ENGLAND'S PREMIER ABBEY
The Medieval Chapter House of St. Albans Abbey,
and its Excavation in 1978

Twenty miles northwest of London, the
great highway of Watling Street passes
through the Roman city of Verulamium,
the second largest town of the province of
Britannia. Known already to Tacitus,
writing at the beginning of the 2nd century
A.D. about the events of Boudicca's revolt
in A.D. 60, as a municipium, Verulamium
continued to prosper throughout the
Roman period, reaching its greatest extent
about the beginning of the 3rd century.
Secure behind its walls, it survived as a
town until at least as late as A.D. 450.

Today its site on the western slopes of
the valley of the River Ver lies open and
deserted, except for the church of St.
Michael and a few surrounding houses.
Across the river to the east rises the hill
crowned now by the modern city of St.
Albans and dominated by the great mass of
the Norman abbey church of St. Alban.

Alban was apparently a citizen of
Verulamium. As the so-called protomartyr
of the English (sic) he is the only known
martyr of the Romano-British church.
Alban was probably put to death during
the persecution of Septimius Severus
(A.D. 193-211), perhaps in the year 209, for
harboring a fugitive priest and because he
himself refused to sacrifice to the pagan
gods. An account of his judgment and
execution has come down to us in several
closely related versions which seem to
derive from a manuscript, now lost,
composed at Auxerre in Gaul in the period
515-40. This account tells that Alban was
taken for execution from a walled place
(presumably the Roman town), across a
stream, to an arena. The execution there
was for some reason abandoned, and Alban
climbed a gentle hill for five hundred paces
from the arena, and on top of the hill he
was executed. The correspondence between
the details of this account and the topog-
raphy of Verulamium and the abbey church
on the hill, marking the supposed site of
the burial-place of the saint and presum-
ably also of his martyrdom, is striking.

The location of the abbey church is the
central fact in the history of Alban and
St. Albans.

If this link between the historical Alban
and the present church is correct, St.
Albans is the only known church in
England where the tradition of Christian
worship may have continued unbroken
from the days of the Romans. The docu-
mentary evidence appears to support that
of the topography: in 429 St. Germanus of
Auxerre visited Verulamium and sought
out the grave of Alban, visiting his basilica,
and ordering the tomb to be opened. The
tradition of Alban was clearly alive in
Britain when Gildas was writing before
547 and about 600 Venantius Fortunatus,
bishop of Poitiers, mentioned him in a long
poem on virginity in the company of such
famous martyrs as Cyprian, Victor and
Vincent. Bede, who wrote his Ecclesiastical
History of the English Church and People
before 731-2, derived his account of Alban
from a third version of the passio com-
posed at or under the influence of Auxerre
about 515-40, and added some crucial
information of his own. The martyrdom,
he wrote, took place iuxta civitatem
Uerolamium, at the city of Verulamium,
and

when peaceful Christian times returned
[i.e., after the persecution in which
Alban died], a church (ecclesia) of
wonderful workmanship was built, a
worthy memorial of his martyrdom. To
this day sick people are healed in this
place and the working of frequent
miracles continues to bring it renown.

The traditions (they are scarcely history)
of the present church begin with its
foundation by Offa, king of Mercia (757-
90), in 793. This "foundation," it can be
argued, was in reality a refoundation of an
already ancient community and a rebuild-
ing, perhaps, of the church described by
Bede as an ecclesia and recorded in the
Auxerre tradition as the basilica visited by
Germain in 429. It was built probably sometime in the 4th century, following the Peace of the Church established by Constantine the Great in or after 312.

The abbey, a complex of churches and chapels, was a major centre of monasticism in the Middle Ages. Its history is marked by a series of renovations and additions throughout the Middle Ages. The present structure dates mainly from the 12th and 13th centuries, with later additions through the centuries.

The abbey is a major tourist attraction, drawing visitors from around the world to witness its historical significance and architectural beauty. It is a symbol of the influence of monasticism on medieval society and a testament to the skill and labor of medieval craftsmen.

