

V.—THE SEVENTH-CENTURY CHURCH AT HEXHAM: A NEW APPRECIATION.

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The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

Arch. Ael.—Archæologia Aeliana.

Arch. J.—Archæological Journal.

Yorks. Arch. J.—Yorkshire Archæological Journal.

INTRODUCTION.

The purpose of this article about the abbey church which St. Wilfrid built at Hexham and dedicated to St. Andrew is three-fold; first, to make generally available some new and important information which was compiled by Mr. C. C. Hodges over a period of about thirty years to 1910 but which has hitherto lain unpublished; secondly, to bring together into a single place a summary of all the relevant information, much of which has until now been scattered in many separate places, some of which have been rather inaccessible; and thirdly, on the basis of this information, to make a new appreciation of the probable character of St. Wilfrid's church. The third is perhaps the least important of these aims, for the surviving remains at Hexham still present so incomplete a picture that successive scholars are almost bound to differ in their interpretation; but, up to the present, as will appear in this paper, attempts at interpretation have been based on incomplete and inaccurate evidence, and the most important object of this article is, therefore, to put on record the whole of the evidence which is now likely to be available unless it

should ever again be possible to carry out further excavations on the site.

The fresh evidence which has come to light was found amongst the working papers which Professor Baldwin Brown had collected during the preparation of the second edition of his *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*.¹ It was in the form of two large-scale tracings prepared by Mr. Hodges, and a series of letters which he had sent to Baldwin Brown, who had urged him to show the results of his thirty years of observations on a small-scale plan such as appears on p. 166 of *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*. Hodges, while maintaining that this was impossible, had gladly supplied all the results of his work, in the form of the two surviving tracings, of which one is a plan at a scale of $\frac{3}{16}$ in. to a foot, and the other is a vertical section at the same scale. It seems clear that Baldwin Brown himself transferred from these tracings to his small-scale plan such of the information as he considered relevant, and that, in so doing, he distorted some of Hodges' observations and omitted many others.

Outline history of the church.

The present abbey church, standing at the west side of Hexham's busy market-place, is an impressive monument which dates mainly from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The aisled chancel is of the period of transition from Norman to Early English, and the transepts and crossing are fine examples of the latter style. Until the present nave was built in 1908, the area which it covers had lain desolate for centuries, and it is not clear how far the building of a medieval nave had progressed before it was stopped by a series of Scottish raids, of which the most disastrous was in 1296.

The site is fixed beyond doubt as that of St. Wilfrid's seventh-century church by the existence under the nave of a crypt almost identical in plan and construction with the crypt

¹ G. Baldwin Brown, *The Arts in Early England*, 2, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London, 1925). For the privilege of access to these working papers the writers wish to record their gratitude to Professor Bruce Dickins and Mr. P. Hunter Blair.

under Wilfrid's other church at Ripon. Details of the foundation of the churches at Hexham and Ripon and of the existence of a crypt at Hexham are given in the contemporary biography of Wilfrid written by his friend Eddius Stephanus.²

The ancient crypt was forgotten for centuries until it was rediscovered in 1726 during the digging of foundations for a buttress to strengthen the north-west angle of the tower. It was thereafter used as a burial-place for a local family, during which period some parts of the doorways were cut away for ease of entry. Its existence was recorded by historians, including Stukeley and Hutchinson, who gave accounts of Roman inscriptions on stones built into its walls but did not discuss its date or historical significance. It was not until 1846 that attention was drawn to the probability that this crypt and the similar one at Ripon were both the work of Wilfrid.³

Wilfrid was made abbot of Ripon about A.D. 660 and was chosen in 664 to be Bishop of the Northumbrians in succession to Colman, but, having gone to Gaul to be consecrated, he found on his return that Chad had been installed at York in his place; Wilfrid was installed as Bishop of York by Archbishop Theodore in 669 and during his tenure of that bishopric he not only restored the cathedral of York but also built the churches at Ripon and Hexham. After a somewhat tempestuous life which involved several changes between bishoprics and several journeys to Rome to secure the intervention of the Pope on his behalf he died in A.D. 709, as Bishop of Hexham, and was succeeded in that bishopric by Acca who "much adorned and added to the structure of the church which is dedicated to St. Andrew".⁴ The church at Hexham must have been built between the years 672 and

² B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927). Building of church at Ripon, Ch. 17; Building of church at Hexham, Ch. 22.

³ T. H. Turner, *Arch. J.*, 2 (1846), 239-242. Editorial, *ibid.*, 3 (1847), 163-4.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.*, Bk. 5, Ch. 20. For the facts about Wilfrid, see Colgrave, *loc. cit.*, particularly Chs. VIII to XV. Abbot of Ripon, Ch. 8; Chosen bishop of York in place of Colman, Ch. 11; Journey to Gaul, Ch. 12; Chad meantime installed at York, Ch. 14; Wilfrid restored to York, Ch. 15.

678, for Eddius in Chapter 22 records against those years that:

“having obtained an estate from the queen, St Aethilthryth, the dedicated to God, he founded and built a house to the Lord in honour of St Andrew the Apostle. My feeble tongue will not permit me here to enlarge upon the depth of the foundations in the earth, and its crypts of wonderfully dressed stone, and the manifold building above ground, supported by various columns and many side aisles, and adorned with walls of notable length and height, surrounded by various winding passages with spiral stairs leading up and down; for our holy bishop, being taught by the spirit of God, thought out how to construct these buildings; nor have we heard of any other house on this side of the Alps built on such a scale.”⁵

Eddius might well have been prejudiced in his judgement of the scale of Wilfrid's achievement, but when William of Malmesbury, writing early in the twelfth century with a knowledge of some of the great Norman cathedrals, could say that “those who have visited Italy allege that at Hexham they see the glories of Rome”, it becomes clear that the enthusiasm of Eddius must have had some real justification.⁶

Wilfrid built two further churches in Hexham, one dedicated to St. Peter and one to St. Mary.⁷ Hexham was therefore similar to a number of the early monastic establishments in having several separate churches. The site of St. Mary's church is known, and fragments of the medieval church which replaced Wilfrid's building may still be seen behind The Shambles by walking through a narrow passage called Old Church, which leads south-east from the abbey to the Meal Market. Here, in 1881, were discovered “three capitals of the bulb form, with the abacus and neck moulds all in the

⁵ B. Colgrave, *loc. cit.*, 45-7.

⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, Rolls Series (London, 1870), 255. He also said that neither time nor war had damaged the building, from which it would seem reasonable to deduce that he believed that Wilfrid's building had survived to his days.

⁷ B. Colgrave, *loc. cit.*, 123.

same stone".⁸ These may have been survivals from Wilfrid's church, or from pre-Conquest or early Norman additions to it. The description given by Aelred of Rievaulx of Wilfrid's church of St. Mary indicates that it was an elaborate structure with a circular central space and four projecting arms.⁹ The site of St. Peter's church is not known with certainty, but a town plan obtainable in Hexham in 1957 records that it probably stood on the site of a thoroughfare now known as Holy Island to the west-north-west of the abbey where foundations of some ancient buildings were found in the course of digging. Prior Richard referred to the church as further from the priory than St. Mary's but gave no other information about it.

Hexham remained a bishopric until about 821, after which the bishopric lapsed for a cause which is unknown but which may well have been the unsettled state of Bernicia at this time. The monastery, however, remained in being until the Danes under Haldene sailed up the Tyne in 875 and burnt it.¹⁰ It seems that the monastery did not remain long deserted, for from the beginning of the eleventh century there were hereditary provosts of Hexham, and hereditary priests who continued in office until Augustinian canons were installed in their place by Archbishop Thomas of York in 1113.¹¹ Baldwin Brown gives a reasoned account of the probability that Wilfrid's nave, or a considerable part of it, remained in being throughout the re-building of the choir and transepts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹² There were clearly attempts at the building of a new nave in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, as may be seen from an early type of Norman base at the west of the north arcade, from the west front, and from the south wall, but it is not clear how far the work was carried.

⁸ C. C. Hodges and J. Gibson, *Hexham and its Abbey* (Hexham, 1919).

