

Notes and News

THE ANGLO-SAXON CHURCH AT ST PAUL-IN-THE-BAIL, LINCOLN (Figs. 1 and 2, Pl. x)

Recent excavations in the city of Lincoln¹ have revealed the remains of what may be the earliest church in the kingdom of Lindsey — that said by Bede to have been built by Paulinus, on the occasion of his missionary visit to Lincoln in A.D. 628/29.² According to Bede, the first convert of Paulinus was Blecca, described as *praefectus civitatis*. He adds, 'In this city he built a stone church of remarkable workmanship; its roof has now fallen either through long neglect or by the hand of the enemy, but its walls are still standing and every year miracles of healing are performed in the place, for the benefit of those who seek them in faith'.³ Apparently Paulinus's church was still standing, as a ruin, in the early 8th century. Tradition has linked the site of St Paul-in-the-Bail with the church of Paulinus at least since the late 12th century when Ralph de Diceto implied that this was the site of Paulinus's foundation.⁴ The dedication to St Paul is uncommon later without St Peter, and may be an indication of early date as in the case of St Paul's cathedral, founded in A.D. 604.⁵

The church (Fig. 1, Phase I) was built on the courtyard of the Roman *forum*, and the robbed-out foundation trenches of its walls contained disturbed fragments of paving slabs which had probably formed part of the paved surface. Nothing survived of the original floor of the church but it is not impossible that the Roman surface served this function. In plan it consisted of an apsidal E. end divided from the nave by a quadruple arcade or screen. The building was 9 m wide, and at least 21 m long, the W. end running beyond the area of excavation. The robber trenches of the foundations of the apse (0.60 m–0.80 m wide) were narrower and shallower than those of the nave (between 0.80 and 1.20 m wide) and this may indicate that the walls of the apse were narrower and lower than those of the nave. There was no indication that the nave and apse were built at different dates.

The clearest evidence relating to the structure of the church came from the foundation trench separating apse and nave. Near the S. end parts of the lowermost foundations survived *in situ*, and consisted of fragments of *forum* paving slabs with limestone rubble and stony earth packed in between. A post-hole could be seen as a relatively stone-free area *c.* 0.30 m in diameter. At the bottom a shallow pit *c.* 0.60–0.80 m in diameter had been dug a further 0.25 m beneath the bottom of the foundation trench, in which was set a timber upright the base of which was then packed around with stone. Four similar pits were found beneath the bottom of the robbed parts of the foundation trench (Fig. 1, Phase I). The posts set in these pits probably once formed the main framework for a quadruple arcade or screen separating apse from nave.⁶ The outermost posts must have engaged with the masonry of the walls at the junction of apse and nave. The posts may have supported a tie-beam in turn supporting a timber-framed wall. Wall and posts could then have been plastered in such a way as to give the appearance of a stone construction.⁷

No trace was found of an altar, but it is unlikely to have stood inside the apse, where the central post would have obscured it. It most probably stood near the E. end of the nave.

