



Fig. 1. Remains of plinth of timber-framed Building I in Veresmead; oven is at top left with superimposed hearths top centre.

WALTHAM ABBEY

Photographs by the authors

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WALTHAM ABBEY is a small market town in the parish of Waltham Holy Cross, Essex. It lies on a gravel terrace beside the river Lea (or Lee) 14 miles due north of Greenwich, London. It stands at the eastern end of a causeway across the marshes from Waltham Cross, in Hertfordshire, which takes its name from the Eleanor Cross erected by Edward I in 1291 and which should not be confused with the Holy Cross of Waltham. On the eastern borders of the parish is Epping (originally Waltham) Forest, and it was for this reason that the Saxons named it

Walt-ham (weald or wald "forest," ham(m) "home-stead or enclosure." The Hundred, sometimes called Half Hundred, of Waltham took its name from this settlement.

Prehistoric occupation. Occasional palaeolithic implements and remains of mammoth and other extinct animals have been found in local gravel digging. An Acheulean handaxe of 300,000 to 100,000 B.C. was found in 1970 in Cobbins brook.¹

The earliest attested occupation is of the meso-

1. By Mark Riley; TL 394 010.

lithic period.² The flint artefacts include flakes, scrapers, cores, two microliths, a burin and a tranchet axe, together with a hammerstone; these were found in an old ground surface in the cloister garth of the later monastery. This site is four miles south of the classic Maglemosean forest-culture site at Broxbourne, Hertfordshire. Waltham and Broxbourne, both in the Lea valley, may represent camps for fishing, while the site of High Beech, where a similar assemblage has been found some three miles south-east of Waltham, may represent a hunting camp, as it is at 250ft. on eocene sands, in what is now forest. A date of 7,000 to 6,000 B.C. may be suggested for the mesolithic activity.

Neolithic occupation is represented by fragments of two "Peterborough" ware bowls² of Ebbsfleet style, also found in the cloisture garth area, and by stray finds² including a polished flint axehead.

The univallate camp of Ambersbury Banks with a stone-wall revetted entrance lies today in the forest on the eastern parish boundary at nearly 400ft. Pottery in the ditch and on the old ground surface underneath the bank is of Woodbury style of the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age³ within the range 800 to 300 B.C. A cleaning out of the ditch suggested Belgic re-occupation.

Roman period. A collection of iron blacksmith's tools including 2 anvils, 5 pairs of tongs and a hammer, together with a variety of other tools (a file, a spoon-bit, a socketed gouge, an adze, a bill-hook, a flat "spoon" probably for skimming molten metal), with some scrap pieces, were found together in 1969 during gravel digging to the south of the town. The hoard⁴ is dated to the first century A.D. on the evidence of a broken lynch pin and part of a sword blade of native tradition.

Actual Roman structures have not been found at Waltham Abbey although Roman material has been recorded in Saxon contexts. Coins of Claudius, Vespasian, Antoninus Pius, Maximianus, Licinius and Constantine have been found in the town. Together with a coin of Victorinus, found in 1970 in a ditch under the Saxon house (see below), these coins cover much of the Roman occupation of Britain. Ermine Street runs north from London via Cheshunt only three miles west of Waltham and it is possible that the causeway from Waltham Cross is a Roman construction.

Saxon occupation. A 12th century chronicler⁵ of Waltham tells us that Tovi (Tofig), standard bearer to King Cnut, in about 1030, built a "hunting

lodge" on his estate at Waltham. He describes what sounds like an early barrow excavation on another of Tovi's estates at Montacute in Somerset when a great black crucifix was found together with a black book, a bell and a small crucifix. The great crucifix was brought to Waltham in preference to other more important towns and Tovi built a church for it there. It was said to have healing powers and began to attract pilgrims. Sixty-six people followed it as it travelled on an ox-cart from Somerset and "so the town was founded." Waltham was described by the chronicler as a richly-wooded spot with fertile pastures but he stated there was "nothing in the place." Tovi appointed two presbyters, who, with other clerics, would minister to God in the church. This may have been a wooden church, nothing remains of it today. Montacute is some twelve miles only from the Isle of Athelney where Alfred retreated, in 878, as a result of the Danish incursions of the middle of the 9th century. One wonders if the Holy Cross was coming to Waltham for the first time or was returning after some 150 years in exile. The chronicler was a secular canon of Harold's later foundation writing at the time of Henry II's refoundation in 1177. He speaks with personal knowledge of the Cross, it is never described again.