⁹ J. Raine, *The Priory of Hexham*, 1, *Historians and Annals* (Durham, 1864), 183 and 14n.

¹⁰ Aelred of Rievaulx, *The Saints of Hexham*, Ch. XI; J. Raine, *loc. cit.*, 190. (Aelred was one of the three sons of Eilaf, a priest of Hexham.)

¹¹ J. Raine, *loc. cit.*, li and lxiii.

¹² Baldwin Brown, *loc. cit.*, 157-160.

Evidence for the nature of Wilfrid's church.

The parts of Wilfrid's church which are still visible above-ground are sufficient to enable the visitor to form a picture of the unusually large scale of the building, but they do not give any real evidence for the complicated structure described by Eddius. The site is therefore a most tantalizing one for the student of Anglo-Saxon architecture because no systematic investigation was made over the area of Wilfrid's nave before the opportunity was lost, probably for ever, by the building of the new nave in 1908.

A careful account of information which came to light during work on the church over a period of thirty years or more, particularly during the re-building of the nave, was kept by Mr. C. C. Hodges, resident architect and loving historian of the abbey, but such a record of chance discoveries can at best give much less information than would reasonably be expected from a series of systematic excavations such as could have been carried out before the new nave was built.

An exhaustive and critical comparison of the considerable literary evidence for Wilfrid's church with the rather fragmentary structural remains was given by Baldwin Brown in 1925.¹³ In that account, he referred to the help which he had received from Hodges, both in valuable communications over the years and also in tracings which showed the most recent discoveries. It has therefore been generally and reasonably assumed that Baldwin Brown's account, as summarized in his Fig. 71, gave all the architectural evidence which could now be expected to become available. This assumption is incorrect, and the tracings which Hodges sent to Baldwin Brown contain appreciably more information than was given in his text or shown in his Fig. 71. Moreover, in certain material details, Baldwin Brown's figure showed his own deductions from the tracings rather than the facts recorded on them.

¹³ G. Baldwin Brown, *loc. cit.*, Ch. VI, particularly 167-175.

That Baldwin Brown appreciated that his plan was incomplete is clear from his remark (p. 165) that his "three sketch-plans are only aids to the reading of the text and must not be taken as offering the exact measurements not really now available and in any case only possible on a scale larger than this volume allows". But smallness of scale is no excuse for distorting the evidence to fit preconceived ideas of what the evidence should be; as was done by Baldwin Brown, for example, when he discarded the four square foundations shown in Hodges' plan and substituted in their place a row of circular columns, with the remark (p. 172) that "on this line Mr. Hodges indicates old patches of foundation, but these seem too far apart to be brought into connection with Wilfrid's row of columns".

In order that readers may have the facts recorded by Hodges, entirely free from later speculation, Hodges' plan has been reproduced as he drew it, and conjectural reconstruction has been kept for a separate diagram. The plan as reproduced in Fig. 1 is a facsimile of the tracing drawn by Hodges in 1923 except that it has been reduced in scale, and except also that key-letters and numbers have been inserted on the plan in order to link individual features to their descriptions in the text; all other lettering on the plan (e.g. *visible, seen 1909*) is copied from Hodges' tracing. We have also given in the text, in Hodges' own words, descriptions of the principal features as he saw them between 1880 and 1910.

Even with this fresh evidence it is not easy to deduce the ground-plan of Wilfrid's church, still less to show without doubt that the complicated superstructure described by Eddius really existed, but the rich collections of architectural sculpture that have survived must surely be accepted as evidence of the former existence of an unusually ambitious church, and the recent accumulation of evidence of galleries and stairways in minor Anglo-Saxon churches has rendered untenable Baldwin Brown's assertion (p. 181) that "Wilfrid's galleries produced little or no effect and, save at Deerhurst,

there seems hardly any trace of them in existing Saxon buildings".¹⁴

STRUCTURAL REMAINS.

The structural remains of the early church at Hexham fall into two classes, those that can still be seen, and those for which the only evidence is the records of their observation during the period 1880-1910. Both classes are described below and both are indicated by key-letters on the plan in Fig. 1; these key-letters correspond to the letters of the separate paragraphs in the remainder of this section.

Visible Remains.

The structural remains which have survived from the pre-Conquest church at Hexham and which may still be seen on the site may be summarized as follows:

- (a) *West wall.* To the south of the west doorway of the abbey, the west wall may be seen to be of three different periods. The tall chamfered plinth is the work of thirteenth-century builders, but above this, and surrounded by well-dressed stones of the twentieth-century wall, is an area of earlier masonry eight courses in height, in which the stones are of varying sizes and show Roman tool-marks and cramp-holes. The inner face of this early wall may be seen in a passage in the thickness of the present west wall, and on this evidence the early wall is fixed as having been 2 ft. 8 ins. in thickness. The lowest four courses of the early masonry, twelve stones in all, are laid in regular coursing and may reasonably be accepted as part of Wilfrid's church, while the succeeding four courses, fifteen stones in all, are much more irregularly laid, and could represent a re-building.
- (b) *North wall.* The whole length of the outer wall of the north aisle of the nave may be seen from outside to be built on a much earlier wall, of which two courses survive along much of the length and one course along most of the remainder. The early fabric can be seen beginning at the diagonal buttress

¹⁴ H. M. Taylor, "Some little-known aspects of English Pre-Conquest Churches", *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. P. Clemoes (London, 1959), 142.

at the north-west corner of the church, continuing to the entrance to the underground boiler-house, and thence running the whole way to the west wall of the north transept. The two courses of early fabric are of stones with Roman tooling, similar to those in the west wall, and they may be taken as defining the north wall of Wilfrid's church.

- (c) *Flooring.* Within the nave, at the south-east corner beside the step to the crossing, an area of the floor can be seen to be of large irregular slabs of stone, and the southern five feet of the step is of similarly archaic construction. During the reconstruction of the nave in 1908 it was found that these slabs were laid on a thick bed of mortar on top of the upper surface of the vault of the crypt and of the covering slabs of its passages. The mortar on which the paving slabs were laid was seen to be of the same composition as that used in the crypt and in the north wall of Wilfrid's nave.¹⁵
- (d) *Apse.* Beneath the flooring of the present chancel, a trap-door and steps give access to an area in which there is preserved the whole eastern curved section and part of the straight side walls of a narrow apse whose eastern end is of semi-circular shape within and without. This has generally been interpreted as the eastern termination of Wilfrid's church, notwithstanding its narrow form, only about 11 ft. in internal width. Reasons are given below for believing that it was part of a separate apsidal church or chapel standing to the east of Wilfrid's church just as Edbald's chapel of St. Mary stood to the east of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which King Ethelbert erected at Canterbury at the inspiration of St. Augustine.
- (e) *Crypt.* This wonderful underground structure has fortunately remained almost intact. It is of exceptional interest both in itself and also for comparison with the crypt at Ripon which resembles it so closely. It has now only one entry, from the nave, by a steep flight of stone steps all of which are original except for a few at the top. This western flight of steps led pilgrims into a barrel-vaulted chamber about 9 ft. by 5 ft., from which, no doubt through a strong grille, they would be able to view the sacred relics that would be displayed in the main chamber, also barrel-vaulted, and about 14 ft. by 8 ft. The pilgrims would then pass northward into a small rectangular chamber whose ceiling is made of pairs of stone slabs placed to form a triangular-headed vault. From this chamber a narrow passage led eastward beside the crypt

¹⁵ C. C. Hodges and E. S. Savage, *A record of all works connected with Hexham Abbey* (Hexham, 1907), 39.

and then turned north, and again east, up flights of about thirteen steps. These steps still exist, almost to the level of the floor of the church, but their top is now covered by the north-west pier of the crossing. From the main chamber of the crypt yet a third passage led into another small rectangular chamber with a triangular-headed vault, whence another narrow passage led eastward, and then south, and again east, up steps, to the ground floor. No doubt this passage would have led to an area reserved for the clergy while the other two communicated with areas open to the public. The walls of the crypt are wholly of Roman-worked stones and the ceilings of the narrow passages are formed of flat slabs of stone laid across the tops of the walls. The barrel-vaults of the main chambers are formed by laying thin flag-stones between semi-circular vaulting-ribs which are spaced at 2 ft. 3 ins. from centre to centre.¹⁶ The various doorways are round-headed, and have square jambs cut straight through the walls, with the single exception of the doorway between the ante-chamber and the main crypt; in this doorway the jambs are splayed outward towards the ante-chamber, perhaps to give a better field of view. It should be noted, however, that the jamb on the south has been cut back in modern times when the crypt was used as a burial-chamber. The main crypt has three niches, with sunken cavities for oil lamps, and long conical cavities above, for the condensation of soot. The ante-chamber has one similar cavity, and also has a ventilation shaft from the top of its ceiling to the floor of the nave.

