



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

THE RECOVERY AND EXCAVATION OF THE ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY SITE, 1844–1947

MARGARET SPARKS

The first Annual General Meeting of the Kent Archaeological Society was held at Canterbury on 30th July, 1858. After a tour in the cathedral led by the Revd. Professor A.P. Stanley, members visited St. Augustine's College, which had opened its doors ten years earlier, and heard a lecture by its co-founder, A.J.B. Hope, a founder member of our Society. For this special volume of our transactions, it seems suitable to trace briefly the recovery and excavation of the St. Augustine's Abbey site in which several of our members took a leading part, and to which many contributed financially over forty years or so.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF THE COLLEGE

The site of St. Augustine's Abbey lies to the east of the old city wall at Canterbury and is bounded roughly by Monastery Street, Longport and North Holmes Road. After the Dissolution parts of the monastic buildings were adapted for one of Henry VIII's palaces on the London – Dover route, but it was little used and, from 1564, the Palace was leased as a private house. In 1612, it was granted to Edward Wotton whose family lived there until 1658, when the estate came to his youngest daughter Anne, who was the wife of Edward Hales. The Hales family preserved the Abbey site or precinct intact until, in 1791, they sold about three acres on the south side for the erection of a General Hospital, which was built just south of the ruins of the nave of the Abbey Church.¹ In an adjoining area at the

¹ R.J.E. Boggis, *A History of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury* (1907), 15, 18–20. Boggis was Sub-Warden of the College (SAC), 1895–1907. He also published a history of the Abbey (1901). He left much useful information to the College Archives, both in

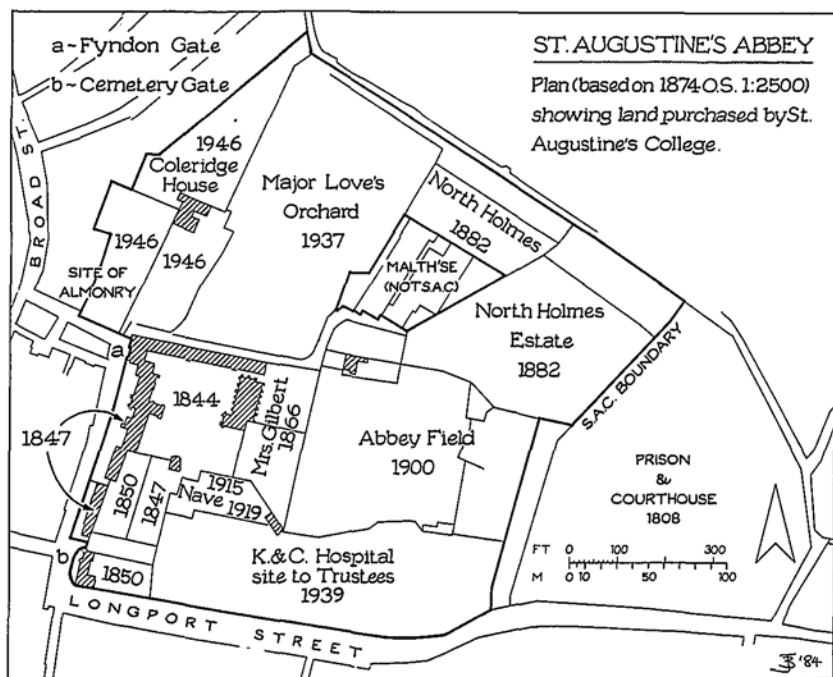


Fig. 1. St. Augustine's Abbey Site.

south-east corner of the precinct, the foundation stone of the new County Gaol and House of Correction was laid in 1791: the author of a Canterbury guide-book of 1843 complained of the breaches made in the ancient stone and flint walls of the Abbey 'to exhibit the supposed beauty of modern structures to greater advantage'.²

After the death of Sir Edward Hales, the 5th Baronet, the rest of the precinct was broken up into separate lots and sold in 1804, as a result of an Act of Parliament of 1802 which permitted the Hales family to sell part of their estates. For many years the land had been let for a variety of purposes, as pasture, orchards, gardens, nurseries, and the old house by the Fyndon Gate was a tavern, with bowling

the form of historical notes and in collections of papers about events of his own time. I have used his notes (as indicated) in this article which is based on material from the Archives (still stored in the Undercroft of the College Library) and from the printed *Occasional Papers (OPP)* a newsletter forming a record of SAC affairs. I am grateful to St. Augustine's Foundation for the use of these documents.

² Felix Summery's *Handbook for the City of Canterbury* (1843), 88.

green, skittle ground and brewery in the Abbey Outer Court. In 1834, it was suggested that the King's School might be moved from the Mint Yard to the St. Augustine's site, but there were legal difficulties about obtaining a freehold, so nothing was done, and the tavern continued, though not unnoticed. A revival of interest in Gothic architecture and in medieval sites and holy places meant that St. Augustine's could not be quite forgotten. The Cambridge Camden Society was founded in 1839, and in 1843 the guide-book writer suggested a need for a 'Canterbury Camden Society, whose object should be the protection of the remaining specimens of ancient art in the city'. He fulminated about the profanation of the monastic court as a tavern and pleasure garden and belaboured the Dean and Chapter for doing nothing about this regrettable state of affairs.³

However, help was at hand, though not from within the city of Canterbury. In September 1843, Robert Brett, a surgeon from London, then aged 35, was staying at Ramsgate and made a visit to Canterbury. He was so horrified by the state of St. Augustine's that he 'resolved to make an effort to move the hearts of the wealthy to rescue the hallowed spot'. Brett wrote a letter to *The English Churchman* lamenting the condition of the 'hallowed and time honoured ruins' and praying that someone might 'purchase and restore the sacred edifice'.⁴ His letter caught the attention of Alexander James Beresford Hope, a wealthy young man of 23, educated at Harrow and Trinity, Cambridge, who had already interests in the County of Kent as, in 1841, he had been elected Member of Parliament for Maidstone, and his step-father was the owner of Bedgebury Park. It so happened that he made his first visit to Canterbury a week after he read Robert Brett's letter. Having been taken round the cathedral by his friend Archdeacon Lyall, he asked to see St. Augustine's. Lyall warned him that he would be very much disgusted, but he insisted on seeing the place. He made an immediate decision. When he returned to London he arranged with his lawyer that he would buy the tavern and the pleasure garden when they should come on the market. Hope had to wait nine months before he could make the purchase, in June 1844, when he obtained a 470-year lease of one-and-a-half acres (the remainder of a 500 year lease) at the price of 2,000 guineas.⁵

At this time Hope had no clear idea of the religious use for which he would dedicate his St. Augustine's Outer Court: his main aim was

³ *Op. cit.*, 83-4.