The abbey was founded in the 7th century by St. Alban, the first European Christian martyr. The site was later used as a monastery, and the present building dates from the 12th and 13th centuries. The abbey was often a center of learning and culture, and its influence extended far beyond its walls.

The abbey is known for its magnificent architecture, its rich history, and its status as an important cultural landmark. It is a place of pilgrimage for many, and its beauty and significance continue to inspire awe and admiration.

The abbey stands as a reminder of the important role of monasticism in medieval society, and its legacy lives on through the continued study and appreciation of its history and architecture.

The abbey is currently undergoing renovation and conservation efforts, ensuring that its beauty and significance will be preserved for future generations to appreciate and admire.
association with the University Museum, whose Board of Managers made the first of a series of modest but crucial grants towards the costs of the necessary associated research and preparation for publication. The entire cost of the excavation and subsequent work on the finds has been met by the developer—the Cathedral Council—a vital precedent in the conduct of rescue archaeology in Britain.

The bulk of the work was carried out by a team of students from the Universities of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Toronto, some of whom took a course for credit (Anthropology 501) through Penn’s College of General Studies under the instruction of one of the writers (B.K.B.). The work was extremely arduous and carried on through a particularly bad summer, ten or more hours a day, seven days a week, for ten weeks. That it was completed at all was due to the remarkable energies and devotion of the students, the full-time workers and to the help of a rapidly increasing band of local volunteers who took on an ever greater load of work as the season extended far beyond its planned termination. Since the end of the digging, work on the finds has proceeded apace under the leadership of Barbara Magid, formerly at the University of Pennsylvania and now doing graduate work at Cambridge, and of Helen Paterson who studied archaeology in the Extramural Department of the University of London and is now a Field Warden with the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments.

The medieval chapter house lay partly under the northern half of the Deanery garden and partly under an asphalted modern path running south of the abbey between the south transept and the Deanery garden wall. Unfortunately this path had been the exclusive route of access for all modern utilities serving the abbey since it was first lit by gas in 1877; twenty-four service lines for high and low tension electricity, gas, water, heating, telephones, and drainage, many of them only too live, were encountered and removed during excavation, involving close, constant and often punitive, heavy contact with the responsible undertakers.

How did we know that this site chosen for the new building was that of the medieval chapter house? Every trace of the former structures above ground here had been swept away after 1937 and nothing remained to tell what lay below the surface. Monasteries, however, followed an established pattern of layout, especially in the arrangement of the buildings grouped around the cloister. At St. Albans the location of the cloister in its normal position in the angle between the south side of the nave and the west side of the south transept of the abbey church was accurately known. Although all above-ground traces had gone, large parts of the arched decoration of the south cloister walk were still in position on the south face of the south wall of the nave, and every summer the pattern of the walls of the cloister could be seen bleached out in the grass of the Abbey Orchard.

From this it was possible to deduce that the range of buildings forming the east side of the cloister ran south from the south end of the south transept. In the normal arrangement the buildings of the range would follow a set sequence south from the transept: first, a passage or “skye” leading east from the cloister to the monk’s cemetery, next the chapter house, then the stairs to the monk’s dormitory. Below the dormitory and running far away to the south lay the dormitories undercroft or sub-vaunt, often in later times rearranged as a warming house for the monks in winter. At St. Albans the skye or passage still exists against the south end of the transept, but was much rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries. To the south of the skye everything had gone, but excavations in 1920 and again in 1937 had revealed some walls and areas of a magnificent tiled floor which was assumed to have been that of the chapter house. Further south the construction of a hoister house in 1937 encountered a floor at a much lower level which was believed to be the floor of the undercroft below the dormitory. The probable location of the medieval chapter house was therefore reasonably certain before excavation began, but nothing was known of its plan, size, or internal arrangement.
Something of the history of the chapter house could be derived from the rich documentation of the abbey. The original structure must have been built by Paul of Caen (abbot, 1077-93), for he had rebuilt the whole monastery, except for the bakehouse and buttery, by 1088. Robert of Gorham (abbot, 1131-66) rebuilt the chapter house a fundamentis, “from the foundations,” together with the immediately adjacent part of the cloister and the slype. Three centuries later the chapter house was repaired by John of Whealhampstead in his second abbacy (1482-96) and his work was completed by William Wallingford (abbot 1479-83) at a cost of £100—a sum so large that Whealhampstead and Wallingford must have virtually rebuilt the chapter house a second time. When the abbey was suppressed in 1539, the chapter house had been in continuous daily use for over four and a half centuries. Within a few years of the Suppression it was totally demolished.