Remains seen and recorded by Hodges.

The existence and character of the architectural remains that were seen during excavations at Hexham between 1880 and 1910 rest not only on the drawings sent by Hodges to Baldwin Brown in 1921 but on references to them by Hodges in published works, particularly two volumes from which brief extracts are reprinted below with regard to each feature for which there is explicit reference in the published works.¹⁷

One important class of information is worth recording separately rather than by repetition in the individual notes,

¹⁶ W. T. Jones, *Yorks. Arch. J.*, 31 (1934), 74.

¹⁷ C. C. Hodges and E. S. Savage, *A record of all works connected with Hexham Abbey* (Hexham, 1907) (brief reference *Record*). C. C. Hodges and Gibson, *Hexham and its Abbey* (Hexham, 1919) (brief reference *Abbey*).

namely Hodges' observation that the character of the mortar in the Saxon fabric was quite different from the mortar in work of other periods in the building. He said (*Record*, p. 39):

"A valuable proof that the foundations unearthed this year are Saxon is provided by the mortar. Comparing this, as found in the walls and foundations, with that in the crypt and the floor above it, a valuable identity is established. . . . Exactly the same mortar was found in the north wall, which has been carefully preserved."

No attempt is made in this section to interpret the remains or to build up a single consistent picture. The notes are intended simply to bring into one place a convenient record of Hodges' observations in order that they may be used, along with the visible features listed above, as a basis for reconstructions of Wilfrid's church. An attempt at such a reconstruction is given in a subsequent section.

The features shown on Hodges' plan, and his descriptions of them in words, may be summarized as follows:

- (f) *North intermediate wall.* Within the present north aisle, a line of foundations was seen running east and west, about 6 ft. in clear to the south from the outer north wall.
Record, 39. At a short distance from the inside of the north wall and near its western end is a length of foundation 3 ft. 2 ins. wide and composed of Roman stones.
Hexham, 41. Between the main arcades and the outer walls were other arcades, and these seem to have had circular monolithic columns.
- (g) *Piers of the main north arcade.* Three large rectangular foundations were seen in the line of the present north arcade.
Record, 39. Under the great buttress built in 1725 to support the tower is a mass of foundation, the bed of which is 11 ft. 3 ins. below the Saxon floor level and is about 11 ft. square. It is formed of Roman stones of great size and the Saxon mortar is a conspicuous feature of its construction.
Hexham, 41. The piers were apparently square and were 23 ft. 6 ins. from centre to centre. The main arcades were of four bays on either side.

- (h) *Internal wall.* Within the nave, a line of foundation was seen running east and west, about 7 ft. in clear to the north of the inner face of the present main south wall of the nave. There seems to be no reference to it in Hodges' published works, but it is shown on the plan exactly as indicated in our figure.
- (j) *Piers of the main south arcade.* Hodges regarded these as having been on the line of the present south wall of the nave. Just as the piers of the main north arcade were on foundations much wider than the walls, so he thought that the southern foundations stretched from the outer face of the present wall to a line about 3 ft. within the present inner face. His observations seemed, however, to show that the foundations on this line were continuous, by contrast to the three separate piers on the north.

Record, 39. One yard from the inner face of the south wall of fourteenth-century date is a similar foundation, of the same width, running the whole length of the nave.

Hexham, 32. The foundation [of the present south wall of the nave] is of St. Wilfrid's time and bore one of the main arcades of his church.

- (k) *South intermediate wall.* There seems to be no reference to this wall in Hodges' published works but it is shown very distinctly in his drawing, where it should be noted that its position in relation to the outer wall (l) and the arcade-wall (j) is the same as that of the north intermediate wall (f) to the walls (b) and (g).
- (l) *South outer wall.* This is shown clearly on the plan at its eastern end, and conjecturally along the rest of its length.

Record, 40. Outside the south wall [of the present nave] is a foundation at such a distance from the centre of the church as to equal the distance of the north wall from the same line. It no doubt indicated the line of Wilfrid's south wall. It has been much disturbed and cannot be conveniently opened out and examined.

Hexham, 41. The foundations of the south wall were seen in 1908 and a number of the stones of the lower course were evidently *in situ*.

- (m) *Transverse internal projections.* Two lines of wall projecting inwards into the church are shown in Hodges' plan. That which is shown as projecting northward into the body of the church is not mentioned explicitly in the *Record* but is shown in manuscript on the plan as part of the thirteenth-century stone screen. That which is shown as projecting southward from the north outer wall is referred to in Hodges' plan as being still visible and is also mentioned explicitly in the

Record. It should be noted that the latter (m_2) is in a position which corresponds with the piece of wall (m_3) that is shown as joining the eastern end of the south intermediate wall (k) to the south outer wall (l).

Record, 39. (With regard to m_2 .) In the eastern end of the aisle are foundations of large stones projecting north of the line of foundations of the wall.

- (n) *Transverse walls projecting outward on the south.* These are not mentioned in Hodges' published works but two are shown clearly on the plan; a vestige (n_1) running south from the main outer wall (l), and a second vestige (n_2) continuing the wall (m_3) southward beyond the lateral wall (o).
- (o) *Southerly lateral walls, as of transepts or porticus.* These walls are not mentioned in Hodges' published works but are clearly shown on the plan.
- (p) *South-eastern transverse wall, as of a transept.* This wall, which presents considerable difficulty of interpretation, is both shown on the plan and also mentioned by Hodges as running along the whole length of the transept and continuing southward as far as the centre of the chapter-house, a total length of about 80 ft.

Record, 47. In the western part of the slype a foundation was reached. It crossed the slype and was 3 ft. in width. On removing the upper course stones, the large slab with the effigy of the standard bearer was found lying face upward and forming the second remaining course. . . . The foundation was traced as far as the centre of the chapter-house.

. . . Two years later [excavation for hot water pipes proved that] the same foundations existed along the whole length of the south transept.

- (q) *Transverse wall at east of nave.* This wall is shown on the plan as having been seen in the period 1882-93. It is shown as of much bigger stones than the step from the nave to the crossing.

Record, 47. Other foundations formed of large stones with Roman broaching were seen in the vicinity of the western piers of the tower and east of the crypt. They were in such a disturbed state that nothing short of clearing out the whole area under the tower would have enabled a plan to be made.

- (r) *Transverse wall by present choir screen.* This wall is clearly shown on the plan as seen in 1908 and is described in *Hexham*, where it is given an interpretation with which we do not agree.

Hexham, 42. The altar stood on a raised platform to the east of the sanctuary. The western part of this platform was found *in situ*, the great blocks being jointed with the peculiar Saxon mortar.

- (s) *Transverse wall projecting outward on the north.* This wall was not mentioned in Hodges' published works but is clearly shown on the plan, in a position corresponding roughly with the vestige of wall (n₁) on the south.
- (t) *Flooring at the west of the nave.* This is shown extensively on the plan. The published reference shows that it was removed.

Hexham, 42. Near to the west wall an area of old flooring was found, of squared stones. The best of these have been laid down in the floor beneath the altar.