⁴ Boggis, *op. cit.*, 57-9.

⁵ A.J.B. Hope's reminiscences: *OPP*, 228 (June 1882), 10-12.

to rescue it from desecration. He was a keen member of the Cambridge Camden Society which had its origin among a group of friends at Trinity. Unlike most young men, he was sufficiently wealthy to pursue such interests on a grand scale. His father Thomas Hope settled in England, although coming originally from a family of Amsterdam merchants of Scots extraction, and gave himself to the study of art and architecture and what would now be called interior decoration. A.J.B. Hope shared the architectural concern, though with a leaning to the Gothic. One of his first actions after securing St. Augustine's Court was to call in William Butterfield to restore the medieval buildings hidden under the eighteenth-century appearance of the tavern. *The English Churchman* which had published Robert Brett's letter was able to announce on 12th September, 1844, that 'a very munificent churchman' had acquired the sacred buildings and there was a possibility that the site might 'be again applied to sacred uses'.⁶

One such sacred use had been suggested to Hope almost immediately by Edward Coleridge, an Eton master. Through his friendship with W.G. Broughton, who was at work in Australia, Coleridge had become aware of the great need for clergy to work as missionaries in the English colonies. In 1842, he sent round a circular proposing the foundation of a missionary college for the training of such clergy. No definite site had been found for the suggested college, when Coleridge heard in June 1844 that part of St. Augustine's Abbey was for sale. He at once wrote to the Archbishop, but Hope secured the prize. Coleridge then wrote to Hope saying in effect 'Dear Hope, I see you have bought St. Augustine's. Of course you are going to give it to my college'. But Hope would not be rushed. Coleridge had to wait, which must have been anguish, since he clearly liked to move fast. In December, Hope had made up his mind and wrote 'St. Augustine's is yours, or rather of the Church, at once . . . however let this at present be a secret. There is another further portion of the site, important to have which I shall attempt . . .'. Hope already had plans for securing the whole Abbey precinct in time.⁷

A.J.B. Hope and Edward Coleridge became co-founders of St.

⁶ For Thomas Hope and A.J.B. Hope see *DNB*; the announcement in the *English Churchman* was reprinted in *St. Augustine's Abbey and St. Augustine's College*, privately printed by SAC c. 1880, 25.

⁷ Letters relating to the foundation of SAC were transcribed by Henry Bailey into three Red Books, Red Book 1, 45; extracts from the letters were printed in H. Bailey, *Twenty Five Years at St. Augustine's* (1873), 31-47.

Augustine's College. They worked together securing money, badge-ring authorities, pondering over statutes. Hope was in charge of the architectural side, for which Butterfield drew up plans, supervised the building and concerned himself with the smallest details such as the kitchen chairs. Work began on the site in April 1845 and was finished by November 1848. Hope was determined that the College should have a proper Charter like an ancient collegiate foundation, and for this purpose he had to obtain the freehold of his land. However, as had been correctly forecast in 1834, there were several legal difficulties in securing this, since the owner of the reversion of the lease was a lunatic.⁸ Three Private Acts of Parliament were promoted before Hope could get what he wanted. After many set-backs from adverse reports of doubtful committees to cries of 'No popery' amongst country clergy, St. Augustine's College was launched on St. Peter's Day 1848, when the chapel was consecrated, and college life began the following Advent. The choice of St. Peter's Day was a deliberate recollection of the old Abbey, formerly dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul, within whose ground the new college had been built.

In fact, although Hope and Coleridge worked together, their interests were somewhat different. Coleridge was concerned with the training of men for work overseas, and perhaps might not have cared too much where his college was sited. Hope's desire was to bring new life to St. Augustine's as an ancient holy place, and to secure its preservation. He thought of the College as having 'a double character, so that while it should be the foundation of 1848, it should also be the foundation of 597'.⁹ This 'double character' continued so long as the missionary college lasted: while the main purpose was to educate good missionaries, there were always some members of the Governing Body of Warden and Fellows who were anxious to preserve, excavate and display to the public the site of St. Augustine's Abbey. Since they could not use their Trust Funds for this purpose (and indeed their endowment was barely sufficient for the College), they resorted to a long series of 'appeals', both to the general public and to very generous private benefactors. All this they had to do themselves, since professional fund-raisers did not yet exist. Over the years from 1848 to 1940, successive generations of Wardens and Fellows must have written thousands of letters appealing for the recovery and excavation of the St. Augustine's Abbey Precinct.

⁸ Mrs. Emma Videan, grand-daughter and heir of John Hill who bought the freehold in 1814, see MS notes by Boggis on SAC Deeds.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, note 5.