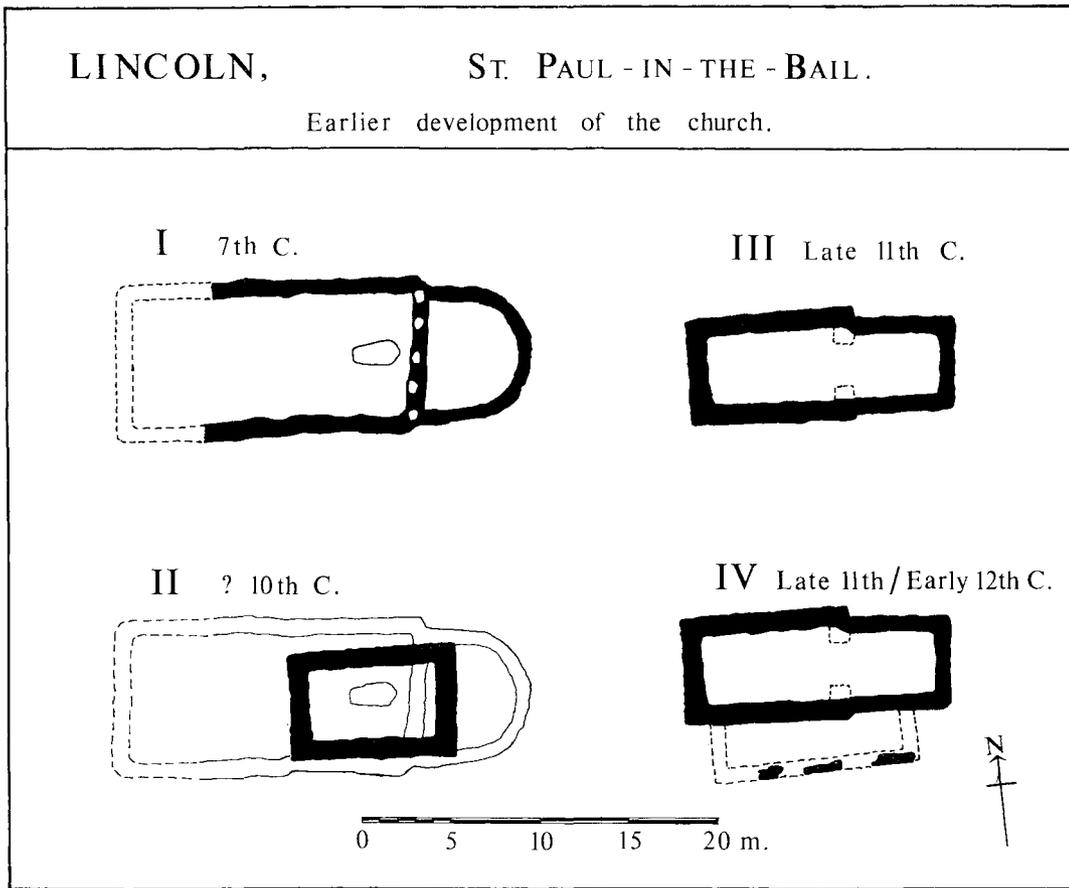


FIG. 1

ST PAUL-IN-THE-BAIL, LINCOLN

Sequence of phase plans showing the development of the church, 7th-12th centuries

On the central axis of the nave and approximately beneath the position likely to have been occupied by the altar were the remains of an empty cist grave (Fig. 1; Pl. x, A), the upright slabs and capping stones of which consisted mainly of flagstone fragments. The cist had been disturbed, the body removed, and several of the central capping slabs were missing. Carefully packed in stony earth behind an upright slab was found a complete bronze hanging-bowl (Pl. x, B), buried so that its rim lay immediately beneath the level of the top of the upright slabs and concealed beneath a small stone slab, which lay beneath one of the undisturbed cist capping-stones.

The hanging-bowl (Fig. 2) is a thin-walled bronze vessel with a separate horizontal strip riveted on to the deeply grooved rim.⁸ At the base of the bowl were interior and exterior discs (Fig. 2, d) both tinned and decorated with enamel and *millefiori* work.⁹ The *millefiori* consists of eight flowerlike inlays, of yellow and dark brown or black petals with a central red spot, arranged in a circle around four square inlays each subdivided into nine small squares. Three hooked bird escutcheons of cast bronze were