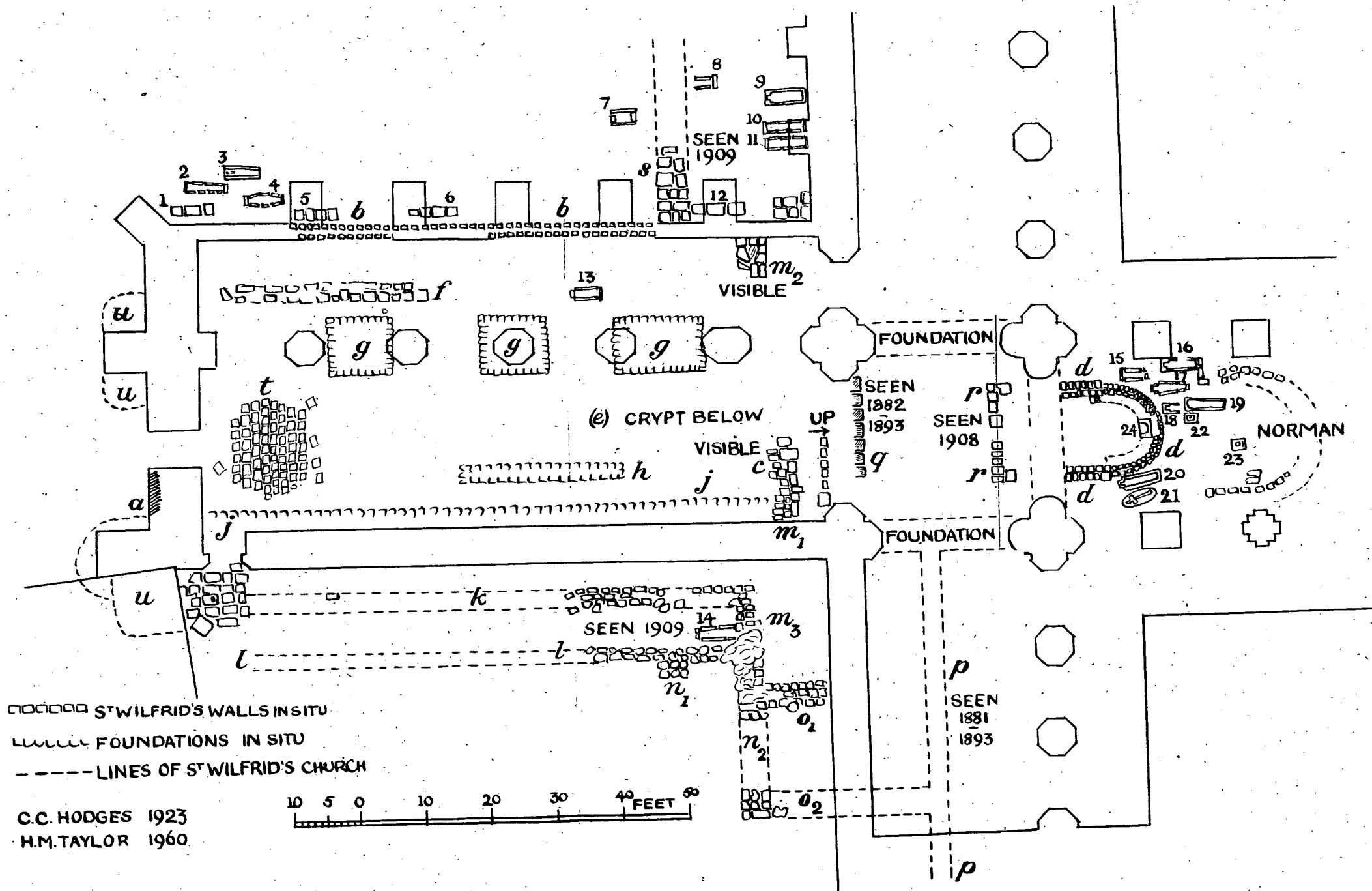
- (u) *Great foundations at the west.* These were interpreted by Hodges as foundations for twin western towers.

Hexham, 34. The great west buttress on the line of the main arcade . . . is on a foundation of great Roman stones which were laid for one of Wilfrid's western towers, and some of them are *in situ*.

Hexham, 42. At the west end of the nave were two towers of considerable size as their foundation courses of huge Roman stones were as much as eighteen feet square.

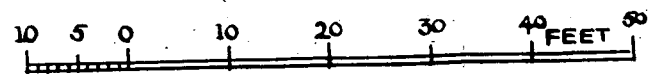
SCULPTURE AND OTHER REMAINS.

In addition to the structural remains recorded above, the picture which we may form of a church of major importance at Hexham rests on other groups of evidence. First, there is the important evidence provided by the great number of carved stones which have been found on the site and which, from their shape and from the nature of their carving, seem to have formed part of the structure; these stones give evidence of the importance of the building and of the richness of its decoration. Secondly, there is the remarkable series of sculptured cross-shafts of such excellence that a whole class of similar sculptures has become known as the work of the Hexham School. Thirdly, there is the considerable group of burials recorded on Hodges' plan as having taken place beside the walls of the church; and finally there are the carved stone