In the life of a monastery the chapter house was second in importance only to the church. Here, every day of the monastic year, the convent met after the Morning Mass at about nine in the morning to hear the martyrology for the day and to listen to a chapter of the monastic Rule (hence “chapter” house, capitulum), which was in turn commented upon by the abbot. Faults were confessed, complaints about breaches of discipline dealt with, and punishment decreed and even administered. Monastic affairs and secular matters affecting the house were discussed and agreed upon and psalms were said for departed brethren.

The celebration of the dead, whether the saints of the martyrology or the departed of the house, was an important element in the chapter, and hence it was that the chapter house had become by the Norman period an honored resting place for the abbots and for a very few other distinguished sons of an abbey. From an account written early in the 15th century, it was known that eleven abbots had been buried in the chapter house at St. Albans: Paul of Caen (d. 1093), his nine immediate successors up to the time of John of Hertford (d. 1263), and John de la Mothe (d. 1401). There also lay buried Adam the Callowes (d. about 1180), the first chronicler of the abbey, Adam Rome, surgeon to King Edward III, Adam Wittenham, cellarer, forestier, and prior in the 14th century, and Robert of the Chamber, father of Pope Adrian IV, whose grave had been lost sight of, concealed below the tiled floor.

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THE 1978 EXCAVATION

Excavation began at the very end of May, 1978. It rapidly appeared that the site had been heavily robbed for its stone on several occasions: first, shortly after the Suppression in 1539, again at the end of the 17th century, in the early 18th century, and lastly about 1820 (Fig. 7, 1). After four weeks of work, an immense rectangular chapter house, 91 feet 4 inches long and 20 feet wide internally, had been uncovered, clasped by diagonal buttresses at its east end, and strengthened by deep buttresses at right angles to north and south (Fig. 7, 1). Of its once superb floor of 9-inch square relief-decorated glazed tiles, laid in
great "carpet" patterns, about seven hundred and fifty tiles, one-fifth of the original number, were still in position. In this tiled floor fourteen graves could be seen, most of them robbed, exactly the number visible and recorded in the early 19th century. Along each wall stretched a bench-seat and a foot-bench for the seating of the monks, and in the center of the badly-robed east wall there could just be made out a battered projection which must have been the setting of the abbot's seat.

This was the chapter house in its final medieval form, following the reconstruction of Abbot Wheathampstead and Wallingford (Fig. 7, H). They, however, had taken over the walls and internal features of an earlier chapter house, to which their deep buttresses had been added at the eastern corners and along the sides. This earlier building (Fig. 7, F, G) had shallow double-ender pilaster buttresses and was faced with Roman tiles, taken from the ruins of Verulamium, the quoins being turned with stone. At the northwest interior corner some of the very rich sculpture which adorned the inner face of the west wall still survived to show that this was a structure of the mid-12th century. The relatively thin mortar beds between the tiles on the outside face of the walls, and the use of stone quoins, also would have been room for about ninety, forty-five a side, if one allows about two feet per monk, a not ungenerous space (9), so that the chapter house seems to have been designed for a community of perhaps a hundred. Down the center of the floor before the abbot's feet lay the graves of his predecessors, three of them, as we shall see, translated to new graves from their original tombs when Robert built the house "from the foundations." Their graves were marked by marble slabs, set into the tiled floor and carved with their images and epistles (as the 15th-century description tells; all have vanished except for a few small fragments). About the middle of the chapter house, at the head of Paul of Caen's grave (Fig. 7, E, Grave 16), stood the lectern from which each day the Rule was read. At the far end, in an elaborately decorated wall, a great west door led out into the cloister walk.