II. THE RECOVERY OF THE PRECINCT

Hope began at once as soon as he had secured the Outer Court. He wished to buy the strip immediately east of his purchase, once the site of the kitchen court, the cloister, and part of the nave of the church. This land belonged to Mrs. Gilbert, but although she was persuaded to sell the lawyers found some difficulty, so that Hope could not proceed. She did, however, permit access to her land for the building of the Library on the foundations of the old Abbot's Hall. While negotiating with Mrs. Gilbert, Hope also enquired about the Cemetery Gate and house, then the property of Mears the bellfounder, but this was not yet available. He did secure a strip of land on the east of Monastery Street in 1847 including the still remaining cottages, and also the eastern half of the garden behind them. By the time the College opened in 1848, Hope had provided the original site acquired in 1844, and three other plots of land; paid £30,000 for the College buildings and over £4,000 for the Chapel and made a handsome donation to the General Fund. He was indeed a 'memorable founder', although successive wardens stressed that neither he nor Coleridge were in the least interfering in the government of their College.¹⁰

The Cemetery Gate and house, with its strip of garden to the east, and another garden to the north were obtained in 1850, with the help of Hope's friend, W.R. Lyall, who had been promoted in 1845 from being Archdeacon of Maidstone to being Dean of Canterbury. Lyall was a kindly supporter from the time when there was merely 'a proposal for a missionary college'. The Cemetery Gate remained a private house, bringing in rent to the College but providing problems of repair, until 1908 when it was adapted for use by students and named Bailey House after Henry Bailey, Warden 1850-78.¹¹

The next acquisition was the piece Hope first coveted, Mrs. Gilbert's land, which covered sites of key monastic buildings, from north to south: the kitchen, the refectory, the cloister and a triangular section at the east end of the nave of the church which in fact included the site of the Saxon church, though this may not have been known at the time. Mrs. Gilbert had died in 1859 and the land was sold to the College by her heirs Thomas and Charles Horne for £1,050 in 1866. The land was partially excavated and then laid out as gardens and an

¹⁰ Red Book 1, 51-2; Boggis notes on SAC Deeds; Building Accounts written up at the front of SAC Members' Declaration Book 1849-86.

¹¹ Packet of letters concerning the Cemetery Gate, SAC Archives.

orchard.¹² East of Mrs. Gilbert's land was a field with farm buildings and a cottage, which belonged to her relatives, the Hornes, who had a butcher's shop in Church Street St. Paul's. Archaeologically, it was very desirable since the east end of the church, the Chapter House, the Dormitory and the Infirmary lay under it, and the ruins of St. Pancras' Chapel stood upon it enclosed by a derelict cottage and pig styes; but, although the College tried to negotiate in 1881, as yet it was not available.

In 1882, the land north of the Hornes' field was put up for sale by Mr. Beer who owned but did not sell a malthouse on the site. Once the Abbey vineyard had been there, and when advertised for sale a walled garden with vineries and hothouses formed part of the property, the remainder being a market garden and a paddock, in all about three-and-a-half acres. The College wanted the land, but thought Mr. Beer's price too high. Mr. Beer elaborated a scheme to sell the land to a builder as plots for 147 cottages, so that the College decided they must pay the necessary £2,000 to obtain the North Holmes estates. They had to sell stock in order to do so, but the land was an asset. Part was let for market gardening, and in 1901 two College tennis courts and two fives courts were made there. Still later (in 1961) the land was sold to Christ Church Teacher Training College.¹³

About ten years after the purchase of the North Holmes estates attention was again directed to the Hornes' field, since Thomas Horne died. The College had naturally wanted the field, though they had no more money to spare. Others were interested: at the north side of St. Martin's Church, in St. Martin's House, lived Canon C.F. Routledge, who had been educated at Eton and King's, Cambridge, and was then a retired Inspector of Schools, a 'most prominent and useful member' of the Kent Archaeological Society and from 1891–1900 editor of *Archaeologia Cantiana* and, thus, worthy of special remembrance on this occasion. He had made a careful study of St. Martin's Church and a preliminary excavation of the south side of St. Pancras' Chapel. He was anxious to excavate the Abbey Church and other buildings which lay under what he called the Abbey Field. He had the blessing of Archbishop Benson who urged that a committee should be formed and the land bought, but at the time (1893) 'young Horne' would not sell. William Henry St. John Hope, a distinguished Honorary Member of this Society, was concerned with the possibility of the Society of Antiquaries of London purchasing the land for

¹² Boggis notes on SAC Deeds.

¹³ Property File, SAC Archives.

excavation, but Horne would not see him. And the Jesuits were interested, and prepared to pay a large sum. When old Horne's widow died in 1899, there was much scurrying: Routledge took command, told the College to keep quiet and promised that if bought and excavated by Trustees the site of the abbey would eventually be transferred to the College. At the auction in the event, the Jesuits did not materialise and the land (just over two acres) was bought in July 1900 for £3,000.¹⁴

At this stage, Lord Northbourne (1846–1923), Past President of this Society, appeared as a benefactor of the St. Augustine's Abbey site. He was brought into touch with Routledge by R.J.E. Boggis, then sub-warden of the College (who kept careful records of this and many other transactions). Lord Northbourne generously acted as one of the guarantors for the sum which might be needed at auction, and became one of the Trustees of the St. Augustine's Abbey Field, the others being Routledge, St. John Hope and Francis Bennett-Goldney, ex-Mayor of Canterbury. Lord Northbourne's interest and generosity continued until his death, and it is possible that without his aid the complete excavation of the Abbey Church would not have been achieved.