■■■■■ ST WILFRID'S WALLS INSITU
 ~~~~~ FOUNDATIONS IN SITU  
 - - - - LINES OF ST WILFRID'S CHURCH

C.C. HODGES 1923  
 H.M. TAYLOR 1960



IG. 1.





chair traditionally known as the Frith Stool, and a further treasure in the form of a small copper-gilt chalice of unusual interest and importance, which has recently been restored to the church.

*The architectural sculpture, and other structural details.*

A considerable wealth of architectural sculpture was found on the site, mainly during the re-building of the nave in 1908. Much of this is now preserved in the church, either built into the walls or placed in niches in the wall of the north aisle; a further considerable collection is preserved in the cathedral library at Durham. Notes on the sculpture in the church were given by Hodges in the two books to which reference has already been given, and a critical survey was published by Collingwood in 1925.<sup>18</sup> The architectural features at Hexham fall into ten main groups as follows:

1. *String-courses decorated with balusters.* These are represented by five pieces of stone, each about 6 ins. in thickness, and each carved only on one face. They therefore seem clearly to have been string-courses of the common Saxon form of plain square section, but differing from it by their unusual decoration. Three of these (Collingwood's Fig. 33, *b, c, d*) are in Durham, while two (*a* and *h*) are at Hexham.<sup>19</sup> Similar string-courses have been preserved in the neighbouring church at Simonburn (Collingwood's Fig. 33, *e, f, g*) and an analogous use of small balusters as ornament is to be seen in a stone preserved in the north porch at Jarrow (illustrated in Baldwin Brown's Fig. 105).

2. *String-courses carved with interlacing ornament.* Four pieces of stone of similar shape to those described above, but decorated with simple interlacing or knot-work, are preserved in the church at Hexham (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *h, i, j, k*).

3. *Stones carved with geometrical ornament.* Three stones from Hexham show geometrical ornament in a form which would have been suitable for string-courses, cornices, or imposts. The first

<sup>18</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Arch. Ael.*, 4th ser., 1 (1925), 65-92. Much of the same material was re-published in the same author's *Northumbrian Crosses* (London, 1927), 22-23 and 27-34. These articles include discussions of the sculptured crosses as well as the architectural sculpture.

<sup>19</sup> References to Collingwood's figures are to those in *Northumbrian Crosses*.

two, preserved at Hexham, are of about the same thickness as the string-courses described above and are decorated with cable mouldings in conjunction with lightly incised chevrons on one stone and with squares or dentils in relief on the other (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *a, b*). The third stone, preserved in the cathedral library at Durham, is much taller, about 1 ft. 3 ins., and is carved on two adjoining faces. It therefore probably represents an angle of a cornice or an impost. Its ornament comprises a row of volutes, a row of cable or wheat-ear, and areas of checky ornament in relief, as on the Bewcastle cross (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *c, d*).

4. *Stones carved with animal ornament.* Animals carved in relief occurred as a string-course on the west porch at Monkwearmouth but have now almost completely weathered away. One stone now built into the west end of the north aisle at Hexham seems to have been part of such a string-course; it shows two bird-like heads, one of which is attached to a snake-like body which is coiled into a spiral (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *l*). Another stone, preserved in Niche 7 (the seventh from the west) at Hexham, is carved on two adjoining faces and might have been an impost, or even a bench-end or a support for a chair, as has been suggested by Clapham for the Monkwearmouth lions.<sup>20</sup> One face has a spirited representation of a running hound, and the adjoining face is carved with concentric squares and circles (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *e, f*). The third animal stone at Hexham, built into the west wall of the north aisle, was found during the re-building, used as a tread of a stair in the medieval newel stair in the west wall (*Record*, 40). It was interpreted by Hodges as part of a capital, but it might well have formed one of the supports for the Frith Stool; it is carved in relief with an animal that might be a lion (Collingwood's Fig. 34, *g*).

5. *Imposts.* Built into the jambs of the twentieth-century western doorway of the nave are two early stones which seem to have been impostes. They are not illustrated or described by Collingwood. That on the north jamb has raised triple mouldings which are carried round the angle to its soffit face. That on the south jamb is differently ornamented on its two faces; the east face towards the nave has wheat-ear or double cable ornament, and the soffit face, although damaged beside the angle, has small balusters on the remainder of its length.

<sup>20</sup> A. W. Clapham, *Arch. Ael.*, 4th ser., 28 (1950), 1.

6. *Columns.* The former existence at Hexham of attached and free-standing columns is proved by three stones which have been built into the outer face of the wall of the north aisle, on either side of the window in the fourth bay from the east. On the east of the window is a tall section of stone, 2 ft. 3 ins. in height, which was part of a half-round attached column 1 ft. 6 ins. in diameter; short pieces of straight walling may clearly be seen, forming part of the stone, on either side of the half-cylinder, thus proving that it was an attached shaft and not free-standing. On the west of the window are two superimposed sections of a free-standing circular column about 10 ins. in diameter and each about 1 ft. 4 ins. tall. These stones are not carved with sculpture and therefore are not illustrated or described by Collingwood.

7. *Window-heads.* Two fragments have been somewhat conjecturally interpreted as window-heads, mainly on the strength of the curved and moulded shape of the one intact edge of one of them, which is now built into the west wall of the north aisle (Collingwood's Fig. 35, *m, n*).

8. *Screen fragments.* Two groups of carvings suitable for use in screen walls are illustrated in Collingwood's Fig. 28 and Fig. 35, *p*. The first is an elaborate carving with birds and human figures, including an archer, incorporated in an elaborate double vine-scroll; the second is a simple rosette of classical form. Two parts *b* and *c* of the first stone are in the cathedral library at Durham, while *a* is in Niche 8 in the north aisle at Hexham. The rosette is in Niche 6. Collingwood regards the elaborate vine-and-figure panel as having come from Romano-British Corstopitum and, in spite of the presence of inhabited vine scroll, he does not regard it as having served as a model for the Anglian crosses which incorporate this motive. Collingwood names a classical model for the rosette, and by inference regards it as part of the work of Wilfrid's or later workmen.

9. *Pilaster base or capital.* This is a curious curved stone ornamented on three sides with four raised mouldings separated by two lines of roundels and one line of cable ornament (Collingwood's Fig. 35, *a*).

10. *The Rood.* This was described by Hodges (*Record*, 42) as a terracotta plaque found in a hole in the centre of the nave, near the west, in 1907; he did not say where the fragments were preserved, but he described them, saying that the largest showed the feet side by side, another carried the dexter arm of the cross,

and a third carried an angel's wing. He also gave dimensions which agree roughly with those quoted by Collingwood in connexion with his Fig. 36. Collingwood, however, although showing the feet side by side, and an angel's wing, does not show the arm of the cross; he describes the material of the Rood as whitish yellow stone, not local, probably oolite. We have so far been unable to trace this work, which seems from Collingwood's drawing to have been of the highest quality, reminiscent of the important fragments of the great cross from Reculver, for which Peers argued a seventh-century date. Collingwood suggests an overseas origin for the Hexham Rood and regards it as a possible source of inspiration for the representations of the crucifixion on the Spital cross at Hexham and on the Ruthwell and other early Northumbrian crosses.

*Burials and sculptured crosses.*

The burials discovered during the restoration of 1907 and in the subsequent works up to 1910 are shown on Hodges' plan. In our reproduction of it we have added key-numbers 1 to 23 in order to simplify references to individual features. Only two burials were found within the area of the early church, one about the middle of the present north aisle of the nave (13) and one in the south-east angle of the double south wall of the early nave, that is to say in the area of the present cloister (14). These were both of the simple form in which the cyst or coffin is formed of upright slabs of stone laid closely round the body, without any stone floor. Their lids had vanished, and no bones were found within.