Before attempting to answer that question, we should take a closer look at Abbot Robert's building (Fig. 7, E). If we imagine him seated in the center at the east end, flanked to either side by the great officers of the convent—prior, sacrist, cellarer, heretarian, almoner, punisher, forester and others—we may see him looking down the long ranks of monks seated on the benches to either side. There were possibly of 12th-century date. Study of the complicated stratification of the floor and its repairs also suggested that the tiles were laid to form the earliest floor in Paul of Caen's chapter house. If this is correct—and it has been assumed in this article—the St. Albans chapter house floor is the earliest decorated medieval tiled floor so far discovered in England. The tiles are of an unusual type, not paralleled outside St. Albans, and the kiln in which they were produced may well have been somewhere on the abbey enclosure.

Robert's magnificent chapter house survived unaltered for three centuries. A few more burials took place beneath its floor. Robert of Gorham (Fig. 7, E, Grave 19) was himself laid to rest in 1168 at the foot of Paul of Caen: his successor Simon...
(d. 1265, Grave 15) and Watin of Cambridge (d. 1285, Grave 16) followed in their turn, and it was probably in Simon’s time that the second less-than-abbatial figure, Adam the Cellarer (d. 1180?, Grave 11) was buried on the north side near the west door.

Abbot John de Cella, a great builder, reconstructed the cloister range south of the chapter house and, dying in 1214, was buried in the chapter house (Fig. 7, F, Grave 18). William of Trumpington (d. 1225, Fig. 7, G, Grave 18) and John of Herford (d. 1235, Grave 19) were the last of a long line of Norman and later abbots to lie in the chapter house. With one exception, all abbots after this were buried in the presbytery of the church. After an interval of perhaps a hundred years two lesser figures, Adam Rous and Adam Wittenham were buried north and south of the center line (Fig. 7, G, Graves 6 and 7) and in 1401 Abbot John de la Mothe was entombed in a stone-built shaft just within the west door (Fig. 7, H, Grave 19). So ended the burials in the chapter house.

When Abbot Wotton succeeded and Wallingford restored the chapter house at great cost between 1452 and 1492 they inserted windows in new positions, as the shift in the location of the buttresses implies. But their greatest expense was in the construction of a stone fan-vault covering the full width of the chapter house. Hundreds of fragments of the vault were found and Dr. Richard Morris of the University of Warwick has shown that it was a magnificent and important structure.

intermediate in style and date between the vault of the Oxford Divinity School and that of Henry VII’s chapel in Westminster Abbey. The glass in the new windows was also of the highest quality. Dr. Richard Marks, formerly of the British Museum, believes that the hundreds of fragments found lying below the windows inside and outside the building show that the glass was painted, perhaps in London, under Flemish influence, or perhaps by Flemish glass-painters. As finished by Wallingford the chapter house, although 15th-century in essence, must have looked very much like a late medieval Perpendicular Gothic structure. It was to stand for barely fifty years before the demolition which followed the Suppression of 1539.

But what of Paul of Caen’s chapter

house? Removal of the floor in Abbot Robert’s building soon showed that an earlier and very different structure lay beneath the tiles (Figs. 7, B and 14). It had been heavily robbed; only the foundations of the east wall and of a north-south firewall remained in position. The north and south walls had been removed to make way for the north and south walls of the later chapter house, and the semicircular eastern apex had been dug out, leaving only a shallow robber trench running across the width of the later building. A low step can across the building on the line of the firewall, dividing the rectangular western body, paved with broken and re-used Roman tiles in several layers, from the apsidal east end. The higher floor of the eastern area had been removed in later alterations, but inside the chancel of the apse, on the axis of the building lay a large, empty, rectangular pit (Fig. 7, B, Grave 9). This can only have been the original grave in which in 1090 Paul of Caen, the creator of the Norman abbey, had been buried, and from which he was translated by Robert of Gorham to his final resting place (Fig. 7, E, Grave 16) when the latter rebuilt the chapter house between 1164 and 1166.