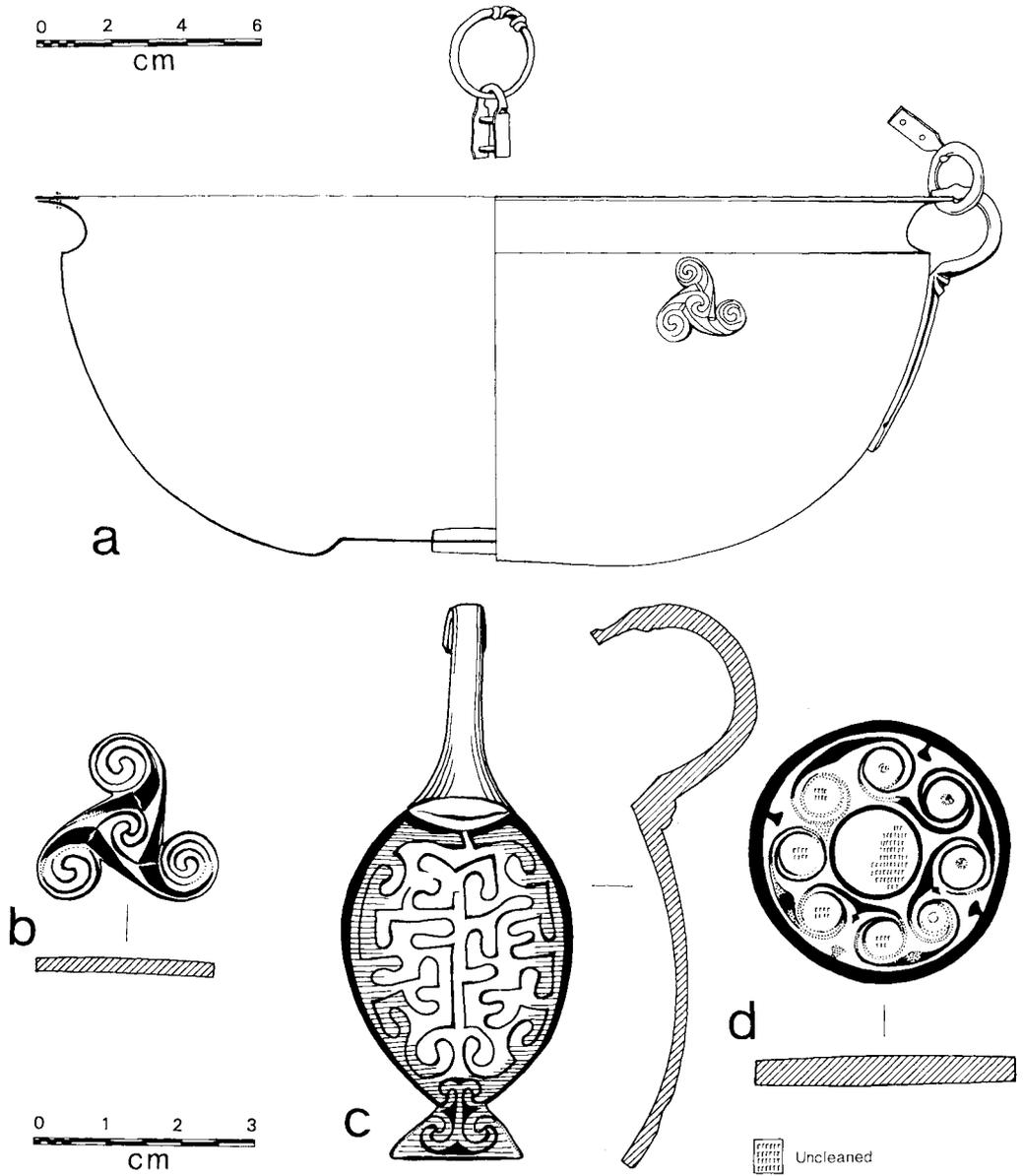


FIG. 2

ST PAUL-IN-THE-BAIL, LINCOLN

The hanging bowl: (a) an attempted reconstruction; (b) triskele 2; (c) escutcheon 3; (d) exterior basal disc. b, c, and d are drawn at the same scale

tinned and enamelled and had been soldered on to the body of the bowl (Fig. 2, c). The solder had decayed whilst in the ground and the escutcheons had become detached. The bronze rings fitting round the necks of the escutcheons were found in place. Also visible on the shoulder of the bowl were the marks of decayed soldering where three *triskele* devices had been attached (Fig. 2, b). The trumpet spiral patterns of these were also enamelled. Finally there were remnants of bronze fittings from which it can be deduced that the bowl was hung from a central ring, perhaps by leather thongs (Fig. 2, a). The bowl awaits extensive conservation work, after which more detailed examination should give a clearer idea of the date of the bowl and its age at burial, clarifying the problem of the relationship of the cist grave to the church.

The church is very similar in plan and dimensions to 7th-century examples from Kent,¹⁰ the focal point of the Augustinian mission and the home of Paulinus before his travels north. The grave with the hanging-bowl appears to have been contemporary with the life of the church, in view of its position along its central axis. The fact that no bones were found suggests exhumation, or 'translation', of the body while still articulated, a situation paralleled by the grave perhaps of St Botolph in the Saxon church of Hadstock in Essex.¹¹ It is clear that the bowl was concealed during the preparation of the grave and it seems equally clear that whoever exhumed the bodily remains was unaware of its presence.

The remains of the apsidal church were robbed out and the area became overlain by burials possibly in the 9th or 10th centuries — closer dating awaits the results of C14 analysis. The cemetery may have been associated with a timber church but later building activities and grave digging have rendered this uncertain. The graves of this early cemetery were cut into by a small rectangular building (Fig. 1, Phase II), externally c.9 m by 6 m, of which the lower part of the stone foundations survived, built of rubble quarried from the remains of the nearby Roman buildings. This church was probably standing by the late 10th century and remained as a single cell until the later 11th, when a stone-founded chancel was added (Fig. 1, Phase III). The remains of further additions were found to the S. of the nave and chancel. It is uncertain what form these additions would have taken. The remains suggested two or even three side chapels, more typical of pre-Conquest than of post-Conquest design, but associated pottery suggested a date after the Conquest. It appears that at the time of the Conquest, the graveyard did not extend much beyond the limits of the area defined by the eastern end of the courtyard of the *forum*.

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NOTE

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NOTES

¹ Carried out by the Lincoln Archaeological Trust, under the direction of Christina Colyer and the supervision of the author, during the summer of 1978. I have to thank K. Camidge for the photographs and the drawings in Fig. 1, Claire Thorne for the drawings and reconstruction in Fig. 2, Kate Foley for conservation work on the bowl and M. Jones, Lauren Adams and N. M. Reynolds for help with the preparation of the manuscript.