Close outside the north wall and near its western end were six similar burials, several of which were intact. The vertical slabs were closely fitted to the bodies, which were laid out on their backs with their heads to the west. Three of the coffins (1, 5 and 6) were covered with groups of flat stones, four to each coffin; two (2 and 4) had lost their lids; and one (3) had a single large stone lid on which there had been carved the outline of a small chalice. A group of four similar simple stone-lined graves (8 and 10 to 12) was found in the angle between the north wall of the nave and the west wall of the present north transept, in an area which might

have been external to the original church but enclosed by the later addition of a northern chapel or *porticus*. In this area was also found a stone coffin (9), hollowed out from a single large stone, but without any lid or contents.

By contrast with these primitive and rather scattered remains, a well-developed and concentrated cemetery was found surrounding the narrow eastern apse. Some of the coffins in this cemetery were of the primitive, built-up form already described, but others were hollowed out of single large stones, and two had carved lids of considerable interest. One coffin (21), locally ascribed to Acca (Bishop from 709 to 732, died 740) is still visible where it was found empty and open, with its lid beside it, close to the south wall of the apse. Its lid, now to be seen on the floor of the choir under the most westerly arch of the south arcade, is oval in shape and is decorated with a primitive cross in low relief, with a curious, spade-shaped foot. A second lid, also decorated with an early form of cross, is to be seen standing against the north wall of the north aisle; its cross is not worked in relief but is outlined by a narrow incised line.

Directly to the east of the apse were two square stone bases (22 and 23) for standing crosses, and a further group of graves, while a little further to the east were found the curved foundations of the apse of the Norman choir, presumably the building whose consecration in 1154 was associated with a great translation of relics.<sup>21</sup>

Symeon of Durham recorded that Acca was buried to the east of the church, outside the wall, and that the grave was marked by two crosses of stone, wondrously carved, of which one stood at the head, with an inscription to say who was buried there, and one stood at the foot.<sup>22</sup> This passage points to one of the coffins at the east as having been the site of Acca's burial rather than the one at the south of the apse to which reference was made above. Whichever may have

<sup>21</sup> Baldwin Brown, *loc. cit.*, 158.

<sup>22</sup> J. Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, Surtees Society Publication, No. 44 (Durham and London, 1864), 205.

been Acca's coffin, there seems, however, to have been unusual accord among antiquaries in agreeing that the noble cross which now stands in the south transept must be the cross which was described by Symeon as standing at the head of Acca's grave. The facts certainly seem to be consistent with that interpretation, though it would be difficult to say that they proved the ascription beyond all doubt. We would prefer to say that the cross is traditionally and not unreasonably regarded as having been that which stood at the head of Acca's grave. It has been built up from three separate sections of which the middle piece was found under the floor of the eastern part of the chancel in 1858, the upper piece was found near St. Mary's church in 1870, and the lower piece, long used as the lintel of a doorway at Dilston, was presented to the Abbey by the Commissioners of Greenwich hospital.<sup>23</sup> One side of the stone bore an inscription, only fragments of which are now legible, and the three others are indeed "wondrously carved" with vine scroll of a type which particularly characterized the Hexham School.<sup>24</sup>

A second cross of very similar character has survived only in part, and is in the cathedral library at Durham (Collingwood, Fig. 40). It was found in the neighbourhood of St. Mary's church, part of the ruins of which are now incorporated in shops at the south-east of the market place.

Yet a third cross of similar character is reconstructed in Collingwood's Fig. 42 from three fragments of which one is in private possession, one at Durham, and one in the church at Hexham.

The fourth of the remarkable Hexham crosses, formerly in private ownership at the Spital, a few miles to the west of Hexham, but now fortunately restored to the church, differs from the others by having on its front a representation of the Crucifixion (Collingwood, Fig. 37).

Two other groups of pre-Conquest carved stones are also

<sup>23</sup> F. J. Haverfield and W. Greenwell, *Catalogue of the sculptured and inscribed stones in the Cathedral Library, Durham* (Durham 1899), 58.

<sup>24</sup> W. G. Collingwood, *Northumbrian Crosses*, 29-32.

represented in the church, namely, the early kind of small memorials known as pillow-stones, of which many were found at Lindisfarne and at Hartlepool, and the much later form of grave-stones known as hog-backs which are rare in Northumberland but common in other parts of Northumbria. One pillow-stone, now preserved in Niche 7, was found in 1911 in Beaumont Street which runs by the south-east side of the abbey; it bears a cross carved in relief, within a sunken circular area, and the letters TUNDWINI are carved, in pairs, on the four arms of the cross. A second stone which may be of the same sort is built into the west interior wall of the nave, on the north of the west doorway; it shows a carving in relief of a primitive form of cross like that on the large grave cover that is traditionally assigned to Acca. One hog-back, now in Niche 5, has the usual form of tiled roof, with interlacing ornament on its sides; it was found in 1907 built into the south wall of the nave. The other, in Niche 7, is of altogether unusual nature, illustrated by Collingwood in his Fig. 213, and interpreted by him as a clumsy representation of intersecting arcading. On this basis, Collingwood dated this hog-back to the Saxo-Norman overlap, possibly to the period when Eilaf, the father of Aelred of Rievaulx, was priest at Hexham.

#### *The Frith Stool.*

The so-called Frith Stool, associated with the privilege of sanctuary which Wilfrid obtained for his church, is an important part of the church furniture and is an unusually perfect example of this early type. It now stands in the choir above the eastern curve of the narrow apse. Hodges recorded that when the apse was excavated in May 1908, a few stones of its flooring were *in situ* and also a small portion of the base of the stone seats which surrounded the semi-circle (*Hexham*, 82). He therefore assumed that the Frith Stool originally occupied the centre of the semi-circle, in a position immediately below the place where it now stands in the choir. Reference has already been made, under item 4

of architectural sculpture, to the possibility that the representation of a running hound might have been a bench end and that the carved lion might have served as a support for the Frith Stool.

*The Chalice.*

An important survival from the early days of the abbey has recently been restored to the church from private possession. This is a small copper-gilt chalice of a size that would have been suitable for use with a portable altar such as is preserved among the relics of St. Cuthbert at Durham. Only two other Anglo-Saxon chalices are known, one in silver, from the Trewhiddle hoard, now in the British Museum, and one in lead, which was found at Hagleton in Gloucestershire, and is now lost. The Hexham example is about  $2\frac{3}{4}$  ins. in height, with a bowl about 2 ins. in diameter. It is very simple in character, consisting of the bowl, a spherical stem, and a splayed foot, all in copper-gilt, and with no ornament except a single fillet of twisted cable round the junction of the bowl with the spherical stem.

A TENTATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL PLAN OF WILFRID'S CHURCH, AND ITS SUBSEQUENT MODIFICATIONS.

In attempting to reconstruct a picture of the original buildings at Hexham from the scanty remains recorded above it is important to bear in mind the supporting evidence that is provided by the written descriptions and by other surviving buildings of the same period. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the descriptions indicate that the building was in a class by itself.

Our suggested reconstruction of the early church is shown in Fig. 2; this has been kept separate from our reproduction of Hodges' original tracing in order that there may be no risk of confusing the features which he saw with those shown in our tentative reconstruction. We have, however, used the



same key-letters, and reproduced both plans on the same scale, thereby facilitating comparison. The only feature in Hodges' plan for which we have been unable to make any suggestion is his interior line of foundation (h).

*The eastern apse.*

The first point which seems to us to stand out clearly from Hodges' plan is that the eastern apse was not part of Wilfrid's main church, but was a separate, free-standing, apsidal chapel, about 23 ft. long internally, and about 11 ft. wide, with walls about 2 ft. 6 ins. thick.