Excavations started the following autumn. St. John Hope in writing to Routledge in July 1900 observed that in time it would be necessary to move into the hospital land in order to excavate the nave of the church. The hospital had been built immediately south of the foundations of the nave and the site of the nave was a hospital garden, with the hospital laundry and mortuary actually built within it. By 1905, the Trustees were trying to organise an exchange of property with the hospital authorities offering them a kitchen garden east of the Abbey Field (the Cellarer's Garden) in exchange for the 'nave' garden, but nothing came of this. After 1907, there was little activity, because since Routledge's death in 1904 the excavation plans and collecting of finance lacked his driving force. But, in October 1912, a new personality arrived on the scene, by whose energy and devotion the main excavations were finally carried through. Robert Ullock Potts was installed as sub-warden, after returning home from missionary work in Madras, and the following spring he set to work 'tidying the ruins' as the College notes said, and arranging with the hospital authorities to take down a wall across the nave, so that the whole length of the church could again be seen. In 1914, excavations were resumed and the matter of the hospital ground and especially

¹⁴ Boggis made a scrapbook of letters and papers concerning this purchase, SAC Archives.

the hospital laundry became urgent. Lord Northbourne, as Chairman of the hospital Board of Management did what he could, but without immediate success, though he secured a lease for the College to excavate in the north side of the nave in 1915. The Trustees of the Abbey Field handed the field over to the College, so that the College acted directly as promoters of the new excavations. These were suspended during the latter years of the war, but, in December 1918, a new campaign of letters was begun with the hospital authorities, who suddenly required a decision in the middle of the Long Vacation when no-one was in residence except Potts. At the end of August 1919, it was agreed that the hospital laundry and mortuary should be rebuilt and a peppercorn lease was granted for the south side of the nave: the rebuilding costs of £2,500 were to be paid by the College. The inevitable appeal went out, but the greater part of the cost was provided by Lord Northbourne, without whom the negotiations might in any case have failed.¹⁵

Thus, by 1919, the College owned or rented the greater part of the old St. Augustine's Precinct, apart from that occupied by the hospital, sessions house and the prison. Excavations went ahead slowly as money allowed. Plans of the monastic buildings under the Abbey Field were drawn and the foundations re-covered with soil, but the church was left exposed, and was much visited by archaeologists and pilgrims to the 'holy ground' of St. Augustine's monastery. In 1934, a plan was published showing all the work to date, and often regarded as complete. Potts, however, was well aware that this was not the case. 'One section remains unplotted, the Almonry which lay on the north side of Lady Wootton's Green, and on the north side of the private road which now forms the north boundary of St. Augustine's College . . . It did not seem worthwhile to delay the printing of this plan until such time in the future as the Almonry should be reunited with the rest of the ancient precinct.'¹⁶ In 1937, the College was able to buy Major Love's orchard on the north of the private road for £2,000, a sum which was raised by selling a marsh at Westbere. If Potts had been able to excavate, he would have found the buildings of the Base Court, some of which were discovered in 1983. The Almonry buildings were destroyed by bombing but, after the war in 1946, the College bought the site of the Almonry and the next-door house, now Coleridge House, which occupies the north-west corner of the Base Court. The days of excavation by the College were alas ended. (The College never owned the malthouse built by

¹⁵ Letters and papers concerning Hospital ground (nave), SAC Archives.

¹⁶ R.U. Potts, 'The Plan of St. Austin's Abbey, Canterbury', *Arch. Cant.*, xlvii (1934), 180.

Mr. Beer in 1876, which remained an island in their territory.)¹⁷

In 1937, the year in which the College bought Major Love's orchard, the hospital moved to new buildings to the south-east of Canterbury, an event which gave rise to much speculation about the future of the old hospital building. To the College and to those who visited the ruins of St. Augustine's Abbey the old building was, as they said 'an eyesore' and, indeed, the sheer face of its back wall rising abruptly above the excavations did look extremely odd. The Warden, Canon Tomlin, and his friends conceived a plan for the demolition of the hospital and the making of a public garden 'which would be a cause of pride to Canterbury and a joy to visitors'. A rival plan was put forward by the County and City education authorities to build a technical institute on the site, but this foundered on the legal problem of putting up new buildings on a disused graveyard. Eventually, after lengthy discussions, a new body of trustees bought the site, and leased the building to the City Council for twenty-one years to house the technical institute until proper accommodation could be found for it. The Trustees of the St. Augustine's Abbey Precinct Recovery Fund bought the freehold for £8,000 as a result of a public subscription, with the understanding that at the end of the twenty-one year lease the hospital would be demolished and a garden created. However, the Council lease was not signed until July 1939, and almost immediately came the war which upset all plans. The hospital building was not available for demolition until 1971 and it was not until 1977 that the Trustees presented the garden to the city. It makes a pleasant setting for the Abbey site, and is greatly appreciated in summer by visiting coach parties of schoolchildren and others.¹⁸

Thus, it can be seen that in just over 100 years (1844–1946); St. Augustine's College and its associates managed to secure almost the whole of the available land of the old Abbey precinct, as Hope had desired in 1844. But almost immediately the stable order set up by Coleridge and Hope came to an end. As a result of a Commission on Selection and Training for the Ministry, the Church of England authorities resolved that missionary colleges should be closed, so that missionaries could be trained with ordinands intending to serve in England. In 1947, there were new proposals for St. Augustine's and a new Charter. The successors of the Missionary College sold the greater part of the Almonry site to the City Council in 1959 for the extension of Monastery Street and for housing. The North Holmes Estate and Major Love's orchard were sold in 1961 to the Church of

¹⁷ Property File, SAC Archives.

England for the new Teacher Training College, later Christ Church College. (Coleridge House was sold direct to Christ Church College in 1969.)¹⁹

III. EXCAVATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE MONASTIC PLAN

The first excavation appears to have been made in January 1845, or possibly a little earlier. Facing the Fyndon Gate across the old court was a row of arches known as 'the cloister', which was in fact part of the east wall of the undercroft of the Abbot's Hall. Butterfield excavated to discover the plan of the undercroft so that he could devise a suitable refectory or library (as was eventually decided) on these foundations. Some finds were made including a seal and 'other curiosities' and fragments of a tile pavement with 'a pattern of birds pecking at berries' which were copied for the tiles in the 'cloister' (now studies) of the new students' building. Shortly afterwards, in February, Butterfield obtained leave from the hospital to excavate in the nave of the Abbey church sufficiently to locate the stonework of the piers, although he could not go as far as the crossing because of the triangle of ground occupied by Mrs. Gilbert's land, which Hope so much wished to buy. At the time, the great length of the church was not realised: Hope thought that the whole of the choir would be found, if it were possible to excavate in Mrs. Gilbert's ground.²⁰