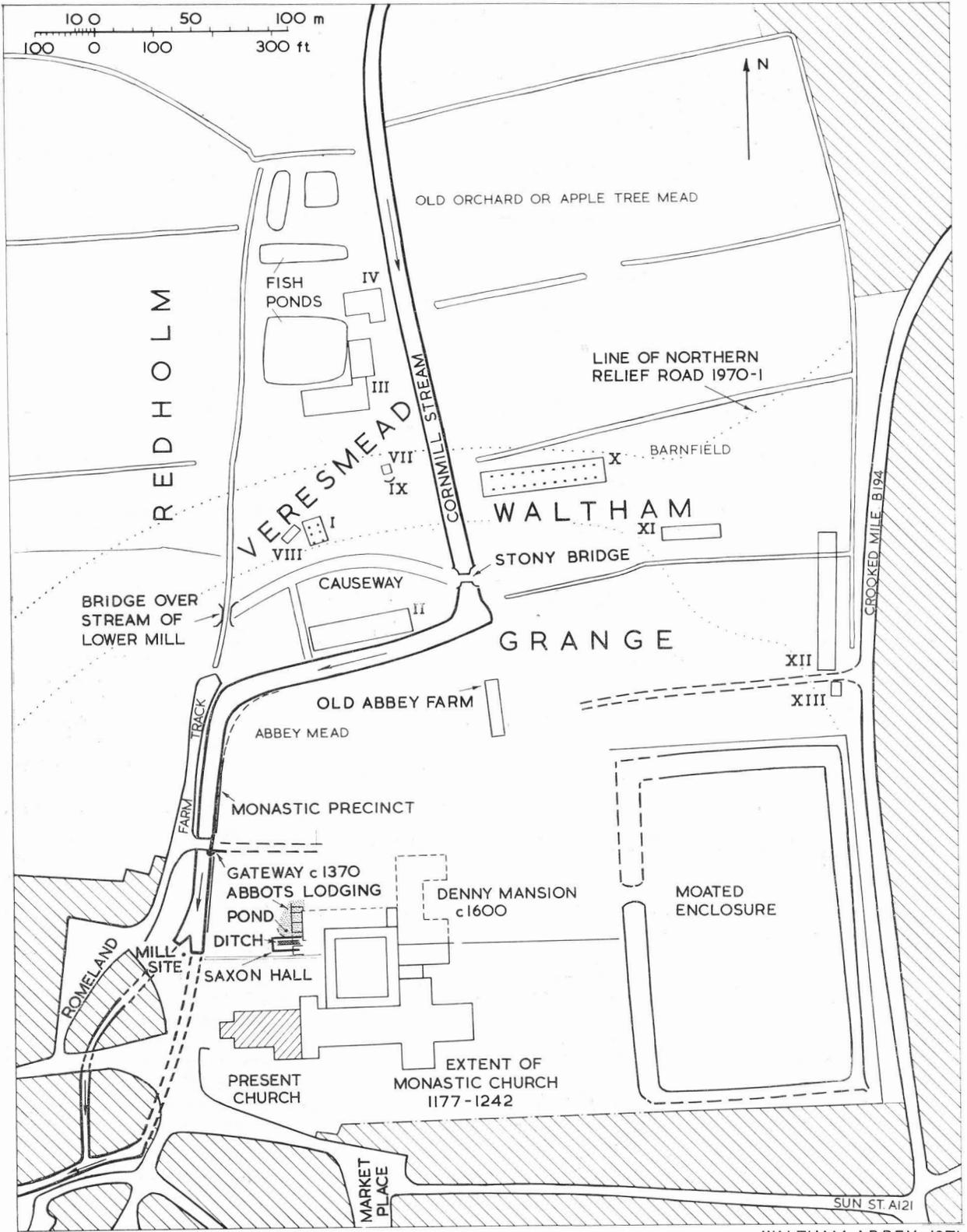
Saxon occupation was discovered in 1969 and 1970, just to the north of the present church (TL 381 007). Remains of a hall (see map), built close to the edge of a "pond" and much mutilated by later monastic activities were discovered. The full length of this building has not yet been established, it may extend into the cloister garth area, but it is 24ft. wide and at least 50ft. long. The side walls were detected as parallel trenches cut into the natural clay, one corner with a massive post-hole for a timber gable end was seen. The trenches were filled with two to ten inches of gravel, above which there was four to ten inches of loam. The loam was stabilised by flints and re-used Roman building debris, this being particularly dense where the wall bordered the pond. Above the loam a layer of clean clay remained with some minor vertical post-holes. A four-foot deep V-shaped ditch, which ran down the middle of the house, was filled in as part of the building operation. The fill of this ditch and the loam of the Saxon wall foundation each contained similar pottery, i.e. "St. Neots" shelly ware, grass-tempered ware, Ipswich ware and relief-band amphorae perhaps from Badorf in the Rhineland. The first half of the 9th century is the date by which this pottery could have

