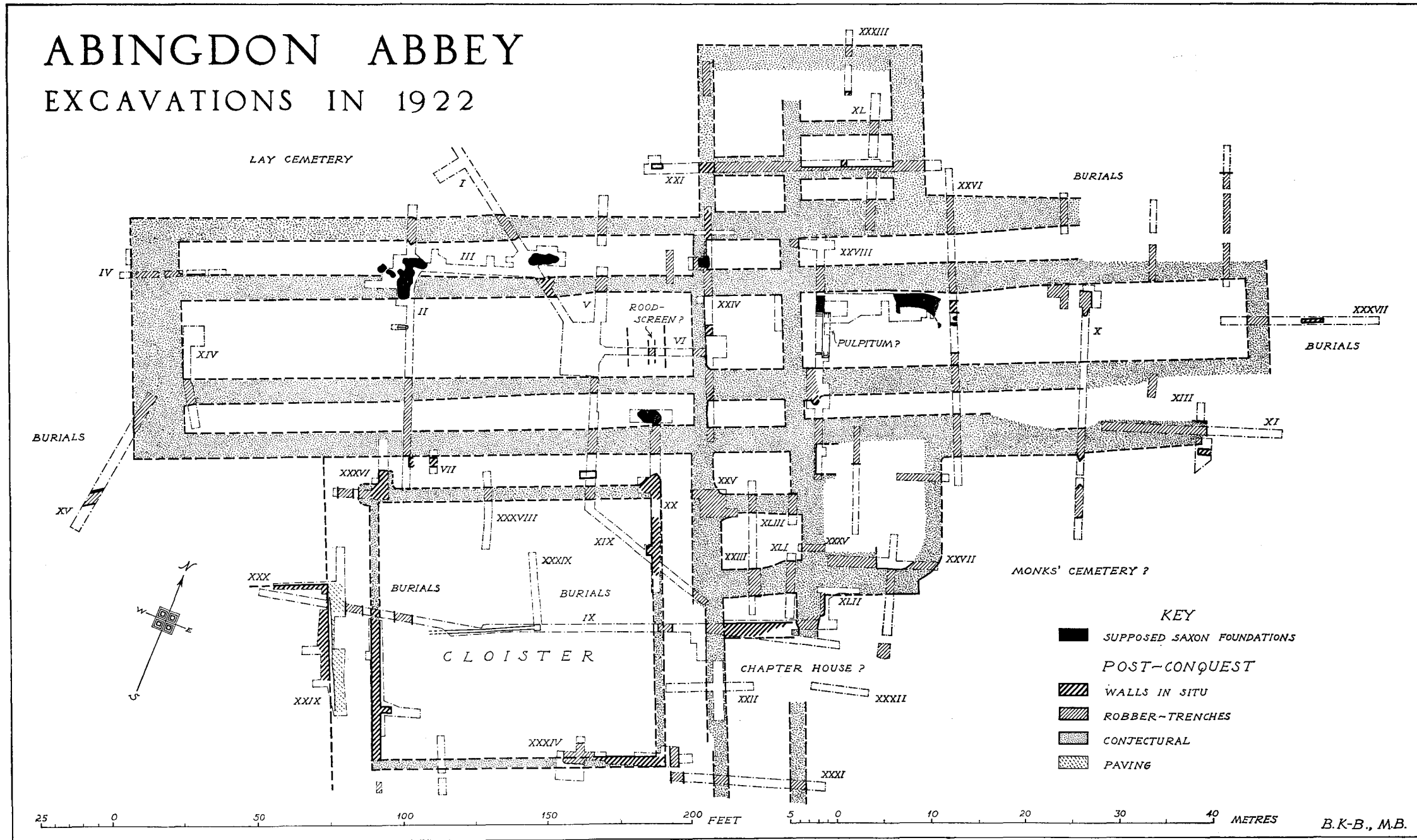
FIG. 12

PLAN OF THE EXCAVATIONS UNDERTAKEN IN 1922 AT ABINGDON ABBEY, BERKS., RECONSTRUCTED FROM THE EXCAVATORS' NOTES AND DRAWINGS (pp. 61 ff.)

especially on the W., N. and E. sides. At least some of the graves in the cloister-garth may be post-conquest, although Clapham believed they must all be pre-conquest. Graves found to the east of the cloister may be post-conquest burials in the S. transept or chapter-house, but there seem to have been so many graves here that some at least are probably pre-conquest.

Outside the church there were numerous burials west and north of the nave, some of which were in cists of unworked stone slabs placed on edge. Very often a stone had been placed under the head. This part of the cemetery extends at least 50 ft. north from the nave and perhaps 100 ft. west from the W. front. The burials begin about 2 ft. below the surface and extend to a depth of over 6 feet. Since many of the graves were badly disturbed, the cemetery was probably in use over a long period, and burials of women and children as well as men show that it was a lay cemetery. Other graves were found north and east of the choir. Burials found south-east of the church, some in stone cists, were probably part of the monks' cemetery.[168]

During the excavation, some of the skeletons were excavated and removed by Miss Beatrice M. Blackwood of the Department of Human Anatomy, University Museum, Oxford. She provided an outline report mainly concerned with the conditions under which the skeletons were found. In 1934 the late Dr. J. C. Trevor, then at Exeter College, included in his thesis the results of measuring 40 male and 11 female skeletons from Abingdon. These results were to have appeared in *Biometrika* in a paper with the late Dr. L. H. Dudley Buxton on the craniology of medieval England, but it was never published.[169]

CONCLUSIONS

The 1922 trenches, although numerous, were not very extensive, and the whole campaign can be regarded as a trial excavation. Some damage has been done to the site, but it is not likely to prove very serious. The opportunities presented for future excavation are in fact notable: there is probably a complete 7th-century monastery south and west of the Norman cloister; there is a large and apparently quite well-preserved church of Saxon date under the Norman church; there should be a centrally-planned church or addition of the 10th century somewhere in the vicinity, together with monastic buildings of the same date. We have, therefore, a very real chance of discovering the whole layout and develop-ment of an important monastery throughout the Saxon period, something which has a high priority among the problems of medieval archaeology. The post-conquest monastery, one of the richest in the country, also requires a thorough examination and offers every hope of establishing its plan in considerable detail; and there is, finally, the added interest of Roman occupation extending through the 4th and perhaps into the 5th century on a site which was reoccupied before the end of the seventh.