The College was able to buy the land in 1866, and the following spring the 'student gardeners' were excavating the Refectory and the kitchen. Mention of excavations occurs at intervals in the College magazine *Occasional Papers*. The Warden, Henry Bailey, took a keen interest. When the Kent Archaeological Society met in Canterbury in July 1868, their second morning was spent at St. Augustine's and included a lecture from Bailey with a guided tour of the College and the new excavations. On that day the College entertained a very distinguished visitor: The Revd. Professor Robert Willis 'kindly came and made a minute survey of the several sites and remains of the Abbey in the portion of land we have recently acquired'. As a result of the day's investigations various sites were plotted on a scale plan drawn up by one of the students.²¹ When the Royal Archaeological Institute held a meeting in Canterbury in July 1875, Bailey again entertained the visitors and on this occasion he read a paper written

¹⁸ Letters and papers concerning purchase of Hospital Site, SAC Archives.

¹⁹ Property File, SAC Archives.

²⁰ For provisional list of excavations with references, see Appendix; Red Book 1, 52-3; A.J.B. Hope, 'Architectural Notes on St. Augustine's College, Canterbury', *Arch. Cant.*, iv (1861), 62-4.

²¹ *OPP*, 113, 11-12.

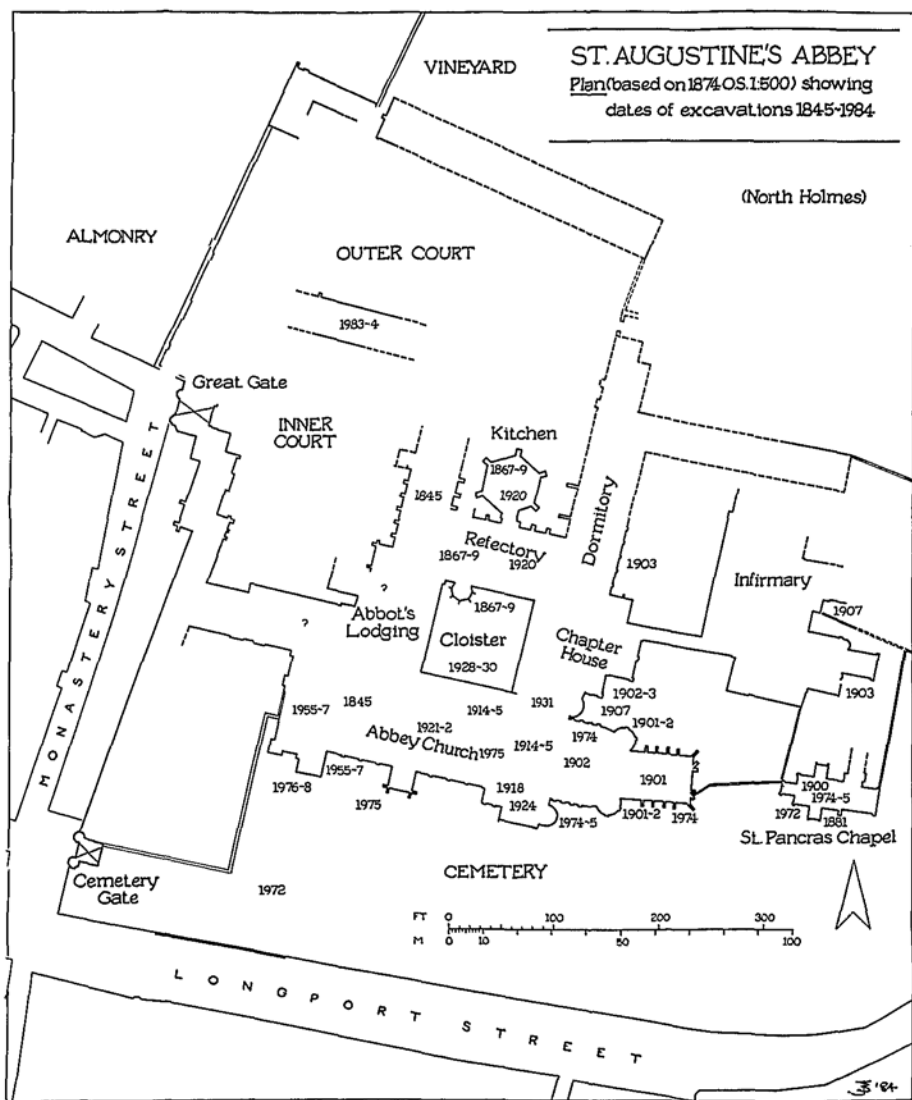


Fig. 2. St. Augustine's Abbey Site.

by a learned antiquarian, the Revd. MacKenzie Walcott, Precentor of Chichester Cathedral, which was published in 1879. Walcott had gathered documentary information about St. Augustine's which he related to such ruins as could be seen, and to the customary Benedictine abbey layout. Although he ventured a plan, he does not seem to have had the benefit of the one prepared at the College, since he drew the nave two bays too short towards the crossing, a matter which should have been verifiable by measurement as a result of the College excavations in the Refectory and Cloister. (After the foundations of these buildings had been plotted, the soil was returned and gardens were made, which can be seen on old College photographs.)²²

There is no mention in the *Occasional Papers* of excavations in the area of the church which the College now owned, except one chance reference to a visit by A.J.B. Hope in 1885 when he went with the warden (Maclear) 'to the spot where they were making excavations on the supposed site of St. Augustine's Altar'; but other evidence shows how anxious the College authorities were to secure the Abbey Field and begin excavations at the east end of the church. Hope died in 1887; so he did not live to see the beginning of systematic excavation of the church in 1901. Those who began it had fortunately no idea that the work would take about 25 years to complete.