2. P. J. Huggins, "Waltham Abbey: Monastic Site and Prehistoric Evidence 1953-1967," *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.*, 3rd series, 2 (1970) 216-66; includes history by K. N. Bascombe; cloister site TL 382 007.

3. Information from a lecture by Dr. John Alexander; TL 438 004.

4. Being studied and published by W. H. Manning; TL 378 002.

5. In the *De Inventione Crucis*; B. M. Harleian Ms 3776.



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Fig. 3. Gilded Saxon pin, head 7 mm long.

accumulated and its presence means that occupation of this period can be expected nearby, presumably within the area surrounded by the ditch. The construction of the hall would then be consistent with a date after 850 A.D.

A gilt pin with grotesque pig-like head, large gaping mouth, tiny snout, eyes represented by tiny inset black stones and, at the back, two large pointed ears (see Fig. 3) was among the most interesting of the finds has not yet been paralleled. A bone comb, fragments of pottery loom weights and a piece of spindle whorl were also found. A coin of Victorinus, 265-70 A.D. confirms the presence of derived material in the ditch fill. The excavation has established Saxon occupation in Waltham some 200 years before Tovi.

Harold and the Normans. Tovi's foundation was enlarged by Harold, Earl of Wessex (later King), who, in 1060, perhaps vying with Edward the Confessor's church building at Westminster, established a college for a dean and twelve secular canons. The nave of their church still stands as the present Abbey church.

By 1066 Waltham was held by Harold as one manor and as 40 hides. There were 80 villeins, 24 bordars, 6 serfs and 20 rent-paying tenants (*censarii*) These last had increased to 36 by 1086, Mills had also increased from one in 1066 to three in 1086.

The value was given as £36 in 1066 whereas estimates of its worth in 1086 were £63 and £100. The death of Harold had not therefore prevented Waltham from prospering. The manor was in the possession of the Bishop of Durham from 1075 to 1088 and from 1091 to 1096 or 1100. By 1086 there belonged to the manor 2 houses in London which rendered 20s and one gate, thought to be Aldgate, which William gave to the manor. This gate was later exchanged by Matilda, wife of Henry I, who had received Waltham as part of her dower, for a mill at Waltham in 1108. It is thought that most of the church which exists today was built or re-built in the reign of Henry I.

The monastery. Henry II's re-foundation at Waltham in 1177 was for a prior and sixteen Augustinian canons regular; it was designated an abbey in 1184 and the number of canons was raised to twenty-four. The re-dedication of 1242 may imply that a major building programme was complete by then. The vast size of the monastic church was revealed in 1938 (see map). The cloisters were discovered to be on the north side of the church during excavations⁶ from 1955-62. Excavations in the Abbey Close, just north of the present church, in 1969, disclosed the west end of the 1177-1242 north claustral range, the wall being constructed in ashlar Reigate stone.

Against the west end of the north claustral range was built a range of small rooms. This early 14th century addition may be the Abbot's lodgings. It was built over the filled-in pond mentioned in the discussion of the Saxon hall. A further addition to this range was a kitchen, added later in the 14th century, with 3 fireplaces and a clay floor. Finds from this 1969 excavation included a lead bulla (see Fig. 4) of Pope Alexander III (1151-89) who was associated with the 1177 foundation.