It also seems probable that the wall (q) described by Hodges under the western arch of the crossing was the east wall of Wilfrid's church, and that the "step" at the east of the nave was part of the wall or its footings. If so, the separate apsidal chapel stood about 20 ft. clear from the east wall of Wilfrid's church. The arrangement was therefore very similar to that which was to be seen at St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, in the relation between the principal church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, and the later chapel dedicated to St. Mary.

It is difficult to be certain whether the "Foundations" marked by Hodges under the three remaining arches of the medieval crossing were intended by him to mean Anglo-Saxon foundations or whether they are to be associated with the medieval church. In the former event, which seems to be indicated by the way in which the lines are drawn, these foundations would most probably represent a later pre-Conquest joining of the apsidal chapel to the main church, in the way which is known to have happened at Canterbury.

One important consequence of this interpretation of the remains as having originally been two churches is that the east end of Wilfrid's main church thereby comes into direct relation to the position of his crypt. In this new interpretation of the structures, his principal altar would have stood immediately above his crypt in the position where it is marked in the plan. In this connexion, it is of interest to

note that the crypt at Ripon is in the crossing of the medieval cathedral church, not beneath the high altar, and it seems at least a possible explanation of this otherwise curious coincidence that in both cases the east end of the principal church was over the crypt and that there was a subsidiary chapel on the same axis, but further to the east. The architectural development of both churches would therefore be closely parallel to that of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, where the Norman chancel occupies the former position of the chapel of St. Mary, the Norman nave lies on top of the principal church of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the Norman crossing stands where Wulfric's octagon was first built to join the two.

This explanation of Hodges' plan and of the development of the abbey at Hexham in terms of an original lay-out of two separate churches on a single axis may sound far-fetched, but the evidence for such an arrangement has long been accepted not only at Canterbury but also at Jarrow. The new evidence for asserting that Hexham belonged to this category is the discovery of the existence of the west wall of the eastern chapel, as seen and recorded by Hodges at (r) on his plan. Hodges did not interpret this fabric as the west wall of an eastern chapel, but as a platform for an altar (*Hexham*, 42); but we must remember that St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, had not been excavated when Hodges saw these stones, and that he therefore did not have the benefit of the clear example which it provides for the former existence of a series of churches or chapels all placed on a single axial alignment. In proposing this new interpretation for the fabric recorded by Hodges, we would like to draw attention particularly to two very significant facts; first, that Hodges showed the wall as turning eastward at both ends; and, secondly, that the extreme length of the wall and its position are exactly such as to ensure that its corners are precisely aligned with the straight side-walls of the surviving apse. We suggest that these are coincidences too striking to admit of any explanation other than the one which we have

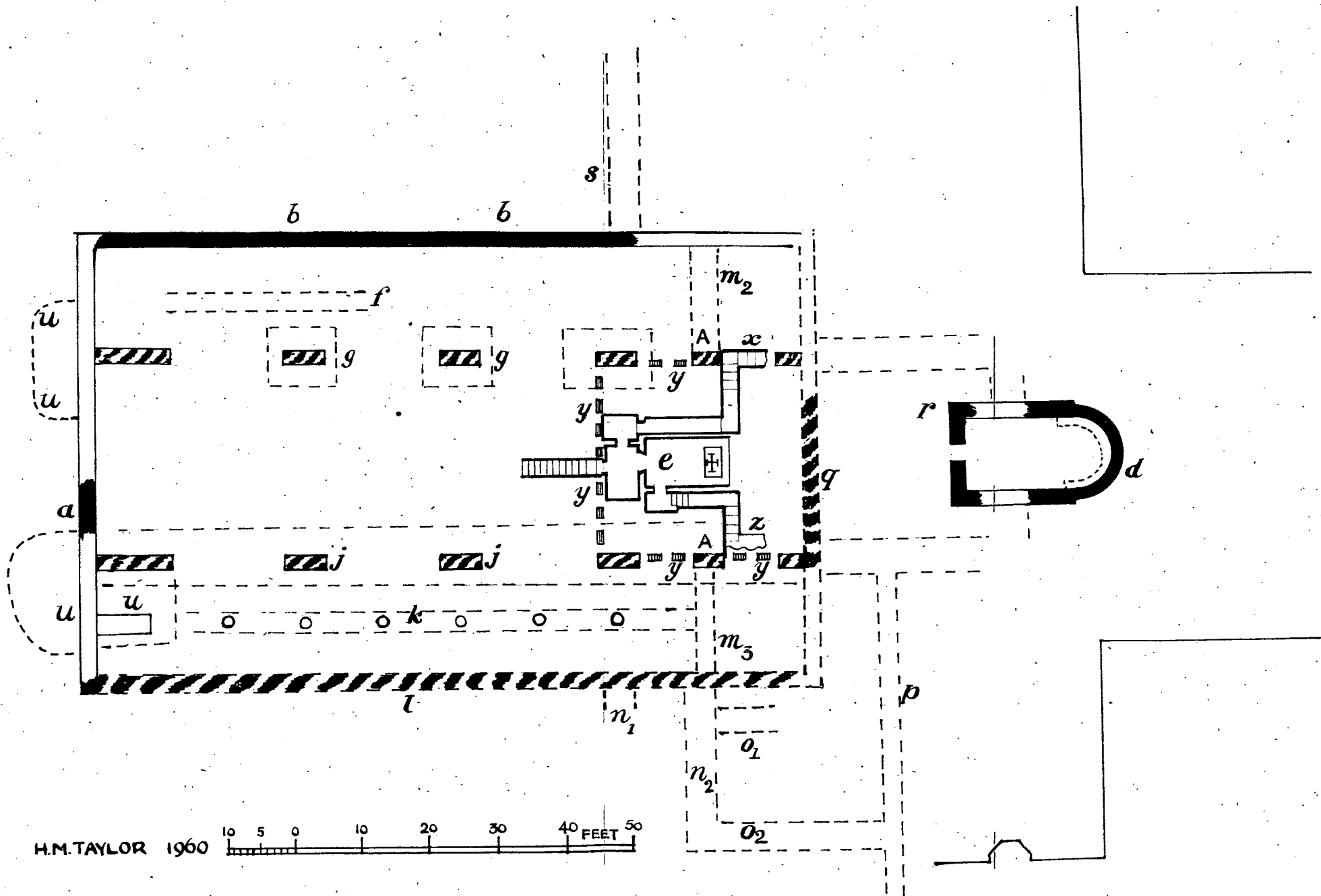


FIG. 2.



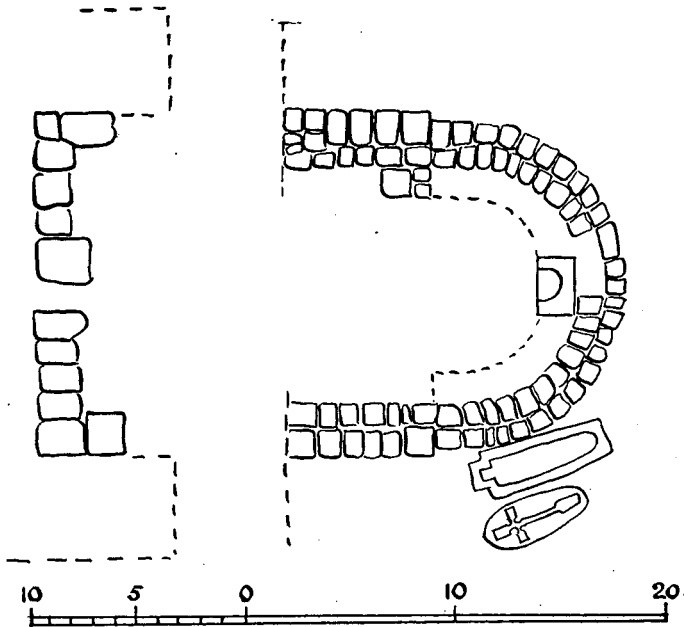


FIG. 3.

given. In order that readers may have the clearest possible evidence on this important point we have reproduced this part of Hodges' drawing in Fig. 3 at a larger scale.

Before leaving the eastern apse, it should be put on record that the floor, of which some stones were found *in situ*, is about 1 ft. 4 ins. below the level of the floor of Wilfrid's main church, as defined by the area of paved flooring still *in situ* above the crypt. Reference should also be made again to the base for the stone bench which Hodges found round the inner curve of the apse.

#### *The arcades of the main church.*

Baldwin Brown's Fig. 71 showed a nave with arcades of eight bays, separated by circular columns, whereas Clapham's Fig. 15 showed arcades each of six bays, separated by square

columns. But Clapham's text indicated that he regarded his plan as largely conjectural; and in any case he did not have access to Hodges' drawings. Baldwin Brown's insistence on a row of circular columns in the face of the evidence provided by Hodges' plan is more difficult to understand. The evidence provided by the early writers for the existence of columns is overwhelming, but columns can be square as well as round, and one of the passages quoted by Baldwin Brown from Richard of Hexham is most naturally to be interpreted as a reference to square columns of well polished stone.<sup>25</sup> The early churches were often referred to by the name "basilica", and this has been used as an argument for arcades supported by circular columns, but square columns are well authenticated for the early church at Jarrow, where the contemporary use of the word basilica is proved by the survival of the dedication stone. Moreover, it should be noted that, whereas Eddius refers to the building of Wilfrid's "basilica" at Ripon, he uses the word "domus" in all his references to Hexham,<sup>26</sup> while Richard of Hexham uses the word "ecclesia".<sup>27</sup>

If next we compare Hodges' observations with other similar churches of about the same date we get remarkable support for the square columns which he recorded. At Brixworth, the arcades, which are still intact, are of four bays separated by rectangular piers, spaced at about 16 ft. between centres. At Jarrow, the early nave was demolished in 1782, but the internal elevation and plan prepared in 1769 and preserved in the British Museum show a nave separated from side-chapels by arcades each of four bays of round arches on rectangular piers spaced at about 18 ft. between centres.<sup>28</sup> Hodges' plan shows the north arcade at Hexham quite

<sup>25</sup> Baldwin Brown, 155. "Parietes autem quadratis, et variis, et bene politis columnis suffultos erexit."

<sup>26</sup> B. Colgrave, *The life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927), 36 and 46.

<sup>27</sup> Baldwin Brown, 155.

<sup>28</sup> E. Gilbert, *P. Soc. Ant. Newcastle*, 5th ser., 1 (1951-56), 311, or B. Colgrave and T. Romans, *St. Paul's Church, Jarrow* (Gloucester, undated), 4.

unambiguously as of four bays separated by supports which rested on huge foundations spaced at about 23 ft. 6 ins. between centres. His vertical section places the matter even further beyond doubt, for the huge square foundations are there shown as supporting piers which are about 6 ft. in extent along the line of the walls. These may be compared with the 8 ft. piers at Brixworth and those of about 6 ft. at Jarrow.

Reference has, however, already been made to the survival of circular columns from the early church at Hexham (p. 119, item 6). The half-round attached columns, of which one section is preserved, could well have formed enrichment for the soffit-faces of rectangular piers such as are shown in Hodges' plan and section, while the lighter, circular, free-standing columns of which two sections have survived could perhaps have supported a screen or a triple chancel-arch like that at Reculver. They might also have been used, as is suggested below, to form an intermediate colonnade to give extra support for a wide gallery. It is, however, quite clear that these light, circular columns would not have been nearly strong enough to form supports for the main wall of the church if spaced at the wide separation indicated by Hodges' foundations; nor would massive foundations of this character have been appropriate to support such light columns. The possibility cannot, of course, be ruled out that the great foundations, and the rectangular bases shown by Hodges as resting on them, supported massive circular columns such as the section which survives in the west end of the north aisle at Ripon, but the analogies provided by the churches at Brixworth and Jarrow give considerable support for believing that the arcade rested on rectangular piers and that the surviving sections of early circular columns served some different purposes such as are suggested above.

*The multiple side walls.*

The next remarkable feature of Hodges' plan to which attention must be directed is the multiple nature of the side

walls of the aisles or lateral chapels. This is most clearly shown at the eastern end of the south of the church, where the two side walls (k) and (l) are joined by the transverse wall (m<sub>2</sub>); but it has already been pointed out that Hodges recorded an intermediate wall (f), on the north, which stood in exactly the same relation to the main arcade (g) and the north outer wall (b) as does the southern intermediate wall (k) to the main wall (j) and the south outer wall (l).