This apsidal structure, the earliest building on the site, was Paul of Caen’s chapter house built between 1077 and 1088. Sometimes after Paul’s burial in the apse in 1090, this first building was extended east to a second apse (Figs. 7, C and 14). To do this, the first apse was demolished, its foundations robbed out, and a new stone step laid from north to south across the filled in robber-trench, approximately on the chord of the new apse. At the same time, the floor west of the original step was raised and that step eliminated.

Although this extension is commonly to be dated after Paul’s death in 1090, its actual date is unknown, except that it should be earlier than Robert of Gorham’s abbacy in 1151-66. This is all the more certain because at some date still before the construction of Abbot Robert’s chapter house, an attempt was made to extend Paul’s chapter house a second time, to an apse virtually on the line of Abbot Robert’s later rectangular east end (Fig. 7, D). This attempt was abandoned when only the foundation-trench had been dug, the coincidence in length of the proposed third apse with Robert’s rectangular east end suggesting that the former was an early attempt by Robert sometime after his installation in 1131 to create a chapter.
house commensurate with the new or intended size of the community.

The increasing length of the chapter house may indeed give us some idea of the growth of the convent during the later 11th and first half of the 12th century. Paul’s first chapter house would have accommodated some twenty-five monks seated inside the curve of the apse with the abbots at their center. If the rest of the monks were seated west of the step, there would have been room for fifteen to either side, giving a total community of fifty-six. The extended chapter house would, on the same basis, have accommodated a convent of about seventy-six, while the extension to a third apse, had it ever been built, would have been ample for a house of some hundred monks.

The decoration of Paul’s chapter house and of its subsequent extenstion seems to have been extremely simple, and in the spirit of his abbey church. But the scale of the whole complex and the great elevation of apses crowning the east end of the church, to which the apse of Paul’s chapter house must now be added (Fig. 6), presents one of the major architectural achievements of the Norman age.

As befitted the founder, Paul was buried in the apse of his new chapter house (Fig. 7, B, Grave 9). The positions of the graves of his two immediate successors can only be surmised (Richard d’Albini, d. 1119, Fig. 7, C, Grave 33; Geoffrey of Gorham, d. 1146, Grave 34), for both were translated to new tombs by Robert of Gorham (Fig. 7, E, Graves 14 and 17). Robert left his own predecessor, Ralph Gobion, undisturbed in the stone coffin in which he had originally been buried in 1151 within the earlier chapter house (Fig. 7, C, D, Grave 2).

Robert also left one other grave undisturbed, probably because it also was very recent when the work of reconstruction began. This grave, lying to the north of the central line of abbots’ tombs, was that of a middle-aged man accompanied by a decayed pewter or lead chalice, demonstrating that he was a priest. The body was laid in a deep, earth-cut pit, the lower part of which was shaped like the interior of a medieval stone coffin, with a recess for the head at the center towards the feet. Above this level the grave-pit widened out, leaving an earth shelf on both sides on which planks may have been laid to form a cover over the body. This grave (Fig. 7, C, D, Grave 23) was subsequently concealed by the decorated tile floor of Robert of Gorham’s chapter house and its temporary use was partly overlaid to the north by the grave of Adam the Cellarer (d. ca. 1180; Fig. 7, E-H, Grave 31).

Several facts suggest that Grave 23 was that of Robert of the Chamber, father of Pope Adrian IV. It was the only grave not
otherwise identified within the chapter house, were on one side of the center-line position reserved for abbs: and it was last sight of, concealed below the tiled floor, precisely as Matthew Paris described Robert of the Chamber's grave as he knew it before his own death Oct. 1259. The date of Robert's death is unknown, but was almost certainly during his son's papacy in the year 1254-9. If this is so, it helps to define the date when Abbot Robert rebuilt the chapter house, for this certainly followed the burial of Robert of the Chamber, and should therefore be dated between 1254-9 and 1190.