William St. John Hope and Routledge were in correspondence for some months before the Abbey Field was secured. As the Trustees could not take possession until October 1900, St. John Hope thought it important 'to keep public interest going. We could make a pretty little splash with St. Pancras to start with'. They set aside a week, beginning on 5th November. Routledge undertook to find a local contractor who could provide '20 men and a foreman for a week, with all necessary plant - picks, shovels, planks and barrows and perhaps two carts and horses'. They were to be paid eighteen shillings per man for the week. The site of the chapel was occupied by a cottage and pig styes. Routledge was at first to get it cleared before the excavation, but then St. John Hope realised that Saxon walling might be destroyed and wrote two hasty letters urging caution. The 'splash' was duly made, as can be seen from the winter photographs of the cleared site of St. Pancras' Chapel. One of the contractor's carts with horse appears in the background. Trial holes were made at the east end of the crypt and in the north transept of the church, and in the Chapter House and Infirmary. A letter was written by Routledge to

²² M.E.C. Walcott, 'Vestiges of St. Augustine's Abbey without the Walls of Canterbury', *J.B.A.A.*, xxxv (1879), 26-58; for a plan of the Abbey and gardens 1874, see O.S. 1st. edn. 1:500 map.

The Times on 16th November to report progress to subscribers and appeal for funds.²³

Beginning in the spring of 1901 there were excavations for five months in the crypt chapels and the early sixteenth-century Lady Chapel which extended east of them. One of the Trustees, Francis Bennett-Goldney (originally Francis Evans), appointed his brother Sebastian Evans to be in charge of excavations, and his cousin, George Hubbard, to be honorary architect. The Trustees found to their disappointment that many had been before them in the crypt, 'graves had been disturbed, relics carried away and shrines plundered'. Little was left but the bare outline of the crypt beneath the ancient 'holy place of saints' known to them from a medieval drawing.²⁴ However, they set to work to reveal what remained. Excavations continued for the next two years (1902-3), with the result that the crypt was cleared, and the Slype, Chapter House, Dormitory and Infirmary were partly uncovered. Money was a great problem. In 1902, Routledge complained to St. John Hope - 'With the exception of the Soc: Antiq: small grant, all the money this year has been collected by me alone - and I have obtained the grant from the Kent Arch: too! This is not a fair division of labour!'²⁵

Money ran out at the end of the 1903 season, and there were no excavations in 1904 (St. John Hope had Glastonbury on his mind). In November that year Routledge died: he had been instrumental in the purchase of the Abbey Field and the start of the excavations, and although St. John Hope was keen to press on with excavations in the crossing and nave of the church, and volunteered to collect subscriptions, nothing was done immediately. Sebastian Evans had another season in 1907 in which the Chapter House and the Infirmary were completed and plans were drawn up by St. John Hope who came down in September. The College students helped with the clearance and subsequent back-filling of the Chapter House. No report was made in *Archaeologia Cantiana* of this season's digging, and there are no further reports of excavations in the College *Occasional Papers* at this time. The lack of an interested trustee on the spot to replace Routledge meant that for several years no money was collected or work done. It is possible that the ground west of the crypt on the site of the crossing was cleared of trees and soil, in preparation for future

²³ Packet of letters from W. St. J. H. to C.F.R., SAC Archives, 26th July, 30th and 31st October; photograph, *Arch. Cant.*, xxv (1901), 232.

²⁴ Trinity Hall, Cambridge, MS 1, fol. 63, a drawing of the High Altar and the arrangement of shrines behind it, which was engraved and published by Somner in 1640.

²⁵ C.F.R. to W. St. J. H., July 10th, 1902.

excavation, but there is no record of this. St. John Hope had been urging that this should be done since 1904; but, in 1908 and 1909, he was concerned with Silchester and there was no-one at St. Augustine's to initiate activity.

In October 1912, R.U. Potts arrived as sub-warden and almost at once started organising the removal of earth and rubbish from the excavated sites. By March 1913, he had persuaded the hospital authorities to allow the wall which ran diagonally across the east end of the nave to be taken down. From May 1914, excavations began in the area under the crossing, and in the porticus outside the north aisle of the nave. Exciting discoveries were made, and St. John Hope was again generous with his help and expertise (the letters and papers which relate to Potts' excavations are no longer stored with the College Archives: evidence comes only from the *Occasional Papers* and reports in *Archaeologia Cantiana* and *Archaeologia* lacking the pungent comments of St. John Hope's letters).²⁶

In two seasons, Potts uncovered the piers of Wulfric's eleventh-century 'rotunda', the north porticus of the Saxon church, which had been the burial place of the early archbishops, and part of the north aisle of the nave of the Romanesque church. He was able to move into the nave as a result of the agreement with the hospital authorities who leased to the College a strip on the north side. The College was now the agent for the excavation, since the Abbey Field Trustees had handed over their site. The new discoveries attracted much interest and were written up by St. John Hope. The relatively easy explication of complicated foundations was a bonus conferred by the precise documentation of the Abbey church. As well as the mention in Bede, and the Chronicles of Thorne and Elmham, there is a carefully detailed account of the translation of relics in 1091 from the Saxon church to the Romanesque church in the *Historia Translationis S. Augustini* of the hagiographer Goscelin, written in 1097. C.E. Woodruff, a devoted member of our Society, drew Potts' attention to Goscelin, whose description was of great assistance for the understanding both of the porticus and of the 'rotunda'.²⁷ The Society visited the site in July 1915 and admired the new work. Official grants and subscriptions from individual members helped to keep the excavations going, as did grants from the Society of Antiquaries of London.

²⁶ Potts's notebooks, etc., are now in the possession of A.D. Saunders, Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, who excavated at St. Augustine's, 1955-57.

²⁷ Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CLV, cols. 15-62; many important passages from Goscelin were quoted and translated in W. St. J. Hope, 'Recent Discoveries in the Abbey Church . . .', *Archaeologia*, lxxvi (1915), 378-400.