[168] *C.M.A.*, II, 378–9.

[169] Some account was taken of these Abingdon skeletons, however, in L. H. Dudley Buxton's paper 'The anthropology of mediaeval Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, II (1937), 118–28.

APPENDIX I

WILLIAM OF WORCESTER'S DESCRIPTION OF ABINGDON ABBEY

A transcript from Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS. 210, fo. 224. Serial numbers are added. For a discussion of this text see p. 66.

Monasterium de Abyndon

1. Longitudo nauis ecclesie cum duabus alis continet 60 virgas.
2. Latitudo ecclesie cum duabus alis continet 24 virgas.
3. Longitudo ~~Ecclesie continet~~ chori cum turre [*not stated*].
4. Longitudo capelle beate marie continet 12 virgas per se.
5. Latitudo chori continet cum alis continet 24 virgas siue 40 gressus.
6. Latitudo brachiorum duarum e[a?]larum super duplices columpnas cum capellis continet 23 virgas ex vtraque parte.
7. Longitudo chori preter capellam sancte Marie 85 gressus siue 54 virgas.
8. [Chorus [?] longitud' cum capella continet 64 virgas.]* et longitudo Capelle beate marie continet 12 virgas.
9. Latitudo brachiorum in principio chori continet 58 virgas siue ~~48~~ 98 gressus.
10. Longitudo turris ecclesie in medio brachiorum ecclesie 12 virgas.
11. Latitudo dicte turris pro [*blank*] campanis continet 12 virgas.
12. Columpne rotunditas in circuitu continet 5 virgas in naui ecclesie.
13. Densitudo murorum ecclesie continet duas virgas.
14. Longitudo ale [*corr. from* Ele *or* Ile] nauis continet 6 virgas.
15. Longitudo ale ~~de~~ longitudinis chori continet 5 virgas.
16. Columpne 12 et 12 archus in vna parte nauis ecclesie et tot in altera parte.
17. Altitudo turris noue in occidentali parte ecclesie 100 pedes.
18. Latitudo dicte turris infra continet ex omni parte 14 pedes.

* [ ]: inserted in margin.

APPENDIX II

THE CHRONICLE SOURCES FOR THE FOUNDATION-TRADITIONS OF ABINGDON ABBEY

1. *Lambeth Palace Library MS. 42*

The Abingdon Abbey 'edition' of the John (Florence) of Worcester Chronicle. Compiled in the mid 12th century; written before *c.* 1170. National chronicle with special Abingdon additions which contain the same information about Hean's foundation, and the gift of land jointly to him and his sister, as no. 2; but note the 'flash-back' technique employed, by which the description of Ethelwold's *re*-foundation in *c.* 954 preceded that of the original foundation under Hean.

2. *B.M. Cotton MS. Claudius C ix*

A chronicle plus cartulary containing purely Abingdon material. Taken from some source or sources probably compiled *c.* 1130. Written before *c.* 1170. The story of the original foundation is closely comparable to that given in no. 1.

3. *B.M. Cotton MS. Vitellius A xiii*

'De abbatibus Abbendoniae.' A narrative account of Abingdon abbots up to the late 12th century. Written and compiled (?) 1st half of 13th century. Certain foundation-traditions are given in detail, e.g. Cilla and her nunnery, and the making and discovery of the Black Cross; the move of Hean's monastery from the hill of Abbandune to the Thames valley; and the subsequent change of place-name from Seuekesham to Abbandune.

4. *B.M. Cotton MS. Claudius B vi*

A chronicle plus cartulary of Abingdon Abbey almost identical with no. 2, except for the earlier folios. Like no. 2 the greater part is taken from a MS. compiled *c.* 1130 but in this case not written up until the 2nd half of the 13th century. The first five or six folios contain passages about K. Lucius; the 'Brut' legends and Constantine the Great; and Cedwalla's conversion and his epitaph. These are probably taken from early histories and chronicles of England, including Bede. It also contains much Abingdon detail on the lines of no. 3, both of them being far more elaborate than nos. 1 and 2.

5. *Trinity College. Cambridge, MS. 993*

Chronicle of England, with brief Abingdon additions, 473–1302. Written and compiled in 1st half of 14th century. Includes the move from the hill of Abbendune to the Thames-side site previously called Seuekesham (cf. nos. 3 and 4).

6. *Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 255*

    Brian Twyne's copy of 'A chronicle roll of the abbots of Abingdon'. Compiled after 1361, and written before the end of the 14th century. The short passage copied on fo. 55 is like part of no. 4 and includes a passage about Cedwalla's conversion.

7. *Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS. 255, fo. 54*

    Brian Twyne's excerpt from another lost chronicle akin to part of the 'Abingdon' additions in no. 1 in using the same 'flash-back' technique. Date of compilation unknown.

8. *B.M. Cotton MS. Julius C vii*

    Nicholas Charles's copy of a brief Abingdon chronicle, in a mixture of Latin and English, compiled during the abbacy of Peter Hanney (1361–99) and the reign of Richard II (1377–99). The 'foundation-tradition' passages are in subject-matter like those on fo. 55 of no. 6.

NOTE