² Bede, *Hist. Ecclesiastica*, II, 16.

³ Translation from B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), 193.

⁴ See Sir Francis Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1965), 80, note 5.

⁵ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), 109.

⁶ It seems less likely that these pits were dug for the emplacement of timber piles, which might themselves have helped to support the masonry bases of stone columns. The subsoil through which the foundation trenches were dug consists of limestone brash which would have rendered such piles quite unnecessary. In addition, the pits appeared to be rather wide and shallow for this purpose, and there would have been considerable risk of sideways movement of such shallow piles caused both by the weight of the superstructure and by general settling of the foundations.

⁷ I owe this suggestion to W. J. Rodwell.

⁸ The form of the rim found by F. Henry to define a second, 7th-century group of post-Roman enamelled hanging-bowls: *J. Royal Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, LXVI (1936), 218.

⁹ For the occurrence of *millefiori* work in the more developed groups of hanging-bowls, see E. Fowler's chart: 'Hanging Bowls', J. M. Coles and D. D. A. Simpson (eds.), *Studies in Ancient Europe* (Leicester, 1968), 297.

¹⁰ H. M. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture III* (Cambridge, 1978), Fig. 723 (Canterbury St Pancras), Fig. 728 (Reculver; Rochester).

¹¹ *Antiq. J.*, LVI (1976), 66, 71.

EARLY ISLAMIC POTTERY FROM FLAXENGATE, LINCOLN (Pl. XI)

The discovery of six sherds of an early Islamic vessel during the 1975-76 excavations of the Viking period settlement on Flaxengate in Lincoln now links the Danelaw with the Islamic East.

The first timber buildings of the Anglo-Scandinavian settlement on the Flaxengate site were built toward the end of the 9th century. Two of the sherds were found stratified in contexts relating to the earliest period of occupation, one in the open area behind the earliest houses, a second in a pit with a coin of c. A.D. 905. Three further sherds came from the upper part of the accumulation separating Roman and Anglo-Scandinavian levels, into which they must have been trampled; and the sixth, a fragment, appeared residually in a pit relating to the third phase of building in the mid-10th century.¹²

The six sherds, of which the four largest are illustrated (Pl. XI), are non-joining fragments of a coarse-walled, handmade, straight sided jar, in a hard fabric consisting of much fine subangular quartz in a cream matrix.¹³ One sherd bears the impression of a piece of grass or straw. The interior is coated with a haematite-rich slip, and haematite blooms have formed in firing where the slip was thickest, above the low ridge on the interior of the shoulder (Pl. XI, A, left). The jar was partly covered with an opaque alkaline glaze of rich turquoise which appears to have been painted on, more thinly below (see Pl. XI, B, where an attempt has been made to place the sherds in their correct relative positions on the basis of thickness of wall, slip and glaze).

The sherds were recognized as early Islamic by Dr D. B. Whitehouse, whose excavations at Siraf on the Persian Gulf produced some thousands of alkaline glazed sherds of jars, jugs and bowls among the rubbish built into the platform of a mosque completed in A.D. 803-4.¹⁴ The Siraf pottery has a finer fabric and more iridescent glaze typical of the alkaline glazed wares of the Persian Gulf area, whereas the sandier fabric of the Flaxengate sherds and the matt quality of the glaze resemble the products of the contemporary industry in N. Syria. Pottery identical to these sherds was produced at Samarra in the 9th century, and at Apamea from the 10th century.¹⁵ Both centres produced finer, decorated plates and bowls as well as the coarser, utilitarian 'bad wares' which the Flaxengate sherds resemble.

Why should Syrian 'bad wares' have been traded so far afield? Microscopic examination¹⁶ revealed specks of iron pyrites embedded both in the glaze along the fracture of one sherd (Pl. XI, B, lower left), and in the slip with which the interior of the vessel was coated. This may not have been so 'bad' a ware after all, but one specially treated to protect costly contents. The jar would appear to be a prototype of the Syrian tin-glazed *albarellos* which circulated widely in medieval Europe, and as such, may have arrived in the city still containing the precious substance with which it was filled in the middle east.

The connexion of the Flaxengate settlement with the Scandinavian invasions of the late 9th century was amply demonstrated by the 1975-76 excavations. At much the same time, Scandinavian traders were pushing down the Volga to the Caspian. The chief lure was silver, rich mines in Afghanistan and elsewhere being exploited by the Caliphate of Baghdad from the late 9th century.¹⁷ Kufic silver flooded Scandinavia, especially Sweden, reaching a peak in the period 890-950.¹⁸ Scandinavian and Baltic