For the remaining years of the war there was no more digging, except when the grave of Abbot Roger II was accidentally discovered in the south transept in June 1918. St. John Hope came to examine the grave: this may have been his last visit, as he died in August 1919. In May 1919, he was corresponding with Potts about the forthcoming appeal to pay for a new hospital laundry, keenly interested as always in the affairs of St. Augustine's. He died just before agreement was reached that the hospital laundry was to be rebuilt immediately, allowing excavation to proceed in the nave as soon as the old building was demolished.²⁸ As so often in such matters, the clearance took time, so the 1920 excavations were in the kitchen and the refectory which had not been investigated since 1867-69. Work began again in the church in January 1921 and continued for two seasons. The floor of the nave was cleared; some work done round the west towers; on the south side the porticus of St. Martin was found and St. Anne's Chapel cleared; and the foundations of the Saxon church were uncovered under the east end of the nave. C.R. Peers took St. John Hope's place as a 'consultant' from the Antiquaries, with the assistance of A.W. Clapham in whose special field of interest the Saxon church lay. Our Society paid a visit again in May 1921 when Potts read a paper, which was subsequently published with a plan of all buildings discovered between 1868 and 1920.²⁹ The drawing of plans, formerly done by St. John Hope was carried on by J.G.P. Meaden, an architect with the firm of Tapper (father and son) who were architects to the College for many years. In 1922, Potts was elected an F.S.A., a recognition of the determination, skilled organisation and knowledge of the history of the site which he had displayed in ten years' work.

Money ran out in 1923. Potts and the Warden (Knight) issued an appeal with a brief account of results so far, asking for a further £750 to complete the work which they thought might take another two years. A further season was possible in 1924 when there were discoveries in the south aisle of the nave and south transept. After this there seems to have been a pause in which plans of the Saxon and Romanesque churches were drawn up and a paper was written by Peers and Clapham and read to the Society of Antiquaries of London in March 1926. The paper ended by drawing attention to the importance of the cloister area and the possibility that a Saxon cloister enclosure might be found there. This was the next area of

²⁸ Letters and papers concerning Hospital ground (nave); W. St. J.H. died on August 19th, 1919, for his work see *DNB*.

²⁹ The plan was published in R.U. Potts, 'The latest Excavations at St. Augustine's Abbey', *Arch. Cant.*, xxxv (1921), 124-5.

excavation, begun in the autumn of 1927 and finished early in 1930 after a delay in 1929 when there was no more money. Two sets of earlier cloister walls were found, one perhaps dating from St. Dunstan's reform movement, and one set re-aligned in connection with Wulfric's 'rotunda'. In 1931, Abbot John Dunster's grave was discovered in the north transept in the final excavation under Potts' direction.

A complete plan of the church and monastic buildings was published in 1934 only lacking information about the Almonry and Base Court, which as Potts remarked were not yet 'reunited to the ancient precinct'.³⁰ Carved stonework and finds from the excavations were exhibited in the ante-room at the top of the Library steps, since they had long outgrown the cases in the College Museum allotted to them in 1905.³¹ For many years the Wardens and the Fellows had been concerned about the best methods of preserving the inheritance they had bought and excavated. From at least 1935, negotiations were begun with the Office of Works 'with a view to the Office taking over the guardianship of the site (we retaining the ownership as before) and spending the necessary money on its preservation'. The negotiations took a long time and were complicated by the uncertainty of plans for the hospital site, but finally a Deed of Guardianship was entered into on 14th October, 1938.³² Further land was included in 1941 and again in 1960. The land has remained in guardianship and several excavations have been promoted by the Ministry of Works and the Department of the Environment, especially on the south side of the Abbey church where the existence of the hospital had prevented earlier investigation.³³ It is unfortunate that no general account of the excavations has ever been pieced together, and that the guardians have not produced a more easily understood explanation of the site for visitors than A.W. Clapham's *Official Guide* of 1955, especially since they published an excellent series of illustrated guides to other monuments in the late 1950s and 1960s.

This detailed review of recovery and excavation has been ended deliberately with the year 1947, because it was in that year that St.

³⁰ This plan was published with *Arch. Cant.*, xlvii (1934), with notes on the Infirmary by A. Hamilton Thompson (183-91), and the Cloister by A.W. Clapham (191-4).

³¹ Some of the stonework and finds were displayed in a museum on the SAC site until 1969. From 1969 to 1981, they were in a museum hut on the DoE site and since 1981 they have been stored at Dover Castle and at Fortress House, London, though remaining the property of the St. Augustine's Foundation.

³² *OPP*, 383-97 (1935-39).

³³ For excavations 1955-83, see Appendix.

Augustine's ceased to exist in the form in which it had been set up at its foundation in 1848. As has been said, the Church of England authorities effectively determined that missionary colleges, as such, should be closed. Although 'the College' continued as a legal entity, with its duly appointed Warden and Fellows, it received in 1947 a new Charter which substantially widened its scope and enabled it firstly to become what was known as 'the Central College of the Anglican Communion' (1952-67) and later to receive the fourth-year theological students for King's College, London (1969-75). Even later still, in 1979, there was yet another Charter which discarded the name and style of College and established in its stead 'St. Augustine's Foundation' with a body of trustees and even wider terms of reference.³⁴ The greater part of the College buildings are now (1984) let to the King's School.

1947, therefore, marks the end of an era, and the end of a story. It is in many ways a remarkable story, now little known. The public interest in so ancient a site has largely evaporated. Modern tourists prefer upstanding monuments, and the cradle of Christianity in southern England has lost its popular appeal. St. Augustine's is in any case a daunting site, difficult to understand for all but the most knowledgeable visitors. But the recovery of the precinct and the excavation of the buildings was a great achievement for a relatively impecunious body whose main function was education. The 'double character' of the foundation on which A.J.B. Hope insisted was not forgotten: there was a sense in which the members of the College felt themselves to be the heirs of the monks of St. Augustine's. Successive wardens supported the work and sent out appeals in order to preserve and display the treasures of their holy and historic inheritance. They sought and secured the support of the Society of Antiquaries of London and the Kent Archaeological Society; but many individuals had a share in the task - benefactors such as A.J.B. Hope and Lord Northbourne; eminent archaeologists such as W.H. St. John Hope, C.R. Peers and A.W. Clapham; the Wardens, Bailey, Maclear, Knight and Tomlin; succeeding generations of students; and most especially C.F. Routledge and R.U. Potts in their great devotion to the Precinct of St. Augustine's Abbey.³⁵

³⁴ *The Charters (1848, 1947 and 1979) and Statutes of St. Augustine's Foundation*, privately printed 1979.