When the floor of Paul of Caen's chapter house was lifted, it quickly appeared that this was the first structure on the site. Although the ground had been terraced into the northward-rising slope to provide a level site for Paul's building, removing most but not all of the previous ground surface, the features cut into that surface had survived (Figs. 7 A and 14). These features consisted of a small cemetery and a series of north-south ditches. The cemetery, which was later than the ditches, did not extend east of the ditch Feature 571, which may have been respected as a sacred boundary, although almost entirely filled. The ditches did not extend as far west as ditch Feature 500/501, and the factors controlling the location of the graves cannot now be established. Two distinct alignments were present: four graves lay west-east, on the same alignment as the later chapter house, and at right angles to the ditches; the other two graves lay at an angle, their heads to the southwest, and this series was the earlier of the two groups. All the burials seem to have been in an (and therefore pegged) wooden coffin, and in every case where the head was visible, it had been laid on a "pillow" of flint stones placed, as far as could be told, inside the coffin. The only object accompanying any of the burials was a copper-alloy "garter"-hook of late Anglo-Saxon type (Fig. 15).

It is a commonplace of excavated medieval Christian cemeteries that burials were sometimes deflected from a strict west-east alignment, heads to the west, by the presence of dominant topographical features, such as the east end of an adjacent church. At St. Albans, the diagonal arrangement of the majority of the graves suggests that their alignment was influenced by some pre-Norman focus, perhaps the eastern termination of the Anglo-Saxon church, somewhere to the north and west of the later chapter house, and therefore in the area of the crossing or eastern part of the nave of the present abbey church.

If this is correct, it follows that Paul of Caen, in rebuilding this building, extended his new building far to the east of its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, which would lie below the present nave. This is a well-known pattern, which was followed for example at Winchester. It allowed the new services to continue uninterrupted in the older building while the entire eastern works of a new church were completed to the west. Only when the new works had been dedicated and were in use for worship, was the old church pulled down and a new nave extended across its site. The documentary evidence we have for St. Albans suggests that Paul built the new eastern works between 1077 and 1086, but that the nave was not completed until 1119 when there was a great dedication at Christmas in the presence of Henry I. If this interpretation of the documentary evidence, of the changes in style visible in the nave, and of the archaeological evidence from the chapter house site is correct, it follows that the present shrine of St. Alban behind the high altar in the presbytery of the Norman church marks only the site to which Alban's body was translated by Paul or 1190. Alban's original grave would then have been somewhere below the eastern part of the Norman nave, at the focus of the postulated early church in that position.

The late Anglo-Saxon cemetery adjoining the Norman chapter house has therefore much of importance to suggest regarding the pre-Norman layout of the abbey. It emphasises the remarkable opportunity which exists in the year 1077 to investigate the whole Anglo- Saxon complex south of, and perhaps eventually even below, the present nave. But the cemetery was not the earliest feature on the chapter house site. Earlier still, and perhaps very much earlier, were the ditches crossing the area from north to south on an alignment exactly at right angles to the axis of the Norman abbey church (see Figs. 7 A and 14).

At least two of these ditches (Features 571 and 402) are strictly comparable and clearly belonging together, defining a strip of ground 47 feet wide between their inner lips. Both ditches were approximately eight feet wide, with steep sides sloping down to a flat bottom one foot in width. To the west, a third ditch, showing two phases of cutting (the earlier Feature 500; the later, Feature 501), marked off a further strip some 41 feet wide, rather narrower than that between Features 571 and 402. To the east, a fourth ditch (Feature 572), only partly excavated, was of a quite different character and clearly formed no part of the series. Its purpose is unexplained.

The pottery from these ditches has still to be studied in detail, but it seems clear that it consists essentially of late Roman pieces, many of them color-coated and extremely worn and abraded. In addition there are these small number of gran-tempered sherds which should be of post-Roman date and perhaps of early Anglo-Saxon origin. This material suggests that Features 571 and 402, and possibly the earlier of the western ditches, Feature 500, should be dated sometime between the 5th and perhaps as late as the 8th centuries A.D. Feature 501 represents a later re-cutting of Feature 500, possibly as late as the 10th or early 11th century, and at this date domestic rubbish, including vast quantities of animal bones, was being dumped into Feature 571, and in the area south and east of the point at which Feature 500/501 appears to terminate or turn west.