Monastic bridges. One coping stone of the bridge at the Abbey Gateway remains. Stony bridge, over the Cornmill stream, exists in a fragmentary form, three of the five double-chamfered ribs remain. A third stone bridge was recorded⁷ in 1933 in the side of a ditch. This bridge lies at the west end of a causeway from Stony bridge (see map). It was excavated⁸ in 1968 in advance of road works. The bridge was a single-span, double-chamfered three-rib construction of rough tooled Kentish ragstone with Caen stone springers and mortared flint backing. Each masonry abutment was carried on planks of oak forming a capping to two staggered rows of elm piles. Other timbers remaining were interpreted as primary and secondary bank-revetting members, and evidence was also found of a coffer dam, which

6. Excavations by John Charlton, *History of the King's Works*, I (1963) 88-9.

7. By S. F. and R. E. Puddephatt.

8. Forthcoming in *Medieval Archaeol.* 14.

would have been built round each abutment to keep out the water while "piling and planking" and building the abutment was in progress. One member was also taken to represent the base to the timber centering needed for the construction of the ribs and arch. By dendrochronology⁹ the bridge is dated to c.1360.

The excavated bridge (32°), Stony bridge (11°) and the Abbey gateway bridge (16°) were all set askew. The angles given are between the line of the roadway and a line straight across the stream. There are very few parallels for skew bridges.

As a result of the study of a document¹⁰ of 1220 describing the laying of a water conduit from a spring in Wormley to the Abbey, the watercourse spanned by the excavated bridge can be identified as the "stream of the lower mill" and the present Cornmill stream as the "stream of the second mill." Because of this identification the names of "Redholm" and "Veresmead" can be assigned to the adjacent meadows.

The monastic farm or grange. Excavations in 1970 were carried out on the line of the town's northern relief road. Foundations II, III and IV (see map) have only been seen as cropmarks.⁷ Buildings I and VII to XIII were investigated before or during the road works. Building VII is a square dovecote with tile plinth for a timber frame of 14th/15th century date; it superseded a round dovecote, IX, probably of stone construction and dating to c.1200. Building I (see Fig. 1) was a kitchen or workshop rebuilt several times between c. 1200 and 1540, and building X was a twelve-bay barn rebuilt many times from c. 1200 to the mid-19th century when it was finally demolished. Both these buildings were timber-framed. Buildings XII, 237ft. long, and XIII, a lodge, were brick-built probably of late 15th century date. Buildings VIII and XI were timber-framed on brick plinths, presumably of 15th century date.

Of special interest is the early use of bricks, 14in. x 5.9in. x 1.3in. and 13in. x 6.5in. x 2.0in. in the stylobates of buildings I and X respectively. The only other excavated barns (which also had stylobates,

or separate bases for principal posts), are at the preceptory of the Knights Templar at South Witham¹¹, Lincs., dated to about the same period. Bricks of a generally similar size are dated to the 12th century at Coggeshall Abbey, Essex, Bricks of the 13th to 15th century, both plain and shaped, were also found.

After the Dissolution. The monastery was dissolved in 1540, its possessions valued at between £900 and £1,079 of which £169 was from the manor and lordship of Waltham and £72 from the Grange and demesne lands, the remainder came from the monastery's extensive estates. The site, lordship, grange and many of the monastic estates were leased to Sir Anthony Denny. Most of the buildings of Henry II's refoundation were pulled down leaving only the Norman nave, with eastern tower, of the collegiate church, which had always served as a parish church, the Abbey gateway, a cloister entry and part of the monastic precinct wall. The east tower fell down in 1552 and the parishioners built the present tower at the west end in 1556. The old Abbey Farm building is reputed to stand on the site of the Abbot's stables which may have survived the Dissolution together with the barn and the mills, the latter being described as "two mills under one roof." The Dennys were living at the nearby house of Dallance, but c.1600 Edward Denny, Sir Anthony's grandson, later to be made Earl of Norwich, built a mansion probably in the position indicated on the map. The property passed to the Wake family and had been partially rebuilt when the historian Farmer, in 1735, describes a garden encompassed by a fine canal. This must refer to the moated enclosure which may date from no earlier than this mansion.

Industry. Plans by two great engineers, John Smeaton (1724-1792) and John Rennie (1761-1821) for works in the parish have recently come to light. Smeaton's drawings¹² for "Mr. Walton's Powder mill" are dated 1771. This establishment became the Royal Gunpowder Works¹³ in 1787 and had probably originally taken over the old fulling mill on one of the eastern streams of the River Lea c.1650. Explosives continued to be produced until 1943 and the factory is now used for research. Rennie's plan¹⁴, dated 1813 was for the Small Arms Manufactory at



Fig. 4 Lead Bulla of Pope Alexander III showing St. Peter and St. Paul, 35 mm diameter.