We seem, therefore, to be presented with a picture of a nave consisting of a broad central chamber, about 25 ft. wide, flanked on either side by double aisles or a double row of side-chapels. The possibility must not be ruled out that Hodges was correct in regarding the intermediate walls (f) and (k) as merely sleeper walls, designed to carry colonades (*Hexham*, 41). Another possibility which should also be considered is that the intermediate walls (f) and (k) might have been the main outer walls of the aisles, thus defining the aisles, or side-chapels, as about 7 ft. in width, by comparison with about 9 ft. at Brixworth and about 8 ft. at Jarrow; in this event, the outer walls (b) and (l) might have been sleeper walls carrying a colonnade to provide a covered passage round the exterior of the church. Finally, although the purpose seems hard to understand, we must consider the possibility that both sets of walls were carried up to their full height, thus producing a nave flanked on either side by aisles, or side-chapels, which in turn were separated from the outer world by passages, about 7 ft. in width, which ran from east to west between the two lines of wall. Difficult though this may be to understand, it does seem to bear close relation to the description given by Eddius of a church "surrounded by various winding passages",<sup>29</sup> and to Richard of Hexham's description of how Wilfrid "surrounded the body of the church on all sides with adjuncts and side-chapels, which with wonderful artifice he divided into lower and upper storeys, with partition walls and spiral stairways, in and

<sup>29</sup> B. Colgrave, *loc. cit.*, 47.



above which there were ascents of stone and level passages and many winding ways".<sup>30</sup>

A somewhat similar picture of complicated structures at the side of the church is given by Bede (Bk. V, ch. 20) in his reference to the way in which Acca, having succeeded Wilfrid as bishop, procured relics from all places and "put up altars in veneration of them, in separate side-chapels for this purpose within the walls of the same church".<sup>31</sup>

In our suggested reconstruction, Fig. 2, we have shown the intermediate wall (k) as a sleeper wall carrying a colonnade. We doubt whether it will ever be possible to determine with certainty what was the original arrangement, and we have shown this as a tentative suggestion. A series of light columns placed along this line might well have served to give extra support for a wide gallery extending from above the main arcade (j) to the outer wall (l). It would also have been possible to place a narrow gallery at an intermediate height, running from the colonnade (k) to the outer wall (l), but this again is mere conjecture. We have not complicated the figure by showing any corresponding colonnade on the north intermediate wall (f).

#### *The western towers.*

All the later medieval descriptions of the church concurred with Eddius in referring to spiral stairways with stone stairs leading up and down. No vestige of any of these has remained, but Hodges interpreted the great stone foundations (u) at the west of the church as foundations for twin west towers. The existence of stairways to upper chambers in early churches of about this date may be accepted as established beyond doubt by the upper doorways in the west walls of the naves at Brixworth and Deerhurst. This need not by itself lead to any change in the accepted theory that belfry

<sup>30</sup> Baldwin Brown, 155. "Corpus ecclesiae apenticis et porticibus undique circumcinxit quae miro et inexplicabili artificio per parietes et cocleas inferius et superius distinxit. In ipsis vero cocleis et super ipsas ascensoria ex lapide et deambulatoria et varios vicarum sufractus . . . fecit."

<sup>31</sup> D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, 1, c. 500-1042, gen. ed. D. C. Douglas (London, 1955), 680.

towers did not become established in England until the ninth or tenth century, for there is nothing in the literary evidence to suggest that the stairways extended higher than was necessary to lead to the chambers or passages in the church.

*The arch of the Sanctuary.*

Richard of Hexham recorded that Wilfrid adorned the walls and the capitals of the columns that sustained them, and the arch of the sanctuary, with stories and pictures and many sculptured figures in relief on stone.<sup>32</sup> This evidence is borne out in a general way by the wealth of sculptured stone which is still preserved in the church, but the question of the sanctuary-arch now deserves consideration. Clapham and Baldwin Brown both tentatively placed it on the line of the present western arch of the crossing, that is to say in the position which we suggest for the east wall of Wilfrid's church. Hodges' plan gives no evidence for a transverse wall within Wilfrid's church and we therefore suggest that in Wilfrid's time the sanctuary was divided from the body of the church by means of stone screens, and that the sanctuary-arch to which Prior Richard referred was part of the later development of the church after the eastern chapel had been incorporated into it. Ample evidence for the existence of stone screens in the earliest church is provided by the carved panels mentioned as item 8 in the section on sculpture, and there would have been a natural place for a sanctuary-arch in the later church across the opening to the eastern apse after this had been incorporated into the earlier church. We have shown a tentative arrangement of screen-walls (y), (y), (y), in our plan, Fig. 2, where we have shown a sanctuary about 30 ft. square.

*The eastern passages of the crypt.*

The eastern passages to and from the crypt as shown at (x) and (z) in our plan of the reconstruction are the parts

<sup>32</sup> Baldwin Brown, *loc. cit.*, 153 and 155.

which survive at present, and about four more steps would be needed in each passage in order to reach the level of the main floor. We have assumed that the passage (x) must have led to an area outside the sanctuary and the passage (z) to an area within it, since any logical interpretation of these passages seems to suggest that pilgrims were intended to pass freely from the western stair, through the ante-chamber, and out by the stair (x), while the clergy would have access from the reserved area of the sanctuary by the stair (z) to the reserved area of the crypt.

The alignment of the north arcade (g) seems awkward in relation to the passage (x). We had expected to be able to align (g) to the south of the exit from the stair (x), but in order to do this we should have had to place the piers (g), (g), on the southern edges of the great foundations seen by Hodges, and this seemed altogether too unreasonable. There clearly cannot have been a section of the wall (g) precisely on top of the steps (x), and we have therefore been led to propose *two* eastern arches in each of the north and south walls of the sanctuary, where otherwise we would have suggested only one. The intermediate piers (A), (A), which we have suggested, to support these smaller arches, are fixed in position within narrow limits, in order to clear the passage which leads north to (x), while at the same time leaving the greatest possible eastward run for the stairs (x). It should be noted, moreover, that the piers (A) come into immediate relation to the otherwise unexplained walls (m<sub>2</sub>) and (m<sub>3</sub>).

In order to prevent access from the top of the stair (x) to the sanctuary it would have been necessary for the screen-wall (y) to be continued across the eastern arch of the arcade. It has not been shown in that position in the diagram for fear of unduly complicating the picture. Moreover, the opposite arch to the south has been shown blocked by a section of screen-wall (y), but if the eastern area of the south aisle had been shut off from the body of the church by a cross-wall (m<sub>3</sub>), there would have been no need for the screen-wall (y) at this point.

*The eastern transverse walls.*

No attempt to interpret the surviving remains would be reasonably complete unless it took account of the transverse walls ( $n_1$ ), ( $n_2$ ) and ( $p$ ), and the apparently associated walls ( $m_3$ ), ( $o_1$ ) and ( $o_2$ ).

There seems little doubt that ( $m_3$ ) and ( $o_1$ ) originally defined a south-eastern *porticus*, possibly in conjunction with a wall under the line of the west wall of the south transept. If this had been part of the original structure, the main south wall ( $l$ ) would have stopped short at the point where our plan shows it crossing ( $m_3$ ). Similarly it seems plausible to interpret ( $n_1$ ), ( $n_2$ ) and ( $o_2$ ) as representing later extensions of this *porticus*, while the wall ( $s$ ) on the north would naturally be associated with a north-eastern *porticus* corresponding with the enlarged one on the south.

There then remains the long wall ( $p$ ), running north and south, but lying wholly to the east of the position which we have suggested for the east end of Wilfrid's church. This wall therefore seems difficult to bring into association with the earliest church, but it could be interpreted as belonging to conventual or other auxiliary buildings either at the time of the earliest church, or later, when the two churches had been joined together.

*The Frith Stool.*

Although we have shown the Frith Stool in the eastern apse in accordance with Hodges' plan, we think it unlikely that this was its original position. It seems to us much more likely that it stood at the east of the sanctuary of the main church, where it would no doubt have been flanked by stone seats in the form of a semi-circle for the clergy. Such arrangements of apsidal form within a square east end are found elsewhere in early churches both in Italy and in England, for example at Much Wenlock.