The late Anglo-Saxon cemetery represented the final use of this area before the construction of Paul of Caen's chapter house, the east-west gravestrip being cut into the earlier domestic deposits. It is not impossible that the diagonal graves, which respected Feature 571 and lay north of the other surviving deposits of domestic rubbish, may be contemporary or even in part earlier than these domestic debris.

In the small area so far excavated it is impossible to be certain what the ditches represent, but they may have been the boundaries of some system of post-Roman
land division, possibly strip fields, in which case the abraded Roman pottery is probably derived from manuring or marling of the fields. The alignment of the ditches is, however, of the highest importance. They lay, as already noted, precisely at right angles to the axis of the Norman abbey church, and so demonstrate that the arrangement of the abbey hill-top has preserved this alignment since at least as early as the 8th century and possibly since late or immediately post-Roman times.

Here we have the first evidence that the organization of the abbey hill does perhaps go back to the Roman period and thus the first evidence from archaeology that the connection of St. Albans abbey with the days of the Romano-British martyr may be as direct as the documentary evidence, summarized at the beginning of this article, suggests.

Two enigmatic pieces of evidence remain to be noted. A copper-alloy disc-attachment (Fig. 15), found by contractors working on the new chapter house (Fig. 7, J), looks like a late Roman or early Anglo-Saxon object of 5th-century date, but this is not certain and, although expert comment is still awaited, the brooch may prove to be much later, possibly even of the 10th century. Second, a Romano-British cremation in a fragmentary 2nd-century A.D. vessel was found on the site in an 18th-century ditch or in filled hollowway (Fig. 7, I). It is the first Romano-British burial from the abbey, and although it may be tempting to suggest that it is evidence of a Romano-British cemetery, in which Alban came in time to be buried, it is probably more likely that it was a find removed from Roman Verulamium in the 18th century and later discarded. Only further excavation will solve this and the many other problems of a site which promises to be one of the most important yet examined for the history of early England.

Bibliography

The bibliography on St. Albans is immense, but it has recently been summarized in a volume of essays, which includes studies of the Roman city (by Sheppard Frere), and of the Anglo-Saxon (by Martin Biddle) and medieval abbey (by Christopher Brooke):

Runcie, Robert, ed.
1977
Cathedral and City: St. Albans Ancient and Modern, London.

Another account of the chapter house excavation in 1978 is given, together with a specific bibliography on the chapter house, in the printed version of a lecture given in the abbey in January 1979:

Martin Biddle
1979
The Chapter House excavations, Fraternity of the Friends of Saint Albans Abbey, Occasional Publication No. 1, St. Albans.

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Birthe Kjolbye-Biddle received her mag. art. in Nordic archaeology and European prehistory from the University of Aarhus in 1972. She has excavated at many prehistoric and early medieval sites in northern Europe, including Aarhus and Hedeby, and from 1964 to 1970 supervised the excavation of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral of the Old Minster in Winchester, which she is now preparing for publication in the series of Winchester Studies. She is co-director of the research programs at Repton and St. Albans and is Assistant Curator of the European Archaeology Section of The University Museum and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology.

Martin Biddle received his M.A. from the University of Cambridge. He was an Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Ministry of Public Building and Works from 1963 to 1963, Lecturer in Medieval Archaeology at the University of Exeter from 1963 to 1967, Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, from 1967 to 1968 and Director of the Winchester Research Unit since 1968. He has directed excavations at many Roman, medieval and post-medieval sites, including Nonsuch Palace and at Winchester from 1961 to 1971. He is the editor of Winchester Studies now being published by the Oxford University Press and author of over a hundred articles and reports. He is co-director of the research programs at Repton and St. Albans. Martin Biddle is Director of The University Museum and Professor of Anthropology in the University of Pennsylvania.