9. By J. S. Appleby, Hon. Sec. of Essex Arch. Soc.
10. B. M. Harleian Ms. 391 f.1-5.
11. *Current Archaeol* 9 (July 1968) 232.
12. Royal Society Library, 9 drawings listed in *Newcomen Society Extra Publications* 5.
13. W. H. Simmons. *A short history of the Royal Gunpowder Factory at Waltham Abbey* (1963), (Controlerate of Royal Ordnance Factories).
14. P.R.O. MPH 764 (1), see also MPH 764 (2) and (4) and MPH 583.

Enfield lock, nearly two miles south of the town, designed for the production of 225,360 gun barrels annually.

Other industries included pin making, calico printing, silk manufacture and printing, and the manufacture of percussion caps. A pottery was in use until about 1960, making flowerpots for the extensive nursery glasshouse industry. Two pipe-makers living in Waltham Abbey were Joseph How c.1749 and William Shadwick c.1800; no pipes can definitely be attributed but bowls of Atkinson and Oswald type 25, 1700-1770 with "IH" on the spur were found¹⁵ in 1970 following dredging of the Lea, they were poor specimens and may be local "seconds."

The town. One town house was excavated¹⁶ in 1966 and its history was traced through humble beginning as a shoemaker's cottage, built after 1540, to an enlargement in 1639 for the family of a well-

15. Collected by R. C. Gray and Jonathon Gray who suggest the pipes were discarded by workmen before entering the gunpowder factory.
16. P. J. Huggins "Excavations at Sewardstone Street, Waltham Abbey 1966," *Post Medieval Archaeol.* 3 includes documentary study by K. N. Bascombe (1969); TL 382 004.

to-do London mercer, Thomas Winspear. The contents of a brick-lined latrine pit were likened to the tableware and food remains of a single meal in a prosperous mid-17th century household.

The town still retains much of the character of a small Essex market town. Many townsfolk and local societies, in 1968, successfully opposed an extensive redevelopment of the town centre. The northern relief road is being built to divert the heavy traffic which at present chokes the town centre and it is hoped the narrow streets will eventually become pedestrian precincts.

Waltham Abbey is seen as the historic keystone of the Lee Valley Regional Park. The Park Authority has plans for a museum just north of the monastic precinct and is at present engaged on opening up a large area of the monastic site to the public for the first time.

The excavations in the town have been carried out by the Waltham Abbey Historical Society with the help of the West Essex Archaeological Group, rescue work being supported by the Department of Environment. The excavations at Ambersbury Banks were carried out by London University Extra-mural Department.

Wandsworth Mud Larking

IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL circles mudlarking often has a connotation not far removed from antiquarianism, chiefly due to the "loner" element involved in the past-time. Further, no serious attempt ever seems to have been made to establish a relationship between foreshore finds and settlement areas.

In an effort to assess the potential of mudlarking, about two years ago Wandsworth Historical Society began a systematic approach to foreshore material. The stretch of the Thames from the Beverley Brook to Nine Elms was divided into 16 sectors, each of which was allocated a code and members, singularly or more often in groups, began an intensive search in various areas. Their efforts tend to be spasmodic being closely governed by tides, dry-land excavations and other activities.

If material of particular interest is discovered, a special effort is made to explore its possible implications. For example, when part of a stoneware sagger was found, a careful search was made for further pieces. A dozen or so were discovered closeby but nowhere else, suggesting the possibility that they could have been dumped there from a nearby kiln, for which documentary research is now in progress. Interestingly enough, the reverse has also worked: there are documentary records indicating a delftware pottery at Putney and now a piece of kiln furniture and some biscuit ware have been found in the same area on the foreshore. (Further details appear in No. 2 of *The Wandsworth Historian*, copies of which are kept, *inter alia*, by the Central Library, West Hill, S.W.18 and the Minet Library).

The photograph shows the recording at very low water near Putney Railway Bridge of a large number of stakes (in the middle distance) and of some wadding (in the foreground). Because of the time element a frame was used to record details while they were still covered with water; in fact some of the stakes were never uncovered.