³⁵ Portraits of A.J.B. Hope and the Wardens hang in the College Hall; there is an obituary of Lord Northbourne with photograph, *Arch. Cant.*, xxxvi (1923), 157-9, of C.F.R., *Arch. Cant.*, xxvii (1905), lxiii, and of R.U.P., *Arch. Cant.*, lxii (1949), 163-4; a photograph of R.U.P. is in the SAC photograph collection.

THE ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY SITE

PROVISIONAL LIST OF EXCAVATIONS AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY,
CANTERBURY, 1845-1983

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|---|---|
| 1845 | Butterfield | Undercroft of Abbot's Hall | Red Book 1, 52, 53; |
| 1867-9 | 'College' | Piers of nave in Hospital ground | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , iv, 63, 64. |
| 1881 | Routledge | Kitchen, Refectory, Cloister | <i>OPP</i> , 102, 113. |
| | | Preliminary work at St. Pancras' Chapel | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xiv, 105-7. |
| 1885 | 'College' | Site of St. Augustine's Altar | <i>OPP</i> , In. mem. A.J.B.H. 1887. |
| 1900 | Routledge | St. Pancras' Chapel, Trial holes: | <i>OPP</i> , 277; |
| | St. J. Hope | Crypt, North Transept, Chapter House, Infirmary | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxv, 222-37. |
| 1901 | Routledge | Crypt Chapels, North Transept | <i>OPP</i> , 280; <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , |
| | Evans | East Chapel, Abbot Dygon's Chapel (Dygon's tomb - report on grave goods) | xxv, 238-43; <i>Collectanea Historica</i> (1981), 74-84. |
| 1902 | Routledge | St. Pancras' Chapel, North Transept, | |
| | Evans | Slype, east end Chapter House, crypt cleared | <i>OPP</i> , 283, 285; <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxvi, 1-8 |
| 1903 | Routledge | Chapter House, Dormitory, | <i>OPP</i> , 290; |
| | Evans | Infirmary | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , as above. |
| 1907 | Evans | Infirmary, Chapter House | <i>OPP</i> , 306. |
| 1914 | Potts | Monks' Choir area, Wulfric's | <i>OPP</i> , 327-9; <i>Arch.</i> |
| | St. J. Hope | 'rotunda', Porticus of St. Gregory | <i>Cant.</i> , xxxi, 294-6. |
| 1915 | Potts | Porticus of St. Gregory, North | <i>OPP</i> , 331-2; <i>Arch.</i> |
| | St. J. Hope | aisle Nave, Tombs of Laurence, Mellitus and Justus | <i>Cant.</i> , xxxii, 1-26; <i>Archaeologia</i> , lxvi, 377-400. |
| 1918 | Potts | Tomb of Abbot Roger II in south Transept | <i>OPP</i> , 337. <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxxiv, 139-47. |
| 1920 | Potts | Kitchen and Refectory | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxxv, 126. |
| 1921 | Potts | Floor of Nave cleared to west door, four east bays of Nave and south aisle, St. Anne's Chapel | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxxv, 117-26. |
| 1922 | Potts | West front, south-west Tower, Porticus of St. Martin, floor of Saxon church | <i>OPP</i> , 346, 21-9. |
| 1924 | Potts | South aisle Nave (Wulfmaeg), south Transept, Royal Tombs, western Tower (in Nave) | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxxvii, 211-3; <i>OPP</i> , 354; <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xxxviii, 97-112. |
| | | Report on pre-conquest churches at St Augustine's by Peers and Chapman, 1926 | <i>Archaeologia</i> , lxxvii, 201-15. |
| 1928 | Potts | Cloister | |
| 1929 | Potts | Cloister | <i>OPP</i> , 368, 13-7. |
| 1930 | Potts | Cloister finished | <i>OPP</i> , 371. |
| 1931 | Potts | North Transept, Tomb of Abbot Dunster | <i>OPP</i> , 373. |
| 1955-57 | Saunders | West end of Nave, Saxon Tower, western Saxon Chapel | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xxii, 25-63. |

M. SPARKS

| | | | |
|--------------|----------|---|---|
| 1960 | Rigold | East of north Transept, north of Choir and Lady Chapel | (Sherlock and Woods forthcoming) |
| 1960 | Saunders | Kitchen and graves under kitchen | |
| 1972 | Sherlock | Two trenches on Hospital site | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xvii, 144-5. |
| | Jenkins | Trench south of St. Pancras Chapel | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xix, 235. |
| 1974-75 | Sherlock | Area along south side of church from Lady Chapel to beginning of Nave | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xx, 790; C. Miscampbell, <i>Collectanea Historica</i> (1981), 63-5. |
| 1974-75 | Jenkins | St. Pancras Chapel | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xx, 163-4. |
| 1976 | Woods | Area along south side of Nave | <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xxi, 225-6; <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xcii, 228-9 |
| 1977-78 | Woods | South Tower at west end of Nave | <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xciii, 204-5 <i>Med. Arch.</i> , xxii, 158-9 B.A.A. <i>Canterbury</i> (1982), 120-4 |
| 1983 | Bennett | Base Court | (Report by Sherlock and Woods 1972-78, forthcoming) <i>Arch. Cant.</i> , xcix, 247-51. |
| Unknown date | Potts? | Abbot's Lodging and Tudor Palace (before 1